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Admiralty, December 20, 1894.

DESPATCHES, of which the following are copies, have been received from Rear-Admiral Frederick G. D. Bedford, C.B., Commander-in-Chief on the Cape of Good Hope and West Coast of Africa Station, and from Captain Francis Powell, of Her Majesty's ship "Phœbe," reporting operations against the Chief Nanna of Brohemie, in the Benin River:—

Letter from Captain F. Powell, of the "Phœbe," Senior Officer, West Coast of Africa, to the Admiralty, dated 1st September, 1894.

Her Majesty's Ship "Phœbe,"

Benin River, September 1, 1894.

SIR, I HAVE the honour to inform you of the following proceedings of Her Majesty's ship under my command since the despatch of my previous letter of 19th August, 1894.

2. I left Loanda at 11.30 A.M. on Monday, 20th August, and arrived at the Fairway Buoy, at the mouth of the Bonny River, at 6 o'clock on Friday morning, August 24th. At 7 o'clock the tide served for entering the river, so I proceeded up, finding the important buoys well in position.

3. Just to the north of Breaker Island I found the African Steamship Company's steamship "Ekoe" aground, and she signalled and sent to me for assistance, so I agreed to send a wire hawser to her and try to tow her off. On getting Her Majesty's ship into position I anchored, but the water reported in the chains appearing rather too shoal I at once rounded from every part of the ship, but got no less than 18 feet anywhere—the ship drawing 17 feet 2 inches aft. However, as the bottom was very uneven and the ship even appeared to touch very lightly once or twice, I weighed again at once, sent to the "Ekoe" to say there was not water enough for me to stop and help him, and proceeded on up to Bonny, anchoring there off the settlement at 9.50 A.M.

4. Mr. Moor, the Acting Consul-General of the Protectorate, came on board, informed me of the position of affairs with regard to the rebellious chief Nanna in the Benin River, and asked me to assist in reducing him. I assured him I should be happy to co-operate in every way in my power should I receive the sanction required by Article 227 of the Station Orders. Telegrams were despatched to the Admiralty, Foreign Office, and the Commander-in-Chief, and I received a reply from the Admiralty on Saturday morning, August 25th, authorizing me to act if I considered the force at my disposal was sufficient.

5. I at once informed the Consul-General I was ready to take him to the Forcados River and thence by the Chanomi and Nanna Creeks to Benin. He came on board, and at 11 A.M. I weighed and proceeded out of the Bonny River and anchored off the entrance to the Forcados River at 8 A.M. Sunday, August 26th. The tide serving at 11 A.M., I again weighed and crossed the Forcados bar and came on through the creeks to Benin River, anchoring near Her Majesty's ship "Alecto," which was lying off the mouth of the Brohemie Creek, at 6.45 P.M.

Shortly after entering the creek we met the Protectorate yacht "Evangeline" and communicated with her. The creeks, though in places very narrow and winding, contain ample water, the least obtained being 21 feet, and, except in one place where there is a very awkward turn, we were able to steam ten knots, the ship steering beautifully.

6. Lieutenant-Commander Heugh, of Her Majesty's ship "Alecto," came on board when I anchored, reported the fact of his boat having been fired on the previous day, and the loss sustained (Enclosure No. 1), and informed me generally as to the state of affairs.

There can be no question but that Nanna's position is a very strong one: his town is up a creek, or rather ditch, at least a mile long, which, as Lieutenant-Commander Heugh experienced, is obstructed and defended by ordnance of at least 7-pounder calibre commanding the waterway. The ditch itself only holds enough water to float one of our boats manned and armed for about two hours before and after high water, and is so narrow that a steamboat could not turn round nor a pulling boat use oars.

As far as I can learn, there is no overland route to the town, but there is perhaps another ditch, also obstructed and commanded by small cannon. The battery that fired on Lieutenant Heugh is, as near as I can judge, about 400 yards in a direct line from the river, and it appears to me that the best plan is first to clear the bush sufficiently near to be able to rush it.

7. Monday, August 27th, was employed in endeavouring to collect information, and moving the Houssas up from Benin to a disused factory near the ship. A search light was kept on Brohemie Creek every night, and canoes attempting to go in or come out were fired on.

8. On Tuesday, August 28th, 70 Houssas with a party of labourers were landed on the left bank of Brohemie Creek and proceeded to cut a road