

‘MY EXPERIENCE IN CAMEROONS DURING THE WAR,’ AND ‘MY
SOJOURN IN THE CAMEROONS DURING THE PEACEFUL DAYS: HALF
HOUR’S TALK WITH BILLY’

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I. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 14th October 1916, p.6¹

It was on the night of the 11th August 1914, when news of a great war in Europe reached us at Mbua² (a town in the South Cameroons, about nine weeks or more from Duala,³ (or Kribbi) and that preparations were being made between the allied forces of the British and French for a war with the Germans in the Cameroons. Being a native of Cape Coast and a British subject employed in an English factory,⁴ it occurred to me that I would fare badly at the hands of either the German soldiers or the natives should this news be authentic. The inevitable trend of events was evident if war really broke out, the natives being mostly cannibals, would attack all aliens, irrespective of race or colour and eat their flesh before any assistance from the German Government could be obtained. My agent was stationed at Njassi,⁵ four days from Mbua, and until I heard from him, my sole duty was to remain at my place. There was hardly any signs of agitation noticeable in Mbua between the 12th and 14th August, but on the 15th the natives could be seen running hither and thither, with spears in their hands, removing their belongings to the bush, mysteriously disappearing and returning in a similar manner, with a seeming stern resolve to finally eradicate all foreigners. These wild ignorant people had long waited for this with wariness, and nothing could afford them a better chance than such an event. In a short time the whole country was thrown into a state of commotion so that by the 18th instant no woman or child could be seen in the town of Mbua except the men who appear and disappear concocting dangerous schemes, with surprising secrecy. Besides myself in Mbua there were the following clerks: two Kwitta⁶ clerks with 26 yard boys, five Cameroon native clerks with 30 yard boys and two Gabon clerks with 6 yard boys. I had ten yard boys. All these people were concerned with the safety of their stores and preparing some means of defence, should the natives attack us. On the 20th August I received a note from my boss intimating that he had been arrested by the German authorities, and his stores commandeered and, that sooner or later, a similar treatment would be meted out to me, so I closed up my accounts, and gave up myself to contemplation of the future. The natives in the meantime, were blackmailing and marauding traders in the outlying villages, but hesitated to take any other important steps. The reason assigned to this, apparently was they were waiting till the German forces had passed to meet the French troops, who were proceeding from Molando Nola⁷ etc. News reached us of the doings of the natives at Ndelele,⁸ Bisom, Deligoni⁹ etc, and it made the heart quail to see thousands of loads of goods, stores, etc and several traders passing down to Dume¹⁰ station to seek refuge. One by one my boys deserted me, until by the 23rd August only three remained with me, ultimately even these three boys would not remain in the yard, and I was left alone with the arduous task of looking after the factory which contained goods to the amount of over £2000. Grim despair stared me in the face, and I lost my equilibrium for want of sleep. During the day, I took snatches of sleep, and at nights I kept watch and took precaution to safe guard myself

against an attack from the natives. Several petty stores in Mbua were plundered by the natives; on the 26th August the German troops passed. An appeal for protection was made by all the traders to the German officers, but they were told to take care of themselves. The natives fled to the bush on the arrival of the German troops, and the German officers incensed at this action, ordered their houses to be burnt down, and their cattle seized. Next day the troops proceeded on their way. Nothing of importance happened to break the tension that ensued between the 26th and 28th but on the 30th on a dark and chilly night, I was awakened from a reverie by a slight noise at the back of the store. Being prepared for any emergency of the kind I took a large cudgel and cautiously walked to the back of the house whence the sound proceeded. As I anticipated, a man was strenuously working to force an entrance into the store. Near him lay a battle axe and other dangerous implements, and at the sight of me, he rose and taking a heavy stone flung it at me. It hit me forcibly on the knee, and inflicted a most excruciating pain, suppressing a groan I sprang at him, and dealt him a heavy blow with my cudgel. He staggered back but closed up with me again. I threw away the cudgel and in a moment we were engaged in a deadly contest. Nothing could be more horrible than the deadly means with which he sought to overcome me. He was a heavy man but by no means a good fighter. He hit out viciously, desperately but aimlessly, while I concentrated every effort to bring him to the ground. We swayed together, to and fro, locked in a tight embrace, but with an ability, which I afterwards failed to conceive, I wrenched myself from him and dealt him a blow right above the abdomen. With a loud yell he turned and fled. Pursuit was useless, so gathering up his tools, I took them to the house and repaired the damage which he had done to my store. Since then I was wont to be more vigilant than ever. Friends far and near, urged upon me to escape, giving as their reasons, that I was a British subject and working for an English firm. At first, I seriously considered their advice, but on maturer consideration, I deemed it imprudent to go away and leave the store unguarded. So I determined to stay through thick and thin. I may here cite one remarkable letter which I received in connection with this matter. It ran thus:- 'Don't be a silly ass and say your sense of duty forces you to stay and protect your store. You know how unreasonable the Germans are, and what would be your fate, should you fall into their hands. Your only chance lies in escaping, and I believe the greatest crime one can commit against nature is to be obstinate and refuse a chance in the face of a disaster. You are committing that offence now, and your guardian angel may be looking down upon you with pity and contempt for your act of folly. For goodness sake go, and may luck attend you.' To this and other subsequent letters I briefly replied thanking the writers for their advice and stating that I considered it injudicious to act upon them. One by one all the traders removed from Mbua, so that by the end of August only three important stores remained, including mine. About the 11th September, I received another note from my boss intimating that he was being sent down to Ajoa,¹¹ as a prisoner of war, by the Germans, and that I should follow at once. I dare not go, without the sanction of the German Government and I wrote to say so. On the 22nd September, however, a German official with three soldiers arrived to commandeer my store. This official first asked for the key of the safe which I handed to him. When I called his attention to the goods in the store, he said the best thing he could think of was to set fire to the goods, and put me inside to burn with them. 'Dem be shit cargo, and I no get no time for count dem!' he said, and then with a vehemence which alarmed me, this great German cursed me, the English, and everything connected with the English, and emphasised his words by kicking the breakable articles in the store. This caused me to giggle, but unfortunately he looked up and saw me in this act, and

after that he administered heavy blows and kicks to me, he ordered the soldiers to bind me up, and keep me in custody. I soon found myself in the hands of these unscrupulous soldiers, whose cruelty was proverbial throughout South Cameroons. All day they goaded me to pain and anger. They were indeed painfully jocular; they tickled me, pelted at me with stones, ordered me to lick the dirty soles of their boots, and to do all sorts of un-nameable things. The officer stood by in calm indifference to my sufferings; my mute anger grew till I felt I must choke; an innocent person kept in captivity for the populace to stare at, might feel as I felt. These torments continued all day and the least reluctance on my part to comply with their requests was rewarded with whips and kicks. In addition to this, the cord with which I was bound gnawed into my flesh and inflicted a pain beyond description. I cried aloud in my agony for forbearance and the louder I cried out the more the soldiers jeered at me. Gradually I lost consciousness, and then all became still blackness. When I recovered consciousness, the German officer was bending over me, and I was unbound. My hands were very much swollen; this officer, after a short reproof full of venomous invectives handed me a passport to Ajoa, and ordered me to provision myself for the journey, I made up two loads and that very night I left Mbua with my boys.¹² Great was my thankfulness to God for my wonderful deliverance from a torturing death, and from the hands of these wicked people, and as I repeated the 'magnificat' the only song of thankfulness that I could think of at the moment I said my last farewell to Mbua.

II. The Gold Coast Leader, 16th October 1916, p.5

That night I camped nine miles from Mbua, and, at the first streak of dawn, headed for Jnassi,¹³ four days distant. During the journey missiles would be hurled at us by hidden foes lying in ambush, but the unfailing hand of Providence shielded us. I travelled about 22 miles that day, and then camped underneath a great spreading tree for the night. On that night, about 11pm, my boys having fallen asleep, I lay on my bed of grass, deep in retrospection – Life at that moment seemed so uncertain, so transitory. Five short months back, all had been well with me. Trade was good, and brisk, and lots of profit to be had. In blissful contentment, I had begun to think that life was all too short for some of those sweet peaceful times that come to every individual at certain periods in his life – It seemed to me, then, that nature had meant to repay me a thousandfold for those *little* mistakes I had made, and just as I was beginning to realize the meaning of happiness, war, with its train of disaster, affliction and pain, had suddenly intervened, wrecking my plans, and to knock me about like a weather-cock.

Thus I was ruminating over the perturbing circumstances of my fate, when I beheld three torches at a distance of about ten yards from our camping area. I crawled to my boys and gave them the alarm. I discerned two stalwart men carrying spears; their faces were expressive of murder, and they crept towards us slowly and silently. Suddenly, and before we could offer any resistance, they swerved to the right and planted their spears almost simultaneously into one of my boys with deadly result, and then disappeared into a thicket close by. The boy expired within a few minutes. The suddenness with which these natives accomplished this deed, dazed and stupefied me. It was a dark night, and would be blinded folly to act otherwise than remain on the *uqi vive*. The ground being soft, with some cutlasses, we contrived a grave in which we buried the poor dead boy. My mind was set up in getting to Njassi as quickly as possible, so I left behind the load of the dead boy, which belonged to me and contained some provisions. On the 26th inst., I arrived at Njassi, and there I met

several Coast clerks with whom I was acquainted. They gave me a cordial reception and sympathised with me for all the mishaps that had befallen me. I noticed that they were all enjoying very lucrative positions, as all the Germans, excepting three, had enlisted at Dume. An air of tranquillity pervaded the whole township of Njassi; the natives seemed good-natured enough and all was calm and peace. I gleaned that the natives of Njassi had formed no plot to massacre and loot the Traders, but it was said that the natives of the outlying villages were plotting and scheming, though it could not be determined what it was all about. No one, however, cared to be misled by the attitude of the natives of Njassi towards the Clerks and Traders, for it was known that as soon as the conglomeration broke out, they would join the others, so notoriously fickle they were. I walked through the streets of Njassi with a keen sense of satisfaction, and truth to tell, never before in the Cameroons, had I felt so disposed to all my surroundings. The cordial reception given me by my friends, the pervading air of quietude and peace that hovered around the town, exhilarated me beyond words, and momentarily obliterated from my memory, the incidents of the last few days past. I spent two nights in Njassi, and on the following day, I left with the good wishes of my friends. On reaching the brink of Njassi stream, I turned and gazed at the town with a yearning heart. I had known that town for a year, and actually resided there on duty for three months, and, at this parting, fully recollecting the pleasurable moments I had had there, I could not help shouting ‘Njassi with all thy faults, I like thee. Farewell.’

Three days from Njassi brought me to Dume, a large station situated on a hill, with walls which stood grim and forbidding. I arrived there on a Monday, and the crowd of people waiting to show their passports to a German Official, was thick and dense. I made several efforts to get through, but all was in vain. It can only be compared to a packed mass of humanity, which surged and swayed with the impatience of waiting. People were jostling and cuffing each other, gesticulating and shrieking in sharp piercing tones, in their mad and fruitless attempts to make way with their passports. No way in any given direction was possible and the more haste one made, the less he progressed. I followed closely at the heels of one tall man, a Kaka native, who, with majestic tread, and the strength of a giant, made way for himself by pushing the people right and left with an air of quiet unconcern. I kept close behind him, and indeed made good progress with him, but suddenly, my course was impeded by a Jaunde¹⁴ man, who sharply slapped me in the face, and said, ‘You be English shwine, *du sow*.’¹⁵ I was momentarily blinded, and he took the advantage to deal me several blows. When I recovered from the shock, however, I caught hold of him, heedless of the consequence, so mad with fury I was, and smarting under the sting of the blow, I hit him right above the abdomen. With a cry of pain, he fell down, with his hands to his chest – what became of him afterwards, I do not know, for at that very time, I heard a familiar voice shout, ‘Hello, Johnny, come with me this way, we will find egress to the fight of one of the chance openings. Mind yourself.’ I looked up and saw a Gaboon¹⁶ man, an old friend of mine, and following him, we landed in front of the Dume Fortress. As we were entering the Fortress, I heard the clanging of the chains of prisoners who were marching past another doorway. Some of them looked more like skeletons than living beings. Close by, there were also about a dozen of them standing near a cask, whilst one of them was stretched on it, and the *caskingo* (whip) laid on him hard and without mercy. The others were all waiting their turn to receive 25 lashes, with calm indifference. With my experience of life in the South Cameroons, I can say, that most of these people thus condemned, were the victims of injustice and falsehood. Some fraudulent German Agents, wishing to fill their

pockets, had falsified some of these most unfortunate victims' stock accounts, and ruthlessly sent them to prison for what they had done. I say this with certainty and those who have been to the South Cameroons, would doubtlessly bear me out. And the soldiers' constant application of brutal treatment to these unfortunate prisoners, had rescued them from beings with morals, ideas, sensations, and feelings to mere pieces of flotsam on the stream of life which might be driven this way or that, with the current. Peace and mercy had been so often denied them, and they had by degrees become unhinged, and reckless, caring for nothing so long as life lasted. In the Cameroons, prisoners are more or less solely under the control of the soldiers, who are invariably of very wicked temperaments. They treated the prisoners with a sternness that bordered on mania, and once at Baturi Station,¹⁷ two days from Mbua, whilst on stock-taking, I saw a soldier order a prisoner to eat excrement, and the prisoner quietly complied. Had he refused, he would have been shot down, without hesitation, on the spot, and the soldier would only have to cut the prisoner's head, go with it to the Ober-Lieutenant in Charge of the Station, and in exoneration say this:- 'Massa! Good soldier done come! One shwine want run away, I shoot him. Him head be this,' and the great German would say, 'Ach! Meiner lieber You be good – Jah vek'¹⁸ and thus the matter would end. Life was of little or no value in the Cameroons, and a soldier is indeed a bad soldier who does not occasionally kill a native, prisoner or otherwise.

III. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 28th October 1916, p.5

I pushed my way as best as I could through the German Official inspecting passports, not without some trepidation though, for, as a British subject, I expected no more from the Germans, than contempt and reproaches and possibly 25 lashes. When I at length approached this Official with my passport, he cast a very severe and scathing glance at me, and asked – 'Nigger, was ist du, und was machst sie hier jetst?' ('Nigger, what are you, and what doest thou here now?')

'Massa, I be Cape Coast man,' I blurted out.

'Cape Coast, Cape Coast,' he said, 'You zink I be fool? You member I no sabe you long time palaver? I say vat for country you be? Na you talk quick ich habe keine seit.'¹⁹ Uncertain how to reply, I stood pinned to the ground racking my brain for a fitting answer. The word Cape Coast somehow seemed to rouse his ire and indignation, and I felt at a loss what to say next.

'Donner, wetter Himmel Gott, how much for town, du sow, mench shwine,'²⁰ the German roared, evidently annoyed at my delay in replying, and thereat he whacked me on the head with a cane which he jerked somewhere from his Office. I writhed in agony. It then occurred to me that the Germans in Cameroons were more conversant with the names of Accra and Sekondi out of the whole Gold Coast (towns at which the German-South Coast Express steamers called) and ports like Cape Coast or Saltpond etc., were utterly beyond their ken.

'Massa, I be Accra true born,' I hazarded, avoiding in the meantime, the incisive cane, with which this great German aimed at my head.

'Jah you be dem English schwine what make plenty big moff,'²¹ he said, and initialling the passport, he hurled it at me. As I stooped to pick it up, again came the cane on my back with such stunning aggressiveness, that I groaned like a bull. He then called a soldier to chase me out of the port, and for more than half a mile, this soldier chased me, hurling at me stones, pieces of wood, and even some raw cassada which he snatched from farmers. When all attempts to reach me proved futile, the soldier with menacing gestures, turned and went away. I had reason to be thankful

that I had a pair of good legs to carry me far from these wicked people. I hurried away from Dume until I overtook my boys who had preceded me on the Abongmbang²² Station Road. It took two days from Dume to Abongmbang. Feeling thankful for having surmounted the persecutions of the Germans at Dume, I nevertheless began to entertain the dread of incurring some perils on the journey from Dume to Abongmbang up to Ajoshobe,²³ my destination, for my course, nine miles from Dume, lay through the country of the incorrigible 'Makias,'²⁴ a people who never scruple to eat the flesh of a man stricken with leprosy. These people cherish such insatiate fondness for human flesh that the Germans' stern measures and punitive expeditions have availed very little to wean them from their uncanny ways. With them, Cannibalism is hereditary, and nothing short of death, could prevent them from killing and devouring human beings. Now and again, people were reported as missing between Dume and Abongmbang or Acoulinga,²⁵ and none knew whence they went or what became of them afterwards. At times, however, actual reports of these inhuman deeds reach the German Government, and then fighting ensues. When it is over, there comes a lull and nothing happens for some time, six months at the longest. The Makias exhume and devour their own dead a few days after the corpse is buried, so deep-rooted is the habit of eating human flesh. They make no exception also to the Cameroon natives, but they infinitely prefer the flesh of foreigners, which they assert, contain 'much salt and plenty fat.' This reminds me of an incident which took place whilst I was travelling to the South Cameroons *via* Jaunte²⁶ and Bertua²⁷ in February 1903, with a Clerk from Togoland. We happened to pass through a Makia Country and the natives, on seeing my companion, who was a rather corpulent man, pointed at him and said, 'Look dis be fine meat, plenty salt live for him skin. Ah mien Gott! de white man he no gree we chop dem people,'²⁸ and so longingly did they eye him, that their mouths actually watered with the saliva of expectancy.

As it will be observed, I was in no very placid state of mind when I thought of the journey that lay before me, for I knew not what fate awaited me. My boys seemed to be absorbed in melancholy reflection and they expressed their premonition, now and again, in broken sentences to each other. The only access to our destination was through the Makia Country, and there was nought to do but take the risk.

Evidently, the Makias between Dume and Abongmbang were not so voracious as those between Abongmbang and Ajoshobe, for although they accorded my greetings with scowls and imprecations, they made no attempt to assault or molest me. In two days, I reached Abongmbang station and having had my passport initialled (though not without a kick on the backside and a 'Gott straffe Englander'²⁹) I hastened on my journey four days of which now remained to bring me to my destination – Ajoshobe.

It would not be amiss, I trust, if I deflected a while from my narrative, to give a brief sketch of the Makia Native. The average Makia is of the middle stature, broad-shouldered, long-armed, and powerfully built. The face, the arms and the body, right down to the hips, are covered with tattoo marks of grotesque figures and, like the majority of the Cameroon Natives, are naked, except for pieces of dry leaves or cloth, barely a yard long which they tie round their waists. A roll of brass wire is twisted artificially round the arm up to the waists³⁰ and also on the legs, which produce a gingling sound at each step. On the neck, heavy iron collars, without any opening, are soldered round, but so loose as to form no impediment to the breathing. It is incapable of being removed, except by the use of a file. There is no covering for the head, but the hair is matted and twisted together, and drawn both sides of the head in a manner that gives it the appearance of the brim of a broad felt hat. Feathers of various hues

and lengths are stuck in it, a mode which imparts to them, a stern, savage and wild aspect. Ochre of a dark red colour is rubbed onto the hair, and palm-oil poured on it, so that when heated by the sun, runs down upon the neck and chest, producing a very repulsive appearance, and emitting a rank nauseating odour. According to custom, the hair is not washed for a period of over six months, but the palm oil and ochre are rubbed into it continually and consequently the hair abounds with lice and is infested by buzzing flies at all times. Both men and women use this means of adorning the hair. Dogs and goats are their pet animals, and without them, especially the former, a woman's marriage is incomplete. At home or abroad, both men and women are armed with bows and arrows, and spears about five feet in length. Strings of beads tied to the hair and worn on the neck and wrists, marked the importance of the wearer, who might be a Chief or a Sub-chief. The Makia men are jealous of their wives, and in case of adultery, the injured party seeks redress by secretly murdering the aggressor. Not so with the Jaunde and Kaka Natives. Exchange of wives between friends and brothers is customary and an elder son is entitled to cohabit with any of his father's wives.

But to return to my narrative – The first day from Abongmbang was uneventful, except that I heartily enjoyed the luscious shea butter fruits and wild mangoes and pineapples with which the roads were fringed but on the second day I arrived at dusk in a big Makia town, and having interviewed the Chief and ordered a lodging for the night I gave him some salt and tobacco – which he took without returning thanks. I was shown into a thatched house, barely four feet high, with a small door which would hardly admit a child of 10 years old. I managed to enter the house with the greatest difficulty, and after having taken bath and some food, I laid me down to rest. Before getting into my bed of grass which was spread on the floor, however, I first cautioned my boys not to forget our situation, and urged upon them to keep watch, if possible. They seemed to feel the force of this appeal, and endeavoured hard to keep awake, by playing upon a singular bamboo instrument, and singing weird, blood-thrilling songs. But they were soon exhausted and fell asleep one by one in a short time. Notwithstanding every effort to keep awake, I fell asleep also, I knew not when or how long and I was suddenly awakened by the presence of four armed Makia men, who held torches over me. I glanced and discovered that my boys were not in the room. One of the Makia men, who had a scar on his brow and a sinister expression to one of his eyes, clutched my throat, and in a short time, the rest fell upon me and bound me. I was then carried to the Chief's room where I noticed several men were assembled. The Chief ordered me to be unbound, and looking me full in the face, he said in the Jaunde language, 'You are a good meat, and the gods have sent you to us; the day after to-morrow is our great festival; we shall eat you on that day. In the meantime, I will keep you and feed you, so that you may fatten and be sweet.'

He motioned to my captors who dragged me to an adjoining room, and put my feet in chains.

IV. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 4th November 1916, p.5

There was a light of sheabutter-oil burning in a vessel, and with this, I glanced round my surroundings, with a vague dull feeling. My thoughts naturally reverted to my boys. What had become of them I wondered. Had they deserted me or fallen victims to these obdurate wolfish-looking people? Try hard as I would, I could not arrive at any possible conjecture. My thoughts ran wild. The Chief's words, 'we shall eat you' rang in my ears, and I racked my brain in vain to think of some means of escape.

Outside, the natives were beating drums, singing and dancing, and I could hear the voices of men, maidens and children, singing with gusts, the glad tidings of the gods having sent them a good meat, being myself. Naturally, with music, comes the curious sensation of joy or sadness, and no sooner had the native instruments joined in the carol than I fell to soliloquising. I saw before me a premature death and an unhappy end. Surely this was bitterer than I ever supposed. To die alone, unsoothed, unnoticed, with no kind hands about me, was indeed hard to bear. I stretched myself on the cold bare ground and slept the sleep of the miserable and forlorn. When I woke up next day, I found some food and palm-wine placed beside me. I took the food and examined it, and as I expected it was fried worms and roasted rats, and some cooked cassada, and feeling very hungry, I partook of it with great relish.

In the afternoon, 2 girls entered my prison-room; they were young and it was easy to tell that they were the Chief's wives. One of them, the younger, crossed the room and came to me, and as she squatted beside me, the door swung to and the other retired. My heart leaped to my throat; I tried to speak but my voice failed. She motioned silence, and instinctively she went to the door to see that no one was about. When she returned she said to me in the Jaunde language, 'My people want to kill you, but I will not allow this. You must run away with me, far from the Makia people. To-night you must be prepared,' and taking from her hair a small instrument, she handed it to me. It was a file! In a moment I was on my feet, despite my chains, held her hands and thanked her. I was wildly agitated. In all my life I had never really known what it was to be carried away by transports of joy until that moment. As I released her hands, the door opened and the Chief entered. His eyes were wild; he looked askance at us; then he made an effort, clenched his hands and rushed at me. How long he beat me, I cannot say, but I was dimly conscious of the girl speaking gently to him, and then he ceased to beat me. She expostulated with him and spoke to him in the Makia tongue, and suddenly his face lighted up and he smiled. I wiped the blood from my face and tried to look as innocent as I could be. The Chief withdrew with the girl, and I laughed as I thought of the whole incident. How clever women are! I mused. I took the file and hid it carefully away and then sat down to think of escape. It would be a moonlight night, and with the aid of this girl, I could escape at 7pm. I heard the voices of the Chief and some others at the farthest extremity of the hall talking in subdued tones, and I knew that they were deciding when to kill me, and how my carcass was to be disposed of. I weighed my fate carefully and knew that even if I managed to free myself and escape, I would probably be exposed to great dangers on the road, and undergo again all the hideous barbarities of the Makia people. I examined the file, and it was good. I tried it on one of my leg chains, and it proved satisfactory. The moon would be up at 8pm, I calculated, and by that time the people would be drunk with palm-wine, and busy with their drums and instruments. Later in the afternoon, when the whole place was quiet as if a spell had been cast over it, the girl came to visit me. She brought me some sheabutter fruits. There was trouble on her brow, and she told me that there would be a grand dance that night, and that there was an opportunity for escape. It was very kind of this brave girl to hazard her life to save me so unlike the Cameroon natives in general, and I was thankful to God for His mercies. At length, everything having been arranged, she departed and left me. At dusk, I commenced filing away the chains, and in a short time, the drums were played. The hopes of liberty nerved me and away I filed, until at last, both chains were broken. I got up and stretched my legs to reassure myself that they were no longer in fetters, and being satisfied, I sat down again to await events. The girl came; she brought some bows and arrows and two spears. I took the spears and together we

left the dingy room by a back-door. We were now united in a common cause, this girl and I, but a sense of foreboding suddenly dawned upon me and depressed my spirits. She led the way and I followed. Through devious paths, through groves of trees and marshy grounds we went, until the sound of the drumming and singing became indistinct. On and on we went, and we walked till daybreak without a work or a pause, and at sun-rise, we halted.

Looking back upon a scene, very often certain aspects stand out more clearly in retrospect than they did when affairs were actually in progress, and as I recalled the incidents of the night of my capture, I could not help admitting that I had been the victim of a series of circumstances. As a rule, the Cameroon natives were not the people to offer any help to any alien, rather than do that, they would cut off their hands and pluck out their eyes, and yet, this girl, offspring of the most callous and blood-thirsty race, had deigned to offer me help, and to offer at my shrine, all the tenderness, the devotion and the sacrifice of her beautiful nature. 'O, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!'³¹³¹

I gazed hard and long at this girl and told her again and again that God would bless her. Poor girl! she hardly realized what I meant, for her ideas of God were remote and hazy.

I was feeling very hungry, and as circumstances did not permit of some food being brought with us, I expressed the wish to go and find some sheabutter-fruits. But this girl would not permit me to wander from her sight, and volunteered to go herself. She soon disappeared in a thick bush, leaving me to wait and watch, but barely five minutes elapsed when I heard a cry of pain. I saw her running towards me, with a Makia-man close at her heels; then her hands went up, and with a long, piercing cry, she dropped down dead, and the fact bit deep into my heart:-

Deep as God's eternal years,
Sad as Christ's atoning tears,
Dread as heart-strings rent apart,
Were the pangs that now did smart
Deep within my heart.³²

V. The Gold Coast Leader, 6-13th January 1917, p.6

This good girl had been killed and I was left alone with my misery. So overwhelming was the shock that I stood pinned to the ground hardly conscious of the fact that the Makia man was approaching me. I was standing behind a tree which I had taken for a cover and as he neared me, I hurried the spear at him. He evaded it and dropping his bows and arrows, sprang at me. By an almost superhuman effort I wrenched myself free and bolted towards the wood. He followed close at my heels. Gradually I lost strength and felt my courage deserting me. At length I was so exhausted that I fell down to the ground panting. My inveterate enemy, the Makia man, also fell down, and with nostrils dilated, he glared at me with eyes that spoke volumes of deep and deadly hatred. He had been rendered absolutely inert by fatigue, and there he lay, panting, gasping and groaning. Mustering the strength that remained in me I got up and started running. The Makia man made an effort to pursue me, but he collapsed at a short distance.

On and on I ran until he was no longer visible, and slackening speed I went on until I got into a thick forest where I hid myself. I was still very hungry, and, in pursuance of my desires, I searched through the wood and was soon able to find some shea butter fruits. Having eaten two, I drank of some cool refreshing stream, that

flowed beside some shea butter trees, and resting for about half an hour, I started once more on my journey. For two days I travelled through the thick forest living on nothing but shea butter fruits and water. During the nights I climbed trees to avoid wild animals, enjoying very little sleep. Never had I had more evils to endure and dangers to apprehend at that time. I would spend most of the time at nights seeking solace in silent converse with nature the great mother. The trees towered above me, and no voice spoke to me save the screeching of owls, the twittering of birds hidden in the deep foliage, and the constant roaring of lions far away. Wild animals, which seemed to take no heed of me, passed and repassed. At one time, a leopard seeing me, climbed up half-way the tree upon which I was perched and then descended. It seemed to regard me as [a] pitiful wreck of humanity, an object even for the commiseration of wild animals. Thus I passed two days and 2 nights in the forest amid a world of foliage and wild beasts, and on the third day, with infinite toil, I fell on the main road to Ajoshohe. Past the Makia countries and released now from my anxieties, I felt myself at liberty to travel slowly, and I walked five hours and then halted at a deserted village not quite seven hours from Ajoshohe. In the huts of this village, there were lighted faggots, earthenware pots and other cooking utensils, evidently left there by travellers who had camped there, according to custom in Cameroons, and there being no one to whom I could apply for food, I picked the tender leaves of some cassava trees that grew hard by, and having beaten them to a pulp, boiled them in an earthenware pot for about 45 minutes and pouring some fresh lime juice upon it, I ate and slept. But my peaceful repose was soon disturbed by voices outside the hut. Peering through an aperture, I descried my two lost boys. 'Hallo boys,' I shouted, but no sooner did they perceive me than their features wore an expression of great fear and timidity. I knew the reason why. These boys undoubtedly supposed that the Makias had already made a meal of me, and consequently took me for a ghost at first; soon, however, they recovered from their temporary doubts and fright, and hailed me with vociferous joy. They then proceeded to account for their mysterious disappearance. It happened that they were also captured by the Makias who first seized and carried them to a room adjoining the one in which I was strangled. But the boys managed to free themselves and escape, taking with them one of the loads, and finding it difficult to travel quickly with this load, they left it behind taking from its contents the papers (which very luckily proved to be my store ledger, contract, receipts etc) and some provisions. I thanked them and together we proceeded to Ajoshohe. This is a small town snugly tucked between two mountains. The villagers, numbering about 250, lived half-a-mile away, from the prisoners of war camping area, nor were they, under any circumstances whatever to come within that area, except under escort. At first the vicinity seemed rather an empty sort of place, wrapped in vapour, but I reflected that no one was ever allowed to enter the place except authorized German officers or Political prisoners. I passed sentries after sentries, all of which examined my passport, until I arrived at the prisoner-of-war camp, when my boss saw me and hailed me. I gave him my ledger, receipts etc, and passport and together we went to Frieherr Hautman von Stein, the German officer who was in charge of the camp. He had about five dozen soldiers with him. This august person spoke English fluently and after many suggestions and much desultory conversation with my boss, he finally decided that I should be consigned to the guidance of one Johannes a Dispenser, from Togoland. His quarters were situated about 200 yards from the prisoners' quarters. At the time of my arrival at this place, there were about 25 Europeans all of the mercantile department, but soon some officers – English and French, were also brought. I was restricted within limits of the

first sentry, and I was told point-blank that any attempt on my part to go beyond that limit, would be fatal to me. It was fortunate that Johannes should have the sole charge of me, for he trusted me unhesitatingly, allowed me to roam about the limited area as much as possible, and on all occasions protected me from the soldiers. My boss made me a small allowance each month for my food, and with Johannes's aid, I could obtain all that I desired. But I was far from happy; the time seemed to pass away slowly after all; the complete seclusion of our camp, the monotony, and the tepid stillness began to weigh upon me, and notwithstanding a comfortable living, my heart yearned for the outside world and news. The only way to kill time, apparently, was to walk about the camp up and down the restricted area, and after two months, the first glow which I felt on my immediate arrival in Ajoshohe had died out by degrees, until at length I felt an aversion for my surroundings and a sort of distaste for the German soldiers and officials. I caught myself wondering whether I could not take a trip to Jaunde to gather news of the progress of the war, and accordingly I went over to my boss to consult him about the matter.

'I am going to Jaunde, Sir, to gather news,' I said, 'I find it impossible to sit down in this cursed hole and keep a rational head on my shoulder.'

He smiled and said, 'This is something rather too daring. At the best you will be captured, at the worst you will be killed by one of the many guards on the road, and then, again, there are the natives to avoid. Remember that if you do go it must be on your own.'

I did not feel downcast by this advice; I resolved to go by all means. I put the matter before Johannes and he agreed at once. He wanted me to bring him some salt from Jaunde. Salt at the time was very scarce, a teaspoon costing 2/-. The only question at the moment was how was the secret of my departure from Ajoshohe to be most easily concealed. The soldiers might be curious to know where I had gone to and enquire. Johannes waved aside my presages regarding a possible discovery of our plans, and promise to see me through. It was arranged that I should disguise myself as a Hausa trader and having some knowledge of the Hausa language, I became perfectly convinced of the safety of this guise. Johannes supplied the gown, the sandals etc, for a small charge, and the next question which flashed upon me was how was I to cross the river without being observed by the guards. Johannes told me that he knew of a certain secret path to the river unknown to the guards, and that if I could manage to pass there unseen, the rest would not be a very difficult matter.

VI. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 17th January 1917, p.5

Everything having been arranged, one dark calm night (about the 1st week in December 1914) I started in my disguise with Johannes towards the river. Arriving there we took out a submerged canoe from the water and with two oars which we brought with us, we rowed toward the landing stage on the left bank of the river. We had hardly rowed towards the middle of the river, where the sharp report of a carbine came shockingly upon our ears and a voice shouted, 'Who are you and whither bound?' in the Jaunde language. A soldier was standing at the beach with his gun pointed towards us. Johannes promptly replied in a matter-of-fact tone that he was merely casting net for fish. The soldier seemed to recognise Johannes's voice, for he lowered his carbine, and with a sigh proceeded as follows:-

'Alright, compin, but I beg you for bring me one fish when you come for house. Dem shwine German people no want gib we plenty chop; das all shlack we 25 for ash, and lef we 1 mammy no more. I bin get 3 mammy, dey dreb 2 way, lef one no more and dey say we must fight English and Francais. Alright, compin, Francais lib

for come for Dume, Lomie and Boliwa and English lib for come Garua, and Eden and Jaunde, and me I go sabe dem place I fit go. Be cold night dis and I no see my mammy.’³³

To which Johannes replied, ‘Compin I sabe all dis. We be black people, dis war be for white mans and white mans, so any black man must sabe how be go don. Alright compin I go bring you some fish when I come back.’³⁴

‘Alright,’ said the soldier, and shouldering his carbine retraced his way into the gloom, whence he came.

Johannes, still undismayed, told me to row away, and in a short time, I landed. Johannes gave me the best advice he could offer, and pointed out there were guards everywhere who would search and question me; that I should be wary, and in the event of my being caught that I should not breathe a word, under any circumstances, of his acquiescence in the matter, to either man or woman, however hard I might be pressed.

‘If Gott help you come back bring dem salt,’ he said, and with that we shook hands, and he rowed back.

I was now left to fight my way to Jaunde as best as I could. The night being dark, I had the advantage of being able to carry my plans through, I walked slowly and cautiously all the night towards the ‘Aconolinga Station;’ the only military fort between Ajoshobe and Jaunde. Now and again I saw guards on the way, but I have them a wide berth, and for good many hours I pursued my course unchallenged.

Had the German soldiers been more vigilant, my course would have been impeded in less than two hours, but these rude soldiers with undue penchant towards the Cameroon girls (their only weak points), left me free to proceed without interruptions. For as I passed the guards, I observed that each of the soldiers had a girl beside him chatting, smoking, playing on native made bamboo banjos, and singing native love songs. They seemed oblivious of everything besides their girls, content each with his lot, happy with his fond girl by his side. I would stand for a long time watching these people, listening to their songs, and envying them for their happiness during that period of warfare and strife.

All through the night I walked on, ascending and descending precipitous mountains and crags, the silence being unbroken save by the German soldiers’ love song, and the occasional flight of some antelopes or hartebeeste that I encountered on the way. I went on till past midnight; when from the shadow to the right of my front, where the bushes fringed the road, a soldier emerged, levelled his gun at me and challenged. According to the manners of the Hausas, I stopped low and did obeisance and spoke as follows:-

‘Sanu dan zaki, Allah shi dede rai nka, Allah shi kara maka girima,’ which may be interpreted thus: ‘Greetings thou son of lion. May Allah prolong your life, May Allah add to thee greatness.’

This had the desired effect, for no sooner had I finished, than he shouldered his gun and with a vigorous kick he said, ‘Move!’ and motioned me to follow him. I obeyed at once and together we came to a German European non-commissioned officer who with about 25 soldiers had camped in the bush some 300 yards away from the road. The non-commissioned officer looked at my garments and without asking me a word he ordered the soldier to keep me in custody until day break.

Once again I found myself in the hands of the cruel and ruthless German soldiers, and this time, instead of being pelted with stones or goaded to pain and suffering, I was plied with any amount of questions concerning the French invasion of the ‘Jokkuduma’ territory. Although I averred that I was totally ignorant of such an

event, (for Jokko Duma was a far way off), they continued plying me with questions. No detail was too insignificant for their enquiries, and one of them went so far as to spread his palms before me, and ask me to read his fortune. I was very anxious to keep my guise and the only way to avoid a very close scrutiny from these German hirelings was to comply with their requests one way or the other. As this soldier held his hands spread before me, I gazed long and hard at them and with an air of great condescension, I asked for his name which he told me was Amoggu. I then began to count imaginary figures on the ground with my fore-fingers (after the manner of the Hausa fortune tellers) and repeated the following:

‘Ya nwa mun gode Allah,
Har Jihadi denka jalla;
Mun yi imanchi da salla,
Mun kesshe dengi na dalla.
Shi Amoggu! shi wanene?
Shi du sashin Cameroonawa?
Sun gudu su duk da Kaiser
Babu duchia, babu girima.’³⁵

I stopped short at that and gazing straight at Amoggu, said in the Jaunde language –

‘Amoggu, most beloved of all men, there is a woman in the country of the Kakas who loves you dearly and is very anxious to come to you. I see that she has started and will soon be with you ere long. You have a long life, and you are destined to become great. The battle wages fiercely on all sides, and though you will soon be in it, you will come out unharmed.’

Evidently this fictitious story about a woman coming to Amoggu, was coincident with the existing conditions of Amoggu’s love affairs, for this worthy gave me fifty pfennings and shook hands with me. He said it was a fact that his lover would be soon coming to him, and that he had received a message from her only the day before. Such a remarkable coincidence is worthy of comment. In plain truth, I knew nothing about Amoggu or his lover, nor had I any private information concerning them. Amoggu was a Babutu tribe, I knew that from the tattoo marks on his face, and as every Babutu soldier is passionately fond of the Kaka maidens, instinct prompted me to foretell something about a Kaka girl. Therein lay the secret of my success.

The news that I was well versed in palmistry spread through the camp like a conflagration, and one by one the soldiers came to me to unravel the mystery of their lives. I prophesied through without a shadow of embarrassment and the very preciseness with which I carried out this fake impressed my audience with which I carried out this fake impressed my audience with my genuineness so that at the end I had 5 marks of German coins presents from them. The next morning I was called up by the German non-commissioned officer and immediately I arrived in his presence, I prostrated myself with a ‘Sanu dan zaki,’ etc. He looked on amused. My attitude appeared to interest him a good deal more practically than the questions he was going to put to me, for he told me to go. On praising him and at the end of each ebullition he shouted, ‘Ach, be fine, be gut.’

I went on until I was well-nigh exhausted, and then stopped. At this the German kicked me vigorously and said, ‘Na you fit move du shwine.’ I got up and hastened away as fast as my legs could carry me and in a short time, I was on the main road to Aconolinga Station.

VII. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 10th February 1917, p.5

I walked past dismal villages, zigzagged through farms, and after many circuitous roads arrived in 'Aconolinga.' This was a small station usually guarded by a company of Military Police, but at the time, there were about 20 Europeans and a company of Regular Soldiers and another company of Military Police. On my arrival there, the whole town was astir, and the Officials etc were busy discussing some great events which had taken place between Edea and Jaunde and between Jokko-Duma and the Abongongbang station. It was gossiped by all that the German troops in the counterattack had succeeded in throwing back the British troops several miles away from Edea, that one English General and 100 soldiers had surrendered to them, whilst they had captured hundreds of soldiers of the French and Belgian troops and taken several booty. All that day the town was perturbed by rumours of the alleged great battle fought close to Edea. German soldiers and native Officials raced ceaselessly through the streets shouting tidings of victory by the Germans and tidings of great disaster to the Allied Forces. It was also alleged that there had been a charge by Major von Mavis's Regiment at Lomie which had rolled up the French and captured their guns. On every street, alley etc., posts were set up, bearing the inscription 'Gott straffe Engländer' and in every part of the European quarters rang the strain of 'Deutsch' and 'Deutsch land ueber alles, ueber alles in decveldt.'³⁶ I knew this to be false, a mere makeup to stimulate their soldiers and to impress the natives that they were invincible. For the Germans foresaw that if the secret of their defeat was not concealed in that way, the natives would refuse to recruit, rebel and fight them. Ever since the war began in the Cameroons, there had been feeling of unrest among the natives who had shown the most marked predilection for the Allies. I learned at Aconolinga that the natives in the far interior at Ndelele, Mbua etc, had killed several Coast Clerks, Hausas, and even 4 German white Traders and some Police, and had plundered all the Factories. This caused the Germans some loss and great difficulty in quelling down those turbulent people and they knew that this complication was likely to occur again unless they adhered to the policy of weakening by fictitious stories of conquests, the designs of the natives, who were considered as nourishing the most inveterate antipathy to the Germans. I need not stay to listen to this jargon and I took the opportunity of slipping away whilst the soldiers talked and laughed, and in a short time I was on the road to Jaunde. The people through whom I journeyed impressed me as the most callous people. This was not the same road I travelled through when proceeding to the South Cameroons in the early part of 1913. My course now lay through mountains and stony rugged roads, which rendered my journey very burdensome. Food there was little to obtain, – the natives would not supply me any except upon the most extortionate terms. Even the dirty brackish water was only obtainable on ready payment. The journey from Aconolinga to Jaunde was one which I shudder to bring to remembrance, and I can only think of it and thank God that it is over. In three days, I arrived in the Jaunde, the military headquarters. The great 'Eber Malir'³⁷ the Governor of the Cameroons was there.

VIII. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 17th February 1917, p.5

From the parade-ground of the barracks, the drums and bugles sounded incessantly, beckoning and commanding, and the voices of the German Officers could be heard shouting orders. Then the troops marched in fours and were proceeding to the southern extremity of the town. Meanwhile spectators of every description assembled to watch and admire the scene. 'What means this great commotion?' I asked a man beside me, and he told me that a manouvre was going to be held. It was to be a singularly impressive affair, and to augment the occasion, Ebermaier himself was

heading the army that day. In truth, the appearance of everything denoted that the approaching ceremony was one of the utmost grandeur and importance; armed policemen were posted to keep the ground for the troops, and sergeants ran to and fro, pushing the people and lashing them to maintain order. The throng increased every moment and the efforts I was compelled to make to retain the ground I had gained sufficiently occupied my attention during the few minutes that ensued. Tired though I was (having just arrived in town) I felt revived by the information of this most exciting event and I joined in the throng, which had by that time gathered thickly. The soldiers marched with an air of mysterious solemnity, and as they drew near, Ebermaier was greeted by a general exclamation of the crowd, uttered in loud tremendous applause which drowned the sound of the band and bugles. Ebermaier rode foremost with drawn sword, followed by over 30 Officers all mounted, who seemed to be persons of considerable importance from their uniforms. Ebermaier was a somewhat corpulent person, short, with closely-cropped beard, and the expression of his countenance was calculated to impress a degree of awe, if not of fear, upon all who came into contact with him. His eyes were grey, stern, strong and powerfully expressive, and he rode on his black horse with a grace which depicts the well-trained horseman. He gazed straight ahead of him, seemingly oblivious of all around him. To me, at the time, it seemed as if he saw through to Berlin. Company after company passed, and I noticed there were in all about ten companies. I noticed also there was one carbine to every two soldiers, and even some of these were flint-lock guns. Then came a host of army in native dress (short tunic reaching to the knee), having as their armour, bows and arrows and shields, spears, cutlasses and battle axes and other dreadful weapons. These were headed by the King of Jokko, who I understood was in command of the mounted men about 500 strong. The remainder, on foot, numbered over 1000, and these marched with the attitude of men whose brains burned with the remembrance of injuries and hopes of vengeance. They sang wild blood thrilling songs, swearing vengeance on the French troops which had completely annihilated their comrades in an encounter during the early part of December between Bertua and Manga-Bugu. Their war song was interrupted by the occasional blast of native trumpets which had harsh, discordant defiant notes, and as if in answer to these dreadful blasts, the army shouted with a flourish of their arms, defiant, challenging, and looked as if they could not suppress the hatred of the enemies (the allied forces) which was burning fiercely within them. Their attitudes reminded me of the following quotation: 'The quiver rattleth; the glittering spears and the shield; the poise of the Captain and the shouting.'³⁸

It was in this manner that the German troops in the Cameroons endeavoured to lay the foundation of their popularity and undaunted courage to the civilian natives who simply worshipped any German soldier and regarded him as the highest emblem of valour and power. If so much was the German soldiers' due, soldiers, who, perpetually by inconsiderate acts of wanton aggression upon their feelings of the civilians, assert their might and power what then do you imagine the due of the German white man to be? He was an awe-inspiring person, nothing short of the Deity.

Even amidst this din and clamour, a German white trader interrupted this singularly romantic scene by ordering a native to be flogged 25 lashes on the bareback for the simple reason that 'dam nigger lib for look my face.'

'Son of a sow, whelp of a she-wolf,' he re-iterated in the Jaunde language and with nostrils dilated, he administered kick after kick to the prostrate unfortunate victim which his man applied the cane as well. This happened among the crowd close to the market, and this harsh and unjust treatment was passed on a native by a mere

white trader without any administrative authority; and this tyrant could have done it over and over again with impunity. The native took his 25 lashes, with some vociferation, so heavily was the cane brought to bear upon him, and at the end he sneaked away far from the great white man.

At that moment I was pinched on the elbow and on looking up descried Hughes. I left the crowd immediately and went with him, where we were sufficiently out of hearing, I turned and looked at Hughes. I observed that his face was all pinched and haggard and he walked with a slight stoop with his eyes fixed on the ground. His clothing which consisted of a singlet and a pair of old khaki trousers were almost in tatters even as mine were, and in some places his clothes were blotted with the stains of blood. I looked at him and shuddered at the thought of what he might have gone through. We walked on without exchanging even a word until we arrived at a low house where he let me in. I sat on one of the bamboo-beds in the rooms, which in the south Cameroons served as seats, and on looking round at the room which was only 6 feet by 4 feet, I noticed that it answered the purposes of a kitchen, bathing room, sitting room and bedroom, when we were seated, we gazed long and hard at each other and then I said, 'It is, a long time since we met, isn't it, Kweku?'

'Very long time, Kwesi,' he replied, 'I saw you in the crowd and was afraid of speaking to you lest by conversation you should betray your identity, for we have detectives everywhere looking out for spies. I heard that you went down to Ajoshohe and were detained there as a prisoner of war with the Europeans. What in the name of the saints are you doing here, Kwesi?'

I laughed heartily at this last remark. Both of us felt that on that day a page in the chapter of our lives had been opened and since the chapter had been a pleasant one to read, I felt inclined to take a pessimistic view of our situation.

On my part I really felt very much exhilarated for since I entered the South Cameroons, in February 1913, I had never seen a Cape Coast man with whom to discuss news of home and fond friends at home, and this unexpected meeting with Hughes thrilled me beyond measure.

'Well Kweku,' I replied, 'as usual, I am here seeking for adventure. Could you give me news of some sort? But wait a minute let's hear how you came by this misfortune which has left you so miserable a creature in the face of God's earth.'

With a deep sigh he said, 'I have seen much trouble, Kwesi, most of my friends have been killed. My boy was killed before my own eyes. I myself was severely wounded, by the natives of the town where I was stationed. When the French and Belgian troops neared Deligoni, the natives burst upon us with the awful fire of rapine, plunder and revenge. They killed most of us, and my boss has been missing since. You know, Kwesi how furious the natives are, and I believe you can fully grasp the dire situation into which we were thrown: God only knows what I would forfeit to be away from this cursed place far away to a safe place.'

I sighed and urged him to forget his miseries and misfortunes. He then told me all the news I had come for, of the Germans' retreat and losses etc., all of which bore testimony to the active and defensive preparations that were being carried on in Jaunde. Far away, meanwhile the guns burst forth with the most awful and tremendous discharge which shook the whole place, and the notes of the bugles sounded at intervals, the command of the officers. In the afternoon the troops returned, their faces beaming with warlike ferocity wholly diverted of any expression of softness whatsoever.

I knew that it would not be safe for me to remain in Jaunde, so having procured the salt for Johannes, I prepared next day to proceed to Ajoshohe. Hughes

cast a wistful glance at me when I said good-bye, and I had not taken two steps outside his house when he called me back.

‘Kwesi,’ he said, ‘may be, we will meet no more. If the worst happens, and we are killed, let us hope to meet in Heaven. Join me in a parting hymn.’ And together we sang:

‘Shall we meet beyond the river
Where the surges cease to roll.’³⁹

IX. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 1st December 1917, p.5

Chapter 2.

Once again I appear on the stage to recount my experiences in the Cameroons during the war. I am gratified to note that my poor efforts in relating these experiences, have awakened interest in the public, and I hope I shall succeed in my own small way to interest the readers of these articles again. Let it not be thought, however, that these stories which I write are exaggerated. No man who has gone to the Cameroons and come back alive can be anything than wiser for his experiences. As I write, reminiscences of the days that I lived in the Cameroons rise up vividly before me and impose upon me a sense of wonder and awe. Ah! life in the Cameroons! If the summary of all the evils that were done there, were being written, the recording angel would find it hard to know where to drop the scathing tear. But enough of this. I must now commence my narrative.

One month on my return from Jaunde, Mr Ogoe of Cape Coast and 2 French subjects were sent to Ajoshohe as prisoners of war, and were consigned to the care of Johannes, (the good Samaritan whom I hope you all will remember). Mr Ogoe was indeed very weak and exhausted; he tottered in his walk, and spake in gasps. He was almost blinded from hunger; on the whole his face wore the expression of one who had gone through the acme of pain and distress and hoped nothing, expected nothing more from life. Hunger and ill-treatment from the German soldiers had had a powerful strain on his physical strength from which he never recovered. He lingered on till August 1915, but his course on earth was over and he died in Aconolinga where he had been sent for treatment that month, and was buried in a sack-cloth, unwept and unsung. He was once a popular man in the Cameroons. His faults belong to a dead past, and his merits are written large in the hearts of all those who knew him in the Cameroons. May he rest in peace.

In a short time, about 100 others were sent down to Ajoshohe and the place became a veritable hive of mixed people. We lived quietly together and gradually developed a state of ennui. Cassavas were plentiful, and faggots easy to find; we could get nothing better and so were content with what we could have. Our peace and tranquillity were however disturbed by the arrival of one Herr Jellowick an Officer of the German Army.⁴⁰ He was indeed a typical German. Tall and big, with always a long cigar between his teeth he looked a masterful person in his uniform. Proud, deep in contemplation always, he carried with him the manners of a great man. He had just come from Molondo where there had been very active fights with the French Congo troops. It was said that his man had used the maxim gun, and had let it play upon the French soldiers with the ease and power of an expert, but the day of reckoning came and the French drove the Germans from their formidable posts, broke their column and shattered their flanks, and this man with the others fled – fled with a panic and terror, goodness knows where. In the rush and confusion he lost sight of his comrades, (poor fellow) and wandered alone in the bush foodless and helmetless. He arrived in Lomie (Cameroons) quite a spectre; on his head was a banana-leaf hat which he had

ingeniously contrived for covering. His clothes had been caught in the brambles, and torn sadly, revealing the nasty gash on his leg. His boots were heel-less, and his sword gone. On reporting himself to the Hauptman (Captain) at Lomie, and recounting the whole of the incident, the Hauptman told him that he had something to live for. He was to avenge himself upon the French Officers and prisoners of war wherever he came upon them, and despatching Herr Jellowick to Jaunde, he was sent by the authorities there to Ajoshohe to exercise his power upon the poor prisoners of war who had no alternative than to obey his dictum. Thus he came and in the zenith of his mature strength, and superbly endowed with physical excellences he rode through Ajoshohe with the manly grace and vigour of a man who had come to have his own. The first impulse which seized me was to bolt and go right away from this man who never once favoured us with as much as a glance, yet noticed us and quietly made us feel that he was the master, aye the master of the situation, and that none but he could accord us our lives. Judge what was my consternation when one day, the order came that the prisoners of war (White and Black) were to go under the direct supervision of this man, and that we were to camp 100 yards from his quarters. I was indeed grievously disappointed, for one French Officer (a Captain), apparently feeling worried and exasperated with the monotonous life in Ajoshohe, and scorning the idea of submitting to the dictates of this Herr Jelloewick, had proposed to me to escape with him to Lomie an important station 11 days distant, which the French troops were rapidly advancing upon at that period, and I had acquiesced. It wanted but time and opportunity to enable us to put our projects into execution, for this was a most hazardous undertaking and as far as we knew, the Germans had been much too busy keeping an eye on recalcitrant subjects and spies and for many miles around the country, guards were posted to keep order and to shoot down suspected itinerants wherever they came upon them. But this French Officer meant to risk everything, and although I had agreed to run away with him, I hardly expected that we should be able to get there. In accordance with Herr Jelloewick's order, the black prisoners of war, numbering about 100, were removed to a camp about 100 yards from his quarters, but I did not go with them. It happened that my boss had entered into the scheme of our proposed escape, and they had arranged with Johannes to keep me in hiding until the time for our escape matured and we were able to slink away. Thus I remained behind in hiding, and went about the village in disguise, gathering information as to the roads etc, buying eggs and other necessaries of life for the European prisoners whenever it was practicable to do so. Several times in the dead of night the French Officer and I left Ajoshohe to go and make a survey of the roads, but our nocturnal roamings merely served to reveal to us the utter fruitlessness of any attempt at escape for the time being, for Herr Jelloewick with the quick insight of the German Officer had foreseen that some of us might escape if the roads were not blocked and rendered impassable by any one save German soldiers and subjects and had done so effectively. It indeed proved a difficult task to us to find the means whereby we could render escape possible. One night, we ventured farther than we had ever done, and were attacked by some natives who were evidently the hirelings of Herr Jelloewick. By sheer luck, we managed to evade them and return quite safe to the camp, but the news of the attempted escape of some prisoners of war, soon spread like a conflagration in the town. But Herr Jelloewick was not the sort of person to submit to this tamely; he swore that he would bring the miscreants who had dared to defy his authority, under his feet, and trample them down, until the fire of life was extinguished out of them.

X. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 8th December 1917, p.5

Chapter 2.

I believe I have already described some of the traits of Herr Jellow-wick, but I must add that he was an even-tempered man and it was not considered wise to approach him when he was angry. His temper was now up; he had sworn to punish the miscreants who had dared to defy his authority by attempting to escape, and he was in a mood now to take advantage of any opportunity. So mounting a snow-white horse belonging to Hauptman von Stein (whom I hope you all will remember) and buckling his sword with a pistol attached, he took from his pocket a spy-glass and scrutinized the vicinity of the prisoners of war camp, and shook his head ominously. Needless to say that Herr Jellowwick should have buckled his sword before mounting the snow white horse, but he was angry, and profoundly irritated and so acted as one in a trance. Thereupon he jerked from his breast pocket a whistle, which he applied to his mouth and blew it vigorously. Twenty stalwart soldiers, bristling with life and energy, issued out of the barracks completely equipped. Herr Jellowwick placing himself in front of them delivered a short but emphatic address, unsheathed his sword, waved it thrice above his head, and shouted 'Hurrah,' and 'Hurrah' responded the soldiers. Of these soldiers it may be enough to say that they did not love Herr Jellowwick, but they were ready to combine with him in their mutual dislike of the prisoners of war (both black and white). They often stated that the war had been forced upon them by the allies, and therefore their position demanded that they should assert their rights whenever there was an opportunity. All of them had been to the fights and very luckily escaped with their lives, and they were still burning with the desire to avenge themselves for the chastisement they had received from their enemy. Herr Jellowwick therefore felt some pride in placing himself at the head of these 'desperadoes,' and led them towards the quarters of the European prisoners with intense seriousness. When he got there, he halted them and surrounded the place. Dismounting, he entered the houses and seized everything he could lay hands on, from rifles and pistols hidden in remote corners, to cash deposited in double-locked trunks belonging to the French traders. From my post of observation, I could see and hear everything within my ken, and I watched the proceedings with wonder and awe. One brave French man, incensed at the actions of Herr Jellowwick, refused to allow that worthy to pry into his belongings and the issues which his conduct involved were, of course, serious. At last came the opportunity for Herr Jellowwick to spit out his venom of hatred against some individual. He fumed with rage and indignation, at this daring defiance of the Frenchman, and rushed upon him with great impetuosity. The Frenchman shook himself free, and Herr Jellowwick, white with rage and with nostrils dilated, stamped the ground, shouted 'Mien Gott,' and ordered that the Frenchman be immediately arrested and taken to the 'house of punishment on the granite hill,' whereupon four stalwart soldiers, who were evidently beaming with glee at the affray, abandoned their posts, and fell upon the Frenchman with an agility baffling description, and dragged him at top speed to that 'house of punishment;' which was a terror and a by-word in Ajoshohe in those days. I saw the French Officer my confrere sitting on a chair with a sad rather cynical smile on his face; I saw the other Europeans sitting heavily and despondently in the conclave. The French Officer and I had brought about the whole show, but we did not intend that there should be all this tussle. Of course it was a pity that the Frenchman who had been dragged to the house of punishment should have lost his self control as completely as he appeared to have done, but nevertheless one could quite understand how aggravating Herr Jellowwick's manners were. This daring Frenchman had played with fire and burnt his fingers badly.

* * * *

‘My Sojourn in the Cameroons During the Peaceful Days: Half Hour’s Talk with Billy’ by J. G. Mullen⁴¹

I. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 25th January 1919, p.4

On the New Year’s Eve, instead of going to the ball that was given that night at Saltpond, or to the watch-night service held at the Chapel, Billy and I sat down together in my humble abode and talked about life and what not. He asked me many questions about the changing scenes of life and I answered him as well as I could. Presently, he got on to talking about wild stories he had heard of the Cameroons and ended by saying, ‘All who go there abandon hope.’

I had been sitting quietly listening to him, but his last remark about ‘hope’ made me start and I said, ‘Excuse me Billy, but what do you mean by the expression “abandon hope”?’

He said, ‘Jim, three years ago this New Year’s Eve, where were you? Making a fortune? No. Spinning yarns as we are doing now? No. Captive of the Germans, isn’t it?’ and he laughed and slapped me on the back. We were in such a good humour that his manner did not annoy me but I answered, ‘What has all that got to do with the beautiful future that now lies before us? Let’s have done with the Germans and their treacherous ways. Let’s have done with war, grim deaths and tragedies. Cameroons you must remember is not without its roses, and I may as well tell you that despite my misfortunes there, I still yearn for the good and peaceful days in that country which I even now consider little less than an earthly paradise.’

At that moment, the clock struck twelve, the passing of the old year and the entering of the New Year, and I heard Billy sigh gently and said, ‘Tell me, Jim, why and how you went to the Cameroons that far-off land where one goes not but to prepare for death?’

I felt for a bit of distraction, and as the prospect of relating to Bill all the good that one might reap in the Cameroons did not seem to me at that time to be without attraction, I began thus:-

Eight years ago, in the Chief Time-keeper’s Office at the Obuassi Mines,⁴² two clerks, apparently tired of poring over figures in the pay sheets, began a long conversation which was chiefly about life in the Cameroons. Neither of them it appeared had gone to that country, but evidently one of them had heard sufficient good reports about the place to justify the animated manner in which he spoke about the good things that await those who dare go there to seek their living amidst its dangers.

‘I wish you would give me your advice,’ said the younger of the two clerks, who that very morning had been fined 5/- for being five minutes late. ‘We are all curious about this country which you speak so much about, and circumstances permitting, I should like to eke out of this stuffy dingy office, and go to this land where there seem such vast possibilities for a man with brains.’

Their conversation eventually dwelt on life on our Coast, and there was something like contempt in their tones. Although engrossed by work, it had been impossible for me not to overhear this talk about the Cameroons. My curiosity was there and then aroused, but I asked no questions. That night, however, my sleep was very much disturbed by dreams of that land where so much good might be had for the

taking, and the next day it became impossible to hide from myself the fact that there lurked within me a strong longing to sojourn there to reap some of the good that came as a reward to every toiler in life. The next day, at the office, I addressed myself to the clerks and suggested that we should go together to the Cameroons and try our luck, but the eldest of them thrust an advertisement at me and said, 'Not we. A penny at home is worth more than a thousand abroad. You may go, and if you do I guarantee you will become richer than ever you were, and the life is one that would suit you, I'd bet.'

I picked up the paper which is the 'Gold Coast Leader' and read the advertisement for clerks in the Cameroons and that very afternoon I resigned my billet at the Time Office at Obuassi Mines and the next day saw me at Secondee where I met an Elminian who booked my passage and his for the Cameroons per the s.s. 'Henny Woerman.'⁴³

II. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 8th February 1919, p.4

At 6pm the following day, the s.s. 'Henny Woerman' magnificently, with brilliant lights and gay flags, steamed majestically into port. All who boarded her were very profuse in their expressions of admiration at the style in which the steamer had been decorated. It was a festive occasion – the Kaiser's birthday – and everything on board denoted a most happy event. At 7pm a splendid dinner was served to nearly 89 people in the second class saloon, all were whites and with the exception of the Elminian and myself, and the table was literally crowded with various delicacies suited to the purpose. Wines and beer were also abundant. I looked at them all, officials, soldiers, merchants, nurses, missionaries and so on, and I could not help noticing that they seemed to me to be new types of people except that in some indefinite way, many of them suggested pugilists. And they looked well-fed too! As the dinner proceeded the conversation rang loud and fast. There were few, if any, who did not seem to be very happy and to indulge in an extravagant spirit that night. It was a grand occasion and they seemed to have made it so, effectually. At the close of the dinner, toasts, chin-chins and speeches were given. One speech, delivered by a tall, fair man among the company, attracted my attention more than the others. (This was interpreted to me by a German scholar, a native who served at table that night.) This tall man, having gone some length with his speech, looked up and smiled and with a flourish of his hand continued:-

'Yes my boys think of the honour of going to the Cameroons. It isn't every body that has this privilege. It will make men of us. It will do credit to us and to the Fatherland. We must strive for the first honours. Our fathers "took them before us."' At the conclusion of this thrilling speech, the company applauded tremendously, drank more liquors, sang a patriotic song and carried the speaker to the promenade deck, where yet another saloon, gaily decorated was thrown open to them. There was a piano in this room, and before it sat a lady, tall and graceful, with eyes full of eloquent expression. At the entrance of the company, she started rattling off, on the piano, several fashionable frivolities in a kind of hap-hazard style. Then she changed tune, and running her fingers lightly over the keys for a few minutes, warbled out a song in a low sweet voice. Every body seemed charmed with her song, and this was testified by the tremendous roar of applause that was accorded her at the end of it. Song after song, given in quite a spirited style was sung, and bravo's followed each of them, till the small hours of the morning. Before day break, the deck, the saloon, and the cabins were strewn with drunken men. Some feebly moaned 'mien Gott, mien

Gott,' while others very sheepishly attempted to be hilarious and look wise. Thus passed my first night amongst the Germans on board the 'Henny Woerman.'

III. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 22nd March 1919, p.4

The next morning at 8 o'clock the steamer dropped anchor at Accra. Here I saw nothing that particularly claimed my attention and as the ship would be at this port for only an hour according to the time table I did not go ashore. That afternoon at 5pm we came to port at Lome. The surf being good, many passengers went ashore to find diversion but I felt sufficiently reconciled to the sights of beautiful houses and gaily decorated boats which I viewed from the gangway. Among the passengers who came on board from Lome was one young man whose personality excited my interest. He was of medium height, jovial looking, with clean cut features, and devil-may-care manners. I never saw one I liked so much better. He travelled third class, as they were never permitted to visit us in the second class saloon or on the promenade deck, it behoved me to condescend to visit him in the 3rd class, a well furnished apartment, though not so elegantly and considerably furnished as the 2nd class. This man came out of his cabin, stood on the deck, looked at the township of Lome, and drew a deep breath. Tears welled to his eyes. His attitude was so remarkable that I believed he might have stood as a model for a picture titled 'Reminiscence.' I ascertained that he was a native of Aneho, so I approached him and handed my card. He seemed very pleased and thereat we became friends. He spoke English very fluently having been trained up in Hamburg and given an English education. He told me he was bound for the South Cameroons and speaking effusively of the life he had seen and known in the Cameroons generally he continued with gusto.

'I expect this time, to go and make a big pile far out there in the land of Beyond, although I don't know that I shall come out safe at the end of it pile and all. Many men are killed in the South Cameroons by the natives and many a man kills in self-defence. But I have never slain wantonly. You also, Jim will enter into the bargain,' and entering into his cabin he emerged with a pistol and a box of cartridges and said, 'Take these my boy they may stand you in good stead some day. Shed blood only in self-defence only, mind – Remember that the Almighty gave us our lives and He meant us to defend them, and I am sure howsoever you do it, it will not be brought against you when the Angel Gabriel blows his last trumpet.'

I took the pistol and put it in my pocket. Since then this man and I entered into the closest friendship and I soon found out that his acuteness, his gaiety in conversation, his civility in manners, sufficed to counteract the inconveniences of the journey. On the fifth day we reached Fernando Po, and the seventh day saw us at Duala. This is a town built by the water's side. The wharfage is so constructed that no surf boats are used. Passengers and cargoes are landed straight from the steamer to the warehouse. It is obviously a town where commerce and industry have produced opulence, and the streets, which seem never to want repairs, the ground being very much consolidated and rarely broken, were wide and good, and afforded, to a stranger from the Gold Coast, a new kind of pleasure to travel so commodiously without let or hindrance. Our reception at the various places we visited in this town exceeded our most sanguine expectations. We found nothing but civility, perambulated the town and directed our attention to all that was worthy of observation. There stood the Kaiser Hoff Hotel, the Bank, King Manga Bell's palace and several other buildings of great magnificence, all seemingly at leisure for a visitor to derive gratification for a view within.⁴⁴ There also stood the big public lavatory which forces itself upon the eyes of a stranger, for nearing it one hears the sound of a great clockwork, invisible

yet within the edifice, and on entering into it, one finds stools about 50 built similar to those used on board ships and connected with pipes, which every two minutes, by means of this invisible clockwork, draws water from the river into the stools, and discharge the excrement of the town. This place is kept so scrupulously clean that not a single fly can be seen hovering about it. I noticed that there were no quadrupeds in Duala but fish abounds in great quantity and within easy reach of all. We lunched at a public house and when evening came were very loath to return on board. In fact to attempt to fully describe Duala, a town I had visited with my new companion for a few hours only, would have the appearance of a frivolous ostentation, but suffice it to say that it had all the bustle of a town with prosperous trade and the show of increasing opulence. The general air of the town strikes the imagination, with a very delightful surprise, and here, one feels, after having left the Bights of B⁴⁵ an unexpected emersion from darkness into light. At 6pm we returned on board with new life put into us.

IV. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 29th March–5th April 1919, p.4

The hours seemed to pass very quickly after we had left Duala, and at dawn the next day we obtained a glimpse of Kribi a town noted in the Cameroons for its commercial importance. It is the gateway to trade in the South Cameroons just as Duala is to the North Cameroons. The story of this town awakened in us the highest spirits and after breakfast we joined one of the motor launches and went ashore to explore it. The shops were gay with merchandise of all description and in front of the factories, hundreds of men and women half naked, waiting for the word of command to start for the bush, were lined up with loads which they carried on their backs in cane baskets specially constructed for securing loads of 60lbs weight each. The South Cameroon natives never carry loads on their heads. Everywhere were bustle and animation. Here bands of men were hard at work cutting, washing and cleaning rubber, there palm kernels in baskets, palm nut oil in casks, ivory and other produce were placed in rows ready to be weighed and consigned to their respective storage rooms. Every body seemed to be busy; from the seven-year old boy to the gray-haired man, and everything seemed to say aloud to every person do something, do it, do it. For an hour or more we tramped through the streets until it was time for lunch when we returned on board. From Kribi we came to Lonji and at last, one beautiful evening we landed at Plantation commonly known as Batanga. It is a lovely coast with red sands and wide sweeps of deep green bordered with cocoa-nut trees, and dotted here and there with trees of luxuriant fruits. Just before one lands ashore, one cannot escape noticing the peculiar density of the place. Fish of diverse sizes play about the shore and are seldom caught with the net, a basket being enough to take about six at a sweep. Crabs of enormous sizes live in burrows in the houses near the sea and are very numerous. This is because the natives regard them with great abhorrence and never eat them. Soon after we landed, the Elminian betook himself to his Agent, and we (the Togoman and myself) were handed over to the Manager of the Firm of Krause & Fehrman. It was too late to think of discussing business, so we were put up at the little shanty, (called Clerks' quarters) that is built on the beach. There are only three rooms and a kitchen and it is constructed of red bricks with a galvanized iron roof. As regards food we had it sent us from the Manager's kitchen, and we had a supply of linen etc. That night our sleep was very much disturbed by huge crabs which crept about us and disturbed us a great deal.

'Curse it,' said my companion (for he had a habit of using strong language when excited) contracted no doubt in the course of his frequent journeys to the North

Cameroons), as he dashed at the wall a monstrous looking crab which had bitten him. I proposed an easy way of getting rid of them, that is by catching them and having them cooked for breakfast. My friend's face fell at this suggestion as he was afraid that the natives would hoot at us and call us slaves if they caught us eating crabs. I did not care a jot about what the natives would say so I set to catching the crabs and having caught about 2 dozen huge ones called the cook and told him to boil them for us. He seemed to stand still, nailed to the floor in fact. The idea of boiling crabs appeared so monstrous to him, but we bribed him and in less than an hour we had the crabs cooked with other delicacies for our morning breakfast. The cook came to see us eat the crabs and he laughed heartily at us as we ate them with relish (for they were very delicious to the palate) and took it for an evil omen. He was a cheerful savage in a dignified sort of way and when he had drunk a glass of kummel, had a wonderful knack of keeping up our spirits. We soon grew fond of him and petted him as much as we could, He used to tell us about life in the Cameroons, about some brave men, who, tired of life and the tameness of things started off into the great bush to find new things and how, lo and behold! when they had travelled far into the interior, they found it was no bush at all, but a beautiful country full of young wives, fat cattle, game to hunt and enemies to kill. That day an agreement having been made between us and the Manager of the firm, whereby we covenanted to serve for two years in the far hinterland we made preparations to start early the next day to venture into the wilds of the South Cameroons.

V. *The Gold Coast Leader*, 12th April 1919, p.4

Just before we left Batanga, a man from Kwitta walked up to us and said: 'I saw you when you came ashore and I have kept my ears open as to your destination. I hear that you are bound for the hinterland, but if you will not think me impertinent, I may say that I like you both, and would give you a piece of advice. Don't go to the bush. In the first place the journey is too tedious, and when you have a long distance as this before you and are sure to come to grief, it behoves me to advise you and prevent you from making fools of yourselves. If you undertake this journey and come out of it safe and sound may I go to blue blazing hell and roast there forever. What was the fate of Quacoe VI three years ago? What was the fate of those who went into the hinterland before him? And my own beloved brother (of blessed memory) what has been his fate a few months ago? They are all lost – irrevocably lost, eaten up by wild beasts or cannibals or tortured to death, and I tell you frankly that as their fates were, so yours will be.'

He paused to watch the effects of his words, which, as we listened to him made us look a little uncomfortable, but my companion coughed softly and said: 'Look here, if I am to go to the bush and get killed there, I shall go and be killed. God Almighty, no doubt, knows his mind, about me, so I need not trouble on that point,' and he turned towards me and asked what I thought. I replied that we must by all means take our chance, and so the matter ended. Now came the question of carriers, provisioning, and things which required the most careful consideration, for we were undertaking a journey of over one month and what we had to do was to take only the articles that were absolutely necessary. Our boss also advised us to leave behind us such dresses as flannels, navy blue serges, collars, etc., as they were strictly prohibited in the bush, and so he supplied us each with 3 suits of khaki and 3 suits of white drill.

'Dem be goot dress for der bush,' he said smilingly, 'you no want make no yanga for dem bush country sabe?' and he grinned like a fiend.

‘Ja woh!’⁴⁶ we replied, making obeisance at the same time, for we had been warned to say ‘Ja woh!’ in reply to every word – good or bad – that a German in the Cameroons said to us, otherwise 25 lashes would make us learn to say it quick enough.

Early dawn the next day, by the light of the silvery moon, we started with 5 carriers each, and having to travel a distance of some 420 miles before getting to Jaunde, our packages consisted mainly of provisions supplied us at Batanga. I remember that my companion and I were not in the highest of spirits on the occasion of our departure from the coast, we were rather silent, and I believed each of us was wondering whether we should see our homes again or not.

Our adventures on the way, during the first 3 days were many and various, but as they were of the sort that befall every traveller, I shall not set them down here lest I should render this narrative too wearisome. On the evening of the fourth day, however, after an unusually long day’s march (for we travelled at an average of 10 hours a day), we came to a spot of great loveliness. At the foot of a bush-clad hill, a dry river bed lay, in which however were to be found pools of stagnant water all trodden round, with hoof-prints of game. Facing this hill was a plain, where grew clumps of shea-nut trees varied with occasional barren palm trees and all round stretched a beautiful silent bush. As we emerged into this river-bed path, our carriers suddenly halted without our orders and began to unburden themselves of their loads. Soon they strung their bows and made ready their arrows. We were considerably startled and not at all pleased with this seeming waywardness of our carriers. Catching hold of the headman’s throat, my companion tossed him about until he shook like an aspen leaf, and demanded why the dickens didn’t they move along. The headman explained that they wanted to hunt game, and if he interfered with him he’d ‘game’ him right enough. I pacified my companion by telling him that we were in for a curious trip and a wayward headman won’t make much difference one way or the other. So with a smothered oath my companion released his hold of the headman and told him to go to the deuce. The other carriers paid no attention to our dramatic dialogue, but pushed on cautiously and silently with their bows and arrows strung for destruction, their nostrils dilated, and their expression the very significance of mischief. Presently at our right there came the sound of a loud ‘huff huff.’

‘Na wum,’ shouted one carrier, and ‘na wum’ echoed the rest of them, as they let go their arrows at the succession of bush cows that were moving slowly from the direction of the bush towards the water. The Cameroon natives’ reputation as a marvellous shot was established at any rate, among the southern race, and as the bows twanged and the arrows whizzed off, we saw over 3 of the bush cows rolling over the ground like monkeys turning a somersault. I never saw a more curious thing, although I have seen odd ones in my life. It was indeed so fascinating and entertaining, so much so that my companion, apparently thinking it a very nice fun, rushed also to the front with a heavy stick which he carried, with the intention of smashing the skulls of the wounded, groaning beasts, but I ran up to him, caught him by the arm, and implored him to desist from making such a rash and undoubtedly futile attempt, when suddenly, and curiously enough, from the direction of the water, came sounds of scuffling and at the next instant, there broke upon our ears, and awful roar. There was no mistaking the origins of this weird sound, only a struggling, dying human being could make such a sound as that. We pushed forward to discover who the unfortunate victim was, and soon we came upon two objects, rolling and struggling on the ground. The one object was one of our carriers, being gored to death by a wounded, frenzied

bush cow. Soon both struggled no longer but lay quite still. Both had died in a well fought fight.⁴⁷

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ENDNOTES

¹ The original grammar, spelling and layout have been preserved throughout this document; sic has not been used. Many of the spelling errors would have been introduced after the submission of the manuscript: they are consistent with the efforts of a typesetter to decipher handwriting.

² Mbua (or Bua) is south of Baturi and east of present day Doumé.

³ Douala.

⁴ Merchants and produce traders in West Africa from the eighteenth century onwards called their stations 'factories.' A report from Kwitta (Keta), on the Gold Coast-Togo border, published in the British Journal of Nursing in 1903, described factories thus: 'We have several factories, as they are called – in fact, they are trading stations; the natives bring in rubber, palm oil, ivory, skins, &c., and receive in exchange either money or cheap cotton goods, beads, or other "trade" goods. You would be surprised at the weights they can carry; everything is carried on the head (except the babies), from a single box of matches to a load weighing from 60 to 80 lb. The women are the chief carriers, and it is amazing to see them, with a great load on their heads and a baby slung on their backs, stepping along as though it were nothing' (The British Journal of Nursing 19 December 1903: 514).

⁵ Present-day Ndjassi. This station was situated just outside the boundary of the 'South Cameroons company's Concession' area.

⁶ Kwitta (Keta) is a coastal Ghanaian town near the border with Togo, famous as a centre of commerce: its government offices, post office, court house and prison were housed in the Danish-built fort. Interestingly, nearly all of the clerks Mullen mentions in the memoir are West African migrants. The stories of these migrant clerks add an

important layer of information to the social history of migrant networks, which tends to focus on élites.

⁷ Possibly Nola in present day Central African Republic.

⁸ Ndélélé is near the border with present-day Central African Republic.

⁹ Probably Daligéné.

¹⁰ Doumé.

¹¹ Ajos (or Ayos), east of Yaoundé, also referred to as Ajoshohe by Mullen in later instalments. See British War Office map of the German Cameroons, 1915 (British Library maps GSGS 2793), a section of which is reproduced in FIGURE 1. On this map, a telegraph route runs directly through Ajoshohe from the main administrative port of Duala (Douala), terminating at Njassi Post and Telegraph Office in the east.

¹² There is a discontinuity here with the earlier instalment in which Mullen states that ‘[o]ne by one my boys deserted me, until by the 23rd August only three remained with me, ultimately even these three boys would not remain in the yard, and I was left alone’ (14 October 1916: 5).

¹³ Jnassi should be Njassi (i.e., Ndjassi).

¹⁴ Yaoundé.

¹⁵ Shwine is a misspelling of ‘schwein,’ meaning pig or more contemptuously ‘swine;’ du sow means ‘you hog,’ or ‘you filthy beast;’ it could also be translated as ‘you scum’ in this instance. Bertrand Harry kindly provided the German translations for this edition. Throughout the memoir, Mullen writes a simplistic parody of German; his language is very similar in style to the anti-German cartoons and stories produced by Britain as part of the propaganda war against Germany (see Buitenhuis 1987; Messinger 1992). For a detailed account of imperial language policy in German Togo, see Lawrance (2000). Mullen’s comic-book German can be interpreted as a jibe at the colonial administration’s failed effort to impose German as the lingua franca of the country: the language of trade and commerce, English, was impossible to displace (Rudin 1938).

¹⁶ i.e. Gabon.

¹⁷ Present-day Batouri, near the border with the Central African Republic.

¹⁸ A pidgin English rendering of Ach! Meiner lieber is ‘you be good.’ Jah is a misspelling of ja, or yes, and vek could be a misspelling of weg, or away. The translation of Jah vek may be ‘yes, take it away’ or a more colloquial ‘yes, now go away.’

¹⁹ Literally, ‘You think I’m a fool? Remember I don’t have a long time for chatting. I have no time / I am in a hurry.’

²⁰ Spelt correctly, Donnerwetter has two meanings: ‘Gracious me!’ or ‘My word!’, when it is a response to an unexpected development or a realisation about something; or ‘Damn it!’ when it is an angry response to a situation. The latter is the most likely in the situation Mullen describes. Himmel means ‘Heavens above.’ Du sow or Du Sau is, again, ‘you sow’ or ‘you scum,’ and mench shwine or Mensch Schwein means ‘human swine.’ The sentence thus translates as: ‘Damn it! Heavens above! Good God! How long do I have to wait to hear what town you’re from, you scum, you human swine.’ Wartime caricatures of Germans frequently have them exclaiming in a patronising way, Himmel! (see e.g., Gilson 1916: 15).

²¹ A rough translation of this sentence is: ‘Yes, you are the English swine who makes a big stink,’ or ‘Yes, you are the English swine who makes plenty of big mistakes.’

²² Present-day Abong Mbang.

²³ Ajoshohe (present-day Ayos) is also spelt Ajoshohe in the memoir.

²⁴ Throughout the memoir, Mullen refers to the Maka people of south-eastern Cameroon as the ‘Makia’ and ‘Makias.’ The Maka region is marked on the British War Office map of 1915, running north-east of Abong Mbang (see FIGURE 1).

²⁵ Present-day Akolinga.

²⁶ Yaoundé.

²⁷ Present-day Bertoua.

²⁸ ‘Look, this is fine meat with plenty of salt in his skin. Oh my God! The white man doesn’t approve of us eating those people.’

²⁹ ‘May God punish the English.’ *Gott strafe England!* and *Wir haben nur einen Hass – England!* were common jingoistic chants in Germany. The latter is a quotation from Ernst Lissauer’s ‘Hymn of Hate’: ‘Hate by water and hate by land;/ Hate by heart and hate of the hand;/ We love as one and hate as one;/ We have but one enemy alone – England!’ (Welch 2000: 59).

³⁰ i.e., armpits.

³¹ Psalm 107: 31.

³² Source unknown.

³³ ‘All right, mate, but I ask you to bring me fish when you come home. Those German swine do not want to give us enough food. They all give us 25 lashes on the buttocks and take away every one of our women/wives. I had three women, they took two away, and now they have taken the remaining one, and they say we must fight the English and French. All right, mate, the French have set out for Dume, Lomie and Boliwa and the English have set out for Garua, and Eden and Yaounde, and as for me I need to figure out where to go. This is a cold night and my woman is not here’.

³⁴ ‘Friend, I know all this. We are black people. This war is between white man and white man, so any black man must know how to get by/manage’.

³⁵ Graham Furniss describes this Hausa as ‘eccentric,’ and has kindly provided the following as a tentative translation of Mullen’s words:

Ya nwa mun gode Allah (‘Friends we thank God’)

Har Jihadi denka jalla (‘Even jihad [we have done] for your sake, oh God)

Mun yi imanchi da salla (‘We have faith in prayer’)

Mun kesshe dengi na dalla (‘We have killed people [relatives] in order/ in sequence/ one after the other.’ The latter part of this sentence is difficult to interpret.)

Shi Amoggu! (‘He Amoggu!’ [also spelt Ammoggu by Mullen, above])

Shi wanene? (‘Who is he?’)

Shi du sashin Cameroonawa? (‘He and the section of the Cameroon people?’)

Sun gudu su duk da Kaiser (‘They have run away along with the Kaiser’)

Babu duchia, babu girima (‘Without wealth, without honour’).

³⁶ A corruption of the opening words of the German National Anthem, ‘Germany above all other, above everything in the world.’

³⁷ Eber Malir is probably a typesetter’s error. It refers to Karl Ebermaier (1862–1943), later correctly named in the text, who was Governor of the German Cameroons from 1912 until the Allied victory in 1916.

³⁸ For ‘The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield ... the thunder of the captains, and the shouting,’ see Job 39: 23–5 and Pilgrim’s Progress Part I: 30.

³⁹ The words to this popular hymn, ‘Shall we Meet?’, were written by Horace L. Hastings in 1858, with music by Elihi S. Rice in 1866.

⁴⁰ Also spelt Jelloewick and Jelloweick later in this instalment. Neither Ajoshohe Camp nor its commandants are referred to in war histories of West Africa (e.g., Gorges 1916). However, Mullen's description of the location of Ajoshohe Camp concurs precisely with the 1915 British War Office map of the German Cameroons.

⁴¹ Mullen's name is often printed as 'J. B. Mullen,' rather than 'J. G. Mullen,' in the header to this second memoir.

⁴² Obuasi Mines, Gold Coast. Owned by the London-based Ashanti Goldfields Company, these goldmines were established in 1897 and remain a major source of gold in Ghana.

⁴³ The Woermann Line was a German shipping company with 'extensive economic interests in the German Cameroons as well as in East Africa, South-West Africa and New Guinea;' the company funded plantations in the Cameroons and operated ships between German and African ports after the 1890s (Rudin 1938: 160). Woermann was one of only two European trading houses in the area (the other was Jantzen and Thormahlen) when Germany occupied the Cameroons in 1884 (ibid. 219).

⁴⁴ Rudolf Duala Manga Bell (c.1873–1914) was a powerful Douala chief, hanged by the German regime for high treason in August 1914.

⁴⁵ Bights of Benin.

⁴⁶ A corruption of Jawohl, which means 'certainly.'

⁴⁷ Mullen's contributions to the Gold Coast Leader end here, and no evidence can be found of his further involvement in the Gold Coast press. It is possible that, when the Great War ended, he travelled away from Cape Coast to continue his life on the trading stations of West and Central Africa. Other travel memoirs appear to have been inspired by his contributions, however: for example, on 7th February 1920, the Leader ran the first instalment of a narrative entitled, 'Congo Belge: My First Impressions of the Congo Belge, One of the Still Darkest Parts of the African Continent' by an author called 'A Negro.'

On 24th April 1920, the editor of the Leader offered an explanation for the exclusion of literary contributions in recent issues: 'It is with pleasure that we turn to-day from the humdrum discussion of political issues to a consideration of beauty in literary expression, for, after all, the former is of a fleeing nature, the latter of permanent value ... So little space has he at his command, as a rule, that he has to make the editorial columns serve for all purposes with the result that when pressing issues come following one another with uncomfortable regularity, he has perforce to postpone the consideration of delightful literary productions' (4). Memoirs such as Mullen's were clearly considered to be 'literary' rather than expressions of 'pressing issues.'