

King Prempeh and the Golden Stool

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their first serious check. The Fantis, with whom King Kofi was at war, called in their allies, the British. A powerful army of 3,000 European soldiers, and regiments of West Indian and African soldiers, as well as the Fantis and their native allies, under Lord Wolseley marched on Coomassie. The Ashantis fought with their traditional valor, but the long distance cannon of the whites triumphed, and Lord Wolseley, entering King Kofi's capital, burnt it to the ground. King Kofi was forced to sign a treaty by which he pledged to pay 50,000 ounces of gold and to keep the road which the conquerors had made to his capital, open and in good condition.

Most of the agreement ended in promise, however, for soon after the British withdrew the Ashantis regained the upper hand. They paid a small part of the indemnity only; as to the road, it soon grew up again in bush.

King Prempeh

This brings us down to the year 1896 and to King Prempeh.

Prempeh (Kwaka Dua III) had come to the throne at the age of 16, and was now 20. He had inherited, as was the custom, through the female line. His family had been on the throne since 1635.

The young king was beset by many difficulties. England had gone into his country, as was said, and had disorganized it, after which the native tribes were left to fight it out among themselves. But on the accession of King Prempeh, the British had again begun to interfere in native affairs.

As Sir F. C. Fuller says: "The government policy of non-interference in Ashanti affairs so long adhered to by the Coast authorities had now been definitely abandoned; but the interference was all directed against, instead of in support of, the central power. This rendered Prempeh's task all the more difficult and gradually discouraged and embittered him and the court party. Prempeh, only 'd' was beset by the gravest difficulties."

Prempeh, however, did his best to establish cordial relations with the British. He wrote a friendly letter to the Prime Minister saying that he hoped Her Majesty's government would give him all assistance and good advice for the well-governing

of his kingdom.

He added: "I believe if there is any grievance, Her Majesty's government is able to remove same; and I trust Her Majesty's government will assist me in this important matter. I wish Her Majesty's government a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

But the British had decided to annex his territory. The other European nations were seizing territory nearby, and England wished to have

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a lone hand in Gold Coast affairs. The British replied with a proposal to make Ashanti a protectorate.

Prempeh is Decisive

On this the young monarch sent

the following remarkable reply—a reply as noted for its courtesy as its decisive tone:

"The suggestion that Ashanti un-

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