

# ELLIS ALFRED BURDON

THE HISTORY OF THE  
FIRST WEST INDIA  
REGIMENT

Alfred Ellis

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West India Regiment**

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# A. B. Ellis

## The History of the First West India Regiment

### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

At the present day, when our Continental neighbours are outvying each other in the completeness of their military organisations and the size of their armies, while in the United Kingdom complaints are daily heard that the supply of recruits for the British Army is not equal to the demand, it may not be out of place to draw the attention of the public to a source from which the army may be most economically reinforced.

The principal difficulty experienced by military reformers in their endeavours to remodel the British Army on the Continental system, is that caused by the necessity of providing troops for the defence of our vast and scattered Colonial Empire. Without taking into consideration India, our European and North American possessions, a considerable portion of the army has to be employed in furnishing garrisons for the Cape Colony, Natal, Mauritius, St. Helena, the Bermudas, the West Indies, Burmah, the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong, etc.; which garrisons, though creating a constant drain on the Home Establishment, are notoriously inadequate for the defence of the various colonies in which they are placed; and the result is that, whenever a colonial war breaks out, fresh battalions have to be hurriedly sent out from the United Kingdom at immense expense, and the entire military machine is temporarily disarranged.

In size, and in diversity of subject races, the British Empire may be not inaptly compared with that of Rome in its palmiest days; and we have, in a measure, adopted a Roman scheme for the defence of a portion of our dominions. The Romans were accustomed, as each new territory was conquered, to raise levies of troops from the subject race, and then, most politicly, to send them to serve in distant parts of the Empire, where they could have no sympathies with the inhabitants. In India we, like the Romans, raise troops from the conquered peoples, but, unlike them, we retain those troops for service in their own country. The result of this attempt to modify the scheme was the Indian mutiny.

The plan of a local colonial army was, however, first tried in the West Indies. At the close of the last century, when the West India Islands, or the Plantations, as they were then called, were of as much importance to, and held the same position in, the British Empire as India does now, there was in existence a West India Army, consisting of twelve battalions of negro troops, raised exclusively for service in the West Indies.

As India was gradually conquered, and the West India trade declined (from the abolition of the slave trade and other causes), the West India Colonies, by a regular process, fell from their former pre-eminent position. Each step in the descent was marked by the disbandment of a West India regiment, until, at the present day, two only remain in existence; and it is a matter of common notoriety that those two are principally preserved to garrison Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast Colony, British Honduras, and British Guiana – colonies the climates of which, experience has shown, are fatal to European soldiers, who are necessarily in time of peace, from the nature of their duties, more exposed to climatic influence than are officers. Economy was, of course, the cause of this continued process of reduction, for, until recently, such gigantic military establishments as those of Germany, Russia, and France were unheard of; and Great Britain was satisfied, and felt secure, with a miniature army, a paper militia, and no reserve. All this is now changed, and the necessity of an increase in our defensive power is admitted.

These negro West India troops won the highest encomiums from every British commander under whom they served. Sir Ralph Abercromby in 1796, Sir John Moore in 1797, Lieutenant-General Trigge in 1801, Sir George Provost in 1805, Lieutenant-General Beckwith and Major-

General Maitland in 1809 and 1810, all testified to the gallantry, steadiness, and discipline of the negro soldiers. Sir John Moore, speaking of the new corps in 1796, said "they are invaluable," and "the very best troops for the climate." To come to more recent times, in 1873 the 2nd West India Regiment bore for six months the entire brunt of the Ashanti attack, and had actually forced the invading army to retire across the Prah before the men of a single line battalion were landed. In fact, the efficiency of West India troops was, and is, unquestioned.

This being so, it may be asked, why should not the present number of regiments composed of negro soldiers be increased for the purpose of garrisoning the colonies, especially those of which the climate is most prejudicial to English soldiers? This would not be a return to the former state of affairs, for when we had twelve negro regiments they were all stationed in the West Indies, whereas the essence of the present scheme is to send them on service in other colonies. Such an augmentation of our West India, or Zouave, regiments certainly appears politic and easy. I will also endeavour to show that it would be economical.

Each West India battalion would take the place of a Territorial battalion now serving abroad. The latter would return to the United Kingdom, be reduced to the Home Establishment, and have from 300 to 400 men passed into the Reserve. Repeat this process seven or eight times, and the services with the colours of between 2000 and 3000 European soldiers are dispensed with, the Reserve being increased by that number. In addition, negro soldiers being enlisted for twelve years' service with the colours, negro regiments on foreign service would not require those large drafts sent to white battalions to replace time-expired men, transport for which so swells the army estimates; while the negro being a native of the tropics, invaliding home would be reduced to a minimum.

The pay of the black soldier is ninepence per diem, against a shilling per diem to the white, so that there would be some saving effected in that way. In fact, it has been calculated that for an annual addition to the army estimates of some £27,000, six new negro battalions, each 800 strong, could be maintained; giving, on the one hand, an addition of 4800 to our present military force, and on the other, an increased Reserve, and six more Territorial battalions in the United Kingdom, ready to hand on a European emergency. To this may be added the lives of scores of Englishmen yearly saved to their country.

By the Territorial scheme now in force in Great Britain, an attempt has been made to localise corps on the German system, irrespective of the fact that Germany has no colonies, while those of Great Britain are most numerous. In Germany, in time of peace, each army corps is located in a district, from which it never moves, and in which the Reserve men, destined to complete the regiments to war strength, are compelled to live. Thus, when a general mobilisation takes place, the men are on the spot, and join the regiments in which they have already served. France has adopted this system, with the exception that army corps are not permanently located in districts, and the army thus localised is the one for European service only. For her colonies an entirely distinct army is maintained, composed of men specially enlisted for foreign service. In Great Britain we have neither adopted the German system nor the French modification of that system; but a scheme of localisation, with the main-spring of localisation removed, has been endeavoured to be grafted upon our old system, under which the regular army is sent on service in time of peace to distant portions of the globe. Should the mobilisation of an army corps be necessary in England, the Reserve men would, in a large number of cases, find the regiments in which they had formerly served, on foreign service. It would then be necessary to draft them into regiments to which they were strangers, in which they would take no interest, and where they would be unknown to their officers. On the other hand, should it be necessary to despatch suddenly six or seven battalions to India or the Cape, they have to be made up to a war strength from other corps, for they have been reduced to a skeleton establishment in order that men may be provided for the Reserve.

Localisation, to be effectual, must be thorough; but it and the demands of foreign service are so incompatible that they cannot be efficiently combined. At the present time, neither is said to be

in a satisfactory condition, and the Reserve, which was expected to have risen to a total of 80,000 men, consists of 32,000 only.

Military reformers have long since arrived at the conclusion that if the British Army is to be maintained at such a footing as to give weight to the voice of Great Britain in the councils of Europe, we must have two distinct armies; namely, one for home service, ready for a European imbroglio, and a second to which the defence of the colonies can be entrusted. The objection to this has been, hitherto, the great expense, for it has always been taken for granted that this Colonial Army would consist of white soldiers; and the question of increased pay, supply of recruits, and periodical removal of men to the United Kingdom, over and above the cost of the Territorial Army, had to be considered. With negro troops, however, for the Colonial Army, this objection, if it does not entirely disappear, is reduced at least by three-quarters. Should it be tried on a small scale and found successful, there need be no reason why in time almost the whole of the Territorial battalions should not be withdrawn from foreign service. In this way localisation could be made a reality; and with such vast untouched recruiting grounds as our colonies offer, there can be no doubt as to the practicability of raising the negro regiments required. Such regiments might also partly compose the garrisons of Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden, and Ceylon. There is, indeed, no reason, except the hatred of the Hindoo for the negro, why such regiments might not serve in India. As the negro would never coalesce with the natives of India, a new and entirely reliable force, indifferent to tropical heat, and not requiring a vast retinue of camp-followers, would be always at hand. Of course, negro battalions could never be employed in cold latitudes, for the negro suffers from cold in a manner which is incomprehensible even to Europeans who have passed the best part of their lives in the tropics. Instead of being braced by and deriving activity from the cold, he becomes languid and inert; and nothing but the rays of the sun can arouse him to any exertion. Even in West Africa, during the Harmattan season, natives may be observed in the early morning, hugging their scanty clothing around them and shivering with cold; while the ill-fated expedition to New Orleans showed what deadly havoc an inclement climate will play with negro troops.

Next, as to the men of whom these negro regiments would be composed. It is too much the custom in Great Britain, in describing a man of colour, to consider that all has been said that is necessary when he is called a negro; yet there are as many nationalities, and as many types of the African race, as there are of the Caucasian. No one would imagine that a European was sufficiently described by the title of "white man." It would be asked if the individual in question were an Englishman, German, Frenchman, and so on; and the same kind of classification is necessary for the negro. On the western coast of Africa, the portion of the African continent from which North and South America and the West Indies obtained their negro population, there are at least twenty different varieties of the African race, distinct from each other in features and even in colour; and these are again subdivided into several hundred nations or tribes, each of which possesses a language, manners, and customs of its own.

In the days of the slave-trade, the slave-dealers adopted certain arbitrary designations to denote from what portion of the coast their wares were obtained. For instance, slaves shipped from Sierra Leone and the rivers to the north and east of that peninsula, and who were principally Timmanees, Kossus, Acoos, Mendis, Foulahs, and Jolloffs, were called Mandingoes, from the dominant tribe of that name which supplied the slave-market. Negroes from the Gold Coast kingdoms of Ashanti, Fanti, Assin, Akim, Wassaw, Aquapim, Ahanta, and Accra were denominated Koromantyns, or Coromantees, a corruption of Cormantine, the name of a fort some sixteen miles to the east of Cape Coast Castle, and which was the earliest British slave-station on the Gold Coast. Similarly, slaves from the tribes inhabiting the Slave Coast, that is to say, Awoonahs, Agbosomahs, Flohows, Popos, Dahomans, Egbas, and Yorubas, were all termed Papaws; while those from the numerous petty states of the Niger delta, where the lowest type of the negro is to be found, were known as Eboes.

Thousands of men of these tribes, and others too numerous to mention, were carried across the Atlantic and scattered at hap-hazard all over the West India Islands. At first tribal distinctions were maintained, but in the course of years, in each island they gradually disappeared and were forgotten; until at the present day a West India negro does not describe himself as a Kossu or a Koromantyn, but as a Jamaican, a Barbadian, an Antiguan, etc. It would naturally be supposed that as the West India Islands all received their slave population in the same manner, and that as in each there was the same original diversity of nationalities, subsequently blended together by intermarriages and community of wants and language, a West India negro of the present generation from any one island would be hardly distinguishable from one from any other. Nothing, however, would be further from the truth. Since the abolition of slavery, the conditions of life in the various islands have been so different – in some the dense population necessitating daily labour for an existence, while in others large uncultivated stretches of wood and mountain have afforded squatting grounds for the majority of the black population – that, in conjunction with diversity of climate, each group of islands is now populated with a race of negroes morally distinct *per se*. The difference between a negro born and bred in Barbados and one born and bred in Jamaica is as great as between an American and an Englishman, and the clannish spirit of the negro tends to increase that difference. At the present time the negro of Jamaica does not care to enlist in the 2nd West India Regiment, which is largely recruited in Barbados; and, in the same way, the Barbadian declines to serve in the 1st West India Regiment, because it is almost entirely composed of Jamaicans.

While the negroes of the West Indies have thus lost all their tribal peculiarities in the natural course of progress and civilisation, those of West Africa have remained at a standstill; and there is to-day as much difference between the hideous and debased Eboe and the stately and dignified Mandingo, between the docile Fanti and the bloodthirsty Ashanti, as there was one hundred and fifty years ago. Civilising influences have made this contrast between the Africans and their West India descendants still more striking. The latter have, since the abolition of slavery, been living independent lives, in close contact with civilisation, and enjoying all the rights of manhood under British laws. From their earliest infancy they have known no language but the English, and no religion but Christianity; while the former are still barbarians, grovelling in fetishism, cursed with slavery, ignorant, debased, and wantonly cruel. The West India negro has so much contempt for his African cousin, that he invariably speaks of him by the ignominious title of "bushman." In fact, the former considers himself in every respect an Englishman, and the anecdote of the West India negro, who, being rather roughly jolted by a Frenchman on board a mail steamer, turned round to him and ejaculated, "I think you forget that we beat you at Waterloo," is no exaggeration.

Just as the negro races of West Africa are distinct from one another, and the West India negro from all, so are the coloured inhabitants of both those parts of the world entirely distinct from the Kaffir tribes of South Africa; and a coalition between Galeka or Zulu inhabitants and West India troops would be as impossible as the fraternisation of a Territorial battalion with the natives of India. Apart, however, from the fact that negro troops could always be safely employed alone outside the colony in which they were bred, history has shown that the fidelity of West India soldiers is beyond question. Indeed it would be difficult to say what stronger ties there could be than those of sentiment, language, and religion, and the association from childhood with British manners, customs, laws, and modes of thought. When to these are added discipline, the habit of obedience, and that well-known affection for their officers and their regiment which is so particularly an attribute of the West India soldier, it must be acknowledged that the guarantees of fidelity are, with the single exception of race, at least as good as those of the linesmen.

In India, the native army consists of men hostile to us by tradition, creed, and race, who consider their food defiled if even the shadow of a British officer should chance to fall across it, and assuredly it would be as safe a proceeding to garrison our colonies with English negroes as to garrison India with such men. Yet that is done at the present day, and excites no remark.

The English-speaking negro of the West Indies is most excellent material for a soldier. He is docile, patient, brave, and faithful, and for an officer who knows how to gain his affection – an easy matter, requiring only justness, good temper, and an ear ready to listen patiently to any tale of real or imaginary grievance – he will do anything. Of course they are not perfect; they have their faults, like all soldiers, and when they chance to be commanded by an officer who is unnecessarily harsh, or who speaks roughly to them, they manifest their displeasure by passive obedience and a stubborn sullenness. English soldiers, on the other hand, under such circumstances, proceed to acts of insubordination, and it is for military judges to say which mode of expression they prefer.

The West African negro does not appear to such advantage as a soldier. Although all the specimens, with the exception of the Sierra Leone negro, possess the first necessary qualification of personal courage, they are dull and stupid, and cannot be transformed into intelligent soldiers. It may be wondered why the Sierra Leonean, who alone among the West Africans is an English-speaking negro, should be worse than his more barbarian neighbours; but I believe the solution may be found in the fact that the large proportion of slaves landed in former days at Sierra Leone from captured slavers were so-called Eboes, from the tribes of the Niger delta; which tribes all ethnologists are agreed in describing as among the lowest of the African races, and which, it may be remarked, are even at the present day addicted to cannibalism. The West African soldier is a mere machine, who mechanically obeys orders, and never ventures, under any circumstances, to act or think for himself. Should an African be placed on sentry, he fulfils to the letter the orders read to him by the non-commissioned officer who posts him, but frequently entirely ignores their spirit. Sometimes this is productive of amusing incidents. For instance, some years ago, among the orders for the sentry posted at Government House, Sierra Leone, was one to the effect that no one was to be permitted to leave the premises after dark carrying a parcel. This order had been issued at the request of the Governor, to prevent pilfering on the part of his servants. One evening the Governor was coming out of his house with a small despatch-box, when, to his surprise, he was stopped by the sentry, an old African.

"But I'm the Governor," said the astonished administrator, "and I had that order made myself. You mustn't stop me."

"Me no care if you be Gubnor or not," replied the imperturbable African. "The corporal gib de order, and you no can pass." And Her Majesty's representative had to turn back and leave his despatch-box at home.

The greatest objection to the African, however, is the strange fact that no amount of care or attention on the part of his instructors can ever make him a good or even a fair shot. In the 1st West India Regiment there are still a few Africans remaining, most of whom have from twelve to eighteen years' service; and who have annually expended their rounds without hitting the target more than once or twice during the whole musketry course. Give these men a rifle rested on a tripod, and tell them to align the sights upon some given mark, and they cannot do it. They will frequently aim a foot or two to the right or left of an object only a few yards distant. Every possible plan has been tried to make them improve, but all have equally failed; and, in consequence, Africans are not now enlisted. Still, although on account of this failing, African troops could never, in these days of long-range firing, meet Europeans in the field, a battalion of Africans would be quite good enough for bush fighting against an enemy like the Ashanti, a still worse marksman, and worse armed; or against tribes armed with the spear or assegai.

Of course one reason of the African's dulness is that until he enlists, that is until he is from twenty-four to thirty years of age, he has never exercised his mind in any way; and the long years of mental idleness have produced a sluggishness which makes it extremely difficult for him to acquire anything new that requires thought. After enlisting, he picks up a species of unintelligible English, but that is the most that he can do. It is pitiful to see these men, some of them now old, struggling day after day, according to regulation, in the regimental school, to learn their letters. It is to them

the greatest punishment that could be inflicted, and though they attend school for years, they rarely succeed in doing more than master the alphabet.

In former days, whenever the cargo of a captured slaver was landed at Sierra Leone, a party from the garrison used to be admitted to the Liberated African Yard for the purpose of seeking recruits amongst the slaves. Many of the latter, pleased with the brilliant uniform, and talked over by the recruiting party, who were men specially selected for this duty on account of their knowledge of African languages, offered themselves as recruits. If medically fit, they were invariably accepted, though it must have been well known that they could not possibly have had any idea of the nature of the engagement into which they were entering. Some fifteen or twenty recruits being thus obtained, they were given high-sounding names, such as Mark Antony, Scipio Africanus, etc., their own barbaric appellations being too unpronounceable, and then marched down in a body to the cathedral to be baptised. Some might be Mohammedans, and the majority certainly believers in fetish, but the form of requiring their assent to a change in their religion was never gone through; and the following Sunday they were marched into church as a matter of course, along with their Christian comrades. Although thus nominally christianised, they still remained at heart believers in fetish, for it is a remarkable fact that no adult West African has ever become a bonâ-fide convert, and the missionaries have long since given up attempting to proselytise grown persons, reserving all their efforts for children. Holding, as they did, in great dread all fetish, or obeah, practices; usually someone amongst them, more cunning than the rest, professed an acquaintance with the supposed diabolical ritual; and gained influence with, and extorted money from, his more timid comrades. Officers now in the 1st West India Regiment can remember the time when, there being many Africans in the regiment, the feathers of parrots or scraps of rags might be found in the neighbourhood of the orderly room. Whenever this was the case, it was known that an African was about to be brought before his commanding officer for some neglect of duty or breach of discipline; and these fetishes had been placed there to induce the colonel to deal leniently with the offender. Ridiculous as this practice must seem to every educated person, it sometimes produced the most serious effects upon the credulous Africans; and I have heard old officers speak of instances, which came within their own knowledge, of soldiers who, having found old bones, broken pieces of calabashes, or glass, placed on their beds, immediately resigned themselves to death, saying that "fetish was thrown upon them," and in nine cases out of twelve, so certain were they that it was impossible to escape the coming doom, they positively frightened or worried themselves to death. The professors of fetishism likewise drove a good trade in amulets which rendered the wearer invulnerable. On one occasion at Sierra Leone, a young African who had been recently enlisted displayed with much pride a gri-gri or amulet which he wore on his wrist, and which, he asserted, rendered him invulnerable. His West India comrades laughed at him; and the African, indignant at the doubt thrown upon the efficacy of his charm, drew his knife, and, before he could be stopped, plunged it into his thigh to prove that he spoke the truth. His eyes were opened, unfortunately, too late; for though he was at once removed to the hospital, he died from the effects of this self-inflicted wound. In West India regiments the practice of fetish was made a military crime, and was severely punished. Sufferers or imaginary sufferers from fetishism, however, rarely complained to their officers, for they believed that the occult art practised by the professor was superior to any power held by man, and consequently, culprits were but seldom detected. With the disappearance of Africans from West India regiments, the offence of fetishism has, however, also disappeared.

Military crime in West India regiments is of comparatively rare occurrence. Even when the 3rd West India Regiment was in existence, there was less in the three negro regiments than in one of the Line; while drunkenness is confined to the few black sheep who will be found in every body of men. Riots or disturbances between West India soldiers and the inhabitants of the towns in which they are quartered are unheard of, and in every garrison they receive the highest praise for their unvarying good and quiet behaviour. In fact they are merry, good-tempered, and orderly men, who do not wish to interfere with anyone; and, owing to their temperate habits, they are not led into the commission

of offences by the influence of drink. Of course, the popular idea in Great Britain of the negro is that he is a person who commonly wears a dilapidated tall hat, cotton garments of brilliant hue, carries a banjo or concertina, and indulges in extraordinary cachinnations at the smallest pretext; but this is as far from the truth as the creature of imagination in the opposite extreme, evoked by the vivid fancy of Mrs. Beecher Stowe.

The bravery of the West India soldier in action has often been tested, and as long as an officer remains alive to lead not a man will flinch. His favourite weapon is the bayonet; and the principal difficulty with him in action is to hold him back, so anxious is he to close with his enemy. It is unnecessary here to refer to individual acts of gallantry performed by soldiers of the 1st West India Regiment, they being fully set forth in the following history; but of such performed by soldiers of other West India regiments the two following now occur to me.

Private Samuel Hodge, a pioneer of the 3rd West India Regiment, was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery at the storming of the Mohammedan stockade at Tubarcolong (the White Man's Well), on the River Gambia, on the 30th of May, 1866. Under a heavy fire from the concealed enemy, by which one officer was killed and an officer and thirteen men severely wounded, Hodge, and another pioneer named Boswell, chopped and tore away with their hands the logs of wood forming the stockade, Boswell falling nobly just as an opening was effected. Again, in 1873, during the Ashanti War – when it was reported, on the 5th of December, by natives at Yancoomassie Assin that the Ashanti army had retired across the Prah – two soldiers of the 2nd West India Regiment volunteered to go on alone to the river and ascertain if the report were true. On their return they reported all clear to the Prah; and said they had written their names on a piece of paper and posted it up. Six days later, when the advanced party of the expeditionary force marched into Prahsu, this paper was found fastened to a tree on the banks of the river. At the time that this voluntary act was performed it must be remembered that, on the 27th of November, the British and their allies had met with a serious repulse at Faisowah, through pressing too closely upon the retiring Ashantis; that this repulse was considered both by the Ashantis and by our native allies as a set-off against the failure of the attack on Abracampa; that the Houssa levy was in a state of panic, and no reliable information as to the position of the enemy was obtainable. It was under such circumstances that these two men advanced nearly sixteen miles into an (to them) unknown tract of solitary forest, to follow up an enemy that never spared life, and whose whereabouts was doubtful.

Other qualifications apart, however, West India troops have proved themselves of the very greatest value on active service in tropical climates from the very fact that, being natives of the tropics, they can undergo fatigue and exposure that would be fatal to European soldiers. In campaigns in which both the West India and the European soldier are employed, all the hard and unpleasant work is thrown upon the former, and the publication in general orders of the thanks of the officer in command of the force is the only acknowledgment he receives; for newspaper correspondents, naturally anxious to swell the circulation of the journals they represent, while giving the most minute details of the doings of the white soldier, leave out in the cold his black comrade, who has few friends among the reading public of Great Britain. Occasionally, facts are even misrepresented. For instance, the defence of Fommanah, on the 2nd of February, 1874, which was really effected by a detachment of the 1st West India Regiment, was, in an account telegraphed to one London daily paper, attributed to the 23rd Regiment, of which corps there were only six or seven men in the place, and those in hospital.

On the last occasion on which West India troops served with Line battalions, namely in the Ashanti War of 1873-74, West India soldiers daily marched twice and even three times the distance traversed by the white troops; and, south of the Prah, searched the country for miles on both sides of the line of advance, in search of carriers. It is not too much to say, that if the two West India regiments had not been on the Gold Coast, no advance on Coomassie would, that year, have been possible. In December, 1873, the transport broke down; there was a deadlock along the road; each half-battalion of the European troops was detained in the camp it occupied, and the 23rd Regiment

had to be re-embarked for want of carriers. The fate of the expedition was trembling in the balance, and the control officers were unanimous in declaring that a further advance was impossible, and that the troops in front would have to return by forced marches. Prior to this, the want of transport had been felt to such an extent that the West India soldiers had been placed on half rations; a step, however, which was not followed by any diminution of work, which remained as hard as ever. In this emergency the two West India regiments, with the 42nd – to whom all honour be due – volunteered to carry supplies, in addition to their arms, accoutrements, and ammunition. They acted as carriers for several days, and moved such quantities of provisions to the front that the pressure was removed and a further advance made possible. Even if more carriers had been obtained from the already ransacked native villages, they could not have arrived in time, for the rainy season was fast approaching and the delay of a fortnight would have been fatal.

There was a peculiar irony of fate in the expedition being thus relieved of its most pressing difficulties through the exertions of the West India regiments. It had been Sir Garnet Wolseley's original intention to take into Ashanti territory only the Rifle Brigade, the 23rd, and the 1st and 2nd West India Regiments; and, on the arrival of the hired transport, *Sarmatian*, he wrote, on the 15th of December, that he did not propose landing the 42nd. In the course of the next three days, however, he changed his views, and, in his letter of the 18th December, gave as his reason: "I find that the one great obstacle to the employment of a third battalion of English troops, viz., the difficulty of transport, is as great in the case of a West India regiment. The West India soldier has the same rations as the European soldier, and a West India regiment requires, man for man, exactly the same amount of transport as a European regiment." The 42nd, therefore, was to be landed and taken to the front, while the 1st West India Regiment was to remain at Cape Coast Castle and Elmina as a reserve. Afterwards, when the transport failed, it was found that the West India soldier could do the work of the European on half rations, and carry his own supplies as well.

West India regiments at the present day labour under many disadvantages. Owing to the two battalions having to furnish garrisons for colonies which really require three, they are alternately for one period of three years divided into three detachments, and for the next period of three years into six. No lieutenant-colonel of a West India regiment can ever see the whole of his regiment together. The largest number that, under present circumstances, he can ever have under him at any one station is four companies; and the most he can have under his actual command at any one time is six companies on board a troopship. Thus in a regiment there are sometimes three, and sometimes six, officers vested with the power of an officer commanding a detachment; and however conscientiously they may endeavour to follow out a regimental system, every individual has naturally a different manner of dealing with men, and a certain amount of homogeneousness is lost to the regiment as a whole.

Endless correspondence is entailed, and sometimes questions have to remain open for months, until answers can be received from distant detachments. In small garrisons, also, drill becomes a mere farce; for, after the clerks, employed men, and men on guard and in hospital are deducted, there are perhaps only a dozen men or so left for parade. In spite of all these drawbacks the regiments still maintain a wonderful efficiency, and afford another proof of the soldierlike qualities of the West India negro.

Another disadvantage is that a West India regiment is never seen in England, the British public knows nothing of such regiments, has no friends, relatives, or acquaintances in their ranks, and consequently takes no interest in them. Yet they are a remarkably fine body of men, and a picked battalion of the Guards would look small beside them if brigaded with them in Hyde Park. So little is known, that I have sometimes been asked if the officers of West India regiments are also black, and it is with a view to making the regiment to which I have the honour to belong better known to the public at large, that the following history has been written. There has been no attempt at descriptive writing, facts being merely collected from official documents, so that the authenticity of the narrative may be unquestionable.

In order that the earlier chapters may be the more readily understood, it may be as well to state that, with the 1st West India Regiment, which was called into existence in the *London Gazette* of the 2nd of May, 1795, were incorporated two other corps; of which one, the Carolina Corps, had been in existence since 1779, while the other – Malcolm's, or the Royal Rangers – had been raised in January or February, 1795. It is from the Carolina Corps that the 1st West India Regiment derives the Carolina laurel, borne on the crest of the regiment.

## **CHAPTER I.**

### **THE ACTION AT BRIAR CREEK, 1779 – THE ACTION AT STONO FERRY, 1779**

In the autumn of 1778, during the War of the American Independence, the British commanders in North America determined to make another attempt for the royal cause in the Southern States of Georgia and South Carolina, which, since the failure of Lord Cornwallis at the siege of Charlestown in July, 1776, had been allowed to remain unmolested. With this view they despatched Colonel Campbell, in November, from New York, with the 71st Regiment, two battalions of Hessians, three of Loyal Provincials,<sup>1</sup> and a detachment of Artillery, the whole amounting to about 3500, to make an attempt upon the town of Savannah, the capital of Georgia. Arriving off the mouth of the Savannah River on the 23rd of December, Colonel Campbell was so rapidly successful, that, by the middle of January, not only was Savannah in his hands, but Georgia itself was entirely cleared of American troops.

It was about this time that the South Carolina Regiment, the oldest branch of the 1st West India Regiment, was raised. Numerous royalists joined the British camp and were formed into various corps;<sup>2</sup> and the South Carolina Regiment is first mentioned as taking part in the action at Briar Creek on the 3rd of March, 1779,<sup>3</sup> the corps then being, according to Major-General Prevost's despatch, about 100 strong. The action at Briar Creek occurred as follows:

In the early part of 1779, General Prevost's<sup>4</sup> force was distributed in posts along the frontier of Georgia; Hudson's Ferry, twenty-four miles above Savannah, being the upper extremity of the chain. Watching these posts was the American general, Lincoln, with the main body of the American Army of the South, at Purrysburgh, about twenty miles above Savannah, and General Ashe, who was posted with about 2000 of the Militia of North and South Carolina and Georgia, at Briar Creek, near the point where it falls into the Savannah River.

General Ashe's position appeared most secure, his left being covered by the Savannah with its marshes, and his front by Briar Creek, which was about twenty feet broad, and unfordable at that point and for several miles above it; nevertheless, General Prevost determined to surprise him. For the purpose of amusing General Lincoln, he made a show of an intention to pass the river; and, in order to occupy the attention of Ashe, he ordered a party to appear in his front, on the opposite side of Briar Creek. Meanwhile General Prevost, with 900 chosen men, made an extensive circuit, passed Briar Creek fifteen miles above the American position, gained their rear unperceived, and was almost in their camp before they discovered his approach. The surprise was as complete as could be wished. Whole regiments fled without firing a shot, and numbers without even attempting to seize their arms; they ran in their confusion into the marsh, and swam across the river, in which numbers of them were drowned. The Continental troops, under General Elbert, and a regiment of North Carolina Militia, alone offered resistance; but they were not long able to maintain the unequal conflict, and, being overpowered, were compelled to surrender. The Americans lost from 300 to 400 men, and seven pieces of cannon. The British lost five men killed, and one officer and ten men wounded.

After this success, the British and American forces remained on opposite sides of the River Savannah, until the end of April, when General Lincoln, thinking the swollen state of the river and the inundation of the marshes was sufficient protection for the lower districts, withdrew his forces

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<sup>1</sup> De Lancey's Corps, the New York Volunteers, and Skinner's Corps.

<sup>2</sup> "Annual Register," 1779, Beatson's "Memoirs," Gordon's "History of the American War," etc. etc.

<sup>3</sup> Beatson's "Naval and Military Memoirs," vol. iv. p. 492.

<sup>4</sup> Major-General Prevost had come from Florida and assumed command in January.

further inland, leaving General Moultrie with 1000 men at Black Swamp. By this movement Lincoln left Charlestown exposed to the British. General Prevost at once took advantage of this, and, on the 29th of April, suddenly crossed the river, near Purrysburgh, with 2500 men, among whom was the South Carolina Regiment, which had been considerably increased by accessions of loyalists and freed negroes.

General Prevost advanced rapidly into the country, the militia under Moultrie, who had considered the swamps impassable, offering but a feeble resistance, and retiring hastily, destroying the bridges in their rear. On the 11th of May, the British force crossed the Ashley River a few miles above Charlestown, and, advancing along the neck formed by the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, established itself at a little more than cannon-shot from the city. A continued succession of skirmishes took place on that day and the ensuing night, and on the following morning Charlestown was summoned to surrender.

Negotiations were broken off in the evening, much to the disappointment of the British general, who had been led to suppose that a large proportion of the inhabitants were favourable to the royal cause, and that the city would fall easily into his hands. He now found himself in a dangerous predicament. He was without siege guns, before lines defended by a considerable force of artillery, and flanked by shipping; he was involved in a labyrinth of creeks and rivers, where a defeat would have been fatal, and General Lincoln with a force equal, if not superior to his own, was fast approaching for the relief of the city. Taking all this into consideration, General Prevost prudently struck camp that night, and, under cover of the darkness, the direct line of retreat on Savannah being closed, returned to the south side of the Ashley River. From thence the army passed to the islands of St. James and St. John, lying to the southward of Charlestown harbour, and commencing that succession of islands and creeks which extends along the coast from Charlestown to Savannah.

In these islands the army awaited supplies from New York, of which it was much in need; and, on the arrival of two frigates, it commenced to move to the island of Port Royal, which at the same time would afford good quarters for the troops during the intense heats, and, from its vicinity to Savannah, and its excellent harbour, was the best position that could be chosen for covering Georgia.

Directly General Lincoln discovered what was taking place, he advanced to attack. St. John's Island is separated from the mainland by a narrow inlet, called Stono River, and communication between the mainland and the island was kept up by a ferry. On the mainland, at this ferry, General Prevost had established a post, consisting of three redoubts, joined by lines of communication; and, to cover the movement of the army to Port Royal Island, he here posted Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland with the 1st Battalion of the 71st Regiment, a weak battalion of Hessians, the North Carolina Regiment, and the South Carolina Regiment, amounting in the whole to about 800 men.

On the 20th of June, General Lincoln made a determined attempt to force the passage, attacking with a force variously estimated at from 1200 to 5000 men and eight guns. Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland's advanced posts, consisting of the South Carolina Regiment, were some distance in front of his works; and a smart firing between them and the Americans gave him the first warning of the approach of the enemy. He instantly sent out two companies of the 71st from his right to ascertain the force of the assailants. The Highlanders had proceeded only a quarter of a mile when they met the outposts retiring before the enemy. A fierce conflict ensued. Instead of retreating before superior numbers, the Highlanders persisted in the unequal combat till all their officers were either killed or wounded, of the two companies eleven men only returned to the garrison; and the British force was sadly diminished, and its safety consequently imperilled by this mistaken valour.

The whole American line now advanced to within three hundred yards of the works, and a general engagement began, which was maintained with much courage and steadiness on both sides. At length the regiment of Hessians on the British left gave way, and the Americans, in spite of the obstinate resistance of the two Carolina regiments, were on the point of entering the works, when a judicious flank movement of the remainder of the 71st checked the advance; and General Lincoln,

apprehensive of the arrival of British reinforcements from the island, drew off his men, and retired in good order, taking his wounded with him.

The battle lasted upwards of an hour. The British had 3 officers and 19 rank and file killed, and 4 officers and 85 rank and file wounded. The South Carolina Regiment had Major William Campbell and 1 sergeant killed, 1 captain, 1 sergeant, and 3 rank and file wounded.<sup>5</sup> The Americans lost 5 officers and 35 men killed, 19 officers and 120 men wounded.

Three days after the battle, the British troops evacuated the post at Stono Ferry, and also the island of St. John, passing along the coast from island to island till they reached Beaufort in the island of Port Royal. Here General Prevost left a garrison under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland, and proceeded with the remainder of his force, with which was the South Carolina Regiment, to the town of Savannah.

The heat had now become too intense for active service; and the care of the officers was employed in preserving their men from the fevers of the season, and keeping them in a condition for service next campaign, which was expected to open in October.

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<sup>5</sup> "Return of the killed, wounded, and missing at the repulse of the Rebels at Stono Ferry, South Carolina, June 20th, 1779."

## CHAPTER II. THE SIEGE OF SAVANNAH, 1779 – THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTOWN, 1780 – THE BATTLE OF HOBKERK'S HILL, 1781

At the opening of the next campaign, although General Prevost had been obliged to retire from Charlestown and to abandon the upper parts of Georgia, yet, so long as he kept possession of the town of Savannah and maintained a post at Port Royal Island, South Carolina was exposed to incursions. The Americans, therefore, pressed the French admiral, Count D'Estaing, to repair to the Savannah River, hoping, by his aid, to drive the British from Georgia. D'Estaing, in compliance, sailed from Cape François, in St. Domingo; and with twenty-two sail of the line and a number of smaller vessels, having 4800 French regular troops on board and several hundred black troops from the West Indies, appeared off the Savannah so unexpectedly that the *Experiment*, a British fifty-gun ship, fell into his hands. On the appearance of the French fleet, on September 9th, General Prevost immediately called in all his outposts in Georgia, sent orders to Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland, at Port Royal, to rejoin him at once, and exerted himself to strengthen the defences of the town of Savannah.

For the first three or four days after the arrival of the fleet, the French were employed in moving their troops through the Ossabaw Inlet to Beaulieu, about thirteen miles above the town of Savannah. On the 15th of September, the French, with a party of American light horse, attacked the British outposts, and General Prevost withdrew all his force into his works.

On the 16th, D'Estaing summoned the place to surrender. Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland's force had not yet arrived, the works were still incomplete, and General Prevost was desirous of gaining time; he consequently requested a suspension of hostilities for twenty-four hours. This was granted, and in that critical interval Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland, by the most extraordinary efforts – for one of General Prevost's messengers had fallen into the hands of the enemy, who had at once seized all the principal lines of communication – arrived with the garrison of Port Royal, and entered the town. Encouraged by this accession of strength, General Prevost now informed Count D'Estaing that he was resolved to defend the place to the last extremity. On the 17th, D'Estaing had been joined by General Lincoln with some 3000 men, which, with the French troops, raised the total besieging force to something over 8000. The besieged did not exceed 3000.

The enemy spent several days in bringing up guns and stores from the fleet, and on the 23rd the besieging army broke ground before the town. On the 1st of October, they had advanced to within 300 yards of the British works. On the morning of the 4th of October, several batteries, mounting thirty-three pieces of heavy cannon and nine mortars, with a floating battery of sixteen guns on the river, opened fire on the town. For several days they played incessantly on the garrison, and there was continued skirmishing between the negroes of the Carolina regiments and the enemy.<sup>6</sup>

On the morning of the 9th of October, the enemy, under a furious cannonade, advanced to storm in three columns, with a force of 3000 French under D'Estaing in person, and 1500 Americans under Lincoln. General Prevost, in his despatch to Lord George Germain, dated Savannah, November 1st, 1779, says: "However, the principal attack, composed of the flower of the French and rebel armies, and led by D'Estaing in person, with all the principal officers of either, was made upon our right. Under cover of the hollow, they advanced in three columns; but having taken a wider circuit than they needed, and gone deeper in the bog, they neither came so early as they intended nor, I believe, in the same order. The attack, however, was very spirited, and for some time obstinately persevered

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<sup>6</sup> "The True History of the Siege of Savannah," published 1780.

in, particularly on the Ebenezer Road Redoubt. Two stand of colours were actually planted, and several of the assailants killed upon the parapet; but they met with so determined a resistance, and the fire of three seamen batteries, taking them in almost every direction, was so severe, that they were thrown into some disorder, at least at a stand; and at this most critical moment, Major Glasier, of the 60th, with the 60th Grenadiers and the Marines, advancing rapidly from the lines, charged (it may be said) with a degree of fury; in an instant the ditches of the redoubt and a battery to its right in rear were cleared... Lieutenant-Colonel de Porbeck, of Weissenbach's, being field officer of the day of the right wing, and, being in the redoubt when the attack began, had an opportunity, which he well improved, to signalise himself in a most gallant manner; and it is but justice to mention to your lordships the troops who defended it. They were part of the South Carolina Royalists, the Light Dragoons (dismounted), and the battalion men of the 4th 60th, in all about 100 men, commanded (by a special order) by Captain James, of the Dragoons (Lieutenant 71st), a good and gallant officer, and who nobly fell with his sword in the body of the third he had killed with his own hand."

After their repulse from the Ebenezer Redoubt, the enemy retired, and, a few days afterwards, the siege was raised, the Americans crossing the Savannah at Zubly's Ferry and taking up a position in South Carolina, while the French embarked in their fleet and sailed away. During the assault the French lost 700 and the Americans 240 killed. The British loss was 55, four of whom belonged to the South Carolina Regiment, who were killed in the redoubt, where also Captain Henry, of that corps, was wounded.

According to the "Journal of the Siege of Savannah," p. 39, the garrison of the redoubt in the Ebenezer Road was as follows:

28 Dismounted Dragoons.  
28 Battalion men of the 60th Regiment.  
54 South Carolina Regiment.  
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110

In the same work is the following: "Two rebel standards were once fixed on the redoubt in the Ebenezer Road; one of them was carried off again, and the other, which belonged to the 2nd Carolina Regiment, was taken. After the retreat of the enemy from our right, 270 men, chiefly French, were found dead; upwards of 80 of whom lay in the ditch and on the parapet of the redoubt, and 93 were within our abattis."

The strength of the South Carolina Regiment at the termination of the siege was: 1 colonel (Colonel Innes), 1 major, 4 captains, 7 lieutenants, 3 ensigns, 15 sergeants, 7 drummers, and 216 rank and file.

Nothing of note took place in Georgia and South Carolina till January, 1780, when Sir Henry Clinton arrived in the Savannah River with a force destined for the reduction of Charlestown. He had sailed from New York on the 26th of December, 1779, and, having experienced bad weather, put into the Savannah to repair damages. Sir H. Clinton selected a portion of General Prevost's force at Savannah to take part in the coming operations, and among the corps so selected was the South Carolina Regiment, which is shown in the return of troops at the capture of Charlestown as "joined from Savannah."

On the 10th of February, the armament sailed to North Edisto, where the troops disembarked, taking possession of the island of St. John next day without opposition. On the 29th of March, the army reached Ashley River and crossed it ten miles above Charlestown; then, the artillery and stores having been brought over, Sir H. Clinton marched down Charlestown Neck, and, on the night of the 1st of April, broke ground at 800 yards from the American works. The garrison of the city consisted of 2000 regular troops, 1000 North Carolina Militia, and the male inhabitants of the place.

On the 9th of April, the first parallel was finished, and the batteries opened fire; and Charlestown finally capitulated, after an uneventful siege, on the 12th of May. In the "Return of the killed and wounded" during the siege, the South Carolina Regiment is shown as having had three rank and file wounded.

Sir H. Clinton sailed from Charlestown on the 5th of June, leaving Lord Cornwallis in command. The latter meditated an expedition into North Carolina, and, for the preservation of South Carolina during his absence with the main body of the troops, he established a chain of posts along the frontier. One of these posts was at Ninety-six, and for its defence was detailed the South Carolina Regiment, under Colonel Innes, with Allen's corps, "the 16th and three other companies of Light Infantry."<sup>7</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Balfour was then in command of the post, but was soon after relieved by Lieutenant-Colonel Cruger.

The garrison of Ninety-six remained undisturbed till September, 1780, when, Lord Cornwallis having moved into North Carolina and occupied Charlotte, Georgia was almost denuded of troops; and an American leader, Colonel Clarke, took advantage of this to attack the British post at Augusta. Lieutenant-Colonel Brown, who commanded there with 150 men, finding the town untenable, retired towards an eminence on the banks of the Savannah, named Garden Hill, and sent intelligence of his situation to Ninety-six. Lieutenant-Colonel Cruger, with the 16th and the South Carolina Regiment, at once marched to his relief. Colonel Clarke, who had captured the British guns and was besieging the garrison of Garden Hill, upon being informed of Cruger's approach raised the siege, and, abandoning the guns which he had taken, retreated so hurriedly that, though pursued for some distance, he effected his escape.

In the spring of 1781, Lord Cornwallis had again invaded North Carolina, and, having defeated the American general, Greene, at Guildford Court House, had continued his march towards Virginia, expecting the enemy to make every effort to prevent the army entering that state. General Greene, however, allowed Lord Cornwallis to pass on, and then, having assembled a considerable body of troops, made a sudden descent upon the British posts in South Carolina, where Lord Rawdon had been left in command. These posts were in a line from Charlestown by the way of Camden and Ninety-six, to Augusta in Georgia. Camden was the most important, and there Lord Rawdon had taken post with 900 men.

On the 20th of April, 1781, General Greene appeared before Camden, which was a village situated on a plain, covered on the south by the Wateree, a river which higher up is called the Catawba; and below, after its confluence with the Congaree from the south, assumes the name of the Santee. On the east of it flowed Pinetree Creek; on the northern and western sides it was defended by a strong chain of redoubts, six in number, extending from the river to the creek. Lord Rawdon's force was so small that the approach of Greene to Camden necessitated the abandonment of the ferry on the Wateree, "although the South Carolina Regiment was on its way to join him from Ninety-six, and that was its direct course; he had, however, taken his measures so well as to secure the passage of that regiment upon its arrival three days after."<sup>8</sup>

General Greene, whose force amounted to 1200 men, determined to await reinforcements before attacking, and on the 24th of April he retired to Hobkerk's Hill, an eminence about a mile north of Camden, on the road to the Waxhaws. Here Lord Rawdon resolved to attack him, and on the morning of the 25th, with 900 men, he marched from Camden, and, by making a circuit, and keeping close to the edge of the swamp, under cover of the woods, he gained the left flank of the Americans, where the hill was most accessible, undiscovered.

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<sup>7</sup> "The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America," by Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, London, 1787.

<sup>8</sup> Tarleton, p. 461.

The alarm was given, while the Americans were at breakfast, by the firing of the outposts, and at this critical moment a reinforcement of American militia arrived. So confident was General Greene of success that he ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Washington, with his cavalry, to turn the right flank of the British and to charge them in the rear, while bodies of infantry were to assail them in front and on both flanks.

The American advanced parties were driven in by the British after a sharp skirmish, and Lord Rawdon advanced steadily to attack the main body of the enemy. The 63rd Regiment, with the volunteers of Ireland, formed his right; the King's American Regiment, with Robertson's corps, composed his left; the New York volunteers were in the centre. The South Carolina Regiment and the cavalry were in the rear and formed a reserve.<sup>9</sup>

Such was the impetuosity of the British that, in the face of a destructive discharge of grape, they gained the summit of the hill and pierced the American centre. The militia fell into confusion, their officers were unable to rally them, and General Greene ordered a retreat. The pursuit was continued for nearly three miles. The Americans halted for the night at Saunders' Creek, about four miles from Hobkerk's Hill, and next day proceeded to Rugeley Mills, about twelve miles from Camden. After the engagement the British returned to Camden. The American loss was 300; the British lost 258 out of about 900 who were on the field.

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<sup>9</sup> "Martial Register," vol. iii. p. 110.

## **CHAPTER III.**

### **THE RELIEF OF NINETY-SIX, 1781 – THE BATTLE OF EUTAW SPRINGS, 1781 – REMOVAL TO THE WEST INDIES**

Lord Rawdon was not in a position to follow up his success at Hobkerk's Hill, and on the 3rd of May, 1781, Greene passed the Wateree, and occupied such positions as to prevent the garrison at Camden obtaining supplies. Generals Marion and Lee were also posted at Nelson's Ferry, to prevent Colonel Watson, who was advancing with 400 men, from joining Lord Rawdon, and Watson was obliged to alter his route. He marched down the north side of the Santee, crossed it near its mouth, with incredible labour advanced up its southern bank, recrossed it above the encampment of Marion and Lee, and arrived safely with his detachment at Camden on the 7th of May.

Thus reinforced, Lord Rawdon determined to attack Greene, and, on the night of the 8th, marched from Camden with his whole force. Greene, who had been informed of this movement, passed the Wateree and took up a strong position behind Saunders' Creek. Lord Rawdon followed him and drove in his outposts, but, finding the position was too strong for his small force, he returned to Camden.

Camden being too far advanced a post for Lord Rawdon to hold with the few troops at his disposal, he evacuated it on the 10th of May, and retired by Nelson's Ferry to the south of the Santee, and afterwards to Monk's Corner. In the meantime, attacks were made on the British posts in Georgia, Augusta itself being taken on the 5th of June, while the post of Ninety-six in South Carolina was closely invested by General Greene with the main American army in the Southern States.

About this time, a change took place in the South Carolina Regiment. Lord Rawdon, in a letter to Lieutenant-General Earl Cornwallis, dated Charlestown, June 5th, 1781, speaks of the difficulty which he has experienced in the formation of cavalry, and goes on to say that the inhabitants of Charlestown having subscribed 3000 guineas for a corps of dragoons, out of compliment to those gentlemen "I have ordered the South Carolina Regiment to be converted into cavalry, and I have the prospect of their being mounted and completely appointed in a few days."

On the 3rd of June, Lord Rawdon had received considerable reinforcements from England, and on the 9th he left Charlestown with about 2000 men, including the South Carolina Regiment in its new capacity, for the relief of Ninety-six. In their rapid progress over the whole extent of South Carolina, through a wild country and under a burning sun, the sufferings of the troops were severe, but they advanced with celerity to the assistance of their comrades. On the 11th of June, General Greene received notice of Lord Rawdon's march, and immediately sent Sumpter with the whole of the cavalry to keep in front of the British army and retard its progress. Lord Rawdon, however, passed Sumpter a little below the junction of the Saluda and Broad Rivers, and that officer was never able to regain his front.

In the meantime, the Americans were pushing hard the garrison of Ninety-six; they were nearly reduced to extremities, and in a few days must have surrendered; but the rapid advance of Lord Rawdon left Greene no alternative but to storm or raise the siege. On the 18th of June, he made a furious assault upon the place; but, after a desperate conflict of nearly an hour, was compelled to retire. Next day he retreated, crossing the Saluda on the 20th, and encamping at Little River.

On the morning of the 21st, Lord Rawdon arrived at Ninety-six, and the same evening set out in pursuit of Greene, who, however, retreated; and Rawdon, despairing of overtaking him, returned to Ninety-six. He now found it necessary to evacuate that position and contract his posts; and, having destroyed the works, he marched towards the Congaree. There, on the 1st of July, while out foraging,

two officers and forty dragoons of the South Carolina Regiment were surrounded and taken prisoners by Lee's Legion. This blow sadly crippled Lord Rawdon, who was much in need of cavalry, and two days later he retreated to Orangeburgh.

The summer heats now coming on, Lord Rawdon proceeded to England on sick leave, leaving Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart in command of the troops in South Carolina and Georgia. The new commander at once proceeded with the army to the Congaree, and formed an encampment near its junction with the Wateree.

Towards the end of August, while Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart was expecting a convoy of provisions from Charlestown, he received information that General Greene, who had been reinforced and was now at the head of 2500 men, was moving towards Friday's Ferry on the Congaree. The American cavalry was so numerous and enterprising that the expected convoy, then at Martin's, fifty-six miles from the British camp, would inevitably fall into their hands unless protected by an escort of at least 400 men; and Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart's force being too small to admit of so considerable a body being detached without risk, he determined to retreat by slow marches to Eutaw Springs, about sixty miles north of Charlestown, and meet the convoy on the way.

General Greene followed the retiring British, and, on the 7th of September, arrived within seven miles of Eutaw Springs. Being there reinforced by General Marion and his corps, he resolved to attack next day. At six in the morning, two deserters from the American army entered the British camp, and informed Stuart of the approach of the enemy; but little credit was given to their report. At that time Major Coffin, with 140 infantry and 50 of the South Carolina Regiment, was out foraging for roots and vegetables – the army having neither corn nor bread – in the direction in which the Americans were advancing. About four miles from the camp at Eutaw, that party was attacked by the American advanced guard and driven in with loss. Their return convinced Colonel Stuart of the approach of the enemy, and the British army was soon drawn up obliquely across the road on the height near Eutaw Springs.

The firing began between two and three miles from the British camp. The British light parties were driven in on their main body, and the first line of the Americans attacked with great impetuosity. For a short time the conflicting ranks were intermingled, and the officers fought hand to hand. At that critical moment, General Lee, who had turned the left flank of the British, charged them in the rear. They were broken and driven off the field, their guns falling into the hands of the Americans, who eagerly pressed on their retreating adversaries.

At this crisis, Colonel Stuart ordered a strong detachment to take post in a large three-storey brick house, which was in rear of the army on the right, while another occupied an adjoining palisaded garden, and some close underwood. The Americans made the most desperate efforts to dislodge them from their posts; but every attack was met with determined courage. Four pieces of artillery were brought to bear on the house, but made no impression on its solid walls, from which a close and destructive fire was kept up, as well as from the adjoining enclosure. Almost all the gunners were killed and wounded; and the guns had been pushed so near the house that they could not be brought off. Colonel Washington attempted to turn the British right, and charge them in rear; but his horse was shot under him, and he was wounded and made prisoner. After every attempt to dislodge the British from their position had failed, General Greene drew off his men, and retired to the ground which he had left in the morning. This conflict had lasted nearly four hours. The Americans lost 555, the British 693. The British kept their ground during the night, and next day began to retreat. About fourteen miles from the field of battle, Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart was met by a reinforcement, under Major McArthur, marching from Charlestown to his assistance. Thus strengthened, he proceeded to Monk's Corner.

Eutaw Springs was the last engagement of importance in the southern provinces. The British soon retreated to a position on Charlestown Neck, and confined their operations to the defence of the posts in that vicinity; while in Georgia, the British force was concentrated at Savannah. The surrender

of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, in October, 1781, and the subsequent peace negotiations, put an end to the hostilities in America.

Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton says: "It is impossible to do justice to the spirit, patience, and invincible fortitude displayed by the commanders, officers, and soldiers during these dreadful campaigns in the Carolinas. They had not only to contend with men, and these by no means deficient in bravery and enterprise, but they encountered and surmounted difficulties and fatigues from the climate and the country, which would appear insuperable in theory and almost incredible in the relation. They displayed military and, we may add, moral virtues far above all praise. During renewed successions of forced marches, under the rage of a burning sun and in a climate at that season peculiarly inimical to man, they were frequently, when sinking under the most excessive fatigue, not only destitute of every comfort but almost of every necessary which seems essential to existence. During the greater part of the time they were totally destitute of bread, and the country afforded no vegetables for a substitute. Salt at length failed, and their only resources were water and the wild cattle which they found in the woods. About fifty men, in this last expedition, sunk under the vigour of their exertions and perished through mere fatigue."

At the cessation of hostilities, the South Carolina Regiment and the Loyal American Rangers were removed to Jamaica, and as they are shown in the Jamaica Almanack for 1782 as being then in the island, they presumably arrived there about December, 1781. The South Carolina Regiment was probably dismounted, as it is shown as being stationed at Fort Augusta in Kingston harbour. At this time, the reinforcing of the West India Islands by provincial corps was considered most important, and in a letter to Sir Guy Carleton we find the following: "The object of reinforcing those islands is so important, that His Majesty wishes to have it understood that every provincial corps embarking for the West Indies shall immediately be put upon the British Establishment." It was, probably, on some such understanding that the two corps above mentioned proceeded from South Carolina; but the promise, if made, was never fulfilled, and neither of the two ever appeared in any Army List. The following is the list of officers of the South Carolina Regiment given in the Jamaica Almanack:

Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant—CAPTAIN LORD CHARLES  
MONTAGU, 88th Regiment.

Major—JAMES BALMER.

Captains—G.C. MONTAGU, ROBERT PALMER, W. OLIPHANT, W.  
LOWE.

Lieutenants.

R. MARSHALL. H. CRADDOCK. — O'DONNELL.  
J. CARDEN. D. M'CONNELL. A. CLERK.  
H. RUDGLEY. P. SERGEANT. J. PETRIE.  
M. RAINFORD. J.P. COLLINS. — SMITH.

Ensigns.

W. SPLAIN. J. KENT. B. MEIGHAN.  
— BELL. — FARQUHAR. — THOMAS.  
— SMITH.

The South Carolina Regiment remained in Jamaica until the general disbandment of the provincial corps in 1783. The lieutenant-colonel commandant was given an independent company, and the whites, both officers and men, were pacified with grants of land. The black troopers, however, were a source of difficulty. These troopers, some of whom were originally free, while some had been purchased by the British Government, were in those days of slavery something of a "white elephant" in a large slave-holding colony like Jamaica. The planters, fearful of the consequences of the example to their slaves of a free body of negroes who had served as soldiers, agitated for their removal from the island, but, on the other hand, no other island was willing to receive them. There is no trace of how the difficulty was finally settled, but in a letter, dated War Office, June 15th, 1783, signed R.

Fitzpatrick, and addressed to Major-General Campbell, commanding in Jamaica, the receipt of his letter concerning the disbandment of the provincial troops in the island is acknowledged, and the removal of "the blacks of the South Carolina Regiment" to the Leeward command approved of.

Some time, then, in September, 1783, the black troopers were removed to the Leeward Islands, and in the "Monthly Return of His Majesty's Forces in the Leeward and Charibee Islands, under the command of Lieutenant-General Edward Mathew," we find them formed into a corps, with a body of black artificers, who had served in South Carolina at the sieges of Charlestown and Ninety-six, and thirty-three black pioneers who had been included in the surrender of Yorktown. The following is the state of this corps:

### RETURN OF THE BLACK CORPS OF DRAGOONS, PIONEERS, AND ARTIFICERS

- A. Captains.
- B. 1st Lieutenants.
- C. 2nd Lieutenants.
- D. Sergeants Present.
- E. Drummers and Trumpeters Present.
- F. Present, fit for duty.
- G. Sick in Quarters.
- H. Sick in Hospital.
- I. On Command.
- J. Total.
- K. Total of the Whole.

Where Stationed.	Companies	Officers Present.					Effective Rank and File.					
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Grenada St.	Capt. Mackrill	1	-	-	3	1	25	7	10	23	65	70
Vincent	Capt. Anderson	1	-	1	14	5	46	4	-	138	188	209
Grenada	Capt. Millar	1	-	-	3	-	19	4	4	19	46	50
	Total	3	-	1	20	6	90	15	14	180	299	329

The officers of this corps were, according to Bryan Edwards, vol. i. p. 386, taken from the regular army, and the companies were commanded by lieutenants of regulars, having captains' rank. Artificers, it may be as well to observe, were sappers and miners. The Royal Engineers at about this date consisted of various companies of Artificers; later on they were called Sappers and Miners; and, finally, Royal Engineers.

## **CHAPTER IV.**

# **THE EXPEDITION TO MARTINIQUE, 1793 – THE CAPTURE OF MARTINIQUE, ST. LUCIA, AND GUADALOUPE, 1794 – THE DEFENCE OF FORT MATILDA, 1794**

In February, 1789, all three companies of the "Black Corps of Dragoons, Pioneers, and Artificers" were stationed in Grenada, and from that date until June, 1793, they are shown in every monthly return, with a strength varying from 279 to 268, and an increase of four first lieutenants.

In February, 1793, the news of the French declaration of war was received in the West Indies, and orders were soon after transmitted from England to the Commander-in-Chief in the Windward and Leeward Islands to attempt the reduction of the French islands. Tobago was taken on the 17th of April without much trouble, the majority of the planters in that island being English; and an attack on Martinique was next meditated. The whole of the British force in the West Indies was known and acknowledged to be inadequate to the reduction of that island; but such representations had been spread throughout the army, concerning the disaffection of the greater part of the inhabitants of all the French islands towards the Republican Government lately established, as to create a very general belief that the appearance of a British armament before the capital of Martinique would alone produce an immediate surrender. Major-General Bruce, on whom the chief command of the troops had devolved, was assured by a deputation from the principal planters of the island that "a body of 800 regular troops would be more than sufficient to overcome all possible resistance."

These representations induced Major-General Bruce, in conjunction with Admiral Gardner, to undertake an expedition; and the troops having been embarked at Grenada in the men-of-war, the armament arrived off Cape Navire, Martinique,<sup>10</sup> on the 11th of June, 1793. There the general met the officer commanding the French Royalists, and, as the latter proposed an attack upon the town of St. Pierre, the 21st Regiment was landed at Cape Navire on the 14th, and there posted, to enable the Royalists to concentrate in the neighbourhood of St. Pierre, where the remainder of the British force joined them on the 16th. "The British troops consisted of the Grenadiers, Light Infantry, and Marines from the fleet, with the Black Carolina Corps, amounting in all to about 1100 men."<sup>11</sup> The Royalists were said to number 800.

On the afternoon of the 17th, the enemy made an attack, but were driven back by the pickets, with the loss of one officer and three men killed on the part of the British. An attack on the two batteries which defended St. Pierre was planned for the morning of the 18th, but failed, owing to the want of discipline on the part of the Royalists. Major-General Bruce says: "The morning of the 18th was the time fixed for the attack, and we were to move forward in two columns, the one consisting of the British troops, the other of the French Royalists; and for this purpose the troops were put in motion before daybreak; but, unfortunately, some alarm having taken place amongst the Royalists, they began, in a mistake, firing on one another, and their commander being severely wounded on the occasion, the whole body, refusing to submit to any of the other officers, retired to the post from which they had marched."

This conduct showed the general that no reliance could be placed on the Royalists, and that the attack on St. Pierre, if carried out at all, would have to be done by the British troops alone, whose numbers were not equal to the task. He, consequently, ordered the troops to return to their former

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<sup>10</sup> See map.

<sup>11</sup> Major-General Bruce's despatch.

positions, and on the 19th they re-embarked. As to have left the Royalists in Martinique would only have been to leave them to be massacred by the Republicans, those unfortunate people were embarked on the 19th and 20th, and the 21st Regiment being taken on board at Cape Navire on the 21st, the expedition returned to Grenada.

It may be wondered whence came the Black Carolina Corps mentioned by Major-General Bruce, but it is evident that by that designation the Black Corps of Dragoons, Pioneers, and Artificers was locally known; for in the monthly return, dated May 1st, 1794, the "state" of the corps is headed, "Return of the Black Carolina Corps," and the title, "Black Corps of Dragoons, Pioneers, and Artificers" ceases, from that date, to be used in any official document. The strength of the corps in that return is 258 of all ranks.

The failure of Major-General Bruce's attempt on Martinique induced the British Ministers to send out an armament under Sir Charles Grey for the reduction of all the French West India Islands; and, until the arrival of this force at Barbados, in January, 1794, the Black Carolina Corps remained quietly in garrison at Grenada. The troops from the various islands – and amongst them all three companies of that corps – were collected at Barbados during the remainder of January, and, on the 4th of February, the expeditionary force, 6085 strong, set sail from Carlisle Bay. The army, in three divisions, landed at three separate points in Martinique; the first at Gallion Bay, on the northern side of the island, on the evening of the 5th of February; the second at Cape Navire, nearly opposite on the south, on the 8th of February; and the third at Trois Rivières, towards the south-east. The British were so rapidly successful that, by the 17th of February, the whole of the island, except the two fortresses of Bourbon and Fort Royal, were in their hands. The services of the Black Carolina Corps up to that date are not known in detail, but the return of killed and wounded shows the Dragoons as having had one rank and file killed.

On the 20th of February, Forts Bourbon and Fort Royal were completely invested, and the pioneers and artificers of the Carolina Corps were busily engaged on the siege works. On the north-east side the army broke ground on the 25th of February; and on the western side, towards La Caste, fascine batteries were erected with all possible expedition. By the 16th of March, the advanced batteries were pushed to within 500 yards of Fort Bourbon, and 200 yards of the enemy's nearest redoubt. On the 20th of March, the fortress of Fort Royal was carried by Captain Faulkner, of the *Zebra*; and General Rochambeau at once sent a flag from Fort Bourbon offering to capitulate. The terms were accordingly adjusted on the 23rd, and on the 25th, the garrison, reduced to 900 men, marched out prisoners of war.

Martinique being now entirely conquered, Sir Charles Grey left there, as a garrison under General Prescott, five regiments, and one company of the Carolina Corps; and proceeded, on the 31st of March, with the remainder of the force to the attack of St. Lucia. That island had no means of defence against so considerable an invading force; and, on the 4th of April, the British colours were hoisted on the chief fortress of Morne Fortune; the garrison, consisting of 300 men, having surrendered on the same terms of capitulation that had been granted to General Rochambeau. The 6th and 9th Regiments, with a company of the Carolina Corps, being left as a garrison for St. Lucia, Sir Charles Grey returned to Martinique, and commenced his preparations for an expedition to Guadaloupe.<sup>12</sup>

Guadaloupe really consists of two islands, separated from each other by a narrow arm of the sea, called La Rivière Salée, which is navigable for vessels of fifty tons. The eastern island, or division, which is flat and low-lying, is called Grandeterre; while the western, which is rugged and mountainous, is named Basseterre.

On the 8th of April, the troops, with the remaining company of the Carolina Corps, sailed from Fort Royal, Martinique; and, about one o'clock in the morning of the 11th, a landing was effected

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<sup>12</sup> See map.

at Grosier Bay. Before daybreak on the 12th, the fort of La Fleur d'Épée was carried by assault, and the greater part of the garrison put to the sword. Fort St. Louis, the town of Point à Pitre, and a new battery upon Islet à Cochon being afterwards abandoned, the possession of Grandeterre was complete. The reduction of Basseterre was effected on the 21st of the same month; and the company of the Carolina Corps, with other troops, being left in garrison in Guadaloupe, the general returned to Martinique.

The British, however, were not permitted to remain long in peaceable possession of their most recent conquest; for on the 3rd of June, a considerable French armament arrived off Point à Pitre. Fort Fleur d'Épée was taken by storm, and the place not being tenable after this loss, the British crossed over to Basseterre. Several prisoners were taken by the French, and amongst them were some of the Carolina Corps, for in the return of that corps for February, 1795, dated March 1st, there is the following note: "Some of the corps are prisoners at Point à Pitre, but their number cannot be ascertained." In a later return, however, we find that they consisted of one sergeant and eight rank and file.

On the 2nd of July, the British made an ineffectual attempt to recover Point à Pitre, and soon after established their head-quarters at Berville, in Basseterre. The camp at Berville was invested in September, and on the 6th of October it was compelled to capitulate. Thus the whole of Guadaloupe, with the exception of Fort Matilda, situated above the town of Basseterre, and which was still held by a British garrison, was recovered by the French. At the surrender of Berville, 300 French Royalists, who were in the British camp, were massacred by the orders of Victor Hugues, the French commander.

Fort St. Charles, Basseterre, had been rechristened Fort Matilda by the British on its surrender on the 21st of April, 1794, and against it Victor Hugues now moved all his forces. The fort was commanded by Lieutenant-General Prescott with a garrison of 610 men, including the company of the Carolina Corps which had come to Guadaloupe. General Prescott, in his despatch, dated "On board H.M.S. *Vanguard*, at sea, December 11th, 1794," says: "To enter into a minute detail of the siege, which commenced on the 14th of October, and terminated by evacuating it on the 10th of December, would not only too much occupy your time, but might be deemed equally unnecessary. It may be sufficient to remark that on entering the fort I found it totally out of repair, the materials composing the wall-work thereof being of the worst kind, and having apparently but little lime to cement them properly. By the middle of last month the works were very much injured by the daily and frequent heavy fire of the enemy, and almost all the carriages of our guns rendered useless. These were in general in a very decayed state, but even the new ones for the brass mortars that were made during the siege gave way from the almost incessant fire we kept up; so that upon the whole, what from the nature of our defences and the small number of our garrison, we were in a very unfit state to resist the very vigorous exertions of our enemy, who began to prepare additional forces about the 20th of last month, but who, from a number of causes, and especially from heavy and continued rains, could not open their new batteries till the 6th of this month. On that day they began to fire from twenty-three pieces of cannon, four of which were thirty-six-pounders, and the rest twenty-four-pounders, and from eight mortars, two of thirteen inches and two of ten. The fire was very heavy and continued all day and night, and by it all the guns on the Gallion bastion were dismounted, and the bastion itself a heap of ruins. Every day after this grew worse until the 9th, on the evening of which day I went into the ditch accompanied by the engineer, when we were both but too well convinced of the tottering state of the works from the Gallion along the curtain, and indeed the whole, from the east to the north-east. I could not hesitate a moment about the necessity of evacuating the fort. I therefore sent off immediately to Rear-Admiral Thompson, who commanded the detachment of the squadron left for our protection, to acquaint him with the necessity of evacuating the fort next evening, and to request that he would have the boats ready to take off the garrison at seven o'clock. I kept this my design a profound secret until half-past six o'clock of the evening of the 10th, when I arranged the march of the garrison... The embarkation continued with little or no interruption, and

was happily completed about ten o'clock at night, without its being discovered by the enemy, who continued firing as usual on the fort till two or three o'clock on the morning of the 11th, as we could plainly perceive from the ships. My satisfaction was great at having thus preserved my brave garrison to their king and country."

During the siege of Fort Matilda, the Carolina Corps lost 1 killed and 3 wounded, 2 of whom afterwards died of their wounds. In the "State of the Garrison of Fort Matilda, as embarked on the 10th of December, 1794," the strength of the company of the Carolina Corps is shown as 1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 4 sergeants, and 30 rank and file. After the evacuation, this company was stationed at Martinique; so that at the close of the year 1794, two companies were in that island, and one in St. Lucia.

## CHAPTER V.

### ROYAL RANGERS, COMMANDED BY CAPTAIN MALCOLM, 41ST REGIMENT

- A: Capt. Commandant.  
 B: Captains.  
 C: 1st Lieutenants.  
 D: 2nd Lieutenants.  
 E: Sergeants Present.  
 F: Drummers Present.  
 G: Present fit for Duty.  
 H: In Hospital.  
 I: In Quarters.

Stations.	Commissioned Officers.						Effective Rank and File.			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Sick and Wounded.		Total.
								H	I	
Martinico	1	2	2	2	8	4	149	28	27	204

This officer is mentioned by Bryan Edwards, vol. iii. p. 452: "Lieutenant Malcolm, of the 41st Grenadiers, was appointed Town Major" (of St. Pierre, Martinique, in 1794) "in consideration of his distinguished conduct and active services at the head of a body of riflemen, which was composed of two men selected from each company of the 1st Battalion of Grenadiers. We shall have occasion to mention this officer afterwards."

This body of riflemen, raised during the operations in Martinique, in March, 1794, must, if the above statement of its formation be correct, have been European, for there were no black troops employed in the reduction of that island, except the Carolina Corps. The corps of riflemen is not shown in any return, and it is probable that at the termination of the active operations the men rejoined their respective battalions. The Royal Rangers, shown in the return of the 1st of May, 1795, were black; for Sir John Vaughan, in a letter dated Martinique, April 25th, 1795, which gives an account of the operations in St. Lucia in that month, says: "The flank companies of the 9th Regiment and the black corps under Captain Malcolm were the troops engaged." These Royal Rangers, then, were almost certainly entirely distinct from the "body of riflemen," and the success which had attended Captain Malcolm's efforts with the first body probably led to his being employed in raising the second, about February or March, 1795. In the month of April, 1795, one company of this corps, numbering 121 of all ranks, was in St. Lucia, and the other company, 112 strong, in Martinique.

Victor Hugues, having succeeded in ousting the British from Guadaloupe, commenced, early in 1795, active measures for the recovery of the other islands that had been wrested from France in the previous year, and the plan which was first ripened appears to have been that against St. Lucia.<sup>13</sup> "No official and scarcely any other accounts of the event are to be found, but the invasion of this colony appears to have been effected about the middle of February... Nor can the strength of the invading force be now ascertained. That force was probably few in number, and stolen into the island in small bodies, and under cover of the night. Aided, however, by an insurrection of the slaves, people

<sup>13</sup> Bryan Edwards.

of colour, and democratical whites, it was sufficient to wrest from us the whole of the colony, with the exception of the two posts of the Carenage and the Morne Fortune."<sup>14</sup>

Affairs remained in this situation till about the middle of April, when Brigadier-General Stewart resumed active operations, in the hope of recovering the lost ground. On the 14th of that month, he suddenly disembarked near Vieux Fort, with a force consisting of a portion of the 6th and 9th Regiments, the company of the Carolina Corps which had remained in the island since its capture in 1794, and one company of the new corps of Malcolm's Rangers; and, after two days' skirmishing, that town was abandoned by the French on the 16th, and immediately taken possession of by the British, the enemy falling back upon Souffriere, their chief stronghold.

"Resolved to follow up his blow, General Stewart advanced against Souffriere. Undismayed, however, by their recent defeats, the Republicans had collected together a very formidable force, for the defence of their main position. On his march, the British general was suddenly attacked by a division which had been placed in ambush, and it was not till after a severe struggle that the enemy were driven back."

Sir John Vaughan, in a despatch dated Martinique, April 25th, 1795, says: "He was attacked by the enemy upon his march on the 20th instant, who had formed an ambuscade. The flank companies of the 9th Regiment, and the Black Corps under Captain Malcolm, were the troops engaged. The enemy, after a severe conflict, were driven back. Captain Malcolm, and Captain Nesbitt of the 9th, were wounded, after behaving in a most gallant manner."

On the 22nd of April, the troops reached the neighbourhood of Souffriere, near to which, on the mountainous ground, the attack was made. The contest continued warmly for seven hours, and though the greatest exertions were made by the British, they were finally compelled to retreat to Choiseul, with a loss of 30 killed, 150 wounded, and 5 missing. In the four days' fighting between the 14th and the 22nd of April, Malcolm's corps lost 48 out of a total of 121.<sup>15</sup> At Choiseul the troops embarked and returned to Vieux Fort, and thence to Morne Fortune and the Carenage, which General Stewart considered his force strong enough to hold until the arrival of reinforcements.

Two months passed away without the occurrence of any event worthy of notice. Sickness, in the meantime, was making great ravages amongst the British, one-half of whose force was generally unfit for service. The enemy, on the other hand, were daily gaining fresh accession of strength. From Guadaloupe arms and other supplies were frequently transmitted; and though some of the vessels fell into the hands of the British cruisers, many more of them reached their destination in safety. The French now began to act decisively. They first reduced Pigeon Island, and, on the 17th of June, made themselves masters of the Vigie. On this last post the communication between the Carenage and Morne Fortune depended, and the enemy now prepared for a general assault upon the latter. As, in the weak condition of the garrison, it would have been imprudent to await the meditated attack, Brigadier-General Stewart determined to evacuate the position; and, on the evening of the 18th, the whole of the troops embarked on board H.M.S. *Experiment*, undiscovered by the enemy, and proceeded to Martinique.

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<sup>14</sup> See map.

<sup>15</sup> Return of the killed, wounded, and missing in the actions on the following days, of the troops under the command of Brigadier-General Stewart, in the island of St. Lucia. 14th of April, 1795 Royal Rangers – 1 sergeant, 5 rank and file, wounded. 15th of April Royal Rangers – 2 rank and file, killed; 1 sergeant, 4 rank and file, wounded. 20th of April Royal Rangers – 6 rank and file, killed; 1 captain, 1 sergeant, and 18 rank and file, wounded. 22nd of April Carolina Corps – 1 rank and file, wounded. Royal Rangers – 4 rank and file, killed; 5 rank and file, wounded. Names of the Officers killed and wounded Captain Robert Malcolm, of the Royal Rangers, wounded.

## CHAPTER VI. THE CARIB WAR IN ST. VINCENT, 1795

Some little time before the arrival, at Martinique, of the company of Malcolm's Rangers from St. Lucia, the company of that corps which had remained in the former island had been despatched, with the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Regiment, to St. Vincent. Since the month of March, 1795, that island had been devastated by a war between the Caribs, assisted by the French, and the British garrison. This war had been carried on with varying success, and the most horrible atrocities on the part of the Caribs, until the end of May, when the Commander-in-Chief, Sir John Vaughan, went over to St. Vincent from Martinique, to satisfy himself as to the state and military wants of the colony; and, finding the enemy strongly posted within a short distance of the town of Kingston itself, immediately on his return to Martinique despatched the above-mentioned reinforcement, which arrived at St. Vincent in the beginning of June.

The principal position of the enemy was at the Vigie This post was situated on a ridge, forming the south-west side of the valley of Marriaqua, and consisted of three small eminences of different heights; that nearest the sea, though the lowest, being the most extensive of them all, and that to the fortifying of which they had paid the most attention.

Lieutenant-Colonel Leighton, commanding the troops in St. Vincent, on being reinforced, determined to carry into execution a long meditated attack upon the Vigie. Accordingly, on the night of the 11th<sup>16</sup> of June, the troops marched through the town, and halted about ten o'clock at Warawarrow River, within four miles of the Vigie. The force was composed of detachments from the 46th and 60th Regiments, the company of Malcolm's Rangers, the St. Vincent Rangers, almost all the southern and windward regiments of the militia, and a small party of artillery. At Warawarrow River the troops were divided into three columns; and the third was further divided into small bodies to hold the passes at Calder Ridge, and prevent the escape of the enemy.

Just before daybreak, the westernmost redoubt, which overlooked the road coming from Kingston, was attacked and carried almost without opposition, the enemy retiring to their principal stronghold. The grenadiers and Malcolm's Corps had in the meantime forced their way through the bush on Ross Ridge, and being met by the light company, which had kept along the road, the whole of the British advanced against the third and strongest redoubt. At the upper end of the road a deep trench had been dug, which obstacle for some little time delayed the guns; but, by great exertions they were lifted up a bank eight or ten feet in height, and then opened fire.

For some time the enemy returned the British fire with great spirit. About eight o'clock, however, they beat a parley, and sent out a flag of truce to propose terms, which were refused. The troops were now led to the assault, and in a short time carried the works, which were defended by the French from Guadaloupe, the Caribs having retired early in the morning, and escaped to the windward portion of the island. "Never did troops display greater gallantry than did the British, militia, and rangers on this occasion."<sup>17</sup> The British killed and wounded amounted to 30; 250 of the enemy are said to have fallen. In the redoubts were taken three four-pounders and sixteen or seventeen swivels.

At the close of the action, Malcolm's and the St. Vincent Rangers were sent out to scour the valley of Marriaqua, and destroy the huts of the Caribs. This service they effectually accomplished before nightfall, having killed and taken prisoners many of the fugitives, and driven the remainder into Massirica.

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<sup>16</sup> Coke; Bryan Edwards says the 8th.

<sup>17</sup> Coke.

A detachment of the 60th being left in the Vigie Lieutenant-Colonel Leighton, on the morning of the 13th of June, marched with the remainder of the troops, by several routes, towards the Carib district. So little opposition was made to their march, the enemy constantly falling back from ridge to ridge, that on the afternoon of the 16th they reached Mount Young, from which the Caribs fled with such haste that they left standing their houses, in all of which considerable quantities of corn were found. This carelessness of the enemy provided the British with a very welcome shelter. It was fortunate, also, that they had not attempted to dispute the hills and passes; for, had they done so, the troops would have suffered greatly, seven men, even as it was, having expired on the march from fatigue alone.

As soon as Mount Young was in our possession, the troops were busily employed in spreading devastation through the Carib district. In Grand Sable and other parts of the country, many houses were burned, and more than 200 pettiaugres and canoes destroyed. Several hundred slaves were also sent out, under the protection of military detachments, to dig up and destroy the provisions of the enemy. On the 4th of July, a detachment of the 46th and Malcolm's Rangers took, after a sharp action, the enemy's post at Chateaubellair, near Walliabon, with a loss of 14 killed and 39 wounded of the 46th, and 2 killed and several wounded of Malcolm's.

The evacuation of St. Lucia by Brigadier-General Stewart was, however, as far as St. Vincent was concerned, attended by fatal consequences. The proximity of the former island enabled the French unceasingly to pour in new reinforcements to their Carib allies in St. Vincent; and, towards the end of August, a small British post which had been established at Owia was surprised by a detachment from St. Lucia, and the whole of the guns and large quantities of supplies captured.

Encouraged by this success, Victor Hugues resolved to endeavour to wrest St. Vincent from the British, as he had already wrested Guadeloupe and St. Lucia; and, in the middle of September, he landed in St. Lucia with a force of some 800 men. These, embarked in four vessels, which escaped the *Thorn* and *Experiment*, the British ships of war on the station, landed at Owia Bay, St. Vincent, on the morning of the 18th of September; and the force of the enemy was now so vastly superior to that of the British, that it became impossible for the latter to retain their advanced positions.

Orders were at once sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Leighton to abandon Mount Young without delay, and retire to the vicinity of Kingston. They were carried into execution on the night of the 19th. Having destroyed their supplies and left their lights burning in their huts as usual, to deceive the enemy, the troops were silently put in motion. They reached Biabou the next evening, and, bringing in the detachment which was there quartered, reached Zion Hill on the 21st; being then distributed among the posts in the neighbourhood.

The retreating British were speedily followed by the Caribs and French, who drove off the cattle from several estates, and finally took up a position on Fairbairn's Ridge, by which the communication was cut off between Kingston and the Vigie. The detachment of the 60th at the latter post being short of supplies, Lieutenant-Colonel Ritche, of the 60th, with 200 of that corps and 150 of the St. Vincent Rangers, was detached to escort the necessary stores. His division had nearly reached its destination when it fell in with the enemy; a sharp action ensued, victory was on the eve of declaring for the British, when, struck by an unaccountable panic, they suddenly gave way and fled in all directions. The supplies fell into the hands of the enemy, and a number of the mules were killed.

The news of this terrible disaster spread dismay through Kingston, for it was thought that the enemy would at once attack all the British posts. It was resolved to at once abandon the Vigie; and to facilitate this step, Brigadier-General Myers, with the 46th and Malcolm's Rangers, marched from Dorsetshire Hill, and posted himself opposite the enemy, as if threatening an attack. This movement had the desired effect. The enemy called in all the detachments which invested the Vigie, and thus enabled the officer commanding that post to retreat at night through heavy rain to Calliaqua, and thence proceed to Kingston in boats.

While the troops were using the utmost exertion to strengthen the posts in the neighbourhood of Kingston, an unexpected reinforcement arrived from Martinique, on the 29th of September. It consisted of the 40th, 54th, 59th, and 2nd West India Regiments,<sup>18</sup> into which latter the St. Vincent Rangers were at once drafted. Major-General Irving also came over from Martinique to assume the command.

The first effect produced by the arrival of this succour, was the retiring of the enemy from their advanced position on Fairbairn's Ridge to the Vigie, where they now collected the whole of their strength. From this post Major-General Irving determined to dislodge them; and, on the night of the 1st of October, the troops marched for that purpose. One column, consisting of 750 men, under Lieutenant-Colonel Strutt, marched by the high road and took post upon Calder Ridge, on the east of the Vigie, about three in the morning. A second column, consisting of 900 men, under Brigadier-General Myers, crossed the Warawarrow River, and detached one party to proceed round by Calliaqua, and another to move up the valley, and climb the heights near Joseph Dubuc's. With this last force was Malcolm's Corps; and, to gain the point to which they were directed, it was necessary to cross a deep rivulet and ascend a steep hill covered with bushes and wood. In doing this it suffered a heavy loss, both of officers and men, from the enemy, who fired upon it almost in security under shelter of the bushes. The British, however, still pressed on, and at length arrived on the top of the Marriaqua or Vigie Ridge. During the ascent of the hill, Malcolm's Corps lost one man killed and two wounded.

In the meantime, the remainder of the second column were struggling in vain to reach the summit of the same ridge; at a point where the enemy had strongly occupied a thick wood, and thrown up a small work. Though the opposing forces were within fifty paces of each other, not an inch of ground was won on either side. Firing commenced at seven in the morning, and was kept up till nightfall. All this time the British were exposed to a violent tropical downpour of rain, which rendered the abrupt declivity so slippery that it was almost impossible to maintain a foothold on it; and, finding he could make no impression on the enemy, the general, about 7 p.m., gave orders for the troops to retire.

During the night, the enemy, from some unknown cause, abandoned the Vigie, and that so hastily that they left behind them, undestroyed, both guns and ammunition. They continued their retreat till they reached the windward part of the island, and the British in their turn advanced. For the remainder of the year, the troops were employed in circumscribing, within as narrow limits as possible, the French and their Carib allies; and, though great hardships were endured, no engagement worthy of note took place.

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<sup>18</sup> See next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII. MAJOR-GENERAL WHYTE'S REGIMENT OF FOOT, 1795

The terrible mortality which thinned the ranks of the British troops in the West Indies, induced the British Ministers to think of reinforcing the army with men better calculated to resist the influence of the climate. The West India Governors were instructed, therefore, in 1795, to bring forward in their respective legislatures a project for raising five black regiments, consisting of 500 men each, to become a permanent branch of the military establishment. There were already several black corps in existence, for Mr. Dundas, during a debate in the House of Commons on the West India Expedition, on the 28th of April, 1795, said that "the West India Army of Europeans and Creoles consisted of 3000 militia and 6000 blacks."<sup>19</sup>

These black corps were distributed amongst the various islands, and were the Carolina Corps, Malcolm's or the Royal Rangers, the Island Rangers (Martinique), the St. Vincent Rangers, the Black Rangers (Grenada), Angus' Black Corps (Grenada), the Tobago Blacks, and the Dominica Rangers. Some of them, notably the Carolina Corps, Malcolm's Corps, and the St. Vincent Rangers,<sup>20</sup> were paid by the Imperial Government, and were consequently Imperial troops; although none of the corps appeared in any Army List, nor were appointments thereto and promotions therein notified in the *London Gazette*.

The five black regiments, now proposed to be raised, were to be in addition to those small black corps already in Imperial pay, and which were to be blended into three permanent regiments. Consequently, in the Army List dated March 11th, 1796, showing the state of the army in 1795,<sup>21</sup> we find the following eight corps, indexed under the heading of "Regiments raised to serve in the West Indies:"

Whyte's Regiment of Foot	" "	(Carolina and Malcolm's Corps).
Myers'	" "	(St. Vincent Rangers).
Keppell's	" "	(probably the Dominica Rangers).
Nicoll's	" "	} (the five new regiments).
Howe's	" "	
Whitelock's	" "	
Lewes'	" "	
Skerrett's	" "	

Major-General Whyte's regiment was called into existence by the *Gazette* of the 2nd of May, 1795; Major-General John Whyte, from the 6th Foot, being appointed colonel. On the 20th of May, Major Leeds Booth, from the 32nd Foot, was appointed lieutenant-colonel; and other officers were rapidly gazetted to it. On the 8th of August, Captain Robert Malcolm, of the 41st Foot, was promoted major in Whyte's regiment. The following is the list of officers appointed to the regiment in 1795:

### Major-General Whyte's Regiment of Foot.

<sup>19</sup> In the Account of the Extraordinary Expenditure of the Army, from 25th December, 1795, to 6th December, 1796, is the following:

<sup>20</sup> "The military force in St. Vincent consists at present of a regiment of infantry and a company of artillery, sent from England; and a black corps raised in the country, but provided for, with the former, on the British Establishment, and receiving no additional pay from the island." – Bryan Edwards, vol. i. p. 428.

<sup>21</sup> The Army List for 1795 is dated January 1st.

Rank.	Name.	Rank in the Regt.	Army.
Colonel	John Whyte	April 24, 1795	M.G., Feb. 26, 1795
Lt.-Col.	Leeds Booth	May 20, 1795	
Major	Robert Malcolm	July 1, 1795	Lieut.-Col., Oct. 5, 1795
Capt.	James Abercrombie	" "	Major, March 1, 1794
	Edward Cotter	" "	
	Francis Costello	" "	
	Alan Hampden Pye	" "	
	Ralph Wilson	" "	
	Thomas Cunninghame	" "	
(C.)	William Powell	Aug. 24, 1795	
	Thomas Deane	Sept. 1, 1795	
	.....		
	.....		
	.....		

Lieuts.	Ross Gillespie	July 1, 1795	Dec. 20, 1794
	Henry Maxwell	" "	March 8, 1795
	David Butler	" "	
	Benjamin Chadwick	" "	
	James Reid	" "	
	James Stewart	" "	
	James Sutherland	" "	
	James Calder	" "	
	Andrew Coghlan	Aug. 24, 1795	Sept. 14, 1792
	Henry Goodinge	Sept. 1, 1795	
	Thos. Page	Sept. 16, 1795	
	.....		
	(11 vacancies)		
	.....		

Ensigns	William Graham	July 1, 1795	
	James Cassidy	" "	
	— McShee	" "	
	— Lightfoot	" "	
	— M'Callum	" "	
	— Froggart	" "	
	— McLean	" "	
	R.W. Atkins	" "	
	John Egan	" "	
	James Reed	" "	
(Cornet)	W. Connor	" "	
	— Crump	" "	
	John Morrison	" "	
	Donald M'Grace	" "	
	William Reid	" "	
	— Dalton	Sept. 1, 1795	
	Thomas Byrne	" "	
	C.B. Darley	Sept. 9, 1795	
	Christ. Thos. Roberts	Oct. 5, 1795	
	.....		
	.....		
	.....		

Adjutant	.....		
Qrnr.	— McWilliam	Nov. 18, 1795	
Surgeon	— Bishop	June 10, 1795	
Chaplain	.....		

It was intended that each of these regiments raised for service in the West Indies should have a cavalry troop, and in the *London Gazette* are the following:

**Major-General Whyte's Regiment of Foot**

August 1, 1795 Lieutenant – Powell, from the 8th Foot, to be Lieutenant of Cavalry.  
 August 29 Lieutenant – Powell, Lieutenant of Cavalry, to be Captain of Cavalry.

July 11 Acting Adjutant – Connor, from Lieutenant-Colonel McDonnell's regiment, to be Cornet.

But this idea was soon abandoned, and in 1797 the cavalry troop disappeared.

The 1st West India Regiment (for so it was at once styled in the West Indies, although in the Army List and the *London Gazette*, the designation "Major-General Whyte's Regiment of Foot" was not discontinued until February, 1798) first appears in the "Monthly Return for the Windward, Leeward, and Caribbee Islands," in September, 1795, as follows:

- A: Colonel.
- B: Lieut. – Colonel.
- C: Majors.
- D: Captains.
- E: Lieutenants.
- F: Ensigns.
- G: Chaplain.
- H: Adjutant.
- I: Quarter-Master.
- J: Surgeon.
- K: Mate.
- L: Sergeants Present.
- M: Drummers Present.
- N: Present, fit for duty.
- O: Sick.
- P: Recruiting.
- Q: Total.

Regiments or Corps.	Stations.	Officers Present.													Effective Rank & File.					
		Commissioned.						Staff.							L	M	N	O	P	Q
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K								
Maj.-Gen. Whyte's	Martinico	-	-	-	3	1	5	-	-	1	-	-	6	6	43	4	4	51		
Brig.-Gen. Myers'	Martinico	1	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	5	6	41	5	5	51		
	Total.	1	-	-	5	2	6	-	-	2	-	-	11	12	84	9	9	102		

and the following note is, in the same Return, appended to the state of the company of the "Black Carolina Corps," which was in Grenada; the other two companies having remained in Martinique since their removal there from St. Lucia at the end of April, 1795. "This corps has been reformed, and fifty of the men, who were fit for service, have been drafted into the 1st New West India Regiment. When the remainder of the corps can be collected together, it is possible a few more may be found fit for service."

Major-General Whyte's, or the 1st West India Regiment, remained at Martinique, without any further accession to its strength than these fifty men from the Carolina Corps, till December, 1795.

In the "Muster Roll of His Majesty's 1st West India Regiment of Foot, for 183 days, from the 25th of June to the 24th of December, 1795, inclusive," the list of officers is given as already shown. Captain James Abercrombie, Lieutenants David Butler, Benjamin Chadwick, and James Sutherland are shown as "drowned on passage," and the following note is added: "Some few of the dates of enlistments and enrolments of the non-commissioned officers and drummers may not probably be quite exact, and some others may have been engaged in England not down on the muster roll, all the regimental books, attestation papers, etc., having been left in possession of the paymaster, Brevet-Major Abercrombie (no adjutant at that time being appointed), who was lost in December or January

last on board the *Robert and William* transport, No. 44, on the voyage to this country." The non-commissioned officers and drummers were Europeans, one sergeant and three corporals being shown as "sick and absent in England" in this roll; and, in the next, a drummer is similarly shown. The roll is signed by Leeds Booth, Lieutenant-Colonel; Ed. S. Cotter, Captain and Paymaster; and Thomas Holbrook, Acting Adjutant. The following is the proof table:

- A: Colonel.
- B: Lieut. – Colonel.
- C: Major.
- D: Captains.
- E: Lieutenants.
- F: Cornets.
- G: Ensigns.
- H. Adjutant.
- I. Chaplain.
- J. Quartermaster.
- K. Surgeon.
- L. Mate.
- M. Sergeants.
- N. Corporals.
- O. Drummers.
- P. Privates.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Present	-	1	-	1	1	1	5	-	-	1	-	-	10	-	12	9
Absent	1	-	1	8	6	-	13	-	-	-	1	-	7	3	3	27
Non-effective	-	-	-	5	7	-	5	-	-	1	-	-	5	8	5	13
Total.	1	1	1	14	14	1	23	-	-	2	1	-	22	11	20	49

Although it was intended that the privates of West India regiments should be black, yet, apparently, white men were not prohibited from serving in the ranks; for, in later muster rolls, two or three privates are shown as "enrolled in England," and one of these is afterwards shown as "transferred to 60th." A volunteer, David Scott, who joined 29th May, 1797, was also promoted ensign in November of that year. These enrolments of Europeans only occur in the first three years of the regiment's existence, and negro privates were available for promotion to, at least, the rank of corporal very early; for a Private John Lafontaine, who was promoted corporal, is shown in the muster roll terminating December 24th, 1796, as "claimed as a slave." The pay of a private in a West India regiment was then sixpence per diem.

## **CHAPTER VIII.**

### **THE CAPTURE OF ST. LUCIA, 1796**

In January, 1796, the company of Malcolm's Royal Rangers that was at St. Vincent was moved to St. Christopher; the other company still remained at Martinique, and both, in April, 1796, were selected to take part in the expedition to St. Lucia. "That island could then muster for its defence about 2000 well-disciplined black soldiers, a number of less effective blacks, and some hundred whites, who held positions both naturally and artificially strong, and were plentifully supplied with artillery, ammunition, and stores. The post on which the Republicans chiefly confided for their defence was that of Morne Fortune. It is situated on the western side of the island, between the rivers of the Carenage and the Grand Cul de Sac, which empty their waters into bays bearing the same name. Difficult of access by nature, it had been rendered still more so by various works. In aid of this they had also fortified others of the mornes, or eminences, in its vicinity. The whole of this position, embracing a considerable extent of ground, it was of the utmost importance to invest closely, with as little delay as possible, that the enemy might not escape into the rugged country of the interior, and thus be in a condition to carry on a protracted and harassing war, which experience had already more than once proved to be highly detrimental to an unseasoned invading force.

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