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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF GOLD COAST JOURNALISM

BY

MAGNUS J. SAMPSON, B.A.

*(of the Anona Family)*

Author of "A Political Retrospect of the  
Gold Coast, 1860-1930."



WITH A FOREWORD BY  
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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
GEORGE EKEM FERGUSON, F.R.G.S.  
(MY LATE MATERNAL UNCLE)  
AND  
JOHN EKUAN SAMPSON  
(MY LATE PATERNAL UNCLE)

THIS WORK IS MOST REVERENTLY AND  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

## FOREWORD.

Mr. Magnus Sampson has asked me to write a foreword to this very able and interesting Essay of his, 'Of Gold Coast Journalism.' It is a great joy to me that, after these three years which I have spent in England since 1931, my West African friends are still my friends, and that he should ask me to do this for him. And I have very gladly—though I fear somewhat dilatorily, owing to pressure of other work—done my best to correct the proofs of the Essay, and to see it satisfactorily through the press. His patience with my delays is only another evidence of his friendship and kindness to me.

The Press of a country not only reflects the opinion of its people, but to a great extent also moulds the opinion of such as read it, not only by its leading articles, but perhaps even more by the various methods it may employ of presenting news items to its readers, stressing some, and either excluding others altogether, or relegating them to an obscure corner of some unobtrusive column. It is my opinion that, with the present rapid spread of education in the Gold Coast and Ashanti, Gold Coast journalism stands to-day at the beginning of a new era of great and ever-increasing responsibility. Within the next ten or fifteen years it must necessarily attain a power of shaping the thoughts of a people to an extent which has not been possible in the past. But it is not possible to build, either in journalism or in any other sphere, without very careful study of what has been already built by those who have worked at the task before we came to it, and it is therefore particularly suitable that at this juncture Mr. Sampson has collected for us in this most readable essay a good deal of detail, not readily accessible, of the pioneers who in this field of Gold Coast journalism cleared the Bush and laid the foundations in years gone by.

To all, therefore, whether African or European, who have any stake in the future of West Africa I commend this little book.

BERNARD CLEMENTS, O.S.B.

Nashdom Abbey,  
Burnham, Bucks.

8.8.34.



# A Brief History of Gold Coast Journalism.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

The substance of this historical narrative was first delivered at a lecture under the distinguished Chairmanship of Dr. J. R. Forde, M.B., Ch.B., (Senior Medical Officer) supported by his amiable wife, Mrs. Forde, on July 9th, 1932, under the auspices of St. John's Church (English Church Mission), Winneba. Shortly afterwards I wrote a summary of the lecture for the 1932 Special Christmas Number of the *Gold Coast Independent* under the title of "Masters of Gold Coast Journalism."

But this booklet has been suggested by a hint given by a correspondent from Nigeria—evidently a Gold Coast African resident in that place—in a letter contributed to the *Gold Coast Independent* some time after the lecture had been noticed in that paper. In adopting the suggestion, I have rewritten the narrative with additions, and it is issued as an historical *vade mecum* for the student of journalistic and political history of the Gold Coast.

I am indebted to the Rev. Father Bernard Clements, O.S.B., formerly Rector, St. Augustine's Theological College, Kumasi, a true lover of the African, particularly the Gold Coast African, who in the midst of overwhelming labours, has kindly given time to read the booklet and to write a foreword, and also to see it through the press. I am also obliged to my cousin the Rev. Father George E.F. Laing, (Priest-in-Charge of St. John's Church, Winneba) for valuable suggestions.

Further, I would not forget to mention with gratitude the invaluable assistance given me by my Father, Mr. P. E. Sampson, Barrister-at-Law, and my old friend Prince R. J. Ghartey as well as my uncle, Mr. Willie Freebody Acquah for various forms of encouragement.

MAGNUS J. SAMPSON.

Winneba,  
July, 1934.

it in his brief but excellent account—*a multum in parvo*—has been allowed to remain an “unwritten history” all these years. It is, therefore, scarcely necessary to emphasise the importance of this work, the object of which is to review briefly the period or ground already covered by Casely Hayford, and to endeavour to fill up the gap of the past three decades of journalistic development of this country for the “scientific” or comprehensive treatment of the subject by the future historian.

The three estates of the realm, as is well known, are the three orders into which all natural-born subjects are legally divided, to wit, the Clergy, the nobility and the commonalty. They are represented in Parliament by the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the Commons. But in England journalism is also now an estate of the realm—the fourth estate—which is said to have been more powerful than any of the estates, and even more powerful than all of them put together if it could ever be brought to act as a united whole. This is a truism hardly needing illustration, since in the civilised world there is perhaps nothing which the statesman or politician fears so much as the press. This is obvious because it is the press which educates public opinion and which also, by its agitations, is capable of dismissing Governments from power and Parliamentarians from their seats in Parliament. It was nothing surprising, therefore, when that renowned English statesman, Mr. Winston Churchill, cried out, “God preserve us from our patriotic press.” And as the press has been sometimes a curb to statesmen and Governments throughout the civilised world, so let us hope, in the near future, our press will be to the Central Government and leaders of thought, when we shall have passed out of our present stage into a more advanced one with an effective voice in the management of our affairs.

It has been said that the journalist is older than the journal. This fact could be shown from instances taken from classical Athens and Rome. That is how Xenophon and Isocrates of the famous Athenian days are said to have been the first journalists or pamphleteers that ever lived. Furthermore, Julius Caesar and Cicero, of the brilliant Roman period, were also known to be journalists.



The same truth may be illustrated from the experiences of mediaeval England. Before the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, the fore-runner of the modern newspaper man was a news collector and distributor whose name was Fenn. The noble man made it his duty to go about from place to place and from day to day collecting news and observing happenings which he put into writing for sale as a weekly newspaper. This self-imposed task of Fenn was the humble beginning of English journalism. Similarly in this country did the journalist exist before the journal as we shall presently see. Truly history is cosmopolitan.

## CHAPTER II.

### JOURNALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

✓ The history of English Journalism in its early stages, finds close analogy with the history of the Gold Coast Journalism in that as Fenn started English Journalism as a news collector and distributor, so also to Charles Bannerman, of Accra, is due the honour of sowing the seed of journalism in this country in the "Seventies" as a newsletter-writer by editing the *West African Herald* in his own handwriting on foolscap paper. This was before the introduction of the printing press into this country. But it was the celebrated James Brew, of Cape Coast, who watered the seed sown by Charles Bannerman—a man of the highest integrity and political honour—and saw its germination in the establishment of the first newspaper press in the Gold Coast, which indicated the transition from newsletter-writing to newspaper edition. This happened in 1885 when he (James Brew) started a paper called *Western Echo* at Cape Coast. With his facile pen and with a burning and characteristic enthusiasm, he displayed a rare journalistic acumen, and ranging with the vigilance of an eagle and the dignity of a veritable Achilles in the famous columns of the *Western Echo* over the whole West African politics, he compelled the respect of both Governments and peoples. He developed into the most brilliant journalist that the Gold Coast has ever known; and no newspaper man ever stamped, in characters more distinct and durable, his personality upon his journal than was done by James Brew upon the *Western Echo*. He edited the paper with the combination of such dexterity of method and such rigidity of principle that for a number of years it was a source of inspiration to the rising youth. The late Honourable Casely Hayford, M.B.E., and the late Timothy Laing, were his assistants on the *Western Echo*. Those who did not know of what stuff James Brew was made, but knew the journalistic ability of



foremost place among the newspaper pioneers of this country. It may perhaps serve a useful purpose to quote one or two more examples to show the journalistic skill and literary style of James Brew. The following passage which is culled from the leading article of the *Western Echo* of April 10th, 1886, speaks for itself:—

“We are passing through a critical period of the country’s history. In after years it will be pointed to as the time at which commenced its more rapid decline or its advance in the scale of civilisation. Trade has declined and is declining day after day; the mal-administration of affairs by Governor Griffith and his officials is causing discontentment and dissatisfaction all round, and to bring into still bolder relief the suicidal policy of our administration other influences are at work sapping the very foundations of law and order.”

Then again in the “Leader” of the same paper of December 16-23, 1886, the following passage appears:—

“The revenue of the colony is being eaten up by the system of government which obtains here. It goes without saying that the governmental staff is far in excess of the needs and requirements of the service and that the system of six months’ leave after a year’s service makes a big hole in the expenditure. There is no earthly reason for the continuance of the Government on such principles. The protectorate has not increased in extent although the revenue has advanced by leaps and bounds, but that is no justification for unnecessary outlay. Although we have it told us that when riches increase the disbursements follow in their wake, yet this is not in accordance with the strict principles of political economy as practised elsewhere than on the West Coast of Africa where it is held even when the resources of a Colony are limited increased expenditure is justifiable.”

The problems with which these quotations deal are identical to some of the present day ones. The economic blizzard with its attendant declining revenue and the squandermaniac policy of the Government—despite the critical financial situation of the country with no historical parallel—are all acute problems of the day. What James Brew had to say on this subject was true in his own time, but it goes without saying that it is still the quintessence of political and economic wisdom. The significance of the saying, “There is nothing new under the sun” is here emphasised. Truly history repeats itself.

The “Boys” column, the “Ladies” column and “What society says” column of the *Western Echo* were

all interesting and educative features of the paper. In 1888, James Brew left home for Europe as a legal adviser to the late Mr. Jacob Sey in connection with a case of his against Mr. Walter Griffith, and lived there until his death in London in 1915.

During his absence in England his nephew, the late Honourable Casely Hayford, who had been an assistant editor of the *Western Echo*, re-organised the paper and re-christened it the *Gold Coast Echo*. It had but a short career of two years, but nevertheless did useful service to this country. Among other things that the paper did, it is said, was to advocate a scheme of municipal government for Cape Coast on native lines.

Contemporaneous with the *Western Echo* came the *Gold Coast News*, which was published at Cape Coast with Mr. Niblett, a European Barrister-at-Law, as proprietor and editor. I quote below two editorial passages to show the tone of the paper which was very much like that of its contemporary, the *Western Echo*, as to fearless and unremitting criticism.

✓ "No doubt almost everybody who takes any interest in this colony must have seen that among our various wants at the present moment is the establishment of a Bank. We are aware that this is a question which at its very threshold must suggest some enquiry of an extensive character. Before a bank can be established or introduced into any place you have to make certain that there are all the favourable conditions to ensure its maintenance. In other words you have to make sure that the people for whose benefit it is intended are prepared to receive it in a proper way, or to accord to it that support which would be essential to its success. It would be no use to introduce any institution into a place where the people would not be prepared to receive it or to care for it. Let us see if the Gold Coast is prepared to accord a favourable reception to a bank. To begin with, are the people sufficiently civilised to know what a bank means? We think they are. It is true that in this country if the investigation were instituted, there would be a preponderating number of the inhabitants ignorant of the objects of such a useful establishment. But there would still be a good many people whose conception (on the subject) would be different. The educated natives in whose direct interests the Bank would be introduced would have some better ideas about it and would rather be disposed to support it. Although the majority of the people would be against the institution by reason of the fact that they did not know what it was, we should nevertheless have some whose

conception on its utility would be different and would savour of an inclination to do all in their power to keep it flourishing.

*Gold Coast News*, June 6th, 1885.

✓ "In another column we publish a letter from the Queen's Advocate correcting some impression under which we were labouring. We were under the impression that no provision had been made for appeals from the Full Court of the Colony to the Privy Council, and although our belief has been apparently erroneous we think we were justified in arriving at that conclusion, by reason of the fact that we were aware of efforts having been made in certain cases to carry appeals from the Court here to Her Majesty's Privy Council and of those attempts having been rendered abortive owing to the Court having stated that no such provision existed; and repeated but unavailing efforts were made to obtain information as to the existence of any such order of enactment. We have no hesitation in stating it as our firm belief that the public generally, with the exception, we dare say, of a few officials, had no cognisance of the Order in Council to which the learned Queen's Advocate refers, and we doubt much whether it was known to the members of the profession. In such a case, we are of opinion that we are warranted in drawing attention to what appeared to us to be a vital defect in our legal machinery, and if the result of our articles of the "SUPREME COURT ORDINANCE, 76" has led to the public being placed in possession of such valuable information, of which it had no previous knowledge, we cannot consider that our humble efforts have been entirely misdirected. The Government Gazette was the proper channel for the publication of Her Majesty's Order in Council; but it so happens that in this case it was almost tantamount to hiding it under a bushel, hence the general ignorance thereof.

"*Gold Coast News*," June 27th, 1885.

✕ The above quotations make illuminating reading. It was not until nine years after the advocacy of the *Gold Coast News* for an introduction of a Bank into this country, that is in 1894, that Sir Alfred Jones, of blessed memory, seized the opportunity and founded the Bank of British West Africa Limited. We give thanks for the confidence of its founder and the enthusiastic impetuosity of the man, for, it goes without saying that Colonial banking has contributed in no slight degree to the development of West Africa.

~ The next paper to follow the *Gold Coast Echo* in 1891 at Cape Coast was the *Gold Coast People*, which, it is said, was owned and edited by a gentleman of ability whose identity was kept unknown to the public. But I have been told by older people that that gentleman was no

less a personage than the late Honourable John Mensah Sarbah, C.M.G., Bossman's great work on the Gold Coast was reproduced in the pages of this paper which formed a medium of instruction in matters political. As a writer Sarbah is an outstanding figure among all those who have distinguished themselves in the difficult art of writing in the Gold Coast by reason of the aptitude for the philosophy of politics that belonged to him. The following are some of his illuminating pieces of writing:—

“I am afraid we are prone to undervalue our own capacity and ability, certainly we are unwilling or easily discouraged to undergo the discipline and perseverance and quiet endurance without which there is no valuable experience leading to the accomplishment of anything of worth.”

“Fauti patriot and Japanese Emperor with his statesmen were both striving to raise up their respective countries by the proper education and efficient training of their people. The same laudable object was before them both. The African's attempt was ruthlessly crushed and his plans frustrated. Japan was not under any unsympathetic protection; she has succeeded, and her very success ought to be an inspiration as well as an incentive to the people of the Gold Coast Territories to attempt again to keep on striving until they win in the Twentieth Century what was sought for Thirty-five years ago.”

For about twenty years after the admirable efforts of Charles Bannerman the Eastern Province remained without a paper until during the early nineties when the *Gold Coast Chronicle*, the *Gold Coast Express*, and the *Gold Coast Independent* came into existence at Accra. The “*Chronicle*” was established for the first time in 1891 by the late Mr. Boi Vanderpuve, subsequently it passed into the hands of the late Mr. Timothy Laing, and in 1896 it was incorporated in the *West African Gazette*, under the guidance of the man. The man who edited the “*Independent*” was the late Mr. Bright Davies, of Freetown, Sierra Leone. The “*Express*”, being a daily paper, does not come under this head. It will, therefore, be noticed in a subsequent chapter dealing with daily papers of this country.

But by far the greatest effort in journalism in the nineties it is said, was the *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, whose editor was the late versatile Rev. S. R. B. Attoh Ahuma, M.A. The paper was a religious one owned by

the Wesleyan Methodist Church, to which Attoh Ahuma belonged as an eminent minister. But in spite of its strictly religious policy, the editor could not help using its column to ventilate the political grievances of the people of this country. This naturally met with the displeasure of the Wesleyan Mission authorities. Nevertheless Attoh Ahuma was convinced of the justice of his cause or the propriety of his action and declared that Religion and Politics are two inseparable things for, without the political tranquility or safety of the country missionary efforts would be impossible—"Oman si ho nna posi ban sim"—to use a Fanti adage. It fell to the lot of the '*Methodist Times*' to fight and win Governor Maxwell's notorious Lands Bill of 1897 which sought to declare all the lands of the Gold Coast Crown lands. Thus Attoh Ahuma was rightly considered a great journalistic force in his day, who by the popularity of his topics and his treatment and by the universality of interests to which he appealed carried the entire country with him. He possessed an amazing stock of English words which were constantly employed by him. Thus he lent himself at times to the temptation of being bombastic. None the less he had a commendable, shrewd, and classical style of which the following selected passages from his booklet entitled, '*Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness*,' which are reprinted from the columns of the *Gold Coast Leader*, are an example:—

"It is strenuously asserted by rash and irresponsible literalists that the Gold Coast, with its multiform composition or Congeries of States or Provinces, independent of each other, divided by complex political institutions, laws and customs and speaking a great variety of languages could not be described as a nation in the eminent sense of the word. The term, it is urged, presupposes in its connotation, the existence of a homogeneous community included in or bounded by one vast Realm, governed and controlled by one potent sovereign and possessed of one constitution, one common tongue. But the objection appears to us to be purely academic and is obviously advanced without sufficient regard to practical considerations. In spite therefore of the dogmas and *ipse dixit*s of those wiseacres who would fain deny to us, as a people, the inalienable heritage of nationality, we dare affirm, with sanctity of reason and with the emphasis of conviction, that—we are a Nation. It may be a miserable, mangled, tortured, twisted *tertium quid*, 'or to



quote a higher authority a Nation' scattered and peeled. . . .  
a Nation melted out and trodden down,' but still a Nation."

"When a son of the soil who 'wears the rose of youth' has cut his wisdom teeth, and is become conscious of himself; when he fully knows who and what he is, he yet lacks one or two things, perhaps the most important branch of his moral education, that is to say, if his life is to be of any practical value to himself and to the community at large amongst whom his lot is cast. It is simply this: *his virtues must go out of him*, he must touch other lives for good. As Shakespeare, the sweet singer of Avon, has it:—

"Spirits are not finely touch'd, but to fine issues. I ought follows as a natural corollary from I am and I can. *Noblesse oblige*—Nobility has its impositions of peculiar obligation, and the liberal gifts that we receive, the powers that are developed in us, the knowledge that we acquire, the experiences we go through are all so many talents divinely bestowed on and entrusted to us for wise and far reaching purposes, and woe is that man who waste himself upon his virtues, or his virtues on himself alone, oblivious of his environments, regardless of his mission in life."

"Imitation, it is said, is the sincerest form of flattery; but according to Jonathan Swift in his *Cadenus and Vanessa*, 'flattery's the food of fools.' *Histrionism* is undoubtedly the special *forte* of the educated West African; he is a copyist to the pitch of profane excellence. The Whiteman has his vices as well as his virtues, and sometimes the vices of his virtues. To follow him half-way, therefore, is not, and cannot be the sincerest form of flattery. The average West African of the Molluscan Order, is a clever imitator of every-thing the Whiteman thinks, and does and says, particularly in the outward appearance and observance."

Towards the close of the nineties—in 1898—the *Gold Coast Aborigines* appeared on the journalistic field at Cape Coast under the auspices of the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights' Protection Society. It was the Rev. Asaam who was first responsible for the editing of the paper; subsequently the late "Father" J. P. Brown had charge of it. Copies of the paper which I have been privileged to see convince me of the good service it must have done to this country. The following is the full text of the leading article published in Vol. 1., No. 2, of the paper of January 8th, 1898. I quote the full text because of its very weighty message which may serve a useful purpose in these days of individualistic tendency or exclusiveness:—

## "A WORD TO THE GOLD COAST ABORIGINES RIGHTS PROTECTION SOCIETY."

"It will not be amiss that our first words should be addressed to the Society whose organ this is, now that we consider ourselves to have made our debut on the stage of journalism. There are one or two very important subjects claiming our attention at this eventful time, but we must waive them and venture to offer an advice to the society. "Advice" says the proverb "is cheap". So is air. So commonly is water. Yet air and water are each worth more than gold; and advice even when it costs nothing, sometimes turns out to be more valuable than if every word had been a diamond.

"To even the most casual observer, it would be easily discerned that as a people we are on the eve of some momentous and revolutionary changes, and for us who live at this period of our existence to be mere "spectators of the plays on our social and political stages, to be utterly unconcerned of and disinterested in, passing events with one's time and attention engrossed in the duties of one's own little world, rendering one's self imperturbable to everything else in these days, will be not only of the direct kind of selfishness and disloyalty to one's country, but harmful to one's self, and cruel and unjust to one's posterity. We have each been privileged to live at this time by the All-wise Providence for purpose, we have all been endowed with special talents for our special work, to live in these days. In our different walks of life, Providence has prepared us—and how much that preparation has cost us and taxed His patience, He alone fully knows. The old who still live amongst us must remember they are spared to the country for a purpose, their comrades have done theirs and gone to join the majority. The young, some with their influence and position, others with their intelligence and influence, some with their common sense, others with their naked native-ability, may find enough and more than enough to do for this dear fatherland. What a good thing it would be if these would one and all, adopt as their motto in life: *"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."* a motto actuating their very motives in all they do, ruling their very lives, forming the very foundation of what structures of wealth, fame, position, or reputation they may aim to build for themselves; blessed, thrice blessed is that people whose youth may be imbued with such a motto. And there are many ways of one's dying for his country, some die in wealth, others in reputation, and in some instances even, some are called upon to give up their very lives for their country. In all this we have some glorious illustrations in English History and even in days gone by amongst our people. The English nation to-day enjoy their liberty of speech and all the good things we hear of, because their ancestors with their wealth, reputation and lives, purchased these things for them. "History repeats itself" and why may it not be with us? Perhaps with us this may sound quite utopian, and yet

it can be done. If that hideous thing, that *bête noir* of the country, can only be done away with, surely all things considered we can make such rapid strides as will astound the most cynical sceptic, at home and abroad? We do not say this grim foe of all that is good and noble is indigenous to the soil—far from this; but we do say that it exists among us to such a degree, that one can see it rearing its head over everything else even where the prosperity, the progress and the peace and the quietness of the land are at stake. No, no, let us seek to bury this fiendish spirit. Let those who are blessed with the good things of the world know how to give a helping hand to a poor struggling unfortunate brother and he will find some good will accrue from that little kindness and immortalize his name when the wealth which he sought to amass would have been squandered by those he left behind. Let these feel that after all, they are but stewards of what they possess, to Him who raiseth up one and putteth down another. Let those amongst us who have had the advantages of a good education use it freely in the interest of the country, remembering that others might have had the same advantages, and might have done just as good, if not better, had they not been denied those advantages by Him who knoweth all things. Let those who are blessed with sound common sense use it in the interests of the country; and may one and all with whatever blessing we may enjoy in life. Whatever we may be or do let us never be tempted to say, ‘Is not this great Babylon that I have built. . . by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?’ A great and powerful King in olden days said so, once, and we know to what a pitiable condition he was brought, and to-day we can count by the score many who have come to a miserable end, if not in themselves certainly in their posterity whose talents were misused. In this very country we have had in the good old days, some sweet instances of self-denying men and women, and why not now with all our enlightenment and civilisation. Let us all, therefore, do what we can in our day and generation in spite of all discouragements, base ingratitude, scurrilous remarks, nauseating disappointments, and that for the dear country’s sake.

‘This formation of the ABORIGINES SOCIETY amongst us, is very opportune. May the spirit of unity that has brooded over us to bring us together thus continue to lead us! Here the young and the old, the educated and the illiterate, meet together for the common good of the land. We have no wish to give ominous sounds, we therefore desire to express our hearty longing for its permanency. We hope the enthusiasm which characterized the SOCIETY at its commencement will live and grow. Let it never be said of it, as it is usually said of things with us, ‘It is only a nine days wonder.’ And for this end let each member feel his importance and responsibility for the working of the SOCIETY. We do not wish to see things done in such a way that the work would be thrown on a few, so that if Mr. So-and-so happened to be away, no headway could be made

✓ with business; the representatives of our Kings and Chiefs should be present at certain meetings, say the monthly or quarterly meetings; we are pleased to find their linguists now and again at the meetings, but we think there should be certain meetings at which representatives from them should invariably attend; in a large Protectorate like ours there should be properly worked branches in all the principal towns on the sea-board, and at all the places where the Kings and Chiefs reside. At present as far as we know only Axim and Elmina have branches, but we think other branches should be formed without the least possible delay, if we wish to work harmoniously and effectively; and above all we should see that the Government recognise in some practical form this SOCIETY which is in reality the mouthpiece of the nation.

"We hope the interest which the Kings and Chiefs had in the movement of the SOCIETY has not in the least abated. It is just possible that a large country like ours where in some instances we are separated by some miles each locality may have its peculiarity which may in some unaccountable way interfere with the doing of this SOCIETY; let us guard against this for it is in these things that we unwittingly play ourselves into the hands of enemies. We have lived in contact with a civilized Government long enough to live down such things: the SOCIETY we think should see that our Kings and Chiefs do have intelligent people to act as their clerks for it is unquestionably true that some at least of our troubles arise from the fact that these fifth rate "scholars" do not translate Government communications to them properly, nor can the authorities understand their "high English" and the result very often is grave and serious misunderstandings on both sides. We may revert to this subject again, for we deem it very important.

"The duties which the SOCIETY has to perform are great and many, we hope, however, nothing undaunted, it will live; and living, will so manage and carry out things, that their organ too may never follow the fate of its predecessors—(this will be to our crying shame as a people) that right and justice may prevail, to the peace and quietness of the land."

With the *Gold Coast Aborigines* came to an end a chapter, and a wonderful chapter indeed, in the history of Gold Coast journalism, and as one looks back and reflects one could happily only see what glorious part fearless journalism had played in the political history of the country from the Victorian Era—which was an era of profound erudition and individual genius—up to the present time, and is likely to play in the future.



## CHAPTER III.

### MODERN JOURNALISM.

The beginning of the present century witnessed the appearance of the *Gold Coast Leader* at Cape Coast, with the late Mr. Herbert Brown as its proprietor, and with it a new chapter of the history of the Gold Coast journalism opened. The late Rev. Egyir Asaam, who was destined to play an important part in the modern journalism, though of a smaller calibre than James Brew, Mensah Sarbah, Casely Hayford and Attoh Ahuma, did not fail to lay a solid foundation as the first editor of the "*Leader*" upon which, for thirty or more good years now, others were to rear the superstructure. The style of Egyir Asaam was clear and terse, as could be seen from his message to the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights' Protection Society reproduced in the last chapter from the *Gold Coast Aborigines*, of which he was the first editor. He was cool and reflective, and honesty was his polar star during his journalistic career. When he left the editorial chair, Attoh Ahuma stepped into his shoes for a while, before Casely Hayford took over and edited the paper, until he also handed it to the late Hon. E. J. P. Brown, O.B.E., who piloted it until Casely Hayford took over again up to the time of his death in August, 1930. Other people who have had connection with the editorial staff of the paper in recent years are the Rev. Gaddiel R. Acquaaah, of the Methodist Church, the Rev. Ntedu Kyirbua, of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Mr. Sydney Hayford, still on the staff of the paper, and Mr. John Buckman, now a Tribunal Registrar.

During the Congress Session in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in February, 1923, the late Hon. Cornelius May, proprietor and editor of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, described the *Gold Coast Leader*,—while speaking on the "Union of West African Press" at the Wilberforce Memorial Hall—as the best edited paper in West Africa, for the constructive and outspoken character of its editorials as well as its high literary tone during the time of Casely Hayford were unsurpassed in the whole West African journalism. As a journalist Casely Hayford established himself as the idol and the oracle of the people

of this country. The enthusiasm of the man was always infectious. He was one who believed that, in the material as well as in the spiritual, mountains can be removed by faith. This doctrine he always sought to impress upon his readers. Of all the journalists and publicists from the beginning of the present century up to the present time who have stamped their personality in lasting characters on the press, Casely Hayford has been the most picturesque figure. He was the Macaulay of the Gold Coast, that famous English Essayist and historian. It has been said by Goethe that "the style of a writer is a faithful representative of his mind." The quotations below from the *Gold Coast Leader* thus indicate the mind as well as the crisp and graceful style of Casely Hayford:

✓ "Men, the future holds in store for our race incalculable benefits, but it is only in proportion as we bestir ourselves in intelligent action that we shall come to any good. The age in which we live is a practical one, and you cannot get the good things of life by merely possessing the philosopher's stone. You must dig the mountains, dive into the bowels of the earth by the use of sinew and brain, if you expect to thrive as others have thriven. You must cut the virgin forest and apply scientific means, if you wish the earth to yield her increase. This is not a mere figure of speech, but a stubborn fact which you must take into account or be left out in the cold. Today men of British West Africa are being outstripped in every field of endeavour. Once upon a time our merchantmen vied with Europeans in the hold upon the trade of the country. Today we end in broken purposes, broken purses, and sad to tell, we are so sunk in despair as to indulge in vain querulous complaint of the Syrian and others within our gates, who have the brains to use their wit and time to good purpose. When God said to men of Israel to go over to the land of Canaan and possess it, it did not mean that they were to have whatever they wished for the mere asking, but it meant hard work, hard thinking against the forces of nature and the machinations of men."

January 3rd, 1925.

✓ "The life-blood of every community is commerce. The more a nation exports and the less it imports the better for the financial status of the people. Therefore every progressive community strives to export more goods than it imports. It follows with us, not being a manufacturing people, the more raw products we export in comparison with what we take in, the greater the degree of our prosperity. In the give and take of business we rely to a large extent upon the European merchant who in turn relies upon us for our output in raw material. So that in ordinary healthy conditions the mutual

relations between the merchant and the producer should be an intimate and a confidential one. Their interests, in a sense are identical, and therefore mutual protection should guide them in their relations with outside bodies. . . . give-and-take, live and let live, honesty of purpose in all business relations will achieve a good deal in our economic prosperity as a people."

June 19th, 1926.

✓ "There is a sanctity about the governance of the world for which mankind as yet has not given enough credit to the Higher Powers. ✕ When we hear of Russia hurling an ultimatum against China and a conflagration released which may involve the whole world in another mighty struggle, even as it started with the last war, men are apt to think that our world is governed by a crazy chance, yet all the while the Hand that guides is sure.

"The last war cost mankind innumerable sacrifices, in blood and treasure, and at the time it seemed as if all the sacrifices were in vain; but upon deeper reflection it is evident that good has come out of the evil, and that the tendency towards general co-operation as against excessive individualism has gained considerable ground. So, no matter what the immediate future may have in store for mankind, we cannot but believe that we shall be brought nearer to the dawn of the new age which the prophets foretold."

✓ The "*Leader*"—which some time ago earned the name of the paper of the Aristocrat—has had the longest and one of the most useful careers in Gold Coast journalism, though not without passing through vacillating circumstances. It is the oldest paper of the Gold Coast to-day, and has attained the age of over thirty years.

✓ The *Gold Coast Advocate*, published at Accra, and whose editor was the late Mr. A. Boi Quartey Papaio, B.A., LL.B. (Cantab.), Barrister-at-Law, was the next weekly paper to follow the *Gold Coast Leader* about 1904. The following quotation is culled from the leading article of the paper of January 14th, 1905:—

✓ "We have now actually entered upon a new year. The question arises, what are the political prospects of the Colony? And what are the possibilities of improvement for the Gold Coast generally and Accra in particular? Among the many important questions that face us today is that which, over and again, had been asked in these columns, in reference to the policy of administration of Government within a few years back; policy encouraging the disposition of arranging the expenditure of public Revenue or the management of public funds to the exclusive interest of the governed, or of the people contributing always to that revenue."—*Gold Coast Advocate*, January 14th, 1905.

The *Gold Coast Nation*, which came into existence at Cape Coast after the "*Advocate*," was the official organ of the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights' Protection Society, with the late Rev. Attoh Ahuma as the organiser and editor. Here again Attoh Ahuma proved himself a political genius and a journalist of the first water. When he left the "*Nation*" the late Mr. W. S. Johnstone took over until the paper became defunct. The press was then bought by Mr. K. Sekyiamma who started the *Gold Coast Times* at Cape Coast in 1922. \*Mr. Sekyiamma had not the advantages of a high training just as some of the present editors of this country, but he is a very able journalist and a self made man. The "*Times*" is noted for its trenchant criticism of Government policy as well as for its strictly conservative policy towards the preservation of native institutions. Before the "*Times*" there was a paper known as the *Eastern and Akwapim Chronicle*, which was edited and published at Accra by that talented man, the late Mr. Timothy Laing. It was a paper which was a potent influence for good in its day.

One of the most influential papers of the Gold Coast in recent years has been the *Gold Coast Independent*, which made its debut in 1918 at Accra through the enterprise of the Hon. Dr. F. V. Nanka Bruce, M.B., Ch.B. (Edin.), and the able editorship of the late Mr. J. J. Akrong, a talented man from Labadi, a suburb of Accra. The paper, which is living up to its motto, "Truth feareth not," has on its editorial staff able men like the Hon. Dr. Nanka-Bruce, Mr. D. G. Tackie and Mr. Peregrino Peters, B.A. (Durham), and finds favour with all sections of the community because of its well-balanced editorials, its interesting "Around the Town" column, as well as its reliable news service. But I cannot pass on from this point without paying a short tribute to the late Mr. J. J. Akrong for the noble part that he played in the inception of this paper as well as the very good foundation he laid for it as the first editor. Whatever measure of fame the "*Independent*" achieved in those early days of its existence, the name of Mr. J. J. Akrong was indissolubly bound with it, for it was not until his appointment

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\*Mr. Sekyiamma died in August, 1934, after this book had gone to press.



as editor of the paper that he felt the full force of his responsibility as a public servant. He was a man of literary ability, which stood him in good stead in working for the upliftment of his country which he loved so well. Shortly after the "*Independent*" appeared the *Vox Populi* at Accra, owned and edited by that enterprising Mr. Kwesi Tete Orgle, Barrister-at-Law.

The *Gold Coast Spectator* was started at Accra in 1927, Mr. A. J. Ocansey being the proprietor and Mr. R. W. Dupigny the editor. The "*Spectator*" is undoubtedly one of the most popular papers of this country, and it is the favourite of the young people because of its fearless tone as well as of its various interesting features, such as "The Literary Bow-Wow" column, "The Boy Scouts" column and "The Music and the Stage" column. Apart from all these the "*Spectator*" has a way of securing instructive articles from special contributors such as the learned Mr. Kobina Sekyi, M.A. (Lond.), a great political writer and critic whose articles are almost always widely read, but whose argumentative and controversial manner of writing has not failed to win for him hostility as well as admiration, Mr. C. S. Adjei, a rapidly rising writer, as well as the writer, Dr. J. B. Danquah was before his paper, *The Times of West Africa*, came into existence, also a special contributor to the "*Spectator*." In the pages of the "*Spectator*" have been published such memorable articles as Mr. Kobina Sekyi's "Thoughts for the Reflective" and "Conflict of Loyalties," Dr. Danquah's "Gold Coast No. 144," and the writer's "Official Camouflage" and "Expecting the Impossible." Mr. R. R. Wutu Ofei, the present editor, is well upholding the traditions of the paper. Contemporaneous with it came the *Gold Coast Truth*, which has since ceased publication.

The youngest "baby" born to Gold Coast journalism is the *Gold Coast Guardian* which saw the light of day at Saltpond towards the close of 1932 and whose fine motto is "Loyalty and Service." Mr. J. E. Baidon, the editor, is quite aware of the uphill task of starting a paper and keeping it up in this country, but he is not of the type who are easily daunted by difficulties. The paper bids fair to do well in the hard struggle towards the attainment of our national goal.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE INTRODUCTION OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS.

I now come to another important phase of the history of Gold Coast journalism, and that is the introduction of daily newspapers into this country which dates back as far as the early "Nineties," when about 1894 the intrepid and pioneer, the late Mr. Timothy Laing, established the *Gold Coast Express* at Accra. The paper continued for a number of years in good service of this country, and ceased to exist towards the close of last century. I quote below a few interesting editorial passages from the paper:—

"After 8 years service in 1889 he (Mr. George Ekem Ferguson) applied for 12 months leave to proceed to England. The object of this leave to use his own words was 'to complete a course of instructions in Science and to apply such knowledge to the interest of the Colony.'

"Sir Brandforth Griffith recommended the application to the favourable consideration of the then Secretary of State (Lord Knutsford). The leave asked for was granted and on the 30th June, 1889, Ferguson left for England with Sir Brandforth Griffith by the *s.s. Barbou* for a course of instruction in practical Science and entered the Royal Norman School of Science and Royal School of Mines, South Kensington."

*Gold Coast Express, June 10th, 1897.*

"Success some one has said 'depends on the power to grasp and make use of opportunities as they occur,' and the result of the examination of the Norman School of Science and Royal School of Mines, 1889-90, proved beyond dispute that Mr. Ferguson possessed in no small measure both the power of grasping and making use of opportunities. The following appeared in the Government Gazette for February 1891— The following extracts of Class list of the Sessional Examinations of the Norman School of Science and Royal School of Mines held in South Kensington, 1889-90, are published for general information—Astronomical Physics, George E. Ferguson, fifth in first class, 81 competing. Mining, assaying and Mine Surveying, George E. Ferguson, sixth in First class, 20 competing. On completing his course in the school of mines which embraced instruction in the principles of the Mining in Metallurgy and Assaying and in Surveying including Map and Plan Drawing, he returned to the Colony and resumed duty on the 2nd Sept., 1890. Since 1890 and up to the time of his death he had

been practically in harness devoting all his energy and resources and applying such knowledge as he had acquired in England to the interest of the Colony. . . . His report and Maps on the special mission to the hinterland in 1891 and 1892 was considered by the Royal Geographical Society a sufficient contribution towards the Geological and Geographical knowledge of the hinterland of this Colony to justify of the award to him of its Gill Memorial Prize, a Gold Watch and a diploma which he received. He was attached to the Neoranza detachment during the Ashanti Expedition of 1895-1896 and was the recipient of the Ashanti Star for his services.

*Gold Coast Express, June 17th, 1897.*

✓ "There can be no doubt that in the course of a few more years, the Gold Coast will be considered and regarded as the richest possession in the Empire.

"The Mining industry is being rapidly promoted and developed and owing to the crisis in South Africa certain millionaires and capitalists in Europe are anxious to invest their money in other channels, preferring the Gold Coast to other places.

✓ "People who have put money into South African Mining Companies and Syndicates are now almost regretting what they have done, and are naturally on the look out for other openings. The war with Transvaal is likely to last for many months and hence the disposition on the part of many of the Capitalists in Europe to invest in other channels.

✓ "The Gold Coast has gold in greater quantities than can be found in any other quarter of the globe, including even Australia and California.

✓ "Mr. Macdonald of the Akim Gold Fields is here and his work on the Gold Coast can be quoted in support of a contention that this country is the richest possession in the British Empire. This gentleman is a most brilliant writer and can speak with some authority on matters pertaining to this country."

*Gold Coast Express, Dec. 21st, 1899.*

✓ The *Gold Coast Express* was followed by another daily, the *Gold Coast Courier*, which came into existence at Christianborg in 1905 for a brief space of time. The following is culled from its leading article for July 21st, 1905:—

"There is no doubt that there was never a period in the history of this country when it was so hard as it is now for a person to find employment.

"In the offices and stores of the merchants, a cry of 'retrenchment' may be heard, and there appears a disposition to dispense with the services of assistants where so employed, right and left, and the plea is 'Trade is dull.' A good deal of anxiety and uneasiness is thus being created. To be in the office

of a merchant in these days, judging from what is taking place now, is to be where you may be at any moment either told that your services cannot be continued, or that to remain in office you will have to submit to some substantial reduction or decrease of salary."

For about 25 years after the "*Courier*" had ceased publication there was not a "daily" in this country until in 1929 when efforts were made to establish one at Accra by Mr. Kpakpa Quartey and subsequently by a European. I believe, neither of which efforts were crowned with success. But out of these attempts came two "dailies," namely, the *Gold Coast Telegraph* and the *Gold Coast Daily News*, for only a brief existence. It was, therefore, not until the establishment of the *Times of West Africa* in 1931, through the foresight and enterprise of our esteemed countryman, Dr. J. B. Danquah, Ph.D., LL.B. (Lond.), that the history of daily newspapers in modern times properly began in this country. Dr. Danquah is the editor-in-chief of the "*Times*," and Mr. MacNeil Stewart—an accomplished writer—his second in command. There can be no two opinions that Mr. Danquah is a born writer or journalist, although it is said that the journalist is made and not born. The cosmopolitan knowledge of affairs as well as the literary genius and insight that belong to him make him a great journalistic force. His writings have inherent vitality, though not always free from error of judgment. The "Diary of a man about town" of the paper is as stimulating and educative as its "Women's Corner,"—of which Miss Marjorie Mansah is supposed to be the writer—is edifying. There has been a good deal of controversy over the identity of the writer of the "Women's Corner" of the "*Times*." Many wish to see the gifted lady writer in order to satisfy their curiosity. But no one has ever seen her in the flesh. But perhaps Miss Marjorie Mensah is an imaginary person just as Sir Roger de Coverly is entirely an imaginary person, and existed only in Addison's vivid imagination. The editorials of the "*Times*" are hard to excel in literary merit, and it seems to me the paper has a bright future before it if it can only stick to its beautiful motto, "Keep on Fighting, there is more Beyond."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MISSION OF THE PRESS.

At this juncture, I wish to say a word or two as to what should be the real mission of the press. The press, as is well known, is the educator of public opinion. Besides, the standard of public morals is largely in its keeping. It is thus a sacred duty. The journalist like the minister of the Gospel should always aim at truth and purity. His is to make the press helpful to the cause of peace and mutual understanding, rather than to encourage sham fights between individuals or parties. I should, therefore, without any hesitation condemn the journalist who would always make it a business to write on the bellicose side or who would encourage anything like that.

The duties of public journalists are manifold, but they are at the same time plain and unmistakable. He who undertakes the responsibilities of a public journalist must make up his mind fearlessly to speak the truth, however bitter, and boldly to encounter the enmity of the powerful. Generally speaking, a journal that enunciates its opinion without fear or favour is admired and respected by the public, just in proportion as it is detested by the authorities whose faults it exposes. But a public journal should be a public friend. The friend of the people and the friend of the authorities; the champion of order and liberty, the opposer of anarchy and of despotism. In order to be respected a journal should be conducted in a spirit of rigid impartiality, with decorum but with boldness. It should neither descend to the meanness of pandering to the public passions nor say 'AMEN' to everything said or done by the authorities. There is no doubt that our journals maintain a very fair standard of journalistic integrity; yet there is ample room for improvement, since some of them have often had the tendency of bordering on the personal or of attacking each other over absurd trivialities. The union of the press

which was recently brought into being at Accra with the Hon. Dr. Nanka Bruce as President, Mr. A. J. Ocaisey as Treasurer, and Mr. D. G. Tackie as Secretary, should be capable of remedying the existing defects in our local journalism. But it is desirable that the scope of the union should be extended to the other provinces of the Colony in order to make it more effective for the difficult task which it has set itself.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CONCLUSION.

In concluding this brief historical narrative, it is a source of gratification to me to observe that the journals of this country do not fall behind similar journals of other colonies of West Africa as to literary matter, get up, and finish. This opinion finds a happy corroboration in the report of the Hon. W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, M.P. (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies) on his visit to West Africa during the year 1926. In that report the former Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies seems to have paid a higher tribute to the Gold Coast journals than to the journals of other colonies of West Africa. In politics there is, perhaps, no country in West Africa to beat the Gold Coast; and since journalism is the daughter of politics, it is, perhaps, not surprising that the Gold Coast African has all along shown such a marked aptitude towards journalism also. Let the youth of this country, therefore, not forget the intellectual and journalistic traditions and prestige of their country, and strive to follow the footprints of their great ancestors on the sands of time.

Too much cannot be said in gratitude and praise to these "Masters of Gold Coast Journalism" through whose self-denying efforts and legible penmanship we are by God's grace what we are. And too much cannot be said in honour of James Brew, Mensah Sarbah, Casely Hayford and Attoh Ahuma, who possessed in a highly cultivated degree that sixth sense of intuition, which so mysteriously approximates to a prescience of the future—for their bold leadership and infectious enthusiasm in the journalistic arena. It is obvious that we owe a great debt of gratitude to our journals for the quality of literary food and political protection which they have, from time to time, been providing for the public. We are indebted to them for their

able exposition of the vagaries and vicious practices of certain white colonials. No nation can be a real nation without good journals or journalists, and if we would achieve independence or at least a measure of self-government, national greatness, and racial glory, it is a duty incumbent upon us as citizens of this country to give the press our moral and financial support.

Now it is said that the greatest need of the world to-day is for consecrated leadership. The same is true of this country. When we consider the accomplishments of the age, is it not indeed amazing that the necessities of the times have not produced leaders capable of coping with them? And yet "Great men have been amongst us, hands that penned and tongues that uttered wisdom," the fruit of whose pertinacity we are reaping to-day. Let us then praise them and immortalise their names, for their share in shaping the destiny of our Motherland claims from us a grateful recognition of their devoted and noble service. The future of the country would be more than assured, if every youth could nobly subscribe to the great dictum of one of the characters in Shakespeare, who exclaimed:—

"I dare do all that may become a man,  
Who dares do more is none."

