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Major-General Sir Charles Dobell K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

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THE CAMPAIGN IN THE CAMEROONS, 1914-1916.

By MAJOR-GENERAL SIR CHARLES DOBELL, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

On Wednesday, 4th October, 1922.

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR H. B. JACKSON, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., F.R.S.,
in the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: In introducing our lecturer, Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, to you, I think I may surmise that he himself, and his reputation, are better known to you than what he is going to describe to you this afternoon—that is, the Cameroons Campaign. It was one of the minor campaigns at the beginning of the War, one of many, their object being mainly to help the Navy—that is, by getting rid of the German wireless stations, about which I will speak a little more at the end of the proceedings. That was the main object of these minor operations at the beginning of the War, viz., to destroy the German wireless stations, which were links of communication between Berlin and the German Naval and Mercantile forces at sea. All those campaigns were successful. The Cameroons was one of the first. I sometimes think that the reason so little is known about the Cameroons campaign is because it was successful and that it was overshadowed by the great events on the Western front, and also there was no "regrettable incident" to cause the public to demand any enquiries. It went smoothly and well, with ups and downs, and ended successfully in less than three years from its commencement. I will now ask Sir Charles Dobell to give us his lecture.

LECTURE.

IN the time at our disposal this afternoon it is not possible to do more than trace, very generally, the conduct of the operations in the German Cameroons, which lasted from August, 1914, to April, 1916, and in which three distinct Allied forces, quite independent of one another, and operating from bases many hundreds of miles apart, were employed.

Many points of interest to both Services, Naval and Military, will, therefore, have to be overlooked or slurred over.

Of all the expeditions and campaigns which were conducted in different parts of the world during the period of the Great War, probably less is known of the operations in West Africa than those which took place in other theatres. This is largely due to the fact that there were comparatively small forces engaged, and that only native troops, British, French and Belgian, were employed, and consequently few Europeans had any personal interest in the operations.

This very ignorance encourages me to hope that my remarks to-day may be of interest.

Immediately after the outbreak of war in August, 1914, a committee was assembled in London, under the presidency of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Jackson, who has shown his continued interest in the Cameroon expedition by taking the Chair here this afternoon, to consider the advisability or necessity of sending expeditions against the German colonies in Africa and elsewhere.

The deciding factors in the recommendations of the committee were whether the particular colony had a wireless station, and whether it possessed a harbour.

In Africa, Germany had four colonies : German East Africa, German South-West Africa, and the Cameroons, each of nearly one-third million square miles in extent, each with a powerful wireless station, and each with a harbour.

The fourth, Togoland, was considerably smaller, had no harbour ; but a very fine wireless station, at Atakpane, near Kamina, had recently been completed.

As regards German East and German South-West Africa the recommendation was that India should be asked to send an expedition against the former, and that General Botha's Government be invited to deal with the latter.

The situation with regard to the Cameroons was somewhat different to the others, in so much as France had a very special interest in it.

As a result of the Agadir affair France had, in 1911, ceded a very large portion—over 100,000 square miles—of her Middle Congo territory to Germany. This large tract had been added to the Cameroons, and this France was naturally anxious to regain. A deputation came from Paris in August while the subject of an expedition was under consideration with a proposal that an Allied expedition should be sent.

It was consequently agreed that the French and ourselves should send such an expedition, with the primary object of occupying the harbour at the mouth of the Cameroon River, and destroying or capturing the wireless station at Duala.

The German military resources in the country were estimated to be some 4,500 native troops, with three batteries of artillery and three machine guns per company, and about 1,500 armed constabulary. As it was estimated that only a portion of this force could be concentrated for the defence of Duala, and the Allied operations would be assisted by the active support of the navies, it was decided that the expeditionary force should have a strength of 4,000 rifles and some artillery, that Great Britain and France should find half this force each, and that the Commander should be found by us. French representatives in London agreed to all these points.

Since the expedition was to be controlled from the Colonial Office, the British troops were entirely drawn from forces in the British West African colonies, maintained solely under the Colonial Office and known as the West African Frontier Force. To convey an idea of what the

resources of these troops were, I will give the establishment of the forces of the various colonies.

In Gambia, the oldest British possession in West Africa, there was one company, having an establishment of 145, with a machine gun. In Sierra Leone there was a battalion of six companies, and six machine guns—600 all ranks. In the Gold Coast there was a regiment consisting of a battery of Artillery, and eight companies of Infantry, about 1,200, with six guns and eight machine guns. In Nigeria there was a regiment consisting of two batteries of Artillery, four battalions of Infantry, and one battalion of Mounted Infantry, about 5,000 strong. The primary duty of these forces was to keep order within their own frontiers, and so only a portion could be withdrawn; further, it was not clear what effect the war would have on the native minds; again, Nigeria and the Gold Coast had frontiers contiguous with German possessions, making it impossible to withdraw troops from these areas. So you will see that the British quota of the expeditionary force had very small reserves behind it.

In Togoland matters had moved more quickly. On receipt of the news that war with Germany had been declared, the Officer Commanding the Gold Coast Regiment at once demanded the surrender of Togoland. The Governor surrendered, to Captain Bryant's ultimatum, Togoland to a distance of about 60 miles from the sea. The wireless station was situated at Atakpane, 100 miles inland, and consequently was not given up. Bryant occupied Lome at once, and set to work with the forces at his disposal to organise an expedition to attack the Germans covering Atakpane. He also applied to the French in Dahomey to co-operate with him. A few days were spent by him in organising, but on the 23rd August, only 19 days after the declaration of war, he attacked a strong, entrenched position held by the Germans on the Schra River, about 70 miles inland. This was the first occasion on which our African native troops had been called on to fight against troops led by Europeans armed with modern weapons and in possession of machine guns. Owing largely to Bryant's high qualities and personality, the action was entirely successful, and on the 27th August, Togoland surrendered, the Germans before doing so destroying the wireless installation. The value of this prompt action was very great. The Allies scored the first victory, the Germans lost an important link in their wireless communication, and French and British troops were rendered available for operations elsewhere.

The Headquarters of the expeditionary force destined for the Cameroons left England on the 31st August in the ship "Appam," which was subsequently to become somewhat notorious, owing to its capture by the German raider "Moewe," with the Governor of Sierre Leone, the Lieutenant-Governor of Southern Nigeria, and the Chief Commissioner of Ashantee on board, all of whom were taken to America.

At Freetown, the French portion of the expeditionary force was waiting for the arrival of the "Appam," and a conference with the

French commander was held. The French troops had come from Dakar. They were conveyed in five troopers, escorted by the French cruiser "Bruix." The French commander, Colonel Meyer, was a fine type of French colonial soldier; the value of his services throughout the expedition, from first to last, cannot be overestimated. After the conference, the French troops, under their own escort, moved down the coast to Lagos, where the British concentration was taking place.

The early operations in the Cameroons were not entirely successful to the Allies. The French, from Fort Lamy in the north, attacked Kusseri, a German post on the opposite side of the Chari River, but failed in their first attempt.

A second attack, undertaken in the middle of September, was, however, successful.

A British attack to seize Garua, an important German station on the Benue River, by a *coup de main*, also failed, while a British force which had occupied Nssanakang on the Cross River, and just inside German territory, was strongly counter-attacked and forced to fall back, losing very heavily. It was obvious that Nigeria could no longer furnish the quota of troops originally asked of her for the expeditionary force.

At Freetown, which is an Imperial coaling station, the War Office maintains some African troops. Authority was given for one battery and one battalion of six companies, the latter from the W.A. Regiment, to join the expedition, replacing Nigerian troops.

A word now about the action of the Navy. H.M.S. "Cumberland," under the command of Captain (now Rear-Admiral) Fuller, accompanied by the gunboat "Dwarf," and certain vessels of the Nigerian marine, arrived off the Cameroon coast on the 31st August. Captain Fuller found the Fairway buoy, which was situated 11 miles outside the entrance of the Cameroon River, and all steering marks, had been removed. He, therefore, had to survey the channel and replace buoys, and on entering the harbour found that the Germans had formed a barrier, some eight miles below Duala, by sinking eleven sea-going ships, to prevent our ascending the river to Duala, which is fifteen miles up the Cameroon River. Captain Fuller set to work to force a passage through this barrier, to reconnoitre the various creeks, and generally make himself active in acquiring as much useful information about the country as possible, and so prepare the way for the expedition.

The Germans had two armed craft which repeatedly attacked the small British reconnoitring vessels, one the "Hertzogin Elisabeth" and the other the "Nachtigal." About the barrier there was a mine-field which made the naval operations the more difficult. By the 22nd September, however, a passage had been made, giving about 19 feet of water at high tide, over the barrier. On the 23rd September the British portion of the expeditionary force, under the escort of H.M.S. "Challenger," arrived at the mouth of the river. These troops were transported in ten vessels, which were, with few exceptions, of the coasting type, possessing no condensing plants, having no cabin accommodation for officers, and

no conveniences such as we understand as necessary in troopers. It was, therefore, obligatory to get the troops on shore as early as possible, more especially since, in addition to their other shortcomings, the troopers were all overcrowded.

On the 24th, the day after the expedition arrived, a naval and military reconnaissance was carried out up the Dibamba creek, to find out if it were possible to land a force, with the object of working on to the railway, which runs east from Duala, and so to operate against Duala itself. The whole of the country about Duala is intersected by creeks, and consists of mangrove swamps—Duala itself is on an outcrop of sand; this rendered landing, and in fact all military operations, most difficult.

As a result of the reconnaissance, it was considered that a landing could be effected with some prospect of reaching the railway, and it was decided to make the attempt on the 26th. On the 25th the French troops arrived, and H.M.S. "Challenger," which normally drew about 22 feet of water, was lightened by taking out guns, ammunition, and coal, until she drew 19 feet 7 inches, or 7 inches more than there was water over the barrier at high tide. On the afternoon of the 25th, "Challenger," preceded by mine sweepers, forced the passage of the wrecks, and an ultimatum was sent to the Governor demanding the surrender of the colony. On the 26th, the ultimatum having been refused, a strong expedition was sent up the Dibamba creek, while "Challenger" shelled Duala from her position above the barrier.

The presence of this force east of Duala, in conjunction with the shelling of Duala by H.M.S. "Challenger," produced the result hoped for.

Early on the morning of the 27th, Duala and Bonaberi surrendered. Duala was found to be a thoroughly well-found and convenient place for a base. There was an excellent water supply, ice factory, good houses, good hospital, and there were in the harbour nine ocean-going steamers of the Woermann line, six smaller steamers, thirty small steam and motor boats, and forty to fifty lighters, besides a floating dock, a well-stocked naval store, and several large stores of provisions. The last named were most welcome as there were only thirty days' supplies for the troops after landing.

The Allied expedition immediately began its disembarkation. The strength on disembarking was:—

					Officers.	Other ranks.	Africans.
French	...	...	...	...	54	354	1,859
British	...	...	...	...	154	82	2,451
					<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	...	...	...	...	208	436	4,310

The French were organised into one battery and two strong battalions, while the British had two batteries and four weak battalions.

The expedition, drawn as it was from four British colonies and a French colony, had no administrative or departmental services whatever. It was necessary, therefore, immediately on landing, to improvise these.

The R.E. Services were organised under Captain Giles, R.E., who assumed duty as C.R.E. and D. of W., his British *personnel* being entirely composed of R.E. survey parties which had been at work in the various colonies, and of civilians from the Railway and Public Works departments, lent by the Governors of the colonies.

The Medical department was taken in hand by Colonel Statham, R.A.M.C., who had joined the expedition at Sierra Leone, and who, as D.M.S., formed the Medical Services from the Medical officers, who belonged to the Colonial Medical Service, dressers and orderlies who had accompanied the troops from the colonies.

The Transport and Supply Services were under Captain Waldback, late The Royal Irish, who had fought with his regiment as a corporal at Tel-el-Kebir as Director of Supply and Transport. Under him were an excellent band of officers, chiefly drawn from the Political department of the West African colonies, and who had come in charge of transport carriers. The supply arrangements were most arduous, as the country provided no supplies whatever.

The Ordnance Department was in charge of Major Meyer-Griffith as C.O.O. He was a Major in the Militia battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, and was serving as A.D.C. to the Governor of Sierra Leone. He had no previous experience of ordnance work, but there was never a hitch in his department, and he eventually fell fighting while gallantly trying to save a convoy when acting as I.G.C., for which duty he was temporarily detached, owing to there being no other officer to spare.

The Pay Department was undertaken by a civilian financial officer—Capt. Sheppard.

I have gone into this matter of lack of organisation in some detail because it is not easy to realise an expedition landing in an enemy country so completely devoid of such essentials.

Captain Fuller, R.N., set to work to develop the naval resources. He armed many captured light craft, and light draft vessels of the Nigerian Marine Department, so fitting them to take part in the many expeditions in which the troops and the Navy worked together. Captain Fuller, although the British S.N.O., was not always senior naval officer of the Allied navies. He, however, worked so completely in accord with the French senior naval officer that there appeared to be no break in the continuity of the naval service.

With the surrender of Duala, the destruction of the wireless station, and occupation of the harbour, the primary object of the expedition had been attained. It was clearly impossible to do otherwise than set about the conquest of the whole colony.

In falling back the Germans had blown up a span of railway bridge over the Dibamba creek, and were holding the left bank of the stream.

The first move from Duala was to make good this further bank in order to allow work of reconstruction on the bridge to be begun.

This was done on the 6th October by the French, with the assistance of naval gun detachments on land and armed craft in the creek. The French displayed the greatest gallantry in this action, in which severe fighting took place.

At the same time, a British force, under Colonel Haywood, began a systematic advance up the northern railway. His progress was disputed at every step, but he eventually, after some weeks, established himself 30 miles up, at Susa. Between the 8th and 12th October, a British force went up the Wuri River and occupied Jabassi. This force had the support of two 6-in. guns mounted on lighters, besides many armed craft carrying lighter guns. In spite of this, owing to the advantage which is conferred by the defence in such a country, the first attempt failed; the column had to be reformed, and Jabassi was taken after the second attack.

On the 20th October, three converging columns, chiefly French, were put in motion against Edea, on the Sanaga River. The main expedition was transported to the Nyong and landed at Dehane. In crossing the bar at the mouth of the river, Captain Franconville, of the French Staff, Captain Child, Director of the Nigerian Marine, a most gallant and valuable officer, and Captain Grey, of the Nigerian Marine, were drowned, and Captain Fuller was in the water for some time and nearly lost his life. The other two columns consisted of one which moved along the line of the railway, and one conveyed in light draft vessels up the Sanaga River, under command of Captain Braithwaite, R.N. The main column was very severely engaged, and it was not until the other two began to make their presence felt that progress was possible. All three columns reached Edea almost simultaneously.

On the 12th November, again employing converging columns, Buea, on the slopes of the Cameroon mountain, was occupied. The Cameroon mountain is 13,000 feet high, and Buea stands on one of the lower spurs, at a height of 4,000 feet. This, like the Jabassi expedition, was carried out by British troops, under Colonel Gorges.

With the occupation of Buea the valuable cocoa plantations fell into our hands, with their thousands of indentured labourers, drafted from all parts of the country. It was necessary to form a department to carry on the cocoa industry and look after the labourers. This was so well done by the officer charged with the duty that the plantations showed a handsome revenue, and were eventually handed over to the Nigerian Government as a going concern. They are for sale at this moment—Messrs. Hampton have the disposal of them.

Up to this time about 1,200 Germans had come into our hands. These included prisoners of war, members of religious bodies, women and children. Owing to the prevailing conditions it was impossible to look after and supply these people in the country, and consequently all were sent to England or to British and French colonies. This evoked

very severe remonstrance and protest from Germany, but was the only policy possible under the circumstances.

The next expedition was conducted against the railhead of the Northern Railway. On the 10th December, Bare, which covers the railhead, was occupied. On the 2nd January the British expedition captured and destroyed Dschang. It was while every available man had been sent north for this enterprise that the Germans took the opportunity of attacking the French, in force, at Edea. The railway and telegraph lines were cut and the place attacked on all sides. The French, however, were equal to the occasion, and the Germans were driven off, leaving 23 Europeans and 190 African soldiers on the ground. It was impossible to maintain a force at Dschang, 50 miles from railhead. The strength of the expeditionary force was sorely tried in finding garrisons for all the points already held and in L. of C. duties, which, in a country of dense bush, were particularly arduous. The force, therefore, was withdrawn to Bare.

A word now about the physical geography and climate as we found it. The rivers of the Cameroons are only navigable for a very few miles from their mouths. In nearly every case there is a bar at the mouth, making the entrance for craft very dangerous, and within 50 miles of the mouth there are falls. Dense bush extends for about 100 miles back from the sea along the whole coast. There are practically no roads whatever in the coastal belt, the natives using canoes and travelling by water.

Running from Duala there are two good railways, one north to Nkongsamba called the Northern Railway, and the other to Eseká called the Midland—they were each about 100 miles long, and the rolling stock and engines had been removed to the respective railheads, and all bridges had been blown up. The outstanding feature of this part of the Cameroons is the Cameroon mountain, which, as I have already said, is 13,000 feet high.

The rainy season in the coastal belt lasts for 10 months in the year. Receding from the coast, the country rises, the bush gets thinner and gives place to parklike country, where there is cultivation and grass, and comparatively little rain.

After three months' hard and incessant fighting the troops of the Allied force were effectually holding Edea, 50 miles east of Duala, Jabassi, Bare, and Nkongsamba, about 100 miles from Duala, and the country to the west of the N. railway was clear of the enemy. Campo, Kribi, and the mouth of the Ngong River were occupied by small forces, supported by the Navy.

Nigerian troops under Brigadier General F. C. Cunliffe were watching Mora and Garua in the north, and Ossidinge on the Cross River was occupied by a Nigerian force.

A French force under General Aymerich, commanding French troops in Equatorial Africa, had, on the outbreak of war, taken the offensive from south and east. At first progress had been rapid, but transport and other difficulties had later made themselves felt. General Aymerich's exact position at the end of 1914 I am not able to give.

In order to prosecute the campaign with vigour, reinforcements were essential. The Governors of the British West African Colonies, and the Governor-General of French West Africa, were asked to do what they could in this respect. An armed constabulary was enlisted and trained at Duala, which eventually took over garrison duties, and some posts on the L. of C. A training establishment was also opened, where recruits, enlisted in Nigeria, were trained. Eight weeks' training was all that time would allow to be given.

During January, February and March there was constant fighting about Bare. Lieutenant-Colonel Cockburn carried out a brilliant night operation at Mbureku on the Manenguba Mountain on 3rd February, in which he captured an enemy camp, with a large quantity of S.A.A. and equipment.

In April a blockade of the coast was declared. This threw a great deal of work on to the Navy, but it was maintained effectively till the end of the campaign.

In March, 1915, Mons. Fourneau, Governor of the French Middle Congo, who had himself been wounded in the fighting in 1914, came on a deputation to Duala, to obtain the co-operation of troops of the Allied force, with General Aymerich, in a combined expedition against Jaunde.

The German Governor, Herr Ebermaier, accompanied by Colonel Zimmermann, commanding the troops, had, on evacuating Duala, moved his seat of Government to Jaunde. General Aymerich was prepared to move on Jaunde from the east, and asked that the expeditionary force should co-operate from the west.

The expedition started on the 7th April under command of Colonel Meyer, Colonel Haywood being in command of the British portion of the force. Severe fighting was encountered from the start and slow progress was made. The line Eseku-Wum Biagas was made good by the 10th May.

From that juncture the two columns joined and advanced by one route. This was unfortunate, though unavoidable—the strength of the troops available being insufficient to form two columns. Very scanty news was received from General Aymerich, and what there was indicated that his progress was as slow as ours. On 10th June, after receipt of a further communication from Governor-General Merlin, French Equatorial Africa, regarding General Aymerich's lack of progress, and in view of the severity of the rainy season, which had brought on a serious outbreak of dysentery, it was decided that it was impossible longer to maintain the force in the field, and on that day a withdrawal was ordered to the line Ngwe, Kele River. This was successfully carried out, but not without very severe fighting.

In April the control of the expedition was transferred from the Colonial Office to the War Office.

Turning now to the Northern area, General Cunliffe, commanding the troops in Nigeria, moved up to Garua, to take personal charge of the operations there, and arrived in the Allied camp on the 18th April. He

then had at his disposal : British, eight companies Infantry, one company Mounted Infantry, three guns, including a naval 12-pr. sent from Duala, nine machine guns; French, three companies Infantry, one squadron, two guns and two machine guns. The operations entailed trench warfare, but after prolonged and severe fighting, Garua surrendered on the 10th June.

The situation then, at the end of June, was : General Aymerich was on the line Bertua—Dume station—Lomie—Bitam. The expeditionary force was holding the line Campo—Kribi—Dehane—Ngwe—Jabassi—Bare, and Brigadier General Cunliffe's troops were on the line Ossidinge—Takum—Gaschaka—Tingere—Ngaundere.

In August, Mons. Merlin, Governor-General French Equatorial Africa, accompanied by General Aymerich, attended a conference at Duala. It was decided to resume the most vigorous offensive from all sides the moment the weather would allow, i.e., about the end of September.

General Cunliffe, who could not be present as he was engaged against Mora, where a small enemy force still held out, was informed of the decision of the conference and asked to co-operate.

French and British reinforcements arrived steadily during the summer, among the latter being the 5th L.I. of the Indian Army, and two companies of the W.I.R. from Sierra Leone.

Arrangements were made for a sufficient supply of transport porters from the colonies—1,500 a month to replace casualties alone were required. A 4.5" howitzer, Rolls-Royce armoured car, a Ford van company, and wireless sets were ordered from England. A motor road was begun from Edea and completed as far as the covering troops, which were at Ngwe.

On the 1st September the strength of the expeditionary force was :—

			European Officers.	O.R.	Native ranks.
French	...	...	70	274	3,023
British	...	...	254	131	4,532
			<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	...	...	324	405	7,555

The offensive was resumed by the expeditionary force on the 22nd September. The British column was directed on Jaunde, by a narrow bush track about 100 miles in length, *via* Ngwe—Wumbiagas—Ndog, while the French were to move by the line of the railway, and consequently to the south of the British. From the first most strenuous fighting took place. Every foot of the road was contested. The British were obliged to convert their track into a motor road, while the French had several important bridges to repair in order to supply themselves by rail. In front of the completed motor road and rail head 7,000 carriers were employed in bringing up supplies.

General Cunliffe had been pushing south and east, and on the 6th November he had moved his line forward to Bamenda—Banjo—Tibati; in this advance he had encountered most severe opposition. His action

on Banjo mountain he described as "one of the most arduous ever fought by native African troops." By this day, the 6th November, the expeditionary force was on the line Eseka-Wum Biagas, with a force at Deschang.

On the 23rd November the final advance on Jaunde was begun by the expeditionary force. Severe fighting was met with at first, but by the middle of December this began to slacken, and on the first of January the British force entered Jaunde, the French cutting the Jaunde-Kribi road at the same time. Many carefully prepared positions were not held by the enemy, and it was evident that they were on the run.

When Jaunde was reached it was found that the Germans had evacuated it some two days previously and were in full retreat to Spanish Muni. In anticipation of this movement, a strong Allied force had been sent to Campo, with orders to move along the Muni frontier and cut off the retreating Germans.

On the first January, the day on which Jaunde was reached, General Cunliffe's advance troops were at the Nachtigal Falls, on the Sanaga River. Within a few days of its occupation, Jaunde was reached by units of Generals Cunliffe and Aymerich's troops; among the latter were two companies of Belgian Infantry. General Aymerich himself arrived on the 5th January. The pursuit of the retreating Germans was taken up by Colonel Haywood and several French columns. The rear guard was engaged on several occasions, but the Germans managed to elude all efforts to arrest their flight, and 1,000 Europeans and 6,000 African troops reached Spanish Muni, where they laid down their arms.

The Cameroons was then entirely cleared of all Germans, except a small group who were still holding out at Mora. This gallant band, who had defied all efforts to dislodge them, had held out for 19 months on the top of a rocky hill. They were offered terms, which they accepted, and on the 18th February they surrendered.

The two companies of Belgian troops which were in General Aymerich's force came into Duala and returned to their own country by sea. They must have marched and fought over close on 1,000 miles.

The blockade was raised on the 27th February, and on the 1st April practically the whole country was handed over to a French administration under General Aymerich. The French now have a mandate for the majority of the country, the British mandate extending to a narrow strip along the Nigerian border.

This result was attained with the least possible drain on Imperial resources. The troops employed were, with few exceptions, all drawn from neighbouring colonies, and would probably not have been employed elsewhere at that period of the war.

The German captured shipping was made use of for trooping, for armed craft, for transport of cocoa and other produce to Europe, for carrying German prisoners, while two ships were sent to German South West Africa to assist in the trooping there.

Material and supplies had to be obtained from home, but the

demands were light and the strictest economy in every particular was observed, so much so that the total cost of the British portion of the expedition was less than £2,700,000.

It is a remarkable thing that the Gold Coast Regiment was the first unit of our Army to be on German soil—with French assistance they conquered Togoland, they took a great part in the operations in the Cameroons, they went straight on without rest to German East Africa, and were in readiness to go to Palestine when the Armistice was signed. This constitutes a very fine record for a regiment of West Africans, and one of which their Commanding Officer, Colonel Rose, of the Worcester Regiment, may well be proud.

Aircraft were not used in the Cameroons expedition. The Admiralty and War Office were approached, but both decided against providing them; this was before the days of the R.A.F.

Although wireless from ships worked most efficiently and well, the wagon and pack sets with the troops gave very bad results. It was difficult to account for this, but the dense forest appeared to affect it in some way. It was particularly unfortunate, as the air lines through the forest were frequently cut by falling trees, by elephants and by carriers cutting out pieces to tie up their loads.

The Ford van company, which came out in August, 1915, was invaluable during the advance—each car had to do over 100 miles a day, and to do this native drivers had to be trained to take their turn with the Europeans. Each Ford van was worth about 150 carriers, and at a pinch it could always do a bit more.

As regards treatment of sick and wounded, there was a base hospital at Duala for 3,000 beds, and two smaller hospitals in the French quarter for accommodation of their carriers. British soldiers and carriers had to be retained at Duala until they were cured and fit to go back to work, or until they were patched up sufficiently to go back to their villages. We had with us all available medical personnel from the W.A. colonies, and consequently the colonies could not accommodate and look after our sick and wounded.

The conduct of the African troops, French and British, was beyond praise throughout; all ranks displayed the very greatest gallantry in most exacting circumstances. The W.A.F.F. more than fulfilled what had been expected of it, from a fighting point of view, while the training and discipline reflected the greatest credit on all who belonged, and had belonged, to the force.

No day appeared to be too long, no task too difficult for them. With a natural aptitude for soldiering they are endowed with a constitution which inures them to hardship. They share with their Senegalese brothers an inexhaustable fund of good humour.

With a specially prepared ration, which was carried on certain occasions, they were able to go for six days with only what they carried on the man. Their marching powers are wonderful—a column was once

known to do 87 miles in 47 hours, in full service order, carrying 100 rounds ammunition, cape, blanket, etc.

DISCUSSION.

MAJOR--GENERAL SIR GEORGE ASTON: The lecturer asked me to come to London to-day to speak on the special subject of the lecture, and I should like first to congratulate him on the lucid way in which he has told us of what happened in the Cameroons. The question he has asked me to deal with is that of why it happened. That involves an important question, so important always in a country like ours, of the control of warlike operations in a democratic country. I recall very vividly a very hot summer's afternoon in July, 1907, in this theatre, when the lecturer introduced for the first time to the public the expression, amphibious war. In the subsequent discussion Lord Roberts took a part, a great soldier, who was sitting in the seat I have just vacated, and the great Admiral Sir A. K. Wilson, was in the Chair. The late Sir Julian Corbett, whose loss we deeply regret, was sitting behind the rails here. The discussion hinged on that very question—the great difficulty of ensuring the most efficient use of the sea and land forces in a democratic country, and the need for devising some form of Government Committee, individual or whatever it might be, to exercise that control and to decide what should happen, and when. That was in 1907. It is now eight years since war broke out, and I think that the time has come when one might, perhaps, allow the safety-valve of one's discretion to lift a little bit. In the years between 1907 and 1914 it came to my personal knowledge, as head of the General Staff of the Army in South Africa, that there was no machinery in this country for deciding upon a plan of campaign as a whole. I speak of that advisedly, because, naturally, it is the work of the General Staff to prepare plans and look ahead, and endeavour to draw up, from what they call a purely academic point of view, hypothetical plans of campaign. It was impossible to get any guidance on the subject of what a plan of campaign would be from the point of view of South Africa in the event of war with Germany. South Africa was right up against German South-west Africa, and the military and naval policy of dealing with German troops in that territory it was impossible to get any guidance about. When war broke out in 1914 we were still in that position. We had, as you know from Lord Haldane's book, drawn up a plan of campaign for using the British Expeditionary Force, and experience showed the brilliant method which the Government had arranged to mobilise and distribute that force, but there was nothing beyond that. There had been machinery, but there had not been the time for that machinery to work, or the leisure for the people concerned to work it properly. There was no Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence that could deal with such questions as offensive operations elsewhere than in France. At that momentous time Sir Henry Jackson and I were working in the Admiralty together. A sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was extemporised and devised to report to the Prime Minister on all proposals for using military forces elsewhere than in France. The composition of that Committee was as follows:—General Sir Ian Hamilton was the Chairman; but he was hard at work elsewhere, and did not attend, and Sir Henry Jackson acted as Chairman of the Committee. The Committee had upon it a representative of the War Office, Sir Charles Caldwell; a representative of the Colonial Office, the present Sir George Fiddes; a representative of the Foreign Office and of the Treasury, myself among others; and the Secretary was Captain S. Wilson, who was in the R.E. and is now Governor of a West India Island. It was an extemporised arrangement to con-

sider what the strategists would call "diversions" of forces from France. That was the body that recommended the first overseas campaigns; it was for the political side to decide to move the troops. That was done nominally by the whole Cabinet, but a small number of them got together and did the work. The first action that led to the Cameroons campaign was taken on the initiative of an officer in the Gold Coast Colony, who had a small force in that Colony. There was no harbour in Togoland; the principles on which the Committee went were to help the Navy, and they considered that the best way to do that was by attacking all the wireless stations in the world held by the Germans, and the harbours. There is a very powerful wireless station in Togoland, and one of much less importance in the Cameroons; also a Spanish one at Fernando Po which the Germans were trying to use. Although, as the Chairman has said, there was no harbour in Togoland, there was a landing-place, and if we wanted to send an expedition to the wireless station a hundred miles inland it was important to have the landing-place without fighting for it. A very enterprising officer on the Gold Coast took it, acting, as far as I know, on his own responsibility. He went across with a very small force and took it. The story I want to tell you—if the press will let me be a little indiscreet on the subject—is that the Colonial Office, in whose service he was, was very angry. I do not know what the Colonial Office do to people like that, but the War Office was very pleased, and promoted him before the Colonial Office got in to do anything. That was the beginning. Attention was then devoted to Duala. I should like to add one other thing to what the Chairman has said. I will use the word objective—a most hateful word—but there was another objective that I should like to add to those mentioned by the lecturer, and that is—any war-vessels of the enemy which might be in a harbour which we could get at by a small military force. I think that there was a small German gunboat in the harbour at Duala. There was also some merchant shipping, shipping of enormous importance to Germany and ourselves, which was taken. To the best of my memory, the Cameroons campaign was not undertaken on the initiative of the Committee, but on the initiative of the French, who were very anxious to undertake their capture by a combined expedition. Another little personal touch that I might mention was the question whether Sir Charles Dobell should command the expedition or not. He was the senior officer, French or British, on that coast. The French gracefully conceded that he should command, but there was a proviso, of course, that the nationality of whoever took these places should not prejudice the peace-terms after the war; in fact, that applied to all the overseas possessions of Germany and Turkey. That is the story of why this campaign happened; how the initiative came about. I remember attending that meeting with French officers—I do not think that there was a French soldier present, but only naval officers. I remember asking one question, which was: "If you conduct operations inland, what form of transport would you use?" And the reply was: "It is quite easy, we will use mules." I rather doubted it at the time, and I should like to know whether the country was suitable for mules, with all the difficulties of forage, and so on. I have made those small disclosures in the interests of historians, and in answer to anti-British propagandists, who maintain that we conducted these overseas expeditions with the object of territorial expansion. There was only one object in view, to the best of my knowledge, up to the end of August, 1914, when I went abroad, and that object was to win the war by defeating the German army, diverting the minimum military force from that purpose. I knew nothing of what happened to the Committee afterwards, or whether it recommended the Dardanelles expedition, or other expeditions. The question of combined control in an amphibious war is one of immediate interest at the present

moment, and might have been of much more interest if things had become worse in the Straits last week. I think that it is of value, from an historical point of view, to put this information before the public as to how things were actually done in 1914. I am sure that the object of anybody who had anything to do with our strategy at the beginning of the War was to try to win the war in the only way in which the war could be won, by defeat of the principal enemy's principal army, and by using the Navy to promote that object.

THE CHAIRMAN: There is an officer here who actually took part in the expedition under General Dobell, and I hope he will continue the discussion.

COLONEL AUSTIN HAYWOOD: There are two points which struck me very forcibly about the lecture as being one of the officers who had the honour of serving under the lecturer in the Cameroons. As one of the officers who was merely a regimental officer, and not on the staff, I had not appreciated what this lecture has brought home to me very clearly. One thing was the extraordinary difficulty that Sir Charles Dobell and his staff must have had in organising the expedition. It seems to be, perhaps, an obvious thing to say that it was difficult to organise, but I think a great many of us did not appreciate the difficulty that there must have been in bringing an expedition of that sort into a tropical country, and organising all the services, as had to be done, and carrying the whole thing through to such a successful conclusion. First of all, there were the difficulties of supplies. Sir Charles Dobell only had time to touch very lightly upon that, but there was an extraordinary difficulty in the country in getting supplies. Everything had to be improvised. It was not, like on the Western front or in some of the larger campaigns of the war, where supplies were always forthcoming. Somehow or other we had to collect supplies out of the country as far as possible, in order to make up the very small quantity which was available from Europe. Another thing was the question of health. The wear and tear on the mind of the Commander and Staff of the expedition in that tropical country were very great. Then there were the difficulties of communication. As Sir Charles has explained, there were three main expeditions operating at distances of 500 to 600 miles apart through a country where there were practically no good roads, and only two short railways, each about one hundred miles long, and practically no telegraph lines and no wireless. All that must have made it extremely difficult for the Commander. I am glad that these points have been brought home to us, and I am sure that regimental officers will now appreciate the difficulties of the Commander and his Staff. One other thing which occurs to me is this. Sir Charles Dobell is very modest, and he touched very lightly on the small cost of the expedition. It is rather a remarkable thing to my mind that the campaign cost only £2,700,000, although it lasted for about eighteen or twenty months. I think that is rather marvellous. It would be interesting, if it were possible, to get a comparison with the cost of other campaigns during the war—how much per head per diem the campaign cost—I feel certain that none could have been run as economically as this one. In connection with the economical way in which the campaign was run, I think the point which Sir Charles mentioned about the cocoa plantations is rather interesting. Those cocoa plantations, I believe, were made to work and pay by Sir Charles Dobell while the campaign was going on, so that, in addition to fighting and clearing the country, he actually succeeded in getting some revenue out of it—a rather wonderful thing.

SIR CHARLES DOBELL: There are only two points that I think I have to refer to in my reply. General Sir George Aston asked about the possibility of using animal transport. Well, animal transport was out of the question. The French

brought about 200 mules, if I remember rightly, and they did a little work at first in drawing a few old railway trucks, which were put together in Duala, as far as the bridge at Japoma over the Dibamba creek. They were not worth keeping, and very soon were sent back to Dacca. There were a few ponies in Duala, but they got tsetse. It is quite an impossible country for animal transport at all. The only method is by transport-carriers or, after you have made the roads, mechanical transport.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think you will all agree with me that we have had a most interesting and instructive lecture from General Dobell and very interesting remarks from those who have taken part in the discussion. Sir George Aston has explained how this campaign was organised in the beginning, and also referred to the other campaigns for the destruction of the wireless stations. He rather made me think that the Committee he referred to included all combined naval and military operations; but it did not, it only included those in the Colonies, but none nearer home. It did not include the Dardanelles. Possibly it might have been better if it had included the Dardanelles, but it did not do so. I should, therefore, like to correct that impression.

The Army pattern of wireless which was used would give a reduced range in the damp forests. Wireless at the present moment is getting a great boom and possibly a few remarks from one who has studied it may be of interest historically in regard to the German system. It was really the want of submarine cables controlled by Germany that forced her into building these wireless stations in her Colonies. She felt that she must be able to communicate without the messages passing through other hands and she saw no chance of getting cables. The only one she had, as a matter of fact, was destroyed the day after war broke out. She had the foresight to erect wireless stations in different parts of the world. Wireless was not as reliable as the submarine cable and it was more unreliable in those days than at present. But it had the very great advantage over the submarine cable that it could communicate with ships at sea; and thus the stations in Africa, the one in Togoland, the one in the Cameroons, the one in South-west Africa and the one at Dar-es-Salaam were links of communication between the General Naval Staff in Berlin and every ship on the ocean within a certain distance from the stations. I think the distance at a pinch might be taken roughly at 2,000 miles. Longer distances were possible, but 2,000 miles would be the maximum that could be depended upon, and it might be put as a certainty at 1,500 miles—that any ship within 1,500 miles of the coast of Africa could be warned and given directions from Berlin, although she might not be able to reply. The German statistics, drawn up by the Prussian Ministry, claim that over 800,000 tons of German shipping were saved by the warning signals sent at the outbreak of war from those wireless stations, and that the African stations contributed to the greater part of that saving of the merchant ships from capture by our cruisers. They had directions to proceed to the nearest port and lay up so as to escape capture. Over three-quarters of a million tons were saved by the German wireless stations. So many stations would not be quite so necessary now because we can cover so much greater distances. The station at Togoland was by far the best, and it had only been in operation 4 months. The Germans knew perfectly well that the station at Togoland could not last long in the case of war and that they could not very well defend it. They did not expect war at the time and had not such defence as they otherwise would have had. The only reason why this best station, which Captain Bryant so promptly destroyed, was not in the Cameroons was on account of the difficulty of getting the heavy machinery, the large dynamos and

wires, etc., through the bush to a suitable place. The difficulty of transport has been already described, and the Germans knew it, and knew they could not get the apparatus into the interior of the country, where it would be free from attack. Until the wireless station was destroyed it enabled them to keep touch with Africa. If they could keep their apparatus they could receive signals from Berlin, occasionally flying their aerials by means of a kite. It was not only necessary to destroy the towers and the machinery, but it was necessary to capture all the apparatus and the *personnel*. In London, when we had this Committee and agreed that we would destroy the wireless stations, I think that everyone of us knew that that would not be all and that the capture of the harbours and the destruction of the stations would be only the beginning. That was the case in every single instance and when we once got into the country we were obliged to stay there. The same thing happens in nearly all wars: you go for a minor objective and you have to take the major one. Another point I think the General was too modest about was that he did not bring out that during the whole of that campaign the power of rewarding the men on the spot who did well was not in his hands. I happened to be able to follow that campaign nearly to its completion, and I tried to assist it in every way I could by endeavouring to squeeze things out for it, but it was a time when we were short of everything—short of cruisers, aeroplanes, seaplanes, and particularly short of guns. If that had not been the case we might have sent them more than we did, but I think with the little they had—and it was only a little they could expect—they did remarkably well. One point brought out in the lecture was the cordial co-operation between the Allies. There was not only cordial co-operation between the Army and Navy, but between the three armies and the two navies of the different nations. We always feel that there may be friction on such occasions and that the friction may begin at the bottom, but one generally looks to the top to stop it. We know now why the friction, if any, and if it did begin at the bottom, never got any further. We must thank the heads for that. It was most remarkable both in the army and the navy. The French senior captain stayed at sea rather than interfere with Captain Fuller in the river at Duala. He patrolled outside the mouth of the river to protect his junior officer inside, instead of *vice versa* as is generally done, and I think we should remember that. Of course, we were obliged to hold the harbour at Duala and it was really a matter of importance to have captured it. If the Germans had ever got command of the sea, or had a force in Duala, they would have made the route to the Cape very uncomfortable indeed. The harbour is an extremely good naval base and its situation in the Bight has a small resemblance to the German Bight: it is the same shape and the same principles apply on a smaller scale. The Germans had plans ready for fortifying it and making it a very strong naval base indeed, but they did not have the time to start the work.

I will conclude my remarks by asking you to give a vote of thanks to Sir Charles Dobell for his very interesting lecture this afternoon.

The motion was carried unanimously.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR W. H. ANDERSON: I wish to propose a vote of thanks to Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Jackson for presiding this afternoon. We have heard a few remarks as to the difficulty of making plans between the two Services, but you have only to look straight in front of you to see that these difficulties can be overcome. You see Sir Charles Dobell lecturing to you and you see in the Chair an Admiral of the Fleet. He has made some remarks to us with regard to the wireless stations and harbours which were the main objects of the expedition, and

our thanks are due to Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Jackson for having presided and for giving us his expert views this afternoon.

The motion was carried with acclamation.

THE CHAIRMAN: I thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The following note is added by Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Rowe, D.S.O., M.C., R.A., who was Major-General Sir Charles Dobell's Staff Officer during the campaign:—

As General Dobell told me that he wished I had spoken at his lecture, I forward the following notes. In view of the peculiar nature of the administrative side of the campaign they may be found of interest. I embarked with him on the S.S. "Appam" in August, 1914, and was his chief Administrative Staff Officer from that date until the conclusion of the operations.

The forces engaged were collected from the ports in the various Colonies as we proceeded down the coast towards Duala. The Colonies provided *personnel* and *matériel* according to their resources, and their ideas of what could be spared, and what we thought we should want. There was, when we started, no administrative organisation, and no corps or departments existed. One regular R.A.M.C. officer came off at Sierra and no others. There were no A.S.C. officers at all available till late in the campaign, nor did any departmental officers, such as ordnance, veterinary, etc., appear.

At one port a civilian doctor would come off with some medical stores, at the next the medical officer would arrive in charge of some barbed wire, at another came off a tin-miner or district commissioner, hoping "to be of some use." At one time things were further complicated by officers arriving to join armed with certificates as follows:—

"The bearer *So-and-so* is hereby appointed chief medical officer to the expedition.

(Signed)

Governor and Commander-in-Chief."

So-and-so was naturally rather disappointed to find the D.M.S. already in existence.

By the time we arrived off Duala we were a fleet of some sixteen vessels of various capacities and speeds, all very full of troops and stores and a very large number of persons expected to be of use, such as civilian doctors, political officers, local post office officials, railwaymen, mining prospectors, merchants and others. Communication between the ships was chiefly maintained by visual signalling between native signallers of quite different tribes.

Some of the native soldiers from the interior, who had never seen the sea in their lives before, were very sick. "States" were made out and rough lists of the stores in each ship compiled. Heads of the various departmental services were appointed and the various persons present in the ships were posted to the services and departments according to our, and their, ideas of what duties they could manage to perform.

It has been said that the administration of the campaign was good and that it was "well run." I think this was undoubtedly due to the fact that, while there were few officers of military experience on the administrative side, and practically none with any special knowledge, from a military point of view, of their work at the beginning, they all knew the country, and the difficulties they were likely to meet, and were formed into an extemporised but quite sound organisation with

clear instructions, from the outset. They embarked on their work with unbounded enthusiasm and energy.

On the capitulation of Duala after the naval bombardment, the *personnel* and stores were discharged on shore and rapidly quartered and sorted out.

Two native clerks, who had formerly served with me in Nigeria, hearing I was off Lagos proceeding "to the war," put off to the ship with typewriters, cyclostyles and other clerical fittings, and joined up. These two native clerks and I formed the entire general headquarters administrative staff of the campaign till towards the latter part, when a staff captain was added.

The Royal Engineers consisted of a few sappers who were surveyors in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, and civilians from the P.W.D. and railways and telegraphs. They ran a train a day in each direction over the hundred miles of the Northern railway without a hitch, throughout the campaign, after rebuilding the bridge that had been destroyed. The "Supply and Transport" department, organised from among political officers and civilians of various classes, very soon became an efficient Army Service Corps and Carrier Corps, and their good work is well remembered, especially by such troops as had very different experiences later, on other fronts.

It is, I think, noteworthy, that this extemporised organisation, instead of being extravagant, did things well and cheaply, the whole campaign of 22 months costing well under £3,000,000.

The chief difficulty met with was the carrier capacity on long lines of communication. A "carrier" or "porter" carries a load of about 60 lbs. or 20 to 25 rations. Long lines were divided into stages of a few days' march each. The country operated in was stripped bare and practically all food had to be brought up. Thus the carriers on the first stage had not only to bring up the rations for the troops at the front, but enough for themselves and also for the carriers employed on the further stages beyond. A few simple sums in arithmetic will soon show that, as the line of communications increases, the number of carriers required very soon grows to an impossible figure, out of all proportion to the troops engaged or the resources in men available.

This led General Dobell to commence the building of motor roads, sufficient to carry light Ford lorries, pushing the carrier services further and further forward, and supplying the first few sections entirely by mechanical transport. This took time; otherwise, had the roads already existed, General Dobell would undoubtedly have finished his campaign still more quickly.

The campaign was originally run by the Colonial Office under Colonial regulations as regards finances, and stores were supplied by the Crown Agents for the Colonies and the various adjacent governments. There were present in the forces engaged a great variety of unusual elements, such as carriers, rations peculiar to the various tribes, equipment different to the War Office issues, etc. This necessitated a departure from the procedure contained in any available regulations, and local regulations, and instructions were necessary. Financial instructions, stores regulations, standing orders, etc., were compiled at once or as early as they could be drafted and printed, and issued to the services and departments. The original regulations issued were produced with care and were of the simplest possible nature, the result being that changes in method and organisation were few, and the same few simple regulations held good throughout the campaign, with red-tape reduced to a minimum.

The care of the sick and wounded, their evacuation by hammock, lorry and train, and their treatment in base hospitals, received the greatest attention that could

be given, and the system worked with the greatest smoothness throughout the operations.

Mule transport was used, but to a very limited extent, motor or head transport being found more suitable.

Undoubtedly such extemporised services could not have worked with the efficiency they so rapidly acquired had it not been for the extraordinary quality of the regimental officers. For most of the campaign they were chiefly regulars of considerable service. Officers commanding companies in the Cameroons were of the type and capacity to have been, in France, promoted to command battalions and brigades. They were supplemented and assisted by men selected from among the political and other services, who made up for any lack of military training by a very complete knowledge of the natives and West Africa.

With such officers, commanding native troops that are second to none in the world for their mobility and endurance, our extemporised administration "worked."

It should be added that, in addition to the administration of the campaign itself, the headquarters administrative staff also dealt with General Dobell's work in governing the occupied territory and administering the civil government. Customs were collected, police forces recruited and organised, commercial activities resumed, and the "plantations" put into running order. The civil administration was nearly self-supporting out of customs revenue and other resources by the time General Dobell ceased to be Commander-in-Chief and "Governor" of the occupied territories.