

detaching parties to the west and south-west among the disaffected towns; some sharp fighting ensued, the enemy being driven back with loss, and some prisoners being taken. This action was of the usual bush fighting order, the expenditure 1,689 rounds or 5 per man, approximately being small, as were our casualties, which numbered 4. On the 15th Major Merrick continued a northerly route, visiting towns already destroyed. These had been re-occupied and the houses re-roofed. Some fighting took place, our casualties being three killed and wounded. At the town of Olah, which refused to come out and talk, articles belonging to the late Captain Burney were found. The town was destroyed. An officer and two sections of infantry in charge of convoy proceeded thence to the River Benue at Amagedi en route for Lokoja. The remainder of the column moving once more west, reached Lafia on the 17th, having met only little opposition on the way and suffering only one casualty. On the 18th the stockaded town of Goddo was successfully carried, the 2·95 quick-firing gun doing good work, and 2 Companies Infantry under Captain Williams and Lieutenant Oldman being especially mentioned for their coolness and the able way in which they were handled. Our casualties were 7.

At 2 A.M. on the 19th the enemy made a night attack, wounding 4 men. The troops behaved well, and there was no confusion. Star shells were fired, and the bush round the camp swept with rifle fire. When day broke parties were sent out on both flanks, the main body moving to Kushagi. The enemy anticipating our movements, the main body was fired on from trenches 50 yards in length, constructed parallel to the road and some 15 yards from it. Although the fire was heavy and continuous, the Okpotos as usual retired at once when discovered.

The country being more open, Major Merrick on this occasion attempted to draw the enemy to attack, but only the bolder of their scouts came into the open. These met with a severe check. Our casualties were six. In the action Major Merrick particularly notes the coolness of Lieutenants Oldman and McLay. On the 21st the column marched to Agwacha, having arranged to meet Lieutenant Baillie and returning convoy at that place on this date. The march, some 25 miles, was a long one when one considers the nature of the country. The narrowness of the paths, the dense bush, the necessity of careful scouting, and the scarcity of water rendered it necessary to move slowly, and the troops were on the march 11 hours. At Agwacha the first real signs of surrender on the part of the Okpotos were noticed. Some carbines and Sniders taken from Captain O'Riordan's party being brought in, and three more of his followers, whilst the enemy handed over some of their own guns. From the 21st to the 28th no movements of importance took place. On the 28th the force again reached Kushagi's village, having met with no opposition; 29th, more Government carbines and sniders captured by the Okpotos from the late Resident, and many of their own guns were surrendered.

1st March, the scene of the night attack of the 19th was revisited and surrounding towns reconnoitred, one only was stockaded, and that but feebly held. On the 2nd and 3rd Major Merrick moved east through the disaffected districts to the confines of the Munchi country. These, although suspicious and nervous, were not hostile, and gave guides. The country here is noted as more open. On the 5th March, Major Merrick reached Obojibi, the extreme south-east boundary of the Okpoto country; the natives

are near akin to the Muntchis, and armed with poisoned arrows; the country is more open than Igara, and is better watered; the bush immediately along the streams is, however, very dense. From the 6th March to the 12th, Major Merrick once more went over most of the ground previously covered, but met with no further resistance. On the 12th March, he arrived at Iddah, en route for Lokoja, having left a strong garrison. The country formerly disaffected, but now under control.

I attach a list of casualties, 48 in all—these are on the whole not large; the operations lasted just three months. Major Merrick recommends the following Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers for special consideration, and I have much pleasure in submitting his list to your Excellency. Major Merrick is not fulsome in his praise of those under him, and his selections are, I know, brought forward after careful consideration.

As regards Major Merrick himself, I feel sure your Excellency will bring him to favourable notice. The operations were, as you have already stated in despatches to the Secretary of State and others, admirably carried out.

Major Merrick showed not only skill as a leader, but also tact and discrimination in dealing with the people; where punishment was deserved it was thoroughly administered, and where leniency was advisable common sense and tact were used.

Captain Williams commanded his company with ability throughout the expedition. This Officer has seen much service in this country; is the beau ideal of a company commander, and a fine leader of coloured troops.

Lieutenant Oldman commanded his company with ability, and displayed initiative and enterprise; he rendered invaluable service; I specially commend him to your notice.

Lieutenant McLay has by his personal example frequently encouraged his men, and always led them with the greatest dash.

Lieutenant Spinks handled his gun well, whenever it was required, and was noticeable for the efficient way he placed his men in the bush and kept them on the alert.

Lieutenants Galloway, Royal Artillery, and Sewell, Royal Fusiliers, have also done good work.

Sergeant Buey has done good sound work throughout.

Of the native ranks, I note No. 89 Corporal Edee, Royal Artillery; No. 422 Yatto Yola, No. 1111 Daday, 1st Northern Nigeria Regiment; No. 1331 Lance-Corporal Baba Duchi, and No. 524 Private Lawani Kegi, 2nd Northern Nigeria Regiment, as deserving of special consideration.

In this connection I would also remind your Excellency of the good work done by Captain Byng-Hall, Suffolk Regiment, who succeeded Major Merrick in Bassa. This Officer carried on the work begun by Major Merrick, and in relation to the recovery of the remains of the two murdered Officers showed peculiar delicacy.

I have, &c.,

ARTHUR FESTING, Lieutenant-Colonel,
Acting Commandant, Northern Nigeria
Regiment, West African Frontier
Force.