

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM PLATT

Lieutenant-General Sir William Platt, K.C.B., D.S.O., who has been appointed to the command of our troops in East Africa, is a soldier of the modern school: a General of the type of Wavell and Allenby. He takes a keen interest in the people with whom he lives and the places in which he lives, and he has always regarded service abroad, not as a period of exile but as an opportunity for fresh studies. After his appointment to command the troops in the Sudan in 1938 he made a study of the flora and fauna of the districts in which he was stationed.

He is a short, slim, dark-haired, energetic man of 55. His work is his life interest and his hobby. He is a sound and enthusiastic cricketer and plays golf, but is not a champion by Khartoum standards. Throughout his career he has earned a special name for the keen personal interest he has taken in the welfare of his men: indeed he takes a sympathetic interest in the home affairs of all who are about him. This sympathy and his great considerateness account largely for his popularity as a Commanding Officer.

His personal bravery is a further reason. After joining the Northumberland Fusiliers at the age of 20, he won the D.S.O. in the North-West Frontier for gallant conduct in a campaign against the Mohmads. He was also mentioned in despatches. During the Great War he saw service in France and Belgium, was wounded, and was mentioned in despatches four times. He was promoted temporary Lieutenant-Colonel and G.S.O.1.

After serving in Egypt from 1924 to 1926 and as D.A.A.G. at the War Office from 1927 to 1930, he took over the command of the 2nd Battalion The Wiltshire Regiment. He was promoted Colonel in 1933 and he became G.S.O.1. in the 3rd Division at Bulford. The following year he was given the command of the 7th Infantry Brigade, and was appointed A.D.C. to the King. In 1938 he received his promotion to the rank of Major-General commanding the troops in the Sudan.

General Platt played a conspicuous part in the campaign which brought to an end Italy's empire in East Africa. He commanded the troops operating in Eritrea and Northern Abyssinia, and among his victories are the great names of Keren and Amba Alagi. Keren, which was the turning point of the northern campaign, was a victory against an enemy more than twice as strong in numbers and, furthermore, ensconced in a mountain fortress. It was a victory which, according to all the rules of war, should have been impossible, and the capture of Amba Alagi, which was followed by the surrender of the Duke of Aosta, was an achievement no less meritorious.

General Platt was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General in January of this year and created a K.C.B. four months later. His conduct throughout the campaign in Northern Abyssinia was such as to win him the affectionate respect of every soldier who served under him.