

The Committee found "No blame should be attached to the chief nurse or her assistant, and they are hereby completely exonerated, and your Committee takes pleasure in commending them for faithful and efficient service." The appointment of the Surgeon was cancelled, the Committee stating "It is the duty of the Surgeon to remove sponges from the abdominal cavity. As life or death may depend on the count of the sponges, the count should always be verified by the Surgeon, and in no event can the hospital assume any responsibility in such matters."

SUCH a case came before us in our Matron days, the operating surgeon bitterly blaming the Theatre Sister for the death of the patient, and desiring her discharge on this plea. Upon enquiry we found that the Sister had also counted and found the 12 sponges complete after the operation, but that it was a custom for a student to act as intermediary between the Sister and this Surgeon, and hand him the sponges, the student, in ignorance and unknown to the Sister, had *cut one sponge into two*, and it was this half-sponge which, having been left in the abdomen, caused the death of the patient. We, therefore, felt that the Surgeon, and not the Sister, was to blame, and pointed out that we believed the public would hold him responsible for the death of his patient. Thereupon the Surgeon magnanimously "forgave" the Sister!

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL'S new book "The River War," "An historical account of the reconquest of the Soudan," appears at a psychological moment, and he is to be congratulated that he has had the courage of his opinions on many points over which it has been considered expedient to draw a veil, or rather the long-bow.

Mr. Churchill took part in the famous charge of the Lancers at Omdurman, and gives extraordinary evidence as to the condition of mental aberration of men in battle.

"Two impressions I will, however, record. The whole scene flickered exactly like a cinematograph picture; and, besides, I remember no sound. The event seemed to pass in absolute silence. The yells of the enemy, the shouts of the soldiers, the firing of many shots, the clashing of sword and spear, were unnoticed by the sense, unregistered by the brain. Several others say the same. Perhaps it is possible for the whole of a man's faculties to be concentrated in the eye, bridle-hand, and trigger-finger, and withdrawn from all other parts of the body."

After the battle, Mr. Churchill galloped over the field with Lord Tullibardine, and he gives the following graphic description of the awful scene three days after the fight.

"All over the ground—on the average three yards apart—were dead men, clad in the white and patched smocks of faithful Dervishes. Three days of burning sun had done their work. The bodies had swollen to almost gigantic proportions. Twice as large as living men, they appeared in every sense monstrous. The more advanced corpses hardly resembled human beings, but rather great bladders such as natives used to float down the Nile on. Frightful gashes scarred their limbs, and great black stains, once crimson, covered their garments. The sight was appalling. The smell redoubled the horror. . . . In places desperate rushes to get on at all costs had been made by devoted, fearless men. In such places the bodies lay so thickly as to hide the ground. Occasionally there were double layers of this hideous covering. Once I saw them lying three deep. In a space not exceeding a hundred yards square, more than four hundred corpses lay festering. It is difficult to imagine the postures into which man, once created in the image of his Maker, had been twisted. It is not wise to try, for he who succeeds will ask himself with me, 'Can I ever forget?' I have tried to gild war, and to solace myself for the loss of dear and gallant friends with the thought that a soldier's death for a cause that he believes in will count for much, whatever may be beyond this world. . . . But there was nothing dulce et decorum about the Dervish dead, nothing of the dignity of unconquerable manhood; all was filthy corruption. Yet these were as brave men as ever walked the earth."

"All this," says Mr. Churchill, "was bad to see, but more remained." After the dead, the wounded. Three days after the battle, three days during which the sun had beaten on them mercilessly, there were still wounded men alive among the dead. They were very thirsty, and Lord Tullibardine's large water-bottle was soon empty. One poor wretch had been shot through both legs:—

"A Martini-Henry bullet had lodged in the right kneecap. The whole limb had stiffened. We gave him a drink. You would not think such joy could come from a small cup of water. Tullibardine pulled out his knife, and after much probing and cutting extracted the bullet—with the button-hook. Would the reader be further sickened with the horrors of the field? There was a man who had crawled a mile in three days, but was yet two miles from the river. He had one foot; the other remained behind. I wonder if he ever reached the water he had struggled so hard to attain! There was a man with both legs shattered; he had dragged himself along in a sitting posture, making perhaps four hundred yards a day."

And yet we have been assured that "the wounded Dervishes received every delicacy and attention," a statement which is, says Mr. Churchill, "so utterly devoid of truth that it transcends the limits of mendacity, and passes into the realms of the ridiculous." It is not surprising, therefore, that the Nursing Sisters were not permitted to follow the flag into the Soudan.

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