

*REMARKS ON MEDICAL ASPECTS OF THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

By J. T. FOTHERINGHAM, M.D.

At the conclusion of Major Nattress' lecture on March 26th, 1900, the chairman called upon Major Fotheringham, Militia Army Medical Staff, who displayed a very interesting collection of small-arm projectiles and explosives, obtained by the kind assistance of the Rice-Lewis Company, Limited, of Toronto, and the Dominion Cartridge, Company, of Montreal.

After apologizing for the purely conversational character of his remarks, Dr. Fotheringham went on to say:—"Any thing from me, Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, must be purely in the nature of remarks upon the effects of the projectiles, and not upon the projectiles themselves. One of the most striking features of the experience being gained in South Africa at present by the R. A. M. C. is the remarkable preponderance of recoveries over deaths among the wounded in the Hospitals; up to March 12th, 1900, the total casualties were 14,700. A total of wounded in Hospital of 7,673, showed a death-rate of only 347 or $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The main reason of this is the marked absence of bacterial infection of wounds, in addition to the merciful character of the Mauser rifle, which had been almost solely in use by the Boers both on the Modder and in Natal until the later stages of the campaign.

This absence of poisoning of wounds by germs is one mainly to the following causes:—

- 1 The bullet is scraped clean and given practically a new sterile surface in its passage through the bore of the rifle, and by the tremendous friction developed in its flight through the air.

2. The summer khaki of cotton does not tear, but splits clean as if cut by a knife, on the entry of the bullet, and no shreds of fabric enter the wound as a rule. The wounded from Elandslaagte, I may say for the benefit of our chairman and the excellent regiment he represents, showed this in a very interesting way, for the Highlanders, wounded by bullets which had passed through the thick quilted woollen kilts, showed a great preponderance of suppurating wounds over those of other men wounded by projectiles which had passed only through khaki; the same objection held to wound through say a flannel shirt.

3. The air and dust of the veldt is remarkably free from germs, unless in the area actually occupied for weeks as camps, when of course contamination has occurred. Nature's great antiseptic agents, sun, rain, and fresh highly ozonized air, are to be seen in operation then quite as effectively as for instance on our own western prairies.

* Extract from the proceedings of the Canadian Military Institute.