

ON THE OPERATING TABLE

It was during and after battles that the surgeon was most at work, mainly in amputating [cutting] of arms and legs, with the sound of battle raging overhead. There was nothing to put the patient to sleep [anaesthetics] and nothing to kill germs [antiseptics] because they did not know that germs spread disease. The key to a successful operation was speed because if it went on too long the patient might die of shock or bleed to death.

The surgeons rarely know anything of the men's diseases.

Aaron Thomas

There were upwards of 60 severely wounded. Those with slight wounds were of not such importance. His time spent in dressing the wounds was 22 hours out of 24. Many a time did I go the rounds with him and have witnessed his skill and kind hearted care of those brave men. I have known him come up the quarter deck at 2 o' clock in the morning after finishing his work. He would then say, 'I have only two hours to rest myself. After that I must begin my visits.'

William Dillon



If an arm or leg was shattered in battle there was little else that could be done but to amputate

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

The sick bay is forward on the half deck and close to the ship's head which is also the toilet for the crew. Add to this, that whenever it blows fresh, the horrible smells of the sea pass through it.. the place less than six feet high; narrow, smelly and wet, the writhings, moans of acute pain, bandages soaked in blood and the rats it is impossible to keep away from the invalids.

Edward Mangin