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River War 2V: Historical Account of Reconquest of Soudan

Winston S. Churchill

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River War 2V: Historical Account of Reconquest of Soudan Winston S. Churchill
A definitive new edition, edited and with an introduction by James W. Muller (University of Alaska)
New foreword by Lady Soames (Churchill's only surviving child)
Published in association with the Churchill Centre

Building on Churchill's newspaper dispatches for the Morning Post, this book tells the exciting story of the reconquest of the Sudan by an Anglo-Egyptian army led by Lord Kitchener in the late 1890s, including the 1898 cavalry charge at Omdurman in which the young Churchill fought as a lieutenant. The River War is an indispensable source for people who want to understand Churchill, and it has always been popular with general readers. Those interested in military history will relish the story of war on the Nile, with all of its colorful incidents, but the book is much more than just a campaign history.

As he worked on The River War, Churchill spent most of a year learning the history of the Sudan. In the first volume, he describes the Dervish rebellion of the Mahdi in the Sudan, the death of Charles Gordon in Khartoum, and Britain's role in Egypt and the Sudan before beginning the story of the three-year military campaign up the Nile, including the challenge of building a railway across the Sahara Desert. In the second volume, Churchill can draw on his own observation and experience of the climax of the campaign. He also discusses the justification for reconquering the Sudan, the effect of Islam on its votaries, dilemmas of development for the people of Africa, and the purposes and pitfalls of British imperialism. Many of Churchill's concerns and reservations have a surprisingly contemporary flavor.

One should note the similarities of that time to our present time: a unipolar world emerging from a bipolar one, in which the one world power (Britain then, the U.S. now) is harassed by guerrilla bands of religious irregulars in the Levant, Northern Africa, and the Balkans.

Originally published in two volumes in 1899, The River War has been out of print in its original, unabridged version since it was shortened to one volume in 1902. Only 3,000 copies were printed, and the first edition costs thousands of dollars today. The original version abounded in colorful stories about Churchill, controversial judgments on his contemporaries (especially his commanding officer, Lord Kitchener), and thoughts on Islamic fundamentalism and British imperialism. Because they were left out of every subsequent edition, they are all but unknown today, even to scholars. The 1899 edition was illustrated with drawings, photogravures, and colored maps that disappeared with the 1902 abridgment.

The new St. Augustine's Press edition includes the entire text of the original edition, returned to print for the first time since the book was abridged. It also includes all material added or altered in later editions of the book. New appendices add a definitive new edition of Churchill's newspaper dispatches from the Sudan, based for the first time on his original manuscripts, as well as Churchill's other writings on the Sudan from 1898 to 1958.

The new edition has a new foreword by Churchill's only surviving child, Lady Soames, who is a noted writer in her own right. It is edited with a new introduction and notes by James W. Muller, Professor of Political Science at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and Academic Chairman of the Churchill Centre, who has been working on the new edition for more than a dozen years. His research adds thousands of new footnotes identifying people who figure in The River War, explaining Churchill's references to other books and events, tracking down the original dispatches and illustrations, and establishing a text that encompasses all variations

in previous editions. These elements distinguish the new edition from any other and make it the definitive version of The River War for all time.

St. Augustine’s Press will publish the two-volume set, slipcased, with a binding to match the 1899 edition. The outer slipcase will be illustrated, and the books will have the unique endpapers. All of the original drawings, photogravures, and colored maps will be included, along with a separately bound facsimile samples of Churchill’s original manuscript dispatches and chapters.

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