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TRUTH ABOUT THE WAR.

THE MISFORTUNES AND MISTAKES OF LORD METHUEN.

Some supposed mystery about Lord Methuen is one of the principal weights on the British mind with regard to the war.

Is Methuen any good?

What is the truth about his first report of Magersfontein?

Why has he been kept at the front?

—these are some of the inquiries volleyed at whoever has had the misfortune to be invalided back from the front.

They are difficult questions to deal with.

To answer the first one causes pain to one who, like myself, shared the fortunes of the noble lord's army from the beginning up to Magersfontein.

The next two questions should be addressed to the War Office, though the understanding of the usually well informed is that Methuen's first Magersfontein report—returned as "defective in form"—was in reality withheld because he went too deeply into the sore point of the cause of the panic of the Highland Brigade. As to this matter, for which he has been most angrily criticised, military opinion is beginning to lean heavily toward the decision that a general in command cannot be held responsible for a brigadier-general's tardiness in opening up his ranks after the subordinate general has taken full charge of his troops and begun a movement against the enemy.

THE VALUE OF HIS DEFEAT.

I am inclined to put Lord Methuen in the very first place in estimating the value to Great Britain of the leaders with which she outfitted her army at the beginning of the war. The worth of the example he set and the lessons learned from his operations cannot be too highly appraised. It is even a question whether Lord Roberts himself would have so rapidly and brilliantly pushed the war to a conclusion but for what was learned from a study of Methuen's earlier campaign. Moreover if any reader fancies this is pure sarcasm, let him pause and think how inadequately Methuen was equipped for what he had to do, and let him be positive that if the Government gave the great field marshal plenty of cavalry, it was because it saw how dangerously Methuen had been stunted in this respect; if it gave the field marshal the support of that master cavalryman, French, it was because Methuen obviously suffered for need of such a right arm; if it gave "the Little Man" a force six times as strong, numerically, as his enemy it was because the lesser superiority of numbers under Methuen had failed so signally.

Finally, when, with her majesty's warm approbation, the Committee of Defence sent out Lord Roberts by an order issued over the heads of the War Office, be sure that it was done because the earlier commanders had demonstrated the need of military genius and genuine command at the head of the British forces if the huntsman's cunning of the Boer were ever to be overmatched by strategy.

TACTICS WITHOUT STRATEGY.

It is only fair to Lord Methuen to say, upon the latter point, that he was by no means the only British officer who did his best to impress upon his fellow-countrymen the fact that tactics and strategy are different things, and that the first can never take the place of the second.

That moral was even more startlingly pointed at Paardeburg than at Magersfontein.

Lord Methuen has not had great success in this war, but he is too good a man, to high a type of the Anglo-Saxon, to be subjected to any criticism which does not take into account his personal qualities apart from his equipment as a general. He is a thoroughly bred gentleman of that high class

Dear Sirs,—Within the past year I know of three fatty tumors on the head having been removed by the application of MINARD'S LINIMENT without any surgical operation and there is no indication of a return.

CAPT. W. A. PITT. Ch'oon, N. B. Gondola Ferry.

which has distinguished itself, in this war rather by casting in its lot with the rest, and not only sharing every hardship to which the humblest clay was subjected, but setting a priceless example of daring unto death. If these aristocrats who were in high places had neither genius for war nor deep knowledge of its science, it must be said that they possessed the other qualities of leadership, and were always in the front in battle. Of that stock is Lord Methuen, courageous to the last degree in war, courteous in the fullest measure to those around him, a proud man, yet gentle and modest—and pious as well.

WHERE HIS STRENGTH LIES.

What his critics agree upon is that he would have shone as a brigadier. He would carry out with courage and dash the most trying orders that could be given, but he has not the qualities which make a commander-in-chief, or even a corps commander. He lacks initiative, solidity, originality, ingenuity, and, more than all, confidence in himself.

There is a public man in America of whom it is said: "You can always tell what he is going to do until he makes up his mind—then he wobbles."

So it is with Lord Methuen; he is full of confidence in himself until he is actually in a fight, then he gets "rattled." He is not one of those who can put on responsibility and wear it like an easy glove. He is not of the distinguished few who know their own limitations.

He was handicapped at the start in many ways; in some by his own fault—in others by the War Office. He had a sufficient force, for no one now believes that the enemy he fought was in any case nearly as large as was supposed at the time. But his command was not properly made up. He did not have anything like enough artillery or mounted men, or a single cavalry leader who was fit for his job. The intelligence he got of the enemy was scanty and false, the intelligence the enemy got of his doings was thorough. Before the British knew better, they used sometimes pay to salaries to the enemy to betray what went on in our camps.

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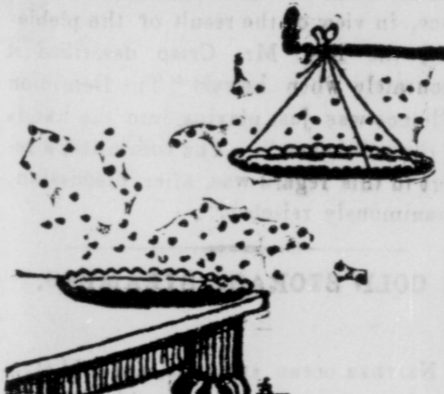
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