

# HOW TO BEAT THE BOER

A CONVERSATION  
IN HADES

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BY

FRANK HARRIS

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LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1900

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# THE TRANSVAAL FROM WITHIN

El Private Record of Public Affairs

BY

J. P. FITZPATRICK

## What Two Statesmen say.

*MR. CHAMBERLAIN, in reply to a request for a printed defence of the Government's policy in the Transvaal, wrote:—*

*"I refer you to Mr. FitzPatrick's book."*

*LORD ROSEBERRY, in his speech at Bath, said:—*

*"If you wish to read a history of the internal economy of the Transvaal, I would simply suggest that you should procure a book called 'The Transvaal from within,' by Mr. FitzPatrick, who was a denizen of the Transvaal, and much interested in its progress—a book which seems to me to bear on every page, and in every sentence, the mark of truth, and which gives you wholesale, and in detail, an extraordinary, and, I think I may say, an appalling record of the way in which the Government of the Transvaal was carried on, and the subjection to which it reduced your fellow countrymen there."*

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# HOW TO BEAT THE BOER

*A Conversation in Hades*

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**Dramatis Personae :**

Washington	C. S. Parnell
Samuel Johnson	Lord Randolph Churchill
Thomas Carlyle	Aylward—a Fenian

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BY

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“WHAT I think we did was possibly to under-  
rate (and I do not care how frankly I confess  
it), not the number nor the armaments of the  
Boers, but the value of their fighting men.”—  
*Lord Lansdowne, in the House of Lords,*  
*30th January, 1900.*

## How to Beat the Boer.

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Dr. JOHNSON. That Englishmen are too much inclined to impose their will on weaker peoples may be conceded; but I have yet to learn that they are inferior to Dutchmen, or that our language has not as good a right to be the tongue of South Africa as the obscure and vulgar dialect which now obtains in parts of that region.

Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. I like to hear that; it has got the true unregenerate ring about it, but there are many ways to Rome, Doctor, and I think with Mr. Carlyle that we have chosen the very roughest and worst. It was Africa that gave me this opinion. I went out hating Majuba and believing that we ought to have continued the war and smashed the Boers. But I had not been on the spot many weeks before I became conscious that a very different view obtained in South Africa, and, on the whole, a wiser view. The best Englishmen and Dutchmen in the country convinced me that, as the two races had to live together, conciliatory and healing methods were not only advisable but necessary. As I wanted to warn my countrymen I admitted my change of feeling in public, and acknowledged that Mr. Gladstone had done

right in concluding peace after Majuba, and in giving back their independence to the Boers.

It was perfectly clear, ten years ago, that if we English only held to the policy of conciliation we should win everything in South Africa. I never met a Dutchman in South Africa who could not understand English; we were rapidly assimilating the Boer population of the Transvaal; in the election before the Raid Kruger only kept the Presidentship by a majority of a few hundreds.

It is said now that there was a desperate conspiracy against the British rule in South Africa. To admit that would be to argue that our rule was a bad rule; but it was evidently a light and lenient rule, and there was no conspiracy against it, no ill feeling even towards it.

Lord Loch was the first to coquette with the paltry disaffection in Johannesburg; he should have been rapped over the knuckles for his pains. Then came that insensate Raid, brainless in conception, and worse than feeble in execution, which brought about the first grave mistake in our policy. The only way, then, to restore confidence throughout South Africa was to punish Rhodes; his name should have been removed from the list of Privy Councillors, and the Prime Minister should have given dignified utterance to England's condemnation of the Raid. Instead of that we were all astounded by Chamberlain's eulogy of Rhodes. That was the first grave mistake, but since then Chamberlain has been allowed to go on from blunder to blunder. I sometimes wonder what he thinks of himself now, the Minister who

has brought England lower than Lord North and George the Third combined!

PARNELL. You still seem to believe, Lord Randolph, that the British are going to beat the Boers, but I don't believe it. You have already one hundred and eighty thousand men in South Africa who have all been stopped, and you can't send out many more of the same quality. If Kruger has the brains he is supposed to have, he will have some reserves held centrally to be thrown on any threatened point. In that case I am not at all sure that the English are going to win in the war.

Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. Then I can hardly argue the matter with you, Parnell. Every Boer lost is a man lost who can't be replaced, whereas we can go on increasing the pressure for another year if it comes to that. In the long run, it seems to me, the Boers must be beaten. You forget the help of our Colonies, too; but here is a better judge of war than any of us. What is your view of the probable outcome of the war, Mr. President?

WASHINGTON. I am not sufficiently informed to have a decided opinion. On the one hand forty thousand men seem too small a foundation on which to build a nation. On the other hand, the British troops in South Africa have already been beaten; in at least one instance they have been demoralised. These men will never be worth as much as they were before their reverses. The moral element is the most important element in warfare. It can hardly be doubted that the moral

courage and determination of the Boers have been even more uplifted by the results of the war than those qualities in the British soldier have been depressed. Still, the British soldier has shown great spirit under defeat. I cannot say whether thirty or forty thousand more troops will change the balance; but the numbers are already so greatly in your favour that it appears as if you might overwhelm your antagonist.

DR. JOHNSON. And this is the "art of war"!

CARLYLE. I'm beginning to think, Doctor that what you call the "art of war" is very like what was called in my time the "science of political economy." They are both founded on qualities of the human animal which are infinitely variable. General Washington increased the value of the troops under him as much as General Burgoyne diminished the value of his troops. The great thing is to pick a Wolfe or a Washington, and not a Burgoyne or a Methuen. But poor old England to-day is so blinded with lies and shams that she seems to have taken a Lord Methuen for a real lord instead of a mere titular creature, and so is paying the penalty for her sins. Trial by battle, man, is an awful trial; no shams stand there, no lies, and it looks as if the two little despised republics were worth on the field as much as the whole British Empire. An awful lesson that, which England would do well to take to heart and think over.

DR. JOHNSON. Is there then no art of war, General Washington?—no fixed principles of military action?

WASHINGTON. The rules of war are rules of common sense. Hunters make the best soldiers; men fighting before their own doors are doubly formidable; there is no mystery about these rules.

PARNELL. Of course I agree with you, General, but there is a mad Irishman here who is always talking about "modern warfare" and "scientific warfare." I think it would be worth our while to interview him. He is certainly intelligent and he knows the Boers and South Africa thoroughly. We might bring his views to the test of your experience. But we must go to him; hatred lames him. Luckily he is not far from here; his name is Aylward.

Dr. JOHNSON. A good English name that.

PARNELL. You are right, Doctor, the bitterest adversaries of England have always been men of her own race, and that is something that if she were wise she would ponder over at her leisure as Mr. Carlyle says, for when she discovers the reason of their enmity she will have got very close to the secret of her own weakness. But let us go to Aylward.

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PARNELL. Aylward, we've all come to see you to hear your opinion of the war in South Africa, and of war in general if you like. But we want the truth without prejudice; the fact without passion.

AYLWARD. Ha, ha, ha! And so passion is a bad thing, is it? It's the motive power of life, Parnell; you don't call an engine of ten horse-

power good and one of fifty bad, do you? I was able to predict the English defeats, eh? That was easy enough; but before I knew South Africa, or had seen a Boer, I was able to divine that the Boers would beat the British, and that was partly due to the passion that you try to condemn. A passion of sympathy with the weak, whom the strong tried to bully as the British always try to bully, always.

CARLYLE (*aside*). It looks very much, Doctor, as if your sentence were as pertinent now as the day it was written: "We English do not as yet enough understand the common rights of man."

AYLWARD. That's it! That's it! That's what they don't understand, "the common rights of man." And another thing they don't understand is the rights of intelligence. They hate brains because they fear them. Ask General Washington there what Englishmen of genius did to free the Americans from the British yoke. Ask him what Tom Paine did with his "Crisis" and "Commonsense," and what Captain Paul Jones did who beat the best British seamen and the best of their ships with a scratch crew in a crazy hulk? Didn't I serve as a private in the Queen's Westminsters eager to fight and die for England? But all my suggestions were laughed at, and I was sneered down. One must be a lord, or as servile as a lord, in order to be listened to in England. When I went to fight for the Boers the English called me a traitor. A traitor, it seems, is one who dares to fight for the weak against the strong, for the oppressed against the oppressor, at twice the usual risk.

Dr. JOHNSON. Unless I am vastly mistaken, sir, we are now fighting for equal rights for Englishmen, and nothing more.

AYLWARD. As if everyone didn't know that your equal rights would give you dominion even in the home of the Boers; the hypocrisy is sickening. But thank God the corner-boy *régime* is coming to an end even in England; the corner-boy diplomatist is somewhat discredited, the corner-boy politician despised. I used to hate England so much I couldn't do her justice; but now that I am free of the body—the body that casts a shadow, as someone said—I can see her as she is, and whenever I want to understand her I think of a public school boy. The fourth-form boy hates brains and admires nothing so much as physical strength and brute courage, and that is exactly England's case. She makes a hero to her liking out of a Baden-Powell; there he sits in Mafeking and fights and fights, with no effect upon the general result of the war. But a Napoleon who would see things as they are and find a way to beat the Boer without great loss—a triumph of intelligence over difficulty—would never be appreciated in England. Perhaps that's the reason Napoleons are not found in England.

Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. Do you prefer the Boer to the Englishman, Mr. Aylward?

AYLWARD. No, how could I? He's still more unintelligent than the Englishman, and very nearly as conceited and obstinate. Prefer him! I despise him. Take Schreiner: Schreiner's one of the best of the Cape Dutch, but fancy

remaining a Schreiner when one has the chance of being a Washington !

When I first went to the Transvaal in '80 I was supposed to have done the Boers some service ; the chief thing I did was to increase their self-confidence. Kruger used to say that he and I were the only two men in the country who knew England and still believed in a Boer victory. The Boers were willing to fight at any time, but they did not like to risk much or to push forward boldly. Like the English they prefer rather to receive than to give battle ; it took a good deal of persuasion to get them to advance and cut the British communications at the Ingogo.

I was of some service to them as they admitted, and how did they repay me ? I did not ask them for anything then. They were a poor people, and poverty is a bad debtor, but later, in '90, when the mines were paying and the Transvaal had become a rich country, I wrote to Kruger reminding him of his promise to help me if I ever needed help. He never answered my letter. I wrote again to him and showed what I was worth by predicting all that has happened since. I begged him to begin at once to prepare for the inevitable struggle ; I told him that just as the British, in spite of their solemn promises, had stolen Kimberley diamond mines from the Free State, so they would be certain to try to steal the Randt gold mines from the Transvaal. It was clear that the Free State would cast in its lot with the sister republic, but I warned Kruger that he must use diplomacy in order to make the Dutch in Cape Colony take their

place in the line of battle. I pointed out to him how easy it was to bring about this result by preferential duties in favour of the products of the Cape farmer. It was all as simple as A B C. Why I even told him to be sure, in case of war, to hold the edges of the great plateau, and that's the only piece of the advice he has attempted to act on. He thanked me for my letter in his pious way, and offered me a post in the Customs, but then it was too late, I wasn't a dog to whom he could throw a bone when he liked. But think of the fool! Instead of following my counsel he went on exasperating the Dutch in Cape Colony against him; he even closed the Drifts to their produce, and yet the English go about now saying that he had some far-reaching plan for making South Africa Dutch; he had no plan at all and no foresight, and that's the condemnation of him; he's more hatefully short-sighted even than Chamberlain.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. Very interesting, I am sure, Mr. Aylward, but I should like to hear about the war. How did you know that the Boers would beat us in the field?

AYLWARD. Because I had formed a correct theory of warfare before I ever saw a bullet fired in anger.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. General Washington, whom perhaps you know, says there is no theory of warfare, that it is all a question of common sense.

AYLWARD (*quietly*). I am not likely to differ much from General Washington in either the

theory or practice of war. It was in reading his campaigns that the truth first flashed across me. But let us begin at the beginning. It is strange, isn't it, to find a disciplined and trained army beaten by half their number of ignorant peasants.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. These peasants, Lord Rosebery says, are led by able condottieri from a dozen foreign armies.

AYLWARD. Lord Rosebery does not know what he's talking about; no Boers would ever follow Germans or Frenchmen. What leaders had they at Majuba? The talk about foreign officers is a silly lie invented by the more foolish English journalists to try to excuse the reverses of the British Army, but these journalists know nothing, or they would know that the same English soldiers who have been beaten by the Boers, could drive three times their number of Germans or Frenchmen. British soldiers of the same sort, under shocking disadvantages of food and climate, were able to beat double their number of Russians at Inkerman, and Russians have always proved themselves at least as good soldiers as Germans and Frenchmen. We all know how Frenchmen and Germans behave when they're beaten. Why a corporal's guard of Frenchmen could take a German army prisoners after Jena. The English troops in South Africa have been five or six years with the colours and have nearly all smelt powder in India: they are veterans, and the men who won at Elands Laagte, after the defeats at Glencoe and Dundee, would frighten your German recruits into fainting fits. We have nothing to learn from Germans

or Frenchmen, but let me get on and you will see whether I am right or not at the end. I say that this one fact that a handful of peasants have been able to beat trained and disciplined troops shows that there is something absolutely wrong in the commonly received theory of warfare. What other art or science is there in which ignorant peasants can beat trained and lettered men. None—eh? Then, is there something peculiar in fighting? Nothing. Take, for example, fighting with fists. Do you think half a dozen Boers would stand a chance with half a dozen English pugilists? There is no doubt that training in that sort of fighting is effective. And why? Because your pugilist is trained to punch the bag, and not merely to stand at “attention” and to salute his officer with mechanical perfection; the pugilist is for use, and not for show.

Let us go back as far as my scanty reading will take me. I find that from the beginning there have always been two opposing theories of war. One theory, which I call the barbaric theory, believes in numbers; the other prefers quality to quantity. The Greek took the true view, and the defeat at Thermopylæ brought about the downfall of the Persian Empire. The few against the many, and the few triumphed!

At the very dawn of the modern time the English were found, like the Greeks, with the true tradition. Who was it won at Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt against three and four and six times their number of Frenchmen? The English bowmen, who could strike further and quicker and truer than their opponents. The

French knights were about as good as the English knights. Chandos and Walter Manny were no better than Bertrand du Guesclin and Olivier de Clisson. It was the English bowmen who laid France prostrate at the feet of England, in spite of her broader acres, greater wealth, and enormously larger population. But curiously enough, when the gun took the place of the bow the English gradually lost their grip on the vital truth, perhaps because the old arquebus did not shoot straight, and so did not reward practice; perhaps—but the explanation does not matter; the fact is that when we next find the two theories face to face, the English are the exponents of the bad theory and the American colonists the exponents of the true. The battle of Saratoga should have taught every Englishman the true theory of war. There the American militia not only defeated English troops but forced them to an ignominious surrender. And, mark it, those same English troops were the best soldiers of their time. As soon as France and Spain, encouraged by the success of the Americans, declared war against England, they were both whipped, and the prestige England lost in her colony she regained in Europe. Or take a still clearer case. Wellington's veterans, the men who marched across Spain and France and bivouacked in Paris, were beaten at New Orleans by half their number of raw militia! But even New Orleans taught the English nothing, and in this last half century we find them falling further and further away from the truth till at last they become so infatuated that they set themselves to copy the Germans, who

stand frankly for the barbaric theory. In spite of their wars on the frontiers of India, in spite of the fact that they find themselves able to treat savages with contempt, the British in their turn play savages to the Boers, and advance across the open to be swept away by rifle fire. They don't seem to see that their bravery is just as useless and just as stupid as the bravery of the Hadendowa Arabs.

But what do you think of their leaders, those generals who should have studied the lessons of the past, or at least the lessons of Bronker's Spruit, Lang's Nek, the Ingogo, and Majuba, even if they studied nothing else ?

But they studied nothing and learned nothing, nothing! Such an object lesson even as Majuba was thrown away upon them. It all comes from the national love of the fourth-form school boy, the grotesque English ideal: he must have pluck, be somewhat arrogant, and detest brains. And because you admire this semi-savage you have your White losing touch with a part of his force and sacrificing it as absolutely as if he had ordered his men to be shot. This is the reason that your Buller makes a frontal attack on Colenso and sacrifices a thousand men, and is so shaken that he does not even know how to protect the guns on his own side of the river, but lets a small party of Boers cross over and take them in his teeth. This is the reason that you have a Gatacre with his idiotic night march into an unknown country, and worst of all a Methuen. Your ideal, I say, is the plucky brainless fourth-form school boy, and everywhere that ideal has come to grief. He is not destined to

lead the modern world is the fourth-form school boy, thank God, but to be relegated to his proper position, which is that of a mere subordinate. Buller with his frontal attack and his personal contempt of danger would make an excellent lieutenant, but he is utterly out of place as a leader of armies.

The greatest English fighting man combined both ideals. Nelson always told Hardy to lay his ship yardarm to yardarm with a French ship, but he won the Nile by laying two English ships yardarm to yardarm with each French ship.

We want then two things, intelligent leadership and soldiers that shall be trained fighters as our pugilists are trained boxers. We cannot get the intelligent leadership within fifty years, let us see if it is possible to get trained fighters. The first thing to recognise is that the English tradition is bad, even for the common soldier. Just as young Brown wants to punch Smith junior's head so the English soldier wants to "get at 'em with the bayonet." The English Press, too, encourages this spirit by harping upon the courage of the soldier, as if courage were everything. We have accordingly one Elands Laagte, a chance victory, under favour of the night and a dozen shameful defeats, shameful, I say, because we everywhere outnumber the Boers three to one. The "Cape Times," and such-like hireling prints, now declare that there are ninety thousand Boers in the field, just as before the war began they laughed at the idea of the Boers being able to muster thirty thousand men, but the truth is—and everybody who knows the country knows it—the Transvaal and Free State together are able to put about

forty thousand men in the field, and the Natal and Cape Colony Boers who have joined their forces don't number five thousand more. No, everywhere the Boers are outnumbered two and three to one, and everywhere they are victorious. Why?

One organ of English opinion tells us that it's because the Boers have better artillery than we have, and this brainless folly goes down. The so-called war correspondents of all the English papers describe how hundreds of Boers have been killed in every battle by our artillery. "Lyddite is terribly destructive," we hear. All fables, foolish fables. These correspondents and papers have also published the fact that ninety-eight per cent. of all the Boer wounded who are our prisoners were wounded by rifle fire. I remember at Lang's Nek that the Boers were at first very much alarmed at what the British artillery might do; they thought shells something devilish. At the end of the day they laughed at them. To men in trenches—to men who know how to take cover—shell fire is comparatively harmless; great cry and little wool—that's artillery!

What, then, is the secret of the Boer success? I say they are unconsciously the exponents of modern scientific warfare. The Boer ideal is to expose himself to danger as little as possible while killing his adversary with the rifle bullet. That is, his defence is as perfect as his attack. And the English papers, in exactly the brainless spirit of the common soldiers, are perpetually occupied in ridiculing the Boers' defence. Would they sneer at a boxer who guards himself? these representatives of intelligence! The Boer has

been properly trained to fight in his combats with wild animals, and is now the best soldier in the world. There is one Englishman, and one only, who has seen part of this truth. The other day, Mr. Winston Churchill—your son, Lord Randolph—wrote to the "Morning Post" that one Boer was worth from three to five English soldiers—that is the truth. In my time he was worth ten. I am sure that one of those old Voortrekkers behind his boulder with his Martini would have killed ten English soldiers who tried to kill him and would have got off without a scratch. Their sons are not nearly so efficient; they have not had the same rifle practice, but one of them is still equal to, say, five English soldiers. But if the Boer represents the modern scientific theory of warfare, how are we to beat him? Mr. Winston Churchill tells us to send quarter of a million of men to South Africa—in fact, he advises us to overwhelm the Boers with numbers. He says nothing of the hideous loss of English life that that would entail. The idea is to me revolting, barbaric. You may win in that way, though it seems very doubtful. Every little success inflames the courage of the men who are fighting against such odds, and all the while the bravest of our men are being killed first, leaving the less brave to win if they can.

I put no faith in numbers. The way to beat the Boer is to send out men who are better fighters than he is, better exponents of modern scientific warfare than he is. We must form a corps of men in England who will take cover as cautiously as the Boer takes cover, and who is a better rifle shot than the Boer; we must form a special corps

of sharpshooters. I know you will say that this is being done—that Mr. Seton-Karr is doing it. He got an echo of my ideas, it is true; but he did not even understand them, and was incapable of putting them correctly. Charlotte Corday astonished her judges by saying that “only those could carry out ideas who conceived them.” That may or may not be true: but it is certain that no one can express ideas like the man who has conceived them. Your Seton-Karr forgot that.

Let me explain myself in detail. Just as forty thousand Boers are able now to hold a hundred and fifty thousand English troops, so I believe that five thousand English sharpshooters, properly armed, would turn the tide of war, and with their aid we should everywhere begin to drive the Boer.

Let me face all the difficulties. It would not be easy, even in England, to find five thousand better shots than the best five thousand Boers. The conditions of light and air in South Africa are very peculiar. Ask Lord Hawke why his team missed catches when they first landed in Capetown, and even when they played at Johannesburg, and he will tell you how very difficult it is for an Englishman to judge distances in that translucent air that throbs with sunlight. But British nerves and eyes are as good as any in the world, and five thousand marksmen can be collected in England who would hold their own anywhere.

But if we can only equal the Boers in men we can far surpass them in weapons. Give but the order, and Gibbs of Bristol and Rigby of London, and Westley Richards will turn you out a marks-

man's rifle in comparison with which the Mauser shall be as inferior as Brown Bess was inferior to the Mauser.

You must, of course, know what you want before you give the order, and here again history, the history of modern warfare, is a supreme and sufficient guide. It has often been said in the United States, and I myself have heard Grant admit, that the Southern troops were never really beaten till they met the volunteers from the Western States—men who knew how to use a rifle. But even Grant never understood the new element that some of his Western troops brought into warfare. Some of these Westerners formed corps of sharpshooters, and these sharpshooters decided nearly every battle in the last year and a half of the Civil War. We can scarcely do better than copy the main features of their equipment: it was astoundingly modern. First of all, their aim being accuracy of rifle fire at long ranges, they increased enormously the weight of the rifle barrel, and diminished in proportion the size of the projectile; they thus got less kick, less vibration, too, in the barrel itself and enormously greater accuracy. They carried the change to an almost extreme pitch: their rifles, in certain cases, weighed thirty-two pounds, and threw a ball no bigger than a pea, but with these rifles, mounted with the best telescopic sights, some of those sharpshooters could put three balls out of five into a man's head at a thousand yards.

PARNELL. You would sacrifice mobility, then, Aylward? Yet Mr. Balfour praises the

“mobility” of the Boer as if that were the chief lesson of the war, though I confess it always seemed to me as if it were the immobility of the Boer that had surprised the British troops.

AYLWARD. I would sacrifice everything to accuracy of fire. But let me go on: this immense weight of rifle is not needed to-day: cordite and rifleite, and the other modern smokeless powders have enormously diminished vibration and kick; but I should still make the barrel of the sharpshooter's rifle very considerably heavier than, say, the barrel of the sporting Lee-*Metford*. In fact, the sharpshooter's rifle should weigh, I think, somewhere between twelve and fifteen pounds. It should, of course, be furnished with the best telescopic sights and accurately tested in South Africa. Moreover, every stock should be suited to the owner. Equipped with such a weapon, built by the best gunmakers in the world—and, thank God, the British love of sport has given us the best rifle makers in the world—five thousand British marksmen would, with a week's practice in South Africa, become more efficient soldiers than any five thousand Boers. Then we should begin to drive them.

But my chief warning is that at first these marksmen must be kept together and apart from the other soldiers; a few *Tommies* who can't shoot and who want to “get at 'em with the bayonet,” would disturb and ruin a thousand marksmen. At first three or four hundred sharpshooters should be scattered in front of the Boer trenches you wish to take, and should be told to crawl forward, availing themselves constantly of cover, or, better still,

they should be brought into position in the night. We do not want to shove them before the Boer trenches as Methuen did; a thousand or twelve hundred yards is near enough for our purpose, and at this distance they should be scattered fan-like when dawn breaks. Now let the first lines crawl slowly forward while their comrades behind watch the Boer trenches and put a bullet into every head that shows itself above the parapet. In two hours, or three or four, time being of no consequence, the foremost ranks will have got within three or four hundred yards of the trenches, and at that distance no Boer will be able even to look at them without being himself shot. As soon as these marksmen seriously command the trench; as soon as, say, ten Boers out of a thousand have been shot through the head, you will find the weak point of the Boers, the weak point of all irregular soldiery. There is no discipline in these men to hold them to a certain death; there is not in their blood the tradition of a thousand victories; in their armoury is no weapon from the invincible past; they don't belong to the first race on earth. Ah, you wonder, don't you? at the Fenian speaking like this; but the Fenian loved England and her glory better than any of you, and would have done more for her if she had been willing to accept his service. Didn't Captain Paul Jones beg for a commission in your English navy, and offer to accept the smallest independent command long before he took arms on the other side and bequeathed to the American navy its first and noblest tradition. England stones her prophets and then curses them. That's what she has done for the last

century, and she is now beginning to pay the price of her folly.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. But wouldn't five thousand sharpshooters be too few? Oughtn't we to have forty thousand?

AYLWARD. You couldn't get forty thousand in time, and I don't think they are necessary. You don't take into account the moral effect my five thousand marksmen would have on all the rest of our soldiers. As soon as it was seen that marksmen could beat the Boers, you would have the good shots in your ordinary regiments drawing together and constituting themselves into bands of sharpshooters. The officers ought to do this for them, but perhaps the men would be quicker. Besides, as soon as the new spirit of taking care to kill and not be killed began to reign in your army, the ordinary soldier would begin to try and take aim before he shot; now he shoots first. Moreover, the Boer once beaten at his own game, would not stand the racket long. The men from the Zoutspansberg know nothing of the men from Marico; they are a congeries of small bodies which would all fall apart under a shock. Now you are carefully welding them together. No: five thousand marksmen would do for this work.

There is no other lesson in war but this one. If you will read the history of the American navy you will find that in the war of 1812 her ships beat yours wherever they met them, simply because the Americans had sights on their cannon and your sailors had none. That's a new fact

to the most of you, isn't it? but I, seeking causes, found it all sufficient. In 1814, the last year of that war, too, some of the cannon of the American ships were already rifled, and their balls went through the English ships as a knife through cheese. Get up your corps of marksmen now, and give them telescopic sights and the best rifles, and train them as sharpshooters and not as pugilists, and you will beat the Boer yet, and not otherwise. Above all, remember that there is no time to be lost. Don't think of mounting these marksmen, leave that to Seton-Karr; the shooting's the thing; all the rest is leather and prunella. What would you think of the pugilist who was only taught how to dress and ride, and make idiotic salutes, and had never punched a ball!

WASHINGTON. I have to thank you, sir, for a very able essay on Warfare. Your conclusions would be accepted, I think, by such General Officers as have seen good marksmen and bad in the field.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. I'm glad you approve, General. Mr. Aylward's theory seems in itself reasonable, and fits in curiously with even a layman's half-formed opinions. I remember when reading a French General's Memoirs (Marbœuf, I think, was his name) being struck by his explanation of one of Wellington's victories in the Peninsula. He proved, or tried to prove, that Wellington was a bad strategist; at any rate, the inferior of Massena, and then found himself confronted with the fact that the British won the

battle with inferior forces. To do him justice he did not flinch from the truth; he admitted that the British infantry fire was far more effective than that of the French. I don't know why, but the passage reminded me of an account of Crecy I had read when a boy, and so stuck in my memory.

CARLYLE. I put no faith in an anarchic horde of marksmen. Cromwell and Napoleon made their armies; it is genius that organises victory.

AYLWARD. How could I underrate genius! Give brains in the captain, and even now our British soldiers on the Tugela would overwhelm the Boers. Genius is the *nth* power of the mathematician, that raises the value of the force under it to any extent. But I almost despair of finding genius in a British General, or, indeed, anything save drill-sergeant incapacity. What do you think of Buller giving, as proof of his soldiers' hard fighting, the fact that he is allowed to retreat unmolested! Was there ever such a braggart! Instead of following him up and annihilating him, the ignorant, suspicious Boer lets him run away, and he cites his escape as evidence—not of his adversary's stupidity, but of his own prowess. And the incredible Methuen, worst among the bad—who still sticks to his command even after Magersfontein. Such leaders were never seen in the world before. Perhaps the English will love a lord less now that they can reckon up the lives a Methuen costs. But nearly all Generals in all armies are mediocrities; our English ones are only a little worse than the others. On the one side they

have the practical sense of their race, and on the other that intense dislike for the things of the intellect of which I have already spoken; furthermore, the army in England is a sort of aristocratic preserve from which the free air of merit is jealously excluded, and perhaps because of this fact English Generals of late years have been permitted to hide their defects. Wolseley was almost the first to object boldly to war correspondents; now the Press telegrams are censored or held back, on the most absurd pretexts, and so the Generals ensure the personal eulogy which in this war has reached the ridiculous. Keen eyes and tongues free to blame as to praise must be as disconcerting to a Wolseley or a Buller as they would have been agreeable to a Clive.

How do I account for the fact that the leading Generals are more brainless than the leaders in any other art? First of all, let us remember that it is the fact. Again and again men like Washington, Cromwell, and Clive have come from the outside, and without any military training have beaten the best Generals of the day. This could not happen, and does not happen, in the case of any other profession founded on realities. Our best surgeons may at the moment be excellent or merely average, but no one believes that there is a single layman in the world who, without study and practice, could trepan a man or take a stone from the bladder as well as the worst of them. Our pugilists, too, may be merely average, but no outsider, without practice or training, would be likely to stand a chance with the ordinary professional.

The explanation of this is simple. When a

man of genius chances to appear in any other trade or profession, he cuts out a way for himself and makes his own place: insubordination is the birth-mark of ability. But discipline is the fetish of the soldier, and the able man who finds it hard to follow the fool, will get no advancement in any army. Consequently the best regular Captains are scholarly mediocrities like Moltke, who carry on war according to approved principles, and in seventy years make no innovation. If Moltke had met the Boers he would have found out how little he knew of the art of war. As another proof of this, take Napoleon. There is a man of genius who introduced little or nothing new into the science of war. Why? Simply because in youth, when he could think, he was able to beat all his adversaries with the old weapons so easily that he didn't take the trouble to forge a new instrument, and when need pressed, he was played out and worked out.

But if all Generals are equally bad, how are we now to get good ones? By taking experience as our guide. It is in times of revolution that genius comes most easily to the front. Why? Simply because men are in earnest then and correspondingly impatient of fools and failure. If the English Government were in earnest now, Methuen would have been disgraced after the Modder fight, and Buller cashiered after Colenso. As the debate shows, the Government isn't at all in earnest yet; but the English people is in earnest, and may yet make its will felt. In that case the fools will be dismissed the service at once and punished as certainly as hitherto they have been rewarded; and as soon as that becomes the order of the day,

you will find the mediocrities funking high, dangerous positions, and, sooner or later, you will get the man who can do the work. But you may have to wait some time, for the problem is not an easy one to solve. I don't hope for a loosing of this tangle by brains. Centuries of peace at home and prosperity have made the English fear and hate revolutionary methods; the French Revolution to them does not mean the regeneration of a people; but the massacre of thousands of aristocrats, and that event is looked upon in England with horror and loathing, which in France excites only grateful enthusiasm, and throughout the civilised world is regarded as the chief victory in what Heine has called "the liberation war of humanity." No, England, I am afraid, will not adopt any revolutionary methods; as she preferred to lose her American colonies and keep her George the Third, so she would now rather lose South Africa than dismiss her Bullers and Methuens. Why even Chamberlain seems secure: Chamberlain, the author and instigator of the war; Chamberlain the——

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. You believe then that the formation of a corps of five thousand marksmen would be enough to give England the victory?

AYLWARD. I do; if they are picked honestly, without snobbishness I mean, and honestly equipped with the best weapon that can be devised. We English have great practical sense; give us something near the right thing and we take a lot of stopping.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL. Then you'll get your corps of marksmen. Believe me, there's an England unrepresented at Westminster; unknown almost to the Chamberlains and Methuens; an England of both brains and heart; an England that regrets the war and condemns it; but nevertheless is determined to go through with it, and to reach victory, if needs be, through a hundred defeats. The corps of marksmen shall be found, Mr. Aylward, I promise you; I only wish you were alive to command it; but it shall be found and formed according to your model. Of that you need have no doubt.

CARLYLE. What an Englishman you are, after all, Mr. Aylward, a typical Englishman; you want, as Cromwell wanted, "a few good men" with the best weapon; "arms and the man" you would sing as the Roman. But I'm sore at heart and very hopeless. I wonder what'll be the end of it all, I wonder——

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