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Mr. Julian Ralph's Criticisms. Mr. Julian Ralph has recently written some things in criticism of the British army which are attracting attention. Mr. Ralph has been doing the work of a war correspondent in South Africa, and his accounts of what he has met with have been graphic and highly interesting. Mr. Ralph is an American, but he is by no means the kind of an American which can find nothing to like or admire in Englishmen. On the contrary he has always expressed a generous interest in the British and the British cause in South Africa, and he has never expressed any very high opinion of the Boers or the cause for which they have so obstinately fought. Mr. Ralph's criticism is accordingly delivered from a friendly stand-point, and both for that reason and because of the view of strong common sense which pervades it, seems very worthy of respectful consideration. To sum up this friendly criticism in a sentence, it is to this effect, that, while the material of which the rank and file of the British army is composed is second to none in the world, its effectiveness is very seriously discounted by the lack of professional knowledge and ability on the part of its officers. As to the character of the British soldier, Mr. Ralph writes: "I had not hoped to see in Europe a better private soldier than the Turk. He is so submissive to discipline, so uncomplaining, so ready to fight and ready to die, and so patient under reverses, wounds and the hardship of campaigning. But Tommy Atkins is all of these in stronger measure—and he has other good qualities as well. He is capable of greater enthusiasm in a cause, and especially for a favorite leader. He has a greater degree of intelligence—mainly valuable to him in leading him to take more care of his health. Neither harshness nor brutality is needed to make him admit the position and authority of his officers—upon whom he is too dependent, by the way, though not nearly so much so as the Turk. Finally, he has a sense of humor which is priceless as a safety-valve." But what about the officers? Mr. Ralph does not endorse the opinion expressed in some quarters that the average British officer is stupid. They are not stupid "when you discuss with them the subjects in which they are interested, such as politics, sport, travel, exploration, society, literature and a dozen other general topics. As to their knowledge of military science you can get little idea, because the subject seldom, almost never, comes up unless you force it. And then you discover that they are not so stupid as they are ignorant. (I speak of the majority, of course.) They do not know that the Spaniards used the Mauser rifle against us last year, or have any idea what we were armed with, or that we employed balloons in that war, or what were found to be the merits of the dynamite-gun, or of the newly designed cannons wrapped with wire." The fact is, as Mr. Ralph thinks, that British officers have often acted stupidly in the present war, not because they are not, as a rule, highly intelligent, but because, in the case of many, they are playing a game which they do not understand. The fact is they take war only half seriously, whereas if war is to be considered as an actuality at all, it certainly ought to command from the man who engages in it the fullest measure of intelligence and earnest purpose of which he is capable. The British army, as Mr. Ralph puts it, "is not a ladder for merit so much as it is a soft seat for wealth and caste. It is, indeed, a great aristocratic social club. So truly is this the case that Hector MacDonald, the 'ranker' who has risen to be a general, serves to condemn the system by the singularity of his achievement, instead of glorifying it by figuring as a type and member of a class." The fact is that most of the officers in the army are men who by family traditions and the influences of their early years have been led to look upon themselves as born to a life of genteel leisure.

The thought either of working to live or of living to work is repugnant to them. They live for society, for sport, for whatever is leisurely and genteel. They are fine fellows, too, no doubt, in their way and among their own set) brave too—none more ready to face death than they! But courage, however magnificent, is not war. We may well pray that our nation may be delivered from war. But it may not be for her to choose, and if she must meet her enemies upon the battlefield, it is in the highest degree important that her military forces shall be so organized and officered that they shall be available, up to the full measure of possible efficiency, for the defence of the Empire. To this end there is probably nothing more essential than the development of a different type of officers.

Regulating the Nile. As everybody knows, the productivity of Egypt depends upon the water for irrigation purposes which it receives by the Nile. For long centuries the great river has been a means of fertility to the country through which it passes on its way from its sources in equatorial Africa to the Mediterranean Sea. But the Nile has never been to Egypt what it is likely to become when the science of modern engineering shall have been fully applied to the problem of irrigation. The object to be accomplished is of course to hold the water in the lakes and upper reaches of the river so as to be able to apply it when and where it will do the largest amount of good. It is said that the great Assouan dam now being constructed, will, when finished, furnish the means of storing up a thousand million cubic meters of water. It is further said to be feasible to construct dams to retain the waters of the great lakes, the Albert Nyanza and the Victoria Nyanza, and thereby, increase the reserve volume of water by over two hundred times. As it is estimated that this can be accomplished at a cost of about \$5,000,000 and that the result would be to increase the annual value of the crops of the Nile Valley by \$45,000,000, it seems altogether probable that the work will be undertaken. The mere cutting away of the vegetation which had obstructed the channels of the Bahr el Gebel, is said to be worth \$20,000,000 to Egypt's cotton crop the present year.

The Drinker's Tax Bill. The drinker of intoxicating liquors is in some respects a very patient person. That is to say he bears without complaining a burden of taxation which, generally speaking, is altogether out of proportion to the amount of his taxable property or his ability to pay. In Canada, for instance, which is a comparatively temperate country, the liquor drinkers contribute as a tax upon their beverages something like a seventh part of the Dominion revenue, in addition to being taxed upon their property and upon all dutiable goods consumed by them just as the non-drinkers are taxed. In some other countries the drinker is much more heavily taxed. Alluding to this matter the London Daily Mail says: "The latest parliamentary return relating to the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages shows that the consumer of alcohol in the United Kingdom contributes a far larger share to the maintenance of the state than the consumer of any other country. He contributes, in fact, no less than thirty-six per cent. of the total national revenue. The consumer in the United States comes next with twenty-eight per cent., in France he contributes only nineteen per cent., and the German eighteen per cent." There is, however, this comfort in respect to this liquor tax, that it is one which no man need pay unless he chooses to do so. If the drinker feels that his taxation is burdensome, as well he may, all he has to do is step out from the company of drinkers into the tee-total army, and straightway his grievance is redressed. And, what is more and better, such a step will not only mean for him deliverance from undue taxation, but deliverance from the drink itself. We are not to suppose indeed that the tax

which the liquor consumers contribute to the public revenue is clear gain to the other taxpayers. The citizen's welfare is always bound up with the prosperity of his country, and the damage which the liquor business inflicts upon the country vastly overweighs the gain resulting to the non-drinking taxpayer from the contributions of the drinkers to the revenue. Let any man look at the sacrifice of property, of manhood, of productive energy and of human happiness, which the drink traffic involves, and then ask himself what measure of exemption from taxation would fairly effect such a bill of damages as the liquor traffic involves.

The Alaskan Boundary. We have not been hearing much of late respecting the Alaska boundary question, but the subject has not altogether passed out of the field of political discussion in the United States, whatever may be the case in Canada. There has been an attempt in some quarters to make capital against the McKinley administration on the ground that the *modus vivendi* arranged in October last between Lord Pauncefote, the British Ambassador at Washington, and Secretary Hay on the part of the United States Government, was much too favorable to Canada, involving a virtual surrender of territory justly belonging to the United States. The general feeling in this country, we believe, is that the concession has been pretty much altogether on the side of Canada, and this also is clearly the contention of Secretary Hay, who not long ago was interviewed on the subject by the New York Herald. Mr. Hay, we are told, discussed the subject with much freedom, indicating the conflicting claims of the two countries in respect to the boundary. The fact that Canada was willing to settle the question by compromise is so put as to suggest a lack of confidence on her part as to the validity of her claim. Respecting Canada's offer and desire to arbitrate, Secretary Hay is represented as making the very remarkable statement that arbitration would have meant an admission on the part of the United States of a flaw in its contention. If a consent to arbitrate a question is to be so interpreted, then why should there be any talk about international arbitration, and why, especially, should the United States urge it upon other nations as a method of settling their disputes? It would certainly seem to be a much more reasonable conclusion that the refusal of the United States to submit its claims to arbitration indicated the consciousness of "a flaw in its contention." To admit, as Secretary Hay is represented as doing, that "if the question had been submitted, to arbitration, Canada would have got what it wanted—a deep water harbor on the Lynn Canal," sounds very like a confession that, outside the United States, the British and Canadian contention as to the boundary would have a very fair prospect of favorable consideration. Since a permanent boundary line could not be established, it was of course necessary that some temporary line should be agreed upon in order to avoid a conflict of executive and police authority, which, as things were, might arise at any time and lead to the most serious results. Secretary Hay does not, of course, think it necessary to explain that the difficulties in which Great Britain had become involved in South Africa made it more important for her to maintain friendly relations with the United States than to support vigorously her claims to territory in the Yukon country, so that, practically the United States was given its own way in the matter, a way which, from a Canadian point of view at least, does not exemplify the virtues of either generosity or justice. In drawing the temporary boundary line, as Mr. Hay is represented as putting the matter, "Canada was put entirely out of the Lynn Canal; driven away from Pyramid Harbor, from Dyea and Skaguay. The Indian town of Klukwan, which Canada claimed, was taken in as American territory. Instead of having a tidewater port of entry, Canada was deprived of even canal navigation in the Klondyke. When the extent of concessions made by Canada and the United States is compared, it is discovered that Canada has conceded more than one hundred miles and the United States not more than ten miles, and nothing that the United States has done has vitiated or weakened its claim, which is even now being pressed."