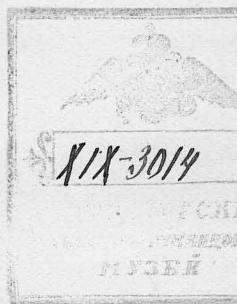


STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN
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125

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INTRODUCTION.

THE publishers of the UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE have deemed it desirable that my Essays on "Strategy and Tactics in Mountain Ranges" should be collected together and issued in the form of a book. They reappear in the same guise as that in which they first appeared.

They are manifestly only compilations, excerpts, extracts from a great variety of authors, many of them not even paraphrased. For myself I am not a mountaineer. Though I have a hereditary sympathy with the wild and daring energies which I describe, and though I have always seized upon any opportunity of making friends with clansmen and hillsmen, Scotch, Albanian, Afridi, or Swiss, with keen delight, I entirely agree with the Roman strategists, who wondered why any one ascended the Alps except at the call of duty. I have been on glaciers and in mountain passes, but I always descended as rapidly as I could to the plains.

Unfortunately, my duties have never called upon me to share the fatigues and honours of warfare in the hills ; but I have spent a considerable part of my life in the company of British officers, to whom skirmishes at altitudes as high as the defiles of the Pennine or Lepontine Alps have been frequent experiences. Many of my friends are buried near the Sufed Koh, and where frequent torrents rush to join the Indus close to the sites of the camps of Alexander. Towards these my hopes and memory during twenty-six years have frequently turned. I have been a sharer in their far and fierce delight ; I have been a partner of the mountains and of their toils, and only too often have I mourned as I was obliged to close their records and to be content with wishing their gallant young spirits a sweet repose.

As these Essays were first issued from month to month, many critics found some merit in them ; and for all friendly comments and suggestions I am grateful.

On the other hand, I have been very roughly attacked, and I confess that I was not in the least surprised. My strictures on the

farce called government in these isles, annoyed or shocked some of my old political associates. I can only say that my severest comments have been fully justified by the Report of the War Commission, which I had merely anticipated. I had very strong reasons for despising our political leaders years ago ; every one despises them now.

With regard to my views about making sports and golf, bridge, and games of ball, serious objects in life, every word of my comments has been supported again and again in the Royal United Service Institute. I trust game-players will soon have had their day like the Court jesters, macaronies, and dandies, and other idlers and wasters of former epochs. I am not more severe than any other honest critic of our fashionable life, and of the ruinous habits of sport and betting that pervade all ranks, and, by their dread contagion, are demoralising and wrecking even our skilled labourers.

The public school craze for the organisation of games was held up to contempt in *Blackwood's Magazine* in January, 1904, under the head of "A Nation at Play."

I have no hesitation in repeating that we are on the verge of national degradation by reason of games, sport, luxuries, and of the basest worship of the lowest type of plutocrats recorded in history. Our humbler classes cannot be reformed till the so-called upper classes set an example. The rage for football on Saturday is not a whit more disgusting and injurious than the rage for golf on Sunday. We must go back to military and manly amusements and exercises, and "scorn delights and live laborious days," or Glory and Empire will spurn us.

Some critics said that these pages were merely the product of scissors and paste. Why not? I only hope that the facts are all right, and that I used the scissors efficiently. Why should I make a hash of the descriptions of better men than myself when they and their publishers gave me leave to use their very phrases?

My military pupils are not pedants. Their career deals with realities. They wish to quaff the fount of knowledge at its source. If Earl Roberts allows me to repeat his words about Afghanistan, why should I prefer my own? At any rate, I preferred his, and so did my readers. Moreover, I was very glad when Mr. John Murray removed an obstacle to my strong desire to quote Sir Donald Stewart.