



The Volunteer Review

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. VI.

OTTAWA, (CANADA,) MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1872.

No. 9.

(Written for THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.)

CHARITY.

Meek and lowly—pure and holy—
Chief among the blessed three,
Turning sadness into gladness,
Blest art thou, O Charity!

In such unadorned terms, and to a melody as simple as the words are artless, sweet voices sometimes recall to us even in the hour of relaxation and mid innocent gaiety, a yet loftier testimony to the supremacy of the lowly Queen of the Christian Graces.

Nor does the Nazarene alone accord to her a deep veneration. For the joy in Heaven which attended the record of Ben Adhem's meek desire to be written only as "one who loved his fellow men," attests the equal reverence of the Moslem for the cardinal virtue which is said to cover so great a multitude of sins.

If, then it be not permitted us in individual cases to doubt the efficacy of charity towards our permanent welfare, we cannot but hope much, if vaguely, for the future of a nation which has been pre eminent in its practice. Nay, more. If advantage be attendant on the recognition of an agglomerate virtue, it would not seem unreasonable to suppose that a portion may fall to the lot of each individual of the aggregate.

How enviable, on this hypothesis, is the lot of an Englishman! For is not England, of all the kingdoms of the world, foremost (if not—as of yore—"in the battle's van") at all events in the boundless exercise of that most excellent quality? What, therefore, may he not hope, not only for his country, but for himself, in the great hereafter?

For have not the benignant administration and the admirable providence of the sachers of his nation already laid up for him a sort of balance in advance, consisting of his share of the national virtue, which, it is presumed will be available to be placed to his credit in the day of his need at the final balancing of accounts.

And not only, let us trust, may the Englishman, but the Colonist—even the Canadian—amid all the humiliations of a national policy which induces the irreverent taunts of the worldly cynic, find—under the ægis of an empire whose rulers, if they be not

always guided by the wisdom of the serpent, more than emulate the meekness of the dove—the higher consolations of the righteous. For there cannot exist a doubt of the quality of the charity on which he may base his calm reliance, as, although it includes a liberal bestowal of goods to feed the poor, it is, essentially and above all, of the kind without which the possessor of all other virtues is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Conspicuous, however, as is the charity of England, it is yet, in one respect, admirably tempered with somewhat more than the serpent's wisdom. For the serpent does not always pause in its spring to consider whether its antagonist is strong enough to give it battle, while Britain is fast becoming famous for a wise discretion in the picking of her quarrels. The union of valor with discretion is doubtless a happy and most respectable one, and England asserts high claims to all the praise which may be due to the combination.

But it is of course only cavillers who will insinuate that British honor was cheaply vindicated by the assumption of a lofty and threatening attitude towards the effete power of Spain—to the rabble of Greece—to the petticoated mandarins of the Flowery Land—to the two sworded Dominions of Japan—or to the astute and resolute savage who lately ruled in Abyssinia—whose ignorance of the appliances of modern civilized warfare, however, alone prevented him from proving a "foeman worthy of her steel."

It is of course only the narrow minded who will dare to hint that the sensitiveness of British honor is marvellously quickened, when the British Taxpayer can be made to realize that the luxury of its assertion is attainable at little cost and at less danger.

It is of course only the ribald and the gross who will point to the dismemberment of Denmark, and with shallow and heartless malice, scoff at the Christian meekness which characterized the action of our noble and virtuous mother country on that occasion. It is true the wrath of Prussia and of Austria would have been a more serious matter than that of Denmark. But what of

that? Is not discretion a pearl of great price?

Said we, unguardedly, that Britain's large hearted counsels were unguided by the wisdom of the serpent? Let us hasten to retract; and let us in no wise asperse the perfect beauty of her faultless clarity! For is it not a wise and a wholesome proverb which inculcates that charity begins at home! And are not our frank and honorable confessions of the States "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh?"

How graceful is concession! How heavenly the spirit which, when one cheek is smitten, turneth the other to the smiter—which, when the rapacious thief masterfully seizes the cloak, begs him also to accept the coat!

Not, alas, in this spirit did wicked Prussia await the onset of France! And what a chance has she allowed to escape her of edifying the whole world by the true greatness of a lowly and Christian national frame of mind! How differently does England, to the admiration of her neighbours, and the joy of her dependencies, utilize the similar opportunities so abundantly furnished to her by the kindly readiness of the United States, of displaying the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

There yet remains on the face of the earth a class of fossil whose purblind vision fancies it discerns in the teachings of history that the foreign policy of nations cannot with safety be modelled on the apostolic type. That security lies in the readiness of the sword to spring swiftly from its scabbard in defence of national rights, national dignity, and national honor. That the first lesson of the diplomatist should be unbending firmness in the maintenance of his country's rights, and that of the citizen to set aside all considerations, even that of life itself, at the first intimation of aggression.

And it is even true that this tone of national mind made Rome the lawgiver of the world, and raised even the small republics of Greece to be a glory to themselves and a dread to surrounding tyrannise. It is true that these principles "sixty years since raised France to the pinnacle of European greatness, and have elevated Prussia to the same altitude to day. It is true that Cleo