



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. II.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1868.

No. 6.

[For the Review.]

ST. VALENTINE.

By MARY A. M'IVER.

The mist rolled off the hill-tops,
The sun shone clear and fine,
For it was the fete amplexuous
Of good St. Valentine!

And even in our quiet village,
Far from the city's din,
Young hearts, with a joyous throbbing,
Welcomed the bright day in.

The smoke rose high from the chimneys
In many a waving spire,
And scoured through the rosy distance
Like temples built of fire.

And the face of my gentle sister
Grew strangely sweet and fair
As she watched the glorious visions
Fade into misty air.

Her dreams were of love and gladness;
Mine were of power and fame:
But both were frail as the temples
Built of the air and flame.

And as we stood at the window
A dark-hatted youth went by,—
And I knew her eyes grew gladder,
Though mine were on the sky.

And now, on this very morning,
After those weary years,
She holds in her hand a missive,
Blotted and stained with tears.

But I utter not a question,
I know her eyes are dim,
When upon that faded token
She looks and thinks of him.

For her dreams of love and gladness,
Like mine of fame, have fled;
And he, her young boy-lover,
Has many a year been dead.

TRAITS AND ANECDOTES OF SIR WILLIAM NAPIER.

(Concluded from our last.)

HIS RETIREMENT.

From henceforth, politics was his arena; literature was his work; painting and sculpture his amusement, his family, his motive and his joy.

After a few years spent in a desultory manner, he prepared to bend all his energies to his great work, "The History of the

Peninsular War." Of its commencement, he says: "It was all owing to Lord Langdale that I ever wrote that history; he first kindled the fire in me. I was living in Sloane Street, on half-pay; and, for the time, just leading a very pleasant desultory life, enjoying my home and friends in London, dining out, going to the exhibitions, and talking to the officers I had known in the Peninsula—to Chantry and Jones, and so forth, and painting a great deal. I had never written anything except that review of Jomini's 'Principes de la Guerre,' when, soon after it appeared, I was walking one day with Bickersteith (afterwards Lord Langdale) in some fields, now built over, and forming part of Belgravia, and he asked me what I was thinking of doing. I thought he meant where I was going to dine that day, but he said no, what was I thinking of turning to as an occupation? And then he went on to urge me to undertake some literary work, telling me that I had powers of writing yet undeveloped—that the review proved it to him—that I must not waste my life in mere pleasantness; and he urged me so seriously and so strongly, suggesting the late war as my province, that it began to make me think whether I would not try, and what he said about not wasting my powers made a great impression upon me."

His wife encouraged him, and for the next sixteen years he worked laboriously at this undertaking, collecting materials and sifting evidence with indefatigable and characteristic industry—Mrs. Napier being his able and affectionate assistant. Of the style of this history, J. Sterling says, "There is no great quality in which it is deficient. It has ease, animation, brevity, correctness, and vigour, and these, taken together, in a greater degree than any other historical writer of English except Raleigh and Hallam."

At the commencement of this work, Col. Napier left London, and went to live at Freshford, near Bath. Here he might be seen digging in his garden, dressed in a smock-frock, taking long walks through the country, or visiting in person the cottages of the poor. He was well known among the poor of Freshford, and beloved by them.—Long after, when he resided in Guernsey, a maid-servant, returning from Freshford, brought him and Mrs. Napier a present of a large basket of apples, containing one from every garden in the village, as a token of affectionate gratitude.

One of his daughters tells the following anecdote of him:—"He was one day taking a long walk near Freshford, when he met a

little girl, about five years old, sobbing over a broken bowl. She had dropped and broken it in bringing it back from the fields, to which she had taken her father's dinner in it, and she said she should be beaten on her return home for having broken it. Then with a sudden gleam of hope she innocently looked up into his face and said, 'But you can mend it, can't you?' My father exclaimed that he could not mend the bowl, but the trouble he could, by the gift of sixpence to buy another. However, on opening his purse, he found it empty of silver, and he had to make amends by promising to meet his little friend at the same spot and the same hour the next day, and to bring the sixpence with him. The child entirely trusted him, and went on her way home. On his return home, he found an invitation awaiting him to dine in Bath the following evening, to meet some one whom he specially wished to see. He hesitated for some little time, trying to calculate the possibility of giving the meeting to his little friend of the broken bowl, and of still being in time for the dinner-party in Bath; but finding that this could not be, he wrote to decline the invitation on the plea of a pre-engagement, saying to us, 'I cannot disappoint her, she trusted me so implicitly.'"

Gentle to the weak, he was undoubtedly rugged to the rough. At this time, reform and the new poor-law violently agitated the nation, and the Napier temper was not one to look quietly on. As the champion of the poor and the oppressed, Sir William took an intense interest in these questions.—Though he several times refused a seat in Parliament, from want of means, he was often before the public as a speaker and writer. Unquestionably the temper he displayed was hot. He thus *naively* describes knocking a man down on the hustings at Bath:—"A Whig partizan, a great miller and corn-dealer, called out that I *had* in asserting that the Whigs had encouraged insurrection. I answered, 'Sir, you know not what you say; I have the proof in my pocket.' 'That's a lie also,' was the reply; whereupon I knocked him backwards with a blow on the face. He prosecuted me, but dared not go through the trial."

In July, 1841, Colonel Napier became Major General, and in February, 1842, was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Guernsey. Here his keen sense of justice, and zeal for the reform of abuses, as well as his fiery temper kept him in continual hot water and disputes with the royal court. It is pleasanter to regard him in his family circle, where he inspired the most ardent affection and reverence. In a letter when absent from home he says, "How I do love my