



THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE MILITARY AND NAVAL FORCES OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

Vol. I.

OTTAWA, MONDAY, APRIL 22, 1867.

No. 16

THE PRIVATE OF THE BUFFS.

["Some Silkins, and a private of the Buffs, having remained behind with the grog carts, fell into the hands of the Chinese. On the next morning they were brought before the authorities, and summoned to perform the koton. The Silkins obeyed; but Moyse, the English soldier declaring that he would not prostrate himself before any Chinaman alive, was immediately knocked upon the head, and his body thrown on a dunghill."]]

Last night, among his fellow roughs,
He jested, quaffed, and swore,
A drunken private of the buffe,
Who never looked before;
To-day, beneath the foeman's frown,
He stands in Elgin's place,
Ambassador from Britain's Crown,
And type of all her race.

Poor, reckless, rude, low-born, untaught,
Bewildered, and alone,
A heart, with English instinct fraught,
He yet can call his own,
Ay, tear his body limb from limb,
Bring cord, or axe, or flame;
He only knows, that not through him
Shall England come to shame.

Far Kentish hop-fields round him seemed,
Like dreams, to come and go;
Bright leagues of cherry-blossoms gleamed
One sheet of living snow;
The smoke, above his father's door,
In grey soft addings hung;
Must he then watch it rise no more;
Doomed by himself, so young?

Yes, honor calls!—with strength like steel
He put the vision by,
Let dusky Indians whine and kneel
An English lad must die,
And thus, with eyes that would not slink;
With knee to man unbent,
Unflinching on its dreadful brink,
To his red grave he went.

Vain, mightiest fleets, of ironed framed:
Vain, those all-shattering guns;
Unless proud England keeps untamed;
The strong heart of her sons.
So, let his name through Europe ring—
A man of mean estate,
Who died, as firm as Sparta's King,
Because his soul was great.

THE KINDLING OF THE BEACONS IN JANUARY 1804.

IN January 1804, the First Consul, Napoleon, had made all needful preparations for an invasion of England. Hundreds of vessels were gathered in the ports of Normandy and of Holland, to serve as transports. A gallant and abundant army lay encamped at Boulogne, ready at any moment to embark. On the other hand, the English people had come forward in vast multitudes as volunteers to defend their country. Every county had its mounted yeomanry corps, and every town its band of fencibles. One and all seemed animated by a spirit of active heroism, and a resolution to die in the last ditch, rather than surrender to a foreign enemy.

There is always something ludicrous in volunteer military service, till it has been put to the proof. The question always arises—Will these amateur soldiers really show themselves, in the hour of danger, as possessors of the right stuff? Although there is no proper reason for this infirmity of faith, since history tells many tales of hearths zealously defended by their owners, yet the question will arise. Fortunately for our country, and for humanity, the volunteer spirit of 1804 was never put to trial, Bonaparte having finally given up his design. But yet we were not left without some means of judging how the volunteers would have behaved in the event of a landing of the French, for a false alarm brought out the troops of a large district, and that with a degree of promptitude and apparent zeal that left nothing to be desired.

All along the coasts, beacons had been prepared to give the alarm, in the event of any appearance of a descent in their neighborhood. These communicated with other beacons in the interior, so that in a very short time the whole of a large province might have been roused. There was a daily expectation of seeing these fires kindled; and men's minds had been wrought up to a pitch of nervous apprehensiveness on the subject. It was at this juncture, on the evening of the 31st of January, that the man attending the beacon at Hume Castle, in Berwickshire, saw what he thought a kindled beacon on one of the hills of Northumberland. What he really did see, was never thoroughly ascertained. The common story afterwards circulated was, that a family across the Border was signalling their entry upon a new house, by the festivity called a

house-heating, and the blaze of lights in the windows affected the Hume Castle watchman as a kindled beacon. He immediately kindled his own fire, and the signal was repeated all along the valleys of the Border. Had the example been followed at St. Abb's Head, Lothian would have instantly received the alarm, and it would have been communicated all over Scotland. But the watchman at that place lightly considered that the alarm of an invaded coast should not have come from the interior of the country, and he accordingly abstained from firing his beacon. As it was, the whole of the valley of the Tweed was roused, and that most effectually.

The alacrity of the muster at the appointed places was surprising. Within two hours of the kindling of the fire at Hume Castle, the Roxburghshire yeomanry filled the market-place of Kelso. At an early hour next morning, the Dunse volunteers were on the march to Haddington, and the Selkirkshire yeomanry and volunteers on the march for Dalkeith. The Berwickshire yeomanry were not less prompt in their movement upon Dunbar. Men rose from sick-beds, and rode to the rendezvous through all the inconveniences of bad weather and foul ways. A young man, with a wounded hand in a very painful state, stopped on duty for two days at Jedburgh without flinching. Many who had not been previously enrolled, shouldered their muskets, and accompanied their friends. Baggage and provisions were brought forward with nearly equal promptitude. To borrow some interesting recollections of Sir Walter Scott: 'The men of Liddesdale, the most remote point to the westward which the alarm reached, were so much afraid of being late in the field, that they put in requisition all the horses they could find; and when they had thus made a forced march out of their own county, they turned their borrowed steeds loose to find their way back through the hills, and they all got back safe to their own stables. Another remarkable circumstance was, the general cry of the inhabitants of the smaller towns for arms, that they might go along with their companions. The Selkirkshire yeomanry made a remarkable march; for although some of the individuals lived at twenty and thirty miles' distance from the place where they mustered, they were nevertheless embodied and in order in so short a period, that they were at Dalkeith, which was their alarm-post, about one o'clock on the day succeeding the first signal, with men and horses in good order, though the roads were in a bad state, and many of the troopers must have ridden forty or fifty miles without drawing bridle. Two members of the corps chanced to be absent