

## THE WAR OF 1812

## SIXTH ARTICLE

The objects proposed to be attained by the publication of the foregoing articles on the war of 1812, are first to expose the fallacy of the cry got up by the political philosophers of the Manchester School, and loudly echoed by the English press, to the effect that Canada is defenceless, and that it would be utterly impossible for Great Britain to come out of a contest in which the political existence of the British American colonies were involved, without disaster and disgrace, and by implication that the people were in different or careless as to what flag they were under, and would not take on themselves the bother of their own defence. Secondly—to point out to our young military men that the constitutional organization, under which Canada was not only successfully, but gloriously defended, was that of the simple militia system, and how necessary it is now to cherish the feelings of patriotism and affection for the banner of the Old Red Cross, "which has craved a thousand years the battle and the breeze," when a new era of political existence is dawning on us, and the ties which bind us to the British Empire are more closely drawn, as well as to illustrate the events of the great contest as a lesson worthy of serious attention and careful study. Political agitators, as a general rule, never enquire closely into questions of cause and effect. It is usually sufficient for them that certain objectionable features exist in a measure of State—harmless enough in themselves and totally apart from its ultimate issues—to enable a good party cry to be got up, and political opponents damaged in character and reputation, without a thought being bestowed on the value of the measure to the best interests of the country. On no other grounds can the cry, recently reverberating through England, of the impossibility of depending on Canada, and of the great cost it entailed, be explained. How injurious this folly has been to the best interests of the empire can be easily imagined; what effect it must have had on losing its prestige, and bringing contempt on its diplomatic relation with other powers. Who shall say how far the dismemberment and humiliation of Denmark, the sudden aggrandisement of Prussia, recent and present European complications, and the increased insolence of the demands of the Washington Cabinet as well as the rupture of our commercial relations therewith, is, and has been due to this cowardly and disgraceful confession of national weakness? It is evident enough that British prestige is, has been, and will be, a subject of jealousy to the United States and Russia, because it thwarts the traditional policy of the one for universal Western Empire, and of the other for the sole control of the Eastern. The cry of confessed weakness in the proposed measure for abandoning those colonies and the countenance given to that measure by the declaration of the responsible advisers of the Queen, of their intention to oppose no obstacle to the expressed wish of the people in the transfer of their allegiance, led the Washington politicians to believe that a little pressure only was necessary to precipitate that measure; and that the Stars and Stripes would float triumphant over all North America. Hence the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty and other contingencies, which followed that very foolish act, which failed because the people of British North

America understood their own interests better than the Washington or London politicians; and it would not be too much to claim that they also appreciated in a greater degree the true interests of the British Empire. The mischievous effects arising from the wholesale slandering of the people, are obvious enough in their own case. What its action may be on the interests of the empire time will devolve, but the best possible answer to the wholesale calumny is found in the action of this people in every case of danger—in 1812 in 1837, in the occasion of the Trent difficulty in 1862, and last year during the Fenian aggression it was not the fear of England, nor her power or resources which paralyzed every attempt at conquest, but the unanimity and determination with which the whole population rose in arms to repel aggression. Such is the truthful answer the people of these Provinces can make to the charge of indifference and careless loyalty, which, with them is no mere lip sentiment, but the feeling of reverence and respect entertained for good and stable government, and that feeling is sustained by the most powerful of all human motives—self interest.

The judicious measures followed since the Trent difficulty have given us a large number of trained officers, but no military force, at all sufficient to meet the exigencies of the country. It is true there is a large nominal Volunteer force; and the spirit and patriotism of the people is quite sufficient to sustain, at least, ten times its numerical strength; but it is totally unequipped—without a proper staff, medical establishment, commissariat or artillery; in reality, there are 20,000 men probably clothed and armed with the old Enfield or bad substitutes, and this constitutes the whole force Canada could put into the field. In the commencement of the contest of 1812 the Province was as badly provided: at that time there was a militia law in existence which brought every available man into the field when required, and equipments were plentifully provided. Still the disadvantages of being taken in an unprepared state gave the aggressors great preponderance in the contest which required the genius of Brock and the imbecility of the American War Department, and its officers to counteract. Nothing short of the firm determination and endurance of the Militia could have prolonged the contest after Brock's death; and it is due to the stubborn resistance of men fighting for their homes and families, that Canada is now a part of the British Empire. Indeed, from the apathy displayed by the British administration for the first two campaigns, it would appear as if they were as indifferent to the fate of the Provinces as the Minister of Louis Quinze—at the period of its conquest—and it was not till the fall of Napoleon in 1814, released a portion of those troops who had marched from Lisbon to Bayonne in one series of triumph that reinforcements deserving the name arrived to assist the Colonists to the glorious termination of a struggle, which their valor had already placed beyond the shadow of a doubt. When the condition of the people in those days is compared with the present time, it is evident there are many more inducements to fight out any contest which may be forced on us to the last bitter issue of desperation. The then Colonist was literally and truly an exile, and almost an alien, about whose welfare little was known or cared at home. He was poor, and engaged in the most laborious of all tasks—winning himself a home and living from the wilderness—doubly dreary then, because almost inaccessible, he was not identified in home politics. The AMOR PATRIÆ—

the love of the dear old land—the home of his childhood—the church where he was taught his duty to God and man—the village school—the graves of his father, mother and ancestors—all were resolutions to bind him to his country's flag. His first lessons of duty and glory taught him to look on it as symbolical of all man holds sacred; it floated over his cradle, and with God's help it should shadow his grave, nobly was this obligation fulfilled; and though he was rendered by worn-out military martinet without any knowledge of, and not unfrequently a supreme contempt for, constitutional law—and irresponsible executive of the creatures and favorites of the British Ministry—although his appeal for justice was tardily and often ungraciously answered, yet his strong and simple loyalty enabled him to cast all those considerations to the winds, and to dare a contest against odds so powerful as might well appal the heart of the stoutest veteran. History has enblazoned the issue in letters of gold. How differently is the case with us—we are constitutionally governed by responsible advisers of the crown who could not maintain their places for one hour in the face of a dissatisfied people. The representations of our sovereign, soon to become her Viceroy, is a constitutional administrator of the laws. The accumulated labor-savings of our gallant forefathers have converted the wilderness into rich fields, and Pope's beautiful idea of—

The swain in barren deserts with surprise,  
Sees lilies spring and sudden verdure rise;  
And starts amongst the thirsty wilds to hear  
New falls of water murmuring in his ear;  
On rifted rocks, the dragons late abode,  
The green reed trembles and the bull-rush nods  
Waste sandy valleys once perplexed with  
thorns—

The spire and shapely box adorns,  
To leafless shrubs the flowery palm succeeds.  
And "yellow harvest" to the poisonous weeds  
Has been more than realised, while our position and connection with the Empire have become vitally important to its political existence.

If, therefore, our predecessors fought for an idea and a sentiment, we are prepared to fight for actual palpable substantial advantages. If they fought for standing-room in a wilderness, we fight for a country rich in every natural production and blessed with the best government the world ever saw. Nor can the defence of those interests be delegated—the people of Canada must and will defend their own country. The militia soldier in 1812 might and did win glorious victories for which he was sometimes boldly thanked, oftener not at all noticed in general orders. The militia soldier of the present day will be untitled to run in the race of honor for the proudest military distinction the crown can bestow—the Victoria Cross. Such are the motives which actuate the people of this Province that no force could possibly subjugate them, nor could any power without the absolute control of the sea compel a capitulation by which it would pass under foreign domination. A review of the war of 1812 show duly that the American War Department inaugurated no new idea in the proposed mode of conquering Canada. Their lines of attack were precisely those used by the British in the old French war sixty years previously and with exactly similar results. "History repeats itself" and so does war—nor is this strange—because the topographical configuration of a country determine its defensive and defenceless positions, and those who would assail it must do so in the footsteps of their predecessors, and in this case the aboriginal Indian marked the only available war trail.