

## Our Contributors.

### ON THE SIDE OF THE BIG BATTALIONS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Six years ago, Principal Grant addressed the students of Queen's College on what he saw at Ottawa during part of a parliamentary session. The genial Principal had just returned from the Capital, where he had been helping to pass a bill, the object of which was to settle an expensive lawsuit that was threatening the peace of the Presbyterian Church and the income of about a hundred Presbyterian ministers. Parliament put the bill through by a large majority and the trouble ended.

The day after the Principal's address was delivered this contributor happened to be in the office of a gentleman, who was then the leading journalist of his country. Looking over the report he remarked to the journalist that Principal Grant seemed to be well pleased with his experiences at Ottawa. "Yes," replied the journalist with his usual pleasant smile.

"HE HAS BEEN FIGHTING ON THE SIDE OF THE BIG BATTALIONS."

As a general thing, it does make one happy to be on the side of the big battalions. Leading a big battalion to victory is a more pleasant kind of work than leading a small battalion to defeat. Of course we are speaking now of contests in which right is on the side of the big battalions, or of cases in which there may be no moral principle involved. No good man would feel comfortable on the side of the big battalions if the big battalions were on the wrong side. Assuming that the contest is one about matters of opinion, or one on which right and might happen to be on the same side—and they often are on the same side—then we say it is rather a pleasant thing to be on the side of the big battalions.

Men who always lead the small battalions usually grow old soon and often die early. Men who lead the big battalions usually live long and keep frisky up to fourscore. That is one reason why Mr. Mowat, who is near the end of his sixty-eighth year, often passes for a man of fifty-five. He steps about the old chamber as lightly as a young man, smiles on everybody, and looks quite happy. Why? There is a big battalion of Grits behind him. That is one reason, if not the principal one. He has been on the side of the big battalions ever since he became Premier. Barring accidents, he'll be very likely to keep his battalion big as long as he leads it.

Sir John has for the most of his life been a leader of big battalions. That is one reason why he is such a lively old gentleman at seventy-four. Two or three times he was pushed over on the side of the small battalions, but he had no liking for the situation and did not stay there long. There is no reasonable doubt that it is good for the health to spend most of one's time on the side of the big battalions.

George Brown was a big battalion himself. So is Gladstone. So is Sir Richard Cartwright. So was Beecher. So is Spurgeon. Spurgeon is a bigger battalion than the Baptist Union that he has just left. A man who is a big battalion himself need not care much what side he is on so long as he knows he is right. A generation never produces more than a few men who are big battalions in themselves. If there were many big battalions of that kind the rest of us would have no chance.

It makes a mighty difference even in the Church to be on the side of the big battalions just about as much as it makes anywhere else.

See that well-dressed, comfortable looking minister whose radiant face proclaims that he lives well, is well cared for, and is on pleasant terms with his surroundings. That minister is the leader of a big battalion. Neither genteel poverty, nor cranks, nor bores trouble him. His battalion is so big that they push all these nuisances to the rear and keep them there. This leader of a big battalion has a fair chance to do his Master's work, the battalion help him and the work goes on.

See this careworn, troubled looking preacher whose appearance proves only too clearly that his life is a life of anxiety, poverty and trouble. He is the leader of a small battalion. His battalion is so small that the cranks and Ishmaelites and other nuisances make

themselves felt. He is at their mercy and they have no mercy on him. They never have.

A small battalion composed of normal specimens of humanity may be just as pleasant a battalion to lead as any other. The trouble arises in battalions in which some of the specimens are abnormal. And this is just the point at which too many Presbyteries most seriously do err. Given what seems to be a sufficient number of people able to raise a certain amount of money, and the people are forthwith declared a congregation. The fact is utterly ignored that a Presbyterian congregation should mean *a body of people capable of self-government*. This implies material for eldership and a good many other things besides money.

It makes a great difference in business to be on the side of the big battalions.

See that comfortable looking, well-dressed man who walks confidently down Yonge Street to business every morning. He has a confident air and seems as if he is not afraid to face the world. He is on the side of the big battalions—financially.

This other man who walks down with a depressed air and a timid kind of step in the same overcoat that he wore five winters ago is on the side of the small battalions—financially.

There are dangers peculiar to both battalions. Men always on the side of the big battalions are likely to become insolent, overbearing and tyrannical.

Men always on the side of the small battalions are likely to become cynical, sour and bitter.

The best discipline for a man is to take a turn in both battalions. That is exactly how it is with most of us. Moral.—If you are on the side of the big battalions don't shout, and swagger, and put on airs, and trample over everybody. One of these days you may be pushed over on the side of the small battalions, and then the people you are trying to trample on may trample on YOU.

If you are on the side of the small battalions keep your courage up. Don't degenerate into a perambulating vinegar barrel. All of us have more good things than we deserve. If you keep your temper sweet and work hard you may soon get over on the side of the big battalions.

### A NEW CANADIAN POET.\*

This beautiful volume of Canadian lyrics has already been the subject of a good deal of comment both in Canadian and Boston papers—a pretty sure sign that its contents are worthy of comment. The editor of the poems—with whom it has been a labour of love to introduce them to the public with the advantage of a tasteful and fitting garb—has asked but one favour from the critics of an author who has passed beyond reach of human criticism: that they read him before they criticise, and that they do him justice. This very reasonable request is distorted by one of his most pretentious critics into "the old command to speak nothing but good of the dead"—a misrepresentation which naturally awakens the doubt whether a critic who can be so unfair at the start is fitted to be a critic at all, since of such fitness absolute and scrupulous fairness should always be an indispensable element.

No one can fully appreciate these decidedly remarkable poems without studying with some intelligent sympathy the strong personality that they reveal. They are the passionate outpouring of a sensitive and poetic soul and vivid imagination, full of ardent sense of beauty, "love of love, hate of hate, scorn of scorn,"—passing through what has been fitly called the "Sturm und Drang" period of a poet's life, which he can scarcely be said to have survived. The poems contain a progressive growth or "evolution," as we prefer to call it nowadays—from the early boyish passion for human freedom and the "enthusiasm of humanity," which is a remarkable feature of even the earliest poems, on through the poet's dreams of love and beauty, always alluring, never fully satisfying; through the mournful tone of pessimism that comes of looking into sad and fathomless mysteries; until his song once more settles into a brighter and serener flow—in the assured faith that

\*LYRICS OF FREEDOM, LOVE AND DEATH. By the late George Frederick Cameron. Edited by Charles J. Cameron, M.A., Queen's University, Kingston. Kingston; Lewis Shannon.

God is, and "God is good." This is the key to some things which have been deemed inequalities in the poems, such as a poem entitled "Is there a God?" but which have their natural and fitting place in a volume which might appropriately be called "The Drama of a Soul."

This progress is very marked in the "Lyrics of Freedom," beginning with some spirited but rather declamatory poems, written between his fourteenth and nineteenth years, denouncing wrong and tyranny with ardent youthful detestation; but breathing a little later such true and maturer thoughts as we find in the very beautiful poems on France, as, for instance, in the lines:

But fear what most can work you harm,  
Ay, fear yourselves the most!

In a later poem, "In After Days," he strikes a true and noble chord about freedom:

So sang I in my earlier days,  
Ere I had learned to look abroad  
And see that more than monarchs' trod  
Upon the form I fain would raise.

A freedom fool! ere I had grown  
To know that love is freedom's strength,  
France taught the world that truth at length,  
And Peace her chief foundation stone.

Since then, I temper so my song,  
That it may never speak for blood:  
May never say that all is good:  
Or say that right may spring from wrong!

The Lyrics of Love are passionate, sweet and musical, yet with the sense of unsatisfied longing pervading most of them, which shows that the poet's "love of love" could never rest satisfied with any love that is of earth alone. We have many such stanzas as:

Shall this, too, fail me? Shall  
Thy swift grown love and sweet  
Be doomed to fade and fall  
In ruins at my feet?

Some of these poems possess great beauty of poetic imagery and musical expression, of which we may in passing just instance "The Defeat of Love and 'By the Fountain.'"

As thoughts and life mature, darker problems, more awful mysteries, present themselves, and a mournful and even pessimistic strain breathes from his lyre. We have the stanzas beginning, "Is there a God?" and others of a similar character, written in a dark period of the poet's life. For a time he seems almost to fall a victim to the cynical, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Ay, this is best philosophy  
The present to enjoy!

But a better faith gradually awakes in a heart that could not find rest in material satisfaction:

I find I hate not sects nor creeds,  
Yet have a creed all creeds above,  
Whose faith consists in noble deeds  
Whose highest law is highest love.

And this faith grows stronger as time goes on, and we have such poems as "An Answer," "Ere the Moon that Wanes," "Lord God Almighty," "He is Risen." In the second of these we meet the thought that brings to his perplexed and storm-tossed being the ray of comfort that grows by and by into clearer light:

He who knew what weariness and want and woe meant,  
He who pillowed earth's sad head upon His breast,  
He who bore that one unutterable moment  
When the burden of her sorrow on Him pressed.

To Him, we deem, was given  
For answer to His love,  
All things on earth—in heaven,  
All lie below—above!

Fear nothing—nought is lost!  
Life, freedom, love and truth  
From sphere to sphere are tossed,  
Here have they but their youth!

In the mystical poem, "Beyond the Utmost Doubts and Fears" we have a record of a deep heart-experience, ending thus:

A love that only died with life;  
And life knows not of death—away  
Beyond the morn of earth and day,  
Beyond its ground, beyond its gyres,  
Life all eternal still survives.