



# 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, MARCH 25, 1867.

No. 12

### WAR-TIME.

O my bird, my beautiful bird !  
Sing no more to-day ;  
The saddest maiden under the sun  
I must be, till this weary war is done ;  
For my lover has gone away.

Ah ! your voice could never drop as it does  
Down through those slender bars,  
If you ever had loved a soldier lad,  
And he was all the friend you had,  
And was gone away to the wars.

You are quiet now ! too quiet, my bird,  
To suit my restless mood ;  
'Tis fearful to feel the house so still,  
Sing out again till you sing your fill ;  
I shall die with solitude !

Yet low ! sing low while he is gone  
To fight for the Union Jack ;  
I would not hear you voice ring out,  
Till it blends itself with the nation's shout,  
When my lover from the wars come back.

You must sing for us both on that blessed  
day  
When I welcome my soldier boy ;  
For my eyes will dim with the happy tear,  
And my heart will come to my lips so near,  
That I cannot speak for joy !

### LUCKNOW KAVANAGH, V. C.

There is a fatal facility about autobiographical writing which makes it the most favorite form of composition ; the thoughts of the writer, and especially of the unaccustomed writer, can be expressed more conversationally, and therefore more easily, in this fashion than in any other. He does not entangle himself in so many grammatical labyrinths, nor—in particular—find himself confounding together the first person with the third, or unable to discover his nominative case. Nevertheless, there are graver evils about autobiography than those. Even when this style is adopted in mere fiction, the public will persist in identifying the pen-and-ink hero with the flesh-and-blood writer, compelling thereby his principal character to appear, if spirited, a braggart—if modest, a spooney ; and when the autobiography is

authentic, the difficulty of steering between these Scylla and Charybdis, is of course considerably increased. One cannot, with any humility, describe one's self as possessing all the virtues ; and still less can one afford to write one's self down as commonplace. It is far worse than the undertaking of one's own epitaph—although that is a delicate operation—inasmuch as you have to hear criticisms on the composition ; while, moreover, the epitaph only concerns yourself, whereas your autobiography, unless you have been a hermit in the wilderness—in which case it is to be hoped you would have been better employed than in writing for Colburn or, Longman, or Murray—must needs relate to other people. That is why almost all autobiographies are published after the deaths of the authors. The sword of Damocles—the lash of the horsewhip—is always hanging over that gentleman's shoulders who publishes his 'Recollections' otherwise than as his 'Remains.' We have known a certain eminent literary person to pass the latter part of his life much respected, or, at all events, amidst the kindest offices of his acquaintances, because he was known to be compiling a posthumous record of his existence ; whereas if some of his friends could have caught a sight of the manuscript, it is possible that they might have hastened its publication by wringing his neck. The fact is, an autobiographical writer may inflict the cruelest chastisement upon very worthy people by simply telling the truth ; and posthumous writers always do tell the truth, and in the most unpleasant manner conceivable. They write as it were from the sanctuary of the tomb, where action for libel can no longer lie against them.

Nevertheless, if one wants to fill one's own pockets by an autobiography, it is highly necessary that it should appear during one's life, and there are some narrations which needs must be told in the first person. When a man escapes alone from a shipwreck or a fire, he must tell the story himself ; and Lucknow Kavanagh, who gained the Victoria Cross for venturing alone through a hostile city and an enemy's lines, in order to act as guide for the relieving army under Sir Colin Campbell, could scarcely have got another to relate the tale. No more modest and simple story exists than his account of that one incident—a plain and unvarnished picture of a brave man performing a perilous duty ; whereas, on the other hand, his history, as a whole, and whenever it refers to

others, exhibits the worst evils of the autobiographical class. It is harsh and detractory towards the author's equals and superiors ; it is querulous and bombastic in so far as it concerns himself. He unwittingly hands us the private key to his own character, and when he asks us to bewail with him at his ill-success in life, we can say little more than that we are not the least surprised at it. There are some men that cannot even complain of their misfortunes without leading their hearers to sympathise in some sort with those at whose hands their injuries have been received. If they did not deserve them, they seem at least to have brought them on themselves. We cannot imagine that Mr. Kavanagh's behaviour can have been at any time conciliatory or judicious towards those who held his tortures in their power, although we allow that he has been certainly insufficiently rewarded for his great deed. He is, however, one of the bravest men, as we should imagine, who ever breathed, nor need we speak further here concerning him, except as respects that bravery. Before he took upon him that voluntary service which has made his name so famous, he showed himself as gallant a soldier, civilian though he was, as any in that beleaguered band in Lucknow Presidency. He made no pretence, indeed of that entire absence of fear, which—it it exist in any man—must needs rob courage of all its virtue, but fully conscious of each peril, he put it aside to make way for duty. Fighting above ground is not agreeable to most people, but how slight a matter must that be when compared with a death-grapple in a counter-mine ! What a nervous moment was that first crawl on all fours through a long, narrow, cold, damp mine, appalled by the darkness and a fancy that an enemy may have got in, wishing to blow out my shrinking brains, or that it might fall in and bury me alive ! It tried me considerably, and I had to say a great many encouraging things to myself to calm my agitated heart, which vehemently panted for the light again. Indeed, it cost many efforts to appease my fears, and gain confidence in those subterranean ramifications, in which I sometimes strayed at night, despairing of ever getting out. At last I discovered that a resolute man was more dangerous below than above ground, and I soon had an opportunity of testing my sprits in the bowels of the earth.

The enemy were heard mining in the south corner of the Sikh quarters, and the engineers counter-mined to stop them ; but they had done so much before being discovered, that we broke in about three feet from our own shaft, and the miners escaped. At this moment, I relieved the officer on duty,