

## THE TWO ARMIES

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

As life's unending column pours,  
Two marshalled hosts are seen  
Two armies on the trampled shore  
That death flows black between.

One marches to the drum-brat's roll,  
And wide-mouthed clarion's play  
And bears upon a crimson scroll;  
Our glory is to slay.

One moves in glory by the stream,  
With sad yet watchful eyes;  
Calm as the patient planet's gleam,  
That walks the clouded skies.

Along the front on sabres shine,  
No blood-red pennons wave;  
Its banner bears the single line—  
"Our duty is to save."

For these, no death-bed's lingering shade:  
At honor's trumpet call,  
With knitted brow and lifted blade,  
In glory's arms they fall.

For these no clashing falchions bright,  
No stirring battle-cry;  
The bloodless stabber calls by night,—  
Each answers, "Here am I."

For these the sculptured laureled bust,  
The bulwer's marble piers;  
The anthems pealing o'er their dust,  
Through long cathedral aisles

For these the blossom-sprinkled turf;  
That floods the lonely graves  
When spring rolls in her sea-green turf,  
In flowery, foaming waves.

Two paths lead upward from below,  
And angels wait above,  
Who count each burning life-drop's flow,  
Each falling tear of love.

Though from the hero's bleeding breast  
Her pulses freedom drew,  
Though the white lilies in her crest  
Sprang from the scarlet dew

While valor's haughty champions wait  
Till all their scars are champed,  
Love walks unchallenged through the gate,  
To sit beside the throne.

## THE MILITARY ASPECT OF DARWINISM.

We are now in a position to gather up the threads of our argument, and indicate their modern value and characteristics. We have endeavoured to show that a nation is a political species, the result of a series of conflicts, in which military power is the sum of physical, legal and religious influences: that in early pre-historic life war is the natural element of progress, as well as the investment of all the force that other kinds of advantage have produced; that where civilized nations have succumbed to less civilized ones, it has been because they have lacked military power in some special ways, or have been enervated by city life, or exhausted by depopulation; that the special characteristic of modern, as distinct from ancient civilization, lies in the double fact that mixture of race has developed a stronger political fibre, and scientific invention has so revolutionised the whole art of war that the barbarous races have altogether ceased to be actual competitors; and that the decay of the so called military spirit in nations and individuals, though it may inevitably follow free institutions and industrial life, is not a real decay in the actual fighting power of a nation, partly because war has changed its nature, partly because the individual soldier has less to do, and partly because national unity, new weapons, and new ideas, are forces still appreciable in any serious combat. Some of these points have been rather suggested than worked out, but they all lead up to the argument we have sought to establish—namely, that all history is a struggle like in nature to that going on for existence between the different species of animals and plants—a

struggle in which the strongest nations tend to prevail, and in which the strongest tend to be the best. The law of inherited capacities is to nations what the law of inherited forms and forces is to animals and plants, and as conditions of life constantly change, nations without any variability become stationary and ultimately die out, as far as their civilized force is concerned, or become subject races or absorbed portions of stronger ones. We could hardly have reached this great truth—and such we believe it to be—without researches into the natural and early condition of mankind, any more than the origin of other species, and their modern forms, could have been explained without a reference to the more or less natural state which precedes domestication.

The first thing to be noted is, that in Mr. Bagehot's words, "the aggregate fighting power of mankind has grown immensely, and has been growing continuously ever since we knew anything about it." War may alter its character, and be carried on in a more humane manner, according to laws and usages which have sprung up side by side with civilization, but it is more deadly, more destructive and more terrible. In the first place, our armies are larger. This is a statement certain to be controverted, but nevertheless it is true. The numbers we read of in old histories are nearly all fabulous. When we are told that Attila and Genghis Khan and Tamerlane had their hosts, we are simply incredulous, and we have good ground for our scepticism. The wild tribes of the north lived mainly by the chase, and to live by the chase modern statisticians tell us that sixty acres per man are necessary. The amount of habitable land was really small. Impenetrable woods, huge swamps, and shallow expansive rivers reduced the actual habitable land to very small dimensions. In many of these invasions the northern lands were depopulated, and the hordes spoken of included thousands of non-combatants in the shape of women and children. They were, in many cases, not armies, but emigrations. Old historians are always untrustworthy as to numbers; partly because they were not actually known and partly because it was good policy to exaggerate the number of the enemy. A settled life, as everybody knows, raises the rate of increase in population, and in an unsettled one it is very small. The regular armies of modern Europe alone, at the present time, would number more than the entire armies of the world at any previous period in universal history. In the second place, our arms are better. Ten thousand trained soldiers, armed with the Chassepot or the needle gun, and with a few batteries of artillery, would be able to rout all the hosts of Attila, though, man by man, the latter would be physically superior to the former. No one thinks of disputing such a statement, but few persons ever think out its whole meaning. Every invention is a new power and changes the character of war. Captain Shaw, a Sandhurst Professor, has shown this in a very interesting way. He takes three periods—1550 as representing the smooth bore guns, 1860, as representing the commencement of rifled guns, small and large: and 1870, as representing other known changes, chiefly in breech loading. In the first period, the effective range of small arms was 200 yards, in the second, 600 to 800; in the third, 800 to 1200. Rapidity of firing was two rounds per minute in the first period, and has risen to from fifteen to twenty in the present one. It is the same with artillery. The range has been increased from 1000 yards to 3000 yards. Similarly in naval and siege artillery,

the range has risen from 600 to 1000 yards in the first period, to from 1000 to 3000 in the third; and with mortars from 4000 yards to four or five miles. It is the same with fortifications. In 1550, six or eight feet of masonry presented an effective resistance; in 1870 it would be useless. To give earthworks the same power of resistance they had in 1850, it is found necessary to increase them from eighteen feet to forty-eight feet in thickness. Projectiles have increased in size and destructiveness. There are naval shells in the arsenal at Devonport filled with inflammable cotton, and each one throwing out a piece of rope and a hook in flight, half a dozen of which would scatter and consume an old fashioned fleet of men-of-war. Science alters tactics. Skirmishing in parallelograms is almost irresistible. In fantry, armed with quick firing breach-loaders, need not form squares to protect themselves from cavalry; and cavalry, formerly so useful in critical moments, are now found to be better employed as videttes and geographical explorers. Numbers, weapons, and new modes of fighting render strategy more important. It is said that Charles VIII. conquered Italy by a piece of chalk, and we may add, that Count Von Moltke defeated Austria by the field telegraph. Balloons, again, are another indication of the assistance rendered by all science to the art and science of war.

Army systems have changed, and the changes are in the direction of a further development of military power. The problem of a comparatively small standing army, capable of rapid and enormous increase, has been solved by Prussia as everybody knows. In less than a month, she can put half a million of men into the field, and this fact alone will always make her a terrible military power. Some modern writers have argued that one soldier for every 100 of population, is a proportion which no state can exceed with safety, and if the calculation apply only to a standing army it may be accepted as correct, but large standing armies are unnecessary where all adult males have received a military training, and are liable to some form of service. At the commencement of the present war France had a larger standing army than Prussia, but she has never been able to put so many men into the field. A large standing army is important where a nation rests upon military glory, and lives for it, but it is incompatible with industrialism and cultivated progress. It kills itself in time, inasmuch as it withdraws from ordinary pursuits a large part of the most physically perfect in the nation, and lessens the natural increase of population.

Military strength, however, now as formerly, depends upon other factors. Ideas are now as potent for good or evil as were the necessities of former days. Mediation produces a valor of its own, and "the ancestor of every action is a thought." National or Imperial unity is a tremendous force, and feudalism was never so invigorating as liberty, actual or possible. Mere conquest, as such, has lost its charm. Russia struggles eastward for increased seaboard, for the strength of the Greek Church, for the chastisement of the Crescent. There are three laws of conquest, says Machiavelli. First, to ruin a State; second, to inhabit it; third, to render it tributary. Modern States desire to assimilate, and to exercise their power in leading up the less civilized races to freedom. A military protectorate over colonies can only be justified by the necessities of the case. Confederation, and not pure Imperialism, is the highest law in organic as well as political life.