

### Sketches.

*The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier, G. C. B.* By LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM NAPIER, G. C. B. Vols. I. and II. London: John Murray.

THE life of Charles James Napier was eventful beyond that of most military men, and his character had in it not a few elements of the heroic. He was of noble blood, counting Henry Quatre and the great Marquis of Montrose among his ancestors on the father's side, while claiming kin with the regal Stuarts through his mother, Lady Sara Lennox, by whom the Napier family was also connected with other notable names. Lady Sara herself was reputed to have missed being a queen by preferring a British officer to a British prince afterwards George III. Charles Napier thus inherited nobility, and by his military achievements and his force of character he added a lustre to it such as it is seldom in the power of men placed as he was to confer. He was a soldier from his boyhood, and gave evidence very early in life of his being possessed of extraordinary decision and courage. At sixteen he was out with his father scouring the country for Irish rebels during the insurrection of 1798, a year later he entered upon active service, and was afterwards engaged in the campaign which closed at Corunna, where he was wounded and taken prisoner. The account of his capture and liberation by Marshal Ney is a story which has been often told, and it may only be noticed that all the particulars of it are fully given in one of the volumes before us. We may quote a brief passage, however, descriptive of his suffering when left on the battlefield, to show how early in his career he had acquired that fortitude in enduring pain which strengthened with his strength:—

"The fire was out and it was dreadfully cold, yet pain kept me from feeling it so much; and all that long and horrible night and next day, did I lay wishing for death, and expecting it if a stray soldier should see me. There was no roof, only a few feet of wall standing, and the following evening, about dusk, I crawled out, reckless of being killed or not. Outside there was a Frenchman cooking; he was a kind man and gave me some broth, but I could not eat it. He went away, but returned with another soldier, and they made a little more fire, rolled themselves in their great-coats and other warm things, and lay down. Pain kept me waking; and the fire went out soon, for there was no fuel. I had no waistcoat or drawers, only a uniform coat and torn trousers, and the cold was dreadful, for it was January and the hill high. An oilskin was on my hat, and I pulled it off to cover my head and face; then putting my hands on my mouth warmed myself with my breath, but could not lie down. My feet and legs lost all feeling, and the wounded leg ceased to pain me except when moved. At midnight the two Frenchmen went their way, and promised to tell their commandant of my state; yet the second dreadful night passed and no one came."

Napier's next service was in Portugal with the Duke who was an early acquaintance of the young soldier's family, and of whom the following interesting anecdote is given:—

"When young, he was an intimate friend of Lord Erskine, who was a distant relation, and being in the same regiment with Napier, was often exhorted, and finally persuaded by him, to quit the army for the bar. But a more noticeable example was his early perception of the Duke of Wellington's genius. Castletown society was then prominent in fashion and politics; Eosign Wellesley frequented it, and was generally considered a shallow, saucy stripling. Colonel Napier thought otherwise, and after many conversations thus predicted his greatness—'Those who think highly of that lad are unwise in their generation; he has in him the makings of a great general.' Whether this reached the Duke's ears at the time, or that Lady Sarah Napier's attention to him, in adopting her husband's opinion, gratified him, or both, is uncertain; but, though the acquaintance soon entirely ceased, whenever her sons were wounded in the Peninsula, the Duke invariably wrote with his despatches a consoling letter to her."

Tardy and shabby promotion sent Charles Napier to the Bermudas as Lieutenant-Colonel, and five years afterwards he received a subordinate appointment in the Ionian Islands. It was here that his genius began fully to display itself, and in his position as resident at Cephalonia he soon distinguished himself by his energy in rectifying abuses and carrying out improvements. A disagreement with the Commissioner of the Ionian Islands, led, however to circumstances which induced him to resign his office, and he retired

into private life. For nearly five years he took little or no part in public affairs. In 1839 he received the command of the forces in the northern district of England, then threatened by a Chartist rebellion, and two years subsequent to that date he began his Indian career. He was then in his sixteenth year, and he entered upon his work with anything but advantageous circumstances. Our troops had been cut to pieces in the retreat from Cabul, and Siko was shut up in Jallalabad. Napier was invited to draw out a plan for the relief of the latter, and the redemption of British honour in Affghanistan. He had formerly and still disapproved of the war in Affghanistan altogether, but he felt that no other had been entered upon; nothing remained to be done but to carry it out with boldness. He accordingly set out for India with empty pockets, and prospects which were desperate enough. On his arrival he at once saw the necessity for prompt and vigorous action. His plans were soon formed, and carried into effect with that daring energy which characterised all his movements. The strongholds held by the enemy in the districts of Soonde constituted at once a barrier to freedom of action and a terror to our troops. Napier accordingly came to the conclusion that these must be taken, and he accordingly formed the resolution of marching into the heart of the desert—arguing that where men had gone men could go. Emaun Ghur, a fortress garrisoned by four times the strength of the force with which the intrepid General set out against it, could only be reached by toilsome marches through a country swarming with the enemy. The following extract from the journal which Napier kept at that time, gives some idea of the nature of the enterprise:—

"Our eyes are full of sand, ears full of sand, noses full, mouths full, and teeth grinding sand! Enough between our clothes and skin to scour the latter into gold-beater's leaf, one might as well wear a sand paper shirt. Our shoes are in holes from dryness, and we walk as if we had supplied their places with sand-boxes; our meat is all sand, and on an average every man's teeth have been ground down the eighth of an inch, according to his appetite."

Emaun Ghur, situated in the centre of this sea of sand, was found to have been evacuated. Panic-stricken by the boldness of the invader, its garrison had abandoned it and fled precipitately. This was the first, and perhaps the most extraordinary of the successes which resulted in the conquest of Scinde. The retreat of the enemy had been cut off by an expedition which Wellington pronounced to be "one of the most curious military feats" on record. Of the campaign which followed, a long account is given in one of these volumes chiefly from Sir Charles Napier's journals and correspondence. Here is a description of the battle of Meance, which finely illustrates his style of writing about his own achievements:—

"We beat them, John, at Meance; the battle was terrible. I afterwards rode over the horrid field and questioned my conscience; 'his blood is on the Amcers, not on me! How I escape. Heaven knows, I do not. We were for three hours and a half only one yard apart, man to man, fearful odds, and they fought like heroes. Covered by their shields they run upon us sword in hand with desperate fury, but down they went under the musket and bayonet; all fought hand to hand."

"In the battle I rallied the 22d twice, and the 25th N. I. three times, when giving way under the terrible pressure; all the officers behaved well, but had I left the front one moment the day would have been lost! many know this. Had I not been there some other would have done the same; but being there, and having rallied them, to have gone to another point would have lost all; for while I was there no one felt responsible, no one dashed on like Teesdale of the 25th and McDurdo, I mean those immediately about me. We ought to have gone slap over the bank, and had the 22nd been old soldiers they would have done so: but such young lads were amazed, they knew not what to do, and the swordsmen in such masses making at them covered by their shields, were very ugly! Well, it was a fearful fight! I feel now frightened at my own boldness, but having worked my courage up to try have been successful. The 22d gave me three cheers after the fight, and one during it. Her Majesty has no honour to give that can equal that, if indeed she gives me any. I do not want any, none at least but what awaits a victor from history. I shall be glad though of a medal with the officers and soldiers; sharing with them will be an honour of more value to me than any other that can be given."

This great battle completed the conquest of Scinde.

Napier was appointed Governor, and all the honours due to his position were paid him; but in the midst of his successes he retained the berry simplicity of his character. While princes were laying their swords at his feet, he was longing to return "to live quietly with my wife and girls."

The volumes before us give us the incidents of only a portion of Sir Charles Napier's career, but they shed a strong light upon the more prominent feature of his character. And a very noble character it was. Strong and manly, yet tender and affectionate. The nature of this great soldier was at once that of a leader and that of a child—it was formed of the finest and the most powerful elements, yet it was child-like in its simplicity. Passages in his journals, too, show him to have been keenly susceptible to impressions of all kinds. He was superstitious, but only in the way in which a brave man could be superstitious, and amid all his successes and excitements he was continually reverting to passages in his past life, or drawing auguries of the future.

For much that is interesting in these volumes we are indebted to the fluency of expression which the subject of them shared with other members of his family. His brother, Sir William Napier, the accomplished historian, has however done much to amplify the biographical details, and the freshest of these refer to Charles Napier's early life. Into the instance of impetuosity of temper, and the numerous squabbles which resulted therefrom, we cannot enter at present, nor does an incomplete work (two volumes have yet to make their appearance) afford the means of forming a just estimate of the questions revived either in the journals or by the biographer.

### THE DISGUISED PRINCESS.

1 King, xiv. 1-18.

THIS quiet place, apart among the encircling hills, is Shiloh. It was once the seat of the Lord's tabernacle, his altar, and his ark, and was then replete with holy activity and solemn sounds. But since departed it has been well nigh forsaken, and has relapsed into a silent village or a small rural town. Yet still holy things are here—holy men who have found here a sort of refuge from the wickedness of the time—a quiet retreat, favorable to sacred meditations, and to the nourishment of holy thoughts. Among them is Abijah, that old prophet who received the new cloak of Jeroboam, and promised him the largest share of the divided kingdom. He is now blind. Upon the outer world, made foul by man's abominations, he has closed his eyes, and lives by the light that shines within.

Now observe that woman stealing down the street, and seeking the old prophet's house. By her guise she is of the peasantry, and she bears a basket. Yet her gait scarcely befits her garb; and the quick furtive glance she casts around under her coarse hood-veil betrays some conscious concealment, some fear of recognition, some purpose she would not wish to have known.

This woman, mean as she seems, is the lady of the land; and although her basket contains but a few cakes and biscuits, and a little honey, she might, if she pleased, have filled it with precious and costly things. She is the wife of Jeroboam—as far as we know, his only wife,—the daughter of his heir; and therefore, if he had a score of wives, the chief of them all. That heir, by name Abijah, is alarmingly ill; and, at the instance of Jeroboam, and impelled by motherly love, that royal lady has come all the way from Tirzab, in this disguise, that she may learn of the prophet what is to become of her son; and the things in her basket are gifts for the man of God, suited to the condition she has assumed. The disguise was thought necessary to conceal this visit from the people, and partly in the idle hope of obtaining, in the semblance of another, the desired answer, unmixed with the reproof and denunciation, which Jeroboam knew that his conduct had been calculated to draw down from the prophet who had foretold his exaltation. He thus foolishly thought to cozen the Lord, through His prophet, out of an answer of peace, and slyly to evade the judgment he feared might be connected with it; and he idly calculated that the prophet, whose view could extend into the future, hid in the counsels of God, could not see through a present matter wrapped up only in the thin cover of a woman's hood. "There was never," says Dr. Hall, "a wicked man who was not infatuate, and in nothing more than in those things wherein he hoped most to transcend the reach of others."

All this fine contrivance was blown to pieces the moment the wife of Jeroboam crossed Abijah's threshold; for then she heard the voice of the blind prophet—  
"Come in, thou, wife of Jeroboam; why feignest