

"CURFEW MUST NOT RING TO-NIGHT."

England's sun was setting o'er the hills so far away;
Filled the land with misty beauty at the close of one fine day;
And the last rays kissed the forehead of a man and a maiden fair—
He with step so slow and weary she with sunny floating hair;
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful, she with lips so cold and white,
Struggled to keep back the murmur, "Curfew must not ring to-night."

"Sexton" Bessie's white lips fluttered, pointing to the prison cell.
With its walls so tall and gloomy, walls so dark and damp and cold,
"I've a lover in that prison, doomed this very night to die,
At the ringing of the Curfew, and no earthly help is nigh.
Cromwell will not come till sunset," and her face grew strangely white,
As she spoke in husky whispers—"Curfew must not ring to-night."

"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton—every word pierced her young heart
Like a thousand gleaming arrows—like a deadly poisoned dart;
"Long, long years ago rang the Curfew from that gloomy shadowy tower;
Every evening just at sunset, it has tolled the twilight hour;
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right,
Now I am old I will not miss it, girl, the Curfew rings to-night."

Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow,
And within her heart's deep centre, Bessie made a solemn vow:
She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,
"At the ringing of the Curfew—Basil! in herwood must die."
And her breath came fast and faster, and her face grew large and bright—
One low murmur, scarcely spoken—"Curfew must not ring to-night!"

She with light step bounded forward, sprang within the old church door,
Left the old man coming slowly, paths he'd trod so oft before;
Not one moment paused the maiden, but with check and brow aglow,
Staggering up the gloomy tower, where the bell swung to and fro;
Then she climbed the slimy ladder, dark, with out one ray of light,
Upward still, her pale lips saying "Curfew shall not ring to-night."

She had reached the topmost ladder, o'er her head hangs the great dark bell,
And the awful gloom beneath her, like the path-way down to hell;
See, the ponderous tongue is swinging, 'tis the hour of Curfew now—
And the slight less chilled her bosom, stopped her breath and cooled her brow
Shall she let it ring? No, never! her eyes flash with sudden light,
And she springs and grasps it firmly—"Curfew shall not ring to-night."

Out she swung, for out, the city seemed a tiny speck below;
There, 'twixt heaven and earth suspended as the bell swung to and fro,
And the half-deaf sexton on his knees he had not heard the bell;
And he thought the twilight Curfew rang young Basil's funeral knell.
Still the maiden clinging firmly, check and brow so pale and white,
Still her frightened heart's wild beating—"Curfew shall not ring to-night!"

It was over the bell ceased swaying, and the maiden stepped once more
Firmly on the damp old ladder where for hundred years before,
Hum and foot had not been planned, and what she thought had done,
Should be told long ages after—as the rays of setting sun
Light the sky with mellow beauty, aged sires with heads of white
Tell the children why the Curfew did not ring that one sad night.

O'er the distant hill came Cromwell; Bessie saw him and her brow,
Lately white with sickening horror, flows with sad life beauty now;
At his feet told her story, showed her hands all bruised and torn,
And her sweet young face so haggard, with a look so sad and worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity—he in eyes with misty light,
"Go, your lover lives," cried Cromwell; "Curfew shall not ring to-night."

CONTROL IN EXTREMIS

The retirement of Sir Henry Storks from the position of Surveyor General of the Ordnance, though cased, we are sorry to hear, by ill health, seems peculiarly opportune at the present time. We have for so long been accustomed to hear of the collapse of the Control system, that it should be a matter for surprise that the system still exists; but at last Control appears to be approaching the climax of its career, and we cannot but believe that the end is now at hand. At no time has the system prospered. From the first it was viewed by those who were best qualified to form an opinion on its merits with suspicion and distrust. Military reformers there were, it is true, who were high in their praises of the "Intendance" which worked so well (in 1868) in the French Army. But, alas, the military history of France has scattered to the winds the theory of the excellence of the administration of the Supply and Transport services as organized by our neighbours, and our British Control service has nothing to recommend it beyond its own inherent merits. What these are the last six years have shown us. From at no time a firm basis, a structure has arisen which has shown itself more and more rickety at every stage, until now it threatens to topple over altogether, and bury itself in its own ruins. In fact, the changes which were admittedly to be feared in the organization of the new system, have developed to an extent even beyond that which the most prejudiced opposers of Control could have prophesied, and confusion and inefficiency have been the result.

The question of "Control" has been so fully and frequently discussed by ourselves and our contemporaries that to dilate on the faults of the system would now be a work of supererogation. The faults of the system have been too apparent to render their existence any mystery requiring explanation, but the dead lock which has threatened to take place in the administration of the department has caused a War Office Committee to be hurriedly assembled. It would seem that at last the authorities have become alive to the fact that the evil lies at the very root of the system and the committee is invited to suggest what is the easiest and simplest method of getting at it.

It has been found that the Military and Control Departments do not work satisfactorily in accord with each other, and it is to suggest a means of establishing a better understanding between the two Services that the committee has been formed. But to suggest a remedy, is now at this date still no easy matter. The enmity between the military and Control officers has been so carefully nurtured and diligently encouraged, that a reconciliation is now all but impossible, and any patching up can only secure a temporary lull in the storm which will surely sooner or later break out afresh and with renewed violence. It will be remembered that when the Control system was established it was decided that the Control officers should be accountable directly to the Department of the Secretary of State for War. The Supply and Transport services were removed from under the control of the Commander in Chief, to whom they had hitherto rendered allegiance, and they were raised to the high dignity of receiving their orders from, and rendering their reports to the Secretary of State direct, who was, of course, the superior officer of the Commander in Chief. High as this privilege was in theory, practically it has turned out to be a drawback, and indeed it is this "privilege"

which has been the ruin of the Control system. To place the Controller side by side with, but not accountable to, the general commanding, was the War Office scheme which has been adopted with such mischievous results. In the first place what could have been more absurd than to relieve the commanding officer of all responsibility with regard to the supplies of his men. No one can no better than he what their wants may be, and upon him should rest the duty of seeing that they are properly supplied. The removal, however, of the Control officer from under the control of the military officer was not only a mistake in placing certain duties in the hands of a War Office employee whose allegiance was not to the same master as the military officer owned, but it was mischievous in either giving power without responsibility to the general in command, or in creating an antagonism from the existence of which the public service must necessarily suffer. If the Controller happened to be a weak officer, he immediately became the tool of the military officer, who, having no personal responsibility in the matter, could induce the Controller to do what, if he were the superior, and responsible for the Controller's actions, he would hesitate to sanction. Or, if, on the other hand, the Controller were an officer of character inclined to hold his own, and to do his duty to his civil master in Pall Mall, the military and Control elements were immediately at variance, and discord was the result.

To the honour of the Control Office, let it be said, that discord has been the result. Its officials have honourably striven to justify the trust that was imposed upon them. These duties have been to check the demands and requirements of the military officers, and in fulfilling this ungrateful task, they have created a breach between the combatants and Control officers, which we fear no recommendations of a War Office Committee will bridge over. The Control has bought its independence dearly at the price, indeed, of its very existence, and the time has come when it must either submit to place itself at the orders of the military branch, or become extinct altogether. The want of accord between the two services which has been becoming for some years now more and more noticeable, has latterly resulted in open scandal. The quarrelling and bickering which has been going on for so long, has at length attracted the notice of the public, and the time is at hand, we venture to believe, when the only real remedy which will be efficacious, will be applied. To subjugate the Control to the Commander in Chief, or in other words, to place the Supply and Transport Departments under the Quartermaster General, is the real remedy which must be resorted to, if the organization of the army is to be placed on a practical and satisfactory footing. Divided responsibility has resulted—as divided responsibility generally does, in no responsibility at all—and until the general in command has control over the officers whose duty is to provide the supplies and transport for his troops, the existing confusion will reign supreme.

Sir Henry Storks, though professionally a soldier, has never had any sympathy with the military element. Whether serving the Colonial Office or the War Office, he has always held a *semi-civil* post, and since he has assumed the position of Surveyor General of the Ordnance, and has been made a member of Parliament and of the Government, his proclivities have become more civil than ever. With Sir Henry's retirement, then (much as we regret its cause),