

## ANECDOTES

OF

# WINFIELD SCOTT

## AS SOLDIER AND AS CITIZEN.

The acts of common men are like mere dirt—they contain nothing in them which is worth the sifting. Even the lives of the most famous must be largely made up of common-place facts, just as the richest mines must have in them a vast deal more of earth than metal. Out of history and biography, the mine, we get anecdote, the metal, casting aside the mere soil or stone that envelopes it. Now, let anybody that likes it, sift every grain of General Franklin Pierce, and see if he can find a bit of anything but the commonest kind of clay in him and his doings. True, when California's treasures had been discovered, certain speculators persuaded people that they had found mines as rich down about Maine and New Hampshire; but they proved to have been "nested," like Pierce's reputation, with gold that came from somewhere else, and the deeper they dug the less they found of anything but dirt. It would be as easy to draw sunbeams out of cucumbers, or to sweat gold off gingerbread as to extract a bright fact out of some people's lives. We shan't go into any such "diggings" for gold, especially when we have before us such a "placer" as the life of Scott. Our purpose is to weave together a series of bright or curious personal traits, that shall be like a rich string of beads. To get the pearls for it we don't intend to go to a clam-bank. The fact is, in our poor opinion, that the locofocos have fallen upon the worst possible means of defeating General Scott; he had no need to be helped by the comparison—the contrast with Pierce. Scott is a diamond that asked no aid of a foil to set it off. His was a light visible by day and in the sun; they thought to hide it by placing about it a darkness (Pierce) which only makes it shine the more.

### *Scott Owes Nothing to Accident.*

In free countries it is Nature, not the chances of birth, or fortune, or favor, that makes one man rise above the rest. With us, actions make the only nobility; and he alone who has best served the State has a title to govern it. God alone and himself have ever done anything for Scott; he is

the son of a poor planter, whose early death left him, with barely the means of education, to the care of a widowed mother. Gen. Pierce, on the contrary, is the son of a State governor, who gave him all advantages, and transmitted to him a large political influence, not since increased. Scott's eminence then, great as it is, is his own work; Pierce's, small as it is, another's. Now, he that rises by his merit only, rises as a republican should do; while he that, though he has gotten up but a little way, has gotten up by the aid of birth and money, has gotten up as aristocrats do. Scott is a self-made great man; Pierce a small man, made by others. At the age when the one was struggling his way up from adversity, the other was taking his ease. While Scott's brave and hardy youth was spent in the camp, the other's was passed in frolic. The one has employed his life in fighting for his country, the other in intriguing and electioneering for himself. Scott has brightened forty years' pages of our history: Pierce has never added a line to it, except in that which is its shame—the low manoeuvres and tricks of party. But, quitting a comparison so preposterous, let us proceed to point out the particular facts in the life of Scott which are most remarkable or entertaining; bidding farewell to Gen. Pierce, however, with only this further remark: that he claims to be of the blood of those proud and princely English Dukes, the Percys of Northumberland. Now, that's a great republican merit, isn't it? We all have read that the Percys fought most valiantly in the Crusades; and how, in the bloody fight of Cheviot Chase,

Earl Percy, on a milk-white steed,  
Most like a baron bold,  
Rode foremost of the company,  
Whose armor gleamed like gold.

Nor can anybody have forgotten that heady Harry Percy, in Shakspeare, who got, from his fiery manner of riding, the name of Hotspur. Such is the martial descent which his friends attribute to Gen. Pierce. It may all be so. But if it is, the Percys in Mexico fell a good deal short of their ancestors, both in fighting and riding.

### Scott's Birth and Education.

True greatness, the favorite plant of Heaven, will grow up to honor, cast the seed on whatever barren place you will. Adversity seems to be its fittest nurse. The contest with difficulties which would overcome inferior natures, appears necessary to its formation. Had Oliver Cromwell been born a peer of the British realm, he would probably never have dethroned its monarch. Had Napoleon Bonaparte sprung in the ranks of French nobility, he would never have made himself the dictator of Europe. Had George Washington been bred in all the wealth and ease of the lordly Virginia aristocracy of his day, would he ever have become the Father of his Country and its freedom? It is most unlikely. The gifts of Nature stood Scott for an inheritance—a heart boundlessly brave, honest and good; a powerful will; a passion to arrive at high distinction by deserving it; an indefatigable ardor and activity in whatever he sets about; a memory remarkably retentive of facts and things, but not good for words, language; great strength of body and soundness of constitution, such as fitted him for facing any danger and enduring any labor or exposure; and, above all, the great gift which fits a man for *doing*, not *talking*—a rapid and sure judgment, that sees always, when it comes to *action*, what is to be done, and how to do it, not speak about it. These were the qualities which Nature gave him: the lessons of a wise, virtuous and tender mother completed all this by training him betimes to every right feeling, to every good principle, to an inflexible love of duty; and, in short, made of him a kind-hearted man, a thoroughly upright man, and a good Christian. Had it pleased Providence, doubtless it could have gone on and rendered him as fit to shine in discourse as in action. But Providence had appointed things—yea, many important things—for him to do; had pitched upon him for a man who was not to expound, (which is easy,) but to perform, (which is hard.) Probably—we venture to say, quite probably—Providence saw that the supply of fine-talking people was in small danger of falling short in this country of ours, for which it has done so much; while it happened to have occasion for a person who did not talk by any means as well as he acted. What, indeed, can the best discoursing reach but to point out what, not speech, but action, is to accomplish? The talents have scarcely ever been united in much excellence. Your man who is so admirable with the tongue, is seldom great at anything but words. The most eloquent of mortals, Demosthenes and Cicero, were cowardly or feeble, when it came from orations to things. Cromwell and Bonaparte spoke but poorly: General Washington hardly at all. So much, then, for the discretion of demanding that when Heaven has raised up a man for its highest purpose—Action—it shall forthwith spoil him for that, by turning him, to please the long-eared, into a fine discourser.

### Early Impulses.

Most men, born without any particular talent that may make them noted or useful to others, live obscurely, though, if good, happily, and perish almost like the summer fly. Some, busier,

have the genius of ants, and bustle along only to heap up a private store. Others, of a more poetic sort, turn to public life, not for honor's, but for profit's sake; and seeking, under the name of patriots, to serve themselves, not their country, become loud, and, for a time, successful demagogues. These last, by some lucky hit of intrigue, or some stumble of all better nominations, may come to be found out by a Democratic convention, and held up to the wondering people's suffrages, for the highest honors of a land that had never before heard of them. Scott was made to be unlike all these; unlike the first described, because he had an impulse; unlike the others, because it was a noble one that took him early by the hand, and led him on to things really admirable.

Yet was something, perhaps, added by descent to help his original organization, and give it, by and by, in the midst of the civil profession which alone seemed, in a peaceful country, to open for him a way to honor, the final determination towards that pursuit in which he was to shine so much. His grandfather and grand-uncle (Scottish gentlemen of some condition) had fought bravely along with the gallant Lochiel and many more, against King George, in the fatal battle of Culloden. The second named had fallen there. The first had escaped death only to suffer banishment and confiscation. Taking refuge in the colony of Virginia, he had no doubt transmitted to his grandson, in lieu of the patrimony of which the monarch had stripped him, a good inheritance of hate towards the British throne. This feeling may have lent a spark more to the youthful flame of patriotism which first led Scott to join a marching volunteer company, and thus gave him the earliest taste of military life. At any rate, this, at least, is certain—that he amply revenged, in his after-fil'ds, upon the third of the Georges, all that the second of that royal name had inflicted on his ancestor.

### His Teachers.

Nothing is likelier than that tales of valor were the entertainment of Scott's childish years. The legend of that brave but unfortunate war, in which his grandsire had suffered outlawry, had, no doubt, been often repeated to him, with many a moving instance of the individual heroism or romantic adventure which marked that Scottish contest. Our own struggle of the Revolution, too, was yet recent; and its passages abounded in stories most fit to light up in the boy a warlike spirit—especially when told, as they could then be on all sides, by surviving actors, often maimed veterans, who

"Wept o'er their wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,  
Shouldered their crutch, and show'd how fields were won."

Such were, probably, his first teachers, and these, with his mother's gentle lessons of truth, honor, and religion, his earliest instruction. Of his mere childhood we can know nothing, except by that strong guess of the boy which we make from the man. From the report made of him when he first drew attention, he must have been unusually well trained, though in a very private manner, at home, under his mother's eye, or in some neighboring country school. It is when he was at about the age of 17—the period when he

lost his mother, and was thrown upon his own management—that we first hear of him from the young associates in education with whom he then began to mix. They describe him as already full of promise and of character; as of parts and a heart equally good; impetuous, but kindly; ardent, but correct; and if already ambitious, ambitious only of true distinction; in short, a very manly youth, with much in his bosom and much in his brain; who, according to the turn his life might take towards action on the one hand, or study on the other, would make either a fine soldier or a solid lawyer.

He had already mastered the elementary studies which are necessary to prepare one for a college course; but left to his own boyish judgment, and captivated by the fame of a teacher then attracting great admiration in Virginia, instead of proceeding to the regular lessons of William and Mary, he placed himself, for a year, under the tuition of James Ogilvie, at Richmond, where that eccentric genius, half lecturer and half lord, had for the time set up as in a land open to a new region of thought, and by him to be philosophized, a school modeled upon those of Socrates and Plato, the Academy and the Portico. This singular person, although standing next to the inheritance of a Scotch earldom, (that of Finlater, to which he eventually succeeded,) had wandered and long continued to wander from country to country, as an itinerant teacher of eloquence, criticism, and indeed of all the great principles of knowledge. Scorning, as fit only for dull men and obscure times, all the usual drill, forms, and drudgery of education, he led his boys up to the summits of learning at once, and, skipping over the inferior steps, gave them Virgil and Tacitus without seeing if the Latin accident had been duly whipped into them; poured into them principles before they knew rudiments; philosophy before they had learned facts; eloquence before they had any ideas. It was, in short, a very poetical system of instruction, and he a very brilliant instructor, if all men could be taken betimes and worked up into great bards, mighty philosophers, transcendent warriors, or, at the least, consummate orators. Could he have sat in Athens, two thousand five hundred years ago, and discoursed, a bearded sage, to a body of disciples, none of whom was to be an ordinary man or to stoop to any lower avocation than those of ruling or of enlightening a State, he would have done admirably: for he was really a man of uncommon talent, and of much attainment in certain things, although not, as matters go in our poor modern world, the most practical of school-masters. To the more positive parts of knowledge, science, and the useful arts, he condescended little, holding them hardly better than mechanical: it was the taste, the fancy, the purely intellectual faculties, the sentiments, the sympathies, the passions, and those arts that can move them, which alone he cared to cultivate. Now, all this was far from the thing needed for a youth meant eminently by nature for action, the real, the positive; and of him young Scott can have learned little: for direct, systematic, solid knowledge was not his forte. Yet, perhaps, except education, in which he was really a master, he taught our future soldier nearly as much as he

did anybody. For Ogilvie was not a teacher for more than about one man in a thousand. With all this, he was not a person whom a youth of generous mind could well approach as a pupil, without a general benefit to his spirit and his aims. He could hardly fail to elevate the feelings, to animate the understanding, to add fervor to any inborn aspiration towards excellence and its reward—honor. Such effects his lessons no doubt had upon our boy that was to be a conqueror. Ogilvie's discourse (for it was chiefly by lectures and talking that he taught) turned always upon great men and great books, the children and the works of Fame; and these were things to which such a youth could not listen without being kindled into a double love for them.

### College Life.

From Ogilvie's school (afterwards removed to Milton, in Albemarle county, where it remained, for some years, under the philosophic shadow of Monticello, Mr Jefferson's young Scott passed to the ancient and long the only college of Virginia, William and Mary, seated at Williamsburg, where once was her capital, and now is her mad-house. Some say they should never have been separated. Here he was, of course, dipped in abstractions—a dye which, however, does not appear to have imbued him very deep, any more than the froth of Finlater's rhetoric. Nor is it surprising that he became no great proficient in that airy science of Ninety-Eight, the meaning of which its own chief doctors cannot settle, and of which I have observed that dunces are the greatest adepts. That favorite mystery was, however, happily not all that could be learned there: they also taught very good Latin, some Greek and mathematics, belles-lettres of the good old sort that prevailed before Dryden and Pope were superseded, and a good course of common law. In the last, Scott spent a year, after having completed the literary course of the college. Returning then to Petersburg, he entered the attorney's office of his hereditary friend, David Robertson, in order to finish, by a knowledge of the practice, the general theory of the law which he had learned.

At William and Mary, to judge from general dates, he must have had two instructors fit to assist, in no ordinary degree, the formation of his mind and character. The first of these was Bishop Madison, then President of the college, cousin-german of James Madison, and brother of him who married one of the five sisters of Patrick Henry. He was a person of great virtues, as well as of excellent abilities and learning. The second to whom I allude was St. George Tucker, then the professor of law, whose edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries* originated (I believe) and is certainly still the leading text-book of what are called the Virginia or "strict-construction" doctrines of constitutional law. I say that he originated them, merely because he first gave them a written, systematic form. He drew them, in reality, from the debates of the Virginia Convention of 1787, where their great source was the inventive mind of Patrick Henry.

### Legal Life of Scott.

Of the debates just referred to, admirably reported, David Robertson, the attorney just mentioned, had been the unassisted stenographer. They are a strong monument of his ability in a most difficult art, then almost unknown in this country, and indeed but little practised in Europe; for it must be recollected that, even in the British Parliament, there was no short-hand reporting until after the great Lord Chatham's day. In our own Congress, there can hardly be said to have been any until fifteen or sixteen years after these Virginia reports, when, at about the age of 17, Joseph Gales suddenly sprang up, and became the best reporter that our country has ever contained. To revert to Robertson, however: He had originally come over from the Land of Cakes, as private tutor in the family of Mr. Mason, Scott's grandfather. In that day, and indeed until about the rise of the Charlottesville University and other new colleges, home-education, by private tutors, was general, in Virginia, among the planters. Each gentleman imported, by order, through the commercial house that took his tobacco and sent him his household supplies of all sorts, an instructor for his children, who was forthwith constituted, if of any merit, a favorite member of the family, and taught both the boys and the girls much alike. Less bred in public schools than now, when they are by early attrition rubbed down into one common shape before they can have any individuality, the boys were perhaps manlier and more original, if less regularly drilled than now; the girls, softer and more reserved, and, if less ambitiously, more solidly educated than since they have begun to be taught by their own sex. A secluded education makes, when at all elevated, a higher cast of men, a gentler cast of women, than the herded academy can form. The tutors thus brought over from the old country were usually well-educated and poor, but most sober and "cannie" young Scotchmen; and an excellent teacher young Sawney generally was, who, by good conduct and thrift, usually won, after a few years' service as pedagogue, the opportunity to turn lawyer or doctor; and, from instructing another's family, rose to founding one of his own. This was the history of Davy Robertson, now a very hard-headed lawyer in Petersburg, and Scott's master in the practice of the law. Under his friendly and astute guidance our youth remained until, in 1806, he was admitted to the bar. He afterwards rode the circuit for about a year.

Fate had, however, marked out for him a destiny very different from that which he was now seeking artificially to make for himself, and perhaps even took for his natural bent. Bred up in a country long at peace; of which peace seemed no less the policy than the inclination; where no military career appeared open to him, he had probably, in making a little earlier his choice of life, not even suspected in himself the latent passion of arms. Meantime, a single little spark had kindled it up in his bosom. The attack of the British frigate *Leopard* upon ours, the *Chesapeake*, happening, followed by President Jefferson's proclamation closing our ports against English vessels, a war was supposed to be close at

hand, and the town of Norfolk to be the point on which the first burst of invasion would light. At the first moment of the excitement which these events spread through the country, a volunteer troop of horse was raised in Petersburg—a town ever remarkable for its public spirit. Sharing to the full the national feeling of the hour, Scott joined this rapidly-equipped corps, and marched with them down to Lynnhaven Bay, where they lay until the momentary cloud of war blew over, and they were disbanded.

Of this Lynnhaven expedition, the following little narrative is probably the only record extant:

The capture of the United States frigate *Chesapeake* by a British vessel of war, for the purpose of recovering two deserters who had fled to our ship for refuge, is well recollected as one of the most exciting of those occurrences which led to the last war with Great Britain. Mr. Jefferson, then President, immediately issued his proclamation, forbidding the American waters to the cruisers of that nation; and forthwith in Virginia two squadrons, consisting of four companies of cavalry, and many companies of infantry, volunteered to enforce this proclamation. The right flank company of one of these squadrons was raised at Petersburg; and of it, Winfield Scott, being the tallest, was the right hand man. This company, with others, marched to Lynnhaven bay, where the British vessels, under Sir John Hardinge, then lay. The Commandant of the company to which Scott belonged, having learned that a boat from those vessels had (for the purpose of laying in supplies) passed up into the country through a tide-way easily navigable at high water, but impassable even for boats when the tide was out, it was determined to cut them off. Scott was *lanced*, as the term is, a Corporal—that is, appointed for the occasion, and six dragoons were placed under his command.

Agreeably to expectation, the boat was stranded by the receding tide, and with its freight became a bloodless capture to the tall Corporal and his little command. The prisoners were two midshipmen, the one Mr. Fox and the other Mr. Evans, and half a dozen sailors.

The prisoners were conducted to the headquarters of the corps of observation, a fine grove about four miles from the bay. The company composed one large mess, and took their meals at a long temporary table constructed of rough planks supported upon wooden forks. With few exceptions, each member had his body servant to attend him, and at dinner for every two a pint of porter and a pint of wine was placed upon the table.

At this table the tall Corporal was charged with doing the honors of Virginia hospitality to the two midshipmen, his prisoners, one being placed on each side of him; and the same allowance of porter, wine, &c., was made to them as to their captors; and they had the pleasure of exchanging ship fare for a free frolic under the greenwood tree.

This was in 1807. In 1815-16, Gen. Scott, being in London, was invited to dinner by Lord Holland, the nephew of the great Charles James Fox. At the close of the dinner, a gentleman desired Lord Holland to introduce him to General Scott. On being presented, he reverted to the

circumstance of his capture by a Corporal Scott at Lynnhaven bay, and remarked, "he was as tall as you are, and of the same complexion and eyes; but you cannot be he, for you are now a Major General in the Army of the United States." Gen. Scott assured him he was the Corporal Scott of Lynnhaven bay, and learned, on inquiry, that Mr. Fox, the gentleman with whom he was conversing, had risen to be a master commander in the British Navy; but that his comrade, Evans, was dead. Mr. Fox also curiously inquired if all the United States soldiers had their half-pint of wine and porter allowed to them? And perhaps he asked himself if all Corporals in the United States service rose to the rank of Major General in nine years.

It was, no doubt, this little expedition which fixed his fate. He did not at once, however, yield to the taste. The probabilities of a war with Britain soon vanished, or else fell into the rather harmless shapes which the Jeffersonian discoveries in strategy proposed to give to the art of war, by sea in the "gun-boat system," by land in what was known as the "terrapin system" while we were to destroy the commercial greatness of England by shutting up all our own ports with a determined embargo. I need hardly say that the promise of this sort of wars was not very stirring to brave men; nor is it, perhaps, altogether surprising if it did not rouse in young Scott, beyond all control, the martial instincts that were sleeping in him. At any event, resuming his original purposes, he went to Charleston, S. C., with the view of making that the future theatre of his practice. There, by an unexpected decision of the State Legislature not to repeal a statute which prohibited the practice of the Law to all who had not resided a year within the State, he found himself foiled in his plans; but remained long enough to attract much esteem and form connexions of friendship with leading men, which have lasted and served him through life. With this check in his professional purposes, came strongly-renewed prospects of war: the non-intercourse act of the close of 1807 was passed; the administration brought forward in Congress a measure for raising an army; and Scott applied for a commission. In May, 1808, through the aid of many friends, and especially that of Senator (afterwards Governor) Giles, the post of Captain of Light Artillery was conferred upon him—a rank which implies that an advantageous opinion of his military qualities had already been formed. Here, then, ended his civil life.

### *Scott's Self-education in Tactics.*

When the tools of fight were few and clumsy, war could hardly be called even an art; but in their modern state, when they have become huge and various machines, it grows, of necessity, a high science; and great genius only and thorough study can render a man master in it. To this difficult science, necessary to complete the powerful faculties which nature had bestowed upon him as a man of action, young Scott now began to devote himself. He had, however, everything to do for himself; for as yet, military knowledge, (of which he was by-and-by to be almost the founder

for us) scarcely existed, even among the two or three regiments that formed our feeble and far scattered establishment of regulars. The officers themselves were alike destitute of military education and of such experience as might have imperfectly supplied its place. Not merely was the general theory of warfare, of the movement of armies, and of the greater field evolutions unknown, but the application and service of indispensable arms, such as engineering, fortification, cavalry, ordnance, commissariat, and others. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say, that our acquaintance with tactics consisted of but the manual exercise, and the company drill. There was not even anybody to teach another. Here, then, was our future commander left to find out this great science for himself. It was what may be called "the art of war without a master." How rapidly and how well he, nevertheless, learnt it, guided only by his genius, and aided only by his own ardor of professional knowledge, soon appeared in his admirable training of General Brown's army, and the masterly manner in which he fought it.

Several things are, however, worthy to be noted as to this preparatory period of his life. In the first place, it is curious to remark how it was his repulse by her law from pursuing his original profession in South Carolina, which threw him upon that of arms; and how that event afterwards led him back to that State, to check by his presence, as a soldier, the rash legislation of those who had refused to admit him as a civilian. Fortunate as the exclusion proved for the peculiar greatness of Scott, and fortunate for the military glory of our country, it was most fortunate of all for the Palmetto State herself, whose self-destruction the conduct of Scott averted. Secondly, it is striking to observe how necessary to his characteristics and career as a warrior were the knowledge and the habits which he brought from his previous pursuits. Without this, he would have been a mere soldier; without this, he could scarcely have conducted with such signal success difficult and dangerous negotiations; without this, he could hardly have shown, in the midst of command, such unalterable reverence for law, and in the midst of triumphs such regard for justice and humanity. But for this, he could never have proved himself fit to rule as well as command, in peace as well as war, and joined the civil virtues to all the terrible qualities of the invincible general. In the third place, they who delight in debating questions that can never be settled, may discuss, in all their *pros* and *cons*, the probabilities of whether Scott would or would not have become a distinguished lawyer. I shall not attempt to decide; but may well say, that certainly he has often shown that he possesses a highly legal understanding, and that joining to it as he does, the genius of a still higher art, which must be by turns deep to deliberate, inventive to devise, and strong to execute, if he had failed at the Bar, it would at least not have been for want of capacity. Still, he might have failed; the sword and the ploughshare are made out of the same material; but they are very differently finished and tempered.

To complete, meantime, his theoretical education in Tactics, now followed one of those seeming disasters which are such, or are the contrary,

according merely to the worth and metal of the man on whom they light. I have elsewhere (in a brief life of Scott) related the circumstances of his quarrel with Gen. Wilkinson, that officer's unworthy effort of revenge, and its success to the extent not of disgracing but of procuring the suspension of the too truth-speaking and honor-loving youth, who had over-freely expressed his disdain for a double traitor, the confederate and the betrayer of Burr. The court which (apparently in deference to the rank of his prosecutor) condemned Captain Scott, expressly acquitted him of all dishonor laid upon him by the charges, and recommended an almost complete remission of its own sentence. That recommendation the Executive should have held obligatory, as really making a part of the judgment of the court itself. But Wilkinson had, in the very matter for which Scott stigmatized him, served the government, though at the sacrifice of his character; and the Administration no doubt felt itself bound to protect the man by whose perfidy it had profited. So the severer terms of the sentence were adopted, and Scott was sent for a twelvemonth into retirement. Just or unjust, all punishment is humiliating. They whom the elevation of their principles makes least capable of having deserved are the keenest to feel it, and, at the same time, the most incapable of being subdued or sunk by it. Against unmerited shame, the wrongs of unjust men in power, or the changing voice of the often-ungrateful multitude, they take refuge (as Scott has more than once had occasion to do) in the unshaken citadel of a brave soul, that knows how to vindicate itself from momentary reproach by arming itself with still stronger titles to success. This was what our soldier now did: he withdrew to solitude, and threw himself upon the severest study of his profession. That year of lonely labor did more to qualify him for leading his countrymen to victory than would have done the utmost personal favor and assistance of a score of Wilkinsons. But for that General's enmity, he would not, when it came, have been in a condition to win the brilliant battle of Chipewa; as afterwards, but for the disgraces and ridicule which Polk and Marcy contrived against him, he might never have been stirred up to that heroic exertion of all his faculties, which achieved the most daring of modern expeditions—the conquest of Mexico. It is easy enough for bad superiors to set their heels upon the common run of men, and though pitiful, it is, perhaps, no great matter if they do; but there is a sort whom force cannot trample down nor fraud overthrow, except as that giant son of the earth was overthrown in the Greek fable, who was no sooner upset than he rose stronger and taller than before.

#### *Early Soldiership.*

I have now traced down to the time when (the war with Great Britain being at last declared) he first took the field in form, the less known particulars (that is to say, anecdotes, secret history) of the formation and rise of the peculiar abilities and character of Scott. From this period, he comes upon the stage of action; his life becomes abundant in personal incidents; and I shall have

little to do but to tell, as shortly and as truly as I can, the story of such minuter events, either honorable or merely curious, as I have been able to collect in regard to him, and can vouch for as real.

He must have created from the first a growing idea of his military qualities; for, in spite of the displeasure which his falling out with Wilkinson had produced at Washington, we find him, almost as soon as his suspension expires, promoted two grades at once—raised to a lieutenant-colonelcy of artillery, and entrusted with the defence of the new navy-yard at Black Rock. The truth, as I have collected it from those who, without being his intimates, served with or saw him in his earlier campaigns, is, that everything about him bespoke the great commander that was to be. His knowledge was at once seen to be far beyond his years and his grade; and, rapid as was his promotion, it seemed to be constantly outgone by his fitness for higher service. These solid merits, too, were set off and made doubly striking, not merely by his remarkable stature, (just six feet five inches in his stocking-feet), the airiness of his movements, and the vigor of his body, but by a singular martial enthusiasm of countenance, and an animation of action, which shone out even in ordinary discourse, and in battle blazed up into an irresistible ardor, which attracted every eye, and made him seem to the soldier the very star of victory. It is easy to imagine how, seen in a charge, such a figure of fight, skilful as fiery, must have looked, and how soon it drew to him at once the admiration of the officers and the hearts of the soldiery.

#### *General Anecdotes.*

The first exploit in which our youthful colonel took any part was the creditable little affair of the capture of two armed British brigs, the *Caledonia* and the *Adams*, by Captains Elliot and Towson, under the guns of the enemy's Fort Erie. That happy little stroke of naval gallantry I have related elsewhere, together with the part that Scott bore in giving it success. The enterprise having been devised by an inferior officer, he could not have himself gone upon it without superseding him, and only therefore interposed when he was needed to complete the event. This, his first touch at the foe, was while he was yet under the general command of that soldier of bravados, Gen. Alexander Smyth, who at that time was making the Niagara frontier resound with his terrible proclamations. The bulletins of Bonaparte were nothing to his, except that the Corsican's were either followed or preceded by battles, while Smyth's were not. A little earlier, he would have done well; but he came too late. Had the war been still a Jeffersonian one, he would have made a most suitable general: for, though he never crossed the river, he kept up a terrific threatening from our side; though he compiled and published for our men a very bold system of tactics, he never took his army where they could be used; and, in short, if the philosophic fighting with embargoes, a gun-boat navy, torpedoes, the terrapin system and non-intercourse laws had not by this time been abandoned, through the mere imperfection of human reason, for gunpowder,

bullets, and bayonets, Gen. Smyth might, in strict conformity with the Monticello methods, have exterminated the British empire by a warfare of proclamations. Ah me! it is the age of paper constitutions, paper money, and paper principles, but not yet of paper generals. For a moment, under President Polk, there was hope: his appointments bade fair to give us an army officered only by demagogues. Give us President Pierce, however, and we may yet hope that statesmen of straw will bring with them soldiers of paper. To finish, however, the history of "Proclamation Smyth," (the military title which he earned,) I must not omit to mention that he afterwards exchanged it for a more scriptural one—that of "Apocalypse Smyth." For when, by-and-by, sated with war, he withdrew from the field, he piously betook himself, like many of the bloody champions of the Crusades, to the study of theology, and published, "upon his honor," a key to the Beast in the Apocalypse. Infidel as well as vaunting, it was at once ludicrously turned upon himself by a strong reply, which showed that, by his own very system of forming the name from the number of the beast, he was none other than Alexander Smyth himself: and hence his latest designation.

### *Queenstown Heights.*

Decatur, that bravest of the brave at sea, said well waxes, after the example of valor by land set at Queenstown, and till then wanting—meeting Scott, he said to him, "Sir, you have shown the way to victory." The words were prophetic. There were failures afterwards, through the incompetency of generals; but none where Scott was the leader: and defeats, from that moment, ceased; while brilliant triumphs followed, as soon as the young commander rose to a rank which permitted him to add to the example of valor which he had set the effects of discipline and of generalship.

Nothing could well have been worse conceived or more ill-sustained than was the attack upon Queenstown. It was certain to end in repulse; it was likely to end in the capture of all the troops thrown across. Indeed, it was an expedition devised, not by the prudence of Gen. Van Rensselaer, but by the insubordination of his militia, who, oddly enough, had no sooner compelled their good old commander to send over the attacking force, which they were to follow, than they fell into scruples about the constitutionality of marching State troops beyond their own borders, under the orders of the President of the United States, and actually, after thrusting their comrades into a fight whether or no, stood debating of State rights and the quiddities of strict construction, until British reinforcement after reinforcement was pressed upon our repeatedly-victorious troops, and they were forced to lay down their arms!

Not a party to either the planning or the conducting of so bootless an enterprise, Scott yet hastened to join it; first, because they were very certain to need him, if they crossed; and secondly, because it is out of desperate undertakings that good conduct can pluck the most honor. Permitted, at first, only to cover with his artillery from our shore, the landing, he witnessed the gallantry with which the heights were carried;

the preparations of that most soldierly adversary, Brock, to retake them; the shrinking of most, the confusion of all, on our side; and he determined that he, at least, would fling himself across. Others might, upon the perilous edge of battle, forget the national honor at stake, and abandon brave comrades to their fate, out of constitutional scruples: at such moments, true men know none. The capable, the good, the brave, never stand refining in the face of duty and of danger. He wrung from Gen. Van Rensselaer permission to pass over and assume the command on the Heights; and taking with him no reinforcement but his adjutant, Mr. Roach, hastened across, resolved either to hold good the advantage already won, until our people recovered from their panic or their abstractions and brought him succors, or else to make with the small force there such a stand for honor and for example's sake, as friends needed and foes should not forget. All this, I need hardly say, he perfectly performed. If they on this side did not accept the former alternative, he, at least, accomplished the latter. A more brilliant defence, fought almost invincibly against all the odds that could be poured upon him again and again, was never seen; and when at last, anything else grown impossible, he made the only surrender he was destined ever to make, it was such a surrender as left to the vanquished all the glory of the day.

I shall not repeat the stories, abundantly well known, of Scott's coolness and of his headlong bravery, by turns displayed in that unequal yet long protracted fight. There are, however, particular traits that must not be entirely passed over, and some incidents not yet introduced into books, though of known truth, which I must touch upon. The first of these is the conduct of Gen. Wadsworth, who, on his arrival, as outranking Scott for the command of the militia, would have at least divided the lead with him; but who at once waived his rights, and even—charmed with the heroism of the young conqueror—repeatedly threw himself before him to shield him from the Indian rifles of which his conspicuous person and acts made him the mark. The fact does great honor to the generous spirit of Wadsworth; but it plainly bespeaks, also, the brilliant and imposing qualities in battle of him who could at once excite such personal devotion in an older officer. A like thing is betokened in the common soldiers, by the enthusiasm with which, as soon as they saw what a true warrior was at their head, they fought under him. His persisting to expose himself in the full glitter of his parade dress, when he already drew all eyes without it, has been, by some shallow folks, whom probably not even vanity itself could make quite so bold, charged with ostentation. But that was his very errand; he went to set an example: it was his business, therefore, in every way to render it as striking as he could. His little military harangue from the fallen tree-trunk, to fire his surviving band (scarcely more outnumbered than spent with wounds and fatigue), to one last stand, that might forever cancel the shame of Hull's surrender, is a fine soldier's speech, plain, short, pithy, stirring; none of your hall-oratory, your in-door eloquence, in which men die in metaphor for their country, who never have grasped a weapon; but words that do little more than to show the foe and the flag,

and to tell you in a few warlike sentences, such as the time alone can afford, that *these* are to be struck, and that *this* is not; sentences just long enough to tighten men's sinews upon swords and firelocks. Measured by that fine talk which leisure and safety can compose, Scott's was, no doubt, quite a poor performance; but many an orator would have been mute enough there, and if men have out-spoken him, none have out-fought him. The ready self-devotion in a commander, with which to save the lives of his dear comrades, he made his sword and pocket handkerchief into a flag of truce and set forward to seek Gen. Sheaffe with it, although several previous bearers of flags had been shot down by the Indians, (as, indeed, he came near being,) or made prisoners, is a fine proof of that affection for his men which he has always shown in field, in camp, in cholera, everywhere. So, again, afterwards, the firmness with which, while in the enemy's hands, he interfered to prevent his Irish soldiers from being treated as traitors to England, and never forgetting them, persevered, until, by retaliation, he forced the enemy to send them back to their adopted country, is a sure pledge of the warmth and faithfulness of his heart. And, finally—passing over the story of the revengeful attempt of the Indian chiefs, Jacobs and young Brandt, (the son of the bloody Brandt who committed the celebrated butchery of Wyoming,) to assassinate, in his quarters as a prisoner, the "tall officer," who had been so vainly the mark of their rifles, while heading the desperate American charge—the generous tribute of an admiring enemy, which he paid to the memory of the good and gallant Brock, by sending across to his artillery, in Lewistown, an order to fire minute guns while the British were burying him, was a fine idea of the honor which one good soldier owes to another, although an adversary. Merely touching on these facts, because they are already in the books, I proceed to mention what is not.

In one of those fierce charges in which Scott repeatedly threw himself upon the superior force of the advancing enemy, and drove him back by sheer courage, as he was pressing forward his line to the assault, and this time treading close upon their heels to take care that none faltered, an officer suddenly came staggering back out of the line, whose livid face had on it all the marks of terror. Scott instantly commanded him, in a loud and fierce voice, to "charge!" The officer neither obeyed nor answered. The order was repeated, with great vehemence: "Charge, sir! charge!" Still, nothing but the same silence and ghastly look of wishing to get away. Ready now to cut down the fier, Scott raised his voice and his arm together, and thundered out, for the last time, the stern command, "Charge!" No obedience, no sign; and the blow that justly slays the abandoner of his colors was already falling upon the captain's head, when suddenly the foaming blood gushed from his mouth, and Scott saw that he had been shot through the lungs, and had been speechless and almost senseless from the wound. An instant more, and it would have been too late; the blow could not even be stopped; Scott could only turn his hand, so as to strike with the flat of his sword. It may be imagined with what a shudder a man so tender-hearted saw how narrowly

he had missed cleaving down a wounded and brave man, and how he always felt afterwards at the recollection. But the officer recovered, and was the same who afterwards became the object of the following good deed, not prompted, certainly, but rendered more pleasing by the old remembrance. I give the story in the words of a gentleman of Cincinnati, who communicated it, with his name, to the National Intelligencer; and can add that I have ascertained it to be true in all its particulars:

"Some years after the war of 1812 was concluded, General Scott, at Cincinnati, met with Captain ———, who had served with him on the Canada frontier in that war. At its close, Captain ——— left the army, highly esteemed by the General and his fellow-officers for gallant conduct and amiable qualities. At this meeting with his comrade, General Scott was impressed with a belief that Captain ——— was in destitute circumstances, and at once felt a desire to extend to him some relief; but knowing Captain ——— to be rather sensitive, the General consulted with P——s, then co-editor of a leading journal in Cincinnati, as to the best mode of affording substantial aid and comfort to the captain and his family. They concluded to constitute Mrs. P. sole agent, with discretionary power as to mode and means, to carry into execution the benevolent intentions of the General. Mrs. P. cheerfully accepted the trust, and immediately searched for and found the humble dwelling of the captain's family. Under the pretext of procuring a seamstress, Mrs. P., with the tact and grace of a well-bred lady, perceived their great distress, and soon ascertained the full extent of their present and pressing want. Without delay, and at the General's expense, Mrs. P. procured all the necessaries and comforts that she, as a good housewife, thought their condition required, and sent the articles to them by a messenger, who was directed not to answer questions, but merely say he was ordered to leave the things there. Captain ——— soon after obtained profitable employment, and subsequently removed to another State, where he practiced law successfully. In 1840 he was a member of the Legislature of that State, and in 1841 the writer of this met the captain, and was informed by him that his condition was comfortable and easy."

### *Battle of Fort George.*

It was not long before Scott retaliated upon Fort George his capture by its garrison, and, upon a shore just below, the glorious surrender at Queenstown.

Meantime, sent a prisoner down to Quebec, he had there resisted the threatened British severities against his Irish soldiers; had been sent around by cartel to Boston; had been there exchanged; and had thence, in January, 1813, (his abilities and valor being now felt,) called to Washington, that he might, in the interval of military operations, be consulted. Here, by his urgent representations, the act of Congress was passed for retaliating upon our prisoners any measures against our Irish or other adopted citizens that fell into the enemy's hands. It is to his efforts we owe it that all such captives were



not put to death, as traitors to England, under the pretence that they owed her a perpetual allegiance. After this, he was sent to Gen. Dearborn, (who now commanded on the Niagara frontier) to serve him in the important duty of Adjutant General. He claimed, however, and obtained the privilege of still leading his own regiment whenever it went into battle. Few men would have been equal to what he was chosen to perform and did perform—the bringing to order and efficiency, in a service yet without system and experience, the Staff of an army; which is its *working part*, that enables its *fighting part* to put forth its strength, and, indeed, to come into the field; supplies, arranges, distributes, and prepares everything, in order that actions, when needed, may be fought; and manages, in a word, the great mechanism of combat. All this was now to be, for the first time, well done. Scott did it; but, with a boundless activity, for which he is especially remarkable, when he had made all ready in the staff, and battle came, he forthwith threw himself into the line and fought the engagements which he had prepared.

It was in this manner that he came to lead the movement of General Dearborn upon the British town of Newark (now called Niagara) and Fort George. He had so completely won the General's confidence, that the lead in the landing was assigned him. That was enough for him; for when he conducted an attack, they who were to support it were left little to do, and usually arrived too late, except to wonder at his rapidity of victory. This was the case at Newark and Fort George; where, in spite of the advantages of position, he was no sooner landed than by impetuous assault he swept the enemy before him; seized upon Fort George and its important supplies of munitions; and, scarcely allowing that capture or his own severe hurt by the firing of a magazine to check him at all, continued to press the routed adversary so hard that he was on the point of capturing their whole force, when, unfortunately, he was obliged to yield to repeated orders of recall sent him, and to give up the pursuit. Well might Col. Moses Porter, who strove hard to come up with him and share his exploits, curse his "long legs;" that boundless energy with which he moves, the swiftness and sureness with which he strikes, baffle all resistance of the foe, and outstrip all rivalry of the competitor.

Scott made many prisoners. Some of them were set apart (all Englishmen) as hostages for the safety of the Irishmen taken from him at Queenstown. One, a British colonel, he treated with an unusual courtesy. It was the officer who, while Scott was a captive at Queenstown, had (no doubt thoughtlessly) taunted him with the little probability of his ever seeing the Falls of Niagara to the greatest advantage; because they were finest from the British side, where (he intimated) Americans would never be able to view them with pleasure, because they would never be able to view them as victors. Scott had taken fire at this, and told him that he ought first to return his sword, if he meant to insult him. Upon this, the officer had apologized. Their situations were now reversed: but Scott, instead of wounding him by any allusion to the former occurrence, offered him only the most delicate kindnesses and

civilities; touched with which, the Briton at last said to him: "Sir, you can now see the Falls of Niagara, with every advantage." The acknowledgment was a very proper one: but he who made it, little imagined how repeatedly he to whom he made it would yet view those Falls under circumstances still more brilliant.

### *Foraging, Capture of Toronto, Expedition against Montreal.*

During the next three months, the army, successively under the command of Dearborn, Lewis, Boyd, and Wilkinson, lay entrenched at Fort George, and nothing of note was attempted. It became little, but a small semi-weekly war of foraging parties. This was regularly entrusted to Scott, in addition to his duties as Adjutant General. He soon showed himself a thorough partisan officer, equally bold and prudent. Every blade of forage had to be manœuvred or fought for; and combats on a small scale were continual; but Scott never lost one, nor missed his object when he struck at it. In consequence, he received, in July, the honor of being placed in command of a double regiment; and thereupon laid down his staff appointment. Then ensued his successful expedition against Toronto: and afterwards, near the close of the year, his descent of the St. Lawrence against Montreal, under his old friend, Wilkinson. In this expedition, made abortive in the end only through that commander's irresolution, Scott was selected to conduct the leading division of the fleet of boats. Here, a fortified point, at some narrow of the river, was to be passed, or perhaps taken, in order that the army in his rear might be able to go by in safety; or, perhaps, it was necessary he should land and sweep away some force of the enemy which beset the way. These—the leading services of the expedition—he performed, and did his part as well as Wilkinson's was done ill. Had Scott, young as he was, commanded, it is hazarding nothing to say that he would never have turned back from an attempt that was obviously within reach of a glorious success. The capture of Montreal—which really lay at our mercy, and with which all Canada above it must have fallen—needed, at that moment, nothing but the boldness to go on; and he whose mature genius devised and executed, with a continual daring, the conquest of Mexico, would surely have had, in the fiery youth of his arms, no lack of boldness for an enterprise that now needed little else.

### *Scott makes and fights a new Army under Brown.*

The campaigns of 1812 and 1813 had now undeceived the country of those imaginary Generals to whom command had been successively entrusted. One after another, they had proved themselves incompetent. Something far better must be found, or a peace anything but honorable would have to be concluded with the haughtiest of nations. In the younger soldiers whom practice was gradually forming amidst the subordinate grades, valor and conduct were showing themselves; but in none yet, except Scott, the marks of a high military capacity. The rest

wanted that knowledge which he had so rapidly made to himself, or which seemed to come by instinct. Indeed, our want was not that of skilful commanders alone; where the troops are good, sufficient generals are seldom missing. But it is these that make those. We had, in reality, nowhere a tolerable army in the field; and we could have none, until a commander had been found capable of disciplining a force first and of manoeuvring it afterwards. In such views as these, the government had now fixed its eyes on the young Scott. Operations in the field having ceased for the winter, he was ordered down to Albany, there to prepare all the materials of war for the coming campaign of 1814, and to settle, under instructions from the President, certain important matters, half military and half political, with the State Governor. These duties satisfactorily performed, he was on the 9th March, 1814, raised to the rank of Brigadier General, and sent to Gen. Brown, then marching from French Mills to Buffalo, where the new army was to be collected and disciplined for him. Arrived there, Brown (apparently under instructions from Washington) withdrew to Sackett's Harbor, and committed to Scott, for three months, the forming, instructing, and disciplining of an army fit for victory.

Others have told, and I have myself related, the methods on which the young conqueror went about this task. Adopting at once all those detailed improvements in the art of war which modern science had effected, but to which we were yet strangers, he went to work with an incessant personal activity, and taught them to his officers and his men, until he had made, of those, tacticians, and, of these, soldiers, fit to cope with the best veterans of any army; as, led by him, they soon proved, in a very amazing manner, in fights the toughest.

I have already said something of the extreme destitution of military knowledge which then prevailed, among even our regular troops; perhaps, however, I should endeavor to give a more distinct idea of its causes.

We had, ever since the revolutionary war, been at peace—an interval of thirty years. The little of generalship in commanders, of discipline among those in the ranks, had passed away, the mere personal possession of that generation. For we at once relapsed into a people who had on land no adversaries except Indians, against whom the mere superiority of white men's arms and numbers were tactics enough. Thus, naturally, we had fallen back in military knowledge. To have prevented this, the maintenance of a standing army could alone have served. But to that a strong and unreasoning popular aversion had been bred and transmitted among us. It was against the standing army of Great Britain that we had fought; and though we ourselves could never have achieved our freedom by mere militia, yet it had passed into a grand political maxim with us that standing armies are dangerous to the public liberty, and that a militia is its only safe defence. Certainly, the idea is thus far just: that a mere militia is little dangerous to freedom; but, unhappily, it is as little dangerous to anything else. To have nothing else is to be a disarmed nation, which is soon to be no nation at all. In

short, a disciplined force must be kept up in peace, that your unwarlike state may not invite attack, or at least encourage insult. It is cheaper to keep it constantly, and thus to have wars seldom, than to have armies to form and officers to teach, at enormous cost of life and treasure, through several years of humiliating tuition in actual combat. Such was the view of our two earliest Presidents; they meant to maintain a regular force; but the feeble state of the public finances limited them to an establishment of only two or three regiments, as mere guards at some great sea-ports, or garrisons at important posts among the Indians. Against even this little army the demagoguery of Mr. Jefferson had raised an outcry; a popular prejudice against it existed; he and his followers therefore inflamed it, being perfectly willing to pull down the soundest part of our public policy, provided they could pull down with it the Administration they wanted to supplant. This done, the same men, of course, could not, even when for some six years preparing for a war with England, decently take the first necessary step towards it—the setting up of a regular army; and hence Mr. Jefferson's notable inventions for war without troops and ships; the terrapin, torpedo, embargo, and gun-boat systems. It is thus easy to see how little the science of arms was understood among us in 1812, and from what causes.

But this was not yet all: the little of tactics which we at first used were most confused and ill applied. No one system prevailed; but each commandant of a regiment usually adopted, at his fancy, the old manual of Baron Steuben, (in reality Frederick the Great's,) or General Apollonius Smyth's modernized Steuben, or Colonel William Duane's improvements upon all three. In short, there could be no harmony of movement in the field; two regiments would execute the same order quite differently; and every brigade would be broken up by its own evolutions. For all this, there was but one remedy—fortunately a very sure one. It was this: that the regiments were so seldom drilled or exercised that they could hardly think of attempting a manoeuvre; and thus manoeuvring became less fatal to them than it must otherwise have been.

Such was, up to 1814, the condition of our arms; a condition for which, in spite of the warlike genius of our people, and the facility with which they are made into fine soldiers, a remedy could not have been found, or must have been found too late, had not a martial ability, far swifter of growth in one than all the rest, sprung up in Scott, and, at a single effort, extemporized for us the admirable army of General Brown, the basis of all our subsequent military system.

### *Battle of Chippewa.*

Viewed in the single light not of the politics of war, (of which Scott showed so many examples in Mexico—those politics which men may have as to the *when* without knowing the *how* battles are to be fought,) but the mere strategy of the field, the art of seizing in the moment those dispositions and those manoeuvres which are fatal to your adversary, Scott's first battle—the first in which he really commanded—was his most beautiful one.

In it, we see the event at once accomplished in a manner as sure as it was swift and brilliant, by a single great movement of generalship. The enemy exposed himself, in his approach, to the dreadful but difficult manœuvre called *en-potence*, (which I have explained in the "Life,") and, executing that upon him, Scott destroyed him at one blow, and swept a more numerous and highly disciplined force from the field before Gen. Brown could arrive to his assistance. It was a perfect piece of science, conceived at a glance, and performed with as much precision as if it had been a mathematical problem, and merely done upon paper. Rather known to the great artists of war as one of the possibilities of pitched battle than a thing achieved by great captains, it had seldom, from its nicety and complexity, been attempted; and never by new upon veteran troops, as were those of Scott and Riall. Than its accomplishment, under such circumstances, a more consummate proof of soldiership could not well be. It bespoke not merely the high qualities of the leader but those which he knew that he had infused into his men; the sureness of manœuvre, the exactness of discipline, the cool, unhesitating reliance on him and on themselves, which he had taught, by his complete and masterly training, to entire regiments. Nor could anything be better than his presence, at just the necessary moment, in each critical part of the field, to prepare his irresistible blow; first, to bring forward the general movements to bear; then personally to show his artillery, on the extreme right, where presently their fire was to be poured for the effect in view; and, lastly, at the moment when the shock was to be given, his animating call to the infantry in the centre: "Soldiers, the enemy say you are only good at long shot, and cannot stand the cold iron. I call upon you to give the lie to that slander! Charge!" At once came that last and terrible touchstone of valor; and the tough Englishman, strong as he is at that game, was driven, almost in a moment, from the field, irremediably routed before he knew the fatal piece of art ut in practice against him. It was then that Scott, seeing how easily the flying enemy might be cut off from the bridge to their fortified camp, raising his hands to Heaven, burst out in that fine military exclamation: "Ten years of my life for a hundred good dragons!" Had he but had cavalry, he must have made prisoners of nearly all the enemy not already stretched on that bloody plain.

One more curious fact remains to be mentioned. I am indebted for it to the interesting researches (soon, I trust, to see the light,) of a very gallant young officer, the grandson of the ablest and best citizen that this country ever contained, except *our* forever matchless. I speak of Capt. Schuyler Hamilton, the grandson of him who more than any other founded our government, made it work, and has ever since been held up to popular hatred by those who labored to defeat the constitution, and to prevent the government from becoming a successful experiment.

The grey and black uniform of West Point was given in honor of the battle of Chippewa. That was the dress in which Scott's brigade put the bayonet to the British that day. This came about as follows: In fitting out the brigade for

the field, during the preceding winter, Cadwallader Irving, the Commissary of Clothing, had found that blue cloth enough to clothe them was no longer to be had: he, therefore, took grey, which was in plenty, and trimmed it with black. And it seems (as General Riall himself related) that when Scott's division, in their new suits, came marching up so stiff and square along the fine level battle-field, to meet them, the British took them (as they said) for "Buffalo militia" a little bolder than usual, who though they moved and fought well for a while, would never venture to cross steel with them. So they set upon them with the bayonet, without dreaming of the innumerable quantity of Tartars they were about to catch. The brave old banner of England has seen many a bloody day; but seldom a bloodier than that, in proportion to the numbers engaged.

### Battle of Niagara.

I need not relate how, just twenty days after the fight of Chippewa, came about, most unexpectedly, almost at sunset on Sunday, the 25th July, the still more fiercely-contested combat of Niagara, or Lundy's Lane, prolonged, by desperate valor on both sides, till near midnight, before we finally drove the enemy, our superior in numbers and position, from the field. To the received account of that remarkable conflict I can add little, except certain particulars from the British general's report, which, though not unexaggerated, give a curious idea of the fury of the fight. Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond says:

"In the centre, the repeated and determined attacks of the enemy were met by the thirty-ninth regiment, the detachment of the Royal and the King's, and the light company of the forty-first, with the most perfect steadiness and intrepid gallantry; and the enemy was constantly repulsed, with very heavy loss. In so determined a manner were these attacks directed against our guns, that our artillerymen were bayoneted by the enemy in the act of loading; and the muzzles of the enemy's guns were advanced within a few yards of our own. The darkness of the night, during this extraordinary conflict, occasioned several uncommon incidents. Our troops having for a moment been pushed back, some of our guns remained for a few moments in the hands of the enemy: they were, however, not only quickly recovered, but the two pieces (a six-pounder and a five-and-a-half-inch howitzer) which the enemy had brought up were captured by us, together with the several tumbrils. But, in limbering up our guns, at one period, one of the enemy's six-pounders was put by mistake upon a limber of ours, and one of our six-pounders limbered on one of his—by which means the pieces were exchanged; and thus, though we captured two of his guns, yet, as he obtained one of ours, we gained only one gun."

This is in part, it will be perceived, General Drummond's not very ingenious mode of hiding the loss of *all* his cannon: he turns it into a *swap* of one piece for two—forgetting how notorious the Yankees are for never swapping on any such disadvantageous terms. But, besides, the gallant story of Col. Miller's modest words, "I will try," when he marched his regiment to the taking of those very cannon, Scott's volunteering to pilot

the attack through the darkness of night and smoke, and the complete and final success of that assault, are things which history has long ago settled beyond dispute.

From the first moment of his joining battle, Scott, rushing on his enemy upon information seemingly the surest, had judged it wiser to accept all the disadvantages of the fight than to attempt a retreat. He at once committed everything, therefore, to desperate valor and staunch discipline. The little of daylight left afforded small room for manoeuvre: he seized that little, however, and, by skillful movements, secured every possible advantage; saving himself, by a bold show, from being overwhelmed, defeating the adversary's left wing, and putting him, though every way the stronger, upon the mere defensive. Then came down the night, with all the horrors of a combat at once blind and furious, whose only guides were to be a courage which nothing could shake and the deadly glare of the volleys themselves, which alone lighted one charging column to the other. All modern war can present no example of a fiercer or longer-continued struggle. It was constantly (what is rarely seen) bayonet-work: for, in that pitchy darkness, the bullet was almost useless, because aimless. Scott, as if almost unimpeded by the night, fought by turns at every point where the greatest bravery was needed, and performed prodigies of personal daring. A horse was killed under him, by a cannon-ball, in one charge: he mounted another, and drove back the enemy. In another charge, his second horse fell dead: he bestrid a third, and was soon again foremost in the fight. It is a fact little known, but that third horse was also mortally wounded under him. At last, near the close of the battle, he himself fell, desperately wounded by a cannon-shot along the right side of his body, and all the bones of his left shoulder shattered by a musket-ball. From the latter wound, he lay at the point of death for two months; and it still maims all his use of that arm. For this hardest-fought of all our land-battles, he was at once breveted major-general, at the age of twenty-eight. At each previous step of his rapid promotion, President Madison had objected to his youth: he now said, "Set him down a major general: I have done with objecting to his youth." Indeed, he soon after offered to the same youth the Secretaryship of War—which was, however, modestly declined. He was thereupon sent abroad, partly for the benefit of our military establishment, and partly on a secret diplomatic mission, connected with the island of Cuba.

### *Diplomatic or Civil Services.*

Nothing can be shallower than the out-cry—a mere party trick—with which this country has rung for twenty-eight years, about "military chiefs," as unfit for the Presidency, as such. It should, in each instance, have been only a question whether a particular general, and not whether every general, would or would not make a good President. Some would, some would not. This question, so idly treated among us, has been ably set forth of late in England, by Roebuck, in his "Political History of Parties down to the passage of the Reform Bill." We have only to

substitute the names of Scott and Mexico, for those of Wellington and Spain, in order to see the unanswerable justness of the following passage:

"No man can be a great soldier unless he possess great administrative talent, and this talent is more likely to be brought forth and fostered by the business of war than by the management of cases at Nisi Prius; yet because of the habit of speaking, the lawyer is deemed capable of governing; while the soldier, whose life is spent in action and not in talk, is considered unversed in what are called the civil affairs of State. The training of the Duke of Wellington was, however, of a much higher character than any which ordinary statesmen, or soldiers, or lawyers, can hope to enjoy. In India, and Spain, and Portugal he led armies, and he governed nations. To feed his armies, and to keep the people for whom he was nominally engaged obedient and favorable to his cause, he was obliged to bring into action all those great qualities of mind which are needed for the practical government of mankind. Every intricate question of finance, the various and perplexing operations of trade, the effects of every institution, commercial, political, of law and administration—all had to be understood, weighed, watched, and applied, while he led the armies of England, and, in fact, governed the people of Spain and Portugal. The vast combination needed for his great campaigns made him familiar with every operation of government; and the peculiar relation in which he stood to the people of Spain and Portugal and their various rulers, called into action every faculty of his mind, and made him profoundly skilled in the difficult art of leading and controlling men of all classes and of all characters."—i 41, 42.

Of the same thing, Playfair, in his "British Family Antiquity" (vol 5, p. 355) gives a good example. Speaking of Sir Eyre Coote, the British commander in the East Indies, who, though bred to arms alone, overthrew the French dominion there, not less by his policy than by his valor, he says: "He distinguished himself very conspicuously, not only by the bravery and skill he displayed as a soldier, but by his political knowledge. For in our possessions so distant and with such a complicated system of delegated power, it is by no means sufficient to be a good general: but to act well as commander-in-chief, it is necessary also to be a statesman."

The really great soldiers must always possess at least equal civil prudence. All examples prove it. Among the ancients, Sesostris, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar show it. In France, Charlemagne, Henry IV, Napoleon; in Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus; in Russia, Peter the Great; in Poland, John Sobieskie; in Prussia, Frederick the Great; in Scotland, Wallace and Bruce; in England, Alfred the Great, Cromwell, Marlborough, and Wellington; in this country, Washington and Scott make the thing clear.

There is, indeed, no point from which a man can better rule the unsteady elements of the public mind than a great military reputation. That of virtue alone or even of great statesmanship bestows a far less powerful ascendancy. Let it only be seconded by love of the public good and by that capacity to make it which must (as I have

shown) usually attend it, and it cannot fail to accomplish as much in the far more trying and sharp difficulties of war. All this has been already abundantly proved, in the long career of Scott. While yet only a Colonel, he had been entrusted, by President Madison, with the transaction, at Albany, of important and delicate arrangements with the Governor of New York, and had performed that duty most satisfactorily. The war over, an important secret negotiation in Europe was confided to him, and was effected. In 1832, Gen. Jackson committed to him the very difficult business of the armed negotiation with the South Carolina Nullifiers. To his skill and temper alone we probably owe it, that a civil war (the sure destruction of this Union) did not then ensue. Almost as good an artificer of peace as of war, he quieted, by his admirable management and boundless activity, the war of the "Canadian Sympathizers," in 1837-'38, and the troubles between Maine and New Brunswick, in 1839. Both these were, in their time, acknowledged, by the whole country, as exploits of peace hardly less glorious than his most brilliant deeds in arms. Indeed, it was his great military renown which enabled him to accomplish these things so well and so soon. For, as I have said, none can negotiate with such advantage as the great soldier who knows what he's about. Finally, the consummate wisdom and justice with which Scott (while administering as conqueror all affairs civil and military in Mexico) employed all powers at once, and both made the law and executed it, afford the highest proof of his fitness for civil rule; and of this the offer of the Mexicans to pay him a million and a quarter a year to stay and govern them is a brilliant testimony, such as no other conqueror ever received. For though others have subdued countries as well as he, I can find no other example of a conqueror so good and wise in all his measures as, while he was subjugating a people, to have also conquered their esteem and affection!

### *Indian Wars and Treaties.*

On these I shall dwell little. In the Black Hawk war there was no struggle; and it is memorable rather for the humanity, justice, and mild policy which Scott put in practice towards a race on whom we habitually trample, than for any deeds of arms; which at best, against a foe so weak, can be little glorious. Indeed, the only danger which he encountered in this expedition was that appalling visitation of the Asiatic cholera among his own troops, in which he displayed a courage and a tenderness still rarer and better than bravery in the battle-field. Such conduct should be the highest honor of the great commander. If he joins that to great deeds in arms, it eclipses all his other trophies, and places him among true heroes—those who were as good as they were valiant. I cannot call to mind in history any great soldier who has exceeded Scott in meriting this praise. The most remarkable warriors have usually been the tenderest in their personal care of their men, and shown the greatest affection for them. Cromwell, Napoleon, and others whom I could mention, were idolized by

their troops. Washington's attentions to his, in that dismal encampment at Valley Forge, will forever endear him to all hearts. But no leader ever met a calamity more frightful than the sudden and awful pestilence which fell upon the four steamers in which Scott was transporting his body of near a thousand men from Buffalo to Chicago. As these crowded boats went up the lake, on the 8th July, the cholera broke out among them with such a dreadful violence as, in five or six days, destroyed every fourth man, and threw more than another fourth into the hospital. The boat of the Commander-in-Chief himself became one general pest-house; and there, forgetting all fear of infection, all thought but of his dear but humble companions-in-arms around him, though himself much affected by the disease, he tended the sick, consoled the dying, as if he had been a nurse and a surgeon, not a General; fought the cholera as he would have fought the foe, and stood by his men in the obscure agony of the death-bed, as nobly as he would have stood by them in all the glorious dangers of battle. This admirable scene was afterwards repeated at Rock Island. To return, however, to Indian affairs, the skilful, conciliatory, and yet determined manner, in which he disarmed the Cherokees, and accomplished (what was thought impossible) their bloodless removal beyond the Mississippi, was another noble exploit of humanity, which only the imposing renown of a great soldier joined to an equal civil ability, could have accomplished. Of the Florida war, and the rash and foolish public injustice of which Scott became for a time the victim, because he did not end it by the first experimental campaign, sixteen years ago, I need say but a single word: I was told to-day, (13th of September, 1852) at the Indian bureau, with much exultation, that Billy Bowlegs, the true original hero and author of that thirty millions and seventeen years' war, has at last consented to make peace with us; and though he says he had some idea of conquering the United States, is now on his way to Washington. If this be so, the Florida war is at last ended.

### *Services in Forming our Army and Military System.*

We have seen how, in the war of 1812, it was by the valor of Scott that our soldiery was first animated, and by his martial genius first directed to science and to success in arms. Founding our tactics, he founded that army which has maintained and advanced them, until we have, beyond a doubt, the finest and most serviceable land force, in proportion to its numbers, that the world has ever seen. As its administrative head, it is he who has infused into it not merely its excellence in professional knowledge and in practical efficiency, but its unrivaled spirit as a body; the honor, the habits, the elevation of personal conduct and bearing, as well as of attainments which render it the best behaved, best educated, ablest, and most gallant set of men in the world. No part of our public service can be compared with it. While all other parts of our Government have confessedly been only growing in corruption and incompetency, that of which he has the charge has been, all the while, as steadily advancing in

its merit and reputation. Nor is this by any means confined to the officers. For as, among them, by a moral discipline which they got at West Point along with their education, the personal habits, conduct, and feelings of each man is elevated and strengthened, so among the privates, too, the army has become a school of orderliness, of self-respect, and of character. None but well-taught and superior men can graduate at West Point. We have, therefore, seldom an undeserving officer; and such cannot long retain their commissions. Valuing their own good character, they equally value it in the common soldier. He is treated, therefore, respectfully and kindly; his rights are regarded, his comforts attended to, and his character and conduct improving with his treatment, the army has become almost as fine a body of men in its rank-and-file as in its officers.

### *The Mexican War.*

There can be little need of my entering into the particulars of the conquest of Mexico; it is but the other day since they filled all men's minds and were upon every tongue, the wonder and the pride of every man of the nation, and scarcely less the astonishment of all the world abroad, than the delight of the poorest citizen at home. And while Fame thus voiced about the story of that long and strange succession of exploits, from Vera Cruz and the mighty fortress of San Juan de Ulloa to the great city of Montezuma, many a brave soldier, the scarry companion of those brilliant victories, coming home at the close of the war, has spread afresh, in almost every household of this valor-loving land, the tale of his great commander's acts; with what a daring genius he set about the enterprise, taking for it a force so small as made it seem desperate to all others, but which with his abilities and American courage he knew to be so exactly sufficient, that he would scarcely have a man to spare nor (what was as dangerous) a man to encumber him; with what a comprehensive mind he collected and wielded his means of war; how he breathed into not only old troops but new that which alone could have made them invincible—his own heroic confidence in valor and skill; that admirable landing at Vera Cruz without loss; the rapid and masterly capture of that city and its castle; how then, though short of his promised supplies, he flung himself forward upon his great undertaking; his triumph at Cerro Gordo, by a wonder of skill, over a greatly superior enemy, lodged in what seemed im pregnable positions; the capture of Jalapa, of Perote, and of Puebla in succession, without a blow; how then, abandoning his communications and making his army (small as it was) "a self-sustaining machine," in the heart of an empire, he pushed forward to the last great scene of struggle, the valley of Mexico itself, where all that the Republic contained of bravery and of patriotism was drawn together, amidst castles, and causeways, and fortified camps, and convents, and bridges, and foundries and walls, and garrios, and citadels, for a last stand; how he turned these defences and took those, never wasting a man nor making a move in vain; how Contreras and Cherubusco were fought; the Bridge-

head, the Convent, the King's Mill, and Chapultepec carried; and, finally, the taking of the city gates of the capital itself. All this, the brave common soldiers who shared in it have told and are telling, to the life, by every fire-side in this happy country, where honor and valor are at least as much admired among the simple and the lowly as among the proud and the politicians. If I told these things, how should I tell them as well as they are doing who witnessed them? I shall not attempt it, therefore.

I will equally leave it to them to relate what they, again, can best tell; how in the camp, on the march, in the hospital, by his affectionate care of all who suffered, he endeared himself to every man in the army, and was not more admired as its invincible chief, than loved as its tender and careful father; what courage and what confidence his presence inspired on the field of battle! what consolation to the wounded: how, his vast business as a commander and a civil governor of every thing performed with exactest and most laborious attention, he issued from his quarters and saw in person to the comfort of every comrade; soothed the sick, administered to those whose cases admitted remedy, wept over the dying, and received their last words for their home and their friends. Thousands will bear me witness that I do not exaggerate these his brotherly deeds. Intriguers, encouraged from at home, might, among officers who owed everything to his kindness, raise murmurs and practices against him when victory, which he alone had directed, was accomplished; but the hearts and the minds of his brave and intelligent common soldiers, which no ambition corrupted, were never for one instant shaken from him. They knew him as good as he was wise, just, brave; and were and ever will be faithful to their great commander and true friend. For they saw him win, by his wisdom and humanity, the esteem and the affection of the very people he was humbling; they saw him governing Mexico more beneficently as its conqueror, than it had ever been governed by its native magistrates; they saw him offered, in reality, when peace was made, a throne, which he might have honorably accepted; and yet were witnesses to his rejecting that glittering temptation, and choosing to return home, degraded from his command, ordered back for trial, and struggling with disease, rather than cease to be an American. He liked better to be persecuted, calumniated, perhaps cashiered, at home, than to be a sovereign abroad. So the second Cortez, refusing the golden realm which he had gained, came back to contend with him of "the spoils," the Governor with a patch in his breeches, (Mr. Marcy,) in the newspapers; to be called, in honor of forty-four years' of the highest public services, "splendid humbug," "Foes and Feathers," "Marshal Turenne," "Dugald Dalgetty," "imbecile," "cheat," "thief," as he is now styled in many party prints. I happen personally to know that he to whom \$1,000,000 in cash, \$250,000 a year, and a dictatorship were offered in Mexico, came home about \$3,000 in debt; and is now, after victories more brilliant than those for which Britain has but fairly paid Wellington with a dukedom and a princely fortune, about as poor as when he began life. He whose peace-making services alone averted three

wars, (a nullifier's, a "sympathizer," and a Maine boundary,) and saved us in them at least \$100,000,000, is now hauled up before the nation by one Mr. Meriwether, to account for having drawn as his pay of forty-four years an average of \$5,000 a year, and a gross amount of considerably less than the rate by the year which Mexico offered him!

I have not loved to touch upon the perfidy with which the great commander was treated, either by those few about him whom the known hostility of the administration at home encouraged, or by the direct practices of that administration itself, whom nothing but his consummate genius snatched from the fast-approaching necessity of abandoning, after a few fruitless victories, a terribly expensive war, as illegally as it was needlessly begun. From such shameful things I will rather turn to acts which it is delightful to commemorate.

No General ever received more touching proofs of the honor and affection in which his companions-in-arms held him, than were offered by his army to Scott, when he was leaving the city of Mexico, after his recall to take his trial in the United States. His recall, by the by, was inevitable in the plan of disgracing him: it was necessary to try him elsewhere. Even had he committed any crime, who could have condemned him, upon the scene of such victories, and amidst such a host of witnesses to his virtues as well as valor?

I will not attempt to describe either the scene of the 22d of February, when, after his suspension from command, Scott, at the solicitation of

General Persifer Smith, the local commandant of the city, reviewed, for the last time, the troops there; or that other more personal parting, when, on the morning of his intended private departure, all the officers and men who had got wind of it, assembled at the gate of Mexico through which he must pass, in order to take leave, individually, of their venerated leader. The scene has been told me by witnesses all of whom related it with glistening eyes. Everywhere it can be described by such. It is not, therefore, for one who could but narrate it at second hand, to try to give an idea of it.

Nor need I relate that last act of humanity and of affection towards his men, when, on his arriving at the season of yellow fever in Vera Cruz, the authorities urged him to take for the accommodation of himself and staff, one or the other of two fine government steamers (the Massachusetts and the Edith) which lay there ready for sea, and he declined, and took a poor little vessel (the Peterburg) of only 150 tons, lest (as he said) some of his soldiers now about coming down in large numbers to embark, should be detained and suffer from yellow fever. His political foes say that he is vain. If he were so, I give the best of them leave to be ten times as vain, when they shall have done as much of what men have a right to be vain of. But no man ever saw Winfield Scott show any of the selfishness of vanity, fail of a just or a generous action, or think of himself when duty or goodness of heart bade him think of others.

EDWARD WM. JOHNSTON.

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