

**Anniversary discourse, before the New-York Academy of Medicine :
delivered in the chapel of the University of the City of New-York,
November 13th, 1850 / by Joseph M. Smith.**

Contributors

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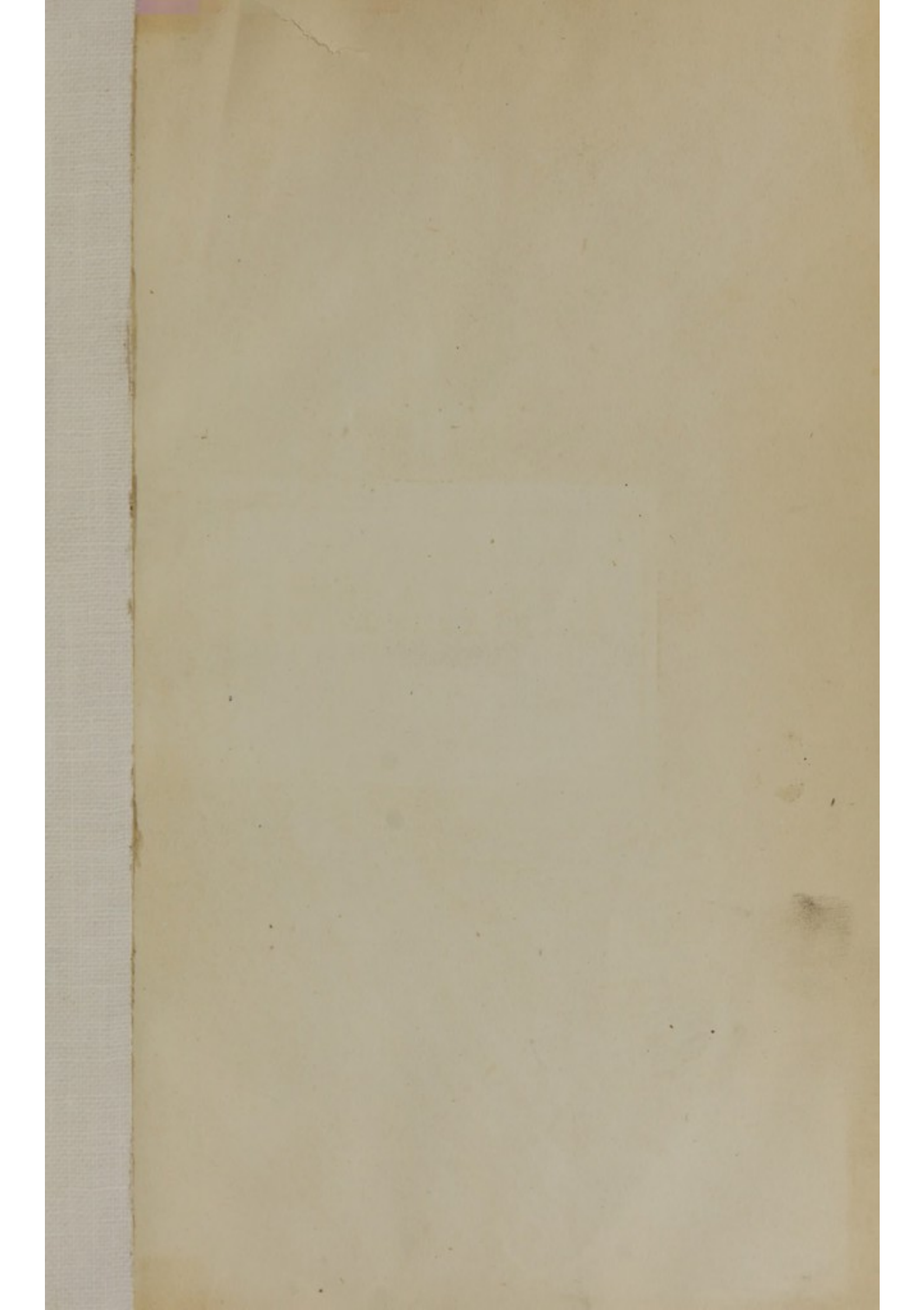


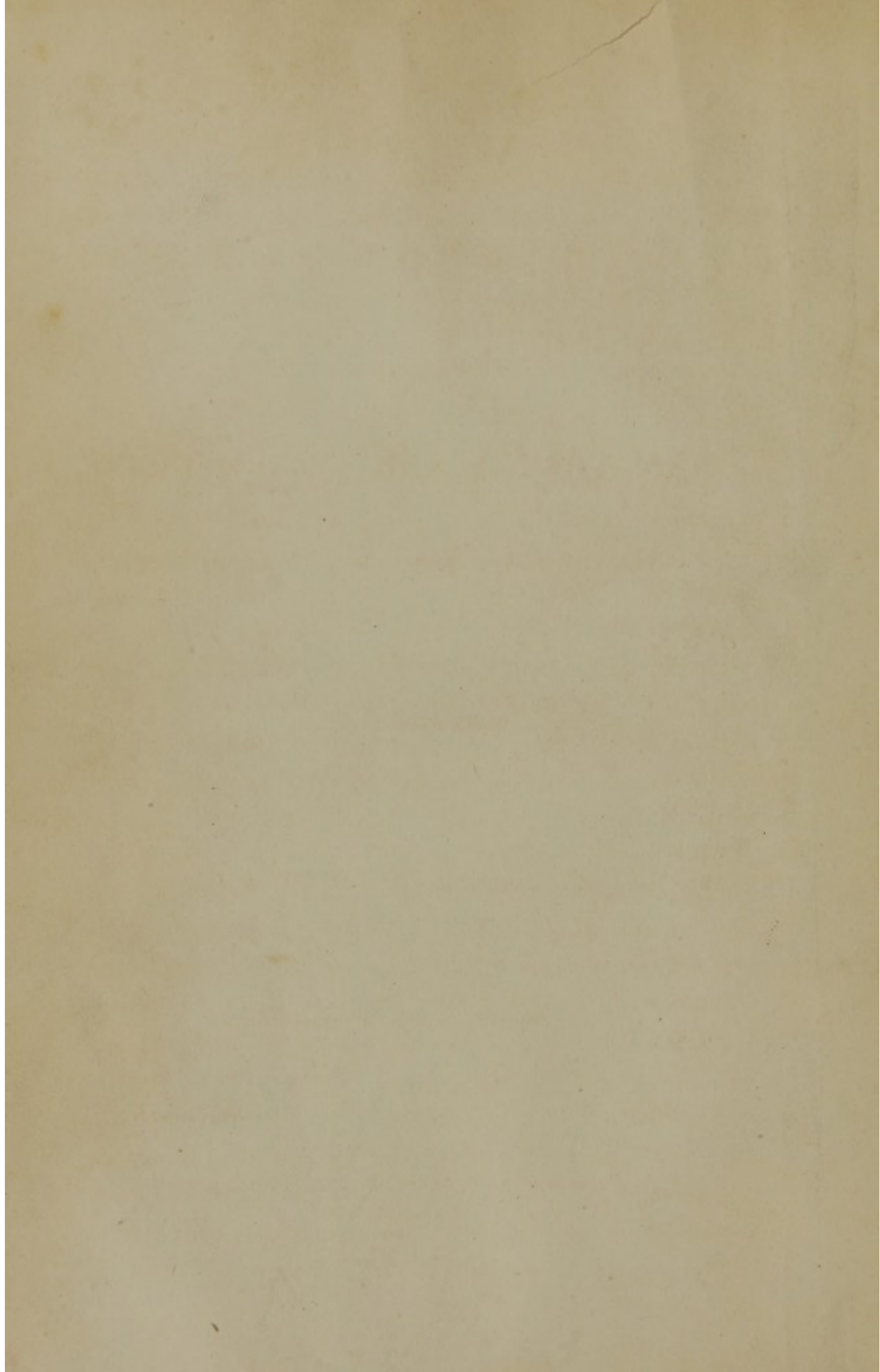
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ANNIVERSARY
DISCOURSE,
BEFORE THE
NEW-YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE,

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE
CITY OF NEW-YORK,

NOVEMBER 13th, 1850.

BY JOSEPH M. SMITH, M. D.

[PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ACADEMY.]

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ANNIVERSARY DISCOURSE.

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN,

IT is now upwards of two thousand years since Medicine has been recognised as a distinct profession; and during the greater part of that long period, its interests have been guarded and fostered by talents of the highest order; and its character dignified by institutions devoted to its advancement. At no time in the progress of civilization has it been essentially degraded from the naturally elevated position which it takes among the vocations into which human pursuits have been divided. Its exaltation and perpetuity depend, not upon the fortuities of political revolutions, but upon its intimate and widely extended relations to the concerns of men. Within the range of its history are recorded the rudiments and successive developments of most of those natural sciences which constitute at present so large a portion of human knowledge. Resting essentially and practically on the foundation of human infirmities, which it aims to relieve, its claim to the regard of mankind must be as

durable as the existence of our race. A profession so ennobled by its ends, and so commanding of the homage of society, should be protected from profanation by every appliance within the power of its legitimate members. The world, though alive to its benefits, seems totally incapable of understanding the principles upon which a judgment is formed of the qualifications of those admitted into its ranks ; and hence it is that the profession is compelled to invest itself with the prerogative of designating those who are worthy of fraternizing in its labours, its honours, and its immunities. There are communities in which no means exist that enables the majority of the people to distinguish empiricism from sound medical learning. Such was the fact in this city within a recent period. But awakening to a sense of the true character of the profession, a large number of physicians resolved to found an institution from which every variety of medical imposture and prostitution of medical science should be totally and forever excluded. The plan of organization chosen to effect this purpose, and which it was hoped would embrace every regular member of the profession in the city,—a hope which is still cherished, was that of an Academy of Medicine, an institution the fourth anniversary of which we are now assembled to celebrate. The themes of the orators who addressed you on the former of these occasions were happily chosen, and ably discussed. In the first annual discourse the “moral necessity” of an association, organised on the principles just referred to, was clearly and eloquently set

forth, in connection with many traditional and historical notices of medical men, interspersed with interesting observations and reflections relative to medicine, in this and other countries, from an early period down to our own times. In the second, the monstrous defects in our systems of medical tuition, and the evils resulting from negligent legislation on the subject, were exhibited in terms which could not fail to produce the conviction that "the standard of education in medicine must be elevated." In the third, the dangers, absurdities, and follies of quackery were exposed with a truth and lucidness which rendered them transparent to the dullest apprehension. As these subjects, so appropriate to the occasions on which they were discussed, have therefore no claim on your attention at this time, I have been led to seek some topic of inquiry, within the range of medical philosophy, which may be suited to our present purpose. In selecting such a topic, I feel at liberty to turn aside from those questions relative to diseases of the body which commonly engage our attention at the ordinary sessions of the Academy, and to discourse on one concerning the operations and phenomena of the mind. Mental science belongs to the domain of medicine. Our libraries are richly stored with volumes on insanity and mental hygiene; and an acquaintance with these subjects implies a knowledge of the operations of the intellectual and moral powers in their sound state. In this latter department there are many branches of inquiry, and it is to one of these we propose to confine our remarks.

In surveying the normal phenomena of the human mind, it is observable that some of them are common to men in every condition of life, and that there are others which are, for the most part, developed in persons devoted to special occupations and professions. In few pursuits is this truth more strikingly exemplified than in the profession of arms,—a profession surrounded by circumstances and subjected to dangers which excite the highest degree of intellectual activity, and the greatest intensity of moral feeling. As I know of no essay which treats of the peculiar mental phenomena of the soldier, employed in active service, I have deemed this subject of sufficient interest to engage the attention of this enlightened audience.

War has its origin in the contentious and combatant propensities of human nature. The same propensities exist in the lower animals; and hence, it may be said, that feuds and conflicts occur among all the tribes of animal beings. The excitement of those propensities, and the determinate resolution and action resulting from that excitement, are denominated courage or bravery. The courage of brutes is elicited by motives which are purely instinctive, and accordingly in them it is distinguished by the epithet animal or physical. But human courage is enkindled not only by the instinctive impulses which are common to man and brutes, but by the movements of those intellectual and moral faculties which are peculiar to man, and which so pre-eminently distinguish him from the inferior animals. As thus analyzed, cou-

rage appears under two forms, physical and moral, the former having an exclusive relation to the instinctive, and the latter to the moral, constitution of man.

In order to illustrate the mental phenomena of the soldier in the various situations and circumstances into which he is cast in the pursuit of his profession, it may be proper, in the first place, to glance at the more striking qualities in the military character, and to notice some of the causes of international war.

The first and essential principle in the constitution of a soldier, is that form of courage which renders him fearless of the ordinary dangers of war. But though that principle is common to most men, and though a thousand agencies conspire, in active military life, to warm and invigorate it, yet it is very unequally sustained, in different individuals, by the same instinctive and moral influences. Some warriors are intrepid on transient occasions, or so long as their enterprises are crowned with success. But when exigencies arise, and reverses occur, their valour wavers, or merges into over-cautiousness. In others courage is not thus variable, but is, for the most part, a steady and uniform feeling, suffering no relaxation in any circumstances or difficulties, however disheartening or long continued. It is this sort of courage which enters so largely in what is called decision of character, and which, combined with certain other qualities, fits men to wield the power of armies, and gives effectiveness to troops engaged in active campaigns. It is this kind of courage which one nation possesses in a higher degree than another. Its type is recognized

in the heroism of Cæsar, Hannibal, Napoleon, and Washington. The feelings most frequently associated with this form of courage, and to which its uniformity is mostly due, are patriotism, love of fame and power, and a high sense of duty.

The incentives of martial courage may be arranged under two heads ; first, those which exert a special influence on individuals ; and secondly, those which have a common influence on nations or masses of men. Those of the former kind are as numerous as the varieties of human temperaments. Of those of the latter kind, some have existed in every age, whilst others have been mostly confined to certain historical periods. To this generalization we are naturally led by reviewing the motives of courage in ancient and modern times.

The belligerent propensity of the Greeks and Romans was specially excited by their love of country, desire of national aggrandizement, and passion for humbling or subjugating other nations. The height to which the spirit of patriotism rose among the former, at the time their national character was at its highest exaltation, is expressed in the epitaph, written by Simonides, and inscribed on the monument, erected on the spot, at the pass of Thermopylæ, where Leonidas and three hundred of his countrymen fell by the sword of the Persians : “ O stranger ! tell it at Lacedæmon that we died here in obedience to her laws.” Of the Romans, in the most virtuous times of the Republic, an elegant writer* remarks that “ their

* Robert Hall. Works, vol. i., p. 206, Am. ed.

country was their idol, at whose shrine the greatest patriots were at all times ready to offer whole hecatombs of human victims; the interests of other nations were no farther regarded than as they could be rendered subservient to the gratification of her ambition; and mankind at large were considered as possessing no right but such as might with the utmost propriety be merged in that devouring vortex."

In the middle ages, patriotism and the love of conquest, though still exerting an animating influence on national valour, was less inspiring of personal courage than the spirit and sentiments engendered and diffused among military men by the institution of chivalry. To be valiant in the cause of religion, and loyal to the king; brave and humane in war; truthful and exact in observing the laws of honour; devoted and gallant to the ladies; generous in redressing the wrongs of the weak and innocent, and triumphant in the tournament, were the chief objects of a cavalier's ambition and pride. Chivalry arrogated and appropriated to itself the attributes which were believed to adorn and ennoble the profession of arms, leaving little or nothing more elevating to the vassal followers in war than the motives of animal courage and devotion to their chiefs. In the decline and degeneracy of the institution of knighthood, the minds of enlightened men became interested in other objects, and though the higher and better principles fostered by that institution yet remain, to refine and dignify the human mind, the habits and external characteristics of chivalry have disappeared, and been succeeded by

modes of thinking and acting more rational and conducive to national exaltation than any mental and social condition which existed in the times to which I have referred.

The love of conquest is no longer a ruling passion of sovereign states. The chief causes of war, among the enlightened nations of the present age, are aggressions upon national rights; invasion of national territory; infraction of treaties; spoliations of property; questions touching national honour; interference in the internal affairs of a country, and oppressive restrictions upon political and religious liberty. Civilization, in its progressive advancement, has not yet reached the point at which reason and conscience are allowed in every case, though undeniably as competent to render just awards among nations at variance as among individuals, to exercise a governing influence in adjusting international disputes; and hence, there being no conventional tribunal or court of nations invested with power to settle such disputes, the ultimate resort is the arbitrament of the sword. Viewed in relation to the cardinal principles of morality and equity, international war is, in most instances, not more rational than was the barbarous, though legally authorized, but now abrogated, judicial combat.

But much as war is to be deplored on account of its calamities and retarding influences on civilization, the study of the mental phenomena of those engaged in it is especially interesting to such as desire to enlarge their knowledge of the intellectual and moral

history of man. To no class of philosophers is this subject more attractive than to medical men. Of the learned professions, medicine is the only one which supplies an important part in the organization of armies. To the medical staff is assigned a duty which is beneficent in its nature, and in this respect professionally opposite to that of combatants. Indeed, to none are the wide-spread evils of war observed under more varied and horrible aspects than by medical men. The military surgeon mingles with the wounded and slain on the field of battle, whilst the physician in civil life witnesses the shocks of grief which disorder the minds and bodies of those bereaved by war of friends and relatives.

Of the various modes of elucidating subjects of natural science, that which proceeds by exhibiting special examples, such as occur in nature, is the one adopted in this inquiry. The advantage of this method consists in the distinctness and permanence which it gives to the impressions made on the mind. Studied thus, in individual cases graphically sketched from life, the mental phenomena of military men are brought vividly before us,—embodied and illustrated as in a gallery hung round with pictorial drawings, in which are displayed the feelings and demeanor of contending warriors, victorious and routed armies, and dying heroes.

In analyzing the mental phenomena manifested in the conduct of armies and individual combatants, it is proper to premise, that they are varied in their form and character by the influences of age, temperament

and education. A fraction only of the mass of a nation is engaged in fighting its battles. In constituting armies, men are selected whose vital and mental forces are matured and not impaired by disease or time. The *ætas robusta vel militaris* of the Romans was fixed by Servius Tullius between the ages of seventeen and forty-six; but it was afterwards shortened to the period between twenty-five and forty-five. Our laws establish the military age between eighteen and forty-five; but individuals, under and over these ages, are numerous in the armies of most countries. An old soldier differs from a recruit in not being as strongly affected by the incidents, usages, and laws of war, as the latter, to whom they are novel and peculiarly exciting.

In transforming men, drawn from the lower walks of civil life, into common soldiers, a few only of the moral affections are the objects of discipline; the intellectual powers receive little or no attention,—the end, in training recruits, is to bring them under the government of the same moral influences; to assimilate their feelings and equalize their courage. This result is usually obtained by breaking up old and establishing new habits of thought and feeling, elevating the sentiment of patriotism, cherishing a passion for military renown, moulding the disposition to cheerful and prompt obedience, and above all, cultivating a high sense of duty. If these sentiments be duly evolved, the highest aim in training privates, an *esprit du corps* is attained. Under despotic rule, a common soldier is regarded as a mere instrument of

war. Among the ancients, the opinion prevailed that “the main body of an army, like the healthy natural body, should have no motion of its own, but be entirely guided by the head.”* Thus Paulus Æmilius issued orders to his army in Macedon, “that each should keep his hand fit for action, his sword sharp, and leave the rest to him.” It was, we are told, a principle of the great king of Prussia, to reduce the soldier to mere animated matter. But in the regular education of officers a different system prevails. In them both the intellectual and moral powers are liberally cultivated. To the chivalrous qualities of courage, a high sense of honour and duty, generosity, humanity and magnanimity, are added an acquaintance with the science and art of war, and those departments of knowledge which elevate the mind and accomplish the gentleman. The more extensively these mental qualities are made to govern and regulate the professional and social relations of those in command, the more effective will be the power exerted by them on the minds of those serving in the lower ranks. In every patriotic and well-disciplined army there is a sympathy between officers and men, which inspires mutual confidence, and through which the spirit of the orders, issuing from the chief, flows down, with animating effect, to every rank, and produces efficient action on the field of battle.

Though civil and international wars have not unfrequently originated from religious controversies, yet, in training soldiers, the religious affections have rarely

* Plutarch,—Life of Galba.

been objects of special cultivation. Baron Muffling observes, that military "discipline, in the full sense of the word, is the fruit of moral and religious instruction."* If this be true, such fruit must be a rare production, for such instruction seldom forms a part of the systematic business of a camp. In most armies the moral proclivities are unfavourable to the contemplation of religious truths and the observance of religious obligations. There is doubtless some truth in the quaint proverb of Herbert, that "war makes thieves and peace hangs them." But this is not always so. There have been instances in which the soldiery of a whole army gave evidence of being influenced and governed by the precepts of Christianity. A memorable example of this sort occurs in the history of the Commonwealth of England. Macaulay says that "that which distinguished the army of Cromwell from other armies, was the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous royalists, that in that singular camp, no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and that during the long dominion of the soldiery the property of the peaceable citizen and the honour of women were held sacred."†

But though few armies have manifested the moral qualities of that of Cromwell, there are doubtless many individuals in military life in whom religious sentiments are harmoniously blended with the highest

* Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. iii., p. 252.—*Note*. Phil. 1827.

† History of England.

qualities of the soldier. The union of these elements of character is beautifully exemplified in Doddridge's popular Memoir of the Hon. Col. Gardiner, who was slain at the battle of Preston-Pans, in 1745. The name of Washington, though rendered illustrious by his patriotism, wisdom and energy, evinced in the trying and eventful scenes of our revolution, is additionally ennobled by the fact, that he "sincerely believed in the truth of the Christian religion, and bore a practical testimony to its necessity and value."*

An example, illustrating the truth that there is no incompatibility between religious devotion and military pursuits, is related in an eloquent address delivered by the Rev. Dr. Vermilye, in this city in 1839. "On a certain occasion," he says, "during the late war, General Van Rensselaer being in command, and the troops being on the eve of battle, he retired for a short space to read his Bible, and commend himself to the care of Heaven. He opened to that beautiful Psalm which commences with the words 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. . . . A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee,'—after reading which he went fearlessly into battle, and the gracious promise which had been thus providentially impressed on his mind, was in his case literally fulfilled; and so deeply did the incident abide in his

* See—The Religious Opinions and Character of Washington.
By E. C. M'GUIRE.

mind, that on returning to his home at the close of the campaign, he caused each of his children to commit the Psalm to memory.”*

But whilst the habits and employments of military men are unfavourable to the cultivation of the religious affections, they are conducive to cheerfulness and liberality of feeling. Neither the duties of a soldier, nor the hazards he encounters in the field, destroy his relish for the pleasures of the world. A passion for glittering display, and a disposition to indulge in festive and social gratifications, are usually associated with the sterner qualities of the military character. It was said by a brave old soldier of Henry the Great, “that, whatever might take place, it was necessary that the ball should be attended to.”† It was in a ball-room that the Duke of Wellington received tidings of the advance of the French army, that brought on the great conflict which resulted in the downfall of Napoleon, and led to the pacification of Europe.‡

“Free is his heart who for his country fights;
He, on the eve of battle, may resign
Himself to social pleasure—sweetest then,
When danger to the soldier’s soul endears
The human joy that never may return.”

Home’s Douglas.

It is well known that familiarity with dangers deprives them of their terrors. In no case is this fact

* New-York Observer, May 25, 1839.

† Museum of Foreign Literature and Science, March, 1825.

‡ Scott’s Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. iii., p. 248, *Note*. Phil. 1827.

more strikingly illustrated than in that of a soldier. Accustomed to the hazards of war, the veteran is firm in the midst of carnage ; and though liable every moment to be struck down, he gathers fortitude in the bloody strife. But fearless as he may be in such circumstances, when danger occurs in another form, he betrays a weakness and timidity which no effort of mind can control. Thus, when surrounded by the ravages of pestilence, he is thrown into extreme anxiety and alarm. When the plague broke out in the French army in Egypt, Bonaparte, aware of the depressing influence of fear of the disease, visited the hospitals in person, in order to relieve his troops from the dread of the distemper and to inspire the sick with the hope of recovery.* This expedient, like that of Alexander, who, to encourage his soldiers, refused to drink when suffering with them from extreme thirst, was conceived in just views of the power of example. Exposure to the infection of the plague was probably not more perilous to the French soldiery than an engagement with the Turks ; and yet, in meeting the enemy, they needed no example to animate their courage. With the dangers of war they were familiar, and they encountered them without a tremor. In illustrating fear, as modified by habit in exposures to danger in battle and pestilence, Sidney Smith contrasts the conduct of a soldier with that of a physician. He says, "In the late attack upon Egypt our soldiers behaved with the most distinguished bravery ; but a

* Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. i., p. 421.

physician did what, I suppose, no soldier in the whole army would have dared to have done: he slept for three nights in the sheets of a patient who had died of the plague. If the question had been to encounter noisy, riotous death, he probably would not have done it; but when pus and miasm were concerned, he appears to have been a perfect hero!"*

It is remarkable that martial courage ordinarily suffers no depression from mental disturbances, other than those immediately arising from the incidents and circumstances of war. Usually it is neither impaired by the agitation of the mind, occasioned by exposure to the dangers of pestilence, nor enfeebled by the influence of diseases of the body on the mental powers. Not unfrequently the effect of derangement of the health is to weaken or destroy the natural love of life. When such is its effect on the mind of a soldier, the combatant propensity sometimes impulsively displays itself, unrestrained by fear, in acts of extraordinary bravery. In such cases, if health and the love of life return, the force of the courageous feeling is greatly lowered. A valetudinary soldier of Antigonus, whose deeds of heroism excited astonishment, when cured of his disease, by order of the king, was observed to be much less fearless in battle. Being struck by the change, Antigonus questioned him in regard to it. "You, sire," he answered, "have made me less bold, by delivering me from that misery which made my life of no account to me."†

* Sketches of Moral Philosophy. By Rev. SIDNEY SMITH.

† Plutarch,—Life of Pelopidas.

Shakspeare has made Cassius say of Julius Cæsar that—

“He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake; ’tis true, this god did shake;
His coward lips did from their colour fly.”

We perhaps do no violence to historic truth in regarding this statement as a poetic license, designed for dramatic effect. Is there any evidence that Cæsar was naturally timid, or was rendered so by an attack of fever? It is well known that he was subject to epilepsy; and it is said, that he “never planned a great battle without going into fits.” Suetonius says of him that he was twice attacked with the disease while engaged in business; and yet, though he suffered from that disorder of the brain, and also, in the last part of his life from attacks of fainting and terror in his sleep,* he has ever been proverbially renowned for his bravery. Among other distinguished men who have been the subjects of epilepsy, was Mahomet, whose moral and physical courage has never been questioned.

The illness which afflicted Blucher during the greater part of the year 1808, and which at times disturbed his reason, seemed to have added a morbid excitement to his enthusiasm. “He is said, in moments of delirium, to have attained to something like a prophetic strain, and to have predicted with con-

* See—A Treatise on Nervous Diseases. By JOHN COOKE, M.D., &c.

fidence the speedy liberation of his country, and the downfall of its oppressor. ‘This must happen,’ he said, ‘and I must assist at it; and *I will not die*, till it shall have come to pass.’”* There are numerous examples on record showing that the soldier’s courage remains unimpaired amidst the wasting effects of chronic disease; and that when it is roused and associated with ambition, it is capable of sustaining the body in achieving deeds of noble daring. “Thus Muley Moluc, though lying on the bed of death, worn out by an incurable disease, and not expected to live an hour, started from his litter during the important crisis of a battle between his troops and the Portuguese, rallied his army, led them to victory, and instantly afterwards sunk exhausted and expired.”†

The deportment of a soldier of a proud and unbending spirit, when disabled by natural disease and surrounded only by his friends, is usually similar to that of persons in similar circumstances in ordinary life; but if one of distinction, whom he has regarded as his enemy, come into his presence, he assumes a bearing which evinces a repugnance to appear in any other light than that in which his foe has been accustomed to regard him. He scorns to let it seem that his prostrate condition has altered the martial character of his mind. An interesting illustration of this state of feeling, though not perhaps falling strictly in

* American Eclectic. Vol. iv., p. 550, from the Quarterly Review.

† Johnson on Derangements of the Liver, &c., p. 205, Am. Edit. 1825.

the line of military life, is presented in the following incident in the life of Rob Roy, related as a fact by Sir Walter Scott in the introduction to his novel bearing the title of that celebrated individual. "Rob Roy, while on his death-bed, learned that a person with whom he was at enmity, proposed to visit him. 'Raise me from my bed,' said the invalid; 'throw my plaid around me, and bring me my claymore, dirk and pistols; it shall never be said that a foeman saw Rob Roy McGregor defenceless and unarmed.' His foeman, conjectured to be one of the Mac Larens, before and after mentioned, entered, and paid his compliments, inquiring after the health of his formidable neighbour. Rob Roy maintained a cold, haughty civility during the short conference. As soon as he had left the house, 'Now,' he said, 'all is over; let the piper play *Ha til mi tulidh* (We return no more),' and he is said to have expired before the dirge was finished."

The influence of the profession of arms, apart from exposures to the contingent sources of diseases, on the general health, is commonly salutary. Its more remarkable effects are observable in curing chronic constitutional affections and disorders of the imagination. It is true, the same effects are produced by other active occupations; but there is no profession which brings the mind into a condition more favourable to the recovery of valetudinarians, than the one in question. The incidents occurring in active warfare produce strong emotions of the moral powers,

and such is the nature of these emotions, that, impressed by them, the nervous system is altered in its condition, regains its normal functions, and, consequently imparts a healthful influence to the disordered organs of the body. In persons of the consumptive diathesis, and also in those in whom the earlier signs of phthisis are manifested, the salutary effects of a military life are sometimes remarkable. It is said by Dr. Colin Chisholm, that "an active, bustling occupation of time, with exposure to what may be deemed hardships such as occur in military service during an active campaign, or in maritime service of any kind, have sometimes produced a most wonderful change in the constitution broken down by phthisis. I have known instances of officers recovering their health by seemingly inconsistent means."*

But it is not on the physical organism exclusively that military pursuits exert a healthful agency. Their influence operates efficiently in correcting some of the forms of mental infirmity, and especially of disorders of the imagination. These evils, as it is justly remarked by Dugald Stewart, if not beyond a remedy, may be relieved by engaging in the business or amusements of the world; or, if there be sufficient force of mind for the exertion, by "resolutely plunging into those active and interesting and hazardous scenes, which by compelling us to attend to external circumstances may weaken the impressions of imagination, and strengthen those produced by realities."†

* See Dr. Parish's Paper, N. A. Med. & Surg. Journal. No. xvi.

† Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

To these remarks the author subjoins a passage from the poet Armstrong, in which the following advice occurs—

“Or more adventurous, rush into the field
Where war grows hot ; and raging through the sky,
The lofty trumpet swells the maddening soul,
And in the hardy camp and toilsome march
Forget all softer and less manly cares.”

But let us turn to other aspects of our subject. The moral phenomena manifested by soldiers, engaged in active warfare, are diversified by the events of the past and the prospects of the future. When, in the progress of a campaign, every successive engagement adds new trophies to those already won, and each successive victory foreshadows other and more brilliant results, the courage and enthusiasm of troops reach the highest intensity,—their courage displaying itself in acts of heroism in battle, and their enthusiasm in cheerful excitement in the camp and on the march ; —when, on the contrary, the past presents a series of disasters, and the future offers no hope of arresting the current of untoward events, the soldier's mind is depressed ; instead of courage there is pusillanimity, and instead of enthusiasm, dismay. These opposite states of the mind occur more readily and to a greater degree in the soldiers of one nation than in those of another. The English soldier is less exhilarated by victory and less depressed by defeat than the French. Both are brave. The former is constitutionally stable and deliberate ; the latter is fickle and fiery. It is owing to their uniform firmness and

steadiness in action, that, as Baron Muffling observes, English troops "have never been defeated in a pitched battle since they were commanded by the Duke of Wellington;" and the same writer remarks, that "that distinguished warrior, in the Peninsular war, acted wisely in reserving the English troops for regular battles, and keeping up that idea in the army."

There is perhaps no nation of modern times which suffers so great a degree of depression from disasters in war, or which, on the other hand, experiences such an exuberance of lighthearted emotions from successes in arms, as the French. The records of the French campaigns furnish many facts which warrant this statement; and the two following examples forcibly illustrate its truth. In the first, is portrayed the mental condition of Napoleon's troops during the occurrences which terminated the battle of Waterloo. The French being vanquished and put to flight, it is related, that, "at Genappe they attempted something like defence by barricading the bridge and streets, but the Prussians forced them in a moment; and although the French were sufficiently numerous for resistance, their disorder was so irremediable, and their moral courage was so absolutely quelled for the moment, that in many instances they were slaughtered like sheep; they were driven from bivouac to bivouac, without exhibiting a shadow of their usual courage."*

From the contemplation of this moral picture let us turn to the following, its converse in expression and character, sketched by Napoleon in one

* Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. iii., p. 246.

of his despatches to the French Directory, while engaged in his first campaign in Italy. Compared with the former how striking is the contrast!

“Were I,” he says, “to name all those who have been distinguished by acts of personal bravery, I must send the muster-roll of all the grenadiers and carabiniers of the advanced-guard. They jest with danger and laugh at death; and if anything can equal their intrepidity, it is the gaiety with which, singing alternately songs of love and patriotism, they accomplish the most severe forced marches. When they arrive at their bivouac, it is not to take their repose, as might be expected, but to tell each his story of the battle of the day, and produce his plan for that of to-morrow; and many of them think with great correctness on military subjects.”*

Among the more remarkable phenomena evolved by the peculiar associations and relations which exist in military life, is a passionate attachment of soldiers to their officers. This feeling is manifested not only by the enthusiasm with which they follow their leaders into action, but by their dauntless encounter of perils to shield them from danger. The extraordinary courage and firmness which such idolatrous devotion is capable of inspiring warriors of humble rank, is shown in the following instance, related by Mr. Guthrie, a British Army Surgeon, and which occurred under his own observation, in the Peninsular war. Among the killed at the battle of Rolica,

* Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. i., p. 359.

was Colonel Lake, an officer who was said by Sir Arthur Wellesley, (now the Duke of Wellington,) to have been the admiration of the whole army. A sergeant-major, "seeing his Colonel fall, stood over him, like another Ajax, until he himself fell wounded in thirteen places by shot and bayonet. I gave him, (says Mr. Guthrie,) some water in his dying moments, and his last words were, 'I should have died happy had our gallant colonel been spared;' words that were reiterated by almost every wounded man."*

But the history of modern warfare affords no example of devotion to a chief, which surpasses that of the French army to the Emperor Napoleon. In the feeling of adoration of that illustrious warrior may be recognized that profound sense of reverence in which the apotheosis of heroes had its origin in mythological times. Nor was Napoleon insensible to the impassioned devotion of his troops. He gloried in it; and in his exile at St. Helena, he cherished it among the most grateful of his reminiscences.

"Many times in my life," he says, "have I been saved by soldiers and officers throwing themselves before me when I was in the most imminent danger. At Arcola, when I was advancing, Col. Meuron, my aid-de-camp, threw himself before me, covered me with his body, and received the wound which was destined for me. He fell at my feet, and his blood spouted up in my face. He gave his life to preserve mine. Never yet, I believe, has there been such

* Clinical Lectures, p. 9, Phil. Ed. 1839.

devotion shown by soldiers, as mine have manifested for me. In all my misfortunes, never has the soldier, even when expiring, been wanting to me—never has man been served more faithfully by his troops. With the last drop of blood gushing out of their veins, they exclaimed *Vive l'Empereur !*”*

Such was the nature of the moral influence exerted by Napoleon on the minds of his followers, that it rendered his presence, and even the sound of his name, remedial in recovering the intellect from its aberration in disease. Among the wounded at the siege of Acre was General Caffarelli, one of Napoleon's favourites. He was shot in the elbow, and died after amputation of the limb. For some days before his death he had delirium; but Count Las Cases reports, “that whenever Bonaparte was announced, his presence—nay, his name alone—seemed to cure the wanderings of the patient's spirit, and that this phenomenon was renewed so often as the General made him a visit.”†

The generous anxiety of soldiers to preserve the lives of their officers, is sometimes extended to those not serving in the capacity of combatants; as, for example, to medical officers. In illustrating this fact, it might suffice to allude to Homer's account of the efforts of the Greeks to preserve the life of their “wise physician,” Machaon, when wounded by Paris

* *A Voice from St. Helena, &c.* By BARRY E. O'MEARA, Esq. Vol. i., p. 139. Phil.

† *Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte.* Vol. i., p. 425.

at the siege of Troy. But an instance, equally striking and beautiful, occurring in the present age, is recorded by one who was himself the subject of it, and whose virtues and services had merited the highest regard of his companions in arms. In the retreat of the French from Moscow, the most disastrous movement was the passage of the Beresina. It was here the catastrophe of Napoleon's Russian campaign was consummated, and the remnant of his mighty army abandoned to its fate. In the midst of that terrific scene of panic and death, was the Surgeon-in-Chief, Baron Larrey. He states, "that in the crowd he was in extreme peril. But no sooner was he recognized, than the French soldiers, regardless of their own safety, passed him along over their heads from one to another, till he crossed the only crazy bridge remaining, and which was completely blocked up with military materials, and the bodies of the living and the dead." This proof of attachment, given in such circumstances, he says, soon made him forget the dangers to which he had been exposed, and reconciled him to the loss of his surgical equipages.*

But there is, perhaps, no case in which an anxious regard for the safety and relief of others more deeply awakens admiration, than that in which a soldier, conscious of being himself mortally wounded, desires the surgeon to leave him, and give his attention to

* *Memoires de Chirurgie Militaire et Campagnes de Baron D. J. Larrey, &c.*, Analysis of, in *Med. Chirurg. Review*. Vol. ii., p. 246.

those to whom his services may be useful. The more remarkable examples of this kind occur among those distinguished for their bravery, and whose minds are habitually influenced by a benevolent spirit, and a high sense of duty. Of this character appears to have been the mind of Colonel Stewart, who fell by a musket-shot at the battle of Rolica. "I saw him," says Mr. Guthrie, "a short time afterwards, lying under a myrtle bush, and he beckoned me to come to him. 'Our friend Brown,' meaning the surgeon of the 9th, 'gives me no hope, pray look at me.' I did so, and he saw I had none to give either. He thanked me, and begged he might not detain me from others to whom I could give relief. He died, poor fellow! a few hours after, with the resignation of a christian, and the firmness of a soldier."* A similar request, in his dying moments, was addressed by Lord Nelson to his medical attendant. Feeling that he was mortally wounded, he desired the surgeon to withdraw his attention from him, and to bestow it upon the disabled that lay crowded around him. As an evidence of the fact that a soldier's compassion may predominate over his sense of selfishness, it is recorded of Sir Philip Sidney, "that when he left the battle, faint and wounded, he asked for water to relieve his thirst, and when it was brought to him, as he raised it to his lips, he saw a dying soldier, to whom he immediately sent it, saying, '*This man's necessity is still greater than mine!*'"†

* Clinical Lectures, &c. Vol. ii., p. 9.

† New-York Review: Vol. vi., p. 465.

But the feeling which prompts a soldier to relieve the sufferings of his wounded companion, is manifested also in acts of kindness to those who have fallen in the ranks of the enemy. When the French, in advancing and fighting their way towards Moscow, passed through Mozaïsk, they found a great number of Russian soldiers, wounded and dying of hunger and thirst. Though borne down by the pressure of his professional duties, Baron Larrey, "and a few humane soldiers administered to the wants of these wretches, thus deserted by their medical and military officers."* So also, after the defeat of the French army at Waterloo, the English troops generously extended their aid and sympathies to the French wounded that were strewed over the field of battle, bringing them water, erecting huts to shelter them, and distributing among them a part of their provision. Such assiduities bestowed on a vanquished enemy are due to the humanizing influence of civilization. In no situation is the abolition of hostile feelings after a battle more interestingly exhibited than in a military hospital in which are assembled the wounded of both parties,—men lying side by side in amity and mutual kindness of feeling, who but yesterday were arrayed against each other in fearful conflict.

The instances in which a spirit of benevolence is more especially displayed after a battle, are those in which troops have been engaged at distances within the range of shot. The missiles used in modern warfare have caused so general a departure from the

* Med.-Chirurg. Review. Vol. ii., p. 243.

ancient modes of conflict, that there are rarely, comparatively speaking, at present, any angry personal feelings awakened between the individuals of the contending armies. The space which separates the combatants, and the volumes of smoke spread around and between them, prevent the excitement of feelings which prompt to barbarous cruelty. But such feelings are excited when the opposing forces engage in a close fight. Then each resolute assailant charges a foeman; and the field becomes an arena, in which the victory is won by the party exercising the greater strength and dexterity in the use of weapons. When hostile armies thus meet, man to man, the most savage passions are called into play. Heroism is divested of its moral qualities, and transformed into brutal rage. To this condition the feelings were naturally reduced by the modes of warfare common among the nations of antiquity; and though the introduction of artillery and other fire-arms has greatly mitigated the cruelties and ravages of war, still the same ferocious passions sometimes occur in the close contests of modern armies. Such, for example, were the destructive impulses elicited at the storming of Jaffa, where, after a desperate conflict, three thousand of the Turks were butchered by the French. In view of such slaughter, well might the Marechal de Montluc, exclaim "Certes, we soldiers stand in more need of divine mercy than other men, seeing that our profession compels us to command and to witness deeds of such cruelty."*

* Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. i., p. 419.

Courage when fully roused is strongly depicted in the human countenance. As Herbert remarks, "A valiant man's look is more than a coward's sword." The emotions of ancient warriors, in battle, were profoundly expressed in their physiognomy. When Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, was recovering from the shock occasioned by the fall of a tile from the roof of a house, thrown by the mother of the man with whom he was engaged, Zopyrus raised his Illyrian blade to strike off his head. At that moment Pyrrhus opened his eyes, and gave him so fierce a look that it filled him with terror, and caused such a trembling of his hands that it was with difficulty he severed the head from the body.* Sallust informs us that Cataline, after the engagement between his army and that of the Republic, was found far from his own troops, amidst the dead bodies of the enemy, still breathing a little, and retaining in his countenance that fierceness which he had when alive.

It is remarkable, too, that the ferocious passions of warriors, fighting hand to hand, sometimes leave their expression in the countenance and position of the body after death. Phenomena of this kind were observed in the border war of the American revolution. The battle of Oriskany, fought between the troops under General Herkimer and the Indian warriors headed by Brant, the celebrated chief of the six nations, was signalized by its bloodiness.† The

* Plutarch,—Life of Pyrrhus.

† Life of Joseph Brant—Thayendanegea. By WILLIAM L. STONE. Vol. i., p. 235.

spirit of combat raged with barbarous rancour on both sides,—the savage and American, mutually inflicting death wounds, and writhing with passion, died in each others' grapple. Among the slain was General Herkimer, and "there," says Gouverneur Morris, "were found the Indian and the white man, born on the banks of the Mohawk, their left hand clenched in each others' hair, the right grasping, in a gripe of death, the knife plunged in each others' bosom. Thus they lay frowning."* Examples, parallel with these, were observed among the heaps of the dead after the battle of Dresden, "the long-haired Russian was still locked in his death-struggle with the undaunted Frank."†

In respect to the illustrations which have been given, it is observable that the greater number of them exemplify the disposition, behaviour and impulses of the mass of military bodies. There are however, phenomena occurring among soldiers suffering from wounds, or dying on the field of battle, which give to their cases respectively something of a distinctive character.

To one who is in a position to observe the deportment of the wounded during and after a battle, it is noticeable that their feelings and conduct are generally in some degree determined by the nature and extent of their sufferings. Sometimes hemorrhage or a severe shock of the nervous system, prostrates the phy-

* Collections of the New-York Historical Society. Vol. xix., p. 133.

† Alison's History of Europe. Vol. iv., p. 140. N. Y., 1844.

sical energies, resolves the excitement of the passions, and reduces the mind to its lowest degree of activity. Commonly in the state of prostration there is thirst, often so urgent as to cause imploring petitions for water. Striking instances of this kind are related by a clergyman who immediately after the battle of Soldin, between the Russians and Prussians, went upon the field of battle among the wounded and the dead—"The Cossacks," he says, "as soon as they saw me, cried out 'Water! dear sir, water! water!' I could hardly recover myself from the fright occasioned by the great and miserable outcry of the wounded."* The thirst experienced by wounded warriors is happily introduced by Sir Walter Scott, in his description of the dying scene of Marmion—

" Is there none
Of all my halls have nurst,
Page, squire or groom, one cup to bring
Of blessed water from the spring,
To slake my dying thirst."

Sometimes, when struck by a shot, life is extinguished in a moment; and of course there is an abrupt termination of all mental manifestation. In this sudden manner perished Sweden's "illustrious madman," Charles XII. Standing near a parapet at Frederickshall, a ball, weighing about half a pound, passed through his head; and, says Voltaire, "the instant of his wound was that of his death."† His head fell on the parapet; and his last natural move-

* New-York Observer, May 27th, 1837.

† Histoire de Charles XII., Roi de Suede.

ment, or, it may be said, his last volition was that which guided his hand to the hilt of his sword, where it reposed in death.

But it is when suffering from the severer sort of wounds, short of such as cause immediate death, that military men frequently display the more remarkable peculiarities of their moral temperaments. In some cases death is ardently desired ; in others, it is passionately dreaded, and in others, it is regarded with indifference. These phenomena are strikingly illustrated in the following examples :

A case in which the desire for death was devoutly invoked as the greatest blessing, is related by the clergyman before mentioned, as occurring under his own observation among the wounded after the battle of Soldin. He says, “ A noble Prussian officer, who had lost both his legs, cried out to me, ‘ Sir, you are a priest and preach mercy ; pray show me some compassion, and despatch me at once.’ ” A similar entreaty that his life might be terminated was expressed by Kosciusko,—a name which illustrates the history of his native land, and adorns the revolutionary annals of this country. He was severely wounded in the battle which resulted in the conquest and partition of Poland. Having sufficiently recovered from the shock of his wound to advance a few steps, “ a Cossack aimed at him a dreadful blow, which would inevitably have proved mortal, had not a Russian General (to whose wife Kosciusko, when she was his prisoner, had shown the most disinterested generosity) stopped his arm ; and when the officer was

requested (if he really wished to render him a service) to allow the soldier to put an end to his existence, he spared his life, but made him a prisoner.”*

Of the class of cases in which the dread of death is strong and unquenchable, a most impressive example occurred in the great conflict between the French and Austrians at Asperne, in 1809. Among the mortally wounded on that bloody occasion was General Lannes. His death was greatly lamented by Bonaparte, who regarded him as a soldier moulded by his own hands. “I found him,” he said, “a mere swordsman, I brought him to the highest point of talent; I found him a dwarf, I raised him into a giant.” “The death of this General, called the Roland of the army,” says Sir Walter Scott,† “had something in it inexpressibly shocking. With both his legs shot to pieces, he refused to die, and insisted that the surgeons should be hanged who were unable to cure a Mareschal and Duke de Montebello. While he thus clung to life, he called on the emperor, with the instinctive hope that Napoleon at least could defer the dreaded hour, and repeated his name to the last, with the wild interest with which an Indian prays to the object of his superstition. Bonaparte showed much and creditable emotion at beholding his faithful follower in such a condition.”

Among the instances in which a soldier's demeanour, when desperately wounded, indicates an indifference of life, is that of the renowned General Moreau.

* Edin. Encyclopedia. *Article*, Poland.

† Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Vol. ii., p. 244.

Whilst engaged in an animated conversation with the Emperor Alexander, during a critical moment in the battle of Dresden, a cannon-ball shattered both his legs, the shot penetrating the body of his horse. Though thus disabled his fortitude was not disturbed. Being conveyed, with his limbs hanging by the skin, to a neighbouring cottage, and laid on a table to undergo amputation, he called for a cigar, and smoked it with the greatest composure. When one limb had been amputated, and the surgeon, after examining the other, informed him that it was impossible to save it, he said, calmly, "Cut it off, then," and the operation was immediately performed. In a few days fever supervened, and "he expired with the same stoicism as he had lived, without giving the slightest trace of religious impression."*

The foregoing cases, when examined in relation to the universal and supreme feeling of humanity—the love of life, are full of interest. They show the different results which the circumstances of the present, the events of the past, and the hopes of the future, produce in the minds of military men, differing in their physical and moral temperaments. In the instance of the noble Prussian officer, it seems from the few facts known to us, that his frenzied wish to be released from life arose from bodily suffering and mutilation. In the instance of Kosciusko, it is evident that the energies of his noble spirit were prostrated by the unfortunate issue of his last and consecrated efforts to serve his country

* Alison's History of Europe. Vol. iv., p. 138.

and the cause of human liberty. Wearied by the toils of his eventful career, surrounded by his foes, his hopes blasted, and suffering from his wounds, his desire to live gave way, and he solicited death from the arm raised to destroy him, but which was happily averted by the generous interference of a distinguished foeman. In respect to General Lannes, it is manifest that his devotion to the person and fortunes of Napoleon, his inordinate love of fame, and his passion for "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war," were the causes of his ardent desire to live and his insane repulsion of the hand of death. Of General Moreau, it is sufficient to say, that schooled in the philosophy of Zeno, life or death with him was a matter of indifference.

But, besides the cases in which the moral feelings, in relation to life and death, differ so widely in different individuals, there are others in which the various kinds of feeling just described occur consecutively in the same individual. Thus, in the first or early stage of prostration and suffering, consequent to severe injuries, a desire for death may be the prominent feeling ; but, under the influence of persuasion and attentions, kindly administered, that desire loses its force, and is succeeded by a willingness and finally a wish to live. Cases of this sort are probably of more frequent occurrence than are noticed by military surgeons. An interesting instance, illustrative of these phenomena, occurred in 1799, and is recorded by Prince Blucher. He says, in his Journal,

“ Among the prisoners was one whose thigh-bone had been shattered. They had laid him near the fire, and offered him bread and brandy, as to the others. He not only rejected this, but refused to be bandaged, and repeatedly begged the bystanders to shoot him. The latter said to one another, this is an obstinate, sulky Frenchman. Muffling and myself were within hearing, and approached the group, The wounded man lay still, drawn into himself, and saw nothing that was passing. As he seemed to shiver I caused clothes to be heaped upon him. He looked at me, and again cast down his eyes. Not being master of the French language myself, I made my adjutant tell him that he ought to let himself be bandaged and take nourishment. He answered nothing ; and I made them tell him further, that I held him for a poor creature who did not know how to meet his destiny ; and that it became a soldier least of all men to take refuge in despair ; that he should not give up hope of recovery ; and he might be assured that he found himself among men who would do everything possible to relieve him. He looked at me again ; a stream of tears burst from his eyes, and he reached me out his hand. Wine was offered him, he drank, and offered no further resistance to the surgeon. I then asked him the cause of his previous obstinacy. He replied, ‘ I have been forced in the service of the Republic. My father was guillotined ; my brothers have perished in the war ; my wife and children are left in misery : and I thought, therefore, that death alone could end my troubles, and longed for it. Your kindness has brought

me to better reflection. I thank you for it, and am determined to meet my future lot with patience.' ”*

But there are still other and very different moral phenomena which occur in warriors severely or mortally wounded. Sometimes death is met with an indomitable spirit ; national pride, chagrin, and profound hatred of the enemy, being the predominant feelings. Thus, the French Admiral Brueys, though fatally wounded at the battle of Aboukir, would not abandon the deck of his ship. He “was struck by a shot which nearly cut him in two ; in this desperate situation he resisted all attempts to carry him to the apartment for the wounded, pronouncing with a firm voice these words,—‘Leave me here, a French Admiral should die on his quarter-deck.’ ” In the same terrible conflict, Petit Thouais on board the *Le Tonnant*, his body, legs and arms mutilated by the shot, remained calm and undaunted on the deck, and with “a firm, though dying voice, exacted from his staff a promise never to surrender his ship, ‘If the enemy,’ said he, ‘attempt to carry us by boarding, swear to me, citizens, to throw our flag and my corpse into the sea, that neither the one nor the other may be soiled by the hands of the English.’ They swore, and he expired.”†

* American Eclectic. *Article*—“Life of Blucher.” Vol. iv., p. 547, from the Quarterly Review.

† See Naval Magazine. Vol. ii., No. 4, July, 1837, New-York. *Article*, “Battle of Aboukir,” translated from “*Les Croniques de la Marine Francaise*.”

There are, perhaps, few things in which the difference in the moral temperament of the French and English is more strikingly exhibited than in their respective emotions and behaviour when wounded or dying in battle. Lord Nelson, when wounded in the conflict at Aboukir, allowed himself to be carried below ; and when he fell in the battle of Trafalgar, how different was his demeanour in death from that of Admiral Brueys and the brave Petit Thouais !

Nelson was struck down on the deck of his ship by a musket-ball which entered his chest. He felt that he was mortally wounded ; and yet such, we are told, “ was his composure, that having observed the tiller ropes shot away, he stopped the men who were carrying him down to the cock-pit, and gave orders to repair the damage ; and then took out a handkerchief to cover his face and stars, that he might not be noticed by the crew.” When arrived at the cock-pit, as we have before remarked, he desired the surgeon to leave him, and give his attention to the wounded to whom his services might be useful. Though suffering from great pain and thirst, his countenance expressed emotions of pleasure on hearing his crew cheer from time to time, as the enemy’s ships surrendered one after another. He issued his orders deliberately ; and when he was told by Capt. Hardy, “ that at least fifteen ships had struck,” he said, “ It is well, but I bargained for twenty.” He expired a few minutes after the victory was completed, uttering in a whisper and repeating the words—“ Thank God, I have done my duty.”

It is said of Lord Nelson, "that his sense of rectitude embodied itself in a feeling of loyalty to the King of England and of hatred to all Frenchmen." But, however strong may have been his dislike to the French, he gave no evidence of it in his last words, corresponding to the fiery expressions of hatred to the English uttered by Petit Thouais in his dying moments in the battle of Aboukir. The predominant feeling of Nelson, as manifested in the closing acts of his life, appears to have been a profound sense of moral obligation to his country. That he felt and believed it to be universally true, that a sense of duty is the most energetic and permanent stimulant of human courage, is shown by the last memorable signal he made to his fleet, "England expects every man to do his duty,"—a signal, which, as it has been beautifully said, "was received throughout the fleet with a shout of answering acclamation, made sublime by the spirit which it breathed and the feeling which it expressed." This being over, "Now," said Nelson, "I can do no more; we must trust to the great Disposer of all events and the justice of our cause. I thank God for this great opportunity of doing my duty."*

Military men, not unfrequently when severely wounded, quit the field with extreme reluctance; and sometimes after their wounds are dressed return to the conflict. Among officers whose devotion to duty admits of no remission, and who are intent on the

* Edin. Encyclopedia. *Article*, Nelson.

achievement of victory, there is sometimes a disposition to conceal their wounds from the observation of their companions ; their motives for secrecy being to prevent their friends from urging them to leave the field of battle ; and to avoid the depressing effect which a knowledge of their wounds would produce on the minds of their followers. The latter was obviously the motive of Lord Nelson, after receiving his death-wound, for covering his face and the stars that decorated his breast. Napoleon in the course of his military life was twice wounded ; but in neither instance did he let the fact be known to his troops. In some cases the existence of severe injuries are not only hidden, but their effect on the sufferer is seemingly to animate his courage and sustain him in the strife. It is related of the heroic Picton, who fell at Waterloo by a musket-ball which pierced his head, as he was encouraging his troops by waving his sword, that “ he had been wounded at Quatre Bras, and had two of his ribs broken, but his ardent spirit led him to conceal an injury which had already, as was afterwards discovered, left a mortal wound.”* It is also worthy of notice, that formidable surgical operations, performed immediately after the reception of wounds, do not always impair the moral and physical energies of a resolute soldier. Baron Larrey relates the case of a field-officer, in the retreat of the French army from Moscow, who immediately after suffering amputation at the shoulder,

* Alison's History of Europe. Vol. iv., p. 535, *Note*.

joint, mounted his horse, and continued his march back to France without halting a day.*

The composure and resignation of military men dying on the field, not unfrequently arises from the favourable issue of the conflict in which they had been engaged, and from the consciousness of being in possession of their arms. A soldier regards his weapons as trusts confided to his hands under solemn obligation to use them in the service of his country. They are the companions of his toils and the sharers of his glory ; and the loss or privation of them is attended with a sense of shame or humiliation. These sentiments exerted a powerful influence on the minds of ancient warriors. When Marcus, a Roman youth, son of Cato, after astonishing feats of bravery, unfortunately lost his sword in a battle with the Macedonians, he felt "that he had better die than leave such a spoil in the hands of his enemies ;" and when the friends he implored to aid him in recovering it, drove back the enemy with dreadful carnage, and it was found with much difficulty under a heap of arms and dead bodies, they were filled with transport, and renewed the charge with shouts of triumph.† The only anxiety expressed by Epaminondas, of whom Cicero said, *princeps, meo judicio, Græciæ*, when mortally wounded in the battle of Mantinea, by a dart in his breast, was concerning his arms and the event of the battle. On his buckler being shown to him,

* Med.-Chirurg. Review, 1821-2. Vol. ii., p. 242.

† Plutarch.—Life of Paulus Æmilius.

and being assured that the Thebans were victorious, he turned to his friends, who lamented that he was about to die without issue, and calmly said, "Do not regard this day as the end of my life, but as the beginning of my happiness and the completion of my glory. I leave Thebes triumphant, proud Sparta humbled, and Greece delivered from the yoke of bondage. For the rest, I do not reckon that I die without issue; Leuctra and Mantinea are two illustrious daughters that will not fail to keep my name alive, and to transmit it to posterity." Having said this he drew the dart from his breast and immediately expired.*

That a soldier in dying derives a tranquilizing influence from the fact of being in possession of his arms, is exemplified in the case of Sir John More, who fell at the battle of Corunna, and whose burial is commemorated in a poem of exquisite pathos and beauty. In the death-scene of this gallant officer are illustrated not only a soldier's attachment to his sword, but a dignity of character and thoughtfulness for the welfare and interests of others, of which there are few parallels in the pages of military history. He was struck in the breast by a cannon-ball. "The shoulder," says Alison,† "was shattered to pieces, the arm hanging by a film of skin, the breast and lungs almost laid open. As the soldiers laid him on a blanket to carry him from the field, the hilt of his

* Rollin's Ancient History.

† History of Europe. Vol. iii., p. 107.

sword was driven into the the wound ; an officer, destined to celebrity in future times, Captain Hardinge, attempted to take it off, but the dying hero exclaimed, 'It is as well as it is ; I had rather it should go off the field with me.' When approaching the ramparts he several times desired the attendants to stop, and turn him round that he might again see the field of battle ; and when the advance of the firing indicated that the British were successful, he expressed his satisfaction, and a smile overspread his features that were relaxing in death. The examination of his wound at his lodging speedily foreclosed all hopes of his recovery, but he never for an instant lost his serenity of mind, and repeatedly expressed his satisfaction when he heard that the enemy was beaten. 'You know,' said he, 'that I always wished to die this way.' He continued to converse in a calm and even cheerful voice on the events of the day, inquiring after the safety of his friends and staff, and recommended several for promotion on account of their services during the retreat. Once only his voice faltered, as he spoke of his mother. Life was ebbing fast, and his strength was all but extinct, when he exclaimed in words that will forever thrill in every British heart, 'I hope that the people of England will be satisfied : I hope my country will do me justice.' Relieved a few minutes after from his suffering, he was wrapped by his attendants in his military cloak and laid in a grave hastily formed on the ramparts of Corunna, where a monument was soon after con-

structed over his uncoffined remains by the generosity of Marshal Ney."

That the consciousness of being victorious and in the possession of his arms should reconcile a soldier to death, is not surprising; but that a feeling of resignation should be produced in a dying warrior by fixing his gaze on the banner under which he has fought and fallen is not so readily imagined. A striking instance of this kind, however, is related by Sir Walter Scott. When Colonel Miller, of the Guards, son of Sir William Miller, Lord Glenlee, was mortally wounded in the assault on the Bois de Bossu, he desired once more before he died to see the colours of the regiment. "They were waved over his head, and the expiring officer declared himself satisfied."*

In further surveying the mental phenomena manifested in military life, we are led to remark that warriors of elevated rank, when overtaken by a violent death in other circumstances than those of mortal combat in the field, are careful that nothing shall appear in their demeanour in their last moments which may derogate from their dignity or dim the lustre of their fame. Examples of this kind embellish the pages of Roman biography.

Military reputation is formed of elements which render it eminently liable to blemishes. The prominent qualities of a true soldier are patriotism, bravery, honour, magnanimity and prudence. A failure to

* The Field of Waterloo, *Note*.

sustain these qualities, or a falling away from them, necessarily lessens the admiration with which their possession may have been regarded. To secure enduring fame a soldier's career must begin, proceed and end with his allegiance unquestioned, his courage undoubted, and his honour unstained. Hence the constant care of every right-minded military man is to earn renown by actions in which such qualities are uniformly displayed. There is not perhaps in modern times a more striking example, in which the desire to avoid the reproach of dishonour and to sustain in death the character and bearing of a soldier, than that of Major André. As this case is one of universal interest, we select it to exemplify the sensitiveness of a mind imbued with the military spirit, in regard to everything touching the qualities to which we have referred.

That Major André was a gallant officer there is no room to question; and that in performing the last official duty assigned him, he did not of his own will place himself in a situation in which he was liable to be arrested as a spy, there are good reasons to believe. But, judged by the principles recognized by military tribunals, the circumstances of his relations with the traitor Arnold warranted the penalty to which he was doomed. The considerations which he urged in his defence show his intense anxiety to escape the infamy that attaches to the character of a spy. In a letter to General Washington, after his capture, he states the circumstances which forced him into the situation

in which he was captured: he avowed himself as Major André, Adjutant-General to the British army; and said, "I have nothing to reveal but what relates to myself, which is true on the honour of an officer and a gentleman. The request I have to make to your excellency, and I am conscious I address myself well, is, that in any rigour policy may dictate, a decency of conduct towards me may mark that, though unfortunate, I am branded with nothing dishonourable, as no motive could be mine but the service of my king; and as I was involuntarily an impostor." Being condemned to death, his last and urgent desire was that he might die as a soldier. On the day before his execution, he expressed that desire in the following affecting terms, addressed to General Washington. "Buoyed above the terror of death, by the consciousness of a life devoted to honourable pursuits, and stained with no action that can give me remorse, I trust that the request I make to your excellency at this serious period, and which is to soften my last moments, will not be rejected. Sympathy towards a soldier will surely induce your excellency and a military tribunal to adapt the mode of my death to the feelings of a man of honour. Let me hope, sir, that if aught in my character impresses you with esteem towards me, if aught in my misfortunes marks me as the victim of policy and not of resentment, I shall experience the operations of these feelings in your breast by being informed that I am not to die on a gibbet." His request, as is well known, could

not be granted, being contrary to the customs of war; but, to spare him the pain of a direct refusal, the mode of death was not disclosed to him until he arrived at the place of execution. On beholding the gibbet he exclaimed, "Must I then die in this manner?" When told it was unavoidable, he said, "I am reconciled to my fate, but not to the mode;" and after a pause he added, "It will be but a momentary pang!" On being asked in his last moments if he had anything to say, he answered, "Nothing, but to request you will witness to the world that I die like a brave man."

There are few things in which ancient and modern warriors differ more widely than in their notions of dishonour and ignominy, and the modes in which they may be avoided. To escape the disgrace of defeat or captivity, and to preserve their fame and honour when endangered by misfortunes, many of the distinguished men of antiquity resorted to suicide. Such a death was esteemed honourable and magnanimous; and he who would not voluntarily destroy himself, when placed in circumstances which were believed to call for and justify the suicidal act, was held unworthy of being enrolled among the brave and virtuous. It is a curious fact, that of the forty-eight illustrious ancients, Greek and Roman, whose lives were written by Plutarch, about thirty died by violence, and of this number seven or eight perished by their own hands. A contempt for those who in certain conditions suffered themselves to be captured

rather than die by their own act, was shown not only by their friends but by their enemies. An instance of this feeling as manifested by the latter, is afforded in the interesting incident related of Lucillius, who to preserve the life of Brutus, when some barbarian horse were riding at full speed against him, interposed and declared himself to be Brutus, and was taken prisoner. Believing their captive to be Brutus, some of Antony's soldiers "pitied his misfortunes, while others accused him of an inglorious meanness in having thus suffered the love of life to betray him into the hands of barbarians."

Diogenes Laertius, Seneca and Plutarch, expressly commend the general sentiments of the ancients in regard to suicide. In comparing Demosthenes and Cicero, Plutarch says, "As to the manner of their death, we cannot think of Cicero without a contemptuous kind of pity. How deplorable to see an old man, for want of proper resolution, suffering himself to be carried about by his servants, endeavouring to hide himself from death (a messenger that nature would soon have sent him) and overtaken, notwithstanding, and slaughtered by his enemies. The other, though he discovered some fear by taking sanctuary, is nevertheless to be admired for his having judiciously provided poison, carefully preserved it, and nobly used it." But though such opinions were prevalent among the Greeks and Romans, there were a few of their more distinguished philosophers who regarded them as impious.

Socrates and Plato condemned suicide, and inveighed against it "as the most dastardly of resources." Cicero was a professed advocate of the doctrines of the academy, and consequently preferred to incur the contempt and pity of the world, by suffering himself to be assassinated, rather than violate by self-destruction a principle of moral rectitude.

The conviction that enduring fame and honour could be secured only by suicide, when involved in certain calamities or in danger of captivity, was so intimately interwoven with the moral feelings of ancient warriors, that we cannot wonder that, with their notions of shame and degradation, so many of them destroyed themselves.

Compared with these sentiments of Pagan antiquity, and the moral actions corresponding with them, how different are the principles and conduct of modern warriors! Amidst the changes of opinion and moral feeling which have taken place in the progress of civilization, the sense of honour and the desire of renown have remained as influential as they were in the enlightened ages of Greece and Rome; but in regard to what constitutes dishonour and infamy the notions of ancient philosophers and warriors are in some respects entirely different from those entertained in later times. To be defeated in battle—to avoid a violent death by flight from an enemy—to be made a captive and immured in a dungeon—have ceased to be regarded as disparaging or infamous, provided such issues are not the fruits of misconduct, cowardice or folly.

It is true, there have not been wanting apologists for suicide among the distinguished writers of modern times, such as Hume, Donne, Rousseau, De Stael, Montesquieu, Gibbon and Voltaire.* But notwithstanding the vindications of self-destruction by these and some other writers, it is extremely rare in the present age that a soldier of elevated rank dies by his own hand ; and in the instances which do occur, the causes leading to the act have usually no connection with military matters. Such was the fact in the case of Field-Marshal Count Radetzky, Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian army in Italy. " This distinguished officer had for some time been affected with a complaint in his eyes which at length degenerated into a cancer. For a long time no one would venture to acquaint him with the real state of the case ; but at last his physicians, on being urged by him to tell the truth, explained the dangerous nature of the disease. He received the information with apparent firmness ; but as soon as he was left alone in his chamber, he took one of his pistols, which always hung by his bedside, and shot himself."†

But it cannot be denied that suicide is frequent among the soldiery of the present age. The proportion of those in the lower ranks of military life who destroy themselves, is, perhaps, equal if not greater than that among those of corresponding grades in the armies of Greece and Rome. It has been ascertained by statistical inquiries, that the number of

* *Anatomy of Suicide.* By Forbes Winslow, M.R.C.S. Analysis of, in *Med.-Chirurg. Review*, No. 81, July, 1840.

† *New-York Commercial Advertiser*, April 21, 1840.

suicides in the British army is much greater than in civil life. "Out of a total of six hundred and eighty-six deaths, no less than thirty-five, or upwards of one in twenty of the whole, have been from this cause alone, independent of many attempts which did not prove fatal: whereas those insured in the Equitable, the proportion of suicides was not a fifth part as great, being only one in one hundred and ten of the deaths."* The strong tendency to suicide in modern armies has also been shown by comparing the number of deaths from this cause with the number occurring among the entire population of countries. But, though these statements exhibit a remarkable amount of mortality from suicide among military men, it must be specially observed, that the causes leading to self-destruction in modern armies are, for the most part, totally different from those common among the soldiers of antiquity. The suicides in the armies of Great Britain and other countries are mostly referable to disordered states of the mind, induced by debauchery, dissipation, chagrin and degradation from a better condition in life.

So entirely have the opinions of the world changed in regard to the subject in question, that a soldier of acknowledged gallantry and honour who should turn his sword against himself, in any circumstances in which he might be thrown by the fortunes of war, would forfeit his claims to these noble qualities, and incur the reprehension of the manly and virtuous.

* Statistical Reports, &c., &c. Analysis in Med.-Chirurg. Review, No. 77, p. 4, July, 1839.

Numerous are the examples in modern history in which if the principles which actuated the illustrious chieftains of antiquity had been the determining motives of conduct in certain untoward circumstances, life would have been voluntarily and promptly abandoned. In no age, perhaps, have there been more powerful reasons or stronger motives urging to the commission of suicide than in the case of Napoleon. Nor was the idea foreign to his thoughts. Bereft of power, utterly overthrown, and a voluntary captive, as he said, in the hands of his "most inveterate and constant enemies," he spoke, while on board the *Bellerophon* "in undisguised terms of a Roman death;" and afterwards, at St. Helena, he talked of dying with his devoted followers by carbonic acid generated by burning charcoal in a close apartment; but influenced by the moral sentiments of the age, he manfully resolved to live, whatever might be the condition which awaited him, or the issue of his destiny.*

The grand cause to which the revolution in the sentiments of mankind in regard to suicide, as it prevailed in ancient times, is distinctly traceable to the influence of the Christian religion. The beautiful and sublime philosophy of Socrates and Plato, which rested on no other foundation than that afforded by the light of nature, was totally insufficient, except in solitary instances, to restrain the propensity to suicide. Nothing short of a religion, emanating from

* Scott's Life of Napoleon Bonaparte.

a higher source, revealed in the Saviour of the world, was capable of overturning the system of classic mythology, weakening the tendency to self-destruction, and changing the moral dispositions of men. The introduction of Christian principles and the establishment of Christian institutions and observances, in the place of heathen superstitions and rites, have had the effect not merely of transforming and purifying the moral affections of a great multitude of our race through a long succession of ages, but of restraining and regulating the conduct of a still greater multitude whose moral condition, in relation to their eternal interests is in no degree better than that of the heathen world. The infidel, in his external conformity to the exactions of the moral code of the scriptures, renders homage to a faith which it is his pleasure to deride, if not his object to destroy. But the same religion to which these results are due is progressively enlarging the circle of its power, reforming the conduct, and regenerating the hearts of men. Nor will its divine agency cease to exert its transforming influence till peace shall reign throughout the earth ;—for the time will come, when

“ No more shall nation against nation rise,
Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
Nor fields with gleaming steel be covered o’er,
The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more ;
But useless lances into scythes shall bend,
And the broad falchion in a ploughshare end.”



DR. J. M. SMITH'S
ANNIVERSARY DISCOURSE.

1850.





