

estimate the moral character of the practice itself : for is no unimportant auxiliary in forming such an estimate of human actions or opinions, to know how they have been produced and what are their effects.

CAUSES OF WAR.

Of these causes one undoubtedly consists in the want of enquiry. We have been accustomed from earliest life to a familiarity with its "pomp and circumstance;" soldiers have passed us at every step, and battles and victories have been the topic of every one around us. It therefore becomes familiarized to all our thoughts and interwoven with all our associations. We have never enquired whether these things should be : the question does not even suggest itself. We acquiesce in it, as we acquiesce in the rising of the sun without any other idea than that it is a part of the ordinary process of the world. And how are we to feel disapprobation of a system that we do not examine, and of the nature of which we do not think? Want of enquiry has been the means by which long-continued practices, whatever has been their enormity, have obtained the general concurrence of the world, and by which they have continued to pollute or degrade it, long after the few who enquire into their nature have discovered them to be bad. It was by these means that the slave trade was so long tolerated by this land of humanity. Men did not *think* of its iniquity. We were induced to think, and we soon abhorred, and then abolished it. Of the effects of this want of enquiry we have indeed frequent examples upon the subject before us. Many who have all their lives concluded that war is lawful and right, have found, when they began to examine the question, that their conclusions were founded upon no evidence ;—that they

had believed in its rectitude not because they had possessed themselves of proof, but because they had never enquired whether it was capable of proof or not. In the present moral state of the world, one of the first concerns of him who would discover pure morality should be, to question the purity of that which now obtains.

Another cause of our complacency with war, and therefore another cause of war itself, consists in that callousness to human misery which the custom induces. They who are shocked at a single murder on the highway, hear with indifference of the slaughter of a thousand on the field. They whom the idea of a single corpse would thrill with terror, contemplate that of heaps of human carcasses mangled by human hands, with frigid indifference. If a murder is committed, the narrative is given in the public newspaper, with many adjectives of horror—with many expressions of commiseration, and many hopes that the perpetrator will be detected. In the next paragraph, the editor, perhaps, tells us that he has hurried a second edition to the press, in order that he may be the first to glad the public with the intelligence, that in an engagement which has just taken place, *eight hundred and fifty of the enemy were killed*. Now, is not this latter intelligence eight hundred and fifty times as deplorable as the first? Yet the first is the subject of our sorrow, and this—of our joy! The inconsistency and disproportionateness which has been occasioned in our sentiments of benevolence, offers a curious moral phenomenon. *

* Part of the Declaration and Oath prescribed to be taken by Catholics is this: "I do solemnly declare before God, that I believe that no act in itself unjust, immoral, or wicked, can ever be justified or excused by or under pretence or color that it was done either for the good of the church or in obedience to

The immolations of the Hindoos fill us with compassion or horror, and we are zealously laboring to prevent them. The sacrifices of life by our own criminal executions, are the subject of our anxious commiseration, and we are strenuously endeavoring to diminish their number. We feel that the life of a Hindoo or a malefactor is a serious thing, and that nothing but imperious necessity should induce us to destroy the one, or to permit the destruction of the other. Yet what are these sacrifices of life in comparison with the sacrifices of war? In the late campaign in Russia, there fell, during one hundred and seventy-three days in succession, an average of two thousand nine hundred men per day : more than five hundred thousand human beings in less than six months ! And most of

any ecclesiastical power whatsoever." This declaration is required as a solemn act, and is supposed, of course, to involve a great and sacred principle of rectitude. We propose the same declaration to be taken by military men, with the alteration of two words. "I do solemnly declare before God, that I believe that no act in itself unjust, immoral, or wicked, can ever be justified or excused, by or under pretence or color that it was done either for the good of the state or in obedience to any military power whatsoever." How would this declaration assort with the customary practice of the soldier? Put *state* for *church*, and *military* for *ecclesiastical*, and then the world thinks that acts in themselves most unjust, immoral, and wicked, are not only justified and excused, but very meritorious : for in the whole system of warfare, justice and morality are utterly disregarded. Are those who approve of this Catholic declaration conscious of the grossness of their own inconsistency? Or will they tell us that the interests of the state are so paramount to those of the church, that what would be wickedness in the service of one, is virtue in the service of the other? The truth we suppose to be, that so intense is the power of public opinion, that of the thousands who approve the Catholic declarations and the practices of war, there are scarcely tens who even perceive their own inconsistency.—Mem. in the MS.

these victims expired with peculiar intensity of suffering. We are carrying our benevolence to the Indies, but what becomes of it in Russia, or at Leipsic? We are laboring to save a few lives from the gallows, but where is our solicitude to save them on the field? Life is life wheresoever it be sacrificed, and has every where equal claims to our regard. I am not now saying that war is wrong, but that we regard its miseries with an indifference with which we regard no others: that if our sympathy were *reasonably* excited respecting them, we should be powerfully prompted to avoid war; and that the want of this reasonable and virtuous sympathy, is one cause of its prevalence in the world.

And *another* consists in national irritability. It is assumed (not indeed upon the most rational grounds) that the best way of supporting the dignity, and maintaining the security of a nation is, when occasions of disagreement arise, to assume a high attitude and a fearless tone. We keep ourselves in a state of irritability which is continually alive to occasions of offence; and he that is prepared to be offended readily finds offences. A jealous sensibility sees insults and injuries where sober eyes see nothing, and nations thus surround themselves with a sort of artificial tentacula, which they throw wide in quest of irritation, and by which they are stimulated to revenge by every touch of accident or inadvertency. They who are easily offended will also easily offend. What is the experience of private life? The man who is always on the alert to discover trespasses on his honor or his rights, never fails to quarrel with his neighbors. Such a person may be dreaded as a torpedo. We may fear, but we shall not love him; and fear, without love, easily lapses into enmity. There are, therefore, many feuds and litigations in the life of such a man, that would never have disturbed its quiet if he had not

captiously snarled at the trespasses of accident, and savagely retaliated insignificant injuries. The viper that we chance to molest, we suffer to live if he continue to be quiet; but if he raise himself in menaces of destruction we knock him on the head.

It is with nations as with men. If on every offence we fly to arms, we shall of necessity provoke exasperation; and if we exasperate a people as petulant as ourselves we may probably continue to butcher one another, until we cease only from emptiness of exchequers or weariness of slaughter. To threaten war, is therefore often equivalent to beginning it. In the present state of men's principles, it is not probable that one nation will observe another levying men, and building ships, and founding cannon, without providing men, and ships, and cannon themselves; and when both are thus threatening and defying, what is the hope that there will not be a war?

If nations fought only when they could not be at peace, there would be very little fighting in the world. The wars that are waged for "insults to flags," and an endless train of similar motives, are perhaps generally attributable to the irritability of our pride. We are at no pains to appear pacific towards the offender: our remonstrance is a threat; and the nation which would give satisfaction to an *enquiry*, will give no other answer to a menace than a menace in return. At length we begin to fight, not because we are aggrieved, but because we are angry. One example may be offered: "In 1789, a small Spanish vessel committed some violence in Nootka Sound, under the pretence that the country belonged to Spain. This appears to have been the principal ground of offence; and with this both the government and the people of England were very angry. The irritability and haughtiness which they manifested were unaccountable to the

Spaniards, and the peremptory tone was imputed by Spain, not to the feelings of offended dignity and violated justice, but to some lurking enmity, and some secret designs which we did not choose to avow."* If the tone had been less peremptory and more rational, no such suspicion would have been excited, and the hostility which was consequent upon the suspicion would, of course, have been avoided. Happily the English were not so passionate, but that before they proceeded to fight they negotiated, and settled the affair amicably. The *preparations* for this foolish war cost, however, three millions one hundred and thirty-three thousand pounds!

So well indeed is national irritability known to be an efficient cause of war, that they who from any motive wish to promote it, endeavor to rouse the temper of a people by stimulating their passions—just as the boys in our streets stimulate two dogs to fight. These persons talk of the insults, or the encroachments, or the contempts of the destined enemy, with every artifice of aggravation; they tell us of foreigners who want to trample upon our rights, of rivals who ridicule our power, of foes who will crush, and of tyrants who will enslave us. They pursue their object, certainly, by efficacious means: they desire a war, and therefore irritate our passions; and when men are angry they are easily persuaded to fight.

That this cause of war is morally bad—that petulance and irritability are wholly incompatible with Christianity, these pages have repeatedly shown.

Wars are often promoted from considerations of interest, as well as from passion. The love of gain adds its influence to our other motives to support them; and without other motives, we know that this love is sufficient to give great obliquity to the moral judgment,

* Smollett's England.

and tempt us to many crimes. During a war of ten years there will always be many whose income depends on its continuance ; and a countless host of commissaries, and purveyors, and agents, and mechanics, commend a war because it fills their pockets. And unhappily, if money is in prospect, the desolation of a kingdom is often of little concern : destruction and slaughter are not to be put in competition with a hundred a-year. In truth, it seems sometimes to be the system of the conductors of a war, to give to the sources of gain endless ramifications. The more there are who profit by it the more numerous are its supporters ; and thus the projects of a cabinet become identified with the wishes of a people, and both are gratified in the prosecution of war.

A support more systematic and powerful is however given to war, because it offers to the higher ranks of society a profession which unites gentility with profit, and which, without the *vulgarity* of trade maintains or enriches them. It is of little consequence to enquire whether the distinction of vulgarity between the toils of war and the toils of commerce be fictitious. In the abstract, it is fictitious ; but of this species of reputation public opinion holds the *arbitrium et jus et norma* ; and public opinion is in favor of war.

The army and the navy, therefore, afford to the middle and higher classes a most acceptable profession. The profession of arms is like the profession of law or physic—a regular source of employment and profit. Boys are educated for the army as they are educated for the bar ; and parents appear to have no other idea than that war is part of the business of the world. Of *younger sons*, whose fathers in pursuance of the unhappy system of primogeniture, do not choose to support them at the expense of the heir, the army and the navy are the common resource. They would not know

what to do without them. To many of these the news of a peace is a calamity ; and though they may not *lift their voices* in favor of new hostilities for the sake of gain, it is unhappily certain that they often secretly desire it.

It is in this manner that much of the rank, the influence, and the wealth of a country become interested in the promotion of wars ; and when a custom is promoted by wealth, and influence, and rank, what is the wonder that it should be continued ? It is said, (if my memory serves me, by Sir Walter Raleigh,) “ he that taketh up his rest to live by this profession shall hardly be an honest man.”

By depending upon war for a subsistence, a powerful inducement is given to desire it ; and when the question of war is to be decided, it is to be feared that the whispers of interest will prevail, and that humanity, and religion, and conscience will be sacrificed to promote it.

Of those causes of war which consist in the ambition of princes or statesmen or commanders, it is not necessary to speak, because no one to whom the world will listen is willing to defend them.

Statesmen however have, besides ambition, many purposes of nice policy which make wars convenient : and when they have such purposes, they are sometimes cool speculators in the lives of men. They who have much patronage have many dependents, and they who have many dependents have much power. By a war, thousands become dependent on a minister ; and if he be disposed, he can often pursue schemes of guilt, and intrench himself in unpunished wickedness, because the war enables him to silence the clamor of opposition by an office, and to secure the suffrages of venality by a bribe. He has therefore many motives to war—in ambition, that does not refer to conquest ; or in fear,

that extends only to his office or his pocket : and fear or ambition, are sometimes more interesting considerations than the happiness and the lives of men. Cabinets have in truth, many secret motives to wars of which the people know little. They talk in public of invasions of right, of breaches of treaty, of the support of honor, of the necessity of retaliation, when these motives have no influence on their determinations. Some untold purpose of expediency, or the private quarrel of a prince or the pique or anger of a minister, are often the real motives to a contest, whilst its promoters are loudly talking of the honor or the safety of the country.

But perhaps the most operative cause of the popularity of war, and of the facility with which we engage in it, consists in this ; that an idea of glory is attached to military exploits, and of honor to the military profession. The glories of battle, and of those who perish in it, or who return in triumph to their country, are favorite topics of declamation with the historian, the biographer, and the poet. They have told us a thousand times of *dying heroes*, who “ resign their lives amidst the joys of conquest, and, filled with their country’s glory, smile in death ;” and thus every excitement that eloquence and genius can command, is employed to arouse that ambition of fame which can be gratified only at the expense of blood.

Into the nature and principles of this fame and glory we have already enquired ; and in the view alike of virtue and of intellect, they are low and bad. * “ Glory is the most selfish of all passions except love.” † — “ I cannot tell how or why the love of glory is a less selfish principle than the love of riches.” ‡ Philosophy and intellect may therefore well despise it, and Christianity

* See Essay II, c. 10. † West. Rev. No. 1, for 1827.

‡ Mem. and Rem. of the late Jane Taylor.

silently, yet emphatically, condemns it. "Christianity," says Bishop Watson, "quite annihilates the disposition for martial glory." Another testimony, and from an advocate of war, goes further—*No part* of the heroic character is the subject of the "commendation, or precepts, or example of Christ;" but the character the most opposite to the heroic is the subject of them all.*

Such is the foundation of the glory which has for so many ages deceived and deluded multitudes of mankind! Upon this foundation a structure has been raised so vast, so brilliant, so attractive, that the greater portion of mankind are content to gaze in admiration, without any inquiry into its basis or any solicitude for its durability. If, however, it should be, that the gorgeous temple will be able to stand only till Christian truth and light become predominant, it surely will be wise of those who seek a niche in its apartments as their paramount and final good, to pause ere they proceed. If they desire a reputation that shall outlive guilt and fiction, let them look to the basis of military fame. If this fame should one day sink into oblivion and contempt, it will not be the first instance in which widespread glory has been found to be a glittering bubble, that has burst and been forgotten. Look at the days of chivalry. Of the ten thousand Quixotes of the middle ages, where is now the honor or the fame? yet poets once sang their praises, and the chronicler of their achievements believed he was recording an everlasting fame. Where are now the glories of the tournament? glories

"Of which all Europe rang from side to side."

Where is the champion whom princesses caressed and nobles envied? Where are now the triumphs of Duns

* Paley: Evidences of Christianity, p. 2, c. 2.

Scotus, and where are the folios that *perpetuated* his fame? The glories of war have indeed outlived these ; human passions are less mutable than human follies ; but I am willing to avow my conviction, that these glories are alike destined to sink into forgetfulness ; and that the time is approaching when the applauses of heroism, and the splendors of conquest, will be remembered only as follies and iniquities that are past. Let him who seeks for fame, other than that which an era of Christian purity will allow, make haste ; for every hour that he delays its acquisition will shorten its duration. This is certain if there be certainty in the promises of heaven.

Of this factitious glory as a cause of war, Gibbon speaks in the *Decline and Fall*. “As long as mankind,” says he, “shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst of military glory will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters.” “’Tis strange to imagine,” says the Earl of Shaftesbury, that war, which of all things appears the most savage, should be the passion of the most heroic spirits.”—But he gives us the reason.—“By a small *misguidance of the affection*, a lover of mankind becomes a ravager ; a hero and deliverer becomes an oppressor and destroyer.”*

These are amongst the great perpetual causes of war. And what are they? First, that we *do not enquire* whether war is right or wrong. Secondly, That we are habitually *haughty* and *irritable* in our intercourse with other nations. Thirdly, That war is a source of *profit* to individuals, and establishes *professions which are very convenient* to the middle and higher ranks of life. Fourthly, That it gratifies the *ambition* of public men, and *serves the purposes of state policy*. Fifthly, that *notions of glory* are attached to

* *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor.*

warlike affairs ; which glory is factitious and impure.

In the view of reason, and especially in the view of religion, what is the character of these causes? Are they pure? Are they honorable? Are they, when connected with their effects, compatible with the moral law?—Lastly, and especially, is it probable that a system of which these are the great ever-during causes, can itself be good or right?

CONSEQUENCES OF WAR.

To expatiate upon the miseries which war brings upon mankind, appears a trite and a needless employment. We all know that its evils are great and dreadful. Yet the very circumstance that the knowledge is familiar, may make it unoperative upon our sentiments and our conduct. It is not the intensity of misery, it is not the extent of evil alone, which is necessary to animate us to that exertion which evil and misery should excite ; if it were, surely we should be much more averse than we now are to contribute, in word or in action, to the promotion of war.

But there are mischiefs attendant upon the system which are not to every man thus familiar, and on which, for that reason, it is expedient to remark. In referring especially to some of those moral consequences of war which commonly obtain little of our attention, it may be observed, that social and political considerations are necessarily involved in the moral tendency ; for the happiness of society is always diminished by the diminution of morality ; and enlightened policy knows that the greatest support of a state is the virtue of the people.

And yet the reader should bear in mind—what nothing but the frequency of the calamity can make him forget—the intense sufferings and irreparable deprivations which one battle inevitably entails upon private