

SKETCH OF WAR :

WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT DOES.

FEW among us know much about the evils of war. Have you ever visited its camps and fleets, or witnessed its sieges and battles? Have you followed the march of its armies, or looked in upon the anguish of its hospitals? Have you seen its nameless vices, its savage barbarities, its countless hardships, dangers, and sufferings? Did you ever behold it firing villages, and sacking cities, and desolating province after province, and butchering men, women, and children, by thousands? If not, you know little of war; and we wish to furnish you with a brief sketch of its NATURE AND EFFECTS.

I. Mark, then, THE WASTE OF PROPERTY BY WAR. It not only demands for its support vast sums of money, but dries up the main sources of a nation's wealth. Its victims are mostly men in the vigor of life. It cripples almost every species of business. It cuts the sinews of enterprise in every department of gainful industry. Fields lie untilled; factories stand still; the shop and the counting-room are deserted; vessels rot at the wharves; every kind of trade is interrupted or deranged; immense masses of capital are withdrawn from use; the entire energies of a nation are turned into the channel of war, and its resources whelmed in this mighty vortex of ruin.

Look at the loss occasioned in the single department of commerce. This main source of wealth war dries up, and exposes to capture an incalculable amount of property on the ocean. Our exports and imports now (1836) exceed two hundred millions of dollars every year; and one half of all this, besides a great variety of products interchanged along our coast, would be liable in war to be seized by the enemy. The imports in the single city of New York amounted, during one quarter of 1835, to thirty-six millions of dollars; and a war suddenly occurring would probably have found afloat on the ocean more than twice that amount destined to the same port, and one or two hundred millions belonging to the whole nation. The commissioners appointed to adjust the demands of British merchants for property destroyed by Denmark alone during the late wars

of Europe, received claims to the amount of about twenty-five hundred millions of dollars! Such estimates as these would prove that the *direct* expenses of war, though immense, are a mere fraction, rarely more than a fourth part, of the sum total which it wastes.

But look at the enormous expenditures of war. Those of our last war have been variously estimated; but they could not have been less than *forty or fifty millions* of dollars every year. Our revolutionary war cost England *six hundred millions* of dollars; and in the wars occasioned by the French revolution, she spent *more than FIVE THOUSAND MILLIONS!* The public debt of Great Britain, incurred *solely* by war, is even now about *four thousand millions of dollars*; and that of all Europe amounts to nearly *eight thousand millions!* The wars of Christendom during only twenty-two years cost merely for their support not much less than **FIFTEEN THOUSAND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS!** Quadruple these sums by the indirect and incidental losses of war, and we shall have an amount that would almost tempt us to suspect figures themselves of falsehood, and facts of deception — a sum so vast that the bare interest upon it would be more than enough to defray the *necessary* expenses of governing every nation on earth, to furnish every family in the world with a Bible, to provide the means of common education for all its children, and to support one minister of the gospel for every thousand souls.

Seldom do the people inquire or imagine how much our own Republic spends for the war-system even in a time of peace. In 1827, our expenditures for war were about nine times as much as for all other purposes. In 1832, we expended for civil offices \$1,800,758; for intercourse with other nations, \$325,181; for miscellaneous objects, \$2,451,203; for the military establishment, \$5,446,035; for the naval service, \$3,956,320; for revolutionary pensions, \$1,057,121; for various other pensions, \$127,301; for the Indian department, \$1,352,420; for the national debt, \$17,840,309; more than *thirty millions and a half*, in one form or another, for war; *seventeen times as much as for the whole civil list*, and about *ten times as much as for all the other purposes of our government*. From 1791 to 1832, the aggregate of our expenditures, with less than three years of actual warfare, was \$842,250,891; and merely 37,158,047, *a twenty-third part of the whole*, were for the civil list, almost the only department that would be necessary, if the war-system were entirely abolished

II. But reflect on the LOSS OF LIFE BY WAR. The battle-field will by no means tell us the whole number of its victims. Cruel treatment, bad provisions, unhealthy encampments, forced marches, frequent exposures to extremes of heat and cold without shelter, and fatal diseases generated by such causes, destroy vastly more than the sword. Often has a single march cut off more than half of an army. The hardships of war shorten from ten to twenty years the life of those who escape the sword, and thus occasion an immense loss that is never reckoned in the usual estimates of its havoc.

But how vast the multitude of its *immediate* victims! At Borodino there perished in one day 80,000; and in the siege of Mexico more than 100,000 in battle, and more than 50,000 from the infection of putrefying carcasses. The Moors of Spain lost in one engagement with Christians 70,000, and in another 180,000, besides 50,000 prisoners. In the battle of Chalons there fell 300,000 of Attila's army alone; in ancient times it was no very uncommon slaughter for *one or two hundred thousand* to be left dead on a single field; and the Old Testament records an instance where *one side* lost 500,000.* We shudder at the thought of Alexander's sacrificing *three millions* of lives; but his successors occasioned the destruction of *twenty millions*, the Saracens, *sixty millions*, and the crusades alone, *forty millions of nominal CHRISTIANS*!!

III. Glance, now, at *some of the PERSONAL SUFFERINGS incident to war*. Think of the violence practised in procuring seamen and soldiers. Where the war-spirit is predominant, they are forced into the army and navy at the pleasure of their rulers, and doomed to all the hardships, perils, and sufferings of war, with little or no hope of release till death. Do you know how soldiers are generally *treated*? They are subjected to the most iron-hearted despotism on earth, to a bondage far worse than that of a Turkish peasant, or a domestic slave. They are at the mercy of every superior, from the commander-in-chief down to the pettiest officer. They have little or no protection against hourly abuse, insult, and violence, nor any adequate security for life itself against the lawless passions of officers seldom called to account in war for the worst treatment of soldiers. Their *punishment* is still more barbarous. 'Sailors are subject,' says a well-known writer, 'not only to a torrent of imprecations and curses, but to the boatswain's

* 2 Chron. xiii. 3—17.

cat-o'-nine-tails. The least complaint brings them to the gangway; and sometimes a sailor is sentenced to receive five hundred, and even a thousand lashes, to be inflicted day after day, as he may be able to bear them. He is attended at each whipping by a surgeon, who determines how much can be inflicted at once without immediate danger to life! Often does the flagellation proceed till the victim faints; and then he is respited, to renew his sufferings another day. I have often shuddered at the recital of whippings through the fleet, the keel-hauling, the spread-eagle, the gagging, the hand-cuffing, and other punishments inflicted on sailors who have been trepanned or forced into a service from which death is the only release.' The punishment of soldiers is equally cruel and shocking with that of seamen; but we will not describe flogging, the gauntlet, the picket, the wooden-horse, and other forms of punishment, the very thought of which is enough to make one's blood boil with indignation, or curdle with horror.

One instance, however, we will select from our own land. In 1814, a soldier was shot at Greenbush, New York, for going thirty or forty miles from the camp, without leave, to visit his wife and three small children. After the usual preliminaries in such cases, his coffin, a box of rough pine boards, was borne before him on the shoulders of two men to the place of execution. He wore, as a winding-sheet, a white cotton gown, having over the place of his heart the black image of a heart, as a mark for the executioners to aim at. His countenance was as pale as his winding-sheet, and his whole frame trembled with agony. His grave was dug, the coffin placed by its side, and the deserter, with a cap drawn over his eyes, required to kneel upon the lid. At this signal, the eight soldiers, drawn by lot for the bloody deed, stepped forward within two rods of their victim; and, at another signal from the officer, all fired at the same instant. The miserable man, with a horrid scream, leaped from the earth, and fell between his coffin and his grave. The sergeant, to insure immediate death, shot him through the head, holding his musket so near that the cap took fire; and there the body lay, with the head sending forth the mingled fumes of burning cotton and hair. The soldiers, after passing close by the corpse in a line to let every one see for himself the fate of a deserter, marched back to the merry notes of Yankee Doodle! and all the officers were immediately invited to the quarters of the commander, and treated with grog!!

Imagine the *sufferings incident to marches*. Trace the French army in the Russian campaign. On halting at night, the soldiers threw themselves down on the first dirty straw they could find, and there perished in large numbers with hunger and fatigue. From such sufferings, and from the infection of the air by putrefied carcasses of men and horses that strewed the roads, there sprang two dreadful epidemics, the dysentery and typhus fever. So fatal were these combined causes, that of 22,000 Bavarians, only 11,000 reached the Duna, though they had been in no action; and the flower of both the French and the allied armies perished. A division of the Russian army, amounting, at the commencement of the pursuit of the French, to 120,000 men, could not, on the frontier of the Duchy of Warsaw, muster 35,000; and a re-enforcement of 10,000, that had marched from Wilna, arrived with only 1500, of whom one half were the next day in the hospitals. Some battalions retained less than fifty men, and many companies were utterly annihilated!

The march of the French both to and from Moscow, was horrible beyond description. 'Overwhelmed with whirlwinds of snow,' says Labaume, 'the soldiers could not distinguish the road from the ditches, and often fell into the latter, which served them for a tomb. Others, eager to press forward, dragged themselves along. Badly clothed and shod, having nothing to eat or drink, groaning and shivering with the cold, they gave no assistance, and showed no signs of compassion to those who, sinking from weakness, expired around them. Many of these miserable creatures struggled hard in the agonies of death. Some, in the most affecting manner, bade adieu to their brethren in arms, and others with their last breath pronounced the name of their mother and their country. Stretched on the road, we could only see the heaps of snow that covered them, and formed undulations in our route like those in a grave-yard. Flocks of ravens flew over our heads croaking ominously; and troops of dogs, which had followed us all the way from Moscow, and lived solely on our bloody remains, howled around us, as if impatient for the moment when *we* should become their prey, and often contended with the soldiers for the dead horses which were left on the road.'

'Every day furnished scenes too painful to relate. The road was covered with soldiers who no longer retained the

human form. Some had lost their hearing, others their speech; and many, by excessive cold and hunger, were reduced to such a state of stupid frenzy, that they roasted the dead bodies for food, and even gnawed their own hands and arms. Some, too weak to lift a piece of wood, or roll a stone towards the fire, sat down upon their dead companions, and gazed with countenances unmoved upon the burning logs. These livid spectres, unable to get up, fell by the side of those on whom they had been seated. Many, in a state of delirium, plunged their bare feet into the fire to warm themselves; some, with convulsive laughter, threw themselves into the flames, and, with shocking cries, perished in most horrible contortions; others, in a state of equal madness, followed their example, and shared the same fate; while many were so maddened by the extremes of pain and hunger, that they tore the dead bodies of their comrades into pieces, and feasted on the remains.'

'The soldiers often fired in the morning the buildings in which they had lodged during the night; and on one occasion there were three large barns filled chiefly with wounded soldiers. From two of these they could not escape without passing through the one in front, which was on fire. The most active saved themselves by leaping out of the windows; but all those who were sick or crippled, not having strength to move, saw the flames advancing rapidly to devour them. Touched by their shrieks, some of the least hardened endeavored in vain to save them. We could see them half-buried under the burning rafters. Through whirlwinds of smoke, they entreated their comrades to shorten their sufferings by putting them to death; and from motives of humanity we thought it our duty to do so! But some still survived; and we heard them with feeble voices crying, "*Fire on us! fire on us! at the head! at the head! don't miss!*"

The sufferings of the wounded left after battle on the open field, or crowded into hospitals, are shocking. Fifty days after the battle of Borodino, no less than 20,000 of the slain were found lying where they had fallen; and the whole plain was strewed with half-buried carcasses of men and horses, intermingled with garments dyed in blood, and with bones gnawed by dogs and vultures. 'As we were marching over the scene of the battle,' says Labaume, 'we heard a piteous sound at a distance; and, on reaching the spot, we found a French soldier stretched on the

ground, with both his legs broken. "I was wounded," said he, "on the day of the great battle; and finding myself in a lonely place, where I could gain no assistance, I dragged myself with my hands to the brink of a rivulet, and have lived nearly two months on grass and roots, and a few pieces of bread which I found among the dead bodies. At night I have lain in the carcasses of dead horses; and with the flesh of these animals I have dressed my wounds."

Even a hospital is scarcely less terrible. An eminent surgeon, present in the hospitals after the battle of Waterloo, says, 'The wounded French continued to be brought in for *several successive days*; and the British soldiers, who had in the morning been moved by the piteous cries of those they carried, I saw in the evening so hardened by the repetition of the scene, and by fatigue, as to become indifferent to the sufferings they occasioned!'

'It was now the *thirteenth day* after the battle. It is impossible to conceive the sufferings of men rudely carried at *such* a period of their wounds. When I first entered the hospital, these Frenchmen had been roused and excited in an extraordinary degree; and in the glance of their eyes there was a character of fierceness which I never expected to witness in the human countenance. On the second day, the temporary excitement had subsided; and turn which way I would, I encountered every form of entreaty from those whose condition left no need of words to stir compassion: *Surgeon Major, oh! how I suffer! Dress my wounds! do dress my wounds!—Doctor, I commend myself to you. Cut off my leg! Oh! I suffer too much!* And when these entreaties were unavailing, you might hear, in a weak, inward tone of despair, *I shall die! I am a dead man!*'

In the hospitals of Wilna there were left more than 17,000 dead and dying, frozen and freezing. The bodies of the former were taken up to stop the cavities in the windows, floors, and walls; and in one corridor of the Great Convent, above 1500 were piled up transversely like pigs of lead or iron!!

An army after its capture is often doomed to every variety of suffering. A French army in Spain had no sooner grounded their arms, than multitudes were murdered in cold blood. Some were burnt alive, and all the survivors subjected to a series of such extreme privations and sufferings as thinned their ranks with fearful rapidity. 'Fa-

tigue and insufficient provision,' says one of the victims, 'rendered many incapable of rising after a night's halt, to renew their march, and dawn exhibited to us the stiffened limbs of numbers whom death had released from their troubles. The survivors were so gaunt and emaciated, that a poor fellow would sometimes drop to the earth in the extremity of weariness and despair. No effort was made to assist these sufferers; but they were either left behind to perish, or bayoneted on the spot. On our arrival at St. Lucar, we were thrown, some of us into prison-ships, and others into stinking casements. Here the extremity of our anguish exceeded all powers of description. With scarce strength enough to crawl to our detestable dungeons, many of us reached them only to lie down, and die broken-hearted; and the fare was so wretched as to be refused in many cases by men fainting with weariness, and famished with hunger. We were not only crowded together like cattle amidst vermin and pestilential effluvia, but treated with such unrelenting severity, that many of my companions sought refuge from their misery by plunging into the sea.'

'When landed on the desolate island of Cabrera, we were exposed to every species of privation. Without shelter, or sufficient clothing, or a regular supply of food, we sometimes resorted to grass and dust to answer the wants of nature. A great many died; and we buried them immediately in the sea under the horrible apprehension that, should their bodies remain before us, the savage longings of the cannibal would rise in our hearts. A cuirassier was in fact killed for food by a Pole, who was discovered and shot. He confessed he had before done the same by two other comrades.'

As the French army on their march to Moscow approached Rouza, 'we met,' says one of them, 'a great number of carts brought back by the cavalry, loaded with children, the aged, and the infirm. In our advance to the centre of the town, we found soldiers pillaging the houses, regardless of the cries of those to whom they belonged, or the tears of mothers, who, to soften their hearts, showed them their children on their knees. Those innocents, with their hands clasped, and all bathed in tears, asked only that their lives might be spared. In another instance we saw, on one side, a son carrying a sick father, and on the other, women pouring the torrent of their tears upon the infants whom they

clasped to their bosoms. They were followed by most of their children, who, fearful of being lost, ran crying after their mothers. Old men, seldom able to follow their families, laid themselves down to die near the houses where they were born. On our return from Moscow, we overtook crowds carrying off their infirm parents. Their horses having been taken from them by the troops, men, and even women, were harnessed to the carts which contained the wrecks of their property, and the dearest objects of their affection. The children were nearly naked, and as the soldiers approached them, ran crying to throw themselves into their mothers' arms.'

Still worse was the capture of Magdeburg, as related by Schiller in his history of the 'thirty years' war.' Exasperated by its long resistance, the commander of the besieging army, on entering it, abandoned the city to the unrestrained rage and lust of his soldiers; and 'a scene of horror ensued which history has no language, poetry no pencil, to portray. Neither the innocence of childhood, nor the helplessness of old age, neither rank, sex, nor beauty, could disarm the fury of the conquerors. Wives were dishonored in the arms of their husbands, and daughters at the feet of their parents! Nothing could afford any protection. Fifty-three women were found beheaded in a single church! Some of the soldiers amused themselves with throwing children into the flames, and others with stabbing infants at their mothers' breasts!! Heaps of dead bodies strewed the ground; streams of blood ran along the streets; and the city being fired at once in several places, the atmosphere soon glowed with such intolerable heat as compelled even the soldiers themselves to seek refuge in their camps. More than *five thousand* bodies were thrown into the river to clear the streets; there perished in all not less than *thirty thousand*; Magdeburg, one of the finest cities in Germany, was a heap of ashes; and the next day some of the few survivors were seen crawling out from under the dead, children wandering about with heart-rending cries in search of their parents, and infants still sucking the dead bodies of their mothers!' In gratitude to the *God of Peace!* for success in this work of blood and desolation, 'a solemn mass was performed the next day, and *Te Deum* sung amidst the discharge of artillery!!'

Do facts like these give an exaggerated view of war? No; they will hardly enable us adequately to conceive even

its ordinary atrocities and horrors. Such evils are not merely incidental to war; they are inseparable from any of its forms, and constitute its grand, essential elements. They are a part of the system. Misery is its object, or its means; and war, without a fearful waste of property, life, and happiness, is an utter impossibility. Its whole business is to plunder, and burn, and butcher by wholesale; and to talk of a war that did not perpetrate such atrocities, and inflict such miseries, would be as direct a contradiction in terms as to speak of vision without light, or of fire without heat.

Can you estimate the guilt, the folly, the madness of employing such an arbiter of international disputes as war? Burn villages, demolish cities, lay waste empires, send hundreds of thousands into an untimely grave, into a ruined eternity, all for the settlement of difficulties which can be adjusted only by an appeal to reason! What should we think of two neighbors who should propose to settle a point in dispute, not by reasoning the case between themselves, nor by referring it to an impartial jury, or to umpires mutually chosen, but by shooting at each other, and butchering each others' wives and children? Yet such is the war-system still supported by all Christendom; and, if the stealer of a horse or a coat deserves a prison, and the pirate who destroys but one vessel, or the assassin who murders a single victim, is deemed worthy of the gallows, what must be the criminality of nations in continuing a custom which multiplies such crimes and woes by thousands and by millions!

On whom do the evils of war fall? Are its guilty abettors the men that pay its expenses, bear its hardships, and suffer its countless woes? No; these come upon the *people*. It is their earnings that are wasted, their blood that is poured out like water, their dwellings that are burnt to ashes, their fathers and brothers, husbands and sons, that are driven away like cattle to be butchered by thousands; while the authors of all these evils, sitting aloof from the storm upon their sofas of ease and luxury, read without a sigh of the miseries they have themselves occasioned. How long will the *people* bear such cold-blooded oppression?

Tell us not that war is a necessary evil. Necessary for *whom*? For civilized, Christian men like ourselves? Are *we* unwilling to regulate our intercourse, or settle our disputes, without bloodshed? *Why* is war necessary? Merely because nations *choose* it; just as intemperance is necessary to the drunkard, piracy to the pirate, and duelling to

the duellist. There is no other kind of necessity for war; and it must cease of course whenever men shall resolve to have it cease. There is no more need of war in Christendom than there is of duels in New England; it would be just as easy for nations, if they chose, to settle all their disputes without the sword and the cannon, as it is for us to adjust ours without pistols and daggers.

But do you deem it impossible thus to change the war-choice even of Christendom? Human nature is as corrigible on this subject as upon any other; there is nothing to render the extinction of this custom impossible by the right use of the requisite means; and the promises of God make its ultimate abolition perfectly certain. 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it; and then shall they beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they *learn* war any more.' Isa. 2:2-4, 9:4-9. Mic. 4:1-4.

But how is this promise to be fulfilled? By miracle? We can expect no more miracles. By some unparalleled interposition of Providence? God has promised no such interposition. Without the use of appropriate means? Such means are just as indispensable for the prevalence of peace as for the spread of the gospel.

But what are these means? Such an application of the gospel to the subject as shall revolutionize the war-sentiments of Christendom, fill every Christian community with deep abhorrence of this custom, and lead rulers to employ only pacific expedients in settling international disputes. And who shall use these means? We cannot rely on men of the world, except as occasional coadjutors; it is the appropriate work of Christians; and they must do it, or it never will be done. But how shall they do it? Is it enough for them merely to support and to propagate the present form of their religion? It has for ages tolerated the war-system, and suffered Christendom to remain a vast hot-bed of war. Will such a religion, if spread through the world, put an end to war? No sooner than a rum-drinking and a slave-holding Christianity would put an end to intemperance and slavery. *The gospel will abolish nothing which it sanctions and supports*; and, if men are not converted to peace, as fast as they are to God, such a conversion of the whole world could not insure the univer-

sal and permanent reign of peace. We must restore the pacific principles of the gospel, and incorporate them once more, where Christ and his apostles left them, in the faith and character of his disciples as a body, before the spread of Christianity will insure the abolition of war. The gospel is a sovereign remedy for all the moral maladies of our world; but it must be *applied* to war, before it can cure this deep and deadly gangrene of our race. It has not been applied for fifteen centuries; and so long as Christians persist in this neglect, we cannot expect to see peace coëxtensive with Christianity.

But do you ask what specific things must be done? Let every man cease from lending his countenance to the war-system in any way or degree, and every possible means be used to render it deeply and universally odious. Let every Christian examine the subject till his own views, feelings, and habits, are cast in the pacific mould of the gospel. Let the pulpit and the press proclaim, with trumpet-tongue, the folly, guilt, and horrors of war before every Christian community on earth. Let instructors in all Christian seminaries of learning, from the highest to the lowest, infuse the pacific principles of the gospel into the forming minds under their care. Let teachers in every Sabbath-school through the world do the same to their pupils. Let every parent train his children to a love of peace, and a deep, unmingled abhorrence of war. Let all classes, high and low, old and young, male and female, unite to bring this custom into general contempt and execration, as a mass of folly, sin, and misery. Such a process would soon bring war in Christendom to a perpetual end.

How much longer, then, will the friends of God and man slumber over this subject? Will they never open their eyes to the abominations and miseries of war, and combine their efforts to sweep it from every land blest with the light of revelation? Can they still lend their countenance to such a wholesale destroyer of property, and life, and virtue, and religion, and immortal souls? Disciples of Jesus, we leave these questions on your conscience before the God of peace. Have you done what you could? Are you now doing all that you can? If not, will you keep hold of the subject till you learn and do your whole duty as a follower of the Prince of peace?