

# MISCELLANIES,

VOL. II.:

ESSAYS, TRACTS OR ADDRESSES

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS.

---

BY

F. W. NEWMAN,

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON;

HONORARY FELLOW OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD;

ONCE FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

AND M.B.A.S.

---

©

LONDON:

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

NOTTINGHAM; STEVENSON, BAILEY, AND SMITH, PRINTERS.

---

M.DCCC.LXXXVII.

CHARLES SUMNER  
ON  
THE GRANDEUR OF NATIONS.

[1845.]

ABRIDGED FROM THE "PROSPECTIVE REVIEW," No. VII., 1846.

WHEN we consider at how recent a time most unnatural and deadly hostilities with the United States of North America threatened this country, and how few among our Trans-Atlantic kinsmen dared to lift up their voices against the warlike spirit which had unhappily attained a political predominance, we feel that a debt of gratitude is owing to every American citizen who in the last year publicly protested in favour of peace, and denounced the profligate and inhuman spirit of territorial aggrandizement. Mr. Sumner spoke with an immediate practical object, and with the actual position of the United States filling his view. This alone enables us to forgive his extravagant overstatements and oftentimes fanatical declamation. But because of the extreme importance of the subject, we deprecate all overstatement of the argument; for this occasions a waste of moral power and of valuable enthusiasm on the part of the advocates of peace, lays them open to the dangerous, because just, assaults of ridicule, and alienates from their co-operation thousands of humane, able, but practical men. We exceedingly differ from Mr. Sumner as to his invidious interpretation of the term *national honour*, which he wishes to explode altogether. The case is, we submit, exactly the same as with personal honour. There are coxcombs and bullies, who often fancy they are insulted, and pick a quarrel in defence of what they call their honour; but we cannot infer that there is no such thing as dishonour to be feared from too passive a submission to injury. If a man is walking in the street with his wife, and a ruffian attacks her, we hold that it would be a deep dishonour in him not to defend her, and if occasion required, he must defend her with as much "boar's" or "lion's might" as he can summon into his frame. Mr. Sumner injures his case by the superfluity

of learning, with which he proves from Homer and Shakespeare that a man in battle degrades himself into a wild beast. Of course he does. Though it is a great misfortune, he must so do, if he is to fight at all: and that this is sometimes a duty, Mr. Sumner does not deny. That a policeman must fight against robbers, a sloop of war against pirates, he allows without reserve. But to return. As honour may force a man to fight in defence of his wife or of his child, so may honour force a powerful State to go to war for the protection of its dependencies or subjects. The weaker the object defended, the stronger is the appeal to honour. Mr. Sumner therefore by no means gains from the argument, "Of what *use* has the war been?" as if rescue from attack and security for the future, were not sufficient use.—To take his own illustration. Some five-and-thirty years ago, France, being at war with England, exercised her belligerent right (as the phrase is) of hindering neutral powers from trading with England. The English retaliated, with far greater power to enforce their determination by sea; and the neutrals, one and all, suffered severe losses in their trade. The weaker States at once withdrew from the effort, but the spirit of America did not so easily submit to what she regarded as the dictation of England, and when her merchant ships fell into the hands of our cruisers, a new mortification awaited her in our claiming *our own* seamen, as many as we found on board of her vessels. This was not an intentional aggression upon her, but a natural and consistent proceeding on our part, when, through want of seamen, we were violently impressing our own people at home. But the Americans have made a law, without consulting us, that any persons (*British subjects* or others) who reside a certain time among them, are their citizens: and consequently it was impossible for us to reclaim our men without offending their national pretensions. Besides this, no skill on the part of our officers could save them from seizing native members of the republic, children of those whose independence we had acknowledged, by mistake for British subjects; and considering the despotic power which our captains possessed, and our strong demand for sailors, there can be little doubt that we really impressed many genuine American citizens. We have recounted the case thus at large, to show how complicated and difficult it was. Mr. Sumner informs us, that "the greatest number of American seamen ever officially alleged to be compulsively serving in the British navy was about eight hundred," and infers, that his country ought not to have made

war upon us for anything *so small*. We do not understand this arithmetic. To us it seems to be a question of principle, depending on its liability to repetition, as well as on the moral features of the case. If we had landed on the coast of Rhode Island, and carried off five hundred seamen to serve as sailors, Mr. Sumner surely holds that a war to recover them or to forbid repetition of the outrage would be *defensive*; yet he might still urge that it was better to allow five hundred men to be made slaves, and say no more about it, than "doom the whole country for three years to the blight of war." "Our commerce," says he, "was driven from the seas; the resources of the land were drained by taxation; villages on the Canadian frontier were laid in ashes; the metropolis of the Republic was captured, while gaunt distress raged everywhere within our borders." Finally, America was glad to make peace with us, when our contest against France was terminated, without obtaining on our part any guarantee or promise that we would not renew our impressments, if like circumstances should recur. From this Mr. Sumner proves by the confession of his own government, whose words he quotes, that "The United States had appealed to arms in vain:" but this does not convince us that the war was really in vain. America ought not to have attacked us: this we most assuredly believe; but not because eight hundred men were too small a consideration. If neutrality was impossible, a far more reasonable and just conduct would have been to declare war against France,—whose decrees had been the first offence,—after stipulating with us, that we should abandon our claims of impressment in case of her so doing. But she remembered with gratitude the aid given her by France against us, and she despised us as a beaten foe,\* and little did she imagine that while our main efforts were engaged against our neighbouring antagonist, we could by a left-hand stroke, and without any loss sensible to ourselves, inflict on a trans-Atlantic power sufferings so severe; sufferings, the effect of which were felt for many years by an infantine republic. Her passions impelled her into that war, and this was the fault. She did not make allowance for our difficulties, and for the *sincere intentions* of our government to claim none but

---

\* We could not conquer our colonists *at first*, because we were too merciful to proceed to extremities; like the Dutch against Brussels: *at last*, because the great Whig party, in jealousy of the increasing powers of the Crown, would not allow of a conquest which it would need a powerful standing army to hold.

our own seamen. But we say, if we had knowingly and manifestly carried off eight hundred native Americans; if we had refused redress, and shown a disposition to repeat the offence, the smallness of the number is not to the purpose. The national honour is involved in protecting individuals and weak dependencies; and if this is a mere name, then Virtue and Justice are mere names.

Nor is it true that America gained *nothing*; although what she gained would probably have been purchased more cheaply by greater wisdom and moderation: but she has prominently brought forward the rights of neutrals, so as either to hinder future European war, or, at least to make it less mischievous to neutral countries. Powerful States, when involved in war, treat "belligerent rights" as the only ones which deserve consideration. This might be correct, if a war were decreed against an offending power by the judicial sentence of a tribunal which represented the interests of all the great nations of the world. In such case, the neutrals would be really or virtually represented in the Congress; or at any rate, they would be situated as individuals in a community, whose neighbour falls under the sentence of the law to their great inconvenience. My lawyer may be arrested for a crime, when his aid is of the utmost importance to me; or my banker may be suspected of holding forged notes, and a seal may be put on his whole establishment; and meanwhile, I cannot get money to pay my creditors. Now in fact, the war against Napoleon, though not decreed by a Congress, was more decidedly than any war in all European history, waged by the will and sentence of all the other nations of Europe,—(except unhappy Poland, who hoped restitution from him!) and this was a new ground why America ought to have borne her wrongs and losses from us more meekly. Not but that we were probably overbearing enough, when we could appeal to Grotius, Puffendorf, &c., on belligerent rights; for these great writers (we understand) treat every independent State as having an undoubted right, of its own judgment, to decree war on any other State, and then to expect from neutrals tame submission to any amount of loss, which may be requisite for an efficient prosecution of the war. The most common form of it is in the stoppage of maritime commerce. A more horrible illustration is in the blockade of Genoa, of which Arnold, and now Mr. Sumner, have given so affecting details. We say that *something has been gained* by the American Union, inasmuch as England in any future war will remember how dangerous it is to confiscate all neutral rights.

A like view, we think, must be taken in retrospect of the other calamitous wars which have been waged, especially in the last two or three centuries. They were shocking and hateful: most of them were caused by guilt or ignorance on both sides, and they are not for a moment to be defended: yet they have not been *fruitless*. Mr. Sumner says:—

“The fruitlessness and vanity of war appear in the results of the great wars by which the world has been lacerated. After long struggles, in which each nation has inflicted and received incalculable injury, peace has been gladly obtained on the basis of the condition of things before the war; *status ante bellum*.”—  
p. 18.

In other words, the resistance has effected all that it aimed at. When this happens, the war has fulfilled a great service, though perhaps at a dreadful price. It has manifested the impossibility of foreign conquest, and has, under severe penalties, taught each nation to tolerate the existence of its neighbour. This is a fundamental condition, without which there can be no permanent stability of anything good or great. The dreadful contests for empire which have desolated Europe in past ages, are the price paid by past generations for the brighter hopes of the present: and however horrible the details of battle, (such as Mr. Sumner has amassed in hope of appalling men who have little realized what war means), yet history declares that the permanent evils produced by war, when conquest does *not* follow, are slight in comparison to those inflicted by unjust laws and foreign government.

The incessant wars of the Greek republics did not hinder their increasing in numbers, wealth and strength; so that in Demosthenes' day Greece was stronger in men and money and in all physical supplies than she had ever been: but from the moment she lost her liberty under Alexander the Great, she began to decline, being so drained of her young men for Asiatic armies, that the Romans found her greatly emaciated: and the fall which domestic tyrannies had begun, a purely foreign despotism rapidly precipitated. Precisely the same remarks apply to Italy, which has twice over had the same experience. Abounding in population in its early times of turbulence, it became comparatively a desert after Roman conquest. Again in the middle ages it became flourishing, warlike and famous; but under despotism it sunk into a weakness which war habitually at the doors had not been able to inflict. So too, the wars of the French revolu-

tion during seven years of unparalleled exertion left France more prosperous than they found her : and after the gigantic efforts of fourteen years more under a despotism which with all its severity was popular, France though exhausted was immeasurably better off than under Louis XVI. Before her great revolution, disastrous as were her wars, these were not her worst curse, but the laws which forbade industry and pampered idle licentiousness.

Viewed as an argument on the general question of War, we deprecate *as irrelevant* the hideous pictures of human misery consequent on a battle, as tending to impress the passions and bias the judgment. Those miseries are short, and affect but a small fraction of a population. They are seldom to be set in the balance of reason against the evils of losing national independence ; yet they affect the imagination more, because so many sharp sufferings are brought into a heap and placed in open day.

With the inconsistency which pervades his whole address, Mr. Sumner, who approves of defence against pirates, quotes with high approbation the following sentimental tale from Mrs. Child's Letters from New York [Note F., p. 98], on which we intend to ground various remarks :—

“ I have somewhere read of a regiment ordered to march into a small town and take it. I think it was in the Tyrol : but wherever it was, it chanced that the place was settled by a colony who believed the Gospel of Christ, and proved their faith by works. A courier from a neighbouring village informed them that troops were advancing to take the town. They quietly answered, ‘ If they will take it, they must.’ Soldiers soon came riding in, with colours flying, and fifes piping their shrill defiance. They looked round for an enemy, and saw the farmer at his plough, the blacksmith at his anvil, and the women at their churns and spinning wheels, babies crowded to hear the music, and the boys ran out to see the pretty trainers, with feathers and bright buttons, the harlequins of the nineteenth century : of course none of these were in a proper position to be shot at. ‘ Where are your soldiers ? ’ they asked.—‘ We have none,’ was the brief reply. ‘ But we have come to take the town.’—‘ Well, friends ; it is before you.’ ‘ But is there nobody to fight ? ’—‘ No, we are all Christians.’ Here was an emergency altogether unprovided for ; a sort of resistance which no bullet could hit ; a fortress perfectly bomb-proof. The commander was perplexed. ‘ If there is nobody to fight with, of course we cannot fight,’ said he, ‘ it is impossible to take such a town as this.’ So he ordered

his horses' heads to be turned about, and they carried the human animals out of the village, as guiltless as they entered, and perchance somewhat wiser. This experiment on a small scale indicates how easy it would be to dispense with armies and navies, if men only had faith in the religion which they profess to believe. When France lately reduced her army, England immediately did the same; for the existence of one army creates the necessity for another, unless men are safely ensconced in the bomb-proof fortress above mentioned."

So many and different thoughts crowd upon us, on considering the truth and error, the good and bad tendencies,\* mingled in this passage, that we have difficulty in disentangling them, so as not to mislead a reader as to our own sentiments. We have an unlimited faith in the power of pure moral influence, consistently exerted through an adequate length of time, to subdue brute force and passion, and assume a kind of divine authority. But in order that moral force may be as influential as the tale implies, it must ordinarily have been in exercise for a long time, and by its consistency and permanence have won respect and admiration. The immediate effect of such conduct as is described, on gross and hard natures, is to produce mere surprize and contempt, and, if leisure permit, a wanton wish to make practical trial whether the non-resistance is genuine or is a mere pretence. Happy exceptions there may be, as in the behaviour of the grave and noble-minded children of North America towards Penn and his followers, (whose superiority in all art and knowledge is not to be left out in reckoning the forces which acted on the Indian mind,) but as a general rule, infinite experience proves, that to conquer violence by pure moral influence is a *process of intense suffering* to those who undertake it. An individual strong in faith and deliberately choosing for himself the course of the martyr, as the highest mode of acting, may consistently oppose meekness and passiveness to raging passion; and if, as it is probable, he should be cut off prematurely, he often purchases a milder lot for his successors, should kindred spirits follow in his steps. Thus the Moravians and the Quakers in their earlier generations underwent severe persecution, until the persecutor gave up his attempts;—in the same spirit as a man who should

---

\* It is obvious that these townsmen are supposed totally indifferent to the tie of country, unconscious of duties towards a king and fellow-citizens, and willing to be transferred to the hands of every potentate in turn. But it is impossible to notice more than a fraction of what is here to be said.

have tried to train cats to guard the house like a dog, after flogging and killing a dozen of the poor animals, would at last desist, and having learned the cat's nature, be satisfied to leave it a cat. Just so the great powers of the world have come to look on Moravians, and similar sects, as a sort of female population, and no longer dream of forcing them into battle: but they nevertheless take possession of them and of their property, and whenever occasion requires, know how to make them useful for military purposes. It is a great mistake to suppose that any softening moral influence has been felt, from conduct which appears to them only a whimsical fanaticism. If Mrs. Child's story is true, the military commander had, just then, other work on his hand; and thought it needless to lose his time upon a population, all of whose good things might at any moment be leisurely secured.

But we deeply object to the tone of the narrator and the moral which she deduces, because it tends to make men imagine that the path she recommends is easy and comfortable, instead of being the path of martyrdom: this is a most grave fault. Moreover, whether it would be lawful for a community tamely to endure that which wanton invaders have ten thousand times inflicted on a helpless population, we hold to be more than doubtful, except where non-resistance should be dictated by manifest physical weakness, and where an opposite conduct would only exasperate.

Mr. Sumner indeed furnishes us with a business-like proof from real life, that non-resistance is the safest and most comfortable, as well as cheapest, method. He quotes, as decisive, a passage from Mr. Jay, which it is hardly worth while to reproduce.

Those who with Messrs. Jay and Sumner suppose national non-resistance to be a cheap and comfortable mode of safety, ought to prove, that if no police force existed, and no magisterial authority were even pretended, (which is the international position,—unfortunately,) the unarmed individual would *then* be safer than the armed. Every great and civilized nation is (compared with savages) industrious and unwarlike, and its vast wealth makes it a mark for savage cupidity. If we can conceive for a moment a nation like England acting on the non-resisting principle, she would be a bait to spoilers, just as was the Roman Empire in its decline to the Northern barbarians, when imperial jealousy kept the provincials unarmed, and sudden reasons of

State called the imperial armies away. Many an innocent town-population was then massacred in cold blood by a sudden incursion. The infinite riches of the provinces lured the eagle from afar, and the taste of prey did but whet the appetite.—That was an awful experiment, on a prodigious scale, of the intense misery that civilized nations, when unarmed, suffer from barbarians. But what have we, civilized Europeans, in recent times, ourselves *inflicted* on savages or on one another? Unhappily there is no want of historical illustrations. When Ovando and his Spaniards had landed in Hispaniola, the native Queen Anacoana welcomed him, though a perfect stranger, with the warmest friendship. After he had received her hospitality and festivity for some days, he suddenly seized all her chief men and burned them alive; and having carried her off in chains, subjected her to a mock trial before Spanish judges, who had her publicly hanged. Avarice was the horrible vice of the Spaniards, but another, yet more shameful to name, is habitual to a soldiery, long restrained from female society. A town which calmly welcomes in a band of soldiers, perhaps of ruffians, ought to calculate on the possibility, that the chief officers will pick out the fairest maidens or matrons, and summon them to share their beds. What would parents think of their passive behaviour, if they found their male children carried off, some to be mutilated for the harem, others to be trained in warfare, and their most beautiful daughters to be sold as concubines;—one and all to be separated from Christian influences for ever, and to be educated in a foreign religion or forced to assume its externals. Nay, the whole population may be sold into slavery, and any of them constrained to subserve the crimes or sins of their lords; perhaps, as some Helot, to follow him to battle, carry his armour, tend his horses.

Mr. Sumner, we suppose, will reply, Such things cannot happen *now*, in *Christian* nations. Yet now men called Christians pay for invading the villages of unhappy Africa, and carry off her sons into slavery. It is evident that if they dared, and if it suited them, the same men would equally tear away Spaniards, Germans, or Englishmen, from their homes, families, country and religion, *if it paid them*. Is any one so childish as to doubt, whether it is the cannons and bayonets of Europe, which repel the slave-dealer and kidnapper from her shores? Why, it is a recent tale, within living memory, that Algerine and Greek pirates prowled about the Mediterranean coasts for Christians to sell as slaves at Constantinople or Morocco. The armies and

navies of Christendom, not Christian love and submission, have put down this horrible practice; and those who counsel the dismantling of fortresses, and disapprove all forcible resistance to violent invasion, must lay their account for a renewal of such atrocities. Granted that an individual of strong mind may choose the martyr's life for himself, he has no right to choose it for others; for his children, not yet of age to know the horrors in store for them: or for his neighbours, some of whom fail in courage when they discern what is coming. Indeed, the real problem, as it is found in life, is this: How are the able-bodied and youthful to act, when the feeble by age and sex implore their aid; when the brave men also, who are venturing their own lives in defence, claim that all who can assist, shall assist against lawless atrocity? If there is not entire concord in the innocent population, the few who resist bravely will exasperate the assailants to greater cruelty; and all semblance of the fair picture so praised by Mr. Sumner will vanish. A most essential fallacy is hidden in Mrs. Child's quiet remark, that "the experiment on a small scale indicates" what ought to be done in a nation at large. The concord in being willing to *suffer* which is not quite impossible in an enthusiastic sect, is simply impossible in an entire nation. The great majority will be depraved, not exalted, by the ordeal of martyrdom.

The persecution which the Christian Church endured under Decius and Galerian, only prepared it to covet earthly power, and to use that power harshly against its adversaries. The sufferings endured by Protestants made the English cruel towards Roman Catholics. The martyr-spirit belongs to very few, and nothing can be more mischievous than for those few to press the multitude into a position for which they have no faith.

We have thus at length urged the grounds which sometimes make *defensive war* a duty; because the opposite sentiment is a growing fanaticism, fostered by ignorance of the world, and plausible to young and tender natures. We do not thank Mr. Sumner for his concessions on this head, when we find them all neutralized and refuted by his arguments.

While thus forced to approve of defence, we are utterly averse to the compact according to which a soldier or sailor enters service. He is expected to fight in any war to which any Prime Minister may send him, however strong his conviction that it is unjust and aggressive. Theoretical means may be suggested of avoiding this difficulty; but it is certain that they will not be

adopted, as long as our recruiting-sergeants can pick up able-bodied youths who have no scruples; nor does the least indication appear that our aristocratic officers feel any difficulties of conscience on these heads.

Mr. Sumner, with others, has a vague feeling, but has not distinctly pointed out what it is that makes war a very improper mode of obtaining "redress of grievances." He has indeed the following remark:—

"The object proposed in 1834 (on the part of the United States) by war with France, was, to secure the payment of five millions of dollars. It would be madness to term this a case of self-defence. It has been happily said:—'If, because a man refuses to pay a just debt, I go to his house and beat him, that is not self-defence':—but such was precisely the conduct proposed to be adopted by our country."

The direct process in such a case is the barbarian one, of landing on the foreigner's coast and carrying off property; which is either detained as a pledge for the repayment due, or else sold to indemnify creditors and defray the expense of capture. This barbarian fashion appears to us in principle far preferable to declaring war; because in the latter case, *in return for a limited injury, an unlimited punishment is inflicted*, and on innocent parties; than which no wrong can be more execrable.—An obstinate or foolish French Minister refuses to pay American subjects their dues. In consequence, the Americans think they are justified in blowing up innocent French merchant ships, and, if occasion offer, laying French towns in ashes; a remedy disproportionate to the disease. But, in fact, if a modern State attempted to redress its pecuniary wrongs by a barbarian foray, it would have to calculate on retaliation; and not knowing on what part of its extensive dominions the retaliation would fall, it would need to keep up an entire war establishment for defence. This would more than swallow up the value of the property withheld, and would be utterly absurd, unless it could hope to make the other party pay this expense also; which undoubtedly could not be done except by a war on a large scale. For these reasons we fully agree with Mr. Sumner, that the truly dignified and politic way of behaving under pecuniary fraud, if it refer to a past transaction and has a limit, is to bear it, but with protest to other powers, and some separation of amity, such as may be felt.

No candid reader (it is trusted) can have read our comments

without seeing that we utterly abjure the warlike spirit, and deplore war, under all circumstances, as a cruel and dreadful infliction. If we have occupied ourselves chiefly in vindicating *some* Resistance, and not in extolling Peace, or re-echoing the condemnation of battle-loving propensities, it is because the latter topic is superfluous to all except those whose greatness or gains arise from other men's sufferings. Upon these an angel's eloquence would be lavished in vain. It would rejoice us to see a Christian abhorrence of rapacity and violence influential over the world at large; but of this we despair, until the Christian Peace-party shall avoid the extravagances which we have been pointing out. To justify *some* wars of defence, is the first condition requisite for that soundness of view and power of Truth, by which the lovers of Peace must triumph.

---