

[From London Quarterly Review, July, '63.]
Close of the American War.

ARTICLE IV.—1. *Exodus of the Western Nations.* By Lord Bury. London, 1865.

2. *Col. Fletcher's History of the American War.* London, 1865.

3. *Campaigns in Virginia, Maryland, &c., &c.* By Capt. G. C. Chesney, &c. Vol. II. London, 1865.

Lord Bury, having held an official position in Canada, and acquired a personal interest in the affairs of the New World, is led by a natural train of thought to the birth and infancy of the communities which have grown so rapidly into their present importance. Great would be the interest and value of the work—if such we possessed—that could teach us how Europe was peopled; trace the gradual divergence of its present races under local influences; tell us whence came the parent tribes; and how, with a common tone of thought prevailing, language became so diversified. America has the advantage over the other continents in knowing its history from the root. That history is usually presented to us in fragments. Lord Bury, in the work before us, gives us the benefit of a clear and comprehensive view of the whole of the great movement across the Atlantic. And though at no one time did there occur so great a migration as to amount to an "exodus," still the movement has, upon the whole, transferred to the New World large masses of the population of Europe. Considering the taste for historical composition so prevalent in these days with the New England writers, it seems strange that it should remain for an English author to give the complete history of the peopling of America. But to each writer on the spot, the part of his own people stands disconnected from the rest, with its separate life and special interests; it is easier for one at a distance to reduce to accurate perspective countries equi-distant from himself. Lord Bury has undertaken this task of bringing all into the same field of view, thus adding a work to our literature which is as a chart of the world to one who before had but disjointed maps of its divisions. Unfortunately, the work appears at a time when all who interest themselves in the affairs of America are absorbed in the events occurring from day to day. The storm is, indeed, over now, but the waves have not yet gone down; and the mind is not yet in a mood for calm study. As this agitation subsides, attention will be drawn to American history, which has hitherto been regarded in this country with marked indifference. Out of this indifference, we have been thoroughly aroused. Students will seek to trace their way back to the original causes of the tremendous events which have recently occurred; and the European historian, who had hitherto allotted a spare chapter to America, will have to assign to it in future a prominent place in the world's affairs. It might have been in anticipation of such probable current of thought that Lord Bury has provided this valuable store-house of facts, the fruit of long labor and research, placed before us in a spirit of philosophical inquiry, and clothed in terse and animated language.

Colonel Fletcher's "History of the American War" leads us to remark, that in our opinion, a considerable period of time must elapse before the complete history of this great struggle can be written. A civil war, beyond all others, involves political questions, and in this instance the Federal system of government renders these unusually complex. The cessation of the struggle will be followed by a deluge of biographies, memoirs, reports; and these will have to be laboriously collated, winnowed of their chaff, and reduced to materials for the historian. Nor is it possible as yet to command that calm view of the whole field which shall do full justice to both sections of the Union. Hence, the only history that can yet be written is that of the military events, a very important part, but not the whole of the subject. Such a record Col. Fletcher gives us, clearly narrated, singularly dispassionate, and full of interest. It adds greatly to the value of the work that its author was an eye-witness to the most remarkable campaign of the war, which, unfortunately, the first volume of the work leaves unfinished. The next volume will probably rescue the reputation of McClellan from the oblivion into which it has fallen in the rapid whirl of events. As a soldier, Col. Fletcher naturally endeavors to do justice to one who, though now unpopular, may claim to have twice rescued the cause of the North from

min, and who at all times had two enemies to fight—the Government at Richmond and his own. As no reputation has fallen so much, probably none will recover so greatly as that of McClellan, when excitement calms down and the success of other leaders ceases to dazzle the judgment. It is easy to contrast his slow and over-cautious steps with the dashing career of a Sherman; but McClellan's army was of other material. He came into play after the great disaster of Bull Run, and was incessantly thwarted and paralyzed by that interference of amateurs at Washington which this volume so strikingly relates. This, the army of the West and in the end that of Grant, wholly escaped. On recalling now the great advantages gained by the North in the fall of Fort Donelson, New Orleans, Norfolk and the occupation of many points on the coast, as well as in Tennessee, the heart of the country—the idea occurs in closing the volume that a more correct estimate might have been formed of the probable termination of the struggle than that which was generally adopted in this country. But the continuation of the work will describe those brilliant feats of the Southern Generals—of Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Beauregard, Stuart—and that firm endurance and heroic self-sacrifice of the people which extorted the admiration of Europe, and rendered it hard to believe that so wide and difficult a country, defended with such resolution and military genius, could ever be brought under subjection.

Now that we hear such loud denunciations of rebellion, and reiterated assertions that treason is the "blackest of crimes," it is almost with a feeling of surprise that we peruse this record of the calm and constitutional manner in which the Southern people proceeded to form a Government and unite themselves into a confederacy. Each State, through its Legislature, passed an act or law which summoned a convention of its people, the direct organ of its sovereignty, and by this convention its severance from the Union was decreed. In the older States, the form adopted was simply the repeal of the original ordinance of a like convention, which had attached them to the Union. The same formalities were used in dissolving the tie which had been used in contracting it. Nothing can be imagined more opposed to our ideas of rebellious leaders or an insurgent body. And in framing a Constitution, the object plainly aimed at was to retain every valuable principle of the old one whilst rectifying the defects which experience had pointed out. Thus, though in all the main features the old and the new are identical, that of the South made the Presidential term six years, and precluded re-election—an improvement of the utmost value. The scandalous abuse of dismissing all officials, down to the village postmaster, on each accession of a new President, was practically rendered impossible. It is strange that ministerial responsibility should not have been ordained, for this seems to us an absolutely essential feature in constitutional government; but here, where change might have been desirable, the traditions of the Union prevailed. One remarkable fact is the open avowal—for the first time in any constitution—of the principles of free trade—in the express prohibition of duties for the purpose of protection. These principles are indeed to be found in the Federal Constitution; but not being in express terms, they have been evaded in practice, until the United States now offer the grossest instance in existence of a spirit of monopoly and a partial fiscal law.

They who are familiar with the literature of the war, should they chance not to have seen the Southern Constitution, would expect to find the preservation of slavery at the head and front of it. They would be surprised to find how little it says upon the subject. It is true, it was framed by slave-owners, but so was that of the Union. The writers, who appear to have enjoyed a peculiar pleasure in terming the South a "slave power," have forgotten that the model republic was also a "slave power;" nay, that the North was a slave power throughout the whole of the war, for to its close there were slaveholding States within the loyal band. Nor is there here a single provision for the protection of slavery which does not exist also in the Federal Constitution. It is true, this of the South forbids "the passing of any law impairing or denying the right of property in negro slaves;" but neither could any such law be passed by the Federal Congress under its Constitution. The same inability existed, and in both cases, for the same reason—that the subject was beyond the scope of Fed-

eral action, and belonged exclusively to that of the State. But there is nothing in the Southern Constitution that would have precluded any of its States from emancipating its negro population by the act of its own Legislature. The principle which stopped the interference of the central government told both ways. The Richmond Congress could not interfere to free the slaves, but it was equally powerless to prevent their being freed. Hence all that has been said of slavery being the "corner stone" of the Southern power is mere windy declamation. The metaphor was, indeed, used by Mr. Stephens, but not as it is invariably and erroneously quoted. He was replying to the very absurd dogma of the Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created equal;" and asserted that, on the contrary, inequality is the law of nature, and that the inferiority of one race to another was the corner-stone of the system. But whatever Mr. Stephens might say or mean, nothing could well be more absurd than to fix upon many millions of people, the great majority of whom had nothing to do with slavery, the sentence or the epithet of a speaker expressing his individual view, on his sole responsibility. The use to which the epithet has been put is no less illogical. The corner-stone of the Southern Confederacy was obviously its Constitution. With it, there existed a Confederacy; without it, none. Here was the base on which rested the whole fabric as a political power. Now, when we see that this Constitution permitted any one, every one, of the States to abolish slavery, we shall see the absurdity of terming that the corner-stone of an edifice which could be removed at any time at pleasure, without detriment to the structure.

In the perspicuous account given by Colonel Fletcher of McClellan's remarkable and ill-fated campaign, we are struck with the treatment he received at the hands of Mr. Lincoln, to which his failure may be largely attributed. Had it been the object to render success impossible, it could hardly have been better pursued. No sooner had McClellan left Washington, than the President commenced a series of measures unparalleled in their way. Nay, even before this, and without consulting his Commander-in-Chief, it appears that he issued positive orders for the movement of the troops which enforced the abortive advance on Manassas—a failure that threw a sinister influence over the campaign. During that advance McClellan learnt by the columns of a newspaper, and without the slightest previous intimation, that he was reduced from the command-in-chief to that of the forces around him. This step withdrew from his control the troops in the valley of the Shenandoah, which formed an important part of his combinations. It was followed by the withdrawal, in a similar manner, of another body of ten thousand men, under Blenker. The next step was to place beyond his control the very base of his own operations, Fort Monroe, reducing his resources by another ten thousand men. Finally, the entire army corps of McDowell, whose co-operation was vital to the plan of the campaign, was suddenly withdrawn from his orders. The wonder is that any general so treated should not have resinded in despair. Colonel Fletcher observes:

"Ignorant of military, and indeed of most other matters of which a knowledge is expected from men in high position, weak in character, and consequently obstinate, Mr. Lincoln was singularly unfitted for the station of life he was called upon to fill. His very character for honesty was a misfortune, as it afforded a sort of counterpoise to his defects, and led men to suppose that his straightforward dealing in private life would be carried out in his public acts. He professed, and probably had, a sincere regard for General McClellan; but when no longer under his personal influence, was easily led by the people around him, and acted in a way that little became the ruler of a great country, and which his most lenient critics must allow had the appearance of duplicity."

The lamentable death of Mr. Lincoln, so tragic, so piteous in every detail—horror at the atrocity, and apprehension of the ills that may flow from it—combined to produce the strong feelings of indignation and sympathy which have been expressed in this country. For a time it was proper to yield to a current of feeling, the generous impulse of human nature. And indeed, no man ever played a part of the first importance in history who so little merited such a death. No ruler in possession of despotic power was ever so completely the reverse of a tyrant. The very weaknesses and defects of his

character were of a nature to disarm personal resentment. No man was ever less stern, less haughty, less cruel, less vindictive. Industrious, pains-taking, domestic, full of quaint good humor, striving with limited knowledge or capacity to do what seemed best at the moment, thrust into the midst of difficulties almost beyond the grasp of human intellect, he struggled on—as he termed it in his homely language, "pegging away"—until the world saw that under an uncouth exterior there was a large fund of shrewd sense and mother-wit, with an entire absence of malice. An instinctive sense of this led all to shudder at his fate. He was an untutored child of nature, and the manner of his death seemed an outrage on nature, on mankind. But now, that expression has been fully given to these feelings, we must not permit truth to be sacrificed. As President of the United States, the rule of Abraham Lincoln stands wholly apart from personal qualities, good or bad. That rule is proper matter for criticism, and must stand a keener test than that of sentiment. Respect is not to be paid to the memory of the dead by fulsome praise or falsification of history. Unfortunately, it is a proverbial expression, "to lie like an epitaph;" but no such license may be used where great principles and the destinies of millions of people are at stake.

President Lincoln was another example of that deplorable rule, long enforced by the exigencies of the Union, which practically excludes all able and eminent men from the Presidential office. Mr. Seward, the proper chief of the Republican party, was passed over, as in other times Clay, Webster and Calhoun. To prevent a disruption of the party, it was necessary to nominate a person unknown even by name to the infinite majority of the American people. Mr. Lincoln was therefore chosen as usual, not by virtue of his eminence, but by virtue of not being eminent. He was by birth a Southern man, a Kentuckian; his wife was also Southern, some of her relatives being on the Confederate side throughout the war. He entered upon office uncontrolled by a popular decision. If, indeed, it might be said that any leaning of the public mind could be detected, the majority in the North appeared to have reconciled themselves to a peaceful separation, and leading politicians, such as Mr. Seward and Mr. Everett, had expressed their abhorrence of the idea of shedding their brothers' blood. The Cotton States had seceded, but the great Border States, with Virginia at their head, clung anxiously to the Union. The history of the United States afforded a valuable guide in this emergency. The Union had been broken up before, peacefully. Two of the States were out of it for quite two years, at the end of which time, finding their isolated condition intolerable, they re-entered the fold. Now, so long as the Border States remained with the Union, it was hardly possible for the Cotton States to form an antagonistic power that could endure. Not only the vast resources of the North, but the greatest of their own sister States would have been against them. Had a statesman been in office at Washington he would probably have spoken thus: "I hold that your action is wholly wrong. I believe you have no warrant for it in the Constitution, no just cause in any fact that has occurred. Try the experiment, however, if you are resolved to do so. It has been tried by North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, who found it not to answer. Meantime I must take such measures for self-protection as judgment may direct; but unless attacked I will not lift one finger to shed the blood of my fellow-citizens." Had this course been taken, it can hardly be doubted that the Union would have been restored in much less time, without bloodshed, and with trifling cost. For at first there existed a Union party, a minority, but still an important party in every Cotton State but one. That party would have had not only the North, but the whole influence of the Border States to support it. Any one may see what this war would have been without the people of Virginia. Now Virginia would have been on the other side. Hence the Cotton States would not only have been void of the necessary resources for an independent position, but would have been a divided people. This division would have widened into dissension, increasing day by day; for the excitement of the hour would have been followed by a reaction, and by disappointment at the results. The cost of a separate Government and military force would have compelled taxation, hitherto unknown. The Federal Government, without going to

war, might easily have caused the heavy cost of an armed peace, and it had the power to place very irksome restraints on the commerce and correspondence of the country. Thus the Union party, although originally a minority, would have grown daily under such influences, and probably in less than the four years which have gone by, would have become a majority, and have brought back the States into the Union. The policy which might have produced these results was the only one permissible under the Constitution. It grants no power to coerce a State, and such power was excluded advisedly, on the reasoning of Madison—that it would be monstrous to provide for the maintenance by force of a Union that was based on free will. The coercion thus excluded by the founders of the Union, Mr. Lincoln resolved to employ. It was an error disastrous to the country. For not only was there a simple way to attain the end desired, but the use of force for the purpose was destructive of the very object sought. By force it was quite possible to conquer the South, but not to restore a Union. To apply the name of a Union to the relations that exist between Russia and Poland, would be ludicrous; such are now the relations of North and South. Between sentient beings union implies a joint, a mutual action that can only proceed from accordance of will. The same principle holds good with great communities. And when one section has conquered another section of the same people, slain the flower of its manhood, devastated its soil, and stands amidst the ruin it has made, in the triumph of superior power, this can only be called the restoration of a union by substituting the sound for the true sense of the words.

And when Mr. Lincoln made this deplorable error, how did he carry out the policy which he had chosen? By sending back the deputation that waited upon him from the Border States, with an answer so offensive as to force upon them the decision to leave the Union. By calling out 75,000 men for three months, exhibiting an ignorance of the magnitude and resources of the country he proposed to coerce, such as hardly could have been found in Europe. By fitting out a secret expedition in New York to reinforce Fort Sumter, although an understanding of honor existed with the Commissioners whom the South had sent to Washington, that no change should be made in the *status quo*. But there is matter more grave even than this. The reason assigned by Mr. Lincoln for deciding on the invasion of the Southern States was the oath he had taken to maintain the Constitution. But the President does not take any oath to maintain the Union. He went on to do what his oath did not compel, and to break what that oath enjoined. To maintain the Constitution required him to maintain those great rights—freedom of person, of speech, of the press—which it expressly guarantees, and which his Government trampled upon without any real necessity and without the smallest concern. If so terrible a means as the sword must needs be employed under a stern sense of duty, that duty plainly required that he who proceeded to destroy the lives of others for an alleged breach of law should himself maintain that law with the most scrupulous care. Now, there is hardly one great principle of that Constitution—nay more, we cannot recall any one great political principle avowed and cherished in America, whether within or outside of the Constitution—which was not violated by Mr. Lincoln's Government.

The Declaration of Independence, for instance, announced in sonorous terms that governments "derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." What an illustration of this, to force a detested government upon a people who refuse their consent. Again, that same document, which is read every 4th of July, in order to inculcate these principles, goes on to teach the world that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of certain ends (one of them being the pursuit of happiness,) "it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its power in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness." These are brave words, and this is precisely what the people of the South proceeded to do. Alas, the principles that are so lofty and virtuous when they tell in our favor, how black and wicked they become when the enemy has them on his side! If there be any one principle thoroughly established in the North, as the rule of political action, it is that the majority shall govern and the minority submit. This is,