



On the Need for Thinking Soldiers



Lt. Gen. Sir William Butler

“In England there has long been an idea prevalent in the minds of many persons that the soldier should be a species of man distinct from the rest of the community. He should be purely and simply a soldier, ready to knock down upon word of command being duly given for that purpose, but knowing nothing of the business of building up It is needless to say that Charles Gordon held a totally different view of the soldier's proper sphere of action, and with him the building part of the soldier's profession was far more important than the breaking part. The surgeon who could only cut off a leg or amputate an arm, but who knew nothing of binding up the wound or stopping an open artery, could not be of much account in any estimate of men. Gordon understood the fact that nations as well as individuals



Maj. Gen. Sir Charles George Gordon

have pulses, that the leader who would lead to any definite end must know how to count these pulsations, and, in addition to his skill as a sword-cutter, must be able to do a good deal of the binding up of wounds, even though he had himself caused them. To say this is, of course, only to say that Gordon was great, in a sense greater than any merit of action in arms could aspire to. The nation that will insist upon drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking by cowards.”

Extract: *Charles George Gordon* by Colonel (later General) Sir William F. Butler, published by MacMillan and Co. in 1889, p. 85