

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

THE VALUE OF A MOMENT

The Christian Mission Magazine, January 1874

Another year gone! The value of a year is apparent enough, and we hear a good deal of vague talk just now about the value of time, often from people who think little of the value of eternity. How many understand the value of a moment?

To those who are intent upon pleasure, and who regard life itself with heedless selfishness, seeing no object higher than their own gratification, no wonder that moments, hours, days, and months, are nothing. But to warriors—to true soldiers of Christ—moments are everything.

How precious are the

MOMENTARY OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK FOR GOD

that constantly present themselves to every one who is watching for them!

There is a moment sometimes when the child is deeply impressed by some Bible story, or by some passing event. An earnest, loving word from a Christian parent just then may enlist a whole life in the service of Christ; but it is bed-time, or the carriage is just ready, or mother has no time—and the chance is gone.

A single customer is in the shop, and he is friendly enough to talk a little off the line of business. a sentence will press home upon him the importance of his soul as he never felt it before; but he may be offended—there is a momentary hesitation, and with another remark he goes out unwarned.

In the railway-carriage with a single passenger, for whose soul you are praying. He looks rather unapproachable; you wonder how to open a conversation; you look around and within for some theme in which he may be interested. While you are calculating, the train rushes on, it slackens speed, it stops; your fellow-



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passenger rises and leaves, you feeling that you have thrown away the one opportunity you will ever have to lead him to Christ.

The tract distributor on his weekly round is met at one door-step by some one who says, "You had better not leave one this time, for we are moving." A decided loving, effort may open a road into the house, and into that heart, too; but it is getting rather late, or rather dark, or the distributor "does not feel drawn." or "does not feel able," to be so pressing just then—an another soul, for whose salvation prayer and labour have been spent, is allowed to get out of range unsaved.

The preacher is feeling the importance of his subject, and is conscious of the help of God in dealing with the souls of his hearers. Before him sits one who is evidently moved. The subject is peculiarly suited to his case, and a few words specially designed for his benefit, with a look in his direction, may break down his pride, and bring him to the feet of Jesus. But then "it will not do to be personal"—it will not do, in fact, to cope thoroughly with the unbelief of any one heart—so the sermon goes on, and the man goes home undecided.

There is, there must be, a moment for every man when the word of God ceases to be looked upon as a statement merely, and becomes a felt reality—

A MOMENT OF CONVICTION,

whether it be conviction of sin, or of some duty. How easy to repent, how easy to perform the service demanded just at that moment, and how much harder when the moment is gone! How many battles are won and lost in every hour of our existence! How often are those who ought always to conquer, vanquished, just because a moment is lost or misused!

However numerous and varied may be the influences which tend to lead a soul to Christ, there must be

A MOMENT OF SALVATION,

if conversion takes place at all. That moment may be possibly be unnoticed, or forgotten; but there must be a first beat of true soul-life, a first sight of Jesus, to



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every new-born child of God. Alas! that so many dear laborers who are striving to bring souls to Christ should fear to use moments, as they might be used.

there are performers, the charm of whose feats consists in the extremity of the danger to life and limb which they involve. Surely no one could justly condemn the friend who should seize some acrobat upon the stage, and by main force prevent him from continuing his exhibitions. Would it be thought an improper thing if the same effect were produced as suddenly by reasoning, or by the tears of a loving wife? And yet the vast majority of Christian people look upon the work of conversion as one which must be very gradually accomplished, and consider any determined effort to secure a more rapid consummation highly imprudent at the least, if not more likely to do harm than good; and what is the result? Many churches carry on their services, year after year, without the known conversion of a single soul. Rather than confess the existence of so terrible a state of things, vague statements are made without foundation, except such as may be presumed from God's declaration that His word shall not return to Him void, but shall accomplish that for which He sent it. This one text is used as a universal salve for all consciences, and, thus perverted, doubtless leads to the damnation of many. Horrible indeed that God's gracious proclamation of His loving purpose should actually be used by His servants as an excuse for indifference to the immediate accomplishment of the Divine Will! What a contrast to the readiness of Christians to accept the instantaneous accomplishment of any purpose of their own!

Who objects to the instantaneous signature of a deed, the instantaneous conclusion of a bargain, the instantaneous starting of a train? Why is instantaneous conversion so much objected to? Is it not because the professed people of God, so decided and earnest in all their worldly concerns, are half-hearted and uncertain in their universally object to the doctrine of purgatory, and yet, while they are unwilling that there should be the slightest delay in their entrance into Paradise, they repudiate the project of bringing souls at once into the kingdom of Christ, as being rash and improper! Such inconsistency would scarcely be credible, were it not similar to the conduct generally prevailing amongst the professed servants of God.

It will always be found that, where instantaneous conversion is looked upon as objectionable, there are scarcely ever any conversions at all. And this cannot



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be wondered at. By every possible type and simile, and by many exhortations, God has set forth the importance and necessity of instant submission to Him, and has expressed His resolution to accept a broken heart the moment it is offered. If the Lord's professed people prefer their own wisdom—their own ideas of propriety—to His, they must expect that, instead of seeing the Lord's work of salvation, they should only see their own performances, their own weakness, and their own failure.

Away with this dread of sudden conversion! If one of us were on the verge of eternity, should we object to being plucked as a brand from the burning? and if we love our neighbor as ourselves, and believe that in the midst of life we are in death, we must be willing—nay, eager—to secure the salvation of all whom God places within our reach.

What is instant conversion more than an immediate answer to prayer? And if prayer cannot be immediately answered, of what use is it amid the wild whirl of human events? If we believe in God at all, we must believe in the sudden answer to petitions granted by Him who has said, "Before ye call I will answer, and while ye are yet speaking I will hear."

But if God is willing in a moment to answer our prayers, it is gloriously possible in a moment to obtain the greatest blessings. God has declared his intention to circumcise the hearts of His own, and to sanctify them wholly. Great as the work is, God will perform it in any heart the moment that heart casts itself entirely upon Him. "He that asketh, receiveth."

WE MUST ALL DIE IN A MOMENT,

no matter whether our end by on the bed of sickness, or amidst the crash of some great catastrophe. Thanks be to God that the moment of death may be a moment of victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. How many who have been kept away from Christ by the vain thought that the one great change necessary could not be effected all at once, sink in a moment into an unlooked for perdition, the Lord only knows! Oh, let us with our might strive to turn men to God at once. With all eternity hanging on a moment, let us use all diligence, not only for our own salvation, but for that of others.



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So shall a glorious entrance be ministered to us in one grand moment into the kingdom of our Lord. Oh, how supremely precious will it be to feel in that moment that life on earth is ended, and life in heaven begun. If such a salvation be our object, let us see to it that our lamps are trimmed and our lights burning, and that in no moment of 1874 we be found with sin upon us.