

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

THE ENEMY

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We are always talking of fighting and conquering. Is any one really resisting us? Have we, in fact, any real personal enemy to conquer?

Alas! We hardly need the Bible to inform us that there is a great and real enemy present everywhere. "The tares" in their abundance, the villainies, outrages, and follies, the sorrows, tears, and groans of a dark, miserable, ruined world, must force every sensible man to conclude—"an enemy hath done this."

We are always talking victory, and yet we are not in possession of the field. The sublimest thoughts of a time of salvation, and glory, and peace, have always been cherished by the Lord's people; and yet, here we are still in the midst of conflict, still as far, apparently, from peace as ever. Men *will not* hear; they *will not* believe; they *will not* come to Christ—and why? Because there is an enemy who is using enormous power to hinder and thwart our movements. Our great opponent is

THE GREAT PERSONAL ENEMY OF GOD.

We cannot search into the origin of this being, or of his hatred to our Father. The records of the skies, if written, are not yet within our reach; and we can know but little of the events which preceded our own world's creation. But one thing is certain—there is a great spiritual being, whose whole existence is devoted to the single object of resisting God.

Clamour as you please for morality and benevolence in the name of man—nay, even exalt man for devotion to God—and you will meet with no great opposition or difficulty; but the moment the authority or honor of God is involved, you find the full power of the enemy let loose against you.



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Ah, the devil knows nothing of those beautiful abstractions, those cold generalities, which are advocated as the only proper forms of religious thought and feeling. He cares nothing for the diffusion of theories or the triumph of principles. For reasons we cannot fathom, he hates God, and he never omits an effort to injure or displease Him. That is why he fights us with such directness and success.

Oh, that was, as children of God, felt as we ought towards this desperate enemy of our Father in heaven! We have seen a child rush to the help of his father against some rough assault, and we have admired and sympathized with his tearful, helpless determination. Only a childlike religion is capable of that desperate, loving rush "to the help of the Lord against the mighty" which our Savior's loving heart yearns for. And only desperate men, blinded with tears and frenzied with fire from on high, are capable of successfully resisting the

RECKLESS SPITE

of Beelzebub. What does the devil care for the anguish of the guilty, the sighs of the widow and the orphan, the miseries of a blighted race, the throes of a spoiled creation, the bubbling cries of myriads of lost souls sinking in eternal burnings? What to him the wreck of homes, the ruin of "vested interests," blasting, mildew, fire, and famine? What to him weary, aching frames, palsied limbs, deformed and torn and bruised and bleeding bodies, minds in ruin, and souls wallowing in the mire? He hates God, and he will gratify his hatred to the uttermost, if a universe perish at the result. From the very circle round the throne a band of lovely angels must be torn, from every one of our homes the choicest of our loved ones must be taken, from every one of us the crown and the peace and hope itself must be snatched away for ever, if it may be, only to satisfy the insatiable thirst for revenge against the Holy One.

My God! and is it in fighting for Thee against such a foe that men are afraid even to use a word that might give offense? Oh, for a just and earnest conviction of the eternal realities of our life!

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How mighty the love that protects us from such enmity! Thank God, the devil constantly fails after all, but his

DESPERATE DISAPPOINTMENT,

instead of disappointing, seems only to spur him on to interest activity.

Every human soul is daily waylaid, and in how many instances the tempter is foiled, God only knows; but no interruption in the fatal activity of hell ever occurs. Temptations resisted a thousand times are repeated, as if certain to be successful; suggestions, the fallacy of which has been proved over and over again, are re-stated verbally, and in print, as though they were well-known facts. The truths of the Gospel, the characters of God's servants, and the movements of the Church, are incessantly assailed with the most violent abuse, and opposition of the bitterest character; and no succession of "triumphs of the Gospel," however rapid or sweeping, has the slightest effect in modifying the strength or nature of the enemy's attacks.

How dreadfully does all this contrast with the weeping eyes, the heavy hearts, and, alas! too often, the slackened diligence of Christian workers whensoever disappointments arise, or even when success is only limited!

When we think of the untiring, invincible determination of our enemy, we could almost begin to respect him, were it not for the

MEAN SUBTLETY

which equally distinguishes all his movements.

Choosing for every onslaught, not the light in which his acts, if not his plans, could be discovered and guarded against, but the darkness in which no one can naturally have a fair opportunity for resistance; choosing always the feeblest and most helpless for his most furious attacks; choosing the moments of man's weakness, and using the completest combination of agencies to effect his object—the devil always fights with the extremest cowardice and treachery.



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Lying has from the first been of his chief forces. Painting the one true Being of Light that we could most safely trust in the most hideous colors; breathing horrid thoughts of unbelief and evil into the purest mind; destroying the mutual confidence of the most loving circle by the inroads of deceit; separating chief friends with groundless suspicion; covering every useful life with the foul slime of slander and reproach, and disuniting the soldiers of the Cross by evil surmisings, evil reports, and evil teachings—this liar from the beginning has made every ear the receptacle of his falsehoods, and every human being the victim of them. Such an apt selection of opportunities can only be realized by

PERFECT, CONSTANT WATCHFULNESS.

When the most diligent servants of the Master are fallen asleep, the devil can still watch many hours more; when the most careful parent's attention is diverted from her child, the devil is there; when the most devoted of preachers has expended his last strength, his most finished point, his most telling story, the devil is there; when careless hands hang down, and idle lips are silent about Jesus, and slothful comfort is rejoicing, the devil is there.

Amid the eager throng of earnest souls in the prayer-meeting, and amid the giddy worldlings in the drawing-room, in the crowded streets of the great bustling city, and in the silent sick-room, the devil is watching—watching like the wild beast for its prey—watching with all the concentrated intensity of an eternal life of hatred, for one thing, and one thing only—an opportunity to vex God. For the devil has nothing whatever to gain; he has never sought to gain anything for himself since all was lost to him for ever. But if he has nothing to gain, he has equally *nothing to lose*.

Ah! is not this the secret of his power and the mighty key to all his strategy? Our enemy is single-eyed. With no tie to bind, no secondary aim to answer, no personal object to serve, all the devil's power is for ever thrown into the war which is the one employment of his miserable existence. Defeat, dishonor, are nothing to one who is for ever lost and damned. To such a life of unbridled malice and hopeless misery for ever are our fellow-men being dragged by the million every year.



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Christians, shall we never appreciate the position in which we are placed? Face the foe we never really can, for the foe never faced any one yet, and never will. But only such vigilance and such unhesitating, ceaseless, desperate resistance and attack as Christians have never yet as a body displayed can cope with the enemy successfully. But although an all but almighty foe surrounds us, an Almighty Savior is ready to lead us to eternal victory. Let us give up ourselves and all we have for ever to Him, and follow our immortal Head to glory and dominion, for ever and ever.