

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

FORWARD!

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Forward! Word of command, word of battle, and yet word of order. Forward! Motto of all who have succeeded, and of all who ever will. Forward! Word adopted and realized so well by all the civilized men of the nineteenth century in relation to everything but the service of God. Oh that we may all hear it coming from the lips of God to us, and eagerly obey! But stop—

WHERE MUST WE GO FORWARD TO?

A thousand voices around us cry, "Forward!" It roars from myriad wheels as they pass along the streets. It comes hissing and screaming from the steam-engine. It flashes along a thousand telegraph wires at once, flares before us in startling advertisements, and, as long as man is man, bubbles up from the depths of our own souls continually. Forward! But which voice shall we obey? Whither shall we go?

Oh, let it not be to follow the multitude to do evil! Let it not be to run with the crowd at all, for the crowd is always going the wrong way. Let it not be away from God, for to go forward from Him is to go down quick into hell. Let it not be to seek our own will or our own profit, for we shall only gain shadows and lose our souls. Let it not be to follow the idol which we or others have set up. Let it not be to follow cunningly devised fables or doctrines of men, but only to follow our God.

Forward to Glory! Not the vain glory of self-love; not the tinsel glory of the world; but the glory of God, the real glory to which He calls us; heaven on earth, sins forgiven, peace with God, and then everlasting glory in heaven. Glory that shall never end, but which must begin by new birth of the Holy Spirit. The glory of being made like the glorious God while living amongst men. The glory of being like Jesus, who shows forth in a mortal body all the glory of the Eternal Father. The glory of saving souls from death, of trampling down evil, and exalting right.



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The glory that pleases God and angels, and before which devils and evil men gnash their teeth and melt away.

Forward to Virtue. Not the “virtue” the philosophers devise and cannot exemplify; but the virtue that God brings forth in the life of those who obey him. The virtue of being tried men—men in Christ Jesus. The virtue, the courage, which enables men to stand up for God against all comers. The virtue that dares to turn the left cheek to him who has struck the other. The virtue that dares do anything but sin. The virtue that can bear with cheerfulness the hardships of a soldier’s life, rejoice in tribulation, sing in prison, and go shouting on to death. The virtue that conquers hatred, that despises shame, and with bleeding hands tears the victims of the devil out of the monster’s grasp, and lifts them right up to the Cross.

BUT CAN WE THUS GO FORWARD IN THE STEPS OF JESUS?

It seems sometimes hard enough to struggle with the difficulties of this present life, and to hold one’s own amongst men. Can we wrestle, then, successfully with the principalities and powers of darkness? Can we defeat the devil and press on conquering and to conquer?

Certainly not ourselves. Our best attempts at righteousness will appear but as filthy rags before Him who alone is good. Our feeble efforts, while unconverted, to please God only left us more dark and wretched than we were before. To strive for God against a world in arms of sin would be for man alone a hopeless task indeed. Of ourselves we can do nothing—with God we can do all things.

In His hands the weak are mighty and the foolish wise. The hopeless become confident, trusting in His salvation, and the lame take the prey. With Him, the most obscure have often come to the front to strike terror in the hearts of all His foes. By Him the poor sinner slave, groaning under the yoke of the devil, rises into freedom, and turns with fury upon his old master. With Him the trembling, halting believer becomes a daring champion for Christ. With Him the timid one, who dares scarcely speak a word in public, becomes a holy orator, swaying audiences not with human eloquence or learning, but with divine power. With him no man yet knows what he can do!



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Who shall stop our advance?

Shall thieves of darkness, groping on their own destruction, be a match for the children of light? Can they sever us from the arm of our God, or crush us while we abide in Him. Can all the world and hell, in league together, form a battalion through which the sword of the Spirit cannot clear a road? Ah! Why have they not been able to get rid of that hated Bible yet? Why have they not been able to stifle the cry of prayer from the agonized to God? Why have they not been able to turn the oil of joy to mourning, to tear from the believer of garments of praise and put on him the spirit of heaviness they lyingly attribute to him? Because they cannot prevent anyone from following on to know Him whom to know is life eternal.

We can only measure our power to go forward by trial.

“Try, try, try again,” is a good old motto. Many a time in the heat and smoke of human warfare bodies of troops have been ordered forward, and have gone forth little dreaming of the terrible odds against which they were being launched. But batteries are captured and prisoners taken, because soldiers, when ordered to advance, do so with all their might until they fall before the foe, or until the victory is won. For us who have immortal life there is no death, there is no defeat. Let us not be content, then, with meagre advantages, but let us dash on to complete triumph over every foe.

WE CAN ONLY GO FORWARD WITH A RUSH.

Those who desire leisure, and peace, and enjoyment, may saunter along the path of life, plucking flowers and resting every now and then to beguile the time that hangs so languidly upon their hands. Those who are content with their own progress, and are willing to leave the world to its fate, may walk along steadily enough. But to conquer sin both in and around us, to combat with success the forces of the evil one, and to win souls for Christ, we must charge, and charge, and charge again.

Rush is necessary to keep up men's courage.



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It is easy to be brave on the cushions of an arm-chair. In the public service or the prayer-meeting, surrounded only by saints, it is easy to sing about conquering every foe, or holding the fort, whatever that may mean. But to ask soldiers to walk forward quietly, with shells bursting over them, and bullets whistling past their ears, would be simply folly. Let them go, let them go with headlong speed, and with a ringing cheer. Let them go and make the utmost of their strength, every man for himself. So shall faith, and courage, and strength, be stretched to their fullest capacity, and every soldier shall be a hero.

If men would stand calmly by while we instructed them in the truth, if Satan's agencies languidly submitted to suppression or arrest, if there were no opposition to truth and holiness in the world, it might be right for us to accept counsels of calmness, and dignified sobriety of movement. But while we are a handful against a world, and while temptations and cares, like a deluge of raging devils, burst upon us daily, let us run with all our might against the forces that oppose us.

Why should we not rush?

Oh, it is not "proper!" Let everything be done decently and in "order." "Don't run to extremes," and a thousand other things are said whenever earnest men rush into spiritual strife, determined to conquer or die.

Is it "proper," then, to pretend to be a soldier of Christ, and to live in ease and self-indulgence? Is it "decent" to see our Jesus spit upon, and His salvation despised, without putting forth all our might to convince men of sin? Is it doing things in "order" to see a world disordered without striving, with all the energy we can command, to turn it upside down? Is it not the worst extreme, the extreme of sinful folly, to go coolly and quietly to work for the salvation of souls which may any moment be gone for ever from our reach? There has been sadly too much of decent and orderly "religion." The world despises it, and goes on in its sin. It is time for us to arise and fight for God.

God cheers us on to rush.

Our victorious Leader, pointing to the crowns and palms and thrones that we may attain, speaks over and over again of bestowing them all upon "him that



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overcometh." What are enemies or spectators to us? We are to overcome, and knowing against what desperate odds we are fighting, God would not urge us to overcome if He were not pleased to see us agonizing in the battle, loving and serving Him with all or strength of body, as well as of mind and heart.

"Oh, but not too fast!" What is too fast? "So run, that ye may obtain," is the only rule of speed that God gives us. We cannot run so fast as to overleap the bounds of everlasting life; let us run, then, as fast as we can; let us run through troops of men; let us leap over walls of difficulty, caring little as to the method of our service, provided we secure the end in view. Away with all false shame. Away with care about the miserable *grumbings* of petty critics. Let us save our souls, and, so far as in us lies, save the souls of others, plucking them out of the fire if need be, without regard to the opinion they or anyone else may form of us.

So shall we, ere long, rush through the gates of the new Jerusalem, while saints and angels run to welcome us, and cheer us, as in our fiery chariot we dash along the golden street to the palace of the Great King.