

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT VICTORY

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Victory! What is it? Ah! We have but to ride over the gloomy battle-field when the night has closed in upon its horrid scenes of destruction, and when the moans of wounded and dying men like blood crying from the ground come up into our ears, while the smoke of smoldering farmsteads fills the air, to see victory!

Or, if you prefer to follow the victors into the city they are just entering, while bells are pealing, and martial music is swelling louder and louder, and lights are blazing from street and mansion in brilliant rivalry, and laughing soldiers are gathering round the banquet-table, you may read victory.

If there is victory, there has been defeat—if there is defeat, there has been victory. If, therefore, we are determined to have victory, and that continually, someone must suffer bitter and constant defeat.

WHOM MUST WE DEFEAT?

To say that we must defeat the devil is only to say what we all are fully aware of, and what may easily be said, only as a sort of complete and general expression to avoid a more definite and practical solution. The devil is a living, ever-present foe, with whom, in his own person or in that of his emissaries, we have to wrestle daily; but the greater part of our struggle against the devil has to be fought out against levies of his which are seen, which are around us or within us, and which we must every day get the mastery over, unless we are ourselves to be vanquished.

WE MUST DEFEAT SELF.

Until this has been done, all other battles will be lost. We are naturally children of wrath, soldiers of hell, and enemies of God. Until born again of the Holy Ghost, we were daily trodden under foot by Satan. But when, in answer to our bitter



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cry, God set us free from this miserable bondage, we speedily found that there were still foes to God lurking in our own carnal nature: passions, appetites, habits become instincts—self, in fact, which ever and anon disputed the Divine possession of us.

Are we crucified with Christ? It is not enough to “bear the cross,” as it is called—to endure what we can hardly help enduring for Christ’s sake. That is very good, so far as it goes. It is very good for a man to bear affliction, poverty, and disappointment, without complaint; but all this may be done, and yet there may not be that entire and everlasting devotion of all to God that He requires, and which Christ has shown us how to perform. Jesus carried His cross, not for the sake of bearing toil, pain, and shame, but in order to assist in His own crucifixion. God has given Himself to the world, thus actually, in a sense, defeating Himself, He requires us to follow Him, giving up ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the service, that is, to the salvation, of the world. Have we done this?

The soldier who goes on to the battle-field resolved to take care of himself, or to seek for plunder, reward, or pastime, rather than fight, is simply a traitor at heart, however, diligently he may labor, or however valiantly he may fight when compelled to do so against his will. The noble patriot who defends his country, gives up his all without reserve, and counts not even his life dear, if he may only drive back the invader,—for such soldiers Christ calls for—men who, like the gentleman who has donned a private’s uniform and left the mansion for the tent to save his country, have given up their own selves, their will, their wives and families, yea, all that they have, to win. The great first victory over self once accomplished, is followed by daily and hourly victories, each one of which, however much pain it may cost, will give increased joy and confidence in the future. To such men victory becomes a habit not easily overcome.

Oh, Let us make sure of this great victory, whatever else we gain or lose. Let us be certain that we live only and always for our God, and never a moment for any other,

THEN WE MUST DEFEAT ALL WHO ARE NOT OUR COMRADES.

Amid the festivities of peace it may be all very well for nations to fraternize with one another; but when war breaks out, any and every man who gets in the way



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of an army must submit to it, no matter to what nation he may belong. There may be neutrality over the border-line, far away; but on the field of battle there can be no neutral whatever.

This principle once received, war becomes very simple. If we had to be always making distinctions, picking out certain favored individuals upon whom to make assault, and passing by others, either because they were not actively hostile or unfriendly, or because they were too fierce, too bad for us to attack, it would be extremely difficult to fight at all. But if everyone we meet is to be set upon unless they fall into the ranks and fight on our side, war becomes comparatively easy, and victory ought to be very frequent. A Christian, fully devoted to God, would be like a wild beast let loose upon mankind. With the Lion of Judah for our leader, we should go up and down the world, fearing neither man nor devil, but falling upon men, women, and children everywhere, and subduing them to our Master's sway.

Ah! That is how to be constantly victorious! That is how to go on conquering and to conquer. That is how to subdue the people under us. That is how to make many hear, and fear, and turn into the Lord.

But who will be such a soldier of Christ? Who shall go up against the strong city of respectable sin, or against the great fortress of vowed infidelity and infamy? Whom shall we "send, and who shall go for us"? Who will be looked upon as a wild enthusiast, as a fool and fanatic, as a madman, a pestilent fellow, a turner upside-down of the world, a revolutionist, all to win souls?

Who will torment his family, his fellow-workmen, his old companions, his neighbors, his fellow-travelers, anybody and everybody he can about their souls, their sins, their God, and their future, all day, and every day? Who will rave in the broadways and by-streets about hell and heaven? Who will watch for souls, lie in wait for them, break through all rules of propriety, and know no moderation, so that he may compel them to come to Christ? Who will be hated of all men and persecuted of all men, because his tongue is against every unconverted man, and because he incessantly struggles to force them to Christ?

Alas, alas! Where are the warriors? There is war, and there are soldiers here and there; but, oh, for more of them and for more victory! To be often victorious, if



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you are invincible, as every man who has God with him must be, it can only be necessary often to fight. Always to fight is always to be winning victories. There are people who long to see mere victory. Get it, brother, get it!

“All power is to our Jesus given,
O'er earth's rebellious sons he reigns.”

Is it true? Is it true? Is it true? If it be—up and conquer! Victory today, victory tomorrow, victory for ever!

WE SHOULD ALWAYS EXPECT VICTORY.

This may appear in itself to imply defeat, for if a man has the victory, how can he still expect it? And yet nothing more powerfully conduces to victory than the confident anticipation of it. No one is more conscious of weakness and no one more dissatisfied than the real victor. The very thought that we have conquered leads us to reflect how little we have really got, and to exclaim, “There is much land yet to be possessed.” But if, under such circumstances, a man settle down, either into contentment with what has already been accomplished, or into despair of final and complete triumph, he may already be considered severely beaten. *It is, after all, in the heart that the great battles of life are won and lost.* He who has the assurance of victory is well-nigh invincible. He who reckons upon defeat is already overcome. Is not this the great lesson that God would teach us when He says, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith?”

As we look through the list of great conquerors, whether we take them from the Scriptures or from the pages of the nation's history, do we not find them one and all surrounded, hedged in, with difficulty of every kind, and victorious because they relied upon victory in the darkest hour of their extremity? When we think of Abraham, our minds instantly see him sacrificing his only son, away from every friend, his last great hope passing from him, and yet calmly confident that, following steadily on in the path God had marked out, he should come out gloriously victorious, and so he did.

We think of David, and we see him chased about from crag to crag, far from home, from friendship, from association with the people of God; everything gone but the desperate conviction of victory ahead, which makes him shout, “Hallelujah, I shall yet praise Him,” in the bitterest hours of his extremity, He is going to conquer, and so he does.



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We find Paul just turned out of his last prison, beaten, bruised, weak, poor, hungry, and naked; sure he is going to be beaten and stoned and imprisoned again, but equally sure that it will all help him to everlasting victory, and so it does. At the end of a long career of labor, he has to stand alone before a cruel judge, and to confess that many of the best helpers he had known have forsaken him; but he is just as confidently happy as ever. His God is still with him; He will never forsake him; He will deliver him out of all his troubles; and so He did.

Ah, there are the victors! They know that their God was able to save them, and that He would save them. And if He allows them long to expect victory, it was only that they might be able to continually to rejoice in hope through a rough, long life.

It would be of little use to others for us to expect victory and not to express our expectation. But to say you are going to conquer is to boast, and to say it boldly is to brag, and is not that dreadful? Oh, with what lowliness and humility some people seem to hold back from daring to say they are going to do anything! Such people are generally correct, however. They are weak, very weak, and never likely to overcome anybody. The men who conquer often dispirit their enemies beforehand by their loud proclamation of coming triumph. Besides, how *can* men go marching on with victory already written on their hearts without letting everyone know what they expect?

We have one Leader who has never been vanquished. He always counted upon victory. He sits in Heaven today a perpetual menace to His foes, "waiting till His enemies be made His footstool;" and if any one should ask why He does not conquer all at once, the answer written upon all His actions in the past is that, certain of victory, the Lord can afford to wait. The secret of waiting as usefully, as happily, as triumphantly as He does, and of conquering at last as completely as He will, lies in "the faith of God," the unchanging certainty of the future which we always imagine so easy and simple to Him who knows it all before hand, but which He has striven to make equally simple and easy to every child. Only let us be strong and very courageous, looking for and hastening unto the coming of our Master, certain that when He comes we shall appear with Him in glory for ever.