

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT RETREATING

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WHAT, retreat! retreat! NEVER! Surely the Christian Mission, at any rate, is not going to learn how to run away. We hope not, we believe not, we trust, by God's grace, we never shall.

But there are worse things than retreating sometimes. The misery of mankind springs more from unwillingness to retreat than from any other cause. A young man, who had wandered from the right way, and was suffering the bitter consequences, was asked one day why he did not at once return to the path of safety and happiness. "Oh," he said, "*It's against my grain to do that!*" Ah, it is always against the grain of human nature, defiled and distorted as it is, to do right, especially when to do right is openly to declare that we have been doing wrong.

1875 is retreating fast. No one can hinder or stop its flight. But everyone can examine their position if they please, and see whether there by anything to which they have been holding which ought to be abandoned, in order to make the next year better than the passing one.

LET US FLEE FROM SIN.

When the angels gathered round Lot, and with earnest look and gesture urged him at once to escape for his life, the poor man, though fully convinced of the truth of all they said, and of the urgent importance of obedience, "lingered." His wife, convinced against her will, was still of opinion that Sodom was a decidedly comfortable place, and longed to return to it.

Amongst the millions who, gathering round the burned cities and the salt pillar, shake their heads over the sad folly of the wretched pair, how many are practically wiser and more determined to do right than they were?



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Here in this country, looking back upon the religious services, ordinary and extraordinary, of the past year, how many million faces do we see uplifted to the cross, how many million ears tingling with the voice of entreaty and warning, and yet how few who have really fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel! Pews filled, buildings filled, streets filled with men and women who know what they are living in sin, and ought to flee from it; but who do not, who will not escape. Death is sweeping them off with their eyes open. There they go—oh, God of Calvary!—with hymn-books in their hands, and Bibles under their arms, down amongst the cursing, writhing demons of hell!

Sin—they saw it, they felt it, they groaned and sighed, and sometimes even wept over it; but they would have it, and its hellish fangs are in their souls now for ever. There was a Deliverer; they were close beside Him once, and they trembled as He pityingly looked upon them and prayed them to be saved, but they told Him it would do *some other time*, and they were damned for ever! OH, SINNER, RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

But look! here are “believers,” who believe they cannot get away from sin; *nay, many, alas! who will not*. They know that sin still has dominion over them, at least sometimes. They have been convinced of it again and again. They have resolved to get away from it, but there they are still lingering. They are in a false position, the guns of hell command them and wound them sorely, every day. They are weak—some of them are bleeding to death; but still they linger rather than *run away from the world and be THE LORD'S ALONE*.

There is a Fortress. They look at it sometimes, and wish they were there. They sing carelessly—

“Safe from the world's temptation,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.”

But they are less at rest than ever they were since they at first believed, unless it be the growing rest of carnal slumber. Hush! what is that? Behold, the Judge is at the door! And contraband goods inside! God help us, my brethren, we must not be found with any sin about us when the King comes.

Away then, at once, from the sin we know and see and feel within us and about us—*nay, from all that God sees which does not please Him*. Away this moment



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into the Almighty arms of our perfect Savior. they say He cannot save us from all sin here below. Let us run to Him like little children, and see. *He will do all we ask Him, whatever they say.*

LET US FLEE FROM SELF-INDULGENCE

Last Christmas Eve, on his way to his charming family-circle and his glowing fire, a good man passed by and saw a little girl hatless and shoeless, timidly peeping through the chinks of a public-house door, where her "father" was drinking away his last few pence. A few steps further on lay on the pavement a woman, with her disheveled hair dragging in the mud. A policeman was jerking her arm, and ordering her to get up; but she could not rise. She spent that night in a cold cell, and "got a week" for being "drunk and incapable."

The good man mused—he resolved. Before he got home that night he had solemnly viewed before God that, from that hour, the cursed cup of ruin should never touch his lips again, but that he would do his uttermost to sweep the hellish traffic away.

But the glasses were on the table when he got home, and it would not do to come down upon the family too suddenly; and then his wife thought it would be shocking to spoil the enjoyment of the young people at that festive season of the year; besides, it would be a great disappointment to some guests already invited if they had to go home without "taking anything."

And so God was disappointed instead, and the good man indulges in "the good creatures" of the brewery, and is still mixed up with the system that is dragging men and women and children into hell. Ah! he will not give up his glass, will he not? Then he will have to give up some of his own children by-and-by, to go away into eternal darkness, because he would not flee from the treacherous refreshment.

There's a soft arm-chair there; half a turn, and it will face the cheery fire, and it will rest you wonderfully. Young man, run away! If you sit down there you will rest so well that you will soon be "really quite unfit" to do any work today. Somebody else will soon sit down and begin to talk to you. You will both enjoy yourselves, and the world will have to do without you. If you lay your head back on that



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cushion you will remember the interesting book you began reading the other day, and you will forget the poor souls that have never begun to seek Christ yet. If you look into that fire awhile the night will soon get too cold for you to go out, and as to standing in the open air on such a night, by the new light of the fire you will see that to be absolute folly. In that warm room your throat and voice will soon cease to be “what they once were,” and your “engagements” will multiply alarmingly.

Young man, run away! The demon of ease has clasped his hollow, pillowy arms round plenty of the soldiers of the Cross already. They world needs you—God needs you. run away from everything that means enjoyment to yourself, to the loss of others you might save and help. Let us live, and fight, and suffer, and die with our Jesus, that we may rest and triumph with Him by-and-by. Beware, lest He come and find you enjoying or improving *yourself* instead of watching and doing *His* will!

BEWARE OF ADVANCING BACKWARDS.

There is nothing more common than for people to be spoken of as “getting on,” who are getting away from the post of duty, falling back before the world and the devil, or giving up the sacrifices and labors they once used to engage in for God.

Have you seen the place they have just opened at the corner of Upper Street? I knew the people who go there when they worshipped in a garret. They were a people then. Why, they used to be at it outdoors and in every night, every one of them, and all the people round used to feel their power. Nay, it was the power of God they had.

They *have* got on! Only look what a nice building it is! And I’m sure the “minister” is a dear man, and he *can* preach too. None of your rambling talk and experience! Oh, no, he knows how to make a sermon, he does. And then the congregation—why, whom do you think I saw there last Sunday that ever was—why, it was Mr. Goldbag, that keeps the big shop in the High Street. And the offerings were—what do you think?—£—s.—d. They *are* getting on!



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Stop! they are not in the open air so much as they once were. And they are quieter too, and certainly I can't say they have so many souls saved as they used to. And many of them never speak or pray in public now. Getting on! they are running away! God help them! The world is as bad as ever, and the Judgment Day is nearer than ever; but they are doing less for it. Getting on! Devils are their engine-drivers then, and the blood of souls stains the track. God save any Mission station of ours from over *trying* to get on so!

May the words of "How to Reach the Masses"—

"We believe that God has given us a mission to the thousands in the great thorough-fares roaming about on the Sabbath day, and on all other days, thoroughly unconcerned about death, judgment, and eternity. To these we believe He has sent us with the glad tidings of great joy, and to win these multitudes from the gin-palace, the theater, the concert-hall, and the infidel lecture-room to Christ and usefulness and heaven is our special work"—

ever express the dearest, deepest conviction of every one of us, and be printed in great letters of fact upon all our movements!

Look at the bright glow of gaslight from that man's window? Do you see what splendid furniture he has got? and what nice new clothes his children have on? He has money in the bank, too. Ah! "Godliness is profitable unto all things," you know (only mind you don't quote that disagreeable verse two chapters father on about being content with food and raiment). Hasn't he got on well!

This time last year he was in a poor hovel, with a dirty little child on his knee, talking to him and his drunken parents about Jesus. Of course he "hasn't so much time" as he used to have for that sort of thing; and he doesn't attend so many meetings either. He considers he has borne the burden (he used not to call it that at all once) long enough; let others have their turn.

He is getting on! He is running away! With his experience, he ought to be far more active and useful now than ever he was; but he has run away, and is running still. Souls that might have called him blessed for ever will be damned, and young converts that might have been trained into mighty warriors will become weak as himself and other men through his bad example.



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God save us from getting on in the world to the injury of our spiritual life, to the robbery of the great army of salvation, and the neglect of our poor, lost, wretched world! God help us rather to follow Jesus ever downwards as regards this world's good—suffering *not in fancy, but in fact*, like Paul, the loss of all things, that we may win souls and be accounted worthy of the everlasting triumph of our Master.

On to Calvary! On to death for the world! Let us not refuse our back to the smiters, nor our face to them that would pluck off the hair! No halting! No rest! No changing front! On, suffering, sorrowing, weeping, dying for God and men, till the hosts of hell fly from their last defense, and we march on over a burning world into everlasting glory!