

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

TEARS!

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Parting sorrows, so often repeated, and yet felt so keenly, perhaps contribute more largely to the sum total of human tears than any other cause. Tears, the overflow and the relief of sorrow in some, and often the seeds of greater sorrow still in those who see them. There is a magnetic influence in tears which communicates feeling rapidly in all directions; but in addition to this sight of tears generally leaves behind a deep and lasting impression. This seems to indicate that there is a harmony and a sympathy in human nature still, which can be wrung upon very readily and very effectively. And to us, whose main business it is to move men upon a subject of the first importance, but to which, as a rule, they remain utterly indifferent, it becomes a most interesting question how to shed the most tears, and to make others shed the largest quantity.

Of course there is feeling at times too deep and strong for tears but as a rule, tears are not shed simply because people do not feel sufficiently to shed them. Let us feel more, and we shall make other people feel more too. It is impossible for the truth of God to be released without producing a great deal of feeling, and, in a world where there is so much wrong, to realize the truth must be to feel a great deal of sorrow. No doubt this is one main reason why He who was the Truth, and fully understood the Father, was a man of sorrow and acquainted with griefs.

Why do we not weep at parting with sinners out of doors?

Here is a crowd of poor sinners. Some of them have but just come up, and have scarcely heard anything yet. We grieve to turn away from them. But those men have stood for more than half an hour. That man and that woman, without bonnet or shawl, were about when we commenced, and have listened eagerly all the time. A city crowd of passing strangers to one another and to us. We must go to our in-door service. for it is time; but oh, what is to become of these people? We have never met them all before, and shall never meet them all



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again. The last word, the last look, before we meet at the judgement seat! As far as we and our testimony for Jesus is concerned, these men and women are just dying now. Parting for ever! Parting without hope of ever meeting some of them in God's presence above! Oh, why do not tears burst from our eyes ere we turn away to our procession or walk homewards? Is it because we do not realize our religion at all? Have we been talking and singing about a heaven and hell, and God and salvation, which we both thought and felt much about some time ago, but which are now only dead facts remembered and repeated over and over again? Oh, to walk in the very vivid light of living faith, and to speak and look always under the direct influence of the living God!

It is because we do not feel real brotherly love to these poor souls? We should not like to leave our own brother or sister there in the streets amongst that crowd to live and die like the rest. We should not like our own relatives to stay behind and perish. And yet these men and women are all our brethren, for whom Jesus died, for whom Jesus weeps and pleads still. Oh, to feel it more!

Is it because we are so much occupied with our own work, the service we have held, or are going to hold, that we really do not think just then about others? If so, is not our service, to a large extent, a mere form? We are there expressly to care for others, and yet our minds are so taken up with our own joys, our own labors, our own thoughts, our own needs, our own cares, our own affairs, in fact, that we forget, at any rate, at the solemn parting moment, the very object of our coming. The leader, thanking God for so good an open-air meeting, wondering why so-and-so does not fall into rank better, and why so-and-so does not sing louder, questioning whether he has given out the best hymn, and what will be the best to follow it with, praying for a good time inside, and singing aloud in joyous confidence, and the poor lost sheep he wanted to lead home all behind still at the corner there! His followers, wondering why Brother So-and-so did not come, and why Miss So-and-so did not speak, thanking God for helping them so much, or wishing they had spoken, enjoying and entering into the hymn or wishing they had had another, or at least such and such a tune to it, wondering how many will be inside, and praying for a good time; but their poor brethren and sisters in sin all behind, not daring to follow! All busy, very busy, and with their Master's business too; but too much engaged with their own things after all to look with pitying, melting eyes to the things of others!

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Oh, for an overflowing flood of tender love for souls! Oh, for singing choked with sobs and processions broke up through the ungovernable emotion of holy men and women, broken-hearted on account of the sins and sorrows of other people! Do we wonder that so many do not follow us in-doors? Is it any wonder while we feel so little about their staying away? But what about those who do come?

Why do we not weep at parting with sinners in-doors?

They have come amongst us. They have heard all we have to say. They have perhaps felt deeply moved by the Spirit's power, and all but yielded to Him; but they see the lions in the way; and now they are off perhaps before the sermon is over, perhaps during the singing of the first hymn in the prayer meeting—praying after being ineffectually pressed to come out for Christ.

What are those people doing near the door of the hall? What, talking gaily to one another while souls are hurrying past them to damnation! Discussing their health, and Brother and Sister So-and-so, the open-air service, the meetings of this week or next, the sermon, the preacher, while men and women are going away from light and hope to perish!

And what is the leader of the meeting doing? Busy with the penitent, having a good time up at the top, while poor, burdened souls are fleeing from God. And what are the people of God about? Thanking Him for a thousand blessings, praying for a thousand more, for themselves, their families, the church, and the world at large, but especially for themselves, if praying at all, while precious blood-bought ones are slipping away from the very forms at which they kneed to eternal damnation!

Oh, why does not the awful sight move, and *thoroughly move*, every heart?

Is it because the people look to the preacher, and the preacher to the people, instead of looking to God and yearning, every heart of them, for a blessing on all present? Oh, for a more vivid realization of the truths we preach!

If we could see some horrid fiend stalk into our midst at the commencement of some prayer-meeting, and seizing some poor sinner, drag him away, screaming



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for mercy to the door, surely it would arouse our sensibility, and make us care for the loss of a soul! But why should we think less of a destruction which is all the more awful because it is so silently and stealthily brought about?

Who has not read of the poor hearer, whose earnest, steady gaze, ever increasing in intensity as the service proceeded, so attracted the attention of a preacher in the Midland Counties some time since, and who was found stiff and cold in his seat at the conclusion? Not less terribly real is the passage of thousand and millions of our hearers from the hopeful and earnest attention of an awakened conscience to cold, listless, hardened indifference which marks them for an almost unsuitable damnation. And we see it daily, and do not weep!

If we ourselves could but see our dying Savior, as He draws nigh to many a soul, and turns away sickened and grieved by their continued refusal, if we looked into those eyes that weep still, and saw the heaving of that sad breast that is pierced as ever, so always, with the keenest of sorrows, the sorrow of a thoroughly disinterested sympathy, surely those who come to listen to us would not find it so easy to get away.

Oh, for guardians of our gates less eager to prevent the entrance of the unruly than to stop the departure of the unsaved, begging men and women with flowing eyes not to go down to the pit! OH, for loving hearts that would almost forget the joy of Israel's triumph, and the gladness of the redeemed, in the bitterness of mourning for the wanderer, and the sighing for the prisoner's release.

Sometimes a mother, a daughter, a wife, may be found at the close of a meeting, sad, because some dear one has not been saved; but, oh! where do we find anyone mourning over a lost stranger? Oh, why do we not feel more about these poor sheep without a shepherd, dying for want of food?

May God send upon us all a deep, all-consuming concern for the souls of our neighbors, that shall rend our hearts, and bow our souls, and make our lives one ceaseless flow of the sweetest, tenderest compassion for the wretched blinded victims of sin, whose looks of horror and anguish before the judgment seat of

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Christ will otherwise recall to us many a listless, unfeeling prayer, and many a hard, emotionless speech.