

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

CONCERT

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How much we have heard about "The European concert" lately! The concert, such as it was, is disturbed. There is an uproar, and how many of the parties now looking gloomily on will yet join in the affray, or when "concert" will recommence who can tell? The concert would appear to have depended for its continuance upon the perpetuation of one tune, "Let us all be quiet, and let everybody else alone," and when a little princeling broke away from all restraint and insisted upon attacking his neighbor, the harmony of the whole company was at an end, and the civilized world began to drift toward a commotion, the extent and results of which no one could foresee.

So end all human concerts, for the simple reason that those who take part in them have no common aim, are not subject to one common authority, and are not bound together by any permanent tie. Nations remain at peace with one another as long as peace is looked upon as most desirable in the interests of each. But the moment one country considers war necessary to preserve its "interests," the wonderful agreement which had seemed to subsist so long and to be so perfect is altogether at an end.

This is sadly too much the case amongst religious people. Here is a church or a society which has enjoyed "a long run of prosperity." The harmony of that church is wonderful. The fact is nobody wants anything particular but peace. Nobody wants to be seriously disturbed about religion or to interfere with any one else. Membership, audiences, finances steadily grow. Never was a dear minister so "highly esteemed." Never were ministrations blessed to so many. Never was there a more respectable body of people. No one in the neighborhood has anything to say against them; in fact, no one has anything much to say about them at all except that many of them are "good customers." If they met together to hold concerts, give readings, or to sew, knit, or play chess instead of having what is called "divine worship," it would be precisely the same to all the world, provided the same amount of gas were

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consumed, and a "minister," "door-keeper," and what not were duly maintained.

But all at once a troublesome being comes upon the scene. He has notions of his own about something. He thinks "something ought to be done." No matter whether he be only a stickler for some particular form, or a grumbler, or an earnest man aiming at some good object, he makes quite a commotion. If he be only weak and turbulent, he is perhaps got rid of by general consent. But if he be a man of God, strong in spiritual power if not in other respects, whether he be minister, member, or officer, the beautiful harmony of the church is soon at an end.

When the Rev. O. Wakeup was made vicar of Tranquilton and "began preaching straight to the people about their sins, and holding open-air services and temperance meetings, half the old congregation left." When a certain young man went from a mission station in London to a village far away, "a third of the members" of one chapel threatened to leave if he were not "put a stop to."

When Brother Blazes was appointed to an old-established station, some declared they would "never work with him," or would even "leave the place," and so it turned out, although there was no real fault to be found with the dear man.

Then reason of all this is not far to seek. People professedly united together, and apparently in perfect harmony with one another, had in these cases no real deep solid bond of union. They remained together so long as each considered it to his interest to do so; but the moment definite earnest action in any direction was proposed, the beautiful party was broken up, and each sought the course which to each seemed most desirable without any regard to the rest.

Thank God, the Christian Mission has known a much more heavenly and enduring "concert" than this hitherto. But we can yet achieve more perfect union, and we pray that the coming Conference may, under the divine blessing, promote this great end in no small degree.

HOW CAN WE SECURE THE MOST PERFECT AND ENDURING UNITY?



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Certainly not by any external arrangements, agreements, rules, organizations, forms, or plans. "That which is seen is temporal." How many governments, constitutions, laws, armies, societies, and companies have we seen the rise and fall of within the last thirty years? How many more existing will outlive the century?

No; "the unity of the Spirit"—that is what we must have. But "the unity of the Spirit" has come to be used as a vague expression, covering a multitude of sins, discords, confusions, separations, and antagonism. That will not do for us. We must have unity, not merely in theory, but such unity as will make us all "as the heart of man" to serve the Lord.

The unity of the Spirit should mean *one life*. Not only all born again, some today, some last week, some years ago; but all living today under the overpowering influence of the Holy Ghost. Where some are "all alive," others "middling," others "holding on," others again "rather backward," and some "cold," there is not that spiritual oneness which ends quarreling, renders division impossible, and blends all together in one glorious progress. The fire whereat every living soul gathers its light and heat is large enough for us all closely to surround. Let us all, drawing nigh to God, be welded together in a purer and intenser spiritual heat than we ever knew before.

With this one life we shall all have *one aim*—the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And people who have all one aim are not likely to discuss at great length the persons by whom, or the lines along which, they shall be conducted to the common end. All are too eager to get along to have even serious care about the route. The feeling of such a people is admirably summed up in the verse—

"Now who can sing my song and say, Christ for me?
My life and truth, my life and way, Christ for me.
Then here's my heart and here's my hand,
We'll form a happy, singing band,
And about aloud throughout the land, Christ for me."

Oh, what a glorious concert! One of the greatest masters of harmony perhaps the world has ever seen has just been visiting our country. If he had not been



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within the line of the world which we may not cross, we would fain have heard Wagner. The peculiarity of his method of conducting musical performances is this—that he will not have in his hand a single performer who is merely a musician playing the notes set before him according to his own idea of the piece. Each one must perfectly understand the aim of realization of that effect. The result is described as surpassing anything hitherto known in the way of orchestral music.

Now this is just what we want to attain—for every one connected with every station thoroughly to comprehend the aim of our great Master, and to give himself up to its accomplishment incessantly. Herein lies the secret of perpetual harmony and mighty co-operation.

And nothing gives such an assurance of *mutual confidence, esteem, and love* as the knowledge that each one is laboring with might and main for one common purpose. The soldiers of different armies marching under the same commander-in-chief, even though they may belong to different nationalities, have an almost brotherly feeling towards one another, simply because every man is looking for and laboring to obtain the same grand triumph over the same foe. And while, as our numbers swell, and we add station after station to our list, the probability of seeing one another in the flesh becomes limited to an ever-decreasing number of us, our precious sense of brotherhood in Jesus, and our delight in one another may become more and more intense continually if we all seek more and more exclusively and passionately the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Does any one ask, "How may I insure my perpetual union with all my brethren in this work?" We cannot reply better than by quoting another verse, which, in the name of God, we earnestly commend to every heart:—

"Lord, arm me with Thy Spirit's might,
Since I am called by Thy great Name;
In Thee let all my thoughts unite,
Of all my works be Thou the aim;
Thy love attend me all my days,
And my sole business be Thy praise."

