

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

TORPEDOES

The Christian Mission Magazine, September 1877

The art of war—of organized, systematized, wholesale murder—has made another grand advance, by the invention of an engine of destruction, more incalculable in its power, more sudden and awfully complete in its effect, than any that has gone before it.

Within a small metal case, such as any lad may carry, it is possible to enclose an amount of explosive material sufficient to ensure the almost instantaneous disappearance of a man of war, and the probable death of all on board her. Such torpedoes buried the many feet below sea or land, and fired by electricity, may bring a sudden overthrow to the most confident and tranquil warrior. Driven through the water or over the land by machinery attached to them, or fastened by daring hands to the side of vessel or fortress, they may work more havoc in a moment than has been accomplished by many hours of cannon shot. That torpedoes, when more thoroughly understood and more efficiently worked, are likely completely to revolutionize the whole practice of war ashore and afloat there can be no doubt. The only question seems to be how far this revolution may go, and whether it may not eventually render war as we now understand it impossible as against a prepared enemy. Great, indeed, will this invention prove if it be found practicable to make every peaceful country safe from invasion, either by sea or land, by the simple substitution of a huge host of torpedoes, buried round coast and frontier, and city, for the great armies and navies upon which so many millions are annually wasted.

But, grand as such a result would be, we are far more deeply interested in the torpedo, because of the thought it supplies us with in reference to the kingdom of our God. We live in awful times; in days when sin seems to be overflowing and overwhelming every boundary in the church as in the world. Spiritual death like a terrible storm night hangs with its dark dismal cloud over the world everywhere, and looks nowhere more dense and black and unalterable than in this lovely land of the Bible. Religion to a fearful extent, where it is professed

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even most loudly, is a cloak, a profession, an art, a science, a play, a performance, trade, a sham, a hellish trap, anything but a divine reality. The great work of the churches would seem to be to teach men how most decently, most in order, most composedly to go to hell.

And as for the world, here is one steady progress of vice, unbelief, ungodliness, corruption, growing, spreading, deepening, with a terrible vigor and completeness everywhere. In the nursery, in the schoolroom, in the play ground, in the streets, in the place of business, in the home circle, in the railway carriage, quite as much as in the public house, the music hall, the theater, and the race ground, millions are being trained to forget God, and to make war upon His Kingdom. Amongst the highest as well as the lowest circles, drunkenness, indecency, cheating, and villainy of every kind are cultivated with a refinement and a thoroughness hitherto unknown.

And all this without any such protest from the witnesses of God as the fearful case demands. Those who most boldly denounce iniquity, those few who in plain English show forth the devilish, brutal, ruinous character of sin, and the horrible end which is the inevitable portion for ever of all who continue therein, where do they speak? With rare exceptions from a pulpit, surrounded by a few sympathizing friends! You may pass from city to city, from town to town, from village to village, for hundreds of miles through this country without being able to meet with one person who is lifting up a trumpet voice to the world for God, and truth, and salvation. "Idol shepherds" prate about the value of precious souls, but neither they nor their people gather any into the fold of Christ—enough for them if they can but replenish the pages of the church register. Well-meaning persons, roused for a moment to think of the multitudes who are dying in sin and going to hell, will tell you with a calm self-satisfied smile that "they wish something could be done," something they have never dreamt of attempting to assist God in doing. Thus the harvest of hell goes on. Men, women, and children never efficiently warned by anyone, amidst the quiet engagements of family life or the more exciting whirl of reckless sin are rushing onward with one awful certain unwavering progress to the bottomless abyss. And those who profess to be the Lord's people are doing nothing worthy of the name to prevent it. Oh, my God! what must be done? What can be done?

WE MUST HAVE SPIRITUAL TORPEDO WORK.



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There are but a handful of us awake to all this, and prepared to go to any length for the salvation of these perishing masses. We cannot raise long subscriptions lists, we cannot form great committees of the *élite* of the land, we cannot make any display that will attract very widespread attention, and indeed the sight of us will drive away rather than attract those who have position, reputation, honor, wealth, or what else the world prizes. We cannot even command respect, and influence minds by the display of genius, or by the production of a dazzling literature. We cannot stir the constituencies and the legislative bodies of the country by agitation for a satisfactory reform. We cannot with our whole organization with any number of services, with any intensity of devotion, save one person from going down to the pit. Of ourselves we can do nothing.

But, oh! Glory be to God, any one of us, the youngest, the weakest, the most ignorant, can if he likes bring the power of the Holy Ghost to bear upon some one spot in the Devil's kingdom, upon some soul or congregation of souls, and that in such a perfect manner that there shall be a mighty shaking, a heartrending explosion, a tremendous overthrow in far less time than it takes to read these lines. Whether it be in conversation by the way side, or in the midst of a great assembly, there is a power there can breathe through our lips which drives away the very Devil, turns darkness into light, searches the hidden corners of a stranger's heart, pours floods upon the dry and barren land, and scorches as with the lightning flash the fruits of the flesh. The power of God applied just where its exercise is most needed—in the hearts of men, and we can apply it if we like—is sufficient to bring about with inconceivable rapidity all that vast change in individuals and in society which we desire.

We are all fully satisfied that only the power of God can accomplish our object; but is there one of us who has constantly borne that in mind in our services? We have labored and toiled until we have been exhausted perhaps, and all for nought, simply because we have been trying to carry things by storm, by the force of our will, by the striking character of our thoughts, by the eloquence of our lips, by the liveliness of our singing, by the violence of attitude and speech, by the sensational anecdote, the good illustration, the wave of feeling, and the other machinery of propagandism. One touch of the power of God will do more



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than a lifetime of all this, even if done all the time with a single eye to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

What would be thought of the man who should labor to convert souls by the use of his fists upon men's faces? And yet is he any less ridiculous who strives to accomplish the overturning of the Devil's Kingdom in any human heart by any other power than that of the Holy Ghost? No one who is really converted could bring themselves consciously to make such an absurd attempt, but people forget God to an extent that no one else is ever forgotten, and they go on acting without Him.

Here is a poor sinner whom you are visiting. You may talk with him, pray with him, sing to him, make a very favorable impression, lead him to confess that he is all wrong and that he ought to come to Christ. You may make him cry by talking about meeting the dear departed ones, whose cards are over the mantelpiece, in the better land. You may get his promise to come to your services, aye, to be converted, and may leave him feeling confident that you have done something grand there. But it may have been purely a human affair from first to last. You may indeed have done a little damage to Satan's kingdom; but, with a horrible leer he will send in a godless neighbor and repair the little breach in ten minutes. You did not use the torpedo power. If you had grasped the poor wretch's hand and looked into his eyes and spoken to hi with the Holy Ghost for but one short minute, the result might have been very different. One sentence searching the very depths of his soul and the strong hand would have trembled and manly face turned pale. He would have felt not for a few moments but for ever after the effects of that explosion.

And just so with a congregation. You may "do your best" until every power you have is spent and they may go home unchanged. Or you may bring all the power of God to bear upon a multitude of hearts at once with just one sentence—Bang! What commotion! What cries for mercy! What anxious faces! What trembling limbs! Killed, wounded and missing from the Devil's ranks on every side! Whatever has happened? A spiritual torpedo has just gone off, that is all. God has shaken the gates of hell and there is a crash.

Oh, that every soul of us may feel whenever and wherever the Lord calls us to work for him, like the giant hero of Israel in the last great agony of his life. "Only



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this once, oh, God! If it be the last word I shall ever speak, or write, or sing, do help me. I have been as weak as other men many a day; but, oh, just this once help me, and here goes for victory or death." God will help such people with all His might, and the stout pillars shall bend like tow, and lords and gentlemen as well as crowds of common folks shall tumble down at the feet of Jesus broken to pieces before Him.

WANTED TORPEDO MEN AND WOMEN!

People who, utterly reckless about their own comfort, their own "interests," their own reputation, their very life, and unboundedly confident in the power of God, shall bring his grace to bear upon sinners every day. Men and women who shall expect without a shadow of wavering, that whenever they prophesy publicly or privately there shall be a shaking, a very earthquake in a moment. Men and women who shall never be at ease but when they are forcing people either to yield to Christ or to run away from their reach. Men and women who shall wield the power of God and horrify hell itself day and night. My God, multiply them!