

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

FINISH!

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There is no mistake about the conclusion of a month or a year. No one will be in any doubt in a few days as to whether we are in the first or last month of a year; everybody knows whether they are living in 1877 or 1878. And yet in this one city there are people who reckon time in four different ways, and whose years commence on four distinct dates. How is it that we are all so positive about the 31st of December, 1877, and the 1st of January, 1878? Simply because we all, with one consent, keep the matter before us, pay attention to it, and remind one another in all sorts of ways of dates and seasons as they pass. You have only to be confined in the sick room, cut off from the receipt of letters and communication with intelligent people to lose all count of time.

By carelessness and thoughtlessness people pass on whole lifetimes without ever noting their real attainments or non-attainments. Where are you spiritually? what state is your soul in? are questions which would startle many a professor of religion let alone wordings. Another year is almost gone. Have you got into the kingdom of God, or are you still outside? is a query which everyone ought to be able to face and to answer satisfactorily before the sound of the gospel and with the words of truth passing frequently through their minds and even their lips, utterly forget, from year's end to year's end, once to think of their own position before God! You were born in sin. Have you got out of it yet? You have been led captive by the Devil at his will. Are the chains off yet? You are by nature a child of wrath, however decent and respectable you may be. Have you been born again yet, or are you plunging on into the darkness and tempest of wrath for ever? Oh, look at it all, we entreat you, ere it be too late.

"Thank God, I am converted: I know my sins are all forgiven; I know I am going to heaven," some one says.

Well, then, listen. Where are you? How far have you got on the way? Consider! It may be you have been saying all this for years and years without seeming to get



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any further. Now do for once ask yourself the question. What progress have I made during the last twelve months? As month after month has been completed and scratched off the calendar, what has really been accomplished in you and by you?

Finish! Finish!! Is there nothing finished about you? You are going on. Very good. "Growing in grace" are you? Can you show no single twig, bud, or fait that was not there twelve months since?

You walk about a great city and you see all manner of building, re-building, paving, and ornamental work going on. They are always as it somewhere. Scarcely a whole business street is ever perfectly finished on any given date. But they are always getting finished somewhere. They have finished doing business in that shop. The huge bills that said "Coming Down" for many months past, have proved true at last. There it stands empty and deserted. No scaffolding yet. But next door they have finished the hoardings, &c., necessary for pulling down to commence. A few days and through the chinks or the opening gate you may see that they have finished their pulling down, and are digging away at the soft earth. Here, again, they have finished their excavations. Oh, what a depth they have got to! They must mean "Capacious Vaults" there! Up yonder street is a house still unroofed, but the great high walls are all finished, and the huge beams and brest-summers are lying down below. And there, again, where you see the flags flying they have finished putting the roof on. Before this huge building great canvas coverings have hung for weeks. Stay—one more visit. The canvas is all gone. The carving of all the stone facings is finished. Beautiful! superb! A few days ago, when still unfinished, it was *nothing!*

Now, is this not a time to ask ourselves "Has the Great Master Builder completed any one of the operations He desired to perform in my case?"

Before my conversion, my most common sins were so and so. Now have all traces of the old life disappeared? Is the passing away of all the old things finished, or do I now and then "in an unguarded moment" go astray into some of the old paths?

Has the great Savior ever had my case fully and completely laid before Him? Have I ever gone to Him, not merely expressing my willingness, but earnestly



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desiring Him to search me and prove me, and see if there be any way of evil in me? Oh have I been content with knowing I was His without caring whether, or even caring to know whether I had let Him do all he wished for me, or had only let Him do a part of it?

When I first began to serve God, and some one found fault with something I said or did, or did not say or do, I was "very much put out" about it. Have I ever let my God tell me my secret faults so that I might be cleansed from them? Has my pride and self-will, and ignorant waywardness been pulled down to the feet of Jesus?

That watch night when I looked so closely at myself; that time when I was talked to so faithfully; that time when the word of God struck me so in reading it; on that occasion when I was so ill, and thought I should never recover; the day I read about that glorious man of God, I felt deeply how far I had come short of what I ought to be and do. Have I in any one respect come up to the mark?

How do I look in the sight of God? Is there anything finished?

"Ah!" says the devil, assisted by how many more. alas! "You cannot hope to be finished in any respect on earth." Quite right too, in a certain sense. We shall always be capable, thank God, of receiving and being and doing more, not only on earth but in heaven itself. But that is not the question.

Is God able or is He not, to finish His new creation in us as He finished His first creation long ago? Such an outrageous question would surely never be asked in connection with anything but religion, wherein people think it lawful to call every absurd fog of willing uncertainty "reverence," and every senseless refusal of plain day-light "humility!" Let us reduce the matter to the narrowest limits. Is there anything which God wants to do in me, for me, by me, and which He cannot really, completely do? Dare anyone says, "Yes, there is?" Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Is this "That we being delivered out of the hand of all our enemies." (Is that deliverance finished in my case? "should serve Him." (Am I finished serving anybody else? Do I do all for God alone?) "without fear," (is all fear of man, the world, the devil, consequences, difficulties, clean gone?) "in holiness," (Is the separation of my heart from all but Him finished?) "and righteousness," (am I perfectly right in motive, in purpose, in plan, in



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action?) “all the days of my life.” Am I done with bad days, purpose for which God sent His son to bless me?

If not, oh god, help us to say and mean at length “Thy will be done—DONE—DONE—DONE! Amen.

