

# ADVICE TO SOLDIERS.

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Soldiers! Allow one who has devoted himself to the work of promoting your spiritual welfare, to give you advice in reference to matters which pertain to your soul's salvation. There are points connected with your duty to God and yourselves, which you, from your situation in the army, may overlook, and a hint in reference to some of them may not be amiss. The writer would earnestly beseech you each to ask God's blessing upon himself while he is reading the following lines.

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

The first point that claims your attention is that in relation to your conscience. And I would solemnly urge you to see to it, that you maintain a "good conscience." Every one has a monitor within him, which reproves for wrong-doing, and signifies its satisfaction in those acts which are right. How pleasant it is to have an approving conscience! How unpleasant the consciousness of having done wrong! Sometimes the sense of shame and degradation which is realized when we are guilty of mean or base conduct drives us to a state bordering on desperation. And this again reacts upon us producing recklessness and impiety of the most daring character. But after a while by repeatedly disregarding the voice of conscience, you will drown it entirely; it will cease to speak altogether;

or if it speaks, it will not be heard. The man in that case is said to be hardened, and his condition is well-nigh hopeless. There is no probability of his being reached by ordinary appeals. And God's book sketches his condition and doom in these fearful words: "After thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2 : 5.

#### LITTLE SINS.

Now in order to guard against this condition, allow me to advise you to look well to what are called "little sins." No man is a great sinner all at once. He has reached that condition only after a long series of sinful acts. The state of heart which we have at any given period of life, is always to be viewed and estimated in connection with those which have preceded it, if we would form a correct judgment in regard to it. And so with acts. They are always better understood by contemplating those which gave rise to their commission. When a case of manslaughter is to be tried, the acts which preceded and the circumstances which attended it are always taken into the account, being deemed essential to a proper judgment in regard to the precise character of the crime perpetrated.

#### THE HISTORY OF SIN.

The history of all sin is generally this, that what is monstrous and shocking in crime originates in something comparatively trifling. Murder is usually the consummation of a long course of sin beginning in a slight grudge or fit of anger. Sometimes it is committed in the vain effort to conceal some other less flagrant breach of law. The highwayman intending only to rob, often finds him-

self obliged by fear of detection to destroy his victim. The truth is, every sin we deliberately commit hardens the conscience and tends to destroy its power to perform its true functions. Every wrong act committed increases our capacity for wrong doing. And no one should feel secure of having arrived at the limit of his course of sin, when he has reached a given point before the eye of his mind. No one can truthfully say, "I will indulge in this or that sin, and then stop and do better." No one can flatter himself that because he sins only in one way therefore he is secure against falling into other causes of sin. The truth is all sins are near akin to each other, and we slide from one species into another insensibly. Thus, we go on from lesser to greater sins, and from those of one kind to those of another, until at last we are cast off by God, and the influences of the Holy spirit are entirely withdrawn.

We see then the importance of cultivating a conscience which will check us when in the act of committing the smallest sin. Be on your guard against little sins, and you need have but little fear of committing great ones. Train yourself to the habit of heeding every monition of conscience. Some think it unmanly to be particular about trifles. But no one would for a moment favor this view, if it be applied to acts of dishonesty or even discourtesy towards a fellow man. The universal judgment of right-minded men is that the greater the respect we pay to the property and feelings of others, the more praise worthy our conduct. Then how much more carefully should we cultivate respect and deference for the rights and claims of the Father of our spirits. No. Be assured you cannot be too nice in your observance of God's law, nor can your conscience be trained to too high or too delicate a regard for what you believe to be right. Avoid, therefore the approaches of sin.

Take for instance the vice of gambling. If you learn how to play cards, you have taken the first step towards contracting the habit of staking money upon the game. The one leads to the other by the almost necessary sequence of cause and effect. So too the habit of indulging in intoxicating drinks is contracted by yielding to the tempter in the first instance. If the first drink be not taken, there can be no second, no last. Sin's demands become the more exorbitant as they are yielded to and satisfied.

#### REGARD SLIGHT IMPRESSIONS.

In the next place, regard the slightest impression made upon your feelings. Are you touched by the preaching of the word? Has some thought affected your heart and moved you to tears? Have you become convinced that all is not right with you, and that in your present state you are unprepared to die? Are you unable to indulge in sinful pleasure and give loose rein to your unlawful desire? Has some mysterious restraint been thrown around you, so that you cannot now as formerly, be gay and frolicsome? You are touched by the spirit of God. You are a subject of divine influences. God is calling you.

#### WHAT MUST BE DONE WHEN GOD CALLS?

And what are you to do? Now the advice you need is rather in reference to what you must not do, than to what you must. I beseech you, do not make an effort to remove these impressions. Shake them not off. You may, if you choose, resist the calls of God. It rests with you to determine whether you will yield or not. Oh! do not strive to banish concern and quell the clamors of conscience. You may by entering into gay society or by taking one

drink of ardent spirits, remove, for the present, these gracious impressions. But think of the consequences. Think of the state of torment which awaits those who are finally impenitent—of the bitter regrets which you will experience, when even the least hope of improvement in your deplorable condition shall be forever gone. Think that one false step now may seal your doom and consign you to the “blackness of darkness and despair forever.” When the feelings are aroused, and the attention turned seriously to the subject of religion, it is dangerous beyond measure to resort to expedients for banishing concern and stilling the alarms of conscience. This is God’s work—a work carried on at his own time and in his own way. And be sure that you interfere not with God, nor strive with your maker. Attempt any other rash measure. Rebel against your earthly sovereign. Interfere with his plans and bring his purposes to naught. But oh! trifle not with the spirit of God. Many of you are touched by the kind and affectionate appeals of mothers, wives and sisters, who implore you with tears to turn from your evil ways. They are pained not only at your absence, but the uncertainty of seeing you again in this life; and they long to be persuaded that whatever may befall you in this war, they will meet you in heaven. Their appeals have brought the tears to your eyes and melted your hearts. Will you not yield to the impressions thus made and “seek the Lord now with the whole heart?” Oh! do not allow the current of feelings to be frozen and your hearts again to become hard and callous. Be assured you will bitterly regret your folly when death overtakes you, if not before, as the following cases prove.

## CASES IN POINT.

First case. A gentleman attended a religious meeting at which many were deeply concerned for the salvation of their souls. He was unusually attentive and signified his desire to be conversed with upon the subject of religion. The preacher found him lamenting his condition. He had no hope—was shut up to utter despair, and spoke of his doom as fixed. Yet he could not *feel*. He had been frequently impressed and even moved to tears, but had as frequently managed to shake off his impressions. And now his judgment was convinced. He knew he was a sinner, exposed to God's wrath, but he could not feel penitent and yielding. In this condition he remained to the day of his death.

Second case. A lady had had very deep convictions of sin in early life. But contriving to remove the unpleasant feelings under which she labored, she determined by entering into lively society and avoiding church, to prevent a recurrence of the disagreeable sensations she had experienced; and to carry her point more surely she became a Universalist. Then she was so armed that she could venture any where. For to be a Universalist is oftentimes only to have a pretext for not being a christian. She was now bold and went frequently to church. On one occasion while the preacher was expatiating upon the threatenings of God's law, she deliberately shook her head—thus expressing her dissent from the preacher's positions and in such a manner as to attract the attention of many in the congregation.

About three months after this, the preacher on visiting the church in his usual round of appointments was met by a professor of religion who announced to him the death of the lady in question. "Ah!" said he, "did she die a

Universalist?" "Oh no," was the reply, "she died in utter despair."

"Not so your eyes shall always view,  
Those objects which you now pursue,  
Not so will heaven and hell appear  
When death's decisive hour is near."

#### ATTEND UPON THE MEANS OF GRACE.

Lastly. Attend upon the misistrations of God's word in your midst. Many of you have regular preaching and prayer meetings in camp. Neglect no such opportunity, as these occasions furnish, of learning the way of the Lord. Oh! how it cheers the hearts of loved ones at home to hear that you are constant in your attention to the duties of religion. Said a dying man to the writer "Oh! if I could hear one more sermon. But, be so good as to write my wife, informing her that I hope God has converted my soul since I have been lying here on this bed in the hospital."

How soon may you be lying in the same condition. Think of this, and improve all present advantages. And may God's grace be abundantly shed down upon you, so that when you return home, if God spares your life, your wife or mother or sister may be enabled to say, "Rejoice with me. The lost is found, the dead is alive again."

THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY. S. M.

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- 1 With brave but beating heart,  
We marched to meet the foe,  
Uncertain what should be our part—  
Who should in death lie low.
- 2 We longed the day to win,  
And drive the invader back.  
Thus we would help a peace to gain,  
The blessing that we seek.
- 3 Thy goodness, Lord, we tell,  
We bless thy wondrous grace.  
While bullets flew, and many fell,  
We did not end our race.
- 4 A victory we have,  
Because thou helped us Lord.  
Else we'd been covered by the wave\*  
And fallen 'neath the sword.
- 5 To thee the praise is due,  
To thee our thanks we give.  
O help us love and serve thee too,  
And to thy glory live.
- 6 And when comes our last fight,  
That fight which all must make,  
Bring us off conquerors, through thy might,  
For our Redeemer's sake.

\* CXXIV Psalm, verses 4, 5.