

## **Wounded and in the hands of the enemy / by John F.W. Ware.**

### **Contributors**

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
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W O U N D E D

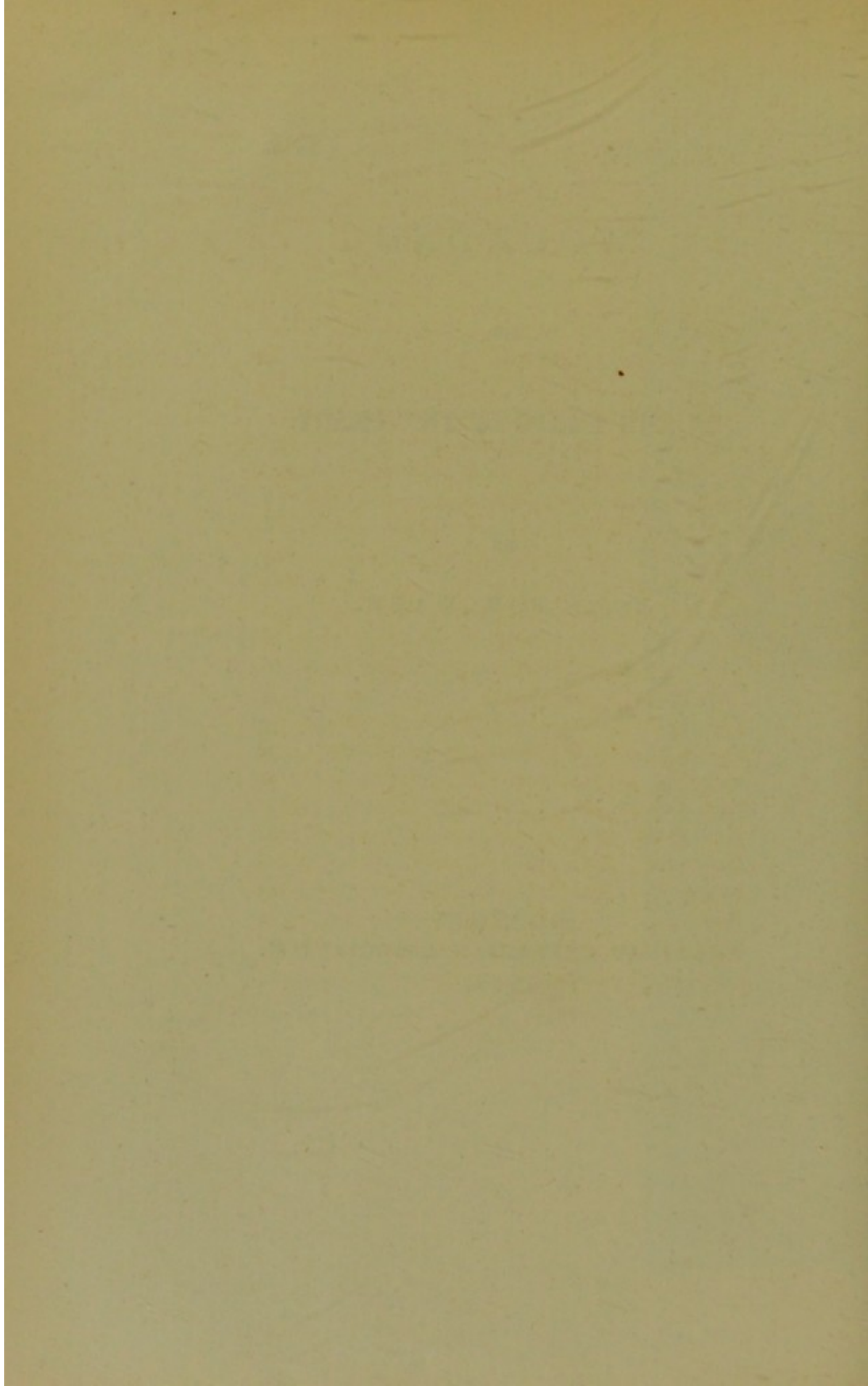
AND

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

BY

JOHN F. W. WARE.

BOSTON:  
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.  
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## W O U N D E D

AND IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

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WE sat about the table, quietly talking over the latest rumors of the battle we knew still to be raging. There was a heavy weight upon all our hearts, though no one had confessed it. All through the weary hours of that weary day, a nameless dread had held us. We each had looked it, but none had spoken. It was late, and yet we lingered, that undefined feeling of approaching evil which had haunted the day settling more moodily over us at the thought of the night,—its separation, its silence, and its solitude.

A quick, sharp ring at the door startled us. No one moved or spoke, yet that sound went deep and heavy into each heart,—the knell of hope. You could see the bracing up of each to hear the tidings we instinctively knew had come,—the convulsive clasping of fingers, the painful heaving of the breath, the pallor of the cheek, the quiver of the lip,—a short, sharp, terrible struggle,—a grasping after faith, an effort at resignation;—and still no word, no movement.

The door opened; one of us rose and received the fatal message, "*Wounded and in the hands of the enemy*"; and his voice sunk as he hardly whispered, "*Probably dead.*" No nobler spirit had gone out to battle than his whose sad fate was thus so fearfully foreshadowed. Idol of his home, idol of his men, he had fallen in the front, loyal to his country and loyal to his God.

How frequently all up and down the land in the past two years have these short, abrupt messages come, telling of the good, the beautiful, the honored, who have passed amid battle flame out of the life of the body into the presence of God! Scarcely a home, scarcely a heart, but has learned to quail before them.

"*Wounded and in the hands of the enemy!*" There is something these words may mean more terrible to yourselves and your truest friends than this which the telegraph tells. That tells only of what has befallen the body, of the pain, of the peril to it. You know that you are not merely bodies; that you are souls, and souls cannot die. They are that in us over which death has no power. They are that in us which ally us to God. Upon them has he breathed a portion of his own inspiration, and it is these, and not our bodies, which are said to have been made in the image of God. All this I hardly need tell you. You know it already. Yet you and I too often forget it.

Now our souls may be wounded as well as our bodies, which can be bruised by shot and shell, or cut by sword or pierced by bayonet; and these wounds leave scars. You know the soldier who has been struck down in battle always after by that sure sign in the flesh. His scar is a token of honor. It is his pride. It may not be possible for human eyes, for our own, always to see the scar on the soul,—the sign, the token of its wound,—but God sees it, and some day we ourselves, and perhaps others, shall see it again, and not as a thing for our pride, to our honor.

What is it wounds the soul? *Sin*,—the conscious, wilful disobedience of any Divine command, the regular, persistent following up of any low desire or habit, the willing estrangement of the soul from the knowledge and service of God,—or, in a less degree, the impulsive, transient yielding to what is not honorable or truthful or pure. And these wounds are self-inflicted. They are all from within. The wounds of the body are from without, by some external foe. But no outward power can wound the soul. There is never any wound to it unless by its own consent, unless it lends its own power to assist the power of temptation. So long as you do not love the thing that tempts you, it is powerless over you; but so soon as you begin to love it, you lend it the power of your love, and your danger begins. Before it can give you much trouble,

temptation must have an ally in the heart, and when that ally grows to a love, the temptation masters you. The strength of sin is love.

And these wounds put you in the hand of the enemy. You know the great Enemy is said to have tempted the Saviour. He did not love the things with which his enemy tempted him. They had no ally in his heart. So they were powerless. If he had loved them, yielding himself, he would have put himself into the hands of that enemy. You may be cut down, maimed, left on the battlefield, suffer nameless horrors, and yet be brought off by your comrades, and escape the enemy. But if you suffer yourself to be wounded in your soul, if you wound yourself, by the same act you fall into the hands, or rather you deliver yourself into the hands of the enemy,—into the most terrible and hopeless captivity and bondage. All that has been told us of those privations and barbarities of the prisons in Richmond, or the merciless tortures of guerillas along the Mississippi, are not so terrible. It is a fate to which you have bound yourself, for which you cannot justly blame anybody,—a fate whose full misery you cannot wholly know in this life.

Is there no help? You remember that beautiful parable about the man who fell among thieves? He lay wounded and beaten and half dead right on the highway between Jerusalem and Jericho, and

all sorts of persons must have passed him besides the priest and the Levite, whose duty it was to have stopped and comforted him. By and by came the right man, with a warm, true, tender heart. Perhaps you have known something like this. You have been wounded, — have wounded yourself. You have been in the hands of the enemy, half dead, — your life, your soul, given up, too willingly, to selfish or bad things. You have not found help from any. Men have passed you by. You have wished you could have help to lift you out of your sorry condition. You have felt if you could only have the right help you could struggle back out of the clutch of the enemy, if not away from the scar of your wounds. The right help came at last to the Jew, — there is a right help for you.

The right help is Jesus, the Saviour, the gentle and loving one, all whose life was spent in going about and doing good, seeking and saving the lost. You cannot see him. You cannot meet him by the wayside, as the woman of Samaria did; you cannot feel the wound in your body, your useless arm, or your maimed leg grow strong again at his word; you cannot hear his word of encouragement, or his assurance that your sins are forgiven; you cannot feel the wound within you healing up, as Zaccheus did when Jesus bade him come from the tree, as Magdalen did when he told her her sins



were forgiven. But there is a record of his life and words left us, and through these you can come to know him, love him, be strengthened, and saved. By a study, a long and loving and thorough study of his principles and purposes, you may get his motives and his helps, and grow into his life. You may not see or hear him, but you may get his spirit. By hearing and reading of good men, you get something of their spirit; a desire springs up in you to go and do likewise. They prompt you to better things. Much more if you will come to realize that there was such a being as Jesus of Nazareth, full of such a spirit, living such a life, will that realization be a quickening power within you, like a strong and mighty arm breaking the thrall of your bondage, standing between you and the enemy, helping you to escape in your weakness, and making you in the end strong enough to resist so that the very gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

If you are in hospital, turn the weary hours of your convalescence to some good, by seeking to know this Saviour who is so mighty in his help; if you are in camp, on guard, on picket, or on ordinary duty, seize the opportunities, which may be made many, for knowing Him who loved and gave himself for you. Out of that knowledge will grow a love beyond all loves, a power beyond all powers, which will snatch you from every enemy, and give you

healing to every wound ; and you who went out to fight the foes of your country, when you come back conquerors over them, may also come back more than conquerors over yourselves, through the knowledge and the service of Him who will give every faithful soul victory over itself.

