

## **Traitors in camp / by John F.W. Ware.**

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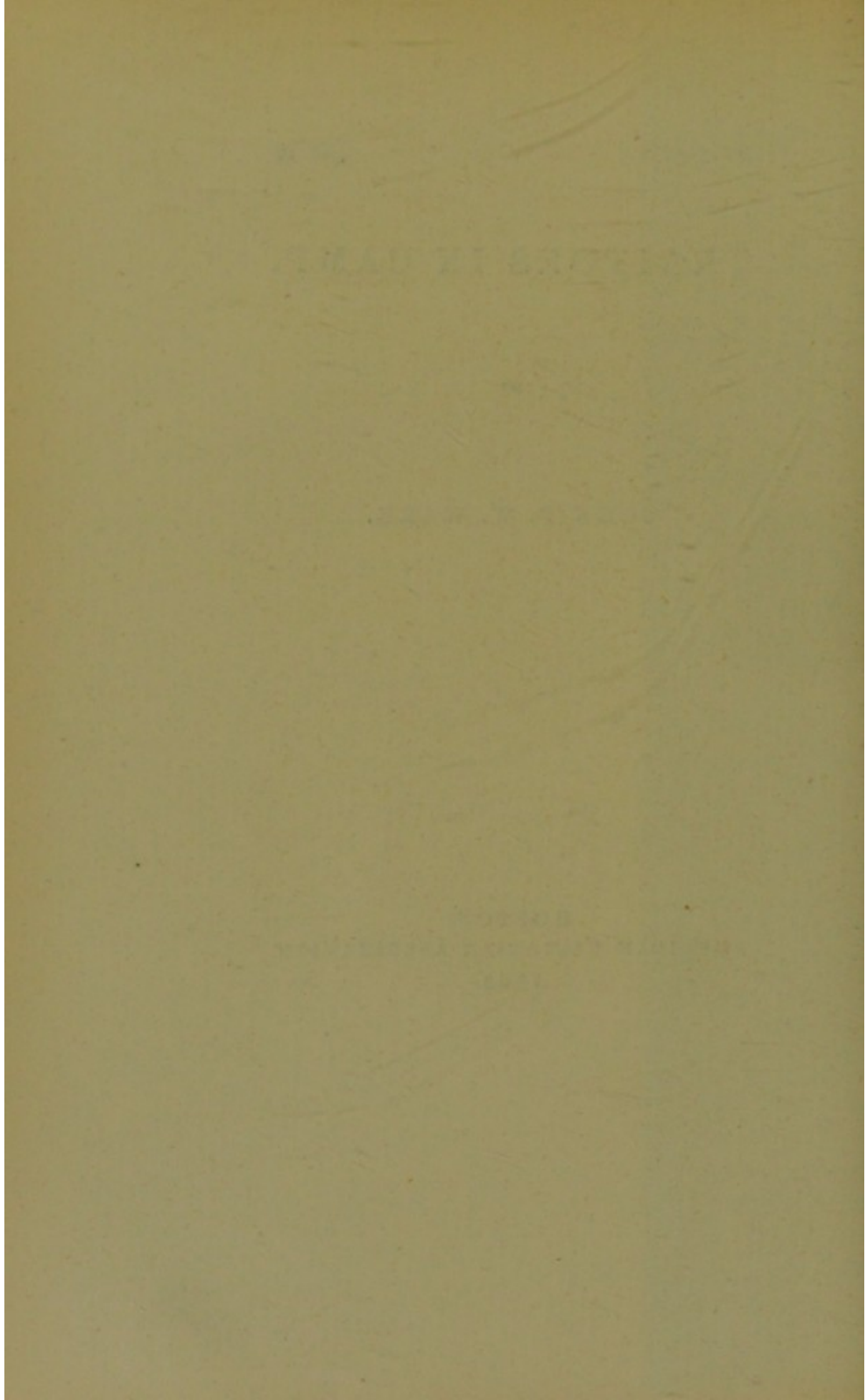
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TRAITORS IN CAMP.

BY

JOHN F. W. WARE.

BOSTON:  
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.  
1863.



## TRAITORS IN CAMP.

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EXPERIENCE has taught you that your foes are not all in the ranks of the enemy. If they were, your work would be comparatively easy. You would have only one thing to do; and, however numerous and determined and powerful, you would feel some security in advancing upon them. You would see the worst, and be prepared.

Every cause has most to fear from secret, internal opposition, — from traitors rather than from enemies. There are men so bad and mean as always to be willing to lend themselves to overthrow the thing they profess to cherish. There were traitors in the armies of the Revolution: there are traitors in the armies of to-day. And not only must the good general guard against these, but every individual soldier. A traitor in camp must be immediately exposed and expelled.

So evident is this, that I doubt not every one of you is fully on his guard, that you have no treacherous intentions yourselves, and do not mean that there shall be any among your comrades.

Though you now are soldiers, you still are men. Your great duty to your country does not override your always greater duty to yourselves. There is another warfare you are to wage beside this in which you now are enlisted, — the same old warfare which devolved on you while you were at home, in which there is no exemption, in which none is allowed to be disable, and which is never over till life is over. It is that great warfare in which we all are conscript.

In this warfare, as in that outer warfare you are now waging, the great danger does not lie in the enemy in front of you, whom you can see, whose forces are marshalled where you can attack or resist them, but in secret, internal enemies, — *traitors*. The Saviour, when he was warning his disciples of dangers and trials before them, told them that their foes would be of their own household. So the real foes to our uprightness are of our household. They are in ourselves, — of the heart.

Now I think that one reason why men do not grow any better, one reason why all their self-conflict is to so little purpose, is, that they think sin is some great thing outside of them, — some one power or presence which they are to watch, guard against, repel, — and forget too much that sin is rather a power, a presence, an affection, inside of them, — a position, a condition of the heart. The treachery of one's own heart to what it knows to

be right is the great cause of sin. There is hardly a more important warning, or one that needs more frequently to be repeated, than that contained in the last line of a verse many of you have often heard read and sung:—

“Thou tread'st upon enchanted ground;  
Perils and snares beset thee round;  
Beware of all; guard every part;  
But most the traitor in thy heart.”

It will not do, however, to think that there is but one traitor in the heart, one great secret foe. There are many, and in themselves they are generally small, — so small individually that we either overlook them or consider them of no importance. What possible harm can come of such little things? There is our mistake; there is our danger. It is the little foxes that destroy the vines; the little mites that eat out the strength of the strongest ship; the little sins that sap the vigor of the noblest manhood. If there were but one, and that a Goliath in the camp, which went up and down raging and boasting and challenging, we should have little to fear. Some smooth stone from our faithful arm would lay it low. But these little things do not alarm us, do not set us on the watch, do not call our prudence or principle into exercise. They lull us rather into security, and we rouse ourselves at last only to find that we are utterly, fatally, within their grasp. Perhaps, in the old

days when you were a boy in the old home, you read the marvellous story of the traveller cast on the strange shore, who, on rousing from his swoon, found himself helpless, tied to the earth by a myriad tiny threads, while a host of little people not bigger than his finger were clambering over him, and seeking to make his captivity the more sure. There he lay, a very giant, at the mercy of these pygmies, each single one of which was beneath his notice, even his contempt. That is just the way the great life in man often lies prostrate, helpless, at the uprising of a host of little things, which, watching the time when they could take him unawares, have sprung upon and mastered him. He would have been as safe as David, had he but one big foe to contend with.

It would not be easy to enumerate these small traitors in our hearts. They are very many and very various. You can easily ascertain what are your own personal sins. That is the necessity for each one of us, and it only needs a little persistence and a right courage. I want merely to point you to a class of treacheries which all of us need particularly to think of and watch against, for they do a deep mischief, from which we hardly recover. I mean that class of sins called secret, not because they are unknown to ourselves, but because they are hidden from others. You practise them, but men do not know it. There is no punishment or

shame to you, because you are not found out. If you should be in some cases, you would still escape all human censure. Some sins are so common, so popular, so all but universal, that it would be like blaming one's self to censure them ; so they escape. Are they the less sins? Are they the less treacherous? Is it not a great mistake of ours to think so much about what men know, approve, or condemn, and so little about what God knows? Some secret sins, vices, leave deeper scars upon the soul than any open ones. The fact that they are secret, the necessity that is on us to keep them hid, give them a greater power over us. The hidden sin is the one we are likely specially to cosset. It is the one we are likely most deeply to love, while it works us the most deadly ill. It thrives through our love, becomes in the end our tyrant, perhaps our destroyer.

Some of these are peculiarly camp sins. The exposure is great, the giving way easy, the corruption fearful. In camp, too, you want many of the safeguards of home, — that invisible influence of home-love which embraces and shields you, and keeps you, without your knowing it, from much of the evil in the world. They have you at a vantage now, and so you must watch and work the more zealously against them, lest home shall find the man who goes back to her worse than he who went out. Shun their polluting as you



would the contagion of a disease. They lie in wait and ensnare, and then lead you very far from the way of integrity. They make wounds deep and hideous, — wounds that fester and spread, and draw the vital vigor of your manhood. Thoughts, imaginations, desires, practices indulged in secretly, are not harmful merely in what they directly do, but they carry their taint into all the intercourse of life, and make the heart, the man, unsound. He may cover all up from human vision, and none suspect the man that he is within; but the sin is not the less foul, the danger not the less deep, the injury not the less fatal. The brand Cain bore marked him among men; but without it was he not just as much known to, just as much outcast with, God?

Now all such traitors must be hunted up, branded, expelled. You can have no security till they are. You will always be weak in the presence of temptation while they remain. They will always be warring against you, sapping the integrity of your best purpose, and holding you every hour in jeopardy. It will not do to allow one to remain. It will not do to consider one as too insignificant. It is the little thing that sometimes destroys the soul, — not the great, darling sin, which men see and condemn, but some little treacherous love, which has secretly sapped the moral power, and left the man to outward seeming fair and firm

and strong, while indeed he is rotten and worthless.

“The meanest foe of all the train  
Has thousands and ten thousands slain.”

One of the phrases which has been common in this war is, “*War to the knife, and the knife to the hilt.*” When applied to men, that seems only savage. It shows an inveterate hatred; it speaks of extermination; it tells of struggle with no quarter. It is such warfare, however, every one should wage against the secret, treacherous things in himself. It is the Christian’s duty, — the way to the Christian’s victory.

