

The rebel / by John F.W. Ware.

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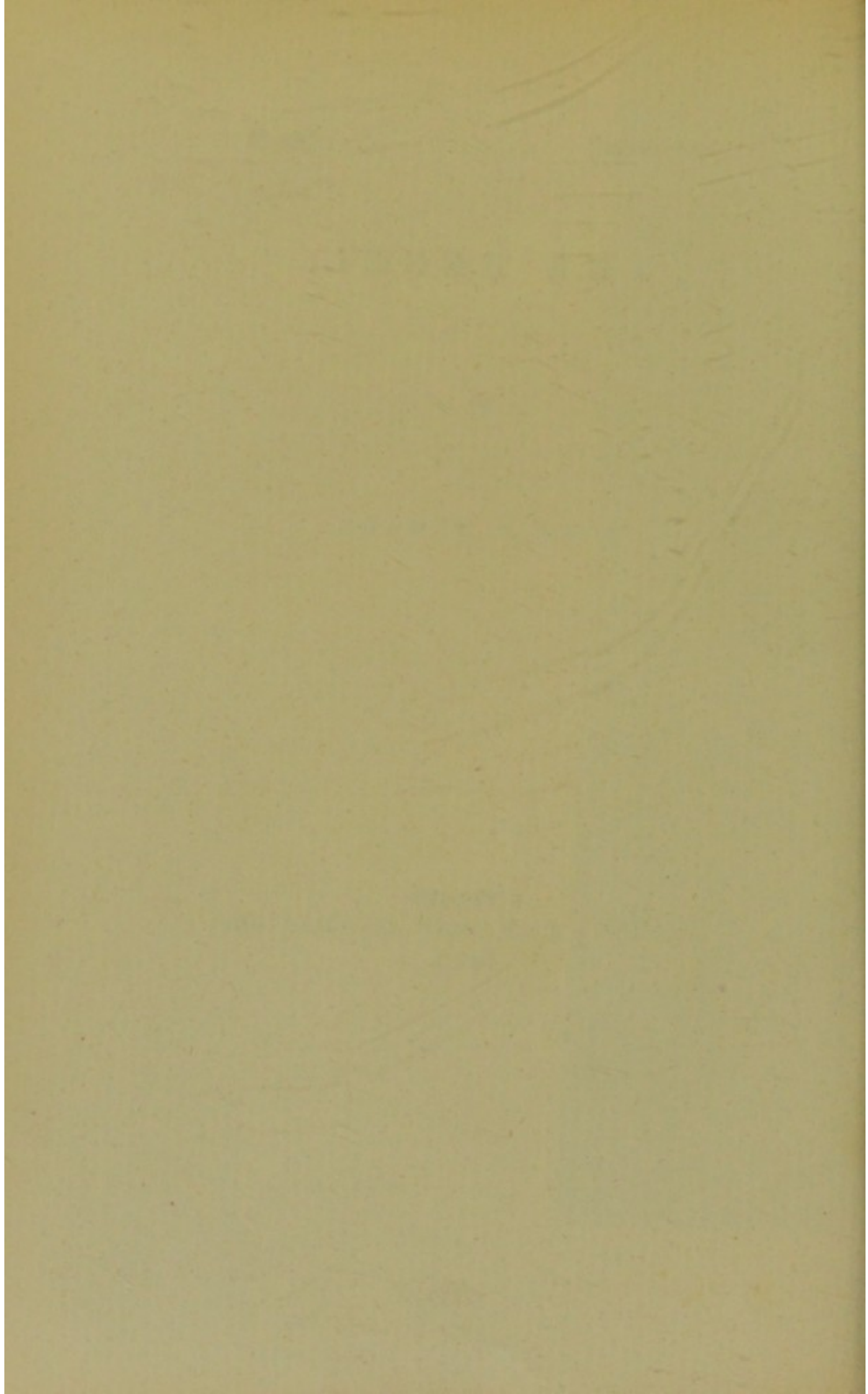
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THE REBEL.

BY

JOHN F. W. WARE.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1863.



THE REBEL.

WE call them rebels. And so they are. But so are we.

What is a rebel? One who unlawfully, without adequate cause, sets himself against a government established over him and acknowledged as the supreme authority. To rebel is to set your will against the will of the law or the ruler of the land. It places you outside the sympathy, the protection, of such, renders you liable to the heaviest penalties, the forfeit of your substance and your life. It makes you an outlaw, it puts a mark upon you, and sets every man's hand against you. To rebel against a bad government, for the conservation of what is right and true and legal, is to win at last your end and the approval of all good; to rebel against a good government, for the overthrow of law and order, virtue and truth, the grand elementary principles upon which human right and liberty stand, is the highest form of crime, and can only be approved of despots, or of those restless, irresponsible men all whose hope lies in anarchy and confusion.

The rebels of this country have set themselves against the best form of government on the globe, the one based on the fairest principles and aiming most earnestly for the greatest good of the greatest number. I do not say the government is perfect. It might be and it will be changed for the better somewhat. I do not say it is or has been in all respects wisely administered. I cannot shut my eyes to fraud, rapine, wrong in high places, not merely under the shadow, but under the sanction of our venerated Constitution. "When this cruel war is over," we hope that these things will have passed.

The government is the best, the fairest, the freest, with all its faults, in itself and in its administration. And yet some millions have rebelled against and bitterly hate it, are sacrificing everything to overthrow it, and declare that they will resist to the "bitter end." And if they hold out, the end will be very bitter.

Very wrong in these people, — very short-sighted, very ungrateful. Just see what they enjoyed under the old rule! Just see what havoc and woe they have brought on themselves! Just see what sorrow and sacrifice to us, — what confusion among the nations! Probably no nation and no great activity of the globe but feels the palsy of this great and fiendish struggle against "the best government." What ingrates, what traitors, what villains, — worthy of the deepest hell!

But hold! "Thou art inexcusable, O man, who-soever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." Rebels against the best government, are they? What are we,—you and I?

Surely, God's government is best, and there is no failure in its administration, for he keeps all things in his own hand, and he is wise and good. He has made a beautiful world and put us in it, to use what we find in it for our advancement and happiness. He has made us capable of deep and rich affections, and given us those to whom these affections cling. He has given us great ambitions, desires, plans, cravings for material success and advancement, and intellectual culture and growth. He has given us dominion not only over the fowls of the air and every creeping thing, but over the elements long untamed, so that fire and air and water are not only man's most useful but most submissive servants. He has opened his secrets, stored from eternity in the deeps of the ocean, in the bowels of the earth, in the abysses of the heaven, one by one, to man's importunate search. He has made the earth's surface teem with plenty, and the race constantly to advance in prosperity and civilization. And to leave nothing undone, lest man should think he was alone and first, and so become a law unto himself, or might fear that he was alone, and grope

feebly after some support, He has revealed himself and perfected the knowledge of his will, by sending his only Son to us, and letting that Son suffer and die for our good. That is God as he is to man. That is what God has done for man. Under such a rule and such a ruler we live and move and have our being.

And we have *rebelled!* That is the return we have made the good God. Just what the children of the Hebrews did in the wilderness when they made the golden calf, just what the Jews did all through their troublous history, just that have we done who have had the greater enlightenment of the truth as it is in Jesus. We are rebels against the Divine authority. We have set up another will to rule over us than his. We serve another law. We have, in act, declared we will not have him to rule over us. We are in conscious, willing, wilful opposition to him, giving our allegiance and our love elsewhere,—not helping God carry out his plans, but doing all we can to check them.

And this just as much, just as truly, just as fatally, as if we had passed a formal decree of separation. It does not affect the fact, that you and I still profess allegiance, if we are all the time doing that which shows we have none. To-day there are those loud in their professions of loyalty to the Constitution and the country, but they are rebel at heart. Rebel at heart is every man who does not

give himself, in the love of a child, to the service of God. Rebel at heart is every man whose word and life show that there is any law with him other, higher than God's law. How many of us are there who, taking the loyalty of Jesus as the standard, can say that we are loyal too, loving God with all our strength and all our mind?

Now, we propose to *subjugate* those in arms against their country. It is a word a great deal of fault is found with, but it is the thing we mean to do. That is, as the word signifies, we mean to bring them under the yoke, the mild and easy yoke of the "best government in the world." That we shall do, or we shall do nothing. That is the condition of peace. To that end the marching of armies, the thunders of fleets, the building of monitors, the forging of monster cannon, the ceaseless activity, the vigilant energy of rulers and leaders, the patriotism and sacrifices of the people.

God proposes to subjugate his rebels, — to bring them under the mild and easy yoke of his best government. He means to break this self-sufficient pride, this trust in the things made, this distrust of the unseen. But his way is not our way. It is not with terrible engineerings, with sweeping destruction, with famine, disease, and pain. It is not with vengeful purpose, with passion, with outraged dignity. He waited and tried men long, and then sent his Son, with not even a bitter message, but with the

tenderest assurances of love, only asking of man love again. Still he waits and tries us. He fills our days with blessings. Our cups run over. He strives to win us. Beauty, plenty, joy, and gladness troop about us and crown our lives, while the very severities, the experiences, the disciplines, how bitter soever at the time, leave enduring sweetness with those who take them as from an Infinite love. They all, — joy and sorrow, success and reverse, exemption and discipline, — are God's efforts at subjugating us, bringing us under his yoke, breaking our rebellious spirit, and leading us back to our allegiance.

Are you going to resist to "the bitter end"? Is that your plan? Is that your madness? What will you gain? God is the great power, and if you do not now yield to him, there is a by and by in which you shall know your folly, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. You do not mean to be so obdurate. You mean before you die to come back to him. Though you do not live loyally, you will die loyal. Do not count on that. Lay down your arms to-day. Give up all rebellious thought and conduct. Renew your allegiance. Come under the yoke, and find its ease, and know, while you are well and strong, before the evil days come, the great, abiding peace which belongs in undisturbed possession to that man whose every way is ordered and every desire determined by his fidelity to God.

"Unworthy to be called thy son,
I come with shame to Thee:
Father, O more than Father, thou
Hast always been to me!

"Help me to break the heavy chains
The world has round me thrown,
And know the glorious liberty
Of an obedient son.

"That I may henceforth heed whate'er
Thy voice within me saith,
Fix deeply in my heart of hearts
A principle of faith, —

"Faith that, like armor to my soul,
Shall keep all evil out,
More mighty than an angel host
Encamping round about."

