

A CAUTION
TO STIR UP
TO WATCH AGAINST SIN
BY
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ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR.

This faithful and affectionate appeal to conscience, was originally published on a half-sheet of copy paper, and being only printed on one side of the leaf was called a broadside; probably intended to hang up in the house, or to be pasted inside the cover of the family bible.

Charles Doe gives the date 1685; but a copy of this rare sheet, clean and perfect as when first printed, was lately discovered in the Stowe Library, among a great number of single-sheet poems, songs, and proclamations; a memorandum on it, in the writing of Narcissus Luttrell, shews that he bought it for one penny, on the 8th of April, 1684. By the liberal permission of Mr. Pickering, of Piccadilly, the present owner of that extraordinary collection, I have been able accurately to correct the very numerous alterations and errors which abound in all the later editions.

Reader, whoever thou art, but especially the young, this unassuming poem is most worthy of being committed to memory. It is a striking detection of the devil's sophistry. Strive, as you value your peace and happiness, to escape the depths of moral degradation and misery, by avoiding the FIRST overtures of sin.

GEO. OFFOR.

CAUTION TO STIR UP TO WATCH AGAINST SIN

*The first eight lines one did commend to me,
The rest I thought good to commend to thee:
Reader, in reading be thou rul'd by me,
With rhimes nor lines, but truths, affected be.*^[1]
8 April 1684

I.

Sin will at first, just like a beggar, crave
One penny or one half-penny to have;
And if you grant its first suit, 'twill aspire,
From pence to pounds, and so will still mount higher
To the whole soul: but if it makes its moan,
Then say, here is not for you, get you gone.
*For if you give it entrance at the door,
It will come in, and may go out no more.*

II.

Sin, rather than 'twill out of action be,
Will pray to stay, though but a while with thee;
One night, one hour, one moment, will it cry,
Embrace me in thy bosom, else I die:
Time to repent [saith it] I will allow,
And help, if to repent thou know'st not how.
*But if you give it entrance at the door,
It will come in, and may go out no more.*

III.

If begging doth not do, sin promise will
Rewards to those that shall its lusts fulfill:
Penny in hand, yea pounds 'twill offer thee,
If at its beck and motion thou wilt be.

'Twill seem heaven to out-bid, and all to gain
Thy love, and win thee it to entertain.
*But give it not admittance at thy door,
Lest it comes in, and so goes out no more.*

IV.

If begging and promising will not do,
'Twill by its wiles attempt to flatter you.
I'm harmless, mean no ill, be not so shy
Will ev'ry soul-destroying motion cry.
'Twill hide its *sting*, 'twill change its native hue,
Vile 'twill not, but a beauty seem to you.
*But if you give it entrance at the door,
Its sting will in, and may come out no more.*

V.

Rather than fail, sin will itself divide,
Bid thee do this, and lay the rest aside.
Take *little* ones ('twill say) throw *great* ones by,
(As if for little sins men should not die.)
Yea SIN with SIN a quarrel will maintain,
On purpose that thou by it might'st be slain.
*Beware the cheat then, keep it out of door,
It would come in, and would go out no more.*

VI.

Sin, if you will believe it, will accuse,
What is not hurtful and itself excuse:
'Twill make a vice of virtue, and 'twill say
Good is destructive, doth men's souls betray;
'Twill make a law, where God has made man free,
And break those laws by which men bounded be.
*Look to thyself then, keep it out of door,
Thee 'twould entangle, and enlarge thy score.*

VII.

SIN is that beastly thing that will defile
Soul, body, name, and fame in little while;
'Twill make him, who some time God's image was,
Look like the devil, love, and plead his cause;
Like to the plague, poison, or leprosy
Defile 'twill, and infect contagiously.
*Wherefore beware, against it shut the door;
If not, it will defile thee more and more.*

VIII.

SIN, once possessed of the heart, will play
The tyrant, force its vassal to obey:
'Twill make thee thine own happiness oppose
And offer open violence to those
That love thee best; yea make thee to defy
The law and counsel of the deity.
*Beware then, keep this tyrant out of door,
Lest thou be his, and so thy own no more.*

IX.

SIN harden can the heart against its God,
Make it abuse his grace, despise his rod,
'Twill make one run upon the very pikes,
Judgments foreseen bring such to no dislikes
Of sinful hazards; no, they venture shall
For one base lust, their soul, and heav'n and all.
*Take heed then, hold it, crush it at the door,
It comes to rob thee, and to make thee poor.*

X.

SIN is a prison, hath its bolts and chains,
Brings into bondage who it entertains;
Hangs shackles on them, bends them to its will,
Holds them, as *Samson* grinded at the mill,
'Twill blind them, make them deaf; yea, 'twill them gag,

And ride them as the devil rides his hag.
*Wherefore look to it, keep it out of door,
If once its slave, thou may'st be free no more.*

XI.

Though SIN at first its rage dissemble may,
'Twill soon upon thee as a lion prey;
'Twill roar, 'twill rend, 'twill tear, 'twill kill out-right,
Its living death will gnaw thee day and night:
Thy pleasures now to paws and teeth it turns,
In thee its tickling lusts, like brimstone burns.
*Wherefore beware, and keep it out of door,
Lest it should on thee as a lion roar.*

XII.

SIN will accuse, will stare thee in the face,
Will for its witnesses quote time and place
Where thou committedst it; and so appeal
To conscience, who thy facts will not conceal;
But on thee as a judge such sentence pass,
As will to thy sweet bits prove bitter sauce.
*Wherefore beware, against it shut thy door,
Repent what's past, believe and sin no more.*

XIII.

SIN is the worm of hell, the lasting fire,
Hell would soon lose its heat, could SIN expire;
Better sinless, in hell, than to be where
Heav'n is, and to be found a sinner there.
One sinless, with infernals might do well,
But SIN would make a very heav'n a hell.
*Look to thyself then, to keep it out of door,
Lest it gets in, and never leaves thee more.*

XIV.

No match hast sin save God in all the world,

Men, angels it has from their stations hurl'd:
Holds them in chains, as captives, in despite
Of all that here below is called Might.
Release, help, freedom from it none can give,
But he by whom we also breathe and live.
*Watch therefore, keep this giant out of door
Lest if once in, thou get him out no more.*

XV.

Fools make a mock at SIN, will not believe,
It carries such a dagger in its sleeve;
How can it be (say they) that such a thing,
So full of sweet, should ever wear a sting:
They know not that it is the very SPELL
Of SIN, to make men laugh themselves to hell.
*Look to thyself then, deal with SIN no more,
Lest he that saves, against thee shuts the door.*

XVI.

Now let the God that is above,
That hath for sinners so much love;
These lines so help thee to improve,
That towards him thy heart may move.
Keep thee from enemies external,
Help thee to fight with those internal:
Deliver thee from them infernal,
And bring thee safe to life eternal. — AMEN.

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FOOTNOTE:

[1] This same sentiment is well expressed in Bunyan's verses at the conclusion of the Pilgrim, part First.

'Nor let my figure or similitude
Put thee into a laughter or a feud;
Leave this to boys and fools, but as for thee,
Do thou the substance of my matter see.'