

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

HANDBOOK
TO
JUDGES AND RUTH

FOR THE USE OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

BY
THE REV. G. H. S. WALPOLE, D.D.
PRINCIPAL OF BEDE COLLEGE, DURHAM

RIVINGTONS
34 *KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN*
LONDON

1901

CONTENTS

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,	v
MAP OF PALESTINE,	xii
CHAPTER	SUBJECT
Judges i. 1-8,	CRUELTY AND ITS PUNISHMENT, 2
Judges i. 9-26,	SUCCESS AND ITS CAUSES, 7
Judges i. 27-36 ; ii. 1-5,	FAILURES, 13
Judges ii. 6-23 ; iii. 1-6,	NATIONAL SIN AND ITS CAUSES, 18
Judges xvii.-xviii.,	MICAHA AND THE SANCTUARY OF DAN, 25
Judges iii. 7-31,	A MESSAGE FROM GOD, 35
Judges iv.,	BATTLE OF MEGIDDO, 42
Judges v. 2-31,	SONG OF DEBORAH, 47
Judges vi. 1-24,	THE HOUR AND THE MAN, 57
Judges vi. 25-32,	GIDEON'S FIRST DUTY, 65
Judges vi. 33-40,	HUMILITY, 70
Judges vii.,	FAITH, 74
Judges viii. 1-21,	PERSEVERANCE, 83
Judges viii. 22-28,	A RIGHT AND A WRONG CHOICE, 89
Judges viii. 29-35 ; ix. 1-21,	THE OLDEST FABLE IN THE WORLD, 94
Judges ix. 22-57,	RETRIBUTION, 101
Judges x. 1-16,	DANGERS OF PROSPERITY, 109
Judges x. 17, 18 ; xi. 1-28,	JEPHTHAH, 114
Judges xi. 29-40,	A RASH VOW AND WHAT CAME OF IT, 121

CHAPTER	SUBJECT	PAGE
Judges xii.,	INSOLENCE PUNISHED,	127
Judges xiii.,	THE THREEFOLD VOW,	131
Judges xiv.,	SAMSON'S RIDDLE,	138
Judges xv.,	THE SPRING OF HIM WHO CALLED,	145
Judges xvi. 1-22,	TEMPTATION,	151
Judges xvi. 23-31,	SAMSON'S DEATH,	157
Judges xix.,	THE LEVITE ENTERTAINED AT GIBEAH,	162
	THE LEVITE'S REVENGE FOR THE OUT- RAGE AT GIBEAH,	165
xx.,	ISRAEL GOES UP AGAINST GIBEAH,	167
	ISRAEL SMITES GIBEAH AND BENJAMIN,	169
xxi.,	ISRAEL PROVIDES FOR THE DESOLATION OF BENJAMIN,	171
	THE DESOLATION OF BENJAMIN RELIEVED,	173

THE BOOK OF RUTH

INTRODUCTION,		175
CHAPTER	SUBJECT	
Ruth i. 1-18,	LOVE,	178
Ruth i. 19-22; ii.,	LOVE IS KIND,	184
Ruth iii. ; iv.,	THE REWARDS OF FAITH AND LOVE,	191
INDEX,		199

INTRODUCTION

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

1. **Its Contents.** The preceding book, that of Joshua, with which this is closely connected by its first word, the conjunction 'and,' carried the history of the chosen people as far as their settlement in Palestine. The book of Judges tells us how this was gradually effected and what difficulties had to be faced. It gives us an account of the period that elapsed between Joshua and Samuel. We are not sure how long this was. Recent critics, as the writer in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, think that it was 'relatively short, perhaps about two hundred years'; others that it was twice as long, at least four hundred years. This is a question difficult to decide, and it will be best to leave it open, as we are concerned with the teaching of the book rather than its chronology. What is of real importance is the character of the time. This was naturally formative. The conquerors, not yet a nation, are trying, as our Anglo-Saxon forefathers did when they settled in Britain, to find their feet, to become at home in their new possession. They have no king, and no leader like Joshua, sufficiently powerful to keep them all together. Indeed, we are not sure that even his influence would have been sufficient to weld twelve different tribes, with very different interests and many jealousies, into a united nation. There are disputes to the very end foreshadowing the separation which eventually came about after the death of Solomon. Such is the general character of the contents.

2. Its Form. The compiler in putting together the story divided his material into three parts. We have first an Introduction, which gives us a picture of things as they were in the last days of Joshua, of the want of patriotic zeal on the part of many of the tribes, and of the tendency to idolatry. Then follows the body of the book, the narrative of the Judges (iii. 7-xvi. 11), which gives an account of the thirteen Judges who were raised up to deliver Israel from the time of Joshua to that of Eli. Of only six, however, are we told enough to get a clear conception of their characters or deeds. We might suppose from the name that they were administrators rather than leaders. This, however, is not their character. Not one of them did anything worth narrating towards building up the people as a whole. They were rather saviours, deliverers, champions than magistrates or rulers. By their prowess and mighty deeds they rescued their countrymen out of the hands of the enemy. Now it was the north that was in trouble, and a northern leader appeared; then the west, then the east, then the south; and whilst fierce battles were being fought in one part of Palestine, the rest of it probably hardly knew what was going on. It is, however, through these local pictures that we obtain a good idea of the state of the people and country. And as we look at them, we are surprised to find that the Tabernacle and its Priesthood exercise so small an influence over the people. Not once do we hear of the High Priest, nor, indeed, of any Priest at all, and only once of the Levites. So weak is the central worship that we find one of the very best of these divine leaders, Gideon, forming a worship of his own, and a Levite not only approving of the erection of a rival house of God, but himself submitting to consecration by the farmer who built it, and consenting to serve in it. We must, however, remember that after the division of the land the tribes were for the first time scattered from Shiloh. Their members probably thought it a great trouble to trudge over the mountains to the divine shrine. The unity that was so easy and natural when they

were ranged in their tents round the Tabernacle became difficult when they were not only scattered, but also had their own peculiar troubles to meet and settle. The hope that a theocracy would be recognised, and that the people would be united under an Invisible Head governing by Priests, Levites, Judges, and Elders was disappointed, and it became more and more clear that nothing but a king would ever be able to make the tribes of Israel into a nation. The body of the book is followed by two interesting appendices, inserted apparently with the intention of showing how rude and lawless the times were. The first story, that of Micah and the Danites, not only gives us a very interesting picture of the state of religion in the early time of the Judges, but also a typical example of the way in which the tribes became settled in the land. The second story, that of the Levite and Benjamite, shows as nothing else could show how degraded the people were, and yet that, in spite of inter-tribal dissensions and differences, they could act together if the national conscience was shocked. It gives us also some very curious and interesting archæological detail.

3. **Meaning.** Such are the general contents of the book, and such its form. We now inquire as to its meaning. With what purpose was it written and why has it been preserved to us? At first the answer seems plain enough. It was written to describe that period of growth, that transition from wild licence to disciplined order, through which every nation has passed. Without it we should fail to understand aright the history recorded for us in the books of Samuel. A gap of two hundred years would be a serious omission: the book of Judges was then written to supply the deficiency. But this answer is not sufficient. Though we do learn much of the character of that period of growth, when the tribes are shaping to become a nation, yet our attention is not fastened on that aspect of the history. It is rather directed to those events which illustrate a principle not much noticed in secular history—the principle of faith. The compiler is anxious to keep alive in the

hearts of his countrymen the truth that faith, whether it is formed in a farmer's son, like Gideon, or a wild chieftain like Jephthah, whether in an undisciplined nature like that of Samson or in a stern vindictive character like that of Jael, is the motive-power of great deeds. But not only this. He wishes to encourage the sense of expectation. God's answers to faith in the saviours or deliverers that He sent when the times were out of joint, and when men did what was right in their own eyes, would lead some, in any case, to feel that, no matter how bad the nation or the world became, one day a Saviour would come who would set it right. And this Saviour would have some of the characteristics of these national heroes. They were in some particulars portraits of the Coming One. So we, his readers who have known the Messiah, find that the compiler has been led to make a remarkable selection of stories. The times, no doubt, supplied several hundreds, but out of these his inspired instinct lays hold of those that not only describe the character of the times and stimulate faith, but show the Coming One. The book, then, is of permanent value and significance. It is true that scenes are depicted which shock our moral conscience. The murders of Eglon and Sisera, the horrible act of the injured Levite, cannot be read without repulsion, but we must remember that the Bible is intended for spiritual persons, *i.e.* for persons gifted by the Spirit with spiritual insight. It is supposed that such will be able to interpret the book by the moral standard of Him under Whose guidance it was written. It is supposed that they will be able to know what actions have the approval of God and what have not. It is taken for granted that they will see what is of God and what is not; that whilst, for example, they rejoice in the motives that led Jael and Ehud to take their lives into their hands for the sake of Israel, they will shrink with horror from the treachery in which these motives found expression. If the Bible were without such moral difficulties as these, it would not be a true record of human life, for nothing is more common in history than the expression of a good motive in a bad action.

Whilst we applaud the former, we are puzzled by the latter, and ask in amazement, 'Why did he carry out his ideas in such a vicious way?' The heroes of the Bible are 'men of like passions with ourselves,' at times lifted out of themselves by the Spirit of God, at other times sinking below themselves. As Professor Maurice rightly says, 'The Bible has tried to convince us that it is making us acquainted with men of the same nature with ourselves—not exempt from our temptations, but sharing in them, frequently yielding to them. And what, then, are these men good for? Why does it concern us to hear of them? They are good for precisely this—God calls them out that they may act as His servants, as deliverers of their country, as benefactors of mankind. So far as they yield themselves to that calling, so far as they give themselves up to the work which they are called to do, He speaks in them, He shines through them; men see His image, and are raised by it to know what they are meant to be. So soon as ever these men begin to act and speak for themselves . . . that moment they become witnesses for God by their rebellion as they had been by their obedience.'¹

In conclusion, we may add that if these heroes of the Old Testament had been pictured without faults, weaknesses, and sins, it is certain that the present tendency to make them representative of certain principles or national movements, to mythologise them and dehumanise them, would have had no check, and the early books of the Old Testament would have lost their value to all except the learned few who could discover beneath their phantom appearance the ideas that form the philosophy of the nature peoples.

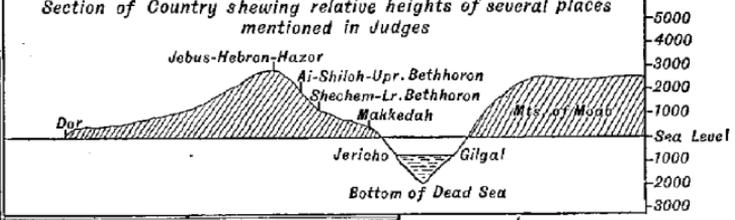
4. Date and Authorship. From what has been said of the contents, it will be seen that the book contains elements of very different dates. The Song of Deborah was doubtless written soon after Barak's victory, whilst other narratives, such as those of Jephthah, Gideon, and Samson, were written later. If by the term 'the Captivity of the land' (Judges xviii. 30) is

¹ Maurice's *Patriarchs and Lawgivers*, p. 324.

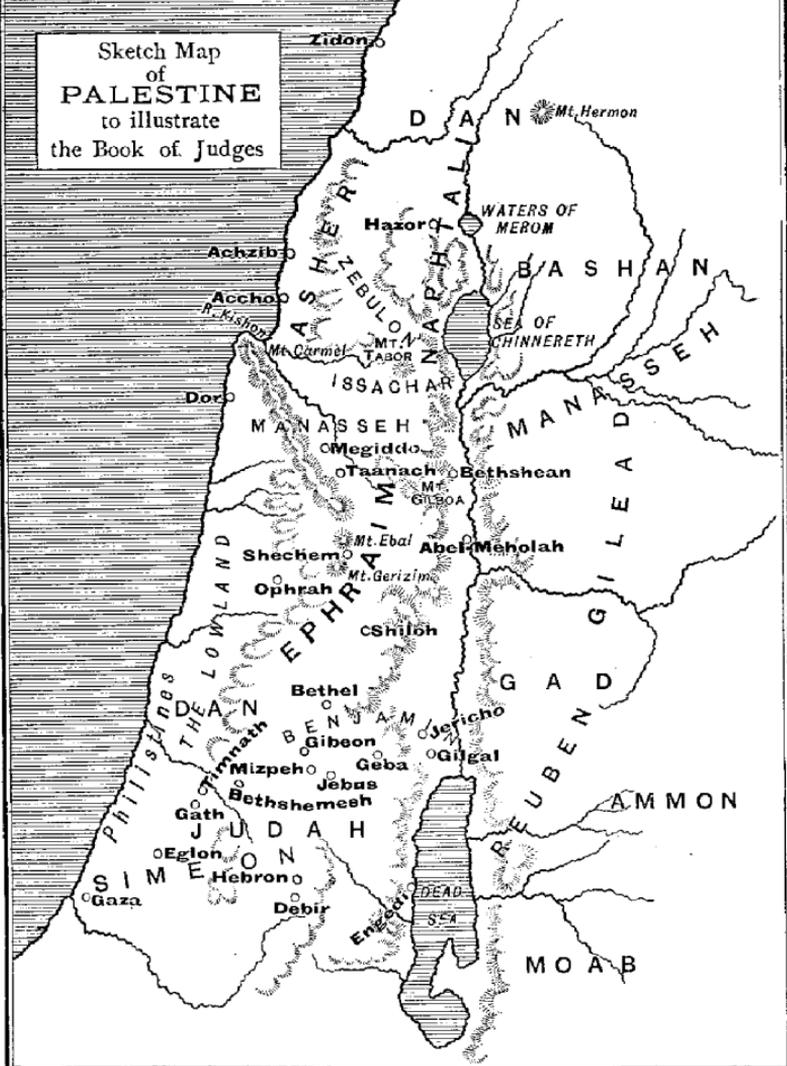
meant the Babylonian or Assyrian Captivity, then the final compilation of the book was made very late. Some, however, interpret the phrase of the bondage of the people during the time that the house of God was in Shiloh, and consider that the words, 'the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem *unto this day*' (Judges i. 21), must give it that interpretation. The Talmud—a book of Jewish, civil and canonical law—compiled during the first seven centuries of the Christian era, maintains that Samuel wrote it. It is quite possible that Samuel made the first collection of stories illustrating the period, and that his collection was afterwards re-edited by some unknown compiler.

The extracts from the Revised Version contained in this volume are printed by permission of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Section of Country showing relative heights of several places mentioned in Judges



Sketch Map of PALESTINE to illustrate the Book of Judges



THE BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER I. 1-8

¹ And. ¹ **N**OW after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? 2. And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. 3. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. 4. And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

NOTE.—Marginal readings *not in italics* are from the Revised Version.

1. **Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass.** From Josh. xiv. it seems clear that the events recorded in this chapter took place before the death of Joshua. We must regard this first chapter as a kind of summary of the history of the conquest of Judah, helping us to understand what follows.

Asked the Lord. How? Did they ask the High Priest to consult the oracle of God given in the mysterious Urim and Thummim, or did they ask in united prayer? We are not told. The means is not of the same importance as the fact that Israel felt no political movement could be safely carried out without God's guidance.

2. **And the Lord said, Judah shall go up.** Judah, 'the lion's whelp' (Gen. xlix. 9), already held the first place for valour and courage. It was important that the first attempt should be crowned with success.

3. **And Judah said unto Simeon.** Judah is not so elated at being chosen as to feel that he can do everything by himself. He seeks the fellowship of that tribe whose territory lay nearest his own, and promises his assistance when the time comes for him to possess the land God has given him. There was also a tie of relationship which bound these two tribes together. (See Gen. xxix. 32-35.)

4. **The Canaanites and the Perizzites.** It is difficult to distinguish between these heathen peoples. The word Canaanite means 'lowlander,' and Perizzite probably 'countryman,' as differentiating those who lived in the country a nomadic kind of life from those who lived in cities.

Bezek. 'Probably Bezkah, a ruin west of Jerusalem in the lower hills' (Conder). Bezek seems to have been the name of some deity, for Adoni-bezek—the name of the chief of the forces that opposed Judah—means 'Bezek is my lord.'

5. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek ; and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizites. 6. But Adoni-bezek fled ; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. 7. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table : as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died. 8. ² Now the children of Judah had ³ fought against Jerusalem, and ³ had ⁴ taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

² And.
³ omit had.
⁴ took . . .
 smote.

5. **And they found.** The words imply that he was specially sought for. He was a great hero amongst the Canaanites, and had a wide and infamous reputation for cruelty. He had mutilated no less than seventy petty kings or chieftains who had fallen into his hands, and diligent search was made for him. His capture was an affair of great importance.

6. **Cut off his thumbs.** One of the enactments of the Mosaic Law provided that a man's deeds should recoil upon his own head ; that what he had done should be done to him—' life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot' (Deut. xix. 21). Adoni-bezek suffered, therefore, the same mutilation he had inflicted on others, and, it would seem, died from the effects. Though barbarous, his practices were not unknown elsewhere. Even the Athenians decreed that every prisoner of war should lose his hands. They served the double purpose of making the prisoner useless, and yet keeping him as a trophy of war.

8. **And the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem.** This is the first time that this celebrated city was taken ; but though fired, it was apparently soon reoccupied by the Jebusites. In Judg. xix. 12 it is spoken of as a ' city of the Jebusites,' but that chapter is not in its chronological order, so we cannot determine anything from it. Possibly Adoni-bezek was its king, as its capture is connected with his overthrow. If so, it is interesting to remember the similar names of two other kings who preceded him—Melchizedek and Adoni-zedek.

LESSON I

Cruelty and its Punishment

INTRODUCTION.—There is a good opportunity for teaching here a lesson children sometimes forget—the hatred God has to cruelty, and the punishment that is certain to follow.

MATTER.**1. Cruelty.**

Jerusalem was not the name the city first bore, but probably Salem, and afterwards Jebus, as it was the capital of the Jebusites. It was an old city known to Abraham (Gen. xiv. 18) and to Joshua, who had killed one of its kings, Adoni-zedek, when he joined four others to fight against Israel (Josh. x. 5). At this time a very cruel king lived there—not like Melchizedek, confessing God, but an idolater, Bezek being his god. He is very haughty and proud. See him at dinner. Beneath his table grovel seventy men, looking wretched and hopeless. Once they were kings, now they are prisoners. They are not in chains, there is no necessity; they are lame, and maimed in their hands. Why does the king have them in his dining-hall? Because he likes to feel his power, to see their misery, to watch the difficulty they find in getting their food. They are like animals.

2. The Avenger.

'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.' Though the king is a heathen, yet he is responsible (see Rom. i.). His cruelty has been noticed by God, Who is now about to call him to account. The king apparently cares nothing, though he must have known of the terrible fate of his predecessor, who had been hanged by Joshua in front of Makkedah. He is secure in his fortress, feeling what his descendants afterwards felt (see 2 Sam. v. 6). But God has raised up those who will punish him. Simeon and Judah march north to Jerusalem, evidently with the hope of capturing this wicked king.

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking what is and has been for centuries the capital of Palestine. Where is it situated? Do we hear anything about it in the Book of Joshua? Describe its situation—surrounded on three sides by a deep valley—only possible to take on one side. Joshua had never taken it, so a new king had been elected by the Jebusites to reign over it. Tell the class that it is of this king they are going to hear—not of his kindness—such as we read of his great predecessor Melchizedek, who won for his city the name Salem, or Peace—but of his cruelty. Draw out clearly what this was.

2. Draw out clearly the contrast between the security of this guilty king and the terrible danger in which he really stood. Illustrate by the Sword of Damocles.

LESSON I—*continued.* CRUELTY AND ITS PUNISHMENT

MATTER.

METHOD.

3. The punishment.

It is not easy to make out the order of events; but it would seem from the R.V. that directly the king heard of the intended attack, he left Jerusalem for Bezek, a place a little north of it, and mustered the Canaanites and Perizzites, but all in vain. A great battle was fought, in which Adoni-bezek lost 10,000 men; he then tried, as Sisera afterwards did, to escape, but was caught and brought before his captors. The story of his cruelty was well known; and according to the well-known law, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' he was made to suffer the punishment he had inflicted upon others. The guilty king acknowledged its justice, and it is hoped thereby expiated his sin.

The army of Judah and Simeon now marched back to Jerusalem, and having captured it, set the city on fire. They then brought their prisoner into the ruins of his capital; and whether this or the punishment killed him, we are not told, but 'there he died.'

3. 'At the end it shall speak and not lie.' Show from these words that punishment always falls on unrepented sin; it may delay, but in the end the sin finds the sinner out (Num. xxxii. 23).

Draw attention to the king's acknowledgment of the justice of his punishment; this possibly was the beginning of his repentance.

LESSON.—All inclined to say, 'Served him right,' but are we free from every kind of cruelty? The Emperor Trajan was believed to be a very kind man, and yet he attended gladiatorial shows; so, too, a Spanish lady who erected a monument to a beautiful bull that died in the bull-ring, yet went to see the poor thing tortured to death. So kind boys who are shocked at the cruelty of a cat will hurt their friends with hard words, if not cruel deeds. When we are tempted to be cruel, to tease or worry others, or to ill-treat animals, let us remember our Lord's words, which sum up the story, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (S. Matt. vii. 2).

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Cruelty and its Punishment.

'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured
to you again.'

1. *Cruelty.*—The measure meted by Adoni-bezek,
king of Jerusalem.
Seventy kings—maimed in hands and feet
—publicly degraded.
2. *The Avenger.*—Adoni-bezek trusts in his strong
fortress.
Simeon and Judah approach.
King rouses Canaanites and Perizzites.
Great battle in Bezek—king taken
prisoner.
'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'
3. *The measure meted.*—King brought before his
captors.
Sentenced to be maimed—confesses
justice of his punishment—dies.
'Be sure your sin will find you out.'
4. *The Lesson.*—*'Be merciful, as your Father
also is merciful.'*

CHAPTER I. 9-26

AND afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the ¹mountain, and in the south, and in the ²valley. ¹hill country. ²lowland.

10. And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

11. And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher.

12. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14. And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

9. **Went down.** From the high country about Jerusalem, which was three thousand feet above the level of the sea, to the lower hill country of the south, that which stretches between Jerusalem and the high land about Hebron.

10. **Hebron.** An important as well as an interesting place. It was the home of the patriarchs, and some have supposed that it derived its name Hebron (friendship) from Abraham, who was known to be the friend of God (2 Chron. xx. 7). Standing as high as Jerusalem on the road to Beersheba, it was a stronghold important to secure.

11. **Debir.** A city about twelve miles from Hebron. From the fact that, like Hebron, it had cities dependent upon it, and as its name Kirjath-sepher (city of books) suggests, a place of learning, it was of importance to Judah, and he determined to take it.

12. **Caleb.** The one other faithful spy besides Joshua, was full of zeal, not only taking a leading part himself in the attack on Hebron, but in inspiring others to follow his example.

13. **Othniel the son of Kenaz.** In Josh. xiv. 6 Caleb is called 'the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite.' Perhaps the words here mean 'Othniel the son of the Kenezite.' In that case Othniel would be Caleb's brother. But when we recollect that Caleb was eighty-five years old, it seems better to take the reading in Josh. xv. 17, 'Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb,' which would make Othniel Caleb's nephew and Achsah's cousin.

³ that thou hast set me in the land of the south. 15. And she said unto him, Give me a blessing : for ³ thou hast given me a south land ; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. 16. And the children of the Kenite, Moses' ⁴ brother in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah *into* the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad ; and they went and dwelt among the people. 17. And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it : and the name of the city was called Hormah. 18. Also Judah took Gaza with the ⁵ coast thereof, and Askelon with the ⁵ coast thereof, and Ekron with the ⁵ coast thereof. 19. And the LORD was with Judah ; and he drave out *the inhabitants of the* ¹ mountain ; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the ² valley ; because they had chariots of iron. 20. And they gave Hebron

15. **She said unto him.** Achsah inherited her father's bold spirit. Finding that her husband did not care to ask more than that which he had promised to give, not caring perhaps to disparage his bride by asking for anything beside her, Achsah herself asks for an increase to her dowry, or rather such an addition as may make it worth having. A south land without springs of water would be useless, so she asks for the water that may make her land fertile, which Caleb gladly gives her.

16. **The Kenite, Moses' father in law.** Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian, who is here called a Kenite, the Kenites being probably a branch of the Midianites. Owing to this family tie and the influence of Moses, the Kenites accompanied the Israelites to Palestine, and till the land became settled stayed at Jericho. They now move into the higher and freer country of the south, near Arad, which was nearly twenty miles south of Hebron, and dwelt amongst the people of that district—perhaps, as the LXX. suggests, the Amalekites, amongst whom they were found centuries later by Saul (1 Sam. xv. 6).

17. **Zephath.** The capture of this place is mentioned because of a sad reverse which the Israelites had sustained some years before when trying to reach Canaan from the south. (See Num. xxi. 1-3.) They had then vowed that if they were ever successful, they would raze the place to the ground ; this they now did, calling it Hormah (*i. e.* place under a ban).

18. **Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron.** Though these Philistine strongholds were taken, they were not long kept (Judg. iii. 3 ; xiii. 1).

19. **Could not drive out.** This verse sums up the results of the campaign. Judah was able to conquer in the mountains, but made little or no way in the plain because of the enemies' chariots.

unto Caleb, as Moses said : and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak. 21. And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem ; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day. 22. And the house of Joseph, they also went up *against* Beth-el : and the LORD *was* with them. 23. And the house of Joseph sent to ⁶ descry Beth-el. (Now the name ⁶ spy out. of the city before *was* Luz.) 24. And the ⁷ spies saw a man ⁷ watchers. come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy. 25. And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword ; but they let go the man and all his family. 26. And the man went *into* the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz : which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

21. **Did not drive out the Jebusites.** Jerusalem had been temporarily occupied by the men of Judah, who had set fire to it. But after they left it the Jebusites returned, driving out partially the Benjamites who had taken the place of the men of Judah. From the language here used it would seem that the two opposing parties agreed to a joint occupation of the hill ; or it is possible that the Jebusites held what is known as the hill of Zion, the men of Benjamin the southern part of the hill, the two parts originally being separated by a deep valley now filled in.

22. **The house of Joseph, i.e.** the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim.

23. **Beth-el.** A place about four hours north of Jerusalem, dear to every Israelite from its sacred associations with the early history of his race. Here Abraham had built an altar, and here too Jacob had the vision which cheered him on his way to Padan-aram. It was a place then to be captured, and the house of Joseph determined to do it. But there were difficulties ; Beth-el was strongly situated ; it was decided, therefore, to take it by craft. Spies were sent out, who discovered the best point of assault.

26. **The man went into the land of the Hittites.** This man was not like Rahab, incorporated into the family of Israel. He still remained a Hittite, and made use of his liberty in journeying to the north and founding a city, which he named Luz, after his old home.

LESSON II

Success and its Causes

In this section we have an account of three notable successes—that of Othniel with Kirjath-sepher, of Judah with Zephath and other places, and of Joseph with Beth-el. We must first make these places clear to the children by pointing them out on the map and describing so far as we are able how they were taken. When this has been done, then we must point out the causes, which we shall find are twofold—God's presence and man's co-operation. When the children have seen this from the text, then we can show how these two causes are found operating in all success.

MATTER.

1. Success.

Judah had its territory in the south. Caleb, its hero, was attracted to Hebron because of its interesting associations and position. Takes it by storm in spite of his great age. Another place, Kirjath-sepher, very important because of the records that were kept there. Caleb offers a splendid prize to the man who shall be brave enough to take it. Othniel takes it, and wins not only a bride, but also the lands that contain the springs that will make it valuable. Judah's boundaries are extending, and welcome is given to the Kenites as settlers. The next move is taken from a feeling of revenge. At Zephath years ago Israel had suffered a bad reverse; they long to wipe it out, and do so in capturing it and razing it to the ground.

After Judah we are told of the warlike doings of the house of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh—but in this lesson our attention is confined to Ephraim. They, like Judah, desired one town rich in memories—the town of Beth-el. They do not feel strong enough to take it by open assault, but resort to stratagem. And as Rahab helped Joshua, so a man from Beth-el helps Ephraim. He never, however, became an Israelite, but went up

METHOD.

1. Point out the position of Judah. Ask what town of importance lies on its boundaries. See whether the children can tell you anything about it and its connection with Abraham. Then show how natural it was that Caleb should wish to take it.

Now point out Debir. Ask what its old name was, and why the place was so called. Show what new motive leads Othniel to attack and take it. This is Judah's second success. Now ask who are allowed to share in it (see verse 16).

What is the third success, and why are the men of Judah specially pleased about it?

Now ask what tribe was of equal importance with Judah, and show that we shall expect great doings from it. Turn to the map and ask what town of Jerusalem had the same sacred associations that Hebron had. Describe its capture and the service that a man of Bethel rendered. Of what other service does it remind us?

LESSON II—continued. SUCCESS AND ITS CAUSES

MATTER.

METHOD.

north and founded a city to remind him of the one he had betrayed.

2. First cause of success.

Note the significance of the words, 'The Lord was with Judah,' 'And the Lord was with them.' Such words mean that an Invisible Presence went forth with the hosts of Judah and Ephraim to Hebron, Zephath, and Beth-el.

2. Now get the children to repeat the four successes of Caleb, Othniel, Judah, and Ephraim, and ask to what they were due. Refer them to their Bibles; and if unable to find the passages, to verses 19 and 22.

As illustrations of the importance great men have attached to God's presence in critical emergencies, refer to the prayer of Henry v. before Agincourt as Shakespeare gives it (Act iv. sc. 1); and to Salisbury's words (Act iv. sc. 3), 'God's arm strike with us! 'tis a fearful odds—God be wi' you, princes all'; also to Lord Roberts' despatch after Paardeberg, where all was ascribed to God. But not only in emergencies. Note our own farewell, 'Good-bye,' *i.e.* God be with ye, showing how in all things we feel we need His presence.

3. Secondary causes of success.

God helps those who help themselves. But note, as men are naturally indolent, He stirs them up to difficult duties by various motives. Caleb's motive was patriotism. He loved his country's past, and longed to have the place where the bodies of his ancestors rested. Othniel's motive was ambition, and possibly love. He wished to win Caleb's daughter. Judah's motive was resentment—the desire to wipe off the reproach of an old disaster. Ephraim's motive was that of Caleb. All these helped.

3. Now ask, shall we be content with God's presence and fold our arms? Was Caleb or Othniel so content? They felt they must do something. But what led them to wish to do what they did? Give illustrations from history of the various motives that led to these successes.

LESSON.—Ask the class which they prefer—success or failure. How are they to succeed? In the first place, they must use and make the most of the ordinary motives—the desire to please their parents or their master, the wish to do honour to their school, etc.—but these are useless unless they have the presence of God with them. Show that this means prayer both before our undertaking and during it.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Success and its Causes.

'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich.'

1. *Success.*—Caleb takes Hebron; Othniel takes Debir; Judah takes Zephath; and Ephraim takes Beth-el.

2. *First Cause.*—The blessing of God.

The Lord was with Judah. The Lord was with the house of Joseph.

'*Blessed is the man who maketh the Lord his trust.*'

3. *Secondary Causes.*—Patriotism leads Caleb to Hebron, and Ephraim to Beth-el.

Love and ambition led Othniel to Debir.

Honour and resentment led Judah to Zephath.

'*Whoso hath, to him shall be given.*'

CHAPTER I. 27-36 ; II. 1-5

¹ **N**EITHER did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* ¹ And Manasseh did not drive. Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns : but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. 28. And it came to pass, when Israel ² was strong, that they put the Canaanites to ³ tribute, ² was waxen. ³ task work. and did not utterly drive them out. 29. ¹ Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer ; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. 30. Neither

27. **Manasseh.** A powerful tribe, but stronger in the east on the farther side of the Jordan than on the west. Her territory on the west seems to have been bounded by the Mediterranean, and on the east it ran down nearly to the Jordan, Beth-shean being close to the river. On the south it was bounded by Dan and Ephraim, and on the north by Issachar. It is difficult to say why a tribe which thrived so well on the east of the Jordan should have failed comparatively on the west. Perhaps the Plain of Sharon, soft and enervating, deprived them of the energy which the hills of Gilead gave them.

Beth-shean. A city of the valley, lying very low, 320 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. An important place, because it was on the road from Damascus to Egypt.

Taanach. This town, and Megiddo, which is almost always named with it, were the chief towns of the fine rich district which forms the west portion of the great plain of Esdraelon.

Dor. A Canaanitish city, about nine miles north of Caesarea on the coast.

28. **When Israel was strong.** It is difficult to know to what time the writer is here referring, whether to the time of Solomon (1 Kings ix. 20), or whether to some period of the Judges. The former would be the more strictly accurate reference, but it is not clear why the fact of the tributary condition of the Canaanites at that time should be mentioned. Taxing the Canaanites was a compromise with the law of God which bade them exterminate their foes.

29. **Gezer.** This place lies a little east of Ekron. In Josh. x. 33 we read of the destruction of the king and people ; but apparently after that it was again inhabited and rebuilt, and now proved too strong for Ephraim.

30. **Zebulun.** Territory of Zebulun lay to the north of the Kishon valley, extending nearly to the Mediterranean on the one hand, and to the Sea of Galilee on the other.

did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became ⁴ tributaries. 31. ¹ Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: 32. but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out. 33. ¹ Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became ⁴ tributaries unto them. 34. And ⁵ hill country. the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the ⁵ mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley: 35. but the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon,

Kitron. This place is difficult to mark. Adam Smith places it about seven miles west of Cana of Galilee, and about six miles north of Nazareth.

Nahalol. Unknown.

31. **Asher.** Their territory, which stretched from Mount Carmel to Lebanon, contained some of the richest soil in all Palestine. Note the meaning of the name, 'Happy or Fortunate,' and the promise (Gen. xlix. 20), 'Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.'

Accho, the modern Acre, on the coast a little north of Carmel.

Zidon. Still farther north, the most important city of Phœnicia. Of the other cities mentioned in this verse little or nothing is known. It is, however, of interest to note that in this small district seven towns of more or less importance were still in the hands of the Canaanites.

33. **Naphtali** was bounded on the west by Asher, on the south by Zebulun, and on the east by the Jordan. It was a mountainous district, but possessing some of the most fertile soil in Palestine. Neither Beth-shemesh nor Beth-anath are certainly known.

34. **Dan.** This tribe had eventually, as the map shows, two districts—one immediately south of Manasseh, in which Joppa is situated, and the other south of the Anti-Libanus range—but at this time their portion was entirely in the south. The land allotted to them, though small, was very rich—the cornfield and the garden of the whole south of Palestine (Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, 258); but for some time the Amorites kept them out of it, forcing them to keep to the hill-country.

Aijalon. About halfway between Joppa and Jerusalem, famous because of its connection with the battle of Beth-horon (Josh. x. 11).

35. **Became tributaries.** By the assistance of Ephraim the Amorites were forced to pay tribute, but they kept their towns, and became an increasing moral danger to the simple-minded Danites.

and in Shaalbim : yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became 'tributaries. 36. And the ⁶ coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akkrabbim, ⁶ border. from the rock, and upward.

II. 1. And ⁷ an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal ⁷ the. to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers ; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you : 2. and ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land ; you shall throw down their altars : but ye have not obeyed my voice : why have ye done this ? 3. Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you ; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. 4. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people ⁸ lift up their voice, and ⁸ lifted. wept. 5. And they called the name of that place Bochim : and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

36. *Going up to Akkrabbim.* A place that cannot be identified. It had a bad reputation owing to the number of scorpions, from which it took its name, namely, the Ascent of the Scorpions, *i.e.* the pass abounding in scorpions.

II. 1. *An angel of the Lord.* The R. V. has in the margin 'a messenger,' and some of the old Rabbis used to interpret the phrase as meaning 'a prophet.' The difficulty is that the language is too strong for a prophet to use. No prophet could say, 'I made you go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land.' We must, therefore, adopt the translation which the R. V. gives in the text, and explain it as meaning some supernatural being vested with full powers, or a manifestation of the Lord.

From Gilgal to Bochim. It would seem as though the old sanctuary of Gilgal was now given up for Bochim—a place near Shiloh where the tabernacle had been set up (Josh. xviii.). See Josh. v. 13, where we see that the Angel of the Lord had manifested Himself at Gilgal.

2. *You shall throw down their altars.* We now see why the tribes had, for the most part, failed in their conquest. They were afraid of uprooting the heathen religion and practices which prevailed, and their disloyalty to God was punished with failure. The task that might have been easy now proved too difficult. They might think it mattered but little leaving the heathen much as they were, provided they paid their taxes, but they would prove to be a source of sorrow, pain, and sin.

4. *They wept.* The warning has a transient effect, and awakens a temporary religious revival, but it is experience alone that will bring them to a true conversion.

5. *Bochim, i.e. weepers.*

LESSON III

Failures

INTRODUCTION.—Go back to last lesson. Ask what was the subject? As we then learned about success, so now to-day we learn about failures. Failures more common than successes. Quote the proverb, 'It is but human to sin.' This due to sin, which we have inherited from our parents.

MATTER.

1. Failures.

The remainder of chapter i., which began so bright, is very sad. Manasseh, who might have had the beautiful valley of Esdraelon as their own possession if they had been vigorous, preferred to make a treaty with the heathen instead of exterminating them or making them their bond-slaves. So, too, even Ephraim, in spite of their success in Beth-el, compromised and allowed the Canaanites to dwell among them. Asher and Zebulun were even worse; they actually dwelt amongst the heathen, mixing freely with them. Dan was cowardly, being confined to the mountains, and not able to take advantage of the rich cornfields of the plains.

2. Cause.

It seems as though God's work in Canaan would fail, in only a few places is there any success. But before God can help, the people must repent. So He sends the mysterious angel of Jehovah, who goes up from the old sanctuary of Gilgal to a place near the new sanctuary of Shiloh. He tells the people, first of all, what He had done for them in bringing them out of the cruel bondage of Egypt to this beautiful land, how He had promised always to be with them, and had only asked of them one thing, namely, that they would not make friends with the wicked people of the land, and would show their

METHOD.

1. Begin by recalling the facts of the last lesson—the successes of Judah and Ephraim. Ask, by reference to the map, what other tribes lived north of Judah beside Ephraim. Point out Manasseh, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, Dan. Show, by pointing out the places mentioned in the text, what poor soldiers they were, and how they resigned themselves to failure. Give examples from school life of indolent, lazy boys or girls who never try to achieve success.

2. Failure is never due to God. He never fails. It seemed when Christ died on the Cross as though God had failed, but seven weeks later, and there was a Society of three thousand enthusiastic Christians. Failure, then, is due to man working by himself without God. Joshua had done such great things, that Israel began to think they could do everything themselves. Point out what God has done for us—(1) Led us out of heathenism; (2) Promised to be with us 'all the days to the end of the world,' and only asks one thing, and that—that we shall not try to serve two masters.

LESSON III—continued. FAILURES

MATTER.

METHOD.

detestation of their abominable religion by throwing down their altars. This they had not done. Punishment, then, would certainly follow.

3. Results.

Failure to fulfil God's plan always means misery. So here it will not be as they think—merely failure—but this would lead to

(1) *Trouble*. They might leave the heathen alone, but the heathen would not leave them alone. They would be always worrying, persecuting, raiding, and not a house in Israel would be safe.

(2) *Disappointment*. The gods they turned to would be found to fail them when they wanted help, and the idolatry would lead them to awful sins.

3. Point out to the class that God, in telling Israel what would happen, was really doing the kindest thing. It made them very miserable to think of the punishment that would follow, but it was better that they should know, for knowledge might stir them up to repent and do God's will. Make it quite clear that failure not only means missing what we might have, but misery and misfortune.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Failure.

1. *Its character.*

Weakness instead of boldness (Manasseh).

Compromise instead of simple faith
(Asher and Zebulun).

Cowardice instead of courage (Dan).

2. *Its causes.*

Desire for ease. Disloyalty.

'*The friendship of the world is enmity
with God.*'

3. *Its results.*

Disgrace. Suffering.

'*From him that hath not shall be taken away
even that he hath.*'

CHAPTERS II. 6-23 ; III. 1-6

¹ Now.

AND when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. 7. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. 8. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old. 9. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the ²mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. 10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for

² hill country.

6. And when Joshua had let the people go. This passage obviously begins a new section of the book, which continues till the end of chap. xvi. It gives an account of the history of Israel during the Judges. This part of it, ii. 6-iii. 6, which we take as our lesson, is introductory to the book. It gives some account of the closing years of Joshua, then the causes why Israel had so much trouble.

7. All the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders. Such is the power of a great example. As long as Joshua was present to direct and counsel, and as long as the elders were alive who had seen God's great wonders at the river Jordan and in the valley of Ajalon, all went well.

9. And they buried him . . . in Timnath-heres. The author or editor adds this that the men of his own time might know where the tomb was, and catch the same inspiration from a visit there as we do from a visit to Westminster Abbey. Apparently he was buried quite simply, as he lived not in Shiloh where the sanctuary was, but in his own small patrimony. The site has now been lost, unless the Thannah of Josephus, the modern Tibneh, represents it. As to the name of the place, see the author's *Joshua*, p. 141.

10. Which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works. Here lies the reason for the idolatry and ungodliness that follow. All religion consists in the personal knowledge of God and His actions. This had not been given to the new generation that sprang up after Joshua. No pains had been taken to instruct them. His wonderful deeds were all forgotten, and it was easy for them to fall into idolatry.

Israel. 11. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served³ Baalim : 12. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and³ Ashtaroth. 14. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. 15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them : and they

11. **And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.** Note the phrase, 'in the sight of the Lord,' which seems to imply that they did it openly without shame. 'It occurs seven times in this book as descriptive of the seven apostasies of Israel, which drew down upon them the seven servitudes.'

Served Baalim. The word 'Baal' is not, probably, the name of a heathen deity identified with the sun, but, as its meaning 'lord' implies, a generic term applying to all the heathen deities of Palestine. The particular god who was supposed to care for agriculture would be called a Baal. The Baalim, then, here mentioned were those heathen gods in whose honour religious festivals were held from time to time in the towns and villages of Palestine. Connected as they were with nature-worship, and therefore grossly immoral, the Israelites who succumbed to their fascination soon became utterly degraded.

13. **Ashtaroth.** The plural of Ashtoreth, the name given to the principal goddess of the Zidonians. The word probably stands, like Baalim, as a generic term for all the goddesses that were worshipped in Palestine and Syria. Such indications as we have of her worship would lead us to suppose that it was more immoral than that of Baal.

14. **Sold them.** Note the antithesis, 'He redeemed them.' Both words must be purified from all conceptions unworthy of God. With us they imply the receiving or giving of something in exchange, in the Bible they are strong images expressive in the one case of the feelings that lead to the abandonment of something you no longer care for, and in the other of those that lead to sacrifice in order to obtain what you highly prize.

15. **As the Lord had said.** The distresses which idolatry brought them had been clearly foretold. Through Moses God had told them what they must expect if they were false (see Lev. xxvi. 37 and Deut. xxviii. 25), but they had paid little or no heed, and now groaned beneath their burdens.

were greatly distressed. 16. Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. 17. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so. 18. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. 19. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. 20. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; 21. I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: 22. that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the

16. **Judges.** The word in Hebrew is not only applied to those who try or decide cases, but to those who execute judgment. It means, then, a champion as well as a magistrate; and it is probably this meaning that should be applied to those who are called 'judges' in this book.

18. **It repented the Lord.** God's unchangeableness is not a dead mechanical immutability like that of the stars. It is moral and not mechanical, and is therefore necessarily affected by the moral behaviour of men. A father who persisted in carrying out the same punishment to the penitent as to the impenitent son would be considered heartless. It is as much a part of the Divine Nature, which is unchangeable, to forgive (which in some cases may imply remission of punishment) on repentance as to punish sin. His moral nature is necessarily unchangeable, but its expression varies with the character with which it is placed in touch. 'I the Lord change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed' (Mal. iii. 6).

22. **That through them I may prove Israel.** This verse is specially noteworthy. Thoughtful Israelites might have wondered, as thoughtful Englishmen do, at the sight of similar phenomena, why these heathen idolaters, grossly sensual, cruel, and deceitful, should have been left in the country. The reply here given is that Israel might be proved, *i.e.* that

LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not.
 23. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily ; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

III. 1. Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many ⁴ of *Israel* as had not ⁴ *omit* of Israel. known all the wars of Canaan ; 2. only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least such as beforetime knew nothing thereof ; 3. *namely*, the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Zidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath. 4. And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. 5. And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites ; 6. and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

he might be tested, and thereby shown his own weakness and need of divine strength. Without temptation man would never know himself, and self-knowledge is essential to all progress. But though left, they are not to be tolerated. They were left, not only that Israel might be educated in self-knowledge but that by conflicts with them they might learn the art of war. As we are told in ver. 2, many of Israel had not known the wars of Canaan, they had no experience in the art of warfare, and were therefore apt to be soft, cowardly, self-indulgent, and undisciplined. It was necessary that they should learn to be hardy, brave, and well disciplined, and only through war could they learn this.

III. 3. **The Philistines, and all the Canaanites.** The Philistines, Canaanites, and Zidonians were those who lived on the west coast of Palestine. They were all more or less allied. The Hivites, in contrast to these people living on the coast, were 'midlanders,' apparently related to Canaan as their ancestor (Gen. x. 17). From the books of Genesis and Joshua, we should judge that they were a peaceful and commercial people living in the region of Gibeon and on the slopes of Hermon, though not free from the vices which marked all the people of the land. Here they are found in the extreme north between Hermon and Hamath, on the river Orontes.

5. **Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites.** The Hittites were the hill men of Middle Palestine, the Amorites the mountaineers of Western Palestine, whilst the Perizzites were lowlanders dwelling in open, unwall'd villages. The intermarriage of the Israelites with these people brought, naturally, the adoption of heathen customs and practices.

LESSON IV

National Sin and its Causes

INTRODUCTION.—Rehearse what has been taught so far. Some successes—many failures. We ask now, what was the state of the country as a whole at the time when the book of Judges opens? We shall find it was very bad. In pointing out national sin, try to make the children feel what a dreadful thing it would be if the King, the Government, the Church gave up allegiance to Jesus Christ, what a still worse thing if the country was not only without religion but without Sovereign and Government. How lawless all would be. And yet this would be the case if England did as Israel did. It will be well to see what the Bible points out as the causes of national sin and degeneration.

MATTER.**1. National Sin.**

The country that God had given Israel, that Joshua had won by such hard fighting, in a terrible condition. Everywhere men and women to be seen leaving the worship of the Invisible God at Shiloh and seeking heathen temples. There people, for whom God had done such great things, are seen bowing down to ugly wooden and brass idols, and begging these hideous dead figures to bless their crops, to ward off evil from their houses. Next, from adopting the worship they adopt the ways of the people, become drunken and immoral. Shiloh deserted, there is no common seat of government, no union amongst the tribes, no great head of the nation to represent the Invisible God. Every one does what he likes, and murder, rapine, crime are common.

2. Causes.

How is it that such a dreadful state of things comes to pass? There are three causes—

(a) *Want of good example.* See ver. 7. As long as Joshua and the elders who knew him were alive, all went well; but when they died, there

METHOD.

1. Explain the words Baal, Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and show how it is that people fall into idolatry. Easier to be superstitious than believing—to believe in gods that have no moral character than in one who says, ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy.’

2. Here show the importance of our State Prayers, especially for the members of the royal family, some of whom may be our future rulers: ‘Endue them with Thy Holy Spirit, enrich them with Thy heavenly grace, prosper them with all happi-

LESSON IV—continued. NATIONAL SIN AND ITS CAUSES

MATTER.

was no one to take their place. Why was this? Because the country had given up praying for their rulers, had forgotten to ask God to give them good men.

Show here why school always begins with a lesson about God.

(b) *A second cause was want of teaching.* There were no religious schools established, and the priests and Levites, from laziness or other reasons, gave up their work of teaching the young. See ver. 10: 'A generation arose after them which knew not the Lord.' How terrible this, that children should know other things, how to fight, how to till the ground, and yet remain ignorant of Him Who alone can help them to do either properly.

(c) *A third cause was disobedience and rebellion.* Though God raised up judges (refer to verses 16, 17), yet they refused to listen to them, would have their own way and their own gods.

3. Results.

Firstly, Israel was under the wrath of God. All things, then, would be sure to go wrong.

Secondly, They who had overthrown Jericho, fought victoriously against five kings at Bethhoron, won victories over skilled armies furnished with chariots, were now everywhere beaten. The people of the land did what they chose.

Thirdly, Suffering at home—disorganisation—want of law and order.

METHOD.

'ness.' Quote also from Prayers for Parliament and Petitions from the Litany, and show from 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3 how important S. Paul felt that Christians should pray for *heathen* rulers. How much more, then, ought we to pray for Christian governors?

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

National Sin.

'They turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers ;
they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.'

1. *Its Character.*

Superstition. Idolatry. Dissension.

2. *Causes.*

Want of good example.

Want of teaching.

Disobedience.

3. *Results.*

The wrath of God. Defeat.

4. *Lesson.*

Pray for England, her King, Parliament, and
all in authority.

*I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications,
prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks
be made for kings and for all that are in
authority.*

CHAPTERS XVII.-XVIII.

AND there was a man of ¹mount Ephraim, whose name ¹the hill country of Ephraim. ¹was Micah. 2. And he said unto his mother, The ²eleven hundred ²shekels of silver that were taken ²pieces. from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed *be thou* of the LORD, my son. 3. And when he had restored the eleven hundred ²shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I ³had wholly ³verily dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. 4. ⁴Yet he restored the ⁴And when . . . his mother ⁴money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred ⁴took. ²shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and ⁵they ⁵it was. were in the house of Micah. 5. And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and

APPENDIX A

MICAHA AND THE SANCTUARY OF DAN

1. **Micah** meaning 'Who is like Jehovah?' as Michael means 'Who is like God?' For another form of the name, see Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 8.

2. **About which thou cursedst.** Micah's mother, on finding the money gone, cursed the thief that took it. This went home to Micah's conscience, and he restores it.

3. **I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord for my son.** The mother explains why she felt so strongly about the loss of the money. She had intended to purchase two silver images with it, that they might bring a blessing upon her son.

Now therefore I will restore it. The Syriac gives here the probable rendering, 'Restore it to me,' etc.

4. **His mother took two hundred shekels.** Two hundred shekels were spent on the images, the other nine hundred probably on the temple in which they were placed.

5. **Teraphim.** A description of one of these is given in 1 Sam. xix. 13, where we are told that it was an image sufficiently like a man to be at first taken for one. In what way it was used, or what was its meaning, it is difficult to say.

consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6. In those days *there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* 7. And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8. And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9. And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, *I am* a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place.* 10. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten ²*shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went *in.* 11. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 13. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest.

6. **There was no king.** This accounts for the strange worship adopted by Micah: 'Every man did what was right in his own eyes.'

7. **And he sojourned there.** 'The Hebrew words for "sojourned there" are Gershom . . . It is impossible not to suspect that the true reading here is "the son of Gershom," for the words "he sojourned there" seem hardly in place' (*Speaker's Commentary*). See chap. xviii.*30.

9. **I go to sojourn where I may find a place.** The tribe of Levi had no territory of its own, but forty-eight cities with their suburbs were given up to them by the other tribes, together with the six cities of refuge. No doubt, in the early unsettled state of the country, this provision was not very effectual; and so there were, no doubt, many cases of Levites looking for a home.

10. **Ten shekels of silver by the year,** i.e. perhaps £10 at the rate of money to-day.

12. **And Micah consecrated the Levite.** This is very strange—strange that Micah should venture to do it, and that the Levite should submit to it. But both apparently were ignorant either of the proper forms for consecration, or of their importance.

13. **Now know I that the Lord.** Micah has no consciousness of doing what is wrong; but, on the contrary, anticipates a blessing to the house in consequence.

XVIII. 1. In those days *there was* no king in Israel : and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell *in* ; for unto that day ⁶ *all their inheritance* had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their ⁷ *coasts*, men of valour, from Zorah and ⁷ *whole* from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it ; and ^{number.} they said unto them, Go, search the land : who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. 3. When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite : and they turned ⁸ *in* thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee ⁸ *aside* hither ? and what ⁹ *makest* thou in this *place* ? and what ⁹ *doest* hast thou here ? 4. And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace : before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go. 7. Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw

XVIII. 1. **In those days there was no king.** These words are interesting, both as giving evidence of the date when this appendix was added to the book of Judges, a date clearly posterior to the setting-up of the kingdom, and also as pointing to the advantage of royalty. Dan would have been able to settle the matter of the territory belonging to them quite easily if a king had been ruling. As it was, there being no central authority, every tribe, as every man, did what was right in his own eyes.

2. **They lodged there.** Micah's house was on the roadside ; and as they went north, they would naturally pass it.

3. **When they were by the house.** They were outside it, and heard the Levite's voice chanting Psalms ; and being attracted by the well-known intonation common to those conducting worship, they went to the chapel to find out who it was. It is not necessary to suppose that they had personally known the Levite.

7. **Then the five men departed, and came to Laish.** 'Laish, mod. Tell-el-Kady (Arab. "Hill of the Judge," cp. Heb. Dan, "Judge"), now an extensive mound, overgrown with brushwood, at the western foot of which rises a considerable stream, El Leddan, the largest of the three branches which go to form the Jordan. The Tell lies about five hundred feet above sea-level in lat. 33° 15' N., and commands the rich plain of the Huleh' (Black, *Smaller Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

¹⁰ in security. the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt ¹⁰ careless, ¹¹ for there was none in the land possessing authority. after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure ; ¹¹ and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing ; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no ¹² business with *any* man. 8. And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol : and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye ? 9. And they said, Arise, ¹³ that we may go up against them : for we have seen the land, and behold, it *is* very good : and *are* ye still ? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land. 10. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and ¹⁴ to a large land : for God hath given it into your hands ; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth. 11. And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men ¹⁵ appointed *with* weapons of war. 12. And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah : wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day : behold, *it is* behind Kirjath-jearim. 13. And they passed thence *unto* ¹ mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah. 14. Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image ? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

After the manner of the Zidonians. They were commercial people rather than men of war, and therefore took no special pains about fortifying their towns, trusting to their trade with their neighbours for their security.

10. A people secure, and to a large land. A people easy-going, and a wide, spacious land with plenty of room.

12. Mahaneh-Dan . . . behind Kirjath-jearim. The six hundred pitched in Kirjath-jearim—which was therefore called the Camp of Dan, *i.e.* Mahaneh-Dan. But Mahaneh-Dan, in chap. xiii. 25, is said to be between Zorah and Eshtaol, and therefore not in Kirjath-jearim. It is, perhaps, owing to this apparent mistake that we owe the unexpected words, ‘Behold, it is *behind* Kirjath-jearim,’ this being put in as gloss to reconcile the two accounts of the position : ‘*in* Kirjath-jearim,’ and yet ‘*between* Zorah and Eshtaol.’

15. And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even unto* the house of Micah, and ¹⁶ saluted him. 16. And the six hundred men ¹⁶ asked him of his welfare. appointed, *with* their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood *by* the entering of the gate. 17. And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood *in* the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed *with* weapons of war. 18. And ¹⁷ these went *into* Micah's house, and fetched the carved ¹⁷ when these. image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19. And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20. And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21. So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the ¹⁸ carriage before them. 22. *And* when they were ¹⁸ goods.

15. **To the house of the young man, the Levite, even unto the house of Micah.** 'In the centre of the settlement rose the house of Micah, and at its gateway was the dwelling of the Levite' (Stanley, *Jewish Church*, i. 253). The five men, who knew the Levite from their previous visit, went in and brought him out to their friends. Whilst he is engaged in talking with them, they enter the chapel and take the two images, the ephod, and the teraphim. When he sees them coming out with these in their hands, he cries out, but they bribe him to silence by offering him a much better position than the one he now enjoys.

19. **Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.** 'So in almost the same words was the like bribe offered by one of the greatest religious houses of England to the monk who guarded the shrine of one of the most sacred relics in the adjacent cathedral of Canterbury—"Give us the portion of S. Thomas's skull which is in thy custody, and thou shalt cease to be a simple monk; thou shalt be Abbot of S. Augustine's.'" 'As Roger accepted the bait in the twelfth century after the Christian Era, so did the Levite of Micah's house in the fifteenth century before it' (Stanley, *Jewish Church*, i. 253).

a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23. And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24. And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? 25. And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. 26. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house. 27. And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that *were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28. And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no ¹⁹ business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Beth-rehob. 29. And they built ²⁰ a city, and dwelt therein, and they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first. 30. And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of ²¹ Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of

¹⁹ dealings.

²⁰ the.

²¹ Moses.

22. The men that were in the houses near to Micah's house. Not only Micah, but every one in the settlement felt outraged at the abduction of the priest and the chapel, the gods and the furniture.

30. And Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses. This is the rendering adopted by the R.V. 'In the Hebrew text, the name here rendered Manasseh is written M'SH. Without the little N suspended over the line it reads, "Moses, whose son was Gershom" (Exod. iv. 22), whose son or descendant Jonathan clearly was. The Masoretes, probably grieved that a descendant of Moses should have been implicated in idolatrous worship, adopted this expedient for disguising the fact without absolutely falsifying the text' (*Speaker's Commentary*). The Masoretes

Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31. ²² And ²² So. they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

were the old textual editors of the Old Testament who compiled the *Masora*, a collection of criticisms and marginal notes of the Old Testament.

Until the day of the captivity of the land. This evidently implies that Jonathan's descendants were the priests that Jeroboam set up in his northern sanctuary, and it is likely that this little temple, with its separate priesthood and worship, first suggested to his mind that sin of making an idolatrous shrine for the north for which he is so strongly condemned. As a tribal sanctuary, its influence was had enough, but when made by Jeroboam into a temple for the northern tribes, it proved the ruin of his kingdom. Note also the indication of date this gives. The editor of this story must have lived after the Captivity.

LESSON V

Independence

INTRODUCTION.—This chapter is taken here because in its place in the Bible it is out of chronological order, being only an appendix to the book, and it illustrates very well the disorder that followed the National Sin of which the last chapter treated.

Sometimes boys and girls will ask about something which they are forbidden to do. 'Why should I not do what I think is right? or Why should I not do what I like? Why should there be rules and orders and discipline?' The answer, of course, is—That if every one were to do what he thought right, the school would soon fall into disorder. In order to see this, let us go back to the time of the Judges, when every one did just as he pleased. The Bible gives us a striking picture of the disorder that followed.

MATTEE.

1. Stealing and idolatry in the home.

(1) *Stealing.*—Micah was a farmer living in the hill-country of Ephraim, close by the highroad that runs north and south. Being in want of money, he took a large sum belonging to his mother; thinking that as it would come to him some day, he had a perfect right to do so. There was no magistrate to say nay, and he did it without fear of conviction. His mother, not knowing who had done it, cursed the thief in such a terrible way, that Micah was frightened and confessed.

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking why every school has its rules of attendance, lessons, etc.? Why should not boys and girls do as they please? And then illustrate the child's answer by telling the story of Micah the Ephraimite.

Point out that taking money from parents is as bad as taking it from any one else.

LESSON V—*continued.* INDEPENDENCE

MATTER.

(2) *Idolatry.*—As Micah offended against the moral law, so his mother against the religious law. She thought as her son did, that she might worship God in any way she pleased. Strictly, there was only one sanctuary in the land, that at Shiloh, but no one cared to go up to Shiloh—perhaps travelling was not very safe, perhaps the services were not very well conducted; in any case, it would be more easy to worship in your own home. So Micah's mother, thankful at getting her money back, spent it in making a little chapel. In it were placed two silver images, an ephod to be used by the minister when asking counsel of God, and some other images which were used for divining purposes. Show how Micah obtained a priest—first consecrated his son, and then a wandering Levite. All this was very wrong, and as contrary to the Second Commandment as Micah's offence was against the Eighth.

2. Stealing and idolatry in the tribe.

What had happened in the family soon happened on a larger scale in one of the tribes. This tribe, not that to which Micah belonged, but the tribe of Dan, wishes to find a larger home. Hears of territory in the north. Sends an exploring party. The spies stay at Micah's house on their way. Micah says nothing about the chapel, but it is discovered by the chanting of the Levite. Spies return with glowing account of the land they have seen. The only objection—so far north. How will they be able to go to the national feasts and festivals? Why not have some of their own? Take Micah's priest, his images, and

METHOD.

Point out that people, when they stay at home on Sundays instead of going to church, having their own form of prayer instead of that which is provided for them, are breaking the direction of the Apostle against 'forsaking the assembly of ourselves together.'

2. Show to elder children, that if the home life is not kept moral and religious, the national life will soon deteriorate.

Point out on the map where Dan was, and why there was a natural desire for emigration. Same causes as those which exist in England—territory too small.

Show how the Danites are pressed by the same temptation as Micah—to save trouble, and to keep the tribe together.

When there are no laws or magistrates to enforce them, then might is the chief law. Show from Gen. xlix. 17 that Dan keeps up his character: a serpent by the way—

LESSON V—*continued*. INDEPENDENCE

MATTER

ephod, and then set up a northern sanctuary. They will feel at home at once with their own little temple. But won't Micah object? What if he does? They are stronger, and might makes right.

3. National idolatry.

No protest, so far as we know, was made against Dan's conduct in setting up a worship of their own. Perhaps the fact that it was done, not only with the connivance, but under the direction of the grandson, or a descendant of Moses, prevented criticism. But note how, the evil which began in the home and spread to a tribe, spreads throughout the north. When Jeroboam was set on the throne by God, he did not like his people going up to Jerusalem; feared they might prefer Rehoboam, and wish to become one nation with the south. How could he stop it? Hears there has been for over four hundred years a little temple in the north, in Dan, set up by Moses' grandson. Why not use this? Long custom would sanction it? No voice had ever been raised against it. And if Dan is too far north for Ephraim, then make a similar sanctuary at Bethel. So the great sin which brought Israel to desolation began.

METHOD.

an adder in the path—taking by craft where it is possible.

Show how they obtain the Levite and his chapel.

3. Show how, though no notice may be taken of something wrong that has been done, yet in time it is sure to bear evil fruit.

LESSON.—Point out how thankful we ought to be for the laws of our country, as well as for the rules of our school, which prevent people doing just as they like, and spreading confusion everywhere; and how we should diligently use the Prayer for Parliament, the short petitions for the Nobility and the Magistrates in the Litany, that not only good laws be made, but that they may be properly administered.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Results of Selfish Independence.

'Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.'

1. *Stealing and idolatry in the home.*

Evil begins in the family. Micah steals his mother's money. His mother steals God's honour. Both, to save discomfort, set up an idolatrous temple.

2. *Stealing and idolatry in the tribe.*

Evil spreads to the tribe. Dan finds a new home in the far north. Wants a temple close by to save trouble in going to Shiloh. Steals one, also a Levite.

3. *Idolatry in the nation.*

From the tribe to the nation. Jeroboam finds the temple of Dan. Extends the idolatrous worship to Beth-el. The whole nation infected.

CHAPTER III. 7-31

AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the ¹ groves. 8. Therefore the anger of the ¹ Asheroth. LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia : and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years. 9. And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a ² deliverer to the children of Israel, who ² saviour. delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10. And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war : and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand ; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. 11. And the land had rest forty years. And

7. **And the groves.** It should be as the R. V. has it : 'and the Asheroth. The Israelites worshipped not only the gods but also the goddesses.

8. **Mesopotamia,** as the meaning of the word indicates, refers to that stretch of eastern country which lay between the Tigris and Euphrates. It was a long way from Palestine, but now, as in later years, its king exercised wide influence, and was able to bring part of Palestine into bondage.

9. **Saviour.** It is interesting to notice that this word, which has such unique associations to all Christians, was first applied to a warlike champion, if we except the name Zaphnath Paaneah, which is interpreted by some as meaning 'Saviour of the world.'

Othniel. Either nephew or brother to Caleb, but probably nephew, as Caleb was quite an old man. We hear nothing of Othniel's exploits, which were probably as hazardous as those of Ehud, though they failed to make the same popular impression.

10. **The Spirit of the Lord.** We are apt to limit the operations of the Holy Ghost to the religious sphere. This book will tell us that enthusiasm and physical strength are also his gifts.

11. **And the land.** The *south* land, for it would seem that Judah had been attacked and put into bondage. Othniel, who had known the great heroes Joshua and Caleb, and had taken part in the successes that followed the invasion of Palestine, must have chafed sorely under eight years' slavery ; but it was some compensation for the delay, that he was able to give his countrymen forty years' peace. The word forty, however, need not be taken literally : it denotes rather a complete period.

Othniel the son of Kenaz died. 12. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. 13. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. 14. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. 15. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a ² deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of

12. **And the children of Israel did evil again.** From this we must suppose, that whilst only part of Palestine was directly affected by the particular judgment or bondage, yet the whole of the land felt its effects. So the invasion of Chushan-rishathaim (*i.e.* double wickedness), and the consequent bondage of Judah, and possibly other southern tribes, led Israel as a whole to share in that repentance which brought deliverance by Othniel. It was, however, only temporary; again a wave of idolatry swept over the land, and it was, we may believe, especially bad in Ephraim, for they had to bear the brunt of Eglon's attack.

The Lord strengthened Eglon. Eglon's success was due to God's power, not his own strategy or might.

13. **Ammon and Amalek.** The Ammonites and Moabites are spoken of in Ps. lxxxiii. 7 as 'the children of Lot,' with reference to their origin (see Gen. xix. 38). They were therefore not only related to one another, but also indirectly to Israel through Lot, and Israel was bidden to treat them with consideration till they showed a strange hostility (Deut. xxiii. 4). This attitude was not changed by the victories of Israel in Palestine, and though rivals, they welcomed the opportunity Israel's weakness gave them. But Moab, mindful of past days, does not venture on an attack without the help of the hardy Amalekites, who were a fierce nomadic people living in the south, half Edomite (Gen. xxxvi. 12), always ready for battle with the prospect of plunder.

The city of palm trees, *i.e.* Jericho. So called because palm trees were at this time its most striking feature. Utterly destroyed by Joshua, and not rebuilt till the time of Ahab, it was at this time probably an unwalled village. The country in which it was situated was very fertile, and doubtless yielded plunder in corn and fruit.

14. **Eighteen years.** After a second lapse, repentance takes longer to develop. It is only after eighteen years' bondage that the children of Israel turn to the Lord again.

15. **Ehud . . . a Benjamite, a man lefthanded.** From xx. 16 it would appear that lefthandedness was common amongst the Benjamites, perhaps it was acquired. This Ehud inherits the fierce spirit which Jacob fore-said would be characteristic of his tribe.

Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. 16. But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh. 17. And he ³ brought the present ³ offered unto Eglon king of Moab: ⁴ and Eglon *was* a very fat ⁴ now man. 18. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. 19. But he himself turned again from the ⁵ quarries that ⁵ *Marg.* graven images, were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: ⁶ who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by ⁶ and he. him went out from him. 20. And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in ⁷ a summer parlour, ⁸ which he had ⁷ his, for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from ⁸ by himself alone. God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat. 21. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly: 22. And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade,⁹ so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; ⁹ for he drew not the sword. ¹⁰ and it came out behind. ¹⁰ belly; ¹⁰ and the dirt came out. 23. Then Ehud went

A present. This was the annual tribute that Israel had to pay Eglon. It is given into the hands of Ehud, as the presentation of it would give him the opportunity of assassinating the Moabitish king. But apparently he was unable to avail himself of it. He then dismissed his attendants and sought another occasion.

19. He turned again from the quarries. The place where he sent his servants away was well known at the time as the quarries or, perhaps, as in R.V. margin, graven images near Gilgal. It is possible that, being foiled at first, he was returning home, when the Moabitish idols roused his spirit, and he turned back, determined to kill the king or perish in the attempt. It is otherwise difficult to explain the precise mention here: 'he turned again from the graven images.'

Keep silence. The fact that he had just presented the tribute dismissed every suspicion from the mind of the king, and he readily granted him the private audience he sought.

20. I have a message from God. Ehud was admitted into the king's summer parlour, or, as the R.V. margin translates, the 'upper chamber of cooling'—possibly a summer-house built on the roof. His message was no doubt perfectly sincere: he believed that God had sent him to kill the king. The announcement roused the king's curiosity, and he rose, that Ehud might whisper the message in his ear.

- ¹¹ into. forth ¹¹through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked *them*. 24. When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that behold, the doors of the parlour *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in *his* summer chamber. 25. And they tarried till *they* were ashamed: and behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took
- ¹² the. ¹²a key, and opened *them*: and behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth. 26. And Ehud escaped while *they* tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath. 27. And it came to pass, when he
- ¹³ hill country. was come, that he blew a trumpet in the ¹³mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the ¹³mount, and he before them. 28. And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. 29. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, ¹⁴all
- ¹⁴ every lusty man, and every man. lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. 30. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of

23. **Ehud locked them.** His position was very dangerous, for he was now unarmed. In order to delay discovery, he locked the doors of the summer-house.

24. **His servants came.** Finding the doors locked, they concluded that the king was either asleep or so engaged that he could not be disturbed. After a time, hearing no movement, they got hold of a second key and opened the door, and then found their king dead.

26. **Ehud escaped into Seirath.** Seirath probably means the 'forest' or 'bush' country on the eastern slope of Benjamin, which would be a good hiding-place for Ehud. He does not delay in taking advantage of the king's death, but blows the trumpet, and so gives the signal for the uprising of Ephraim.

28. **The Lord hath delivered.** Throughout, Ehud believes that the success is due to God. What He had done with the king of Moab, He would do with His people. But they must exert themselves; and the first thing necessary is to secure the fords, and so cut the Moabites' communication with their friends on the east of Jordan. This is done, and ten thousand of the enemy are slain.

Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years. 31. And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also ¹⁵ delivered Israel.

¹⁵ saved.

30. **Fourscore years, i.e. two forties.** This shows what a severe beating Moab had received. For nearly a century they were unable to make any hostile move.

31. **Shamgar slew of the Philistines.** The victory of Ehud struck terror into the hearts of Israel's enemies, but after his death a rising took place in the west. A large force of the Philistines tried to drive out the Israelites, but Shamgar, armed with nothing better than an ox goad, i.e. a wooden pole about eight feet long fitted with an iron spike at one end, put them to flight.

LESSON VI

A Message from God

INTRODUCTION.—The interest of this terrible story lies in Ehud's tribal character. He was a Benjamite and had the Benjamite tendency to do what he had to do in a crafty way. In teaching, make clear that God is not responsible for the way in which men do the work on which He sends them—that is man's responsibility. Ehud might have done his work as Gideon or Jephthah did.

MATTER.

1. To whom it was sent.

To Eglon the king of Moab, whilst taking his ease in his summer-house. He had been a bad man—living an easy self-indulgent life—recognising no responsibility towards the people God had allowed him to conquer—only caring for what he got from them—probably very cruel and hard. God had warned him again and again, speaking to him by his conscience (Rom. i. 14, 15), and now He will speak for the last time.

2. What it contained.

What is the message? 'This day shall thy soul be required of thee.' How different from what

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking the class of the last lesson. What was the state of Israel? What should we expect God would do if there is no discipline amongst the tribes, and every one does as he likes? Punish. Yes; but how does He punish? By giving strength to their enemies. So first to the king of Mesopotamia—point out where this is—from whom after eight years' bondage Othniel delivered them; then to Eglon, king of Moab, who had Israel in bondage for eighteen years. Then God delivered them from him. The way in which this was done is our lesson to-day.

2. Show that such a message is always to be dreaded—'from sudden death, good Lord, deliver us,' lest it find us unprepared—but show that

LESSON VI—*continued.*

MATTER.

Eglon expected! This Israelite who brought him tribute had perhaps come to warn him against some secret insurrection, or to tell him of some good piece of news whereby he would be enriched. He had no anticipation of death. His conscience was asleep, but was suddenly to be aroused.

3. How it was sent.

Such sudden messages sometimes come by lightning or by a wave of the sea, or a sudden rush of the river, or a railway accident, but sometimes by a man. God chooses his instrument, though He gives him freedom in fulfilling His purpose. In this case Ehud the Benjamite—a man famous for cunning and audacity. Ehud is to destroy Eglon.

He might have done it in a fair and open way, as Othniel did (see ver. 10), or as Shamgar did, who had only an ox goad for his weapon (see ver. 31), but Ehud was a Benjamite, and the tribal tendency to act stealthily and cunningly like a wolf ran strong within him. He ought to have crushed this feeling, believed more fully in the infinite possibilities of God, remembered what God had done to Jericho, to the five kings. But Ehud was badly taught, and it is possible that the bad way in which he carried out God's will was not so much his own fault as that of the teachers of his tribe. Note how it would seem that he had a secret warning against his method of delivering Israel in the difficulty he met with in finding an occasion. At first he was foiled, and perhaps was giving it up, when the sight of the Moabitish idols fired his spirit. Note how he again gets audience of the king. Goes on to the roof of the palace, to the king's summer-house, and then kills him.

A MESSAGE FROM GOD

METHOD.

the better we know God, the less shall we fear anything at His hands. Humility teaches us to dread sudden death, but faith teaches that 'perfect love casteth out fear' (1 S. John iv. 18).

Give examples.

3. Show by examples that we are often employed as messengers for God, generally to carry some consolation or help to others; but note the case of Samuel, who, when a lad, had a very sad message to carry to Eli. Whatever our messages are, let us take care to imitate S. Paul, the most famous hero of the tribe of Benjamin, who was always open, sincere, straightforward (see 2 Cor. i. 12). Give illustrations.

LESSON VI—continued. A MESSAGE FROM GOD

MATTER.

METHOD.

4. Effect of the message.

Not only Eglon, but Moab for a time destroyed, and Israel delivered. All rejoiced in the freedom and praised Ehud for his daring, but his name, though it found a place in the annals of his country, has no place in Heb. xi. among the heroes of faith, such as Gideon. Ehud and his deed only strengthened that fatal disposition to impatience which was the ruin of Saul.

4. Show that every family has a good and bad tendency—the one must be strengthened, the other killed. Benjamin had the virtue of courage, but the vice of cunning and impatience. Both seen also in the first king Saul, but only the former in the Christian Benjamite, S. Paul, who was transparently honest and sincere.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

A Message from God.

'Benjamin is a wolf that ravineth.'

- (1) *To whom sent.*—Eglon, King of Moab: lazy—self-indulgent—cruel.

The last of many messages.

- (2) *What it contained.*—'This day shall thy soul be required of thee.' So also to Belshazzar: 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.'

Some day this message to every one.

'In the hour of death, Good Lord, deliver us.'

- (3) *By whom sent.*—Ehud, the Benjamite, wolf-like in nature, bold but cunning.

Contrast S. Peter giving a similar message to Ananias and Sapphira.

A cruel messenger shall be sent against him (i.e. the evil man).

- (4) *Effect.*—Tyrant destroyed—country delivered, but no honour to Ehud.

Contrast the message of the other Benjamite—S. Paul—which brought deliverance to the world, and also the way he gave it, which brought everlasting honour to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

AND the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. 2. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host ¹or nations. was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the ¹Gentiles. 3. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. 4. And

1. The children of Israel again did evil when Ehud was dead. Though Ehud had carried out God's will in a wrong way, yet he was deserving of the name of a judge, because by his example he kept Israel free from idolatry during his lifetime. After his death they fell away again.

2. **Jabin king of Canaan.** In Joshua xi. we read of the destruction of Jabin and his city Hazor, which was burned to the ground. But this, if we are to trust to the chronology of Judges, happened about a hundred years before. There is nothing, after all, more strange in two kings bearing the name Jabin, which means wise or intelligent, than in the kings of Egypt bearing the name Pharaoh. Nor is it unlikely that Hazor would have been built again. From chap. i. 33 we learn that Naphtali, in whose territory Hazor was, did not drive out the Canaanites, but dwelt amongst them. The folly of this is well seen in the miserable condition to which they reduced the whole of the north.

Hazor. Stanley says: 'Its most probable position is on one of the rocky heights of the northernmost valley of the Jordan.' Conder thinks we may see the name in 'Hadireh,' a mountain a little to the west of the waters of Merom.

Harosheth. This place, called Harosheth 'of the Gentiles' to distinguish it from some other Harosheth, is generally identified with El Harathiyeh on the right bank of the lower Kishon. It would therefore be a long way off from Hazor, and was occupied by Sisera as a strong outpost commanding the pass up the vale of the Kishon into Esdraelon. Thomson (*Land and the Book*) says that the immense double mound is still covered with the remains of old walls and buildings. The word means 'workmanship, cutting and carving,' and may refer to some trade carried on there in which the oppressed Israelites were bound to serve. This camp not only paralysed the maritime tribes of Asher and Dan, but cut off the northern tribes from the southern, and therefore imperilled the national existence of Israel.

3. **He mightily oppressed.** The oppression in this case seems to have been worse than in that under Eglon. The word used to describe it is the same as that which speaks of the Egyptian bondage. In the song (chap. v. 6, 7), Deborah speaks of parts of the country being depopulated. It is likely that the villagers were compelled to go to centres like Harosheth to prepare timber or stone for Jabin's trade.

Twenty years. The bondage under Chushan-rishathaim lasted eight, that under Eglon eighteen, but this under Jabin twenty years.

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. 5. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? 7. And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. 8. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me,

4. **Deborah, a prophetess.** Her name means a bee. Like Miriam (Exod. xv. 20), Huldah (2 Kings xxii. 14), Isaiah's wife (Isa. viii. 3), and Noadiah (Jer. vi. 14), she was inspired of God. Her song (chap. v.) proves how great this gift was. With it were united other qualifications which raised her to the seat of power. With the exception of the foreign usurper Athaliah, she is the only female ruler of Israel mentioned in Old Testament history. She had a more popular title than that of prophetess—that of 'mother in Israel,' for to her came men and women to submit their cases and accept her judgments. Though married to one whose name, Lapidoth, means 'illumination,' her husband apparently takes no part in the great work to which she calls the nation.

5. **She dwelt**—rather she sat, *i.e.* to judge the people, under a well-known palm-tree between Ramah and Beth-el, far in the south.

6. **And she went and called Barak.** Barak, *i.e.* lightning, lived a little north of Hazor in the Kedesh that belongs to Naphtali. He was living, then, close to the capital from which all the oppression proceeded. But so far from this rousing him to throw off the bondage, it seems to have kept him timid and irresolute, as though he saw too much of the strength of the enemy.

Hath not the Lord commanded. Deborah seems to take it for granted that Barak has heard the command to go to Mount Tabor and raise the standard of revolt.

7. **And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon.** In these words God had intimated how the enemy would be defeated. Kishon is a stream rather than a river, but it is liable to dangerous floodings, as happened in 1799 when the Turkish army was destroyed.

8. **If thou wilt go.** Barak is not satisfied with the word and promise of Jehovah, but distinctly says that he will have nothing to do with the matter unless Deborah goes with him.

then I will not go. 9. And she said, I will surely go with thee : notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour ; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh ; and ² he went up ³ with ten thousand men at his feet : and Deborah went up with him. 11. Now Heber the Kenite, ⁴ which was of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent ⁵ unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh. 12. And they shewed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor. 13. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the ¹ Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. 14. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up ; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand : is not the LORD gone out before thee ? So Barak went down from mount Tabor,

² there.
³ omit with.

⁴ had severed himself from the Kenites, even from the children of Hobab the brother in law of Moses.
⁵ as far as the oak in Zaanannim.

9. **I will surely go with thee.** This implies that Deborah had all along meant to be present, but she rebukes Barak's timidity by declaring that by his unwillingness to act alone he has forfeited the honour which the expedition might have brought him. Barak must have been amazed at the assurance with which she speaks of the result—Sisera, the great captain, to be given up into the hands of a woman !

10. **Barak called Zebulun.** Barak had a distinguished position in the north amongst his countrymen : directly he gave the summons to rally at Mount Tabor, Zebulun and Naphtali, 'people that jeopardied their lives unto the death' (chap. v. 18), obeyed.

11. **Heber the Kenite had severed himself.** This Heber was a traitor to Israel. For some reason he had forgotten the tie of friendship and relationship which bound his people to Moses and the Israelites, and contracted a friendship with the Canaanite Hazor. He had also left his own people and gone far north to Zaanannim, a place near Kedesh, Barak's town. Here he had heard tidings of the secret rising, and at once communicated with Sisera. His wife Jael, according to Deborah's song, had already taken a leading part in the south with Shamgar, and was well known.

13. **Sisera gathered together all his chariots . . . unto the river of Kishon.** Here was the expected sign, but Barak still hesitates, until Deborah urges him to be up and doing, telling him that already the Lord has gone out before him.

and ten thousand men after him. 15. And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet. 16. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell ⁶ upon the edge of the sword; and there was not ⁶ by a man left. 17. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And ⁷ when he had turned in unto her into the ⁷ tent, ⁸ she covered him with a ⁹ mantle. 19. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave

15. **And the Lord discomfited Sisera.** Deborah tells us in poetry what the Jewish historian Josephus tells us in prose, how this was done. Apparently just as the battle began, a violent tempest came on (the stars in their courses fought against Sisera), with a great downfall of rain and a hailstorm, which, driving full into the faces of the Canaanites, so blinded and benumbed them with cold that they could not use their bows with effect, nor even hold their swords, whilst their bowstrings were made useless by the wet.

Before Barak. Though Barak was hesitating, irresolute, and dependent on Deborah, yet when the moment of action came he acted like a hero, and so his name finds a place amongst the leaders of faith in Heb. xi.

Sisera lighted off his chariot. The chariots stuck fast in the clay, and Sisera's chance of escape depended on his own activity.

17. **Sisera fled to the tent of Jael.** The defeat of the Canaanites would rouse the country, and Sisera found his nearest hiding-place at least twenty-five miles north of the battlefield. In this direction he was likely to find safety, for Barak had gone to smite Harosheth, which lay to the east of the battlefield. The home of his friend Heber lay there. He fled to the wife's tent, as being likely to be more free from suspicion. George Adam Smith (*Hist. Geog.* p. 395) thinks that Sisera's host was scattered east and west, and that he fled to the north by the east.

18. **Jael went out to meet Sisera.** Her mind was quickly made up. To allow Sisera to escape would be to rob the battle of half its fruits. She herself would execute judgment.

19. **A bottle of milk.** Sisera, after his long, anxious, and hurried journey, was exhausted, so Jael opened the skin containing the milk and gave him refreshment.

him drink, and covered him. 20. Again he said unto her, Stand *in* the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. 21. Then Jael Heber's wife took a ¹⁰ nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the ¹¹ nail into his temples, and ¹² fastened *it* into the ground: for he was ¹³ fast asleep ¹⁴ and weary. So he died. 22. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And ¹⁵ when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the ¹⁰ nail *was* in his temples. 23. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. 24. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

24. The hand of the children prospered. This battle proved a decisive one, for it led to victory after victory, till Jabin's power was completely crushed.

¹⁰ tent-pin.

¹¹ pin.

¹² it pierced through.

¹³ in a deep sleep.

¹⁴ so he swooned and died.

¹⁵ omit when.

CHAPTER V. 2-31

PRAISE ye the LORD for ¹the avenging of Israel,
When the people willingly offered themselves.

¹ that the
leaders took
the lead in
Israel, for that
the people.

3. Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes ;

I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD ;

I will sing *praise* to the ²LORD God of Israel.

² LORD, the
God.

4. LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir,

When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,

The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped,

The clouds also dropped water.

5. The mountains ³melted from before the LORD,

³ quaked.

Even that Sinai from before the ²LORD God of Israel.

6. In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,

The Song of Deborah

1. **Then sang Deborah and Barak.** As the verb is singular, we are not to suppose that the battle-poem is a double composition, but that whilst Deborah composed it (see ver. 7 : 'Until that I Deborah arose'), Barak assisted in its solemn recital before the ark.

1-3. **Prelude.** 'For the leading of the leaders in Israel,
In the free self-offering of her people,
Praise Jehovah.'—STANLEY.

This rendering gives an admirable sense. Leadership and national volunteering were of the Lord, and to the Lord, Deborah gives thanks.

3. **Hear, O ye kings.** The wonderful acts of God in the victory of Israel deserve a world-wide audience. It is not only to Israel she sings, but to the kings and princes of the earth.

4-5. **The Exodus.** Having opened with a burst of praise, Deborah now begins her stately poem by referring to that supreme event of which this is the sequel. The victory of Sisera is a natural conclusion of that great first beginning of national history when God, as it were, marched from Sinai northward on His all-conquering mission. Seir and Edom are mentioned as being the last stage before entering the Promised Land. And as at that exodus of God there were awful signs of physical disturbance, earthquake, storm, thunder and lightning, Sinai being hidden in blackness, so now there had been the same proofs of His presence.

6-9. **The national change.** Deborah now depicts the state of things that existed before the victory. In spite of the heroism of Shamgar and Jael, the condition of Israel was much the same as under the oppression of the Philistines in the days of Saul. No one ventured to go along

In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied,
And the travellers walked *through* byways.

⁴ The rulers
ceased in
Israel.

7. ⁴ *The inhabitants of the villages* ceased, they ceased in
Israel,

Until that I Deborah arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel.

8. They chose new gods ;

Then *was* war in the gates :
Was there a shield or spear seen
Among forty thousand in Israel ?

9. My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel,
That offered themselves willingly among the people.
Bless ye the LORD.

⁵ Tell of it.

10. ⁵ Speak, ye that ride on white asses,

⁶ on rich
carpets.

Ye that sit ⁶ in judgment,

⁷ add ye that.

11. And ⁷ walk by the way.

⁸ Far from the
noise.

⁸ *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in
the places of drawing *water*,

There shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the
LORD,

the highroads, for they were infested by marauding bands of Canaanites. All industry, traffic, and commerce ceased. People stole singly along the winding bypaths. There was no government.

Note here the very interesting mention of Jael. She seems already to have acted the part of a Joan of Arc, probably in the south ; and it may have been her activity and enthusiasm that led her husband, who had no share in it, to go up to the north.

7. *The inhabitants of the villages ceased.* Read, 'The rulers ceased in Israel.' There was no one to see that justice was meted out till Deborah arose as a true mother to Israel.

8. *They chose new gods.* This was the cause of the oppression. The people became idolatrous : this, instead of leading to fellowship as they might have expected, led to war, and war to disarmament. Not a shield or spear was to be found in the north. Barak's troops, then, must have been armed with very primitive weapons, such as the sling, bow, or axe.

9. *My heart is towards the law-givers.* The people being so defenceless, Deborah praises the self-sacrifice of their leaders for venturing in a cause which from a human point of view seemed hopeless.

10-12. *A call to meditation.* Deborah now appeals to all classes to hear what she has to say. The wealthy who ride on white, dappled she-

Even the righteous ⁹ *acts towards the inhabitants of* ⁹ *acts of his*
his villages in Israel : rule.

Then ¹⁰ shall the people of the LORD ¹¹ go down to the ¹⁰ *omit shall.*
gates. ¹¹ went down.

12. Awake, awake, Deborah :

Awake, awake, utter a song :

Arise, Barak,

And lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

13. Then ¹² he made him that remaineth have dominion ¹² *came down*
over the nobles *among* the people : *a remnant of*

The LORD ¹³ made me have dominion over the mighty. *the nobles and*

14. Out of Ephraim ¹⁴ *was there* a root of them against *the people.*

Amalek ; *13 came down*

After thee, Benjamin, among thy people ; *for me against*

Out of Machir came down governors, *the mighty.*

asses, the officials who sit to judge on rich divans, the men who plod on foot along the open way, all must give attention. For the victory will have a world-wide fame. In quiet, out-of-the-way spots, far from scenes of battle and bloodshed, men will celebrate these righteous acts of God which enable the scattered people to return to their villages: 'Then the people went down to the gates.'

12. *Awake, Deborah . . . Arise, Barak.* It was Deborah's duty to stir herself to sing, it was Barak's to lead the triumph. She is to stimulate, he is to act.

13-19. *The patriots and the recreants.* The prophetess now singles out for mention the tribes that were loyal, and dismisses with contempt the cowardly do-nothings.

13. *There came down.* This should probably be translated: 'Then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people. Jehovah came down for me against the mighty.' After all, the response to the call was small compared with what it ought to have been. Parts of Ephraim and Manasseh, Benjamin, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Issachar—not quite six tribes instead of twelve. It was humiliating, but then Jehovah was with the remnant.

14. *Out of Ephraim.* Apparently only part of Ephraim, that part 'whose root is in Amalek,' *i.e.* who dwelt in the Mount of the Amalekites, answered Deborah's call.

14. *After thee, i.e.* after Ephraim came Benjamin.

Out of Machir. Machir was the firstborn of Manasseh (Gen. i. 23). From Num. xxvi. 29 ff. we see that Machir's descendants had ten lots in West Palestine. It is probable, then, that Machir stands here for Western Manasseh. By 'governors' is meant leaders, military captains.

¹⁵ the marshal's staff.

And out of Zebulun they that handle ¹⁵ the pen of the writer.

15. And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah ;

¹⁶ As was Issachar, so was Barak.

¹⁶ Even Issachar, *and* also Barak :

¹⁷ Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.

¹⁷ He was sent on foot into the valley.

¹⁸ By the watercourses.

¹⁹ resolves.
²⁰ the pipings for.

¹⁸ For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great ¹⁹ thoughts of heart.

16. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds,
To hear ²⁰ the bleatings of the flocks ?

¹⁸ For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

17. Gilead abode beyond Jordan :

And why did Dan remain *in* ships ?

Asher ²¹ continued on the sea shore,

And abode ²² in his breaches.

²¹ sat still at the haven of the sea.

²² by his creeks.

18. Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death
In the high places of the field.

19. The kings came *and* fought,

Out of Zebulun. As Western Manasseh supplied leaders with, no doubt, contingents of troops, so Zebulun those that were familiar with the marshal's staff, *i.e.* with military duties as officers or sergeants who kept the muster-roll.

15. Issachar and also Barak. Render as in R. V., 'As was Issachar, so was Barak. Into the valley they rushed at his feet.' It seems likely that Barak was a member of the tribe of Issachar, and that their patriotism sustained his. When the attack was made, they either rushed behind him on his footsteps, or else, as it might be translated, they carried him by their headlong attack off his feet. It is possible that the host of Israel was invisible, hidden by the trees on Mount Tabor, and that its sudden dash like 'lightning' gave Barak his name.

15. For the divisions of Reuben. Render, 'By the watercourses of Reuben there were great resolves.' Deborah contrasts the hesitation of Reuben with the bold rush of Issachar. Great resolves, much talking, but in the end sitting still. Gilead lingered also on the banks of the Jordan, and Dan on the seacoast. By Dan is plainly meant the South Dan, not only because North Dan had no coast territory, and therefore could not be loitering in ships, but also because it is by no means clear that the Danite migration to the north had taken place. Asher, staying amongst the creeks that ran up into his territory, is contrasted with the splendid self-sacrifice of Zebulun and Naphtali, who, dwelling in high mountainous country (Zebulun and Naphtali upon the high places of the land) 'jeoparded their lives unto the death.'

- Then fought the kings of Canaan
 In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo ;
 They took no gain of money.
20. They fought from heaven ;
 The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
21. The river of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
 O my soul, ²³ thou hast trodden down strength.
22. Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the
 pransings,
 The pransings of their mighty ones.
23. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD,
 Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ;

²³ march on
 with strength.

19-22. **The battle, victory, and pursuit.** Deborah now describes in glowing language the chief features of the battle : its importance. 'Kings came and fought' ; its disappointment to Canaan. 'Gain of silver took they not' : its supernatural character. 'The stars fought against Sisera. The torrent of Kishon swept them away.'

19. **At Taanach.** Taanach and Megiddo, as we learn from Josh. xii. 21, had both been royal cities, but had not been possessed by Manasseh (Judg. i. 27), but only put to tribute.

Waters of Megiddo. Megiddo was on the river Kishon, which is here called after its chief city.

20. **The stars in their courses.** 'Among the ancients everywhere, the changes of season and weather (which in Palestine follows the season much more steadily than with us) were marked by the movements of the stars. The sense, therefore, is that season and weather lent their aid to discomfit Sisera, viz. by swelling the streams.'—BLACK.

21. **O my soul, thou hast trodden.** The R. V. has, 'O my soul, march on with strength,' but this rendering is not so spirited as the rendering of Ewald given by Stanley and by Milman, 'So trample down, O my soul, their strength.'

22. **Then were the horsehoofs broken.** Referring to the frantic efforts the horses made to get out of the mire and swamp.

23. **Meroz, Jael and Sisera's mother.** The prophetess is now stirred to her very depths as she contrasts the cowardly indifference of Meroz with the splendid patriotism of Jael.

Curse of Meroz. The site of this village or town is unknown, but has earned an unenviable fame for its cowardice. Situated probably on the very path of the retreat, the men of Meroz might have utterly destroyed the fleeing Canaanites, had they come to the help of their brethren. The curse has blotted all but the name out of existence.

Because they came not to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24. Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the
Kenite be,

Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

25. He asked water, and she gave him milk ;
She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

26. She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workman's hammer ;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote
²⁴ off his head,

²⁴ through.

²⁵ Yea, she
pierced and
struck.

²⁵ When she had pierced and stricken through his
temples.

27. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down :
At her feet he bowed, he fell :
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

28. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window,
And cried through the lattice,

24. **Blessed be Jael.** Deborah cannot find words too strong to praise the one person who had shown decision of character. Half the tribes had failed, Barak had hesitated, Meroz had shown stolid indifference, but Jael, in circumstances of extreme risk, had acted with the greatest promptitude.

25. **He asked water, and she gave him milk.** We condemn, and rightly, this abuse of hospitality ; but before condemning Jael, we must realise how exceedingly low the standard of morality was in the days of Deborah, and of how little importance the life of the individual was.

26. **She smote off.** This should be as in R.V., 'she smote *through* his head.' It has been supposed by some that there is a contradiction between this poetical account of the murder and the description in Judg. iv., that the poetry describes Jael as smiting Sisera down whilst he was engaged in taking the milk, the prose as secretly murdering him while asleep, but there is no necessity for this. Combining both narratives, it would seem that he fell asleep, sprang to his feet at the first blow, and then suddenly fell ('at her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay') dead at her feet.

28. **The mother of Sisera looked out.** Note the dramatic contrast between the death of Sisera, in the tent of Jael, and the sanguine expectations of his return at home. She sits in her great house surrounded by her princesses—so the word ladies should be rendered—wondering at his delay. They reply to her anxiety by suggesting that the division of the spoil would take some time.

- Why is his chariot *so* long in coming ?
 Why tarry the wheels of his chariots ?
29. Her wise ladies answered *her*,
 Yea, she returned answer to herself,
30. Have they not ²⁸sped ? have they *not* divided the ²⁷prey ; ²⁶found.
²⁸To every man a damsel *or* two ; ²⁷spoil.
 To Sisera a ²⁷prey of divers colours, ²⁸A damsel,
 A ²⁷prey of divers colours of needlework, ²⁹two damsels to
 Of divers colours of needlework on both sides, ²⁹every man.
²⁹*Meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil ? ²⁹on the necks
 of the spoil.
31. So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD :
 But *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he
 goeth forth in his might.
 And the land had rest forty years.

30. **Needlework for the necks of the spoil**, which makes nonsense, should probably be translated 'needlework for the neck of the queen,' referring to Sisera's mother. The description which marks, as a part of the expected spoil, the captivity of large numbers of the women of Israel, 'to every man a damsel, two damsels,' gives a horrible picture of the results of a Canaanitish victory.

31. **The conclusion.** 'So let all *thine* enemies perish,' etc. : this gives the key to Deborah's thoughts. The victory was primarily a religious, not a national, success, and it is in that aspect she regards it. For the enemies of God she can wish for nothing but their destruction, for His friends—those that love Him—that they may increase in power and influence, shedding everywhere brightness and warmth.

Note the national character of Deborah's song. It is probably one of the first of those great songs which have expressed the mind of a nation in a crisis. Miriam's song perhaps the very first, then this of Deborah. Contrast it with the French 'Marseillaise,' or even with our own 'Rule Britannia,' and draw attention to the religious feeling which is so prominent in it.

LESSON VII

Decision of Character

Before giving this lesson, Chapter iv. and specially Chapter v. must be mastered, so that the battle can be described with fulness. Many lessons naturally spring out of it, and the only difficulty will be that of making selection. The following has been chosen because it helps to explain the moral difficulty contained in Deborah's blessing of Jael. With younger

classes, where this would not be felt, it would be well to take a more simple one. With girls, Deborah as an example of motherhood—'the mother in Israel'—makes an excellent lesson.

MATTER.

1. The hesitating leader.

We now go to the north. Things in a very bad way. Barak, chief and leader, lives close to Hazor, where the wicked Canaanitish king lives. He groans over what he sees: cruelty, rapine, pillage. Mark the life of the north. Every one feels unsafe. No one ventures along the highroads (ver. 6), all the traffic between town and town ceases, people creep along by the lanes when they dare go out at all. There are no magistrates to set things right (ver. 7), or to lead the people against the tyranny of Hazor, who does just what he likes. Only one chief Barak, and he does nothing. Contrast this attitude with that of Othniel, Shamgar, Ehud, and even Jael, who, whilst in the south, seems to have been a leader amongst the people (see ver. 6). At last he receives a command from God to raise the standard of revolt at Tabor, but still hesitates. He is then summoned to the south to meet Deborah. She asks him whether he has not been told to go to Tabor: he cannot deny it, but he will not go alone. Even on the day of battle, when he sees Sisera waiting for him, he hesitates, till Deborah bids him go, and his tribe, Issachar, at her bold words sweeps him off his feet into the battle. But though so cautious, Barak was brave and fought well, and his name is placed in the roll of heroes in Heb. xi.

METHOD.

1. Refer to last lesson. Show from the map where Eglon and Ehud lived, and then where Barak was living, that the children may see that this lesson is of the north.

Illustration: Water is necessary for the floating of timber; but if a log be saturated with water, it sinks in the very element which should buoy it up. Barak was water-logged with anxiety, which, instead of quickening him to action, only paralysed him.

Show that Barak looked too much at the difficulties, too little to God.

Illustration: A man walking across a stream on stilts walks easily if he fixes his eye on an object on the opposite bank, but is sure to fall if he looks at every step.

LESSON VII—continued. DECISION OF CHARACTER

MATTER.

2. The decided leader.

Whilst Barak is always trying to make up his mind, Deborah sees and acts at once. She is a prophetess with insight, knowing what ought to be done, and a mother to her people, determining what shall be done. She judges Israel, and therefore knows all the difficulties—is impatient with Barak for hesitating—sends for him—dislikes his dependence upon her—tells him that he will have no honour, or, at least, not the chief honour, from the campaign—goes with him to Tabor. Note the gathering—large numbers—all poorly armed—no shields or spears (ver. 8). Deborah like Boadicea amongst them. Her spirited speech—the attack—the storm—Sisera cannot get his chariots into action—the defeat—flight and pursuit.

3. Deborah praises decision of character.

Show how vexed Deborah was as she learns that Sisera has escaped north. It was partly the fault of cowardly Meroz, on whom she invokes a terrible curse. If they had but done their duty, not one Canaanite would have escaped. Suddenly news reaches her that Sisera has not escaped after all. He has been killed, and by a woman. Jael—a Kenite, not an Israelite (there was the wonder of it!)—a Kenite, and belonging to a family that had sided against Israel—married to a man whose husband had betrayed the cause of Israel, who was a friend of the hated Jabin—this woman, with everything against her, had done the deed that delivered Israel from bondage. She had not known the cursed spirit of doubt which had so infected Israel, but directly she saw Israel's enemy, she determined to kill him.

METHOD.

2. Show what are the elements in 'Decision of Character':

(a) Faith in God.

(b) Promptitude. Directly faith makes up its mind that its cause is God's, it acts regardless of consequences.

Illustrate: Nelson's action at the battle off Cape St. Vincent in heading off the Spanish fleet, and his favourite saying, 'The test of a man's courage is responsibility.'

3. In speaking of Jael's deed, it is important that any class in which it is really dealt with, should remember—

(1) That the law then was, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

(2) That there was no ruler but Deborah from one end of the country to the other—no one to whom Sisera could be handed over and tried.

(3) That Sisera's escape would probably have inflicted untold harm and suffering on the country.

LESSON VII—continued. DECISION OF CHARACTER
MATTER. METHOD.

Note, any moment Jabin might return and deliver his friend, any moment Sisera might wake and go off on his journey; there were a hundred reasons against her doing what she did: it was exceedingly venturesome, but she did it. And it is the spirit that animated Jael—as it was the spirit that animated Rahab—that Deborah and Joshua alike praise, not the manner of their doing what they did.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Decision of Character.

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'

1. *The hesitating leader.*

Barak—'lightning' in name only—tarries at Hazor—hesitates at Mount Ephraim—delays at Mount Tabor—misses Sisera—loses the glory that the victory ought to have brought him, because he has not the 'courage of responsibility.'

2. *The decided leader.*

Deborah—prophetess—clear-sighted—strong-willed—stirs up Barak—rebukes cowardly Reuben, Gilead, and Dan—praises Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, and Issachar—curses Meroz because her cowardice missed the opportunity—praises Jael because her courage seized it, and wins everlasting renown because she not only saw what had to be done, but did it.

3. *Marks of decision.*—Faith in God—Promptitude—Devotion to duty.

This one thing I do.

CHAPTER VI. 1-24

AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD : and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel : *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds. 3. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them ; 4. and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come *unto* Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither

1. **The hand of Midian.** The Midianites were of kin to the children of Israel by their common ancestor Abraham. Their home, if such roving bands as they were could be said to have a home, was on the east side of the Aelanitic Gulf, at the northern extremity of the Red Sea ; but it is evident they had gone much farther north, for we see them in this chapter on the east of Jordan. Conder (*Textbook on Palestine*, ii. 272) makes an interesting conjecture that the word Midian is the same as Bedouin, b and m, both labials, being interchanged ; whether that be so or not, they have all the characteristics of Bedouins, the pirates of the wilderness.

2. **The children of Israel made them the dens.** The article 'the' before the noun suggests that these existed in the writer's time. He had had pointed out to him the excavations in the rocks or cliffs which, during the repeated invasions of these Midianites, the Israelites had made for shelter and protection. Loss of faith leads to cowardice, and instead of meeting their foes, the children of the living God rushed like frightened rabbits into hiding-places.

3. **The Midianites . . . and the Amalekites . . . and the children of the east.** Three separate bodies are mentioned here. As plunder was the main object of these raids, the Amalekites, who were always ready for a roving expedition, and other nomad tribes here called 'children of the east,' gladly joined forces with Midian.

4. **Unto Gaza.** Their incursions stretched across the whole of the south country of Palestine, reaching as far as Gaza. If the home of Joash was in Manasseh, then we must suppose that at least Manasseh, Ephraim, Benjamin, Dan, and Judah suffered from this terrible scourge. The whole country from the valley of Jezreel to the edge of the desert was laid waste. 'They came up with all their accompaniments of Bedouin life, with their cattle, their tents, and their camels . . . and destroyed the increase of the earth, and all the cattle in the maritime plain till thou come unto Gaza. . . . But it was in the plain of Esdraelon that, then as

- sheep, nor ox, nor ass. 5. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as ¹grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.
- ¹ locusts.
- ² brought very low. 6. And Israel was ²greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD. 7. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, 8. that the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the ³LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; 9. and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; 10. and I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice. 11. And ⁴there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which
- ³ LORD, the God.
- ⁴ the angel of the LORD came.

now, the children of the desert fixed their headquarters. . . . They lay all along the valley like locusts for multitude, and their camels—unwonted sight in the pastures of Palestine—were without number, as the sand by the seaside on the wide margin of the Bay of Acre for multitude.'

6. **And Israel was greatly impoverished,** lit. Israel hung helplessly down, was without strength and without heart.

8. **A prophet.** This was the answer of God to the cry of the people. Before deliverance can be sent, there must be repentance, and this can only spring out of conviction of sin. Lias notes that 'the existence of a class of men whose duty it is to convict men of moral declension is peculiar to revealed religion. Other religions had their priests, Judaism and Christianity alone had their prophets' ('Cambridge Bible for Schools,' *Judges*, p. 100).

9. **And I delivered you.** In his stirring address the prophet appeals to history, showing that the condition of Israel in former days had been as bad as it is now, but God had delivered them out of it. He was able to do this again, but they must first put away the gods against which He had warned them.

10. **The gods of the Amorites.** The Amorites dwelt in the mountains, and it was by their gods that Israel had been ensnared. Joshua had specially warned them against this Amorite idolatry (*Josh.* xxiv. 15), which was evidently peculiarly degrading and abominable (1 *Kings* xxi. 26).

11. **And there came an angel of the Lord.** Apparently the public appeal to the people had had no effect, or at least no direct effect; they were too

was in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abi-ezrite : and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. 12. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. 13. And Gideon said unto him, O my lord, if the LORD be with us, why

paralysed for action. God now addresses that man amongst them who had the best qualifications for leadership. And in His condescension to human weakness, He Himself comes or sends One Who is so perfect a representative of Him that He can speak as God : 'Have not I sent thee—surely I will be with thee.' The question as to whether this angel was the Son of God or an angel deputed by Him, has been often discussed. Those who desire to study the question should read Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, II. : Jehovah or His angel appears here in the guise of a traveller with a staff in His hand (ver. 21).

11. **Ophrah.** The place cannot be identified ; but as Abiezer or Jeezer, as the name is spelt in Num. xxxvi. 30, was a Manassite (see also ver. 15), it is clear that Ophrah was a village in Manasseh. Joash, the head of the family, was a man of position, but not wealthy (see ver. 15).

Gideon threshed wheat. 'This first appearance of Gideon is in striking accordance with his name, which means "one who hews down or breaks," like Martel or Maccabeus. As you look at the man's face, you see that his thoughts are not in his work : there is something more than the energy required for his task causing him to compress his lips and knit his brow. The vehemence of his strokes suggests that he is thinking of these invaders that swarm on the plain below, and wishing he only had them under his flail as well as the bounding corn' (Marcus Dods, *The Iron Age*, p. 32). He had good cause to wish this, for he had lost his elder brothers in some fight that had taken place between Midian and Israel (Judg. viii. 18).

The winepress. Threshing was usually performed by oxen, but owing to fear of discovery, Gideon was threshing privately with a flail, using the trough in which the grapes were trodden as the floor for beating the corn upon.

12. **The Lord is with thee.** The Lord's first words are those of encouragement and praise. But note that, in a village given up to idolatry, the word 'Jehovah' must have sounded strangely. It speaks well of Gideon's faith that the great name can appeal to him.

13. **O my lord, if the Lord be with us.** Gideon does not know Who the Stranger is, but it is clear from His appearance that He has dignity and rank. But though he addresses Him with respect, he shows that he is not satisfied with words that seem like an empty compliment. We here see his truthful straightforward nature, which goes at once to the heart of the question : 'If the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us ? God's presence means strength not weakness, success not failure. We have been told that by the Prophet Who visited us. It is plain, then, that God is not with us as you say, but has abandoned us.'

⁵ wondrous works. then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his ⁶ miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. 14. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and ⁶ thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? 15. And he said unto him, O ⁷ my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? ⁸ the poorest. behold, my family *is* ⁸ poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house. 16. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. 17. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign ⁹ that thou talkest with me. 18. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. 19. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of ¹⁰ flour: the flesh he

14. **Go in this thy might . . . have not I sent thee?** Gideon must have been amazed at this reply. Israel was then to be saved, and by him, but how? Note the true rendering here: 'The thousand, *i.e.* family, is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.' There were no resources of any kind, neither money nor position; how, then, could he deliver his people? But assurance was gathered by the look of the Visitor, Who, as He gave him the commission; turned towards him, giving, as it were, His blessing.

16. **Surely I will be with thee.** Each answer is more amazing than the last. The presence of the mysterious stranger is promised, and that countless host is to be destroyed with the same ease that Gideon could overthrow a single Midianite.

17. **Shew me a sign.** Gideon can hardly tell whether he is dreaming or awake. The message is so startling. He would like to have some evidence that he can look at afterwards, which will make it plain to him that he has not imagined this strange interview. If the stranger will eat of his offering, then it will be plain that the commission is not a fancy of his brain. We are reminded of a similar sign that was graciously given to prove the Resurrection (S. John xxi. 9; S. Luke xxiv. 37; Acts x. 41).

19. **Unleavened cakes.** The present was a very valuable one. A whole kid, and nearly a bushel of flour made up into unleavened cakes, would be far more than a meal for one person. When we remember the poverty of Gideon at this time, the very high price of flour and all provisions, this present is very remarkable. Cf., for a like characteristic in the poor, the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 10).

put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*. 20. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened *cakes*, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. 21. Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened *cakes*; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened *cakes*. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. 22. And ¹¹ when Gideon perceived that he *was* ¹² an angel of the ¹³ LORD, Gideon said, ¹² the. Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the ¹³ LORD; and Gideon. LORD face to face. 23. And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. 24. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

And presented it. This word, like the word 'present,' is used especially, though not exclusively, of offerings to God. Gideon must have been greatly perplexed at words which evidently signified that the Speaker was God, though the outward appearance contradicted it.

20. **Lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth.** The Rock is to serve for an altar, the broth for a libation. Libations were not an uncommon form of offering. See Gen. xxxv. 14 for a libation of oil, and Exod. xxx. 9 for a libation of wine, and 2 Sam. xxiii. 16 for a libation of water. If the broth were poured over the flesh and the cakes, their destruction by fire would be still more remarkable.

21. **There rose up fire.** Fire is always symbolical of the presence of Him Who is a consuming fire. Note Elijah's appeal to the people of Israel some four hundred years later: 'The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God' (1 Kings xviii. 24).

22. **Alas, O Lord God!** Gideon has the very natural feeling that such a sight must mean death. See Gen. xxxii. 30.

23. **And the Lord said.** Not by the angel who had vanished, but directly to Gideon's soul.

24. **Gideon built an altar.** This was a bold step to take, as Ophrah was now an idolatrous village. It was a clear proof to all there that Gideon was on the side of the Lord. The name 'Jehovah Shalom' or 'Jehovah is peace' showed how grateful Gideon was for the Divine revelation of love. It might have been so different, for even Gideon had not been entirely free from the spirit of apostasy, but God had not condemned or punished him.

Unto this day. An indication of the date of the book—a good deal later than the event recorded.

LESSON VIII

The Hour and the Man

MATTER.

1. The hour of Israel's danger.

The south of Israel in great trouble, not subjugated, but exposed to continual raids which swept the country of everything, and just when it was looking its best. Fields ripe with golden corn, farmers looking for a good harvest, preparing their sickles, then a sudden cry, 'The Midianites! the Midianites!' and away the poor Israelites would rush to their hiding-places, the caves they had dug out in the cliffs; and the farms would be devastated, the crops robbed, the country swept bare, and then all would be quiet again. Men would creep out to find their grain gone and their farms plundered. They would then begin again in the hope that that incursion was the last; the fields would be sown, farms restored, and again they would prepare for the reaping, when again the terrible cry would be heard. Israel got very low, and at last did what they ought to have done before, turned to God for His help. He sends them a prophet, who told them the cause of the evil, but apparently awakened no sense of repentance.

2. The man.

The visit of the prophet shows that God will help Israel in spite of their sins. He will first find some one to inspire them with courage. He comes disguised as a traveller to Ophrah, a village in Manasseh—sits under an oak and watches a man at work. The man is threshing corn, but not in the usual place—why not? What is his name, and what does that indicate? Note that he has lost brothers at the hands of these Midianites, and is

METHOD.

1. Begin by referring to the last lesson. Ask what was the condition of the north before Sisera's death. Ask where he had his outpost, in what valley; and then point out that to-day's lesson is concerned with that same valley, only farther to the east. But this time it is the south that is in trouble.

Show who the Midianites were—their kinship to Israel. Ask whether they had any allies, and who they were. Point out their great numbers (Judg. viii. 10), and explain the illustration the writer himself gives.

Ask how far south these raiders went, and make some child point out Gaza on the map.

Repeat verses 9 and 10, and show that idolatry was the cause of their misfortune. Explain the difference between modern and ancient idolatry.

2. Here it will be well to explain to the upper classes that scholars are not agreed as to whether the angel of the Lord means Jehovah or simply an angel representing Him. See note.

Draw out the truth that all our work is done in the presence of God: this we cannot escape.

LESSON VIII—*continued.* THE HOUR AND THE MAN

MATTER.

longing to have his revenge (see Judg. viii. 18). How vigorously he threshes, though casting a glance up now and again to make sure that he is not seen. He does not know that he is being closely watched. God is pleased with the way that Gideon does his work, and by His words and actions draws out Gideon's character. First note how He addresses him, and how frankly Gideon replies. He does not greedily accept the compliment, but demurs, showing his honesty. God approves of this, and gives him still greater encouragement, this time in look as well as in word. Now another trait in Gideon's character comes forward—his humility. Gideon has no trust in himself. The Divine reply is still more wonderful, but Gideon longs to know who He is. How can he act unless he does? This shows his caution. And his expression of caution is followed by an action which shows great generosity. Note what he does with his present, and what the angel of the Lord does. Then Gideon realises who it is, but not till after the Lord has gone. His words show that he realised, not only his insufficiency for the work set before him, but his sinfulness.

METHOD.

Here emphasise the importance of being truthful in our attitude as well as in our words.

Remind the class of the power of Christ's look on S. Peter.

In this dialogue, it will add to the interest if one member of the class gives the Lord's words, and another Gideon's replies.

Here show, that as all the farms were very poor, this offering Gideon brought was most generous. Explain the word 'ephah.'

Show that fire is often a symbol of God's presence, *e.g.* the fiery bush—the tongues of fire.

Illustrate Gideon's sense of sin, revealed to him by the Divine presence. Cf. the similar event in S. Peter's life (S. Luke v. 8).

3. THE LESSON.—Ask what kind of a man God selects when He has a great work to be done.

A very clever or influential man?

A man belonging to the great tribes of Ephraim or Judah? No, a simple man, energetic but self-distrustful, generous but cautious, faithful but penitent.

Show also that a nation's earnest prayers will always win from God the man needed for the situation. It is only when prayer is weak that great men are scarce. Illustration: Samuel Marsden, when he came home with the burden of New Zealand on his heart, everywhere appealed for those who would pray with him for the Maori natives. The next year God sent into the world their greatest friend, George Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

The Hour and the Man.

'Seest thou a man diligent in his business :
he shall stand before kings.'

1. *The Hour.*—South Israel in great danger—
Midianitish raids—harvests carried off—
people cry to the Lord—prophet sent—
mission fails.

' Pray ye the Lord of the Harvest.'

2. *The Man.*—Ophrah farm—Gideon the hewer
—diligent and determined in his work—
humble—cautious—generous—penitent—
the common duty well done leads to greater
work in the future.

*' Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will
make thee ruler over many things.'*

3. *The Lesson.*—Prayer and Duty.

Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

*The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he
prayed for his friends.*

CHAPTER VI. 25-32

AND it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the ¹grove that is by it: 26. and build an ¹Asherah. altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this ²rock, ²stronghold. in the ³ordered place, and take the second bullock, and ³orderly offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which ^{manner.} thou shalt cut down. 27. Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. 28. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was ⁴cast down, ⁴broken down.

25. Take thy father's young bullock. Gideon has witnessed positively for God by building an altar to God. He is now to witness negatively by destroying the altar of Baal, and cutting down the grove in which so many foul abominations have taken place. And he is to do this with the very sacrifice that was being kept ready for Baal. The bullock reserved for Baal is to be used for the demolition of his temple. Apparently his father has only two bullocks—he is to take the second that was being kept ready for some Baal festival.

26. Upon the top of this rock. The new altar was to be built on the highest point of the village—the place where the fortress, to which the men of Ophrah retired when Midianitish raids took place, stood. It is likely that this was the position of the altar of Baal which he was to pull down.

In the ordered place. Either on the foundation of the altar of Baal or in an orderly manner, without hurry, and in obedience to the commands of the Law (Exod. xx. 24), or with the wood laid in order, which you will find ready there from the heathen altar.

The wood of the grove. Render 'wood of the idol' or Asherah, *i.e.* the female god. Possibly the actual idol of Baal was of stone: this would be of wood, and without any definite form. It was a difficult task to which Gideon was called, requiring nerve and faith.

27. Gideon took ten men. These were his own servants, and probably shared his view. Quite likely he told them of the vision, and how God had promised to deliver Israel from the Midianites—this would stimulate them to action.

His father's household. He can count on no sympathy either in the members of his family or amongst his fellow-townsmen.

and the ¹grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. 29. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. 30. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the ¹grove that *was* by it. 31. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar. 32. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath ⁴thrown down his altar.

30. **Bring out thy son.** The men of Ophrah are not only idolaters, but ready to persecute those who are not. This fact alone shows how deeply rooted idolatry was amongst them.

31. **Will ye plead for Baal,** that is, 'Do you suppose that Baal needs any advocates, that he is not strong enough to avenge any insults that are paid to him. Such interference as you propose would be blasphemous and worthy of death.' Joash is quite ready to see that the offender dies.

32. **He called him Jerubbaal.** From that time, Gideon the hewer was called Jerubbaal, *i.e.* 'Let Baal plead against him,' or, as we might say, Baal's rival. In 2 Sam. xi. 21 he is called Jerubbesheth, the word 'Besheth' (=shame) being substituted for 'Baal' (=lord). As the word 'Baal' simply meant 'lord,' in after-years it was thought better to define it more clearly, and so the word 'Besheth,' *i.e.* shame, was used for it.

LESSON IX

Gideon's First Duty

MATTER.

1. The command.

Gideon knows what he has to do, but like a cautious man does not set about doing it until he shall hear further. Note how God teaches us little by little. First, Gideon has the great commission to deliver

METHOD.

1. Refer to the last lesson and quote the proverb, 'Bid God welcome and He will come again.' Gideon had been a generous host and so God visits him again, this time in the night and with a message. He is to do something.

LESSON IX—*continued.* GIDEON'S FIRST DUTY

MATTER.

Israel, and it is only after he has had time to think about that, and all that it means, that he is told what the first step is. His own home is heathen, only one example of that apostasy from God which was, so far as the south was concerned, wellnigh universal. His father seems to have acted as a kind of priest, making all the necessary provision for the foreign altar, using part of the wood near the house as a sacred grove, where many wicked things were done. Gideon had already taken one step against this idolatrous worship by building an altar to Jehovah. Note the name he gave it, a recognition of God's kindness in not visiting his house with destruction. He is now to go still further. Note the details—the second bullock of perfect age is to assist in destroying the foreign altar, the wood of the sacred grove is to be used for the sacrifice and laid upon the altar, and there the sacred bullock is to be offered to God instead of Baal. It is a difficult task, but Gideon has no misgiving, and at once sets about it.

2. The obedience.

Gideon's first duty is to find helpers. The enterprise is perilous, and he can only enlist those on whose secrecy he can depend. It speaks well for him that he can find ten men of his servants who are ready to take their lives in their hands for the work that has to be done. Having found confederates, he now considers when and how it is to be done. Night is obviously the only time when he is at all likely to be successful. Describe the scene as forcibly as possible: the stealing out at night when the village is asleep—the overthrow of Baal's altar—the cutting down of

METHOD.

Illustrations—If you wish to get the schoolroom tidy, first get your own desk tidy; if you wish to get the street clean, first see that your own doorstep is irreproachable; if you wish to take the mote out of your brother's eye, first remove the beam from your own. Before Gideon can reform the nation, he must reform his own house.

Quote the words, 'The very things that should have been for their wealth become an occasion of falling' (Ps. lxxix. 23), and show how often God punishes us by our own sins.

2. Show how important it is to be kind and just to all with whom we have to do, that if we want their help, we may find it. Quote, 'Make to yourself friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness.'

LESSON IX—*continued.* GIDEON'S FIRST DUTY

MATTER.

METHOD.

the mast or post representing Asherah that stands beside it—the building up of the new altar—the sacrifice, and then the dawn of a new day.

3. The issue.

Picture the people as they rose in the morning looking up at the hill which overlooked the village—the grove gone—the wooden pillar and the altar. Great is the consternation. Who has done this thing? Is it not Gideon? Is not the new altar like the one he had set up near his house? Yes, Gideon has done it, and Gideon must die. They hurry off to Joash, and bid him bring out his son that they may kill him. Joash, very firm, reasons with them: 'Let Baal look after himself. If he is really a god, he will plead for himself and execute judgment on Gideon.' The people now speak of Gideon as Baal's rival, the one with whom Baal is to settle matters, *i.e.* Jerubbaal.

3. Note the speech of Joash is really that of a sceptic. It would not do as an argument against punishing a man who pulled down a church and built in its place a mosque. It was open to the challenge of Baal's friends, 'We are his champions, and we will plead for him,' but no one cared to take Baal's part against Gideon. The people's readiness to accept the ruling of Joash showed that they too were sceptics.

It would seem, from the line that Joash took, that Gideon in the morning acquainted him with the reasons that led him to undertake this reformation.

LESSON.—If we feel that things are not as they ought to be, and long to do something to make them better, our first duty is to reform ourselves, to see whether we are right, whether a beam is in our own eye (S. Matt. vii. 3). Our next duty is to make that reform very thorough, to make it plain to the eyes of all that we ourselves will be definitely Christian.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Gideon's First Duty.

'First cast out the beam that is in thine own eye,
and then shalt thou see clearly.'

1. *What it is.*

For Gideon : To reform the home—purge
it of idolatry.

For us : To get rid of the besetting sin.

'*Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest
thou not thyself?*'

2. *How it is to be done.*

Secretly—expeditiously—thoroughly.

'*Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit,
serving the Lord.*'

3. *Result.*

First a storm, then concession.

'*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*'

CHAPTER VI. 33-40

THEN all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

34. But the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

35. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. 36. And Gideon said unto

God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast

33. **Went over**, i.e. over the river Jordan, their home being to the east of it.

Pitched in the valley of Jezreel. If we look at the map and remember that the Midianites were prepared to raid south rather than north, we shall see that they would not assemble, where the Canaanites did, on the west of the great valley of Esdraelon or Jezreel, but on the east, at that point where there is an opening into the south country. The high range of Mount Carmel runs south-east, and just south of Jezreel there is a break or high valley called the plain of Dothan. It was along this valley that the children of the east were preparing to descend on the cornfields of the south.

34. **But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.** The power of the Holy Ghost was experienced in a divine enthusiasm which made Gideon feel strong enough for any measures that might be necessary to keep back the invader.

And he blew a trumpet. This rallied his own house and village. The men of his own place were quite prepared to follow one who had shown such splendid courage in the overthrow of Baal.

35. **He sent messengers throughout all Manasseh.** Having secured a following in the members of his own family, he now appeals to his tribe, and from Manasseh to the three northern tribes—Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. It is strange that no message is sent to Ephraim and Benjamin, who had shown such patriotism when Barak called, and that Judah, so valiant in Othniel's day, takes no part. It is probable that the name of Gideon, whose two brothers had fallen on Mount Tabor, was known in the north, but strange to the south. It was no doubt the influence of Deborah, who was so well known in Ephraim, that had rallied Ephraim and Benjamin in the last struggle.

36. **If Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said.** Gideon does not doubt God's ability to save, but is not quite sure whether the honour of delivering Israel is to be given to himself. Will God work by

said, 37. Behold, I will put a fleece of wool ¹ in the floor; ¹ on the threshing-floor. *and* if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the ² earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save ² ground. Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. 38. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and ³ thrust the ³ pressed. fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. 39. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be ⁴ hot against me, and I will speak but *this* ⁴ kindled. once: let me prove, I pray thee, but *this* once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. 40. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

his hand? This is what he seeks to know. It is noteworthy that this modest questioning is felt just at the time when he has over thirty thousand men ready to follow him. Had he not been humble-minded, he never would have sought a sign.

37. **I will put a fleece of wool in the floor.** 'The threshing-floors were and still are under the open air, usually circular' (Robinson, B. R. i. p. 550, *Speaker's Commentary*). The sign is a natural one for a farmer. Gideon had no doubt often wrung out the moisture from his fleecy coat in the morning after a night's watch.

39. **Let it now be dry only upon the fleece.** It is possible that in certain circumstances the fleece might be wet with dew and yet the floor on which it was be dry, but except by Divine intervention, it is not possible that the floor should be dry and the fleece wet. This second question shows that Gideon was a thoughtful man, anxious to know without doubt that God had called him for the work.

LESSON X

Humility

MATTER.

1. What it is.

Soon after Gideon has witnessed for God in Ophrah, the opportunity for witnessing for Him elsewhere occurs. A fresh invasion takes place: the Midianites, Amalekites, and children of the east are again in the valley of Esdraelon preparing for a descent on the cornfields of

METHOD.

1. Begin by quoting Ruskin's words, 'All great men are humble,' and then ask the class to tell you what humility is. Is it believing that we are of no use in the world, that we can do nothing well, that it is no good trying anything difficult? Then quote and write down S. Paul's words (2 Cor. iii. 5): 'Not sufficient

LESSON X—continued. HUMILITY

MATTER.

the south. Gideon, who remembers that he has been commissioned to rid Israel of this danger, is instantly moved to action—blows a trumpet—blast heard through the north—his own family the first to join him—then his own tribe—then Asher remembers her former reproach—then Zebulun and Naphtali. Gideon sees thousands and thousands of men rallying to his standard, though he is but a poor farmer's son. But he feels no pride, only 'a curious undersense of powerlessness.' Here are the men, but he feels no sufficiency in himself.

2. How Gideon showed it.

He first seeks God in prayer, begs of Him a sign. Dew is symbolical of God's favour (quote Gen. xxvii. 28; Prov. xix. 12). Gideon asks that this mark may lie on his fleece, not on the ground. The answer is plain, the fleece is full of water. Gideon wonders whether this is God's answer. Dew is always abundant in Palestine at certain seasons of the year, and might have evaporated from the ground, though the fleece still remained wet. Gideon feels he must be certain before he moves. Asks for another sign. Explain this. God's blessing asked for, not on the fleece, *i.e.* himself, but on the ground, *i.e.* his enterprise.

3. How God rewarded it.

God not only gave Gideon all that he asked for, but such resolution and high courage that he set off at once, 'early,' against the enemy. Note the direction he took: north-west over the mountains till he reached a hill that overlooked the spring Harod. From this height he could see the enemy's camp stretching for miles and miles. It

METHOD.

of ourselves to account anything *as from ourselves*, R. V. Humility, then, is what Ruskin calls 'a curious undersense of powerlessness,' a belief that power is not inherent in us but through us. When this has been made clear, tell the children we are going to have a lesson on Gideon's humility.

2. Make quite clear to the class that the second sign asked for would strengthen Gideon's faith more than the first.

Stanley points out that Gideon's own character is indicated in the sign of the fleece: on the one hand, quite cool amidst the hot feverish excitement of those around him, on the other, dry and shrewd when all around are damped by fear.

3. Show the class that humility is not the same thing as shrinking timidity. Directly Gideon knows that God is on his side, he is as bold as a lion.

LESSON X—*continued.* HUMILITY

MATTER.

was enough to make a bold heart tremble; but whilst more than half his army was struck with panic, Gideon preserved a calm and cool manner.

METHOD.

LESSON.—The greatest men have been humble. Marlborough and Clive, both very brave men, looked upon themselves simply as instruments in God's hands. This is the true spirit of a religious race. Humility may be cultivated by remembering that no one has anything which he did not receive. See S. John iii. 27; 1 Cor. iv. 7.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Humility.

'Not sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves.'

1. *What it is.*

'A curious undersense of powerlessness.'

Gideon with thousands of brave men at his back feels he is not sufficient.

'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

2. *How Gideon showed it.*

By seeking first an assurance of God's favour.

First, God's blessing on himself (the fleece), then on his enterprise (the ground about the fleece).

'The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge.'

3. *Its reward.*

Confidence and decision.

Gideon has trust in God, and shows no fear when he sees the Midianites.

'Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.'

CHAPTER VII.

THEN Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod : ¹ so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. 2. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. 3. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and ² afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand ; and there

¹ and.

² trembling.

1. **Rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod.** The distance from Ophrah to Harod as the crow flies would be about twenty miles, but in that hilly country the march would be nearer thirty. It was therefore necessary to start very early, not only for the sake of personal comfort, marching at noon being very toilsome, but to get over the ground. The well of Harod, or trembling, so called from the panic which there seized Israel, probably lay at the very foot of Gilboa, where Gideon would encamp his men. It is large, being about fifteen feet broad and two deep. 'The deep bed and soft banks of this stream constitute a formidable ditch in front of the position on Gilboa, and render it possible for the defenders of the latter to hold the spring at their feet in face of an enemy on the plain, and the spring is indispensable to them, for neither to the left, right, nor rear is there any other living water' (George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography*, p. 398).

It should be noted that a stream, fed by two other springs, flows out of it large enough to work six or seven mills.

Moreh. 'Probably the hill above Shunem' (George Adam Smith), almost directly opposite to Gilboa.

3. **Whosoever is fearful and afraid.** This direction was contained in the Mosaic law, which charges the officers to address the soldiers before battle, and warn the timid to go back. Such a warning would no doubt generally have a very wholesome effect, though probably it was never followed by such strange consequences as in this case, when more than two-thirds of the army left the camp (Deut. xx. 8).

Mount Gilead. This name is probably a mistake for Gilboa, as no mountain of that name is known in the district.

remained ten thousand. 4. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are yet too many*; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee*; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. 5. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. 6. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. 7. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

4. I will try them for thee there. This test was not only applied for the sake of reducing the host of Israel to such a small band that it would be impossible for them to lay credit for any success on the powers of their own arm, but also for Gideon's sake. It was important that he should have with him men not only brave, but cautious and prudent; and the test now given supplies this. 'Anybody,' writes George Adam Smith, 'who has looked across the scene can appreciate the suitability of the test which Gideon imposed on his men. The stream which makes it possible for the occupiers of the hill to hold also the well against an enemy on the plain, forbids them to be careless in their use of the water, for they drink in face of that enemy, and the reeds and shrubs which mark its course afford ample cover for hostile ambushes. Those Israelites, therefore, who bowed themselves down on their knees, drinking headlong, did not appreciate their position or the foe; whereas those who merely crouched, lapping up the water with one hand while they held their weapons in the other, and kept their face to the enemy, were aware of their danger, and had hearts ready against all surprise. The test in fact was a test of attitude, which after all, both in physical and moral warfare, has proved of greater value than strength or skill, attitude towards the foe, and appreciation of his presence. In this case it was particularly suitable. What Gideon had in view was a night march and the sudden surprise of a great host—tactics that might be spoiled by a few careless men. Soldiers who behaved at the water as did the three hundred showed just the common sense and vigilance to render such tactics successful' (*Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 398).

8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained *those* three hundred men; and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. 9. And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down ³unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. 10. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with ⁴Phurah thy servant down ³to the host: 11. and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down ³unto the host. Then went he down with ⁴Phurah his servant unto the ⁵outside of the armed *men* that *were* in the host. 12. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like ⁶grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. 13. And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold,

8. **So the people took victuals.** It would be better to translate: 'So they (the three hundred) took the victuals of the people (*i.e.* those who had been sent home) and their trumpets.' This explains how it was that each of the three hundred had a trumpet. They were taken, together with their food, from the nine thousand seven hundred men who now left the camp. It is significant that Gideon in his caution will not have these other men even in the camp. The attack was not made, as it would be to-day, by selected men chosen out of a large number, who wait in the camp to join in their success or cover their retreat, but by the whole camp, all those not chosen for the enterprise being sent away. Perhaps the object of this was to make the three hundred men feel that they must depend absolutely on themselves and the help of God. Those who were dismissed no doubt felt vexed, and we see that on the next day, whilst they help in slaughtering the Midianites who were escaping to the river, they give no help in the pursuit of the fifteen thousand who with their chiefs managed to cross the river and escape eastwards.

11. **The outside of the armed men.** 'The outside' would mean 'the outposts.' The R. V. has 'outermost part.' It is strange to read, 'the armed men that were in the host,' as we should suppose that the host was made up of armed men; but as a matter of fact, the children of the east were accompanied in their raids by wives, children, and a large number of camp-followers. The camp must have stretched for miles, for it was as large as a good-sized town holding between one and two hundred thousand people. The writer describes the enemy as lying in the valley like locusts for multitude, with camels that could not be numbered.

I dreamed a dream, and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled ³into the host of Midian, and came unto ⁷a tent, and ⁷the. smote it that it fell, and ⁸overturned it, that the tent lay ⁸turned it upside down. along. 14. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. 15. And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. 16. And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and ⁹lamps within the pitchers. 17. And he ⁹torches.

13. **A tent.** The tent, *i.e.* the tent of the great chief or sheikh who was in command. The dream would indeed be a strange one, if there were nothing specially significant in the cake of barley bread. There is not much point in it as a representation of Gideon, but it has unusual force when we remember that He Who spoke of Himself as the Bread of Life has overturned the power of heathendom.

14. **This is nothing else.** The soldier's interpretation is as amazing as the dream. It is of course clear that Gideon's reputation as a brave man was widely known. From chap. viii. 18 we see that there had been something very remarkable about his brothers. Amongst the number slain in some previous encounter at Tabor, they had been specially noted. 'Each one resembled the children of a king,' is the witness of the two great chiefs Zebah and Zalmunna respecting them. Attention, then, had been drawn to the family of Gideon long before, and Gideon's influence in raising over thirty thousand men had struck fear into the host.

15. **He worshipped.** Gideon did not wait for a place of safety before giving thanks to God for the assurance of victory, but there and then bowed himself to the ground in adoration. Their return into the camp and the witness of Phurah the servant would give the greatest possible encouragement.

16. **And lamps within the pitchers.** Lamps should be 'torches,' as in R. V. Lane in his book, *Modern Egyptians*, tells us: 'The police used frequently to go about the metropolis by night often accompanied by the executioner and the bearer of a kind of torch which is still in use. This torch burns, soon after it is lighted, without a flame, except when it is waved through the air, when it suddenly blazes forth; it therefore answers the same purpose as our dark lantern. The burning end is sometimes concealed in a small pot or jar, or covered with something else when not required to give light.' This explains what now took

said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise : and behold, when I come to the ⁵ outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do. 18. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow *ye* the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, ¹⁰ *The sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon. 19. So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the ⁵ outside of the camp *in* the beginning of the middle watch, ¹¹ *and* they had but newly set the watch : and they blew the trumpets, and ¹² brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands. 20. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the ⁹ lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal* : and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. 21. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp : and

¹⁰ omit The sword of and read For . . . for.

¹¹ when.

¹² brake in pieces.

place. Each man had a trumpet in his right hand, and in his left held a torch which was covered over with a sort of pitcher, and so concealed. When the signal was given, the pitcher would be thrown to the ground, the torch waved through the air would suddenly blaze forth, and the trumpet would be blown.

18. On every side of the camp. As there were only three companies, only three sides would be occupied, probably every side but the east, along which the enemy would flee. It would never have done for the ruse to have been detected, which would have been the case if those fleeing through a thin line of lights had found nothing beyond.

18. The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. This, or 'For the Lord and for Gideon,' was to be the battle-cry, Gideon's name being added, as it was evidently a name of terror in the camp.

19. In the beginning of the middle watch. The Jews had only three night watches—6 to 10 P.M., 10 P.M. to 2 A.M., 2 A.M. to 6 A.M.—the beginning of the middle watch would be about 11, when the sleep of the camp would be most profound.

They had but newly set the watch, and therefore there would be no further disturbance for four hours. When, then, the camp had got quite quiet again, its stillness was broken by the sound of harsh cries and trumpets.

21. They stood every man in his place. This was their safety. As their fathers at the Red Sea, so they were to stand still and see the salvation of God. Remember that the camp was composed of three forces—Midianites, Amalekites, and children of the east. And as in after-days the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, seized by panic, set to work to destroy one another, in the thought that they were slaying the

all the host ran, and ¹³cried, and fled. 22. And the three ¹³they shouted and put them
 hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's ^{to flight.}
 sword against his fellow, ¹⁴even throughout all the host: ¹⁴and against.
 and the host fled ¹⁵to Beth-shittah ¹⁰in Zererath, ¹⁵and to ¹⁵as far as.
 the border of Abel-meholah, ¹⁷unto Tabbath. 23. And ¹⁶toward
 the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of ¹⁷by.
 Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manassch, and
 pursued after the Midianites. 24. And Gideon sent
 messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come
 down against the Midianites, and take before them the
 waters ¹⁵unto Beth-barah ¹⁸and Jordan. Then all the men ¹⁸even.
 of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the
 waters ¹⁵unto Beth-barah ¹⁸and Jordan. 25. And they
 took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and
 they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at
 the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the
 heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the *other* side Jordan.

enemy, so it was now. The huge camp, awakened in the darkness by the noise, the flashing of the torches, the shrill blasts of the trumpets, mistook the running in of the outposts for the advance of the enemy, and the confusion begun at the circumference soon spread to the very centre of the camp. We should not, of course, forget that this confusion was of the Lord (see ver. 22).

22. **Beth-shittah in Zererath.** See R. V.: 'as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah.' It is believed with good reason that the phrase 'as far as' indicates the points where a rally was first attempted. Of these places Abel-meholah—the birthplace of Elisha—in the Jordan valley near Scythopolis, alone can be identified.

23. **The men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, etc.** These were probably those who had been dismissed, but who had been watching from a distance to see what Gideon's small band would be able to effect. They now occupied the northern fords of the Jordan, and prevented flight in that direction.

24. **Take before them the waters.** When Gideon saw the hostile camp in flight, he despatched runners to Ephraim, bidding them take the waters, and so prevent the Midianites from fleeing across the river. 'The waters' are not the waters of the Jordan, but 'the streams which run from the mountain districts of Ephraim into the Jordan in the district of Bethshan, forming great pools and marshes, which the Midianites fleeing south would have to cross before they could reach the Jordan fords.'

As far as Beth-barah. One of the south fords of the Jordan.

LESSON XI

Faith

INTRODUCTION.—In this lesson we have a very good description of what real faith is. Faith is something distinct from credulity or believing anything—it means thought. It is distinct from superstition or the fancy that certain places or things or movements determine events apart from a Living Person. It is also distinct from fatalism, a lazy confidence that God will do everything. One of the best definitions of faith is that given by Bishop Westcott in *The Historic Faith*, p. 7. 'Faith is thought, illuminated by emotion, concentrated by will.' The lesson of Gideon's great victory will be an illustration of this.

MATTER.

1. Taking thought.

Gideon is now face to face with the enemy. The 135,000 in number outnumbers his force 32,000 by more than four to one. But he has God's promise (see chap. vi. 16). Why, then, does he not dash at them at once? Because the voice of God tells him to tarry and think (ver. 2). What is the first thought? 'My soldiers must be men of courage. All who are afraid had better go back.' How many go? How many are left? What is his second thought? He cannot hope to win by a direct attack; he must surprise the enemy. Perhaps now it is that he thinks of the torches and trumpets. He needs very cautious men; men of self-control, watchful. How many of these ten thousand are like that? God tells him how to find out. He now sees that he can only depend on three hundred. But these are enough for his stratagem. Explain clearly what this is.

2. Receiving illumination.

Gideon has all his plans ready. Now is the time for action. The command comes to make the venture. Gideon hesitates; wishes he could be quite sure that his plans are of God. Assurance absolutely necessary, so God promises him that

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking the class what they understand faith to be? Is it the acceptance of anything you hear? Is it something to save us from the trouble of thinking? Does Gideon embark on his great enterprise, to which God has promised success, without thought?

Show clearly that those 'who put their hand to their mouth' were the men who showed self-control and caution. They kept their sword in one hand and lapped up the water with the other, keeping all the time a keen look-out for the enemy. The others went down on their knees to drink, laying down beside them their weapons, and thus exposing themselves to danger.

Before finishing this section, go back and make clear what you are aiming at, namely, to show what faith is.

2: Show the bearing of this sign upon our enterprises. When we have anything very difficult to do, let us call to mind, not a dream, but a fact—how the Bread of Life has 'turned the world upside down.' Quote the Magnificat, which gives the same thought and the promise

LESSON XI--continued. FAITH

MATTER.

which will make him quite sure. Gideon and his servant go down to the Midianites; hear two things—(1) that a Midianite dreams that a cake of barley has overturned the royal tent; (2) that there is fear in the enemy's camp. Gideon worships God for this feeling of certainty he now has.

3. Purpose or Concentration of will.

Gideon tells all his men what he and his armour-bearer have heard. They no longer fear their weakness, and are encouraged to waken the feeling of panic which already exists. They buckle on their swords, light their torches in their tents so that they may not be seen, cover them up with the pitchers which they hold in their left hand, and then take their trumpets. Slowly and cautiously they creep down to the camp. They stop, for they hear a noise. It is only the Midianites changing guard. Soon all is still, and they march on—one body going to the north, another to the west, another to the south. All wait very still. Suddenly the shrill blast of a horn rings out clear in the midnight air. This is answered by two hundred and ninety-nine blasts. The Midianites start up. What is it they hear? The sound as of a sudden charge (breaking of the pitchers), then the blazing of torches is seen. The outposts rush in—are mistaken for the Israelites—are attacked by their fellows—they fancy in their fear the men of Gideon are within the camp. All is darkness within the host of the enemy, which is encircled on three sides by a girdle of fire. Great panic amongst the Midianites, who make a rush for the east, the only side not held by the enemy. So the great victory was won.

METHOD.

to S. Mary: 'No word from God shall be void of power.' All He promises, He fulfils.

3. After showing how the victory was won, explain that the victory over the world has been won by the light of God's Word (Thy Word is a lamp), and the preaching of God's ministers (see the metaphor, 1 Cor. xiv. 8). God's Word faithfully preached makes the world fear judgment to come.

Show that it is not all God's soldiers who are fit for this particular work. Out of 10,000, God only chose 300. But all can help, as the 10,000 did by giving their victuals and their trumpets to those who had to do the work.

Point out in conclusion that faith is only perfected by action. The Bible says 'Show me thy faith by thy works.' And it is only when faith is seen in action that we can understand its character.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Faith.

'Thought, illuminated by emotion, concentrated by will.'

1. *Thought.*

Gideon taking thought—reducing his force to three hundred—arming them with trumpets, torches, and pitchers.

'Be ye therefore wise as serpents.'

'The prudent looketh to his goings.'

2. *Illumination.*

The best plans useless without God's help.
How can Gideon be sure that God will bless his plan?

The dream makes what is dark bright.

'The Lord will speak unto him in a dream.'

'Your young men will see visions.'

3. *Purpose.*

Thought now gives place to action.

The night march—the surprise—the panic.

'God worketh both to will and to do.'

CHAPTER VIII. 1-21

AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that *thou* calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply. 2. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer? 3. God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that. 4. And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*. 5. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I

1. **Why hast thou thus served us.** Gideon had probably feared to send his messengers to summon the tribe of Ephraim, because they were so haughty, and would probably have resented a farmer of Manasseh taking the lead. Ephraim is now jealous of the position that Manasseh has taken, and asks what business has she to take the field without first consulting her. For similar pride on Ephraim's part, see chap. xii. 1.

2. **Better than the vintage of Abi-ezer.** Gideon's answer is very wise. He refuses to go into the delicate question proposed, and asks who has gained most glory in the fight. Abi-ezer, his own house, which probably made up the larger part of the three hundred, or Ephraim? Abi-ezer has nothing, Ephraim has the two famous chiefs of Midian. This shrewd answer satisfied Ephraim. Note the metaphor, in this case the gleaning was more successful than the vintage. Gideon takes Ephraim's thought that they were confined to picking up what Manasseh had left, and shows that the pickings contained the best part of the booty.

4. **Faint, yet pursuing.** It is evident that Ephraim, as well as those who were dismissed to their homes from Harod, whilst quite ready to take what advantage they could without much trouble, had no intention of venturing across the river. The three hundred had begun the work, and they might finish it. This and the preceding verses give a very painful picture of the discussions and rivalries that prevailed in Israel.

5. **Succoth.** This, from the fact that Gideon had crossed the river, must mean the Succoth on the east of the Jordan (see Josh. xiii. 27). 'The two sites in Gilead whose identification are probable are Succoth and Jogbehah. Succoth may be the present Tell Deir 'Alla—a high mound in the Jordan valley, about one mile north of the Jabbok' (George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography*, p. 585).

pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me ; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. 6. And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army ? 7. And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. 8. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them in like manner : and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*. 9. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower. 10. Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east : for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. 11. And Gideon went up *by* the way of them that

6. **In thine hand.** The men of Succoth have no sense of loyalty to Israel, the only question with them is who is likely to win—these poor famished three hundred or Zebah and Zalmunna at the head of fifteen thousand men. They prefer to side with the latter, and say so.

7. **I will tear your flesh.** Lit. I will thresh your flesh with thorns and briers. The word 'briers' might be translated 'threshing instruments,' which suggest a horrible torture, such as that carried out by David (2 Sam. xii. 31). It is not clear what is intended, but Gideon and his half-starved soldiers may well be excused for fierce indignation against their own countrymen, who even refused them food.

8. **Penuel, i.e. Peniel,** on the north bank of the Jabbok, called 'face of God,' because Jacob in his strange wrestling there had seen God face to face (Gen. xxxii. 30). 'Penuel was probably a prominent ridge near the Jabbok above Succoth' (George Adam Smith). Quite likely a fortified place, as it is here described as having a keep or tower, into which the villagers no doubt retired in time of danger, as in the Pele towers of the north of England. To break it down would be to make the village very insecure. See chap. ix. 46, 51.

11. **Went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents.** Gideon took a long circuit by the path usually taken by the nomad tribes of the east, and came upon Karkor unexpectedly from the east instead of from the west, the direction in which he was expected. A surprise attack, when the host was secure and thought itself safe, against a force greatly outnumbering them—fifty to one—was completely successful.

dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. 12. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host. 13. And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up, 14. and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men. 15. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, ¹ with ¹ concerning whom ye did ² upbraid me, saying, *Are the hands of* ^{whom.} ² taunt. Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are weary*? 16. And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. 17. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city. 18. Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so *were* they;

Jogbehah. The name 'is surely echoed in the present Jubeihah, on the road from Salt to Amman' (George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography*, p. 585).

13. **Before the sun was up.** Trans. 'at the ascent of Heres,' this being the point at which Gideon ceased his pursuit.

14. **Princes of Succoth, and the elders.** Succoth was evidently a place of importance, though it is not possible to distinguish between the princes and elders.

16. **With them he taught the men of Succoth.** There is a fine irony in these words. Probably only the seventy-five rulers were punished, and perhaps it is fortunate for Gideon's reputation that we do not know how the punishment was carried out.

17. **He slew the men of the city.** Here again it is probably the rulers only who are intended. The place was made defenceless, and the magistrates executed.

18. **What manner of men.** It is clear that there was something in the circumstances of the death of Gideon's brothers which tried Gideon's soul. He now arraigns these chiefs for their part in it.

As thou art. The reply is not a taunt as some have supposed, but a compliment, made perhaps in the hope of escaping death.

each one resembled the children of a king. 19. And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother : as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. 20. And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword : for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth. 21. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us for as the man *is*, so *is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ³ crescents. ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

19. They were . . . sons of my mother, *i.e.* whole brothers, and therefore it is my duty to avenge their deaths.

20. He said unto Jether. We are told that even to the fourth century A.D., it was the custom for the Arabs of the Sinaitic desert to charge their youths with the slaughter of prisoners. In this case the motive was probably similar to that of Joshua in telling his captains to put their feet on the necks of the five kings—namely, to inspire his son with contempt for these Midianites who had for so long been the terror of the country.

21. For as the man is, so is his strength. 'Do thou fall on us,' is the reply of Zebah and Zalmunna to Gideon, 'for the work will be more quickly done—as the man is, so is his strength.' The strong arm of the man will do what has to be done more effectually than the weak arm of the boy.

Ornaments. R. V. has 'crescents,' a better translation, showing the shape of the jewels which he took from the enemy.

LESSON XII

Perseverance

'Faint, yet pursuing.'

MATTER.

1. Gideon's difficulties.

Gideon has won a great victory. The great army of one hundred and thirty-five thousand men is broken up, and nearly four-fifths of them are slain, two of the chiefs are taken, and it might be expected that the whole land would have rejoiced over its deliverance. Not so—some envy Gideon's success—who are they? Note their angry words. This, then, is one difficulty,

METHOD.

1. Ask the class what the duty of a boy or girl is who has gained a great success, a prize or scholarship. Is it to rest or to perfect the success gained? Show how Gideon might have very naturally said that he had done all that was necessary in defeating and scattering the host, and that it would be for others to follow up the success and crush the large body that had escaped to the east. Note the difficulties that

LESSON XII—*continued*. PERSEVERANCE

MATTER.

— but there is another. Two chiefs have escaped with fifteen thousand men. Surely Israel will help the brave men who have been up all the night, and are now tired and famished. No, not one. The three hundred men must do their own work. A third difficulty lies in the need of refreshment and food. Gideon seeks it at Succoth and Penuel, but is refused.

2. How he meets them.

The first difficulty is met by tact. He shows the men of Ephraim that they have done far more than he has. The second difficulty is met by resolution. If no one will help, they will do the work themselves; and though it seemed madness for three hundred to try and defeat twenty-five thousand, yet Gideon was confident that God would crown their efforts with success. The third difficulty at Succoth and Penuel is met by threats of coming judgment. Gideon has no doubt that he will return to inflict it.

3. Its triumphs.

Gideon by his tact wins Ephraim's regard. They had expected a very different answer, and would have enjoyed a quarrel, but Gideon's wisdom disarmed them. By his resolution he wins another great victory, as great in its way as that won in the valley of Esdraelon. He brings back the two kings in his train: his gleanings are now like those of Ephraim. By the punishment inflicted on Penuel and Succoth, he shows that he is to be feared and respected. If he can do all these great things at the head of only three hundred men, what will he not be able to do when made captain of thousands?

METHOD.

might tempt him to feel this, and show the same difficulties beset success to-day—envy and selfishness.

2. Show how Gideon's answer is an admirable illustration of 'the soft answer that turneth away wrath.'

3. Describe the battle of Karkor as fully as possible.

Show that stratagem—perhaps the same as before—was here used.

Show how much Gideon would have lost if he had not persevered.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Perseverance.

'Faint, yet pursuing.'

1. *Difficulties.*

Gideon's success followed by envy, selfishness, and cruelty instead of applause and enthusiasm.

'In everything commending ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in labours, in the power of God.'

2. *Difficulties met.*

Envy by tact—selfishness by independence—cruelty by threats of judgment to come.

'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work will perform it.'

3. *Difficulties triumphed over.*

Tact and patience disarm wrath. Independence wins great renown. Judgment inflicted secures respect and fear.

'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.'

CHAPTER VIII. 22-28

THEN the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also : for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. 23. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : the LORD shall rule over you. 24. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For

22. **The men of Israel.** It is not possible to know how many of the tribes this included, but probably only those who had directly benefited by his valour and heroism. The request was the expression of a natural feeling : the whole country was disorganised, every man doing what was right in his own eyes, and it seemed as though a king would unite the tribes and set up orderly government. Note they ask for a dynasty. The throne is offered, not only to Gideon, but to Gideon's heirs.

23. **I will not rule over you.** Gideon's wise reply was founded partly on his native shrewdness, partly on self-distrust. He knew, in the first place, that for a man of Manasseh to attempt to rule Ephraim and Judah would be a very difficult task ; and in the second, that he could not look for Divine help and guidance unless God had called him to the work, and of this he had no evidence whatever. He therefore declined. His attitude has been compared with that of Cæsar and Oliver Cromwell, both of whom declined the throne, but in their cases the refusal was more a matter of policy than faith.

24. **Give me every man the earrings of his prey.** We do not see in this a lust for gold any more than Aaron's similar request (Exod. xxii. 3). Gideon did not wish to enrich himself, but to make an ephod worthy of the great purposes to which it would be put. From 1 Sam. xxiii. 9 and xxx. 7, it would seem that in times of difficulty the ephod, which probably included the breastplate containing the Urim and Thummim, the twelve precious stones so intimately connected with the oracle of God, was in some way consulted. See 1 Sam. xxiii. 9 : ' David said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.' Then follows the prayer for counsel. Now Gideon knew, as every Israelite knew, that God's mind was revealed in some way through the ephod ; he also knew that in the crisis through which the country had passed the oracle had been silent, and that God's mind had been revealed to himself privately. It was natural for him to suppose that the ephod, now at Shiloh, had not been faithfully used, and that if he made one out of the spoils God had given him over his enemies, that God would perpetuate to him and his house the wonderful mercies He had shown in revealing to him what he ought to do. His house would then be for ever what it had been during the last year, the home of the oracle of God. It does not seem likely that he sought the priestly office, but simply wished to have in his own house a guarantee that God would speak with him and his family for ever.

they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.) 25. And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. 26. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks. 27. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which *thing* became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. 28. Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

Because they were Ishmaelites, *i.e.* wandering Arabs—Bedouins, as we should say—with whom it was the custom to wear golden earrings.

26. **One thousand seven hundred shekels of gold.** A Hebrew shekel of gold contained a few more grains than is required for an English sovereign—130 as against 113—the 1700 shekels of gold would therefore represent in weight something under 2000 sovereigns, and in value something very much more. In addition to the earrings which alone Gideon asked for, ornaments, collars, and purple raiment were thrown into the garment, showing how popular Gideon was.

27. **And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah.** It is quite likely that, owing to the widespread ignorance of those days, there was no knowledge as to how the ephod was to be used, its only purpose being in some way to declare the mind of God. The result was as might have been expected: it was worshipped instead of used, and also broke the unity of the nation, which was only preserved by the common worship at Shiloh.

LESSON XIII

A Right and a Wrong Choice

MATTER.

1. The first temptation.

Gideon now a great hero—has shown himself a leader as well as a brave man. Israel much excited. Now we can have a king—Gideon just the man—will pull the nation together—deliver us from these periodical attacks of the heathen. Vote taken—Gideon elected. Commissioners chosen to acquaint him with their decision. To their surprise, Gideon refuses. He will not be their king, he will not found a dynasty. Two reasons: (1) God has not called him—*Vox populi* not always *Vox Dei*. God would surely have given him some direct sign had He wished it. (2) Israel united today, but there was no guarantee of their remaining so. How badly Ephraim had behaved—how badly the people on the east of the river! Gideon refuses.

2. The second temptation.

People cannot understand why the farmer's son should refuse the throne of Israel. The feeling is, he must be good as well as brave. The tempter now comes to Gideon, saying, 'If you will not govern the people, you might be their spiritual adviser. Already God has used you as His instrument, showing Israel what it ought to do. Shiloh was silent, but in Ophrah there was a revelation. If you had an ephod, as they have at Shiloh, then this might always be the case. Your faith would always meet with answers.' Gideon very much tempted. He would like to be the instrument of God's revelations, the prophet through whom God would always declare His mind. Yes, he will have an ephod—an ephod made

METHOD.

1. Begin the lesson by asking what was the chief feature in Gideon's character. Not courage, nor shrewdness, but caution. We shall see how this saved him from ruin in one case, but failed to save him in another. Give illustrations showing that when people have been successful, there is great risk of temptation. Our Lord was tempted after the wonderful signs of the baptism.

Illustrate boy in school, after doing great things in football or cricket, made a sort of head by his fellows, is tempted to think he can manage everything.

2. Ask what temptation, according to S. Luke, followed the offer of a throne to our Lord, and show that when any one is successful in overcoming the temptation of the world, there is a danger of his meeting another temptation, that of the spirit.

When you have made it quite clear as to why Gideon wished for the ephod, show why he ought to have put the wish aside.

LESSON XIII—*continued.* A RIGHT AND A WRONG CHOICE

MATTER.

METHOD.

of the spoils of the enemies, more magnificent than that of Shiloh, as being made of pure gold. Gideon wrong for two reasons: (1) He was not called of God for this work any more than he was for ruling the people—God had never appointed him prophet. (2) By having an ephod at Ophrah, which had been the scene of wonderful revelations from God, and was already a sacred place, he would disparage the ephod at Shiloh, he would set up a rival worship, encourage that schism which he was really most anxious to avoid. But these things Gideon did not see.

3. Results of yielding.

Gideon makes the appeal for the gold—very liberal response—great weight of gold. Gideon makes the ephod of gold, with perhaps the ornaments used for the breast-plate. Sets it up—probably in the threshing-floor where God had showed him what he ought to do. People flock from all parts—see the ephod—look upon it as a kind of God—worship it. Gideon cannot do anything to prevent it. It has been his own handiwork.

3. Illustrate the good boy who has refused what every other boy would have accepted, tempted to fancy that he must be right in everything—put on a pinnacle by the others—tempted to assert himself—does so—falls—makes a division in the school.

LESSON.—The lesson is that given by our Lord: unless divinely called and put in a position of authority, rule others by serving them, and learn that the chief mark of a spiritual man is humility.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

A Right and a Wrong Choice.

'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'

1. *First temptation.*

Gideon tempted to be king—refuses—God has not called him.

'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.'

2. *Second temptation.*

Gideon tempted to make an ephod—yields.

'The thing became a snare to Gideon and his house.'

3. *Lesson.*

Victory over one temptation does not necessarily mean victory over others. We must watch as well as pray.

'Blessed is he that watcheth.'

CHAPTERS VIII. 29-35 ; IX. 1-21

AND Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. 30. And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten : for he had many wives. 31. And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. 32. And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites. 33. And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. 34. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side : 35. Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

IX. 1. And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to

29. **Dwelt in his own house.** This expression, taken with those that follow, indicates a certain amount of state and luxuriousness. The old simplicity of the farmer's son disappeared, and in its place was a large household numbering considerably over a hundred. It probably brought but little pleasure to Gideon during his lifetime, and bloodshed and ruin quickly followed his death. Polygamy was largely responsible for this.

33. **As soon as Gideon was dead.** It is interesting to note that Gideon's influence was wholly against idolatry. He made a bad mistake in the satisfaction of his desire for an ephod, but his loyalty to Jehovah never wavered. After his death the craving for idols again awakened ; and Israel, forgetting all that God had done, turned to Baalim.

Baal-berith, i.e. the God of the covenant. Why this particular deity was so popular, we are not told. It was enshrined in a temple of its own at Shechem (see chap. ix. 4), which seems to have been the centre of apostasy.

35. **Neither shewed they kindness.** Apostasy from God always has its result in the daily life, making people selfish and forgetful.

IX. 1. **And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal.** He was an illegitimate child, his mother being a Shechemite—whether heathen or Israelite, we do not know.

Went to Shechem. Because he had friends there in his mother's brothers. Shechem is beautifully situated on the slope of the woody Gerizim, looking over against the bare rocky Ebal. In view of what follows, it will be well to explain its situation more minutely. The town

Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2. Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I *am* your bone and your flesh. 3. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our brother. 4. And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. 5. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. 6. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the ¹ plain ¹ oak.

lies in a sheltered valley, protected by Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north. The feet of these mountains, where they rise from the town, are not more than five hundred yards apart. The bottom of the valley is about 1800 feet above the level of the sea, and the top of Gerizim about 800 feet higher still. Several lofty precipices of Gerizim literally overhang the city, any one of which would answer the purpose of Jotham. Using one of these, he could stand above the city 'and deliver his cutting allegory in the hearing of the people, and then run away before they could take him' (Thomson, *Land and the Book*, p. 473).

2. **Whether is better.** Abimelech's clever argument was twofold. He first asks whether it would not be better that they should be ruled by one man than by an oligarchy, and then whether they would not prefer a king who was related to them by birth.

4. **They gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver,** *i.e.* seventy shekels of silver. It is not known what was the value of a Jewish shekel of this time. In weight it is believed to have been something between the weight of 2s. and 4s. of our money. In any case the pay would be small, and would hardly do more than 'furnish camel money for Abimelech's mercenaries' (Black). The money was taken out of the temple of Baal-berith.

5. **Slew his brethren.** Such wholesale slaughters have always been common in Eastern monarchies, and are among the fruits of polygamy. Cf. 1 Kings xv. 29; xvi. 11.

6. **All the house of Millo.** Millo was the citadel or stronghold of Shechem—the military quarter, as we should say. This union with the

of the pillar that *was* in Shechem. 7. And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lift up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, you men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. 8. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them ; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. 9. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to ²be promoted over the trees? 10. And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us. 11. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to ²be promoted over the trees? 12. Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us. 13. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to ²be promoted over the trees? 14. Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come

² wave to and fro.

Shechemites made the coronation of Abimelech perfectly safe. He was proclaimed king and crowned near the celebrated oak-tree where God had appeared to Abraham centuries before, and where Joshua, not a hundred years ago, had buried the book of the law of God (Josh. xxiv. 26). In spite of such sacred traditions, it was now used as a witness to the coronation of one who came to the crown through a-sea of blood. The oak is here defined as the oak of the pillar, *i.e.* the 'great stone,' of which we read in Josh. xxiv. 26.

7. **The top of Mount Gerizim.** Not the summit of the mountain, but some precipitous cliff behind the town (see note on Shechem). 'From such a position it would not be difficult to be heard, as everybody knows who has listened to the public crier of villages in Lebanon. In the stillness of evening, after the people have returned home from their distant fields, he ascends the mountain side above the place, or to the roof of some prominent house, and there "lifts up his voice and cries," as Jotham did' (Thomson, *Land and the Book*, p. 473).

9. **Wherewith by me they honour God and man.** Oil was constantly used in the meat-offerings (Lev. ii. 1-16) and wine in the drink-offerings (Lev. xxiii. 13), so they are said to honour and cheer God as well as man.

14. **Then said all the trees unto the bramble.** From the fable, it would seem that when the people found that neither Gideon nor his sons would accept the throne, they offered it to the base-born Abimelech. Jotham represents Abimelech as saying that if they did this honestly and uprightly, he hoped that they would give him their full confidence, but if not, then let them feel the result of his displeasure.

thou, *and* reign over us. 15. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. 16. Now therefore, if ye have done truly and ³sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye ³uprightly. have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; 17. (for my father fought for you, and adventured his life ⁴far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18. and ⁴omit far. ye are risen up against my father's house *this* day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid-servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he *is* your brother;) 19. if ye then have dealt truly and ³sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house *this* day, *then* rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: 20. but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. 21. And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

LESSON XIV

The Oldest Fable in the World

INTRODUCTION.—The fable, and it is this, and not a parable, which never represents natural objects as speaking or acting, is not only one of the oldest in the world, but a striking illustration of certain principles which deserve a permanent place in history. It will be the object of the Lesson to teach these.

MATTER.

1. The facts.

Gideon—the great deliverer of Israel—dead. Leaves behind him a large family, but no one of mark. All, probably, like Jether, hesitating and undecided. No one strong

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking the children if they know what a fable is, whether they can give you any examples, and then stimulate their curiosity by saying that you are going to tell them one of the oldest

LESSON XIV—*continued*. THE OLDEST FABLE IN THE WORLD

MATTER.

enough to prevent idolatry, which becomes universal. Men forget what God had done, and also what Gideon had done. The large family fail to do anything to stem the tide of unpopularity because divided amongst themselves—half-brothers—different mothers. They make no attempt to govern. Only one son ambitious. Has a grand name—Abimelech—*father-king*. Determines to make his name a reality; goes to Shechem, where his mother lived; flatters her relatives. Why not make *him* king? But how about the seventy sons? They must be destroyed. If the Shechemites will give him money, he will see that they are murdered. The blood-money taken from the Baal temple—the assassins hired—the deed done. All the sons slain except Jotham. Great coronation day. All Shechem there. Abimelech just crowned when a voice is heard above the city; it is the voice of Jotham predicting destruction. Men try to catch him, but he escapes. It is his fable we are to look at to-day.

2. The fable.

Jotham gives his rebuke in fable form because he knows it will be better remembered and also be more stinging. In his interpretation of the fable, he rests his whole case on principle. Was the action of the men of Shechem upright? If so, then all would be well; but if not, it would result in the destruction of themselves and their chosen king.

3. The lesson.

The lesson of the fable is not confined to Jotham's interpretation; it shows, indirectly, why neither Gideon nor his sons cared to accept the throne. They felt they were

METHOD.

fables in the world. But before telling it, they must first know what no one can tell them of most of the fables they have heard, and that is, how it came to be told. Then refer to the last lesson, and after speaking of Gideon's death, draw a picture of the melancholy condition of Israel which followed it.

2. Tell the fable simply, explaining the symbols of the olive-tree and vine, which refer to the honour they do God as well as man. Note Jotham's very striking preface, showing that he looked upon his speech as a message from God.

3. There is a good opportunity for teaching the virtue of contentment; the vice of ambition will naturally be the next lesson. Show the class how often boys and girls are tempted to be discontented

LESSON XIV—*continued.* THE OLDEST FABLE IN THE WORLD

MATTER.

doing better work where they were. It was much better to stay where God had placed them, giving Him honour and gladness, and men cheer and encouragement, than to take a high position to which they felt they were not called. 'Happiness is suitableness.'

METHOD.

because they are not made monitors or captains—they long to be head over others in some way—and then ask to which are they like, the vine, olive, fig-tree, or bramble. Which wanted to be head? Why did not the others? Show that the olive felt that she could not leave her place without sacrificing her present usefulness—that of showing respect and honour to God and man. Draw out that good may be done in a subordinate position by loyal reverence and respect to those above us. Quote Catechism. So, too, the fig-tree could not leave without giving up her sweetness. Point out how authority and rule often make people harsh, severe, exacting. Sweetness in a small sphere better than rule in a large. The vine feels that to cheer others is better than ruling them. Here show how much good is done by encouragement. To give people new hope is better even than good government. Lastly, show that the one, and the only one, ready and anxious to govern was the bramble, with not only nothing to lose but which was a trouble and nuisance wherever it grew—a good type of a discontented man.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

The Oldest Fable in the World.

'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'

1. *The facts.*

Gideon's death leaves a divided family—
Abimelech ambitious—Shechemites un-
grateful—the great crime—the corona-
tion—its interruption.

2. *The fable.*

Trees desire a king. The olive, fig, vine
refuse the honour. The bramble
accepts.

3. *The lesson.*

To do my duty in that state of life unto
which it shall please God to call me.

CHAPTER IX. 22-57

WHEN ¹Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, 23. then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: 24. that the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren. 25. And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along *that* way by them: and it was told Abimelech. 26. And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27. And they went out *into* the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and ²made merry, and ²held festival.

¹ And Abimelech was prince over Israel three years.

22. **And Abimelech was prince.** Strictly speaking he was Israel's first king, and in every respect much worse than Saul.

23. **God sent an evil spirit.** The civil war which now ensued between Abimelech and his unruly subjects was of God, *i.e.* God took no steps to prevent it. He allowed the wicked passions of these cruel and ungodly men to work in their own way, and the natural result followed—quarrelling and civil war. Evil spirits are always at hand to stir up dissension in families and kingdoms; when God does not stay them, He may be said to 'send' them.

24. **That the cruelty done.** God allowed sin to have its logical consequences in order that the murder of the seventy sons of Gideon might be avenged.

25. **And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him.** Shechem was the centre of two great roads, one running north and south, the other east and west. 'To-day Shechem is the seat of the government of the province, and the connecting link of the telegraph systems of the east and west of Jordan' (George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 333). Along these roads the commerce of Palestine passed, and was persistently robbed by the men of Shechem. They not only had designs on the traffic but on the king himself, who, however, was told of their plans, and escaped.

27. **Make merry**—better as in R. V. 'held festival,' lit. they sacrificed thank-offerings. 'It was in the midst of this union of anarchy and despotism that the Feast of the Vintage—chief among the festivals of Palestine—came on with the usual religious pomp and merriment with which it was celebrated in the Jewish Church during the Feast of Tabernacles; but at Shechem (not Shiloh), in the precincts of the God of the League.'—*Jewish Church*, i. p. 301.

went *into* the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. 28. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *is not he* the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him? 29. And would to God this people were under my hand; then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out. 30. And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. 31. And he sent messengers unto Abimelech ³privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and behold, they ⁴fortify the city against thee. 32. Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee, *and* lie in wait in the field: 33. and it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt

craftily.

⁴ constrain the city to take part.

28. **Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem?** From this question it is clear that Abimelech took the name of Shechem to himself, partly in memory of his mother, partly as a proof of his identification with the place.

Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? *i.e.* 'He is only half a Shechemite, and Zebul—who is not a Shechemite at all—the man in whom he has chief confidence. Nay, let us have our own people to rule over us—let us serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem, for why should we serve those who have so little connection with us.' Gaal's speech was calculated to arouse all the local patriotism of the town, and when roused, he could point to himself as the person most able to bring about the desired change.

29. **And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army.** Here is a definite challenge sent by Gaal to Abimelech. If this be so, there was no necessity for Zebul, the governor of the town, to send private communication of the insurrection. Gaal himself informed the king. But from ver. 31 it is clear that Zebul did send him private word. It will be better, therefore, to adopt the rendering—easily made by the omission of one Hebrew letter—'Then would I remove Abimelech, and would say to Abimelech, Increase thine army and come out.'

30. **Zebul, the ruler of the city.** Zebul's loyalty to Abimelech is not clear. On the one hand he sends him tidings of the rising, on the other he seems to remain within the city as its head even to the very last, and probably perished in its flames.

find occasion. 34. And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem *in* four companies. 35. And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood *in* the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from ⁵ lying in wait. 36. And when Gaal ⁵ the ambush-ment. saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men. 37. And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and ⁶ another ⁶ one . . . cometh by the way of the oak. company come along by the plain of Meonenim. 38. Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him? *is* not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them. 39. And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown *and* wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate. 41. And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that *they* should not dwell in Shechem. 42. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out *into* the field; and they told Abimelech. 43. And he took the people, and divided

34. **And Abimelech rose up.** By three desperate onslaughts the insurrection is quelled. In the first we see the troops of Abimelech stealing over the mountain-tops at break of day, by the well-known terebinth and by some sacred spot called 'the navel of the land' (see ver. 37). In the second the main battle is fought in the wide cornfields at the opening of the valley of Shechem, and in the third those insurgents that remain take refuge in the tower of the Temple of the League.

38. **Then said Zebul.** Zebul taunts Gaal because he hopes to persuade him to go out against Abimelech, feeling sure he will be beaten.

41. **Zebul thrust out Gaal.** Gaal, being defeated, is not strong enough to hold out against Zebul, the governor, who now attacks him. He is obliged to leave Shechem, which falls into the hands of Zebul. We should now expect Shechem to surrender to Abimelech, but nothing of the kind happens. The fight still continues, until Shechem is razed to the ground.

43. **He divided them into three companies.** Perhaps he remembered how successful such a division had been with his father. Abimelech appears throughout as a brave man. He occupies the most dangerous

them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and
⁷ came. looked, and behold, the people ⁷ were come forth out of
 the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them.
 44. And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him,
 rushed forward, and stood *in* the entering of the gate of
⁸ omit other.
⁹ rushed. the city: and the two ⁸ other companies ⁹ ran upon all *the*
people that *were* in the fields, and slew them. 45. And
 Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he
 took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and
 beat down the city, and sowed it *with* salt. 46. And when
¹⁰ the. all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they
 entered into ¹⁰ a hold of the house of the god Berith. 47.
 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower
 of Shechem were gathered together. 48. And Abimelech
 gat him up *to* mount Zalmon, he and all the people that
were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand,
 and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid
it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with
 him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as I
have done. 49. And all the people likewise cut down
 every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put
them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so
 that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about
 a thousand men and women. 50. Then went Abimelech

situation, that of the entrance into the city, where he was exposed to double attack in front and behind; he alone, through his vigour, wins a decisive victory.

45. **Sowed it with salt.** Salt is the emblem of barrenness. By sowing the city with it, Abimelech expressed his hatred of the place that had risen against him, his desire that he might know it no more. Cf. Deut. xxix. 23: 'The whole land thereof is . . . salt . . . that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein.'

48. **Gat him up to mount Zalmon.** Zalmon means 'shady.' It was, therefore, a well-wooded hill above Shechem, and from Ps. lxxviii. 5 it appears that it was high enough to have snow upon it in the winter.

49. **And set the hold on fire.** Did Abimelech remember Jotham's curse, 'If not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo,' and therefore help to bring about its fulfilment?

to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the ¹¹ top of ¹¹ roof. the tower. 52. And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53. And a certain woman cast ¹² a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and ¹³ all ¹² an upper millstone. to brake his skull. 54. Then he called hastily unto the ¹³ omit all to. young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that *men* say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. 56. Thus God ¹⁴ rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which ¹⁴ requited. he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren : 57. and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads : and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

50. **Then went Abimelech to Thebez.** Thebez, according to Eusebius and Jerome, was not far from Shechem, only some ten miles in a north-east direction.

53. **Cast a piece of a millstone.** Not 'a piece,' but the whole of the upper millstone.

And all to brake. Some English editions of the Bible have 'all to break,' as though 'to' was here the mark of the infinitive. But 'all to' means 'entirely,' 'completely,' as in Chaucer and Spenser.

54. **Draw thy sword.** Saul met his death in much the same way (1 Sam. xxxi. 4). Abimelech, as he gave this last order, probably realised how completely the curse of Jotham had been fulfilled.

LESSON XV

Retribution

'Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.'

MATTER.

1. Its character.

Jotham's fable had threatened two evils to the house of Abimelech: (1) Fire should come out and devour

METHOD.

1. After placing the title on the blackboard, ask the class what they understand by it? Is it simply punishment, or punishment having

LESSON XV—continued. RETRIBUTION

MATTER.

the men of Shechem and the house of Millo. (2) Fire should come out from the men of Shechem and from the house of Millo and devour Abimelech. He did not tell them that as a stone had been one of the instruments of death by which his seventy brothers had met their death, so a stone should be the instrument by which Abimelech should meet his death, but contented himself with the illustration of the bramble. This is of no use except for burning, so Abimelech, the king they had chosen, would characterise his career by the way in which he burnt up his enemies. His character would bear its natural fruit—destruction—and they could not expect anything else.

METHOD.

a peculiar relation to the offence, as *e.g.* in olden days, when a man, who had defamed the king by evil speaking, was punished by having his tongue slit. Show that it is the latter, and ask, Was there any expression of this law in the Old Testament? Note 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' It means literally paying back, and we have a proverb which exactly hits it off. We speak of 'being paid back in our own coin.' Explain it as a law of God by which evil, if not repented of in time, brings with it its own reward. Illustration: *Judas went to his own place.*

When the meaning is made clear, then tell the class that you are going to continue the history of Abimelech, which is a striking illustration of what 'Retribution' is. The Shechemites chose a bramble for their king, and he would do what brambles do, burn and destroy. Abimelech had killed his brothers to gain the throne, that throne would prove his ruin.

2. Its gradual working.

When Jotham disappeared, Abimelech was quite happy. He had the throne, was treated with distinction by the people, kept up state, had plenty of money, and was a great man. So for three years everything prospered. Men looked on Jotham's fable as idle words, and still worse, began to feel that it did not matter what a man did as long as he succeeded. And yet all this time there was an undercurrent of discontent. People began asking, 'Why should Abimelech reign? What has he done to justify his having the throne?' Shechem, that had placed him on the throne, felt this more strongly than other places. At last the feeling is strong enough to produce a revolution, which brings Shechem to the ground and Abimelech to death.

2. Show to the class that when something wicked happens, we generally expect punishment to follow at once, but more often than not it does nothing of the kind, *e.g.* David's murder of Uriah waited at least a year before it was avenged. So Jacob's deception of Isaac was not at once punished.

LESSON XV—*continued.* RETRIBUTION

MATTER.

3. Its effect.

(a) On the Shechemites. Abimelech no longer lives in Shechem, has a governor there, Zebul—thinks he can trust him. The native Shechemites, descended from Hamor (see Gen. xxxiv., and cf. ver. 28), hate Abimelech. One of them, Gaal, takes the occasion of a festival, the Feast of the Vintage, to raise the flag of revolt (ver. 29). Zebul, not strong enough to put the revolution down, pretends to favour it, but sends secretly to Abimelech. Abimelech makes three attacks (verses 34-41), which in the end are successful. Gaal is driven out, but Zebul now seems to take his place. Shechem is attacked, the city taken, the citadel still held by the Shechemites. Abimelech takes steps to burn it, and those who remembered Jotham's words felt that the judgment was coming. A thousand perish in the flames. Jotham is avenged.

(b) On Abimelech. Abimelech, who had persuaded the Shechemites to do wrong to the house of Gideon, is still free and victorious. How can Jotham's words come true now that Shechem is destroyed? Only one city, Thebez, holds out. Abimelech advances against it and succeeds. Men of Thebez flee to the tower. The bramble king will burn it. As he approaches the tower with his burning brand, does he see in vision the stone on which his brothers were slain? If he does, he should be careful to avoid going too near the stone tower. He cares not for visions or fables, begins to fire the building, when crash comes a huge stone and brings him to the ground. Jotham is doubly avenged.

METHOD.

3. In tracing the effect of the working of the law of retribution, show the class that only one thing could stop it, and that repentance (Jonah iii. 10), but neither Abimelech nor the men of Shechem show any repentance at all.

In the effect show that the men of Shechem brought their own destruction upon themselves. The choice of a bad ruler brings ruin on a people. So, too, Abimelech's usurpation brought its own natural result—discontent, dissatisfaction, and revolution. His death a clear proof of Divine justice. Quote '*Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*'

Press home, in conclusion, that every sin brings its own judgment. Break a law of the natural world and you suffer, so break a law of the moral world and you must suffer. Quote Prov. v. 22: '*His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin*'; xxvi. 27: '*Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him.*'

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Retribution.

'He that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him.'

1. *The stone that Abimelech rolled.*

Stone stained with his brothers' blood.

Set rolling by Abimelech and Shechem.

'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'

2. *The stone returning.*

Gaal the Shechemite revolts and is defeated.

Zebul, the governor of Shechem, takes up the
standard of rebellion.

Shechem burnt by the bramble.

'Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein.'

3. *The stone crushing.*

Abimelech proud of his success. Only one
town, Thebez, to be subdued.

Abimelech crushed by the stone.

'On whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him
to powder.'

CHAPTER X. 1-16

AND after Abimelech there arose to ¹defend Israel ¹save. Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in ²mount ²the hill country of Ephraim. 2. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. 3. And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. 4. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called ³Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are* in the land of ³*i.e.* the towns of Gilead. 5. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon. 6. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served ⁴Baalim, and ⁴Ashtaroth, and the ⁴*insert* the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served

1. **Tola the son of Puah.** A man of the same tribe as Barak. Dodo is put in the text as the name of his grandfather, but we might translate it 'his uncle,' making Puah the uncle of Abimelech. This would perhaps account for the mention of Tola in connection with Abimelech, whose first cousin he would be. Like Deborah, he took up his abode in Ephraim, owing to its central position.

Shamir may be the same as Samaria.

3. **Jair, the Gileadite.** Jair belonged to the same tribe as Gideon, *i.e.* Manasseh, thus showing the prominent position Gideon's exploits had given the tribe.

4. **Thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts.** The phrase betokens a time of peace. Never before had any judge exercised the same extended influence that Jair was able to through his thirty sons. Thirty towns, or nearly that number (note 1 Chron. ii. 22 says twenty-three), were directly governed by him through his sons, and were called after him—⁴towns of Jair. These were in Gilead, so we may assume that this judge's chief influence was on the east of the Jordan.

6. **And the children of Israel did evil again.** Apparently this degenerate lapse into idolatry took place after Jair's death, but no doubt during the long peace of over fifty years Israel had grown careless, and the new generation, forgetful of the Midianitish raids, fell into idolatry. This lapse was worse than any previous one, for every god in the country was called into requisition. No less than seven are mentioned.

not him. 7. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. 8. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the *other* side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead. 9. Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. 10. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and *also* served ⁴Baalim. 11. And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? 12. The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the ⁵Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. 13. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. 14. Go and

⁵ The Septuagint version has *Midianites*.

7. **Into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.** So Israel was attacked on both sides, on the west as well as on the east. As the idolatry was worse than had been known before, so the punishment was more severe.

8. **That year they vexed . . . eighteen years.** This makes no sense as it stands, and points to a corrupt text. The only possible explanation of the text as it is would be, 'That year they vexed and oppressed all the children of Israel, but for eighteen years they had vexed and oppressed all those who were on the east of the Jordan.'

That year would refer to the year when, as we are told in the next verse, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight against Judah.

11. **Did not I deliver you.** Seven deliverances are here spoken of: (1) From the Egyptians—at the Exodus. (2) From the Amorites—when Og and Sihon were defeated (Num. xxi. 23). (3) From the Ammonites—not recorded. (4) From the Philistines by Shamgar (iii. 31). (5) From the Zidonians, either unrecorded or identified with the deliverance from Hazor by Barak. (6) From the Amalekites by the hand of Gideon (vi. 1). (7) From the Maonites. The LXX. here have Midianites, but this is quite possibly a shirking of the difficulty caused by an unknown name. We have no other notice of the Maonites—unless the word Meunim in 1 Chron. iv. 41 refers to them. In this case, they would be a nomad tribe connected with the Amalekites (1 Chron. iv. 41, 43).

cry unto the gods which ye have chosen ; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. 15. And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned : do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee ; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. 16. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD : and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

15. **Do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good.** Cf. David's words, 'Let me now fall into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies: and let me not fall into the hand of man' (1 Chron. xxi. 13).

16. **His soul was grieved.** Very touching words, showing what we learn more fully in the New Testament—that God is a living God, Himself afflicted in all our affliction (Isa. lxiii. 9).

LESSON XVI

Dangers of Prosperity

'The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.'

MATTER.

1. Prosperous times.

What happened after Abimelech died? For a long time all went well. The Midianites had suffered so terribly under Gideon that they never ventured across the Jordan, and the land was in peace. At first Tola—possibly a cousin of Abimelech—was judge, and then Jair, the Gileadite. Thus passed away nearly fifty years. That they were prosperous seems to be gathered from the fact that Jair and his sons were able to travel about in semi-state (ver. 4). They established a more or less definite government over a district embracing at least thirty towns, which were so much under the control of Jair that they were called Jair's towns. But though the country was at peace, and, compared with what it had been, fairly prosperous, there was no revival of religious life. The services at Shiloh were probably very badly attended, and

METHOD.

1. Write the text on the black-board, and ask why, if prosperity is destructive, should we wish our friends to be prosperous, and explain that prosperity is like the sun which hardens the clay, but softens the ice. It depends where it falls. Prosperity never hurt Abraham, though it did his nephew Lot. Then go to the lesson, and show that Abimelech's death was followed by prosperous times for Israel. Will the prosperity help or hurt Israel? This depends on whether the people are wise or foolish.

LESSON XVI—continued. DANGERS OF PROSPERITY

MATTER.

METHOD.

of the ephod at Ophrah—if it still existed, and it is quite likely it was destroyed during Abimelech's revolution—we hear nothing. Priests and Levites must have been very careless and indifferent to their duties, for there was no education of the people, and directly the influence of the judge was withdrawn, they sank into idolatry.

2. Effect.

The carelessness and indifference to religion during the judgeships of Tola and Jair led to a strange outbreak of idolatry directly they passed away. The worship of Jehovah was entirely given up, and not only Baalim and Ashtaroth substituted, but the new gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. The people went mad over idols, mixing freely and unrestrainedly with the people of the land, and giving themselves up to their abominable customs. They doubtless hoped by this to become friends with the people whose gods they adopted, but it had the opposite effect: the heathen despised them, took advantage of them, and at last, when they saw they were demoralised, attacked them, and had them in subjection.

3. Result.

Israel ground to death by Philistines on the east and the Ammonites on the west. Hopeless bondage—Israel enslaved—compelled to pay tribute in corn, money, etc. The people contrast the peaceful happy days under Tola and Jair with the cruel bondage from which they now suffer, and take the first step towards recovery by crying unto God. They recognise that this oppression is due to their sins,

2. Quote the proverbs, 'It is the bright day that brings out the adder,' and 'Too much sail is dangerous,' and the question an ungodly son addressed to his father, 'What shall I come to, father, if I go on prospering in this way?' To which came the reply, 'To the grave'; and show that prosperity leads people to fancy that they can get on without God. Refer to the Parable of the Sower: the thorns, *i.e.* the riches, as well as the cares of the world choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.

3. Show what a long time it was before the Israelites looked into the matter, and tried to find out the cause of their troubles—no attempt at repentance for eighteen years!

LESSON XVI—*continued*. DANGERS OF PROSPERITY

MATTER.

specially their idolatry, and they acknowledge their guilt before God. But that is not sufficient. God tells them so through some prophet. He bids them get deliverance from their idols, as, in spite of what they say, they still trust in them. This stern rebuke has effect: They now not only confess their sin, but also put it away; and God is entreated, and provides for them a way of escape from their troubles. This the subject for the next lesson.

METHOD.

Show that directly they put the sin away, the love of God shines out upon them. 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.' Illustrate by the surgeon who has to perform a painful operation on his child. Though he is bound to do it for the sake of the child, yet he is grieved.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Dangers of Prosperity.

'The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.'

1. *Prosperity.*

Israel under Tola and Jair—forty-five years without war.

'The bright day brings out the adder.'

'*In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us.*'

2. *Its effect.*

Degeneracy—idolatry—heathen friendships—no judges.

'*In prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.*'

3. *Result.*

Heathen contempt for Israel—attack—Israel crushed by the Philistines on the west, and the Ammonites on the east.

'*In my prosperity I said, I shall never be removed. . . . Thou didst turn Thy face from me, and I was troubled.*'

CHAPTERS X. 17, 18; XI. 1-28

THEN the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh. 18. And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

XI. 1. Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty *man* of valour, and he *was* the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. 2. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and *his* wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a ¹strange woman. 3. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to

17. **Then the children of Ammon were gathered together.** Apparently the reformation, of which ver. 15 tells us, had its effect in putting spirit into the Israelites. They had the courage to cross over Jordan and meet the Ammonites with all the force they could muster. It is to this final struggle that this verse and the next chapter refer.

Israel encamped in Mizpeh—a place in the pastoral uplands of Gilead, memorable for its old watch-tower, which witnessed the parting of Jacob and Laban. The Ammonites are gathered together to meet them.

18. **What man is he that will begin to fight.** The one need is a leader. The next chapter tells us who this is and how he was chosen.

XI. 1. **Gilead begat Jephthah.** There is a Gilead mentioned in Num. xxvi. 29 who was grandson to Manasseh. It is possible that Jephthah was descended from him, and therefore, in spite of the taint which attached to him through his mother, could boast of some nobility of birth.

2. **Thou shalt not inherit.** His early life was evidently miserable, the stigma of his birth being constantly cast in his teeth.

3. **The land of Tob.** This was on the borders of Syria. See 2 Sam. x. 6 (marg.).

3. **And there were gathered vain men.** Jephthah, like David, is forced to get a living as a freebooter, and in this way gains valuable experience in warfare. 'Vain men' means wild fellows, not conceited men. He was the Robin Hood of his day.

Jephthah, and went out with him. 4. And it came to pass ²in process of time, that the children of Ammon made ²after a while. war against Israel. 5. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob : 6. And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. 7. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house ? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress ? 8. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. 9. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me *home* again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head ? 10. And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. 11. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them : and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh. 12. And Jephthah

4. **In process of time.** Heb. 'after days.' Here we are told indirectly that Jephthah was engaged in his lawless occupation long before the struggle with Ammon came to a climax.

6. **Come, and be our captain.** It speaks well for the reputation that Jephthah had established for daring and bold leadership that it conquered all the old prejudices against him on the score of his birth, which had driven him out from home.

9. **Shall I be your head?** Some have thought that this was a selfish condition, and indicates a lower type of character than Gideon. The words do not warrant it. Jephthah had been shamefully treated, and it was natural that he should ask for some guarantee of better behaviour before breaking up his old life and becoming their general.

11. **Before the Lord in Mizpeh.** From parallel passages (see xx. 26 ; Josh. xviii. 8 ; 1 Sam. xxi. 7 ; 2 Sam. vi. 21, vii. 18) we should suppose that either the Tabernacle, or at least the High Priest, with the Urim and Thummin were at Mizpeh. Had the ark been brought, we should have been told, so we may therefore believe that 'before the Lord' means here 'before the High Priest the representative of the Lord.' It

sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land? 13. And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably. 14. And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: 15. and said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon: 16. but when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh; 17. then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not consent: and Israel abode in Kadesh. 18. Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the *other* side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon *was*

s not at all likely that the Mizpeh here referred to is the Mizpeh in Benjamin, the traditional residence of the ark. It is very interesting to find this freebooter consecrating his new work to Jehovah at the outset, the more so when we remember how prevalent idolatry had been.

12. **And Jephthah sent messages.** Though Jephthah was a man of proved courage, yet he recognises that war is so terrible that steps ought to be taken to avoid it if possible. He therefore sends a message to the king of Ammon asking why he has come out against Israel.

15-27. **Israel took not away the land of Moab.** Jephthah denies the Ammonites' contention that Israel robbed them and the Moabites of their land; it was not their land at all, but belonged to the Amorites (verses 22 and 23), and was taken from them because they attacked Israel when on their way to Canaan. He goes on (ver. 24): 'You would certainly possess whatever land your god Chemosh gave you, and we shall certainly keep whatever the Lord our God has given us. And besides, Balak the king of Moab recognised our right; in fact, for three hundred years it has not been disturbed. The responsibility, then, of this war belongs to you, not to me. I appeal to Jehovah.'

the border of Moab. 19. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon ; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place. 20. But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his ³ coast : but Sihon gathered all his ³ border. people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 21. And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them : so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. 22. And they possessed all the ³coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan. 23. So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? 24. Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God ⁴ shall drive out from before us, them will we possess. ⁴ hath dis-
possessed.

25. And now *art* thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, 26. while Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time? 27. Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me : the LORD the Judge be judge *this* day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. 28. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

LESSON XVII

Jephthah

'Jephthah, who through faith subdued kingdoms.

INTRODUCTION.—So much interest has very naturally been centred on Jephthah's vow that his character as shown in the Scripture narrative has not received the attention it deserves. And yet it is worthy of study, as it shows that out of a rough life God can fashion a fine character.

MATTER.

1. Jephthah's difficulties.

His mother had left him, and he was brought up in his father's house with a stepmother who hated him. Her sons also, when they grew big enough, treated him very badly. At last he was turned out of the house and obliged to seek his living amongst strangers. Picture his loneliness, his misery, both at home and in the world. It does not seem likely he will grow into a warm-hearted, affectionate man, or that he will learn to believe in God and to fear Him. Then his profession is a wild one—he becomes a robber-chief, living on what he can steal from others.

2. Jephthah's faith.

All this time God is 'taking him up' and educating him. Jephthah learns to believe in God, to fear Him. Though he becomes the most successful leader in Palestine, a man so brave and capable that men instinctively point to him as Israel's deliverer, yet he does not feel that he can get on without prayer. When he is elected to the place of Joshua and Gideon as leader, he begins his work by publicly committing his cause to Him. He is not ashamed of his faith, though he is a great soldier, but confesses it at the moment of his triumph. This faith

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking whether the class knows the common saying, 'Home makes the man,' and what it means. But how are they to be made who have no home or a bad home? Quote, 'When my father and mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up.' The lesson to-day about one who had a bad home, and whom the Lord took up.

Picture the idolatry that prevailed in Gilead during Jephthah's boyhood.

Quote—

'There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.'

2. Note the expression, 'taketh me up.' We speak of a person 'taking up' another, meaning by it his befriending him, giving him help, looking after him.

LESSON XVII—*continued.* JEPHTHAH

MATTER.

in the living God is also seen in the vow to give God a thank-offering if He should grant him success in his undertaking.

3. Jephthah's desire for peace.

Though a very brave man and accustomed to fighting, Jephthah does not rush into battle. He thinks of the sorrow and distress that war begins, and tries to avoid it if possible. Read his message to the king of the Ammonites (verses 12-27), and note that he denies that Israel had taken the land of the Ammonites. In the first place, it was not their land, but belonged to the Amorites, and in the second, Israel took it from the Amorites because they were attacked. God had given it to them, so they intended by God's help to keep it. He appealed to the God of battles (ver. 27) as a Witness that his cause was just. Such behaviour shows clearly that though Jephthah's life had been rough and rude, he had not forgotten what was due to others, and would always rather find his cause in justice than in force.

METHOD.

3. Show that the boy who is chosen by his companions as captain ought not to be a bully and take advantage of his position, but to be the more careful to seek peace, and to be perfectly fair and just in all his dealings with others. When the Princess Victoria knew she was to be the Queen of England, she said, 'I will be good,' showing what she recognised to be the true foundation of power.

LESSON.—This is obvious. Some boys have more disadvantages: they may have bad homes, they may be led to choose a bad profession; but if they will be true to God, He will be true to them, and be a sure guide in all their difficulties.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Jephthah.

'Jephthah, who through faith subdued kingdoms.'

1. *Jephthah's difficulties.*

No mother—a bad home—exiled life of a freebooter.

*'When my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord taketh me up.'*

2. *His faith.*

Jephthah appointed captain over Israel—lays the undertaking before the Lord—promises thank-offering if successful—feels responsibility, and casts himself on the Lord.

'I should utterly have fainted unless I had believed.'

3. *Desire for peace.*

Though brave and strong, will not fight unless forced.

Sends a message of peace to Ammon.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.'

CHAPTER XI. 29-40

THEN the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon. 30. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 31. then it shall be, that ¹ whatsoever cometh forth ^{1 or whoso-} ever.

29. **The spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.** Jephthah had done all he could to avoid war, but the Ammonites' refusal to accept his explanation forced him to draw the sword, and it was then that he was endowed with Divine power. As Othniel and Gideon had been inspired for their work, so too Jephthah receives a like inspiration for the difficult and dangerous task that lies before him. Note the difference between 'The spirit of the Lord came upon him' and 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' In the one case the endowment seems temporary, in the other permanent; in the one case touching only a part of man, in the other filling all his capacities.

He passed over Gilead. He first raised the men of his own district, then went south to Eastern Manasseh, and then back again to where he had been crowned, and from that centre, Mizpeh of Gilead, he marched at the head of his army against the Ammonites.

31. **It shall be that whatsoever.** The Hebrew could be taken either way as meaning *whatsoever* or *whosoever*. The LXX. adopts the latter. Even if the neuter be chosen, the sense is not really different. It is not likely that Jephthah expected any animal 'to come forth of the doors of his house to meet him,' *i.e.* he evidently intended a human sacrifice. We must remember that he had had but little religious education, and had for many years been leading a wild rough life. To him, untaught, it doubtless seemed that the sacrifice of a man was more precious than that of an animal. And yet his conscience is sufficiently enlightened to make him hesitate. He does not dare say that he will sacrifice a human being, but he will leave it to chance. It is possible, though unlikely, that an animal might come to meet him, it is possible that no one will come; in this case he will feel that he has been prevented by circumstances from making the thank-offering he had intended. It is because of this element of chance that Jephthah's vow is so rash. 'It is well with vows when the thing promised makes the promise good, but when Jephthah says, *Whatsoever thing cometh, etc.*, his devotion is blind and his good affection overruns his judgment; for what if a dog, or a swine, or an ass had met him? Where had been the promise of his consecration? When we vow what we cannot or what we ought not to do, we mock God instead of honouring Him. It is a vain thing to go about to catch God hoodwinked. The conscience shall never find peace in any way but that which we see before us, and which we know safe,

of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up *for* a burnt offering. 32. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to ² meadow. Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the ² plain of the vineyards, *with* a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. 34. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. 35. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. 36. And she said ³ omit if. unto him, My father, ³ *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto

both in the kind and circumstances. There is no comfort in "Peradventure, I may please God" (Bishop Hall, *Contemplations*, i. pp. 210, 211).

34. **His daughter came out to meet him.** So Miriam went out to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians (Exod. xv. 20).

35. **I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.** Perhaps Jephthah knew the old Mosaic command which bade a man fulfil the vow he had made (Num. xxx. 2). In any case, being an honourable man, he felt he could not forswear his oath because the sacrifice was more precious than he had expected. Nay, that was only an additional reason for fulfilling his promise. So far Jephthah argued rightly. But he was also bound to ask himself, was this sacrifice likely to be most acceptable to God, and further, had he any right to interfere with the life of another? Quite right to sacrifice his own best, but not the best of another. His daughter's life was not his, but hers. Yet in noting this, we must remember that in the place and time of Jephthah, no one would have held that Jephthah's daughter had the right to dispose of her own life. She was looked upon as belonging absolutely to her father. And as for the character of the thank-offering, Jephthah had probably now no misgiving: the finger of God, he would have said, pointed her out.

36. **My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth.** The heroism of Jephthah's daughter redeems the story. Her readiness to be offered as a sacrifice to God is one of the most beautiful and touching lessons in the Old Testament.

the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon. 37. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may ⁴ go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail ⁴ depart and ⁵ go down. ⁵ companions. my virginity, I and my ⁶ fellows. 38. And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she ⁶ knew no man. ⁶ had not ⁷ known. 40. And it was a custom in Israel, *that* the daughters of Israel went yearly to ⁷ lament the daughter of Jephthah ⁷ celebrate. the Gileadite four days in a year.

37. **Bewail my virginity.** So many of the great promises of God were bound up with motherhood, that we are not surprised to find virginity looked upon as an evil worse even than death. Though Jephthah's daughter is ready and willing to die, she wishes for time in which she may lament her bitter disappointment, and so offer her sacrifice more completely to God.

39. **Did with her according to his vow.** These words make it quite clear that Jephthah sacrificed her as a burnt-offering to God. That she became what we should call a nun has no authority from the narrative.

40. **Went yearly to lament**—better, 'to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah.' Her splendid devotion to her father and country was celebrated year by year by 'the daughters of Israel,' who felt pride in what she had done.

LESSON XVIII

A Rash Vow and what came of it

'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.'

INTRODUCTION.—The story of Jephthah's vow is so beautiful and pathetic in itself that there will be no difficulty in telling it. The difficulty arises in pointing the lesson. It will not do to give any teaching that will make children careless in fulfilling their promises. Had Jephthah been enlightened, he would have gone back from the vow he made; but it would have been a serious step beset with difficulties of its own, and that should be made clear. Perhaps it will be best to take the obvious lesson expressed in the text as showing the danger of rash promises.

LESSON XVIII—continued. A RASH VOW AND WHAT CAME OF IT

MATTER.

1. A rash promise.

Jephthah, after being elected captain, raises the whole of the east (ver. 29) against Ammon, and then takes the field. But Ammon is very strong—has been master for over eighteen years. It is not likely that Jephthah will win. This expedition very different from his roving raids. Can he trust his soldiers to remain firm when the Ammonites' cry is heard? He feels that he would give anything in the world to win this battle. And yet it is doubtful. Some idea of the critical condition of his army is seen in his reply to Ephraim (xii. 2, 3), where he speaks of 'great strife,' of 'not being delivered,' of 'putting his life in his hands.' It is clear that the expedition was full of risks. Perhaps, so he thought, if he promised God the best thing he had, he would secure His help. He has heard how in some great crisis human beings have been offered for sacrifice. Well, the peril is so great that he would do even that if only God would help him. Yes—even his child—though he trusts that may not be asked for. He had but one child—a daughter, and he shrinks from offering her—but if necessary, he could do even that. So he vows, vaguely hoping that it may be somebody else, or perhaps even something else, though that is not likely. It was a hasty, rash vow, and brought its own condemnation. Note that it was in Moab and Ammon that human sacrifice lingered longest (Micah vi. 7 and 2 Kings iii. 27), and that no high priest, so far as we know, rebuked it.

2. The judgment.

Jephthah wins a great victory, greater even than that of Gideon: twenty cities were taken, and the Ammonite power completely

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking the class to explain what being 'rash with the mouth' means. Ask them to give illustrations, e.g. a boy in difficulty in the field or school offers extravagant bribes if only his friend will help him. Then go on to speak of Jephthah's difficulty.

Show here, that though no one who knows God would ever dream of bribing Him, yet it is not uncommon for people in imminent danger of death to make promises which they rarely fulfil afterwards. These promises of being better are like Jephthah's, a kind of bribe.

Point out that the rashness of Jephthah's vow consisted in this—in refusing to face all that it might mean. He was hasty, couldn't find time to think it out, and so utters a promise which may cost him something more than life to fulfil. Had he not been hasty, he would perhaps have seen that it was the spirit of God that made him hesitate in facing the possibility of his daughter's sacrifice. Point out also that his vow was really a bribe, and as such was not an act of full trust in God. Jephthah was only to give God a present if he won. If he lost, he would give him nothing. It was this act of distrust that brought the judgment.

Contrast the anxious father, wondering who will be the first to meet him, and the light-hearted daughter, proud of her father and of his success. Picture his horror as he sees the sacrifice he must offer. What he does, what he says.

Give also in exact words the daughter's brave reply.

LESSON XVIII—*continued*. A RASH VOW AND WHAT CAME OF IT
MATTER. METHOD.

crushed. Jephthah now the greatest man in the land. Perhaps, now the anxiety of the crisis is over, he wishes that he had not made the vow. He goes in triumph to his house, and the first to meet him is his daughter. How was it she and no other met him? Was it accident or God's providence? There are no accidents. It was God's providence, thereby teaching men that He hates bribes, and that they are sure to be followed by punishment. Perhaps Jephthah now feels this. He dares not refuse, for his daughter is such a willing sacrifice, but it wellnigh breaks his heart.

3. How it was redeemed.

Jephthah's sacrifice was not acceptable to God: first, because it was a bribe; secondly, because it was human. God brings good, however, out of the evil in the ready self-devotion of the daughter. Compare her readiness with that of Isaac. And note that she does not fear death for herself, but because it cuts her off from her share in the regeneration of the world. Note also, in her reply to her father, her joyful recognition of the fact that she has a part in the victory over Ammon. Though horrible in itself—so much so, that the sacred writer veils the dreadful deed—yet it became in after-days celebrated. Once a year her friends, and when they died the daughters of Israel, met for four days to celebrate her death. The willingness of her sacrifice and her steady fixed devotion are shown by her return after two months. There was no attempt to escape, and, as far as we know, no hesitation in her absolute and complete surrender. It was this that was celebrated in Israel as it deserved to be.

3. Contrast with this daughter's glad consent to her father's will the behaviour of children who will not obey their parents when they order what is for their good.

Show that she was not giving up a life that but few cared for: she was very dear to her father and had many friends.

Draw out what a terrible two months the father had while his daughter was in the mountains.

Show that this sacrifice, like that of Isaac, prepared men's minds for the great sacrifice of the Son of God, which the Church celebrates day by day throughout the year.

Note.—All teachers should read the poems about Jephthah written by Tennyson, and by Byron in his *Hebrew Melodies*.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

A Rash Vow.

'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.'

1. *A rash vow.*

Jephthah's critical situation—Ammon very strong and confident—Israel doubtful—the question: 'Will God help?'

Perhaps He might be bribed— with what? A human sacrifice—what sacrifice? Jephthah will leave that to chance.

'Let every man be slow to speak.'

2. *Followed by judgment.*

Jephthah victorious— returns home triumphant. Hopes a slave may be the promised sacrifice. Meets his daughter.

'By thy words thou shalt be condemned.'

3. *Redeemed by sacrifice.*

The vow hateful to God, but purified by the daughter's devotion.

Celebrated year by year.

Points to the Great Sacrifice.

'I will freely sacrifice to Thee.'

CHAPTER XII.

AND the men of Ephraim ¹ gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, ¹ were gathered. Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against

the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

2. And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. 3. And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

4. Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, ² Ye are fugitives of Ephraim, ye Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, and in the midst of Manasseh. and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye ² Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites. 5. And the Gileadites took the ³ passages of ³ fords.

1. **And the men of Ephraim.** Note their behaviour to Gideon (viii. 1-3). During all the period of the judges, it is Ephraim that takes the lead, as it is no doubt Ephraim that is chiefly responsible for the secession of the ten tribes. See also Josh. xvii. 14-18. Their overbearing pride here takes the monstrous form of a threat to destroy Jephthah and his house, because he asked not their leave to march against the enemies of the Lord.

2. **And Jephthah said.** Jephthah's reply is a flat contradiction of their contention. As a matter of fact, he had called them at a time when their help would have been very valuable, but they had refused.

4. **Then Jephthah gathered together.** Jephthah had not the gentle, wise spirit of Gideon, though it is only fair to say that Gideon had not received such harsh provocation.

Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim. The meaning of this taunt and insult, which were so quickly avenged, we cannot discover. It may mean, 'You Gileadites are nothing more than cowardly runaways, living on the east of Jordan, away from all the difficulties that we have to face,' alluding perhaps to a feeling amongst the tribes that Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, in asking for the eastern lands, had shirked the task they had to take up. See Josh. i. 12, and especially Num. xxxii. 6-15, which contains stern words of Moses that support this interpretation.

- ⁴ against. Jordan ⁴ before the Ephraimites : and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over ; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art thou an Ephraimite?* 6. If he said, Nay ; then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth : and he said Sibboleth : for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the ³ passages of Jordan : and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand. 7. And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead. 8. And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel. 9. And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, ⁵ *whom* he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. 10. Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem. 11. And after him Elon, ⁶ a Zebulonite, judged Israel ; and he judged Israel ten years. 12. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun. 13. And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, ⁶ a Pirathonite, judged Israel. ⁷ sons' sons. 14. And he had forty sons and thirty ⁷ nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts : and he judged Israel eight years. 15. And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of ⁸ hill country. Ephraim, in the ⁸ mount of the Amalekites.

6. **Say now Shibboleth.** 'This is a curious instance of dialectic difference of pronunciation between the east and west Jordanic tribes. It is an evidence of the sound 'sh' having passed into the Hebrew from the east of Jordan, possibly from the Arabians, with whom the sound is common, at least if we suppose the Ephraimitic pronunciation to be that of the nine and a half tribes. Shibboleth means both an ear of corn and also a stream' (*Speaker's Commentary*, ii. p. 187). Note S. Matt. xxvi. 73 for similar dialectical peculiarity.

7. **Jephthah judged Israel six years.** After the defeat of the Ephraimites, Jephthah's rule was recognised everywhere in Israel.

8. **Ibzan of Beth-lehem.** As this judge is mentioned in close connection with Elon the Zebulonite, it is supposed that the Beth-lehem here referred to is the town of that name in Zebulun (Josh. xix. 15), the more so as the southern Beth-lehem, when mentioned in Judges, is called Beth-lehem Judah. He had a large family of sons and daughters, and by them exercised a great influence.

LESSON XIX

Insolence Punished

'Pride goeth before destruction.'

INTRODUCTION.—In this lesson we have a good opportunity for showing that bullying, which is sometimes found in schools, though it takes various forms, is condemned by the Bible. In Jephthah's treatment of it we see the mind of God, Who first shows its ugliness, and then punishes it.

MATTER.**1. Pride.**

The Ephraimites, envious of Jephthah's success, vexed at finding that victories were won without their help—they, the great leading tribe, not necessary. Perhaps the other tribes scoff at their pride in holding aloof, and say, 'Well, you see we got on very well without you.' They are very angry, and turn upon Jephthah. Why did he not invite them to help? Why did he not consult them? What right had he to go to war with Ammon without their advice? He must be punished: they will burn him and his with fire. It is likely that the Ephraimites counted on finding friends amongst the Gileadites, for Jephthah had once been very unpopular in his own family.

2. Rebuked.

Jephthah shows that the Ephraimites are as false as they are proud. They had been invited, and at a critical time, when their help was all-important and the cause of Israel in great danger, but they had refused. How shameful, then, for them to lie and say that their help had not been asked. No, that could not be their reason for coming up in arms against them; and if it was not that, what was it? Jephthah very brave, not a bit afraid of these braggarts!

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking the class what it remembers of the Ephraimites. What was their character? Even to Gideon they behaved very badly, but worse to Jephthah. Picture the scene—Ephraimites armed going to fight against their own brethren. Show that pride and envy are closely connected, *e.g.* a knot of boys hold aloof from the rest of the school because one of their set not chosen captain. The eleven wins without them. School thinks they are ridiculous. They get very angry and envious. Determine to attack the new captain.

2. Show by illustration that a lie has no power against the truth. All Israel saw that it was envy and not patriotism that determined the attitude of the Ephraimites.

LESSON XIX—continued. INSOLENCE PUNISHED

MATTER.

METHOD.

3. Punished.

Note Jephthah does not provoke the attack. He is not responsible for the civil war that follows. He was attacked. All Gilead stands by him. The men of Ephraim then abuse them, call them 'runaways.' The 'runaways,' however, win, and when the enemy flee to the river, they manage to get there first and slay the Ephraimites as they cross the river. Note how they find which are Ephraimites and which are Gileadites. Note the greatness of the slaughter. Ephraim as a tribe almost destroyed. Will not for many years have any influence in Israel.

3. Illustrations: God's enemies and His friends outwardly the same—wheat and tares. Men do not know the difference. God knows. The way in which they talk, the little things they do, reveal the difference. Only the difference of one letter—h—and yet that marked many hundreds for judgment and death.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Insolence Punished.

'Pride goeth before destruction.'

1. *Pride.*

The Ephraimites in arms—their insolent question—angry threats. *They* are the tribe of Joseph, and nothing ought to be done without them.

'*The Lord hateth a proud look.*'

2. *Rebuked.*

Jephthah shows that he invited their help, but they were too proud to serve under his leadership.

'*God resisteth the proud.*'

3. *Punished.*

The attack—Ephraimites defeated. Attempted escape. Shibboleth and Sibboleth.

'*He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*'

CHAPTER XIII.

AND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. 2. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 3. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive,

1. The Philistines. From chap. x. 6 we gather that the Israelites had amongst other gods worshipped those of the Philistines: it is therefore appropriate that they should suffer at their hands. It was only in this way, i.e. by practical experience, that Israel could learn the folly of idolatry. Instead of bringing, as they expected, friendship with their neighbours whose gods they adopted, it brought enmity.

Forty years. This was by far the longest oppression from which Israel suffered, twice as long as that under Jabin, the next longest.

2. Zorah. Sura—the ancient Zorah—and Eshua, perhaps Eshtaol, lie on the northern slopes of a great basin formed by the confluence of three valleys in the Shephelah, about the same latitude as Ashdod, from which it is easily reached. The hill on which Zorah is situated is nearly twelve hundred feet high. The valley which it overlooks was of great importance to Israel. 'Fertile and well watered—a broad brook runs through it with tributary streamlets—it lies immediately under the Judæan range, and at the head of a valley passing down to Philistia, while at right angles to this it is crossed by the great line of trench which separates the Shephelah from Judæa. Roads diverge from it in all directions. It is as fair a nursery for boyhood as you will find in all the land—a hillside facing south against the sunshine with corn, grass, and olives, scattered boulders and winter brooks, the broad valley below with the pebbly stream, and screens of oleanders, the south-west wind from the sea blowing over all' (George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 218-221).

Danites. The Danites were situated in the very midst of the Philistines, and would therefore be exposed to frequent attacks. It is when the trouble is greatest that God sends the relief.

It is by no means certain whether the migration of the Danites, of which we are told in chap. xviii., took place before or after Samson's wonderful deeds. It is possible that it was during the long oppression of forty years that, finding their position unbearable, the Danites went forth.

and bear a son. 4. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing*: 5. for lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. 6. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance *was* like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name: 7. but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean *thing*: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. 8. Then Manoah intreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. 9. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah;

4. Now therefore beware, I pray thee. It is well known that the actions of a mother after conception and before the birth of a child strongly influence the life of the child. Manoah's wife's consecration to the vow of a Nazarite would not only test her faith, but would give a definite set to her mind, which would have its effect on the character of Samson.

5. Nazarite. Nazarite, which means separated, was a name applied to those who took a threefold vow of purity or separation from all unclean things, self-control or abstinence from wine or strong drink, and dedication to God, symbolised by the free growth of the hair. This vow might be taken for a time or for life, and in a worldly and idolatrous age was an outward mark of faith in God as well as a witness to devotion. For the Jewish law on the subject, see Num. vi. 1-21.

Begin to deliver. There is no promise of complete deliverance: this was only effected years after by David.

6. A man of God. From ver. 16 we know that the stranger was the angel of the Lord, but to Manoah's wife he seemed to be a prophet, with a face that inspired awe and fear.

8. Let the man of God . . . teach us. The faith of Manoah is remarkable when we consider the rude age in which he lived. He not only believes that he will have a son who will be able to do what the great judges have done, but that his son's fulfilment of God's promises will depend on the education he gives him.

and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her. 10. And the woman made haste, and ran, and ¹shewed ¹told.

her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

11. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, *I am*.

12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. ²How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him? ²What shall be the manner of the child, and what shall be his work?

13. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. 14. She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe.

15. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, ³until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. 16. ³that we may make ready.

And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

17. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? 18. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is*

12. **How shall we order the child.** Better as in R. V., 'What shall be the manner of the child, and what shall be his work.' Manoah desires to know two things: (1) how they were to bring the child up, and (2) what his future would be. The angel does not really answer either of these questions. He rests content with enforcing on the mother the necessity of consecration.

15. **Let us detain thee.** Manoah feels that a mystery envelops the stranger, but he does not quite know how to penetrate it. In any case, however, it was his duty to offer hospitality, and this he proposes. The visitor, however, refuses food, but suggests that he may make an offering to God.

18. **Why askest thou after my name?** The words 'seeing it is secret' should be 'seeing it is wonderful.' They certainly give the impression that the angel has a dignity beyond that of an angel. When we take the

⁴ wonderful.
⁵ meal.
⁶ the.

⁴secret? 19. So Manoah took a kid with a ⁵meat offering, and offered it upon ⁶a rock unto the LORD : and *the angel* did wondrously ; and Manoah and his wife looked on. 20. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on ⁷it, and fell on their faces to the ground. 21. But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD. 22. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. 23. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a ⁵meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these *things*, nor would ⁸as at *this* time have told us *such things* as these. 24. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson : and the child grew, and the LORD

⁷ omit it.

⁸ omit as.

words in connection with the name that is promised to the Divine Messiah in Isa. ix. 6, that impression is strengthened. Cf. Gen. xxxii. 29, where the same angel refuses to disclose his name, and where there is the same feeling on the part of Jacob as on the part of Manoah : 'we have seen God.'

19. Offered it upon a rock. Should be as in R.V., 'the rock,' *i.e.* the well-known rock, the rock which ever afterwards became a sacred altar.

He did wondrously. 'No word can be so significant as actions. The act of the angel tells best who He was : He did *wonderfully*—*Wonderful* therefore was His name. So soon as ever the flame of the sacrifice ascended, He mounted up in the smoke of it, that Manoah might see the sacrifice and the messenger belonged both to one God ; and might know both whence to acknowledge the message and whence to expect the performance' (Bishop Hall, *Contemplations*).

23. If the Lord were pleased to kill us. Excellent reasoning : 'God will not accept gifts where he intends punishments, and if we can find assurance of God's acceptance of our sacrifices, we may be sure he loves our persons.'

24. Called his name Samson, *i.e.* little sun. There was a sunshine, a joyousness about Samson and his deeds which gave point to his name. Like the sun 'he rejoiced as a giant to run his course' (Ps. xix.). George Adam Smith (*Historical Geography*, p. 221) writes : 'Across the valley of Sorek, in full view, is Beth Shemesh, now Ain Shemo, house and well of the sun, with which name it is so natural to connect his (Samson's) own—Shirason, sunlike.'

blessed him. 25. And the spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

25. Camp of Dan. This is here defined as 'between Zorah and Eshtaol.' In chap. xviii. 12, 13 it has the further definition 'it is behind,' i.e. west of Kirjath-jearim. The account in chap. xviii. probably comes from a different document. The name Camp is suggestive of the slight hold the Danites had of their southern territory. They apparently felt they could never stay there.

LESSON XX

The Threefold Vow—how it came to be made

MATTER.

1. The threefold vow.

Our last lesson about Eastern Palestine, this about Western (point out on the map where the camp of Dan was, and why it was so called). On the top of a high hill, overlooking a beautiful valley, a small flat-roofed house. A field surrounds it. In the field a peasant woman of middle age. We note how careful she is not to touch anything but water at her meals, how careful to keep herself free from anything unclean. And yet she does not look unhappy, on the contrary she is very happy indeed, but she is under a vow, the vow of the Nazirite. Explain what it is, and how it implies three things: (1) *Renunciation*. Separation from all unclean things. (2) *Faith*. The long hair was a mark of faith, for it was an outward sign of consecration to God. (3) *Obedience*, shown by abstention from wine or strong drink.

2. How it came to be made.

As she sits there alone, she hears some one coming. It is her husband. She is delighted, as she wants to tell him about her vow, and how it was she came to make it. She tells of the strange Visitor,

METHOD.

1. Begin by referring to the last lesson but one, that on Jephthah's vow, and ask why was it wrong? Then ask whether any member of the class has ever made a vow. Show that a vow was made on behalf of each when they were baptized. Refer to catechism, and explain the character of the vow then made. Lesson to-day on a threefold vow, made in behalf of a little child before he was born.

2. Show that the promise came when Israel was in despair, owing to forty years of long and cruel bondage, when they had been robbed and cruelly treated by the Philistines. The news then would be specially good news. So tell the children how

LESSON XX—*continued.* THE THREEFOLD VOW

MATTER.

of his face beautiful, and yet so pure and holy that it made her afraid, of the wonderful news—she was to have a child, and the child was to deliver Israel—of the promise that He had asked her to make, and of His sudden departure, she knew not where. The husband, whose name was Manoah, very much concerned, feels that if they are to have this blessing, they ought to know more particularly how they ought to educate the child. If he is to deliver Israel, like one of their judges, he will have to know the arts of war and statecraft and many other things. He prays God that they may have these questions answered. The prayer is answered. The visitor again comes, but Manoah is not present. His wife runs to fetch him. The same message repeated. The Visitor, being asked, declares that His name is Wonderful, and shows it through what He does. Both parents terrified at what they have seen, but the wife's good sense triumphs over unreasonable fear.

3. Its consequences.

The mother, being twice warned, is very careful to keep her vow, and in time the promise finds its first fulfilment in the birth of the child. Great joy. They call him Sunshine, perhaps owing to his bright disposition, perhaps because of the sunny valley near which he was born. As he grows in years, people wonder at his long hair which has never been cut, and perhaps some are told that he is consecrated to God. He soon shows better proofs than this. At times he is overcome with a divine enthusiasm, and is led to speak of what he wishes to do against the enemies of the Lord. His

METHOD.

it was the promise about them came to be made: how God had promised to their parents a wonderful future, membership in His kingdom, inheritance of wonderful blessings and sonship, and that they had in consequence been dedicated to God, with the threefold vow of renunciation, faith, and obedience. Show also that the Person to Whom they were dedicated is called Wonderful, and has ascended into heaven.

3. Show that the vow made by our parents must be fulfilled in our lives, as Samson's was. That we must be filled with the spirit of renunciation, faith, and obedience; and only if we are this shall we be able to play our part in delivering our country from some of the ills which oppress it.

Point out that the threefold vow is man's part, but that it will be met by the Spirit of God, Who at our confirmation comes down to move us to work for God in the same spirit that Samson did.

LESSON XX—*continued.* THE THREEFOLD VOW

MATTER.

METHOD.

parents are now elderly people, but they have never forgotten what they saw in the field, and have never ceased to impress on Samson the importance of the vow they made in his behalf, nor how the future of Israel is bound up with it.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

The Threefold Vow.

'The child shall be a Nazarite to-God from the womb.'

1. *What it is.*

The vow of the Nazarite.

Separated to God. Separated from man (long hair). Separated from worldly pleasures (wine).

My vow. Faith—renunciation—obedience.

'They did promise and vow three things in my name.'

2. *When it was made.*

Before Samson was born.

At my Baptism.

3. *By what promise it was met.*

He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines.

A member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

'All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen.'

CHAPTER XIV.

AND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

2. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines : now therefore get her for me to wife. 3. Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me ; for she pleaseth me well. 4. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines : for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. 5. Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath : and behold, a young lion roared against him.

1. **Timnath.** A village well situated on the south side of the valley of Sorek, some eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. In Josh. xv. 10 it is said to belong to Judah, being on its northern boundary, but in Josh. xix. 43 it is set down to Dan. Though on the lofty plain that borders on the sea, it was not so high as Zorah, Samson's home, which was about three miles to the east of it.

3. **The uncircumcised Philistines.** It is strange that one whose birth was remarkable, and of whom such great things were promised, should have sought a wife amongst the enemies of his country ; and it seems to show that both parents were relying rather on the outward observance of the Nazarite rule than on his spiritual education. One more proof, if any were needed, of the powerlessness of the outward for reformation of character.

Get her for me. In the East, the parents who sought a bride for their son were expected, if not obliged, to pay some dowry and make gifts to her relations (Gen. xxxiv. 12 ; 1 Sam. xviii. 25).

4. **It was of the Lord.** What a man sets his heart upon may become a part of God's plan, as Balaam's journey to Balak, even though it may not be right in itself. God overrules all for good, and was able to make this proposed marriage the occasion of the destruction of the Philistines.

5. **Vineyards of Timnath.** Thomson (*Land and the Book*, p. 566) writes : 'Timnath still exists on the plain, and to reach it from Zorah you must descend through wild rocky gorges, just where one would expect to find

6. And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as *he* would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand : but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. 7. And he went down, and talked with the woman ; and she pleased Samson well. 8. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion : and behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the ¹ carcase of the lion. 9. And he ¹ body. took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat : but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the ¹ carcase of the lion. 10. So his father went down unto the woman : and Samson made there a feast ; for so used the young men to do. 11. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12. And Samson said unto them, ² I will now put ² Let me. forth a riddle unto you : if you can certainly declare it me

a lion in those days when wild beasts were far more common than at present. There were then vineyards belonging to Timnath, as there now are in all these hamlets along the base of the hills and upon the mountain-sides. These vineyards are very often far out from the villages, climbing up rough wadies and wild cliffs, in one of which Samson encountered the young lion.'

6. **The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.** Some have been surprised at so great an announcement for what appears as a merely physical event, and have ventured to say, 'There is nothing religious in this inspiration.' We have yet to learn, apparently, that physical as well as moral courage is of the Lord. Samson saw this danger to his parents, and at once met it with great boldness and decision of character. The ability to do so came from the Holy Ghost, Who is the 'Giver of Life.' His modesty is as remarkable as his courage, for though he had done something worth talking about, he says nothing to his parents, who probably fled when they saw the peril to which they were exposed, and therefore heard nothing of the matter for days after.

8. **He returned to take her.** This visit was to settle everything, and to bring his bride back to his father's house.

10. **Samson made there a feast.** The feast lasted in this case seven days, and was provided at Samson's expense in celebration of his wedding.

11. **When they saw him.** Samson's physical stature and strength so much impressed the Philistines, that they invited thirty of their own countrymen to be his groomsmen, lest he should break out against them in some fit of inspiration.

³ linen
garments.
⁴ raiment.

within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty ³ sheets and thirty change of ⁴ garments: 13. but if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it. 14. And he said unto them,

Out of the eater came forth meat,

And out of the strong came forth sweetness.

And they could not *in* three days expound the riddle.

⁵ impoverish
us.

15. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to ⁶ take that we have? *is it not so?* 16. And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee? 17. And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass

⁶ pressed him
sore.

on the seventh day, that he told her, because she ⁶ lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people. 18. And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down,

12. **I will give you thirty sheets.** These sheets were probably linen wrappers used as waist-cloths. From this promise it would seem that Samson was a young man of considerable wealth.

15. **On the seventh day.** The LXX. and Syriac versions read 'the fourth day,' which is probably correct, because it leaves time for Samson's wife to use all her arts of persuasion to find out the secret. See also the previous verse.

Have ye called us to take what we have. Nothing gives us a better picture of the rude age we are studying, or of the abominable wickedness of the Philistines, than this threat to burn the bride and her home unless she discovered the riddle.

16. **Shall I tell it thee?** In the East, at that time and probably now, the obligation of duty to parents stood higher than that of husband to wife.

What *is* sweeter than honey ?

And what *is* stronger than a lion ?

And he said unto them,

If ye had not plowed with my heifer,

Ye had not found out my riddle.

19. And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of *garments* unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. 20. But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

18. **What is sweeter than honey ?** The young men pretend they have guessed the riddle, as though they said, 'The answer is obvious. What is sweeter,' etc., but Samson sees through them, and rebukes them for their dishonesty.

19. **And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.** The clever wit which enabled him to discharge his obligation without cost to himself was due to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, who gives men 'a right judgment in all things.' If we question his right to rob the men of Ashkelon, we must remember that they had held Israel in cruel bondage for a long time, and that this was the beginning of that deliverance which God had promised to bring to Israel through him.

LESSON XXI

Samson's Riddle

INTRODUCTION.—The spiritual teaching of the riddle is so obvious that there will be a tendency in the teacher to leave the history and confine himself to the moral. It must, however, be remembered that we are studying a living character, and that we must look at this interesting incident in his life (and it appears to be nothing more) as it affects him, and not only in its relation to us. It was intended to serve as a lesson to him, but he missed it by looking upon it only as a conundrum, out of which some gain could be made.

MATTER.

1. **How the riddle was found.**
Picture Samson, now a strong man with bright sunny locks and sunny disposition. He has been kept

METHOD.

1. Begin by asking the children what a riddle is, and what its object is? Though used generally for amusement, it is sometimes

LESSON XXI—*continued*. SAMSON'S RIDDLE

MATTER.

apart as a Nazarite, and his fellow-countrymen have perhaps looked upon him with some awe, as strange rumours have been circulated about him. He is to be the future deliverer of Israel. We listen anxiously for his first words, that we may learn something of his character. Astonished to find that he has made friends with one who belonged to the enemy of God's people. Wishes to marry her. The parents object, but dare not press their objection. Samson has evidently been spoiled. His parents have rested on the outward keeping of the angel's message without thinking of the spirit of the command, and Samson has been allowed to have his own way. They go down with him to Timnath. Picture the sudden danger. The parents flee, but Samson meets it like a man. Kills the lion with the ease that he could kill a kid. Samson very pleased, but also very modest; tells his parents nothing about it; feels that it was not his own power that enabled him to win.

2. What it was.

Some days after he had killed the lion, Samson is passing along the same road on the same errand. Turns aside to see what has become of his foe. Nothing left but the skeleton and hide, and in them some bees have found a home. Samson greatly surprised! What a strange contrast. Meat in the eater, and sweetness in the strong. But note, he does not read the lesson it was intended to teach him. He should have asked himself why he was surprised to find the lion giving food and sweetness, and he would have answered, 'Because it was not its nature,' which was to

METHOD.

intended to make us think. That the object of Samson's riddle when it first entered his mind.

Show how danger is often mercifully put in the way of those who are about to do a wrong thing—as in the case of Balaam. But, if men determine to go on in spite of it, God will not thwart them.

Show from 1 S. Peter v. 8, what lion it is that we are liable to meet, and from the words, 'The Spirit of the Lord came upon him,' how we are to overthrow him.

2. Show that Samson was a thoughtful man. Many would have passed by without seeing the contrast, others perhaps without looking at all. Samson not only a strong, but an intelligent man.

LESSON XXI—continued. SAMSON'S RIDDLE

MATTER.

devour others. That might have led him to question himself about his own strength. Was that like the lion's, only for selfish and rough purposes? Was it not intended that he too should use his strength to help others? But not only this lesson, but the further one, that in spite of his great strength and other gifts from God, unless he used them aright, he, like the lion, might only be of use to men when he died. This, if Samson could have seen the future, he would have discovered. As the history tells us, 'The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.'

3. What he did with it.

The riddle was intended for Samson's instruction, but instead of thinking of its message to himself, he wonders how he can make something out of it. He determines not only to puzzle his Philistine guests with it, but to get presents out of them by it. This very inhospitable, and does not succeed. Show how Samson was outwitted, and how through his selfishness he not only lost what he hoped to win, but was put to great trouble and difficulty in paying his debt of honour.

METHOD.

Press home the duty of doing what we can 'while we have time.' How many there are who benefit others for the first time when they leave their gifts behind them after death.

3. Show how Samson's selfishness spoiled the bridal feast.

Show also that the divine enthusiasm such as he felt when the Spirit of the Lord was upon him is meant to be used, and does those who possess it no good unless it is. Samson, when the spirit of religious excitement left him, was as bad as his enemies.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Samson's Riddle.

'While we have time, let us do good unto all men.'

1. *Samson's danger.*

Fond of pleasure, he was tempted to use God's gifts for selfish purposes. He forgot his calling to deliver Israel. Meets danger in the path.

'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.'

2. *God's warning in the riddle.*

'Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.'—Power to be used to help others and strength to be united with gentleness. This to be done during life and not after death.

'The night cometh when no man can work.'

'None of us liveth to himself.'

3. *Samson's blindness.*

Like Balaam, he does not see the warning, but uses the riddle to make money with.

'They know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel.'

CHAPTER XV.

BUT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

2. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her. 3. And Samson said concerning them,

¹Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred ²foxes, and took ³firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a ³firebrand in the midst between two tails. 5. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn,

¹This time shall I be blameless in regard of the Philistines, when I do them a mischief.
²jackals.
³torches.

1. **Visited his wife with a kid.** Though his wife had betrayed his secret, his love prevailed over his judgment, and he desired to make reconciliation, and so takes with him a present. His anger in finding that she had been given to some one else is very great, and he determines to be avenged.

3. **Now shall I be more blameless.** See the R.V., 'This time shall I be blameless in regard of the Philistines, when I do them a mischief.' *This time*, as contrasted with the last occasion, when he could not do what he had wished to do. He had then been prevented by the laws of hospitality and the tie of marriage from avenging himself on those who had trifled with his wife, but now that the marriage was at an end, he could do what he liked.

4. **Foxes.** It is supposed that jackals, generally found in packs, are here intended. We are told that they are still very common, especially in West Palestine. With respect to the trick which Samson now played on the Philistines, it is interesting to note that Ovid tells us that there was a curious custom in Rome of letting loose foxes with lighted torches fixed to their tails in the Roman Circus during the celebration of the agricultural festival in honour of Ceres. This was done to commemorate a prank played by a boy who let loose a fox tied up in hay, which had been fired, amongst the cornfields. We should like to know whether this story had a Phœnician origin.

The foxes were tied by twos tail to tail to prevent their running to their own homes. The damage done by three hundred of them must have been very great.

⁴ and also the oliveyards. ⁴ with the vineyards *and* olives. 6. Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. 7. And Samson said unto them, ⁵ Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after *that* I will cease. 8. And he smote them hip and thigh *with* a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the ⁶ top of the rock Etam. 9. Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. 10. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. 11. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the ⁶ top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* rulers over us? what *is* this *that* thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. 12. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand

6. **And the Philistines . . . burnt her and her father.** Was this done to pacify or punish Samson? Apparently the former. Yet the words that follow read as though Samson was enraged at what they had done, and consequently determined further vengeance. It is possible that what they did was done without reference to Samson at all, simply to vent their rage on the cause of their misfortune.

8. **He smote them hip and thigh.** It is thought that as the hip and thigh were the choice pieces in the sacrifices, this means that Samson slew the best and choicest amongst the Philistines; but the expression, a proverbial one, is difficult.

Cleft of the rock Etam—some hiding-place—perhaps a cave in the rock of Etam, a place in the hill country of Judah.

9. **And spread themselves.** The Philistines went up and assembled themselves near to the spot where they believed Samson to be, and then scattered in order to find him.

11. **Then three thousand men of Judah.** The relation of these men of Judah to Samson is noteworthy. So far he has been playing for his own hand, and in spite of his wonderful deeds, they have, therefore, no confidence in him. Indeed, they much wish that he would not disturb the peace which they had with their masters.

of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13. And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new ⁷ cords, and brought him up from the rock. 14. *And* when ⁷ ropes.

he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted ⁸ against him: ⁸ as they met him. and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the ⁷ cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands ⁹ loosed from off his hands. ⁹ dropped.

15. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

16. And Samson said,

With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps,

With the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

17. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi. 18. And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance ¹⁰ into the hand of thy servant: and ¹⁰ by. now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised? 19. But God clave a hollow place that ¹¹ was ¹¹ is in Lehi.

12. **And Samson said, Swear unto me.** Samson readily consents, in hopes of showing them his mighty strength, of which he was now fully aware. This might persuade them to seek his help.

15. **Slew a thousand therewith.** It is likely that the men of Judah told the Philistines that they would deliver Samson bound, and that consequently the latter came up unarmed. The divine enthusiasm by which he was seized carried and bore down everything before it. Seizing the first thing that came to hand, the jawbone of an ass, he used it with terrible execution. One after another fell before him, till he had killed a thousand men. His sense of triumph expresses itself in a pithy saying.

17. **Ramath-lehi.** The height or hill of the jawbone.

18. **Thou hast given this great deliverance.** Samson, in spite of his many sins, had faith and humility. What he had done, he felt was done by God and not by himself.

19. **God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw**—better as in R. V., ‘God clave the hollow place that is in Lehi.’ In his sore need a rock hard by the place of his victory was smitten, and water came out in abundance. In consequence the place was called ‘The spring of him that called,’ i. e. upon God.

¹² the name thereof was called.

in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore ¹² he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day. 20. And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

20. **And he judged Israel.** Apparently this feat of strength, followed as it was by such daring deeds of valour in the face of three thousand frightened countrymen, led to his being made judge or leader, a position he held for twenty years.

LESSON XXII

The Spring of him who called

INTRODUCTION.—It will be well to show that Samson has not learned, in spite of the riddle, why his great strength was given him, still forgets the needs of his own country, and seeks selfish pleasure, the result being the destruction of the woman he loved. Then show that this unpatriotic conduct had its effect in producing distrust. His own countrymen have no faith in him, are ready to give him up to their enemies. But it is when Samson is in danger that his better qualities are seen. We here see his faith. Begin by describing the 'spring.' Many years ago, if we had been travelling from Timnath, Samson's home, over the foothills of Judah towards Lachish, after about ten miles our guide would have pointed out a spring of clear water, and told us that its name was Samson's spring. It lies in a little basin amongst cliffs which still bear the strange name of jawbone; it is of this spring that we are going to speak to-day. Its name was En-hakkore, which means 'spring of the caller.' We shall first see who it was that called, and why he called.

MATTER.

1. The caller.

Samson is in great danger. He has been suddenly seized by his own countrymen, bound fast with new strong cords, and carried up from the cave of Etam, where he had been living, to Lehi. The men of Judah have brought him up for the purpose of giving him into the hands of the Philistines. Show why his own people are ready to betray him, and why Samson allowed himself to be caught. Picture his lying bound quite still, on some rock, in the face of his enemies. The men of Judah stand apart to see what will happen.

METHOD.

1. Show that Samson has to some extent brought this dangerous position upon himself. It is his own fault.

Show that Samson expects to be delivered, and perhaps welcomes the opportunity of showing the men of Judah that God is with him. It may be well to refer to the strong Son of God bound by the hands of His own countrymen to be delivered to the Gentiles. Quote also the words of the Collect, 'Bound by the chain of our sins.'

LESSON XXII—continued—THE SPRING OF HIM WHO CALLED

MATTER.

2. On Whom he called.

Strange to think that one lonely man, bound hand and foot, will be able to do more than the three thousand men of Judah who are free and able to use their limbs! How is it? The men of Judah have given up believing in God, Samson still holds him fast by God. He knows of no other deliverer. And though probably he sees that he has not done all he ought with his gift of strength, yet he does not believe God will give up His consecrated servant into the hands of the Philistines. So he prays.

3. Results of the call.

(a) Victory. (b) Refreshment. The Philistines shouted and Samson prays. As they near the prostrate giant, to their surprise he breaks the cords, rises with ease, and picking up the first thing he finds, the jawbone of an ass, uses it with fearful effect, jumping from rock to rock, hurling this man this way and another that, smiting all within his reach, until the total of one thousand dead was reached. Note that the Philistines were probably unarmed, as they had no reason to fear any opposition. The effort nearly cost Samson his life. When it is over, he feels in a fainting condition, ready to die, if he cannot find water. Apparently the men of Judah had fled with the Philistines, fearing what he might do to them. He was alone, and there was no one to get him refreshment. He calls again. Note how pathetic his call is. Then he suddenly hears the sound of water, and finds that God has heard his prayer and sent him refreshment.

METHOD.

2. Note some of the great victories won by prayer: Rephidim—Eben-ezer—Elijah's victory at Carmel.

'Prayer and pains can do everything.' The Son of God was so distinguished by prayer that His own disciples begged that they might be taught to pray as He did.

3. Milton calls his weapon 'his sword of bone.'

Note his great strength is not natural, but ascribed to the special outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Note that though his strength is supernatural, yet it wastes with use. Samson feels the effort necessary for conquest.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

The Spring of him who called.1. *The caller.*

Samson—a prisoner bound hand and foot—
betrayed by his countrymen—about to be
delivered to the Philistines.

The Son of God bound by the Jews.

The Christian bound by the chain of sins,
forged by himself or his friends.

2. *On Whom he called.*

Calls on the living God Who had saved him
from the lion.

Christ's call on the Cross: 'My God, My God,
why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

The Christian's call on Christ: 'Lord save us,
we perish.'

3. *Results of his call.*

Victory and refreshment.

His enemies destroyed. His life preserved.

Bonds of death burst. Refreshment of Easter.

'Who turned the hard rock into a standing
water and the flint-stone into a springing
well.'

CHAPTER XVI. 1-22.

THEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her. *And it was told* the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. 2. And they compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, ¹In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. 3. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and ²went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his ²shoulders, and carried them up to the top of ³a hill that *is* ^{up.} ³the mountain. before Hebron. 4. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah. 5. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great

¹ Let be till morning light, then.

² plucked them up.

1. **Then went Samson to Gaza.** It is disappointing to find that the great deliverance which God had wrought by Samson gave him no sense of what God could and would do for the nation. Samson here again is engrossed in the personal pursuit of pleasure.

2. **And it was told.** These words, as the italics show, are not in the Hebrew, but are supplied from the LXX., the Greek translation.

3. **And they compassed him in.** The men of Gaza not only shut the gate of the city, thus making it impossible for Samson to get out except by climbing the walls, but assembled in strength in the rooms built at the side or over the gate, intending to kill him in the morning. To have attacked him in the house where he was, would have been not only against the custom of the city, but a breach of the law of hospitality.

3. **And took the doors of the gate of the city.** This brave feat of strength was done close to the place where the men of Gaza were. Secure of their prey, they were probably fast asleep ('Quiet all the night,' ver. 2). Samson took hold of the posts on which the doors were hung, lifted them out of the deep holes in which they had been fixed, and carried them off, doors and all, to a hill some distance off looking towards Hebron.

4. **The valley of Sorek, i.e.** the valley running up to his own home, Timnath.

Delilah. 'The name seems to mean *languid, delicate*, and is used in Maltese poetry as a common name for girls' (*Speaker's Commentary*). From the context, it seems that she was a Philistine. It is strange that Samson had such a hankering after the daughters of the enemy of his people, and this in spite of bitter disappointments.

strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of *us* eleven hundred *pieces* of silver. 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. 7. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 8. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withes which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9. Now ⁴ *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes, as a ⁵ thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known. 10. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. 11. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes ⁶ that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. 12. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And *there were* liers in wait abiding in the ⁷ chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread. 13. And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

⁴ she had liers in wait abiding in the inner chamber.

⁵ string.

⁶ wherewith no work hath been done.

⁷ inner chamber.

5. **Eleven hundred pieces of silver**, *i.e.* 5500 shekels of silver would represent a very large sum, several hundred pounds of our money.

7. **Seven green withes**. Withes are willow twigs. When fresh, they would be difficult to break.

13. **The seven locks**. This is interesting as showing that it was probably the practice of those consecrated by the vow of the Nazarite to plait their hair into locks. These long plaits were woven by Delilah into the warp belonging to a loom in the room, which was then fastened into some beam, either of the floor or the wall, by a pin.

14. And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and ⁸ went away with the pin of the ⁸ plucked away the. beam, and with the web. 15. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*. 16. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death. 17. ⁹ That he told her all his heart, and said ⁹ And. unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man. 18. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up *this* once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought ¹⁰ money in their hand. 19. And she made ¹⁰ the money. him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and ¹¹ she caused *him* to shave off the seven locks of his head; ¹¹ shaved off. and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. 20. And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times *before*, and shake myself.

17. **Then he told her all his heart.** This revelation of his sacred vow to a heathen woman was a profanation. It was not in the least likely that she would be led by it to worship Samson's God, and her only reason for asking it was perfectly plain and evident, and that to ensnare him. Samson, then, in yielding showed disloyalty to God. He also showed superstition. It was not the long hair that gave him his strength, but the separation to God which that outward sign testified. See Num. vi. 13—the hair was only to be shaved off when his consecration was at an end—very significant!

20. **I will go out as at other times.** Samson had the feeling that, in a crisis of peril, God would still be with him. He now found to his sorrow that there was no inspiration—no divine enthusiasm—no power from on high giving him supernatural strength—'the Lord had departed from him.'

¹² But. ¹² And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.
¹³ And . . . laid hold on. 21. ¹³ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. 22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow *again* after he was shaven.

21. **And put out his eyes.** This was the best means to prevent his doing further mischief. A blind giant is only a picture of impotency. Horrible though such a mutilation was, it was not uncommon. Zedekiah had his eyes put out by the king of Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 7).

And brought him down to Gaza. Gaza was their chief city, celebrated for the great heathen temple dedicated to Dagon. Samson was brought down as a trophy: 'they said, Our god hath delivered Samson into our hand' (chap. xvi. 23).

He did grind. He who had rejoiced in the freedom his great strength gave him was now obliged, blind and weak though he was, to do the menial service of slaves.

LESSON XXIII

Temptation

'Enter not into temptation.'

INTRODUCTION.—Begin by asking who it was that said these words, and when? Refer also to the petition in the Lord's Prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation,' and ask why this should be our attitude if temptation is good for us (see S. James i. 12, 13). The answer is, Temptation is very dangerous, and never safe unless, like our Lord, we are led up by the Spirit to be tempted. To-day a lesson on temptation, showing how dangerous it is to play with it, what loss and ruin it may lead to.

MATTER.

METHOD.

1. The way of temptation.

Samson, though separated to God, is always thinking of pleasure, and cares not where he may obtain it. Twice before—at Timnath and at Gaza—he has gone into bad company, and on both occasions got into difficulties. Now again he seeks out a Philistine home, and makes friends with a Philistine woman. Where ought he to have been? Leading the hosts of the Lord against the very people that he is now seeking.

2. The course of temptation.

Samson in the Philistine home.

1. Contrast the examples of Gideon and Jephthah. How impossible to imagine Gideon making friends with the Midianites, or Jephthah with the Ammonites.

Quote Prov. xiii. 20: 'A companion of fools shall be destroyed.'

2. Playing with temptation is like playing with fire. Instead of

LESSON XXIII—*continued.* TEMPTATION

MATTER.

His enemies imagine that there is some trickery about his strength. They wish Delilah to find out, promise her a great deal of money if she does. She asks Samson. He has a great contempt for Philistine intelligence; will amuse himself by pretending to tell her, and then dashing out if any of his enemies dare to trifle with him. He does not intend to reveal his secret, but plays with the temptation. This, however, leads him to tell lies; this is the second stage of temptation.

Note Samson's three lies which, though said in jest, were signs of moral weakness. They were not entirely free from pride and vain glory. Samson delighted in showing off his strength.

At last the temptation comes to an issue. Samson must either leave the house or yield. Delilah will not accept any more excuses. It is now easier to yield than to leave the pleasant home and friend, and the question rises in Samson's mind as to whether there is any reason why he should not tell the secret. After all, what harm would there be? It was no secret in his own home; why, then, should he not tell it to his Philistine friend? Now, Samson knew that the only reason he was asked about it was in order that he might be deprived of his strength—that the Philistines might glory over God's champion. He ought, then, to have been very reserved about it, more especially as it concerned his private relations with God. Samson thought, 'Let them know it if they like, they can't profit by it, for I shall never give them an opportunity to touch my hair.' The last stage is now reached, and the tempter waits till Samson is off his guard. At first Samson would be on the watch, but

METHOD.

being a useful servant, it may become a bad master.

If we have not the courage to say 'No' at once, then we are soon obliged to invent excuses for not doing what we are asked to do.

Pride always precedes a fall.

Compare a boy at school telling to some bad boy some of his private home secrets, which if revealed might do damage to the home.

LESSON XXIII—*continued*. TEMPTATION

MATTER.

METHOD.

as the danger never appeared, he got careless; at last is caught asleep and overcome.

3. **The fall.**

Samson knows he has done wrong. He knew it when he told his secret. He ought, then, to have carefully avoided the house of the tempter, but could not withstand the attraction; and now that which he thought impossible has taken place—he has lost his hair. But he thinks that God will not allow His cause to fail because he has sinned. He hears the shout of the enemy, but feels no enthusiasm, no spirit for the fight, no strength. He knows the awful fact that God has left him. Separation from God leads to pain and misery. In a few hours Samson is bound, blind, and a prisoner.

3. Illustrate the moth fluttering to the candle, the bat to the light.

Quote from Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad'—

'My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.'

and show that Samson could no longer say this.—'The wages of sin is death.'

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Temptation.

'Enter not into temptation.

1. *Samson entering temptation.*

Samson, seeking pleasure, goes to Sorek.
Tempted to reveal the secret of his strength.
Lies. Makes boast of it.

'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away
of his own lust and enticed.'

2. *Samson deceived.*

Tempter very cunning. Why not tell?
No one would be harmed. Samson tells.
Profanes his religion and his God.

'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.'

3. *Samson fallen.*

Like any one else, God has left him.
No strength—no enthusiasm—no hope.
Samson bound—blind—a slave grinding corn.

'Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

'The wages of sin is death.'

CHAPTER XVI. 23-31

THEN the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice : for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. 24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god : for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. 25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house ; and he made ¹them sport : and they set him ¹ sport before them. 26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon

23. **Dagon their god.** This was a grotesque image, half human and half animal. The upper part had the face and shoulders of a man or woman, the lower part was shaped like a fish. Their conception of God grew out of their trade, which was chiefly in fish, and they supposed that their own particular god would have something of the wisdom of man, with the fruitfulness characteristic of the fish.

24. **Our God hath delivered.** All teachers should read the sublime dialogue which Milton imagines, in his *Samson Agonistes*, taking place between Manoah and Samson, both of whom feel bitterly the dishonour this idolatrous feast brought upon God. Samson is, however, sure that God will avenge Himself—

' This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end ; all the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon ; Dagon hath presumed,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive, or linger, thus provoked ;
But will arise, and His great Name assert.'

Unfortunately, the history gives us no reason to believe that Samson's chief desire was to glorify God by his death.

25. **And he made them sport.** The object of amusing the Philistines was to put them off their guard and to find the pillars, through which he hoped to avenge the pain and disgrace he had suffered.

them. 27. Now the house was full of men and women ; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there ; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. 28. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. 29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house ² stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. 30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed *himself* with *all his* might ; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life. 31. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and

² rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand, and the

27. **The house was full of men.** Dagon's temple, in which they were assembled, was a house with a flat roof. Part of it was open to the air, so that those on the roof could see what was going on inside the temple. The roof which accommodated three thousand people was mainly supported by two pillars, which probably stood in the middle of the court beneath. When they were removed, the pressure from above brought the roof in with a great crash. It should be noted that the LXX. translation has seven hundred as the number of those on the roof ; if this is more accurate than that of our text, then the number beneath must have been greatly in excess of those above, as 'the dead which Samson slew at his death were more than those which he slew in his life.'

28. **Remember me, I pray thee.** These words lead us to think of another prayer said by a dying man suffering great pain, but how different the spirit of the penitent malefactor from that of Samson ! The selfish spirit which had been Samson's curse remains with him to the close. There is no prayer for the vindication of God's glory such as Milton fondly imagines, but only the natural wish for personal vengeance.

30. **Let me die with the Philistines.** There are no more pathetic words in the book of Judges than these. Samson feels his life is over, and has no wish to make any fresh effort. The loss of sight made the future hopeless.

31. **His brethren and all the house of his father came down.** It was a bold act, for the Philistines were their masters ; but they trusted, and rightly, to the consternation that the overthrow of Dagon's temple had excited. Manoh, it would seem, was now dead ; there were, however, kinsmen who cherished the name of Samson, and delighted, even at the risk of their lives, to do him honour.

took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

And he judged. This means little more than that Samson was the recognised leader of the people for twenty years.

LESSON XXIV

Samson's Death

INTRODUCTION.—It is worth noting how very few death-scenes we have in the Bible. The contrast between this of Samson and that of our Lord Jesus Christ is most instructive, the one teaching us how *not* to die as the other teaches us how to die. It will be well, then, to take this contrast and work it out for the children. It may be taken in three divisions: (1) the last days; (2) the last prayer; (3) the last act.

MATTER.

1. The last days.

Samson is now blind, suffering hot burning pains in his eyes, and in prison, deprived of the liberty he loved so well and used so badly. He, the strong man that could do as he liked with others, now obliged to do what others tell him, nay, dependent on children to lead him to and from his work. This was probably grinding corn—hard, monotonous, and tiring. Samson is bearing his own sins, but so far as we learn from the Scripture, there is no note of penitence, only a thirst for vengeance.

2. The last prayer.

At last Samson is to be led out, not, however, to execution, but to amuse the Philistines. Streets thronged with people flocking to Dagon's temple. They laugh and jeer at Samson as, led by a boy, he goes there to show his wit. He has asked many questions about its interior, how the pillars are placed, what they support. He rejoices as he thinks of the crowds that are assembling to make his vengeance the more sure. When the temple

METHOD.

1. Recapitulate last lesson, that the children may realise that Samson's punishment corresponded to his sin. Then describe the prison where Samson is, and picture him amongst the prisoners.

Note that Samson had sinned with his eyes, using them simply for pleasure; so, too, the great gift of strength he had used for his own advantage.

Contrast Christ in the prison, bound, His back lacerated with scourging, bearing our sins. Note His patience and meekness.

2. Picture the temple with its open court, surrounded by a very deep and lofty cloister, on the roof of which hundreds of people were sitting to watch the games.

Contrast here again with our Lord's last prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' and show that the circumstances were still more provocative in His case than in Samson's. He has no thought for vengeance, but only for the salvation of His enemies.

LESSON XXIV—*continued.* SAMSON'S DEATH

MATTER.

is reached, he delights the people with his games. He pretends to be faint and wearied, asks the boy to lead him to the pillars that support the roof. Then he prays. Note what he says: '*Strengthen me, that I be avenged.*' Very sad, Samson about to die, and yet crying for vengeance.

3. The last act.

Samson now stretches out his hands for the pillars, and as he does so, finds that the strength of God is rushing through his whole frame. Bowing himself, he begins to feel them totter. With one wild despairing cry, 'Let me die with the Philistines,' he overwhelms all in one mighty catastrophe. First the pillars—then the roof—then the whole building falls in, the sight-seers only helping to make the destruction more complete.

4. The lesson.

Samson died as he lived. Though possessing splendid gifts, both intelligence and strength, and marked out by his vow to be the saviour of his people, he pursued a life of pleasure. Timnath, Gaza, and Sorek, Philistine places, were all sought out for selfish amusement. And his great gift of strength was used to destroy those who interfered with it. It is true they were the enemies of his country, but they were not destroyed for that reason, but because they deceived him. So a life that might have been great was one of destruction for selfish purposes, and was summed up in the words, 'He slew more in his death than he did in his life.'

METHOD.

3. Contrast our Lord's last act.

His hands too were stretched out, but His desire is not to destroy the world that did it, but to save it. When He cried, 'It is finished,' there was proof in the response of nature that some great change had been wrought. The reconciliation was complete, man was saved.

4. Contrast the life of Christ.

He died as He lived. He pleased not Himself—came to save men's lives, not destroy them—saved their bodies, their minds, and souls, and when He was dying, His enemies said in words more true than they understood, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save.'

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Samson's Death contrasted with Christ's Death.1. *Last days.*

Samson : blind—imprisoned—grinding at a mill.

Christ : imprisoned — scourged — mocked— crucified.

2. *Last prayer.*

'Remember me this once, that I may be avenged of the Philistines.'

'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

3. *Last act.*

To destroy his enemies.

To save His enemies.

CHAPTERS XIX., XX., XXI.

AND it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the ¹side of ²mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah. 2. And his concubine played the ³whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months. 3. And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him *into* her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him. 4. And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there. 5. And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart *with* a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way. 6. And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry. 7. And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again. 8. And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. ⁴And they tarried until after-

¹ further side.² the hill country of.³ harlot.⁴ and tarry ye until the day declineth.

1. For the position of this chapter and its relation to the rest of the book of Judges, see the Introduction.

5. **The damsel's father said unto his son in law.** Throughout we notice the respect paid to the Levite, no doubt on the ground of his sacred character. The liberal hospitality offered and accepted would help to secure kindly treatment for his daughter.

noon, and they did eat both of them. 9. And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold now, the day draweth towards evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home. 10. But the man would not tarry *that* night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him. 11. *And* when they *were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it. 12. And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah. 13. And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of *these* places ⁵ to lodge ^{5 and we will lodge in Gibeah, or in Ramah.} all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah. 14. And they passed on and went *their way*; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which *belongeth* to Benjamin. 15. And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that took them into *his* house to lodging. 16. And behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was*

10. **Over against Jēbus, which is Jerusalem.** A sign of the date of the narrative, which was written after the days of David.

12. **The city of a stranger.** It added much to the horror of what afterwards happened, that it took place in a Benjamite, not a heathen city—a town where hospitality would naturally be expected.

15. **And when he went in.** 'And he went in and sat him down in the street, *i.e.* the main street or open square.' Apparently there was no inn in the place, and it was therefore necessary, unless hospitality was offered, to camp in the town, much as gypsies and frequenters of fairs do in our own towns. This in the hospitable East was evidently considered unusual, for the narrator remarks that 'there was no man that took them into his house for lodging.'

also of mount Ephraim ; and he sojourned in Gibeah : but the men of the place *were* Benjamites. 17. And when he had lift up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city : and the old man said, Whither goest thou ? and whence comest thou ? 18. And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the ¹side of ²mount Ephraim ; from thence *am* I : and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am *now* going to the house of the LORD ; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house. 19. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses ; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants : *there is* no want of any thing. 20. And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee ; howsoever *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me ; only lodge not in the street. 21. So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses : and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink. 22. *Now* as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him. 23. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly ; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly. 24. Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine ; them I will bring

16. **Which was also of Mount Ephraim.** The old man recognised the tribal relationship, and felt that it was a disgrace to Ephraim that one of his own tribe should lodge in the streets, and so offered him hospitality.

18. **Going to the house of the Lord, i.e. up to Shiloh,** which could not have been far off. The Levite evidently feels keenly the slight put upon him by the behaviour of the men of Gibeah. As a member of the sacred ministry he had a right to expect generous treatment.

24. **Here is my daughter a maiden.** Nothing could better show the awful depth of degradation than this horrible proposal of the old man. There is no sort of defence attempted. The men sacrifice their dearest to worse than howling wolves to save themselves.

out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you : but unto this man do not so vile a thing. 25. But the men would not hearken to him : so the man took his concubine, and brought *her* forth unto them ; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning : and when the day began to spring, they let her go. 26. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down *at* the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light. 27. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way : and behold, the woman his concubine *was* fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold. 28. And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and *gat* him unto his place. 29. And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, ⁶ *together* with ⁶ limb by limb. her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her ⁷ into all the ⁷ throughout all the borders. coasts of Israel. 30. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such *deed* done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day : consider of it, take ⁸ advice, and ⁸ counsel. speak *your minds*.

xx. 1. Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilcad, unto the

29. **Divided her.** As Saul in after-days hewed his oxen in pieces and sent parts of them throughout Israel, with the threat that those who failed to follow him and Samuel should be treated as his oxen had been, so with a different motive the Levite sent the body of the woman he had loved throughout the tribes. They should receive the same shock as he himself had done. We can imagine the tribal meeting, the story of the outrage, and then the exhibition of the relic, followed by a wild storm which would carry men and women off their feet in hot wrath.

xx. 1. **With the land of Gilcad.** The trans-Jordanic tribes joined in the general movement which now centred in Mizpeh, a conspicuous hill some five miles north of Jerusalem.

LORD *in* Mizpeh. 2. And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword. 3. (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, how was this wickedness? 4. And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge. 5. And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead. 6. And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel. 7. Behold, ⁹ ye *are* all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel. 8. And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house. 9. But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it; 10. and we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that *they* may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought

⁹ ye children of Israel, all of you.

3. **The children of Benjamin heard**, *i.e.* they were probably summoned with the other tribes, but held aloof, being quite determined to stand by guilty Gibeah.

8. **We will not any of us go to his tent**, *i.e.* none of us will return home till this matter has been avenged. We will see it through. The Levite's story simply told produced a startling effect.

9. **We will go up by lot against it**. The actual course of proceedings is not quite clear. The following verse does not explain whether the lot applied to those who were to fight or those who were to provide the victualling of the large host. As we know from recent experience, the feeding of an army twice as large as that which we now have in South Africa would be a very serious matter.

in Israel. 11. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man. 12. And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you? 13. Now therefore deliver *us* the men, the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel: 14. but the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel. 15. And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, *which* were numbered seven hundred chosen men. 16. Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at a hair *breadth*, and not miss. 17. And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war. 18. And the children of Israel arose, and went up to ¹⁰ the house of God, and ¹⁰ Bethel. asked *counsel* of God, and said, ¹¹ Which of us shall go up ¹¹ Who shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And ¹¹ for us first. the LORD said, Judah *shall go up* first. 19. And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. 20. And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put them-

15. **Twenty-six thousand.** The numbers of Benjamites at the first census were 35,400 (Num. i. 36, 37), at the second 45,600 (Num. xxvi. 41). There had then been a decline in population since the days of Moses, perhaps indicating 'disturbed and harassing times,' and also immorality.

18. **Went up to the house of God.** Trans. as in R.V., 'Went up to Bethel,' where apparently the ark was at this time. The question they ask of God is, Who shall be chosen to make the first attack? Apparently they are sure of success, and feel that one tribe is sufficient for the work. There is no prayer for God's blessing, and consequently defeat follows. We must remember that all Israel, through lack of government and religious indifference, was responsible for the tragedy that had happened, and was therefore rightly punished.

selves in array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21. And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed *down* to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men. 22. And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set *their* battle again in array in the place where they put *themselves* in array the first day. (23. And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked *counsel* of the LORD, saying, Shall I go *up* again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.) 24. And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day. 25. And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed *down* to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword. 26. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came *unto* ¹⁰the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 27. And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days, 28. and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand. 29. And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah. 30. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put *themselves* in array against Gibeah, as at other times. 31. And the children of Benjamin went

28. **Phinehas, the son of Eleazar.** If the word 'son' is to be taken in its usual sense, we learn that this event happened in the life of Aaron's grandson, *i.e.* soon after Joshua's death. It is in answer to his prayer that the Divine blessing for the first time is granted.

29. **Israel set liers in wait.** See Josh. viii., where the same stratagem was pursued with equal success.

out against the people, *and* were drawn away from the city ; and they began to smite of the people, *and* kill, as at other times, in the highways, *of* which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel. 32. And the children of Benjamin said, They *are* smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways. 33. And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put *themselves* in array at Baal-tamar ; and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah. 34. And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore : but they knew not that evil *was* near them. 35. And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel : and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men : all these drew the sword. 36. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten : for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah. 37. And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah ; and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword. 38. Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great ¹² flame with smoke rise up out of the ¹² cloud of smoke. 39. And ¹³ when the men of Israel retired in the ¹³ the men of Israel turned in the battle. battle, Benjamin began to smite *and* kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons : for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as *in* the first battle. 40. But

31. **One goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah.** The exact place where this first loss took place was very well known as the fork of two roads, one running to Bethel, the other to Gibeah in the field—so called to distinguish it from Gibeah of the hill, *i.e.* the guilty city.

39. **And when the men of Israel retired.** It seems clear that two stories are mixed up together, hence the repetitions that we find from time to time, as here.

¹⁴ the cloud began . . . in a pillar.
¹⁵ the whole of the city went up in smoke.
¹⁶ the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin.

¹⁷ they which came . . . destroyed them in the midst thereof.

¹⁸ at their resting place, as far as over against Gibeah.

¹⁹ both the entire city, and the cattle.

when ¹⁴ the flame began to arise up out of the city *with* a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and behold, ¹⁵ the flame of the city ascended up to heaven. 41. And ¹⁶ when the men of Israel turned *again*, the men of Benjamin were amazed : for they saw that evil was come upon them. 42. Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness ; but the battle overtook them ; and ¹⁷ them which *came* out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them. 43. *Thus* they inclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* trode them down ¹⁸ with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising. 44. And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men ; all these *were* men of valour. 45. And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon : and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men ; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them. 46. So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword ; all these *were* men of valour. 47. But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months. 48. And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, ¹⁹ as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand : also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

XXI. 1. Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife. 2. And the people came *to* ¹⁰ the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lift up

45. Unto the rock of Rimmon. When the Benjamites found that Gibeah was in flames, they fled south-east towards the Jordan, and being hotly pursued, six hundred of them took up an apparently impregnable position on the rock of Rimmon, 'A lofty rock rising steeply,' as it is now described. There they managed to hold out for four months until peace was made.

XXI. 2. To the house of God. It should be as in R. V. 'to Bethel.' It is not clear why these national assemblies should have taken place at

their voices, and wept sore ; 3. And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel? 4. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5. And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For *they* had made a great oath concerning *him* that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death. 6. And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel *this* day. 7. How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that *we* will not give them of our daughters to wives? 8. And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. 9. For the people were numbered, and behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there. 10. And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. 11. And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lien by man. 12. And they found among

Bethel rather than Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was. The reaction in favour of the Benjamites is as striking as their destruction was thorough. When the work of almost complete extermination was finished, Israel began to feel that the loss of a tribe would be a blow to the national life.

9. **Jabesh-gilead**, on the east of Jordan, the metropolis of Gilead. There is a trace of the name in Yâbis, a name given to the tributary that runs from the east into the Jordan, and it is supposed that the town lay near this stream or valley. Apparently the whole population, with the exception of four hundred virgins, was destroyed, but it is quite likely that some of these carried husbands back to their old homes. If so, this would account for the warm feeling that the men of Jabesh-gilead had for the Benjamite Saul some four hundred years afterwards.

the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with *any* male : and they brought them unto the camp *to* Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. 13. And the whole congregation ²⁰ sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and ²¹ to call peaceably unto them. 14. And Benjamin ²² came again at that time ; and they gave them ²³ wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead : and yet so they sufficed them not. 15. And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. 16. Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin ? 17. And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel. 18. Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters : for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin. 19. Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the LORD ²⁴ in Shiloh yearly *in a place* which is on the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. 20. ²⁵ Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards ; 21. and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch ye every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go *to* the land of Benjamin. 22. And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them,

²⁰ sent and spake to.
²¹ proclaimed peace.
²² returned.
²³ the women.

²⁴ from year to year in Shiloh, which.

²⁵ And.

19. **A feast of the Lord from year to year.** Apparently only one of the three yearly festivals obligatory on male Jews was kept, and it is not clear which of the three is here intended.

Shiloh, which is on the north side of Beth-el. Why this minute description ? It suggests a time when Shiloh was not well known, and probably in ruins, so we have another date for the writing of this appendix.

²⁶ Be favourable unto them for our sakes : because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war : for ye did not give unto them at *this* time, *that* you should be guilty. 23. And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they ²⁷ caught : and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them. 24. And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance. 25. In those days *there was* no king in Israel : every man did *that* which *was* right in his own eyes.

²⁶ Grant them graciously unto us : because we took not for each man of *them* his wife in battle : neither did ye give them unto them ; else would ye now be guilty. ²⁷ carried off.

22. **We reserved not to each man his wife.** See R.V., which gives the words of the Israelitish fathers differently, making the following sense : 'Give these young women as a gift to us, for we were not able to provide for all the Benjamites in the battle against Jabesh-gilead. And with regard to the vow we all made not to give our daughters to the Benjamites, well, you have not given them, else you would be guilty of oath-breaking, but they were forcibly taken from you.'

INTRODUCTION

THE BOOK OF RUTH

1. **Its Position.** This book, as will be seen by its contents, is closely connected with the book of Judges, and in the old Jewish canon formed one volume with it. In later days, however, the Jews gave it a separate place and put it amongst the Hagiographa or Holy Writings, a division of the Sacred Library which contains such books as the Psalms, Job, Song of Solomon, etc. This may have been done in order to place the ancestry of David, which it contains, in close connection with the Psalms which he wrote. But though separated in the Jewish and our own Canon from the book of Judges, it is clearly a part of it so far as subject-matter is concerned. It belongs to the same period, breathes the same atmosphere, and is characterised by the same simplicity that marks the stories of Gideon and Jephthah. In other respects it is different, offering a sharp contrast to it. 'The transition from Judges to Ruth is like passing out of some dark overshadowing cloud into bright and glorious sunlight—from scenes of confusion, uproar, and unrest into those of quietness and peace. The veil is, as it were, lifted up, and we are suddenly admitted into scenes of gentle country life, amid sunny fields and golden harvests, and into homes bright with the cheerful atmosphere of truthfulness, modesty, and love, where piety prevails, and everyday life is hallowed by the presence of religious devotion and patriarchal simplicity. . . . And this contrast comes out all the more vividly when we think that the scene of the book of Ruth is nevertheless laid,

as we read in the first verse, "in the days when the judges ruled, as well as in the very place which stood prominently forth with so sad and evil a reputation in the former book" (R. W. Bush, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*).

2. Contents. Briefly, the history of the family of Elimelech, who is driven by famine from Bethlehem to Moab. There he dies, and there also his two sons, who had married Moabitish women, die. When Naomi, Elimelech's widow, determines to return to her home in Palestine, Ruth resolves to go with her. She is warned that she can expect nothing there, but cleaving to Naomi she goes back with her to Bethlehem. Her modest and self-restrained manner when gleaning corn in the fields to provide for their needs attracts the attention of the wealthy farmer Boaz, who eventually marries her, and so becomes the great-grandfather of David.

3. Purpose. One object of the book is to give some account of the lineage of David, especially of his Moabitish ancestress Ruth. It is possible that David himself wished this beautiful picture to be preserved, that he might do her honour and also explain how it was that his great-grandfather came to marry a woman of Moab. Another purpose is indicated in the fact that the name of Ruth occurs in the genealogy of our Lord. David was not only important in himself, but in his relation to the Messiah. It was necessary that it should be clear that He was the son of Abraham. Had no story been told of Ruth, some stigma might have been cast on the race through this Moabitish connection. The line of Him Who was 'according to the flesh the son of David,' must be purged of all suspicion. And it is interesting here to note a certain likeness between the mother of the Lord and her ancestress Ruth. Both were married, as we have reason to believe, to husbands much older than themselves; both were characterised by self-restraint, quiet, and modesty, and in both the virtues of love and obedience were strongly developed, winning for them that length of days which

is the promise to all who practise the Fifth Commandment. One other point we may notice in conclusion : the name of Ruth and that of Rahab ought to be specially dear to the Gentile nations, as showing that the long line of the Jewish ancestry of the Messiah was twice broken to admit heathen influence. In them we feel we are as it were represented, and have an evidence that Christ was not only born for the sake of the Jews but for that of the Gentiles also.

RUTH

CHAPTER I. 1-18

NOW it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. 2. And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. 3. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah,

1. **In the days when the judges ruled.** The compiler or writer of the book evidently lived in days after the judges, for he looks back to them. Here, then, we have one note as to the date of the book. Another, still later, is given us in the last chapter, where David's lineage is traced back to Boaz. The author then lived during, or after, the reign of David.

2. **The name of the man was Elimelech.** Dr. Kitto in his *Bible Illustrations* comments on the striking significance of these names—Elimelech, 'my God is King'; Naomi (pleasant, happy) indicates 'divine favours,' 'worldly prosperity'; whilst Mahlon (weakness, sickness), Chilion (consumption, decay), imply the very reverse of health and comfort.

Ephrathites, i.e. dwellers in Ephratah, the old name of Bethlehem.

4. **Took them wives of the women of Moab.** In the list of the seven nations with which Israel was forbidden to intermarry, the Moabites and Ammonites are not mentioned (see Deut. vii. 1-3); the Law, however, forbade Ammonites or Moabites—up to the tenth generation—to enter into the congregation of the Lord. A Moabitish wife would therefore be under disabilities, unless her marriage was supposed to cancel them. It was in consequence of this that Jeremiah forbade Ammonitish and

and the name of the other Ruth : and they dwelled there about ten years. 5. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them ; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. 6. Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab : for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. 7. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her ; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. 8. And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house : the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. 9. The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them ; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. 10. And they said unto her, ¹ Surely we will return ¹ Nay, but, with thee unto thy people. 11. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters : why will ye go with me ? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your

Moabitish marriages. The expression 'took them wives' is generally used in a bad sense, as though done against the will of the parents.

They dwelled there about ten years. The father had died, and the two sons were quite content to live away from the promised land and from all the religious privileges which it possessed. It is true that at this time these were neither attractive nor much thought of by any one, but the self-imposed exile of these two Jews does not impress one very favourably.

6. Then she arose with her daughters in law. Naomi embraced the very first opportunity that presented itself for returning home. She does so on the ostensible ground that the famine was over, but it is difficult to imagine that the famine lasted ten years. It is probable that all the words mean is that she had heard, perhaps some years ago, that the famine was over.

7. Her two daughters in law with her. As friends and relations go with the departing guest to see them off, so her two daughters in law went part of the way with Naomi to say farewell.

11. Are there yet any more sons in my womb. Naomi felt, as one of her day naturally would, that Orpah and Ruth would marry again. This indeed was her wish. Had she other sons, it would have been their duty to have married them, according to the levirate law, which bade the brother raise up seed to his dead brother. But this was not the case ;

husbands? 12. Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; 13. would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. 14. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. 15. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her ²gods: return thou after thy sister in law. 16. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God: 17. where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me. 18. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

and as she felt that she had too little influence in her own country to procure them husbands, they would be widows to the day of their death if they went with her. It is this that Naomi impresses upon them, and it so far affected Orpah that she returned home.

LESSON XXV

Love

'Love seeketh not her own.' 'Love never faileth.'

INTRODUCTION.—The affection of Ruth is world-wide, famous. Her constancy has been a lesson for generations. Yet though so familiar, it is always fresh. It will be well to emphasise the following points: (a) *Where this love was found*; (b) *How it was nourished*; (c) *How it expressed itself*.

MATTER.

METHOD.

1. Where love was found.

Moab, a beautiful country of where they expect to find the most

1. Begin by asking the children

LESSON XXV—*continued.* LOVE

MATTER.

hills and streams, but heathen. Shocking things sometimes done there (2 Kings iii. 27), but God still looks upon it and plants in it a beautiful flower. Picture the Moabitish village, the two sisters, Ruth and Orpah—the visit of the strangers—their acquaintance with them. Elimelech dies, his sons marry the two sisters, Ruth being the wife of the elder one. They all live together, Ruth proving a true daughter to Naomi. Point out why these strangers came and from what town.

2. How it was nourished.

For ten years the life in the Israelitish home very happy. Naomi has much to teach her daughters about the true God: what He has done for her people; how she hopes that some day they may return and perhaps visit Shiloh and see the beautiful worship. Ruth listens eagerly; Orpah does not feel so drawn. Then sickness enters the house. Picture the sorrow and mourning as one son and husband is taken away, and how this is increased when the other son dies. Three widows left in the home. But the sorrow knits Ruth and Naomi together—the same experiences, the same trials, the same consolations.

3. How it was expressed.

Naomi desolate, feels she must return home. She can be of no use to her daughters, perhaps only hinder them. They both walk part of the way with her, and then want to go the whole way and stay with Naomi. But Naomi discourages it. There is no likelihood that they will find homes there. She has no friends who will give them such, no other sons who will marry them. They are young,

METHOD.

beautiful flowers, and whether they would not be greatly surprised to find a flower more beautiful than the rose or lily growing on the sand by the salt sea. We feel the same surprise in finding the flower of love in Moab—not in Israel. Cf. our Lord's expression of surprise at finding the strongest faith in a Roman. Show where Moab is, and ask whether the class remembers any story in the Judges about Moabites (see Judges iii.).

2. Repeat S. Paul's words: 'The God of all comfort Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble' (2 Cor. i. 4).

3. Picture an English girl who has married and lost a Russian husband. Will she like to go to Russia with her mother-in-law and face a new life there without any hope of friends beside her new mother? What about her parents, relatives, and friends in England?

Quote chap. ii. 11, from which it appears that Ruth's parents were still alive.

Show what a comfort this must have been to Naomi, how she must

LESSON XXV—*continued.* LOVE

MATTER.

whilst she is old. It is their duty to have families of their own. Let them stay in Moab, then, where all their friends are. Naomi's words are backed by the dread of the unknown, by the bitterness of separation from country, village, home, parents, from the familiar surroundings which they may never see again. We cannot blame Orpah for going back, but true love seeketh not her own, never faileth, abideth in the face of the greatest drawbacks. See how strongly this is expressed by Ruth. She chooses Naomi's home in preference to her own familiar one, Naomi's people to her own countrywomen, Naomi's religion to her own faith, and this because she loves Naomi. Her love is so great that she feels she can never be happy apart from her.

METHOD.

have been helped to face the difficulties of returning home a childless widow by the strong love of Ruth.

LESSON—Impress upon the children that such a love is God-given, and that every one may have it who 'asks, seeks, and knocks' for it. Then say with them the Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Love.

'Love seeketh not her own.' 'Love never faileth.'

1. *Where love was found.*

Not in Israel, but in Moab. Ruth.

'Many shall come from the East and West and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven.'

2. *How it was formed.*

By sorrow and trouble.

Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion die.

Naomi, Ruth, Orpah left widows.

'Herein is our love made perfect.'

3. *How it was expressed.*

By Naomi. By Orpah. By Ruth.

'Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.'

4. *Our duty.*

'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.'

CHAPTERS I. 19-22 ; II.

SO they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?* 20. And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. 21. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? 22. So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

II. 1. And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. 2. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ¹ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers:

¹ among the ears of corn.

19. **All the city was moved about them.** Ten years had passed away. There had been little or no communication between Naomi and her old home, and her sudden and unexpected appearance caused quite a sensation.

20. **Call me Mara.** In spite of Ruth's love, Naomi is very troubled, and feels with some bitterness the sufferings she has undergone during the last ten years. When she left Bethlehem she had husband, sons, and some means, now she has nothing. It seemed to her that these chastisements were a proof that God had been angry with her, had testified against her because of her sins.

22. **The Moabitess which returned out of the country of Moab.** This description is a complimentary one, as though we should say of some similar illustration of constancy, 'The English girl who left England out of fidelity to her husband's mother.'

II. 1. **His name was Boaz.** Boaz probably means 'strength,' which may have been the name given to him as being one of the men of power and influence in the district. He was related to Elimelech, but we are not told in what way.

and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech. 4. And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee. 5. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this? 6. And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: 7. and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, ²that she ²save that. tarried a little in the house. 8. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: 9. *let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn. 10. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have

3. A part of the field belonging to Boaz. 'The lands of the respective proprietors are not separated by enclosures, but the whole cultivated in one unbroken field, the separate lots being distinguished only by landmarks and narrow trenches, seldom visible when the corn is grown up' (Kitto's *Bible Illustrations*). It was God's providence that directed Ruth to that part of the field where she was likely to find a friend.

4. The Lord be with you. This is interesting, not only as showing the pleasant relations between the farmer and his work-people, but the religious feeling existing in Bethlehem. Among the Mohammedans this salutation is used by all classes, and is a sign of their brotherhood in religion and their equality before God.

7. Let me glean and gather after the reapers. Though the poor in Israel had the right of gleaning in the harvest-fields, permission was generally, if not always, asked of the overseer to exercise this right. This Ruth does.

9. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap. A necessary direction in fields which are not clearly divided from one another in harvest-time, the small ditches being quite hidden by the corn. Boaz was anxious that she should not go beyond his protection, but should follow the maidens who were gleaning after his men in his own fields.

I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger? 11. And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband : and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

12. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. 13. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord ; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

³ at mealtime
Boaz said unto
her, Come.

⁴ they.

⁵ left thereof.

14. And ³ Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers : and ⁴ he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and ⁵ was sufficed, and ⁵ left.

11. **It hath fully been shewed unto me.** The story of Naomi had been told everywhere in the village, especially in the ears of one who was related to her husband. And Ruth's devotion had been highly extolled. This led Boaz to be so deeply interested in her. The religion of Boaz presents a remarkable contrast to that of Micah and others, and shows us that in spite of the prevailing disorder, there was true religious faith to be found. Bethlehem, even in these early days, had a warm hospitality and kindness about it which helps us to understand the affectionate character of David.

13. **Though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.** Ruth, in the words that precede, expresses a hope that she may still go on finding favour in the sight of Boaz ; and she does this because of all his kind words to her, in spite of her being a foreigner.

14. **And Boaz said, At mealtime come thou hither.** Better as in R. V., 'And at mealtime Boaz said.' This meal was probably a light lunch taken in the middle of the day. Ruth was not forgotten, but invited by the master himself to his table, though it is said that she modestly sat with the reapers. From this it would appear that there was much more freedom of intercourse allowed between men and women than is now the case in the East.

Parched corn, i.e. roasted corn, now as then the common food of the country. Dr. Robinson (*Biblical Researches*, ii. 394) tells us that, 'In the season of harvest, the grains of wheat not yet fully dry and hard are roasted in a pan or on an iron plate, and constitute a very palatable article of food. This is eaten along with bread or instead of it. Indeed, the use of it is so common at this season among the labouring classes that this parched wheat is sold in the markets.'

And left. As in R. V., 'and left thereof,' i.e. had some over.

15. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: 16. and ⁶ let fall also *some* ⁶ also pull out some for her from the bundles, and leave it, and let her glean. of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not. 17. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. 18. And she took *it* up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had ⁷ reserved after she was sufficed. 19. And ⁷ left. her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. 20. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed *be* he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man *is* near

15. **Let her glean among the sheaves.** This was no doubt said in Ruth's hearing, or she would not have ventured to do so. She was practically able to take as much corn as she wanted, far more indeed than she could carry home; for so large was the amount that she was obliged to beat it out before leaving the field, and when beaten out the grain came to about a bushel. How did she carry it home? In her long veil, which amongst poor women is made of cloth quite strong enough for such services.

18. **And gave to her that she had reserved.** Another proof of the affectionate care of Ruth to Naomi. Whilst having her lunch she had thought of her lonely mother in the poor half-ruined cottage which she occupied, and put by something of what Boaz gave her. Probably this did not escape the watchful eye of her lord.

20. **Blessed be he of the Lord.** Note Naomi's hopes are so excited by what has happened, that she already begins to feel that the face of the Lord has changed towards her. But a week or two before, it was 'The Lord hath testified against me,' now it is 'The Lord hath not left off His kindness,' though here she feels it is not merely kindness towards her, but towards the dead also. The addition shows that Naomi had a clear faith in the living condition of the departed. They were not forgotten by God. It should be noted, however, that it is not perfectly clear that the subject is God: both the Latin and Greek versions of the Bible refer them to Boaz.

of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. 21. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. 22. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, *It is good*, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. 23. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest ; and dwelt with her mother in law.

The man is one of our next kinsmen. Not the nearest relative they had—there was one nearer, as the story shows—but the next but one. A special obligation lay on him to redeem the inheritance that belonged after Naomi's death to Ruth, and to marry her if the nearer kinsman failed in his duty.

LESSON XXVI

Love is Kind

INTRODUCTION.—It might be thought that a lesson of kindness or consideration towards those in any way dependent on us was not a lesson for boys and girls. As a matter of fact, however, there are few lessons that need to be impressed on them more earnestly than this. A girl is often put in charge of smaller children, boys as they rise in the school are often placed in positions of authority over younger boys. The disposition to domineer, tease, or bully is not seldom seen. In the generous consideration of Boaz towards his reapers and the stranger there is a good opportunity of showing the better way.

MATTER.

1. By whom it was shown.

We left Ruth and Naomi in a little cottage in Bethlehem, very, very poor. Not far off lives a very rich man—large house—servants—farm—the great man of the place. He has heard of Naomi's return, for she was related to him ; has heard of the stranger who has left parents, home, and country for Naomi's sake. Very much interested, but will not take any steps till he has heard more about them.

METHOD.

1. Last lesson on Constancy—this lesson on Kindness. Ask where kindness is more often shown by boys and girls: to their friends or to those beneath them in age or class, to those who are kind to them or to those who cannot give any return? Generally the former. To-day we are to hear a story of one who showed kindness to those who could never repay it. Begin by picturing the house—servants—farm of the wealthy Boaz.

LESSON XXVI—*continued*. LOVE IS KIND

MATTER.

2. How it was shown to his servants.

Boaz takes a personal interest in his work and in his servants; has his meals with them; gives them his blessing in the morning when he meets them at work. Instead of 'Good-morning,'—'The Lord be with you,' a much more beautiful greeting, for if the Lord is with us, we are sure to have a good morning. The servants' reply, 'The Lord bless thee,' shows how fond they were of their master.

3. How it was shown to the stranger.

Naomi so poor that Ruth is obliged to go out and gather their food in the fields. Ruth shy and nervous, as she is a foreigner. Finds the overseer kind and obliging. Surprised when she sees the master coming to speak to her. Now note how kindly he speaks. Full permission to glean is given; and not only this, but protection also as long as she keeps within his fields. He has charged the young men to show her all respect, and to give her what she needs when she is thirsty. Ruth is amazed, and shows her gratitude in humble reverence. She then asks how it is that he shows such kindness to a foreigner? Boaz answers, he has heard of her constancy to Naomi, her devotion in leaving all to follow her. At meal-time he invites her to share their lunch, and afterwards bids the reapers leave her plenty of corn. Before the work is over she finds she has more than she can carry, and beating it all out, takes home a bushelful of ripe grain.

4. Its effect.

The generosity of Boaz helps Naomi to feel the generosity of God. When she hears of all that her daughter-in-law has met with, she is no longer

METHOD.

2. Here impress on the children the value of courtesy, especially towards those younger than themselves. Quote the Latin proverb, 'The greatest reverence is due towards children,' and show that if we do not respect others, we shall not be respected.

So also not only to the weak, but to the dumb. 'I would give nothing for that man's religion whose very dog and cat are not the better for it' (Rowland Hill).

3. Note that boys are not always ready to treat foreigners kindly. Their different ways and language excite ridicule rather than courtesy. Not so Boaz.

Note Boaz uses his strength to protect the weak.

Note Ruth's modesty, as striking as the kindness of Boaz. It never occurs to her that her devotion to Naomi is the moving cause of the generosity of the great lord.

Impress on boys the duty of chivalry to all women. This shown by politeness, a readiness to do them service, to save them trouble. And 'let them first learn to show this at home,' 1 Tim. v. 4, to their mothers and sisters.

LESSON XXVI—*continued*. LOVE IS KIND

MATTER.

METHOD.

Mara, with a sense of bitterness in her soul, but Naomi, full of pleasantness. She blesses Boaz, and she also praises God, Who has not, as she had thought, left off His kindness to herself or the dead. For the same expression, see Gen. xxiv. 27.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

Love is Kind.

1. *By whom it was shown.*

The wealthy Boaz—living in Bethlehem—has a kind heart, and so is interested in Ruth's kindness.

Cf. The kindness of Jesus Christ, '*Who though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor.*'

2. *To whom it was shown.*

To his servants—to the stranger.

So God '*careth for the strangers, defendeth the fatherless and widow.*'

Christ and the Syro-Phœnician woman. Christ and the widow's son.

3. *How it was shown.*

Courtesy. Protection. Kind words. Food. Hospitality.

So Christ with the five thousand.

'*Good measure, pressed down, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.*'

4. *Its effect.*

'*I caused the widow's heart to sing.*'

CHAPTER III; IV.

THEN Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My ¹And. daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? 2. And now is ²not Boaz of ²there not our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he ^{Boaz our kinsman.} winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. 3. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. 4. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do. 5. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. 6. And she

1. **Shall I not seek rest**, *i.e.* 'Ought I not, who am now old and cannot protect thee, to seek rest for thee, *i.e.* to seek for thee a secure and settled condition, that of a wife' (Wordsworth).

2. **Behold, he winnoweth barley.** It is a sign of the simplicity of the times that Boaz himself assisted in the winnowing of the corn. Dr. Robinson tells us how this was done: 'A level spot is selected for the threshing-floors, which are then constructed near each other of a circular form, perhaps fifty feet in diameter, merely by beating down the earth hard. Upon these circles the sheaves are spread out quite thick, and the grain is trodden out by animals. The straw is occasionally turned with a large wooden fork, and when sufficiently trodden, is thrown up with the same fork against the wind, in order to separate the grain' (*Biblical Researches*, i. 550).

4. **When he lieth down.** 'Natives of the East care little for sleeping accommodation, but rest where weariness overcomes them, lying on the ground. They are, however, careful to cover their feet, and to do this have a chudda or sheet of coarse cloth that they tuck under the feet, and drawing it up over the body, suffer it to cover the face and head. An Oriental seldom changes his position, and we are told that Boaz did so because "he was afraid"; the covering of the feet in ordinary cases is consequently not disturbed' (Kitto, *Journal of Sacred Literature*, iv. 48).

5. **All that thou sayest I will do.** Naomi's advice seems strange to us, but one or two things should be remembered which help to explain it. Naomi saw quite plainly that Boaz was fond of Ruth, and guessed that he would like to marry her. But Boaz being elderly did not think it was right to make any proposal, more especially as the right to marry Ruth rested with another. It is quite plain from his words: 'Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou hast made thy last kindness

went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her. 7. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn : and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. 8. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself : and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. 9. And he said, Who *art* thou ? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid : spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid ; for thou *art* a near kinsman. 10. And he said, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD, my daughter : *for* thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. 11. And now, my daughter, fear not ; I will do to thee all that thou requirest : for all the city of my people doth

better than the first,' that he was more than delighted when he found Ruth ready to accept him, in spite of his age, for her husband. As Naomi saw that Boaz was too shy and modest to take action, she felt it was necessary that Ruth should show her own desire by claiming his kinship. This was done by inviting the kinsman to spread his skirt over the woman who sought his protection. Naomi, knowing Boaz, felt that he would not like this to be done in public. Having, therefore, full confidence in the purity of Ruth and the honour of Boaz, she urged her to seek this sign of his favour at night. The whole matter was even then very public, for the threshing-floor in which Boaz lay down to sleep was quite open. There was nothing, therefore, improper in the proceeding. Indeed, Naomi would never have thought of wrecking all Ruth's chances by bidding Ruth do what was immodest.

7. **His heart was merry.** There was happily no necessary connection, we may even say no suggestion, of drunkenness with merriment in the East. Jezebel says to Ahab when depressed about Naboth's vineyard : 'Arise, eat bread and let thine heart be merry' ; so, too, the man of Bethlehem to his guest the Levite (see 1 Kings xxi. 7 and Judg. xix. 6-9).

9. **Spread therefore thy skirt.** 'Even to this day it is customary among the Jews for a man to throw the skirt of his talith or prayer-veil over his spouse and cover her head with it' (Kitto).

10. **Inasmuch as thou followedst not young men.** Boaz was surprised at Ruth choosing him instead of the young wealthy men of Bethlehem. He not only thanked God for it, but promised Ruth that he would marry her if he could, for it was quite plain that this, and not any low motive, had animated her in seeking him out. Every one knew that she was above reproach.

know that thou *art* a virtuous woman. 12. And now it is true that I *am thy* near kinsman : howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I. 13. Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well ; let him do the kinsman's part : but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, *as* the Lord liveth : lie down until the morning. 14. And she lay at his feet until the morning : and she rose up before one could ³ know another. ³ discern.
⁴ And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into ⁴ For the ⁵ floor. 15. Also he said, Bring the ⁶ veil that *thou hast* ⁵ threshing-floor. upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured ⁶ mantle. six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her : and ⁷ she went into ⁷ he. the city. 16. And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who *art* thou, my daughter ? And she told her all that the man had done to her. 17. And she said, These six *measures* of barley gave he me ; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law. 18. Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall : for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day.

iv. 1. ⁸ Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him ⁸ Now Boaz down there : and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake ^{went up.}

14. **Let it not be known.** 'A good heart is no less afraid of a scandal than of a sin' (Bishop Hall).

15. **Bring the veil.** It should be 'mantle' as in R.V., the word referring to a loose cloak worn over the ordinary dress.

Six measures, *i.e.* two bushels, a heavy load for her to carry, and therefore Boaz lifted it up for her, probably on to her head.

16. **Who art thou, my daughter?** Either Naomi did not recognise Ruth in the dim twilight of the early morning, or else, as is more likely, the question should be as Jerome read it, 'What art thou?' *i.e.* 'What success have you had?'

18. **Then said she, Sit still.** Naomi is quite content with the success of her plan. She knows Boaz well enough to feel sure that he will not rest till he has married Ruth.

iv. 1. **Then went Boaz up to the gate.** Bethlehem being situated on the side of a hill, and the gate, the public place of business, like our market-place, being at the top, Boaz would *go up* from his threshing-floor.

came by ; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one ! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. 2. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 3. And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth ⁹ a parcel of land, which *was* our brother Elimelech's : 4. And I thought to ¹⁰ advertise thee, saying, Buy *it* before ¹¹ the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem *it* : but if thou wilt not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know : for *there is* none to redeem *it* beside thee ; and I *am* after thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*. 5. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. 6. And the ¹² kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance : ¹³ redeem thou my right to thyself ; for I cannot redeem *it*. 7. Now this *was the* ¹⁴ *manner* in former time

⁹ the.

¹⁰ disclose it unto,
¹¹ them that sit here.

¹² near kinsman.

¹³ take thou my right of redemption on thee.
¹⁴ custom.

2. Ten men of the elders. These elders answer to our municipal authorities. Cf. our word aldermen, *i.e.* elder men. Probably ten were necessary to form a quorum.

3. Naomi . . . selleth the parcel of land. The property that Naomi had through Elimelech, her husband, she is anxious to sell to provide for herself. By custom the option of purchase must first be offered to the nearest relative. This Boaz does publicly to the nearest kinsman, who is quite ready to buy the land, till he learns the condition that goes with it.

5. Thou must buy it also of Ruth. Some Hebrew Bibles have 'Thou must also buy Ruth,' but there is no necessity to follow this. Ruth, as Naomi's heiress, would have the land at her death, and as the levirate law obtained in her case, the purchaser must marry her if he wished to have the land.

6. Lest I mar my inheritance. The near kinsman's difficulty was this. If he married Ruth and had sons by her, then his heir would not bear his name, but that of Ruth's first husband, Mahlon ; and not only would Ruth's property, but his own also, pass away from his name. Some, however, think that he means, 'If I have to support Ruth and Naomi and buy the land, then what little inheritance I have will be swallowed up in the process.' This interpretation certainly gives point to the following words, 'I cannot redeem it.'

7. This was the manner in former time. This was the old custom, possibly obsolete when the author wrote. It is not quite the same as

in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning ¹⁵ changing, ¹⁵ exchanging. for to confirm all things; a man ¹⁶ plucked off his shoe, and ¹⁶ drew. gave *it* to his neighbour: and this *was* ¹⁷ a testimony in ¹⁷ the manner of attestation. Israel. 8. Therefore the ¹² kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy *it* for thee. ¹⁸ So he drew off his shoe. 9. And Boaz said unto ¹⁸ And. the elders, and *unto* all the people, Ye *are* witnesses this day, that I have bought all that *was* Elimelech's, and all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye *are* witnesses this day. 11. And all the people that *were* in the gate, and the elders, said, *We are* witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem: 12. and let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. 13. So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a ¹² kinsman, ¹⁹ that his name may be famous in Israel. ¹⁹ and let his name be. 15. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath

that ordered in Deut. xxv. 9. There the Law prescribes that the widow who is refused by next of kin is to loose his shoe from his foot, in the presence of the city elders, and spit in his face, saying, 'Thus shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.' In this case, however, Boaz received the shoe from the near kinsman, the shoe being evidently a testimony to transfer of property. Compare our expression 'to stand in another's shoes.'

12. **Like the house of Pharez.** Pharez was, as it were, the head of the family by Judah's son. His twin brother Zerah had only one house called after his name, whereas Pharez had three (Num. xxvi. 20-21).

born him. 16. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi ; and they called his name Obed : he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. 18. Now these are the generations of Pharez : Pharez begat Hezron, 19. and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, 20. and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, 21. And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, 22. and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

17. They called his name Obed, *i.e.* 'servant,' alluding to the words of the women that he would serve Naomi, restoring her life and nourishing her old age.

18. These are the generations of Pharez. The genealogy of David is not only important in itself, but in its connection with the promised Messiah. It is not unlikely that when David became Israel's great king, great care was taken in tracing his genealogy and in preserving it. So we have no less than four records of it : this one, that in 1 Chron. ii. 10, that in S. Matt. i. 3, and S. Luke iii. 30. It is not likely, then, that it is incorrect, though it is open to one great difficulty, and that is that it only gives four generations between Nahshon, who died in the wilderness, and David,—that is, it only allows two hundred years for Joshua, Judges, and the first book of Samuel, besides contradicting the notice in 1 Kings vi. 1-2 that from the Exodus to Solomon there were four hundred and eighty years. The difficulty seems insoluble, and we must either suppose that there are some missing links in the genealogy here given or that each of David's ancestors bore children when very old. It is worthy of note that S. Matthew tells us that the mother of Boaz was Rahab the Canaanite.

LESSON XXVII

The Rewards of Faith and Love

'There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life.'

MATTER.

1. Faith and love.

Ruth had a home, parents, religion, but all these she had left. Not so her sister, who had gone back 'to her people and unto her gods.' Why this difference? In the first place, Ruth had a strong affection for Naomi, she felt she

METHOD.

1. Begin by pointing to the text on the board. Ask whose words they are? Whether any in the class can say why they are chosen? What they have to do with Ruth? What had she left, and why? This our first question, then what God gave her in return.

LESSON XXVII—*continued*. THE REWARDS OF FAITH AND LOVE

MATTER.

could rather live with her anywhere than without her. This strong love nothing could daunt. In the second place, she had learned enough about the God of Israel to make her long to know Him better. Boaz had felt this to be one of the motives for her self-sacrifice when he said: 'A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust.' She had learned to trust God as well as Naomi, and had no misgivings about leaving her religion as her sister had.

2. The reward of a happy home.

It did not seem likely, when she left her country to follow a poor widow, that she would find her reward in this life, but it came to her in full measure. Note how. She finds it in seeking support for her mother-in-law. Boaz, as we saw in last lesson, shows kindness in word and deed. He then determines to marry her. But first must see whether one nearer of kin than he will do so. Boaz asks him whether he will buy the property belonging to Naomi and Ruth. He is willing. Will he then marry Ruth, for only in that way can he buy the property? No, he cannot do that. So Boaz does. Ruth now one of the chief people in Bethlehem, happy in her husband, in Naomi, and in the child with which God blesses her. She has left parents and country for God's sake, and He has given her in return a mother, a husband, a child, and lands.

3. The reward of Eternal Life.

But these earthly blessings are not God's only reward, there is eternal life. This in a measure Ruth enjoys here, for as long as the Gospel is preached, her name will be known as one of the four women

METHOD.

2. Describe fully the very picturesque court in the gate of Bethlehem, how the property belonging to Ruth and Naomi was sold, and what took the place of the deed of sale.

3. Show that constancy and faith are more highly paid than cleverness or artistic skill, and quote Kingsley's words—

'Be good, sweet maid,
And let who will be clever.'

LESSON XXVII—*continued*. THE REWARDS OF FAITH AND LOVE

MATER.

METHOD.

mentioned from whom the Christ came. Many names of women that have occupied much higher positions than that of Ruth have perished—names of queens, princesses, rulers—but the name of the Bethlehem farmer's wife remains, and will remain, as long as the world lasts.

BLACKBOARD SKETCH.

The Rewards of Faith and Love.

'There is no one that hath left house, or father, or mother . . . or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life.'

1. *What was left, and why?*

Ruth leaves country, parents, sister, friends, and religion.

She is impelled by love and faith—love to Naomi, faith in God.

2. *What God gave her on earth.*

A mother, a husband, a home, a child, and friends.

3. *What God gave her after death.*

An imperishable name. Wherever David is known, Ruth is known: wherever Christ is known, Ruth is known.

4. *Lesson.*

'Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.'

INDEX

ABIMELECH, 94; death, 105.
Abiezer, 83.
Accho, 14.
Adonibezek, 3.
Ajalon, 14.
Akrabbim, 15.
All-to brake, 105.
Angel of the Lord, 15.
Amalek, 36.
Ammon, 36.
Amorite, 21.
Ashtaroth, 19.

BAALBERITH, 94.
Baalim, 19.
Barak, 43.
Bethbarah, 79.
Bethel, 9.
Bethshean, 13.
Bethshittah, 79.
Bezek, 2.
Boaz, 184.
Bochim, 15.

CALEB, 7.
Canaanite, 21.
Captivity of the land, 31.
Corn parched, 186.
Cruelty, 4.

DAGON, 157.
Dan, 14.
Danites, 131.
Date of Judges, 178.
David's genealogy, 196.
Debir, 7.
Deborah, 43.
Decision of Character, 53.
Dor, 13.

EGLON, 36.
Ehud, 36.
Elimelech, 178.

FAILURES, 16.
Faith, 80-81.
Fleece, 71.
Foxes, 145.

GAAL, 102.
Gaza, 57, 151.
Gerizim, 96.
Gezer, 13.
Gideon, 59; overthrows altar, 61, 65, 66; asks for a sign, 70-71; defeats Midianites, 76-77; pacifies Ephraim, 83; punishes Succoth, 83; refuses the kingdom, 89; makes an ephod, 90; his influence, 94.
Gilead, 114.

HAROD, 74.
Harosheth, 42.
Hazor, 42.
Heber the Kenite, 44.
Hebron, 7.
Hip and thigh, 146.
Hittite, 21.
Humility, 71.

IBZAN, 128.
Independence, 34.
Issachar, 50.

JABIN, 42.
Jael, 52.
Jair, 109.
Jebsites, 9.

- Jephthah, 114; appointed captain, 115; dedicates his work to God, 115; reasons with Ammon, 119; his vow, 119; quarrel with Ephraim, 127.
- Jether, 86.
- Jezreel, 70.
- Jogbehah, 85.
- Joshua, 2; death, 18.
- KENITE**, 8.
- Kindness, 188.
- Kirjath-jearim, 28.
- Kishon, 43.
- Kitron, 14.
- LAISH**, 27.
- Lamps, 77.
- Love, 180.
- MACHIR**, 49.
- Mahaneh-Dan, 28.
- Manasseh, 13, 70.
- Manoah, 132.
- Mara, 184.
- Megiddo, 51.
- Meroz cursed, 51.
- Mesopotamia, 35.
- Message from God, 38.
- Micah, 25.
- Midian, 57.
- Millo, 95.
- Moabite marriages, 178.
- Moreh, 74.
- NAPHTALI**, 14, 79.
- OPHRAH**, 59, 90.
- Othniel, 7, 35.
- PENUEL**, 84.
- Perizzites, 2, 21.
- Perseverance, 87.
- Pharez, 196.
- Philistines, 21, 131.
- Phinehas, 168.
- Pitchers, 77.
- Pride, 130.
- Prosperity, 111; its effects, 112.
- RAMATH-LEHI**, 147.
- Repentance of God, 20.
- Retribution, 105-108.
- Reuben, 50.
- Rewards, 198.
- Rimmon, 170.
- SAMSON**, 134; his riddle, 141; burns Philistines' corn, 146; slays Philistines, 147; delivered by God, 148; temptation, 154; death, 159.
- Saviour, 35.
- Seirath, 38.
- Shamgar, 39.
- Shechem, 94.
- Shibboleth, 128.
- Sisera, 44.
- death of, 52.
- mother of, 52.
- Sowing with salt, 104.
- Success, 10.
- TAANACH**, 13, 51.
- Temptation, 154.
- Teraphim, 25.
- Timnath, 138.
- Timnath-heres, 18.
- Tola, 109.
- VEIL**, 193.
- WINNOWER**, 191.
- ZEBAH**, 85.
- Zebul, 102.
- Zebulun, 13, 44, 50.
- Zephath, 8.
- Zidon, 14.
- Zorah, 131.

RIVINGTONS' HANDBOOKS TO THE BIBLE AND PRAYER BOOK

For the use of Teachers and Students.

With Introduction, Map, Text, Notes, Schemes of Lessons,
and Blackboard Summaries.

GENERAL EDITOR—THE REV. BERNARD REYNOLDS, M.A.

*Archbishops' Inspector of Training Colleges ;
Chief Diocesan Inspector of London, and Prebendary of S. Paul's.*

THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE PENTATEUCH.

The Creation to the Deliverance from Egypt. Genesis i. to Exodus xii., with slight omissions. By the Rev. H. C. BATTERBURY, B.A., Assistant Diocesan Inspector of the Diocese of London. 2s. 6d. [Published.]

THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE PENTATEUCH.

The Departure from Egypt to the Death of Moses. Exodus xiii. to the end of Deuteronomy. By the Rev. H. C. BATTERBURY. [In preparation]

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA. With slight omissions.

By the Rev. G. H. S. WALPOLE, D.D., Principal of Bede College, Durham. 2s. 6d. [Published.]

THE BOOKS OF JUDGES AND RUTH.

By the Rev. G. H. S. WALPOLE, D.D. [Published.]

THE MONARCHY. By the Rev. A. R. WHITHAM, M.A., Principal of Culham College, Abingdon. [In preparation.]

THE CAPTIVITY: DANIEL, EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER. By the Rev. G. W. GARROD, M.A., Principal of the Diocesan Training College, Ripon. [In preparation.]

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

By the Rev. W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A., Canon and Chancellor of S. Paul's. 2s. 6d. [Published.]

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

By the Rev. F. L. H. MILLARD, M.A., formerly Diocesan Inspector of Carlisle. 2s. 6d. [Published.]

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

By the Rev. MORLEY STEVENSON, M.A., Principal of the Training College, Warrington. [In the press.]

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

By the Rev. G. W. DANIELL, M.A., Chaplain of Dulwich College, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Rochester, and Hon. Canon of Rochester Cathedral. [In preparation.]

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

By the Rev. BERNARD REYNOLDS, M.A. [In preparation.]

THE PRAYER BOOK.

By the Rev. BERNARD REYNOLDS, M.A. [In preparation.]

RIVINGTONS: 34 King Street, Covent Garden, London

The Object of the Series.

THE object of the Series is to help teachers, especially those engaged in primary schools, in their own study for examinations, and in their teaching. The commonest question asked by teachers is, 'What book do you recommend?' These books are a practical answer to that question.

For Pupil-teachers and Students in Training Colleges, such information will be gathered together as those who have been conversant with the work for a long time have found to be most necessary and helpful.

A prominent feature of the books is the scheme for Lessons, which, it is hoped, will guide teachers in impressing upon the minds of the young the spiritual, doctrinal, and practical points which it is their object to impress. A great difficulty of teachers, even of those who know their subjects well, is to see exactly the points that will be of use to learners, points to be impressed, not only upon their minds, but upon their lives.

For those who want to go more deeply into matters, there are additional notes upon matters that the teacher should know but need not teach: for the teacher must know a great deal more than he teaches.

A new series of mere commentaries is not wanted, considering the many excellent works that already exist, but there are few books at present which look at the subject from the teacher's point of view. These volumes are designed to help both to teach and to learn, but especially the former.

In Rivingtons' Bible Handbooks the correct translation of the text will be carefully attended to; in the Prayer Book, the lessons taught by the history of Christian religion and thought will be dwelt upon.

RIVINGTONS: 34 King Street, Covent Garden, London