

Bible Character Series

Gideon

By

Beverly Carradine



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Gideon

By

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1144



Published by
Pepper Publishing Company
609-11 Lippincott Building
Philadelphia, Pa.

Mr. G. & 15-31.
EMK 1344

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I.

THE MAN IN OBSCURITY.

IT is remarkable to note the number of great men who have sprung suddenly into public notice and renown from the deepest privacy and obscurity. There was no gradual dawn of events heralding their approach; but, as in some climes, the sun seems to leap instantly above the horizon, so these characters loom up as immediately before their time and generation. The world was needing them sorely, but did not know of their existence until they stood in the front ready to teach, lead and deliver, as the case might be.

So we see Elisha emerging from the ranks of seven thousand faithful but equally obscure men, not one of whom was known to Elijah. John the Baptist comes up out of the Wilderness as though he was a part of its strange fruit and had been just shaken from the bough of one of its trees. Moses invades the frightened court of Egypt from the backside of the desert, and Gideon is first seen in a kind of hiding place, where

he was engaged in the ordinary duties of the farm. He was threshing wheat behind a wine-press to escape the notice of his country's enemies, who now possessed the land. Here was secrecy added to obscurity.

Many of his countrymen, we doubt not, passed the lonely wheat thresher and dreamed not that he was to be the deliverer of their nation from the bondage of the Midianites. They saw he was industrious, but did not know that he possessed the gifts of a statesman and warrior combined. And yet, though they saw not his latent greatness, still he had it, and his life gave the confirmation.

The history of the world abounds in similar instances. When a St. Louis lady sharply reproved a wagon-driver for barking one of her shade trees with the hub of his wheel while delivering a load of wood, she did not dream that she was addressing the future commander-in-chief of the armies of her country and the coming President of the United States.

A preacher's wife, standing on the gallery of an humble parsonage, told her husband, who was splitting wood in the yard, that they did not have enough food in the house for a single meal and had no money to buy any more. The then unknown

circuit rider, who was chopping in his shirt-sleeves, afterwards became one of the most renowned of American Evangelists and lecturers, with a splendid income ranging from twenty to forty thousand dollars.

We have little idea who is in the cotton patch and corn field to-day. We do not know what mighty men of the future are touching us on the street, and what geniuses and wonderful characters are sitting by us on the cars, or looking at us from the congregation.

This single thought ought to dignify and elevate human nature in our minds and cause consideration and respect for everyone we meet. Truly we need not be surprised at anything after beholding men leap from a tailor's table, from a canal-boat and from a wagon team to the highest office in the United States of America.

Like the fairy story, the prince is still in disguise; or, according to history, the king, all unknown to his entertainers, quietly turns the spit of the roast in one of the humblest cottages in his kingdom.

A young clerk in New Orleans was supposed to be an unreasonable, day-dreaming sort of fellow; but a few years afterward we saw one of the largest halls in that same city crowded with the most

intellectual people of that community, giving rapt attention to one of the "Readings" of that man, taken from books he had written in the days of his obscurity.

A mud-bespattered pedestrian requested an interview of a leading Evangelist. He had walked in from the country, over twenty miles, to see and talk with the preacher. He was a slave to drink, and had heard that this Evangelist had once languished in like bondage and had been delivered. So he wanted to talk with him. The Evangelist, however, sent word by his stenographer to the plainly-clad man that he would see him next day. The visitor never returned; but several months afterward was soundly converted and thoroughly reformed while in the city of Philadelphia. He to-day is regarded as one of the most gifted speakers and forcible lecturers in America. Years after he became famous he met the Evangelist who had refused to see him. In the course of a few remarks he said to the preacher: "I once walked twenty miles to have an interview with you. I did not want money, but your counsel and moral help. You were too much engaged, it seems, to see me. I just want to say you missed a splendid opportunity of doing good."

Truly we are made to stand in awe as

we see this strange procession out of obscurity into publicity, renown and greatness. The questions may well arise, Who will be the next? Will we meet them or not? Will we recognize the worth of the man and help him on to his life-work, or will we be too busy to give a glance in his direction?

Better than this, will we not honor all men, because God made them, Christ died for them, and because all can be princes and kings in the everlasting world to come?



II. CALLED OF GOD.



HERE is no lottery method in God's selection of human instruments to do his work. The call is direct and personal and based on something the Divine Being sees within the individual in the line of gifts, grace and character.

It is noticeable that the Lord does not thus lay His hand upon men who are lazy, indolent and regarded as failures in life. We have all seen such persons in the ministry, but that fact was no proof that God had placed them there.

We recall, when a young preacher, hearing a plea made at Conference for the admission of an applicant "on trial." The argument made by the Presiding Elder, as given him by the man himself, was that "he had tried everything and failed in everything, and now felt that he must be called to the ministry." On further questioning by the Bishop, it was brought out that the applicant was forty-five years old; whereupon the president of the Conference gave it as his opinion that "he did not be-

lieve that a man who had been a failure in everything all his life could, with any propriety or truth, construe that into a call to preach the Gospel." A glance at the lacklustre face of the candidate confirmed the assembly of ministers and laymen in a similar impression, and the "failure" was not admitted.

While we all believe that God can put disaster and defeat on a man's plans and works in order to whip him into duty, yet we also believe that the men whom God selects to stand for and spread His holy truths possess those attributes of head and heart which would have made them succeed in business or other occupations had He not called them into His service.

Hence it is that we see the Lord laying His hand upon industrious and faithful men when choosing prophets, apostles and ambassadors. So Moses was taken from his flocks, David from the sheepfold, and Elisha was plowing when the mantle of Elijah fell upon him. Peter, John and James were fishing when Jesus summoned them to follow Him. Matthew was busy in his office as a tax-gatherer when the call of Heaven came, while Gideon was threshing wheat when the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him.

The world acts on the same principle,

and summoned Cincinnatus from his farm, Washington from his estate and Lincoln from his law office. Clerks and book-keepers have told the writer that it is much easier to obtain calls to good positions in the business world when they have employment than when out of work.

It is the same in the religious life, and he who is busy for God, keeps receiving fresh calls for service, and finds a steady promotion in grace, liberty, power and honor all along the upward way.

These are lessons we might well afford to study faithfully. We are told in the Bible to do with our might what our hands find to do. We are directed to be always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

According to the Gospel the very industry of the man on the farm or in the office makes him a candidate for higher and better things; for the Word says that he who is faithful in small matters will be counted worthy of promotion to that which is greater and more honorable. This, then, explains why the Lord, in selecting a deliverer for Israel, did not go to a thriftless, shiftless character, but came to a man who was busily threshing wheat on his farm.

III.

THE PREPARATION OF THE MAN.

AFTER the calling of a man into His service, God proceeds to fit him for the special duty or lifelong labor. This is the divine order, and all who have been eminent in Christian work say that long before the achievement of their lives came the preparation.

A part of Gideon's qualification had come in his previous faithful life; but the demands to be made upon him were to be of such variety and magnitude that still more had to be done for him—and was done.

We find that Gideon waited upon the Lord with a sacrifice, and, while presenting it, the fire of heaven fell on the gift. He was also permitted to look upon and talk with the angel, who was none other than the Lord. Like Abraham, Moses and Jacob he spoke face to face with God.

In this interview the Lord unfolded His plan of making him the deliverer of His people Israel. Like Moses under a similar

call, Gideon showed a profound distrust in his own ability, stating that his family was poor, and he, himself, was the least in his father's house.

The Lord met these objections, as he had done in the case of Moses, with the simple but wonderful sentence: "I will be with thee."

In these scenes, over which the hasty reader goes without marking their import, we recognize the striking facts of humility, worship and sacrifice on the part of man; and, finally, acceptance, communion, commissioning-empowering and the face of God Himself on the heavenward side.

The last is specially significant. If we are to be unmoved by the faces of men, we must first look on the face of God. We must go from the presence of the Lord, if we would stand as we should before the Pharaohs of this world; and we must get our message and power from personal communion with the Almighty if we would not be overwhelmed by human tongues and overborne by the majorities of earth.

Moses looked on the face of God, and after that stood up against the rebellious angry tribes of Israel. Paul was granted a vision of Christ, and after that no one could discourage or stop him.

The disciples had been called years before

from their fishing, and, later, were told of the great work in the world which awaited them. The command given them was to "Tarry" for the qualification. They did so, and it came! Came with flames of fire and the conscious-burning presence of the Holy Ghost. After that no one could arrest their onward triumphant march, or, rather, flight. Commanded to cease preaching, they preached the more. Beaten and scourged, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake. Put in prison, they sang at midnight. Crucified or put to death in various horrible ways, they all died in the faith exultant and triumphant.

The preparation in their case was not the mastering of a few dead languages, but the speaking with new tongues the wisdom of Heaven. It was not the gazing upon and listening for four years to some bespectacled professors talking about certain "ologies," excellent as all these studies are; but they had looked on the face of Him who had made all things, and they knew Him, had spoken with Him as friend with friend, and had received His truth and Spirit and power.

Caughy, the great Evangelist, felt called of God to visit England. Months afterward he obtained the preparation. He received

it while praying in the fence corner of an old field near Baltimore. He had been seeking it for days when it arrived. The fire fell! The enraptured man looked, as it were, upon the face of God, and, leaping to his feet, cried out, "I can go now!" And he went; and all the world knows to-day what a wonderful work he accomplished.

When Gideon had been told of his wonderful work, he in wisdom waited on God with his sacrifice. Then came the fire, and the divine manifestation, and after that the true labor of his life commenced.

To-day there is an experience granted the soul where the man feels that he has been caught up and away into a Mount of Perfect Consecration and Devotement to Heaven. He has looked, in a sense, upon the face of the Lord, felt His burning presence, and can now go back to the walks of men and to the work God has appointed him with victory already in his heart, and conscious that through His grace and glory he will override and overthrow every onset and opposition that earth and hell can possibly bring against him. This is God's preparation.

IV.

UNEXPECTED HAPPENINGS.



ONE of the most daring and remarkable acts of Gideon, and which his countrymen gave him credit for having planned, as well as performed, was a night attack upon the altar and grove of Baal and their complete destruction. When the people awoke next morning they beheld, with amazement, the prostrate trees, the demolished sanctuary of Baal, while the altar of God had been upreared in their midst on the brow of a lofty eminence.

It was all attributed to Gideon; and yet we have only to glance at the Scripture to see that such a thing had not occurred to the man, but he only obeyed directions given him personally by the Lord that very night.

This single thought will revive some strange recollections in the minds of God's workmen and servants, for such happenings have taken place with all who are truly led by the Spirit.

Preachers can tell of sermons suddenly required of them by the Holy Ghost when

they did not see their need, and which brought about the most astonishing results of Satanic and human fury on the one side, and deep and widespread good and salvation on the other. Writers will tell of articles that they were reluctant to publish, and yet had to, under a strange directing power. Christians have taken a stand on some questions, opposed a custom, pleaded for a reform, or suddenly projected or advocated some moral or spiritual measure: and then stood fairly amazed at that which came out of it all, in the exposure of evil, the wrath of man, and any amount of abiding good accomplished.

And yet the day before there had been no thought of preaching the sermon, writing the article, or taking a certain stand on the question. Credit was given by the public for long preparation for the work when the whole matter was unexpectedly sprung upon the mind and burned into the heart by the Holy Ghost.

A preacher well known to the writer spent a sleepless night in furnishing reasons to God why he should not preach from a text and subject that the Holy Spirit was pressing upon him. We heard him say that he rolled in agony on the floor for hours, telling the Lord that his congregation needed a sermon on repentance or regeneration

rather than holiness. At daybreak, perfectly worn out in mind and body with the conflict, he consented to obey the impression and preach from the text, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," when instantly his soul was flooded with peace and joy. In another moment, like a flash, the whole plan of the discourse was given him. At eleven o'clock he delivered the message, the power of God fell, and the altar was thronged with his leading members sobbing and crying for full salvation. Everybody thought that the pastor had planned the whole thing for weeks ahead. As a matter of fact, it was given him of God the night before.

A sermon preached by the author, which has gone into the hundreds of thousands in pamphlet form, was literally forced upon him by the Lord. He preached it under the greatest natural disinclination. The results of that discourse would take pages to describe.

All this goes to show how intimately God is connected with human affairs. It also reveals the wisdom of following the divine leadings. Some have these impressions and urgent inward motions given them, but are fearful and will not obey. Happy the man who, like Gideon, will do what God bids him to do; who will exe-

cut the divine command, though only bidden the night, or an hour, or a moment before; who will cut down the grove of iniquity, tear away the buildings of sin and erect over their ruins the altar of Heaven, leaving all present results and future consequences in the hands of the true and omnipotent God.



V.
THE TERRIBLE ODDS.

A VAST army of Midianites gathered against Israel. They covered the fields, swarmed up the valleys, and, according to the Bible, looked like grasshoppers for multitude, while their camels were like the sands on the seashore.

Well might the hearts of the stoutest sink at such a military display. Even the courageous Gideon was sorely tried at the sight, as we can see in his talk with the Lord. But at this critical moment the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, the hero blew his trumpet and a band of his countrymen straightway gathered to his side.

Every true follower of Christ knows what it is to be suddenly confronted at times with what can be called "terrible odds." A work becomes colossal, temptations increase, trials multiply, friends fall away and adversaries gather in number and become persistent in their attacks upon character, reputation, happiness and usefulness.

Great workers have written fully of such

experiences, very devout people have enlarged upon the strange besetment, and all Christians who are such indeed know something of these heart and life conditions.

The temptation is sore at such an hour to give up the combat and go back to privacy and obscurity. The heart grows faint and sick sometimes as we note the grasshopper multitude, count the camels, mark the tented plain and see the valleys choked up with the enemies of God and the soul. So many are against the Lord and His cause and so few are for Him. So many do not believe in or care for us; so few stand by us in real heart affection and spirit loyalty.

There is no doubt that at these times the child of God would go down; but at such a crisis something happens which means present deliverance and future victory. The Bible says when the enemy comes in like a flood then there shall be lifted up a standard against him. The relief and rescue in Gideon's case was the sudden coming upon him of the Spirit of God.

It will always be so to the faithful follower of Christ. The promise is that as our days demand so shall our strength be. When Gethsemane comes with its loneliness and bloody sweat an angel will stand

by us. When a Red Sea with tossing billows will appear to block our progress God will send a rod of deliverance by which the waves are split, a path is made bare and we cross over safe and dry-shod.

The sight of difficulties and great majorities are evidently granted unto us in order to drive us closer to the Lord. Trouble is the black hawk in the air which sends the scattered brood of Heaven fluttering and flying to the outstretched wings of the Almighty.

In some way relief and rescue will come to the man of God who is confronted by terrible odds. The Spirit will come afresh upon the clinging, dependent and discouraged soul, and where just before panic and defeat seemed imminent and certain, lo! and behold! there is suddenly increased power and overwhelming victory.



VI.
THE FAILURE OF SIGNS.



WHAT is there in the human heart which seeks after signs from Heaven rather than to rest upon the Word and faithfulness of God?

We say nothing against miracles, by which the Lord endorsed his prophets and disciples and introduced Christianity into the world. We speak of the craving upon the part of people for outward phenomena when duty has already been made plain and the Spirit is urging them to obedience.

Gideon had been told that he should be the deliverer of Israel. The Spirit had fallen upon him. God had said, "I will be with thee;" and yet here he was begging for a few paltry signs to be granted to his eyes, though the Lord Himself had spoken through his ears to his soul.

The word of the God of all truth however, was not enough for this man. But if he could see some fleece drenched through and through with water, while the ground was dry all around, then he felt he could go forward and do the will of God. A little

wet wool would be so convincing to the judgment, so vitalizing and inspiring to the faith that, after that, he would be able to go out and meet a perfect multitude of the Midianites!

So the dampened fleece was given by the pitiful God whose word, by this new condition or requisition, was now distrusted and discounted. But it all ended as anyone could have predicted who has studied the nature and history of signs.

Full of inward shame and condemnation Gideon came to God again with the words, "Let not Thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this 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." God, who was doubted again, saw to it that a few locks of wool was dry in the morning while the earth all about it was wet.

What a soul-inspiring, majestic spectacle that bunch of wool must have been to Gideon! Does anyone really think so? He had again demanded in his unbelief something else than the word of God to help him discharge his duty, and we doubt not that when his hand touched the wool his own soul was as dry as the fleece before him.

So the second sign failed also, as can be seen a little further on in the Bible narrative, where God, seeing the sinking heart of His servant, bade him go down at night in the camp of the Midianites and get the assurance of his coming victory from the lips of the enemy themselves. This was the third sign. The wool manifestation, wet or dry, had come to naught, just as God knew it would.

The whole demand for signs springs from unbelief. We say nothing against Providential tokens along the way of life by which God confirms to the obedient man that he is in the path of duty and discharging the will of Heaven. We are referring to a spirit of doubt that will not take God's word nor move forward as He directs without some peculiar display of the divine presence and power, which in our conceit we dictate to the Lord and also decide as to its fashion, form and continuance.

The Savior, in His words to the nobleman, struck at this spirit which was filling the people in that day. "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." Again He said, "This nation seeketh after a sign." While to the demand of the Pharisees, "Give us a sign," he sighed and said, "No sign shall be given."

It is well known that the typical happen-

ing in the life of Jonas, as applied to Christ, was not beheld by the Jews; they did not witness the resurrection nor ever behold Jesus again.

The Lord seeks to bring His followers into a life of such faith in Him that they will not ask nor care for strange sights and sounds. Sufficient for them that Christ says a certain thing is so or bids them do this or that. They believe and obey; they trust and go forward; they rest on His Word, and nothing shall offend, shake or move them.

Such a life glorifies God, and He will see to it that it also glorifies the soul.

The Gospel says a centurion came to Jesus beseeching Him, and saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. But I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." This speech not only made Jesus marvel, but caused Him profound joy. Turning to those who followed Him He said: "I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." Here was a man who asked for no sign, and did not even request Christ's presence at his house. His entreaty was, "Speak the word only!" This was the perfection of faith.

If we want to please God we must throw

away every doubt when He has spoken ;
quit asking for strange tokens and wonders ;
and, resting on His word, say, " No matter
what happens, I believe God ; and though
He slay me, yet will I trust Him."



VII.

THE SIFTING OF GIDEON'S ARMY.

 **GIDEON** had, after his summons, only thirty-two thousand three hundred men to oppose an army vastly larger. Hopelessly inadequate even as that number seemed, yet the Lord informed His servant that he had too many. He also knew of elements of weakness and defeat in the band that Gideon did not and could not know.

So the Lord had the following test made : Let all that are fearful of heart return home; whereupon twenty-two thousand church letters were immediately called for, and as promptly given.

This was a wonderful numerical landslide, a fearful defection, and was a melancholy commentary on the prevalence of fear among God's people. Two out of every three in the army of Israel were cowards.

We doubt not that a similar test applied to the church to-day would empty most of the pews and pulpits in the land. Moreover, we do not know that this would be a

weakening, but a strengthening of the cause of Christ. We firmly believe that if two-thirds of the people in the church were out of it, it would be better for the church and better for the world as well.

It is said that a preacher once reported at Conference that his appointment had been blessed with a gracious and powerful revival. The Bishop asked him how many members he had received by the meeting; and his reply was that he had lost three hundred, and it was the greatest revival that had ever visited his church.

The first sifting of Gideon's army through the power of fear was followed by another test that went still deeper in the character life. Under the latter, ten thousand more fell out of the ranks, leaving only three hundred men to face the Midianite army.

This double sifting was seen among the disciples of Christ. The first falling away was beheld when He began to go deeper in spiritual things, and said they would have to eat His body and drink His blood; in other words, become partakers of the divine nature. At these sayings numbers followed Him no more. Indeed, so many left that Christ asked the twelve if they would also forsake Him.

The second sifting was after the Resur-

rection. He had met five hundred of His followers in a mountain of Galilee. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost had not yet taken place. It was to occur in Jerusalem. The Savior's command was that they should tarry there for it. And yet, when that wonderful blessing took place, only one hundred and twenty of the five hundred were present. Three hundred and eighty did not or would not find it convenient to leave their employments and homes and wait for the promise of the Father.

It is simply heartbreaking to a faithful pastor to see the sifting process going on in his congregation for a single year. Some fall away under a spiritual sermon. Some become angry over frequent collections. Others find objections to the length or freedom of the services. Still others fall away during the protracted meeting. And so the separation steadily goes on like a dividing current.

The same sifting is seen taking place in what is called the Holiness Movement. Some follow men rather than Christ; some switch off on non-essential doctrines; some backslide under persecution; some are cowed and others blarneyed into silence; while still others take up with erroneous teaching, get side-tracked, and then off the

track, down the hill, in the woods, with the locomotive on its back and wheels still going, but getting nowhere.

It is an experience never to be forgotten to revisit the scene of a great revival a year or so afterwards. It would take fifty policemen and a board of detectives to find the original company and get them together again. And, even if the physical reassembling were possible, other things far more important have vanished in the way of faith, love, brotherly kindness and godliness never to return. No amount of preaching, praying and singing seem to be able to restore the glow and glory or reproduce former scenes of grace, together with the tremendous conviction as well as power which rested upon congregation and community. Some have had their feeling hurt, some are mad, some have "modified their views," some have gone into "deeper truths," as they call them; some are writing, talking and preaching about "deeper deaths," and thereby have discounted the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification, which the Bible uplifts as the crowning work of grace; some have grossly sinned; and so, in different ways, the blessed, beautiful, glorious work of other days has been smitten, scattered, and, in

some places to human eyes, utterly wiped out.

The writer has in recollection a town where God granted him a most powerful revival. In ten days five preachers and over one hundred members of the church had been sanctified and a number converted. The community was profoundly moved. The Presiding Elder and Official Board fought in vain. The Spirit of God gave victory over every kind of opposition, and the church was a daily scene of power, praise, liberty and salvation.

A few months after another meeting was held. An Evangelist came who taught and encouraged Come-out-ism.

The sermons were filled with scathing abuse of the church. It seemed to be the signal for the incoming of every discordant and dividing spirit. Two of the preachers changed their views, one returning to his pipe and the other committing a crime. Errors crept in. Bickerings sprang up. Fanaticism showed its face. Open Sin re-enscribed its name on the register for rooms and the Devil sent in his card. The result of it all was that to-day there is scarcely a deader place, religiously, than the community of which we have just written.

This case, and other instances of "a fall-

ing away," are no disproof of the doctrine of holiness, but are illustrations of the weakness of human nature and the power of the devil in this world over even good people.

We can imagine how Christ's heart was torn when He witnessed the wholesale departures and desertions from Himself.

One one occasion He said: "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" And so great was the defection among His followers that He asked the twelve if they were going also. Peter, replying for them, said "No." And yet it was not long after that that the Saviour listened to the sound of these same disciples' feet as they fled down the road, leaving Him in the hands of His enemies.

No, the thinning out and falling away in any case is no reflection on the divine grace and truth, whether of doctrine or experience; but is a revelation of the power of the Sifting Process when applied to poor humanity. Let every man be a liar, Christ is true; always has been and always will be. He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

VIII.

THE THREE HUNDRED.



THE people of Israel might well have been discouraged at the sight of the rapid melting away of Gideon's army if they had not had to steady and gladden them the spectacle of the faithful "three hundred" who would not leave the field, but stood true to God and their leader in face of everything.

And so we might well be downcast over the coldness, indifference, backsliding, sidetracking and actual derailment that we see taking place in so many different directions, if we did not observe just as unmistakably the faithfulness of Christian individuals and the steadfastness of those little bands of true and tried ones who survive and remain after every revival, no matter what stand the community takes or how many of the congregation grow cold and go back to the world.

These are members of the "Three Hundred Brotherhood," who never stop to count numbers or consider the magnitude of the opposition, but simply ask what is

right, and then stand or go forward just as God directs.

We may say what we will about all men being the same and all souls being alike. In one sense they are equally precious in their immortality, but, after that, there is a marvelous difference. One man is worth more to the cause of God than another. One person has more magnetism, influence and aggressiveness than another. One individual has often done what a whole congregation was not able to perform. Now, when, in addition to these natural powers, the man is filled with the Holy Ghost, the Bible itself declares the spiritual rank or ratio in the statement that one is equal to a thousand.

The "Three Hundred" of Gideon did easily what the fearful "twenty-two thousand," who departed in a hurry for home, could not possibly have done.

Many hundreds of years have passed away since that time, but the Three Hundred still remain. The Brotherhood has been perpetuated. Their spiritual posterity lives after them.

The tenth leper who returned to give thanks to Christ for his healing was a member of this mystic devoted band. The one hundred and twenty who took time to leave farm, shop and fishing-boat and wait

for the Baptism with the Holy Ghost in Jerusalem belonged to this blessed Fraternity of the wholly consecrated.

John and Peter, lingering in the courtyard when Jesus was being tried and scourged, and Paul and Silas, singing and praising with bloody backs in a midnight prison, were captains in that noble company of the Three Hundred that is seen in every age and country, no matter who is the king nor how the law reads, whether for or against them.

As seen down to the present time the Three Hundred is a band of faithful souls who cannot be driven from truth and duty nor coaxed or sopped into compromise and sin. Men may come and men may go, but they keep on forever.

The writer, in common with other Evangelists and pastors, has seen much of his work scattered and destroyed; but, with them, he can also say that he never revisited a place where there had been a genuine revival but he would find a band of men and women, a little company of faithful ones, who had weathered the storm, outlived the pestilence, survived the persecution, remained firm in the falling away and kept their hearts like a watered garden in the midst of general spiritual drought and deadness.

Such spectacles prove the truth of the doctrine, the genuineness of the experience of holiness and the possibility of human faithfulness under any and all kind of adverse conditions, provided Christ is allowed to remain in the heart.

So these true and tried individuals, these faithful little bands, these struggling small companies of Holiness people become a text and sermon, as well as an inspiration besides, to all who are doubting, hesitating, reeling and ready to fall. They demonstrate by their lives that what they have stood and done we can stand and do. If they can endure and survive the shock of temptation, the loneliness of a devoted Christian life, the venom of slander, the laugh of ridicule and the blow of misrepresentation and hate,—then all of us can do the same. The living illustration becomes then an appeal to arise, move against the walled cities and possess the land.

In conclusion, we thank God for Israel's "Seven Thousand," for Gideon's "Three Hundred," for Pentecost's "One Hundred and Twenty" and for all the faithful followers of Christ to-day, whether they reach the number of hundreds in a great City Tabernacle, dedicated to Full Salvation, or are a despised little Corporal's Guard worshipping in a dingy mission room or hall,

or whether the "Three Hundred" is seen sifted down to the solitary individual living the life of holiness alone in a cold fashionable church or in the midst of an unsympathetic, worldly family circle.

God be thanked for the Three Hundred, and, above all, for that Spirit of Grace and Truth who calls out the Three Hundred from the great ranks and bodies of men and causes them to stand true to God and themselves in the face of all the opposing thousands and millions of earth.



IX. THE MIDIANITISH TENT.



HE Lord is exceedingly pitiful and kind to His servants. He is mindful of the failing body and the sinking heart. He steps in at critical times and shows the divine omniscience as well as love in sudden reliefs and assistances that came, as His people afterward declare in commenting upon them, just at the very moment most needed. So the Lord finds the despondent Elijah under the Juniper Tree, diagnoses the case, sees that an exhausted body has much to do with the prophet's discouragement, and so sends an angel to prepare him a meal, lets his tired servant go to sleep, wakes him up to eat a second time and then sends him on his way to duty. The man had asked for death and the Lord sent him a breakfast and an angel to cook it. The whole scene translated into language meant, "Live and not die."

The same observant God knew that Gideon's army, now reduced to three hundred, looked so diminutive and incapable in comparison with the black masses of the

Midianites that were covering the hills and choking the valleys, that He had to do something to rally, cheer and strengthen the drooping heart of His servant. So He said to him:

“If thou fear, go thou with Phurah, thy servant, down to the host and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened.”

Drawing near one of the tents in the darkness, Gideon, crouching in the gloom, heard a soldier talking to another in the night. He was telling him a dream which had greatly troubled him. He said that he saw a cake of barley bread tumble into the host of Midian, smite a tent and knock it flat. Whereupon his aroused companion said: “This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon—for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host.”

One can imagine the profound effect this remarkable speech must have made upon the listening warrior outside in the shadows of the night. Who wonders the Bible says that “he worshipped;” that he returned to his little army and said, “Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hands the host of Midian?”

The whole scene is full of significance and suggestion. The talk in the Midianitish tent is still going on, still overheard and,

to this day, still a great factor in the success and victories of God's people. Many of us are permitted to go down and hear what our foes are saying. And, to our amazement, we have discovered again and again that they recognized God's possession of our lives, realized our full strength and were themselves already defeated in heart.

We have overheard the talk in the tents of the world and found that, in spite of their swarming numbers, sounding trumpets, gay processions and flashing accoutrements, that sinners are anxious, disquieted and miserable. With all their bluster and show they confess that they rush to every place of amusement to drown thought and forget care; that they drink, revel and travel, not only to get rid of heart burdens, but to obtain deliverance from themselves. They are also overheard to say that their plans, hopes and ambitions have been failures, that they are disappointed in life and that the Christian course is the best for anyone and everyone.

We never heard such admissions, but, like Gideon, we worshipped and felt our hands and hearts strengthened for mightier achievements for Christ and His blessed cause.

The Midianite Tent is found in the ranks of Formal Worship. Such formal-

ists affect to be satisfied with stately ceremonies and declare against all "excitement," as they call it, in the religious life.

On a certain occasion hundreds of this class of people, cultured, intellectual and respectable every way, were gathered in one of their annual ecclesiastical-social assemblies. Among the groups was one composed of several of the very foremost of the church. They were discussing a neighboring congregation which enjoyed and was pressing the blessing of holiness. These men were in the famous Midianitish Tent, and one, speaking to another, said, "They may not suit our ideas, but one thing is certain, that God is with them and they are getting people saved at all of their services."

A heartsick follower of the Lord, sitting near, overheard the words, worshipped God, returned to the company to which he belonged and said to them, in substance: "Arise, for God will give us the land."

A Bishop was addressing the class for admission into conference, on Saturday morning, when he said to the row of young ministers before him: "From my soul I pity a preacher who has to stand before persons in his congregation who

have a deeper religious experience than himself."

There were some in the audience that day who had been abused and ridiculed unmercifully for claiming the blessing of heart purity. As this Bishop, who was not a believer in the second work of grace, uttered the words mentioned above they felt that a whisper had floated out from the Midianitish Tent and it had made them wonderfully stronger for having been heard.

Time would fail to enumerate the instances in the lives of our readers when, tempted to disparage one's own self and work and to magnify out of all truthful proportion the opposition of men and the influence of devils, God would in some way bring the Midianitish Tent around, and lo! such confessions were heard of felt weakness, such anticipations breathed of coming defeat, such commendations spoken of the supposedly absent man or men and their work as to fairly electrify the drooping spirit and send the now enthused soul back with redoubled energy and courage to the field of conflict and duty.

The writer of these lines makes humble as well as grateful acknowledgments to God for the power for good over his life of the Midianitish Tent. He rejoices and

praises God for the miracle of the wet fleece, and for the words "I will be with thee;" but he has also abundant cause for thanksgiving for the whispers which the Lord has allowed to come wafted in the most unexpected way through the night to his ears from the tabernacles and tents of Midian.



X.

THE WEAPONLESS BATTALION.

IT is noticeable that the Three Hundred went into the battle against Midian without a single instrument of war. There is no mention made of their having anything in their hands but pitchers, lamps and trumpets, and none of these are considered military weapons by any country or in any age.

While it may seem that later the company had swords and spears, yet, if it was so, they must have taken them from the hands of the slain Midianites or as they found them scattered by the fugitives along the road and over the plain.

The point we make is that they went forth to battle and achieved a stupendous victory without the use of sword, javelin, battle-axe or any engine of war.

It requires some Christians quite a time to learn this wonderful secret, that in the holy life we need no carnal weapons for attack or defence.

We are apt to enter Canaan with the knowledge and customs of Egypt and the

Wilderness still clinging to us, and so we repose for awhile great measures of confidence in the bow and arrow and the horse and chariot. As the Israelites never dreamed of walls falling down before a shout and armies vanquished by harp playing and singing, so we enter upon the life of holiness with lingering beliefs in the power and efficiency of great arguments, scathing articles, stinging repartees and severe retaliation, with all other human and carnal methods which we think necessary to protect ourselves, advance God's cause and bring confusion to the ranks of His and our enemies.

It grows with an increasing wonder upon the spiritual man that the success he craves does not come, and never will come, by the use of carnal weapons. Little by little the repeated statements of the Bible, and continually fulfilled before his eyes, settles in the form of a sweet and strong persuasion of the heart that he is perfectly safe in God and can be nothing but a victor over every kind of foe so long as he remains in God.

Hence it is that genuinely godly people are not upset by attacks of tongue and pen, and go on in their work without rushing before the public in self-defence or with measures of retaliation.

It is perfectly marvelous to see how God

can and does defend His own. Has he pledged Himself to do so. He has said, "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper." The word "deliver" is constantly used in regard to the divine rescue of soul and body from the hands of men and devils.

That is a remarkable speech of Christ where He declares that "They who live by the sword shall perish by the sword." This saying can be legitimately lifted from the military world and applied to those who are always contending, snapping, snarling, criminating, insinuating, slandering and abusing their fellow beings. They will go down by just such weapons as they have pitilessly used on others.

A still more wonderful utterance is to be found in the Psalms in the words, "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; therefore shall He deliver my feet from the net."

Here is a man who has had laid for him all kinds of traps, pitfalls and engines of cruelty and destruction. Instead of studying the topography of the country, securing a guide, taking a stick and probing the ground before him, the assailed individual turns his gaze upward and fixes his eyes on the Lord. He is not looking at his own feet nor watching the dangerous ground, but contemplating the God of

Heaven. He acts as if he had no feet to guard or as if there was no danger before him.

The whole proceeding appears foolish and even suicidal to the careful, calculating, prudent man of the world; and yet the highest wisdom, the divinest philosophy is in the whole course. The argument is, because my whole attention is given to God, my love, thought, labor, life, all fixed upon Him; "therefore!" will He devote His observation, love and power upon me. As our eyes are turned toward His face, His eyes are directed toward our feet. We have committed our all to Him, and He will save us from every evil word and work, from every false friend and open foe, and, in a word, from every pit that may be dug for our steps before our unobservant vision. Our eyes are on Him and His eyes are on us. What need of sword and cannon, of horses and chariots? What necessity for cuts and slaps, for crimination and recrimination, for explanation and retaliation? If we have elevated God as supreme in our hearts and lives, He will elevate us. "And now," says David, "shall mine head be lifted up above all mine enemies."

We never knew a man who was a dweller in the Canaan life to forget these

things and take up carnal weapons but would realize immediate loss in his soul and get worsted in his encounters with men. It was God's way of reminding him that he must not trust in the bow or spear nor go down to Egypt for help, nor hire armies from Syria. The reassuring word is, "The Lord is my defence. The Lord is my shield and buckler. The Lord is my fortress and deliverer; my buckler and the Lord of my salvation and my high tower."

Recently, at a meeting, we heard a preacher confess to having lost the blessing of sanctification. His explanation was that he had been fearfully persecuted, and, before he knew it, he had taken up arms in self-defence, got to striking back, and so lost the sweetness and power, and, finally, the whole blessing of sanctification.

Mr. Wesley was advised once to defend himself from certain attacks. His reply was that he was perfectly confident that the God, who had taken care of him thus far, could also preserve his reputation. History has thoroughly vindicated the truth of his statement.

Numbers of times the writer has started to answer attacks of various kinds made upon him by tongue and pen, and where he could easily have vindicated himself,

when suddenly the recollection of his consecration would come back to him, the memory of a blessed morning when he had laid everything on the altar, family and friends, past and future, appointments and reputation, and took God to be his judge, defender and rewarder in all things. The single swift thought of that day would cause the pen to be laid aside, the sword fall quickly into its scabbard, the chariot sent back under the shed and the horses of war returned in haste to Egypt.

God Himself is the best defence of the Christian. His Word says that He will show Himself strong in behalf of those who are perfect in heart, and that if our ways please Him He will make our enemies to be at peace with us, and, better than all, that all things shall be made to work together for our good if we but love Him.



XI.

THE STRANGE INSTRUMENTS OF GOD.

OTHING scarcely is more remarkable than the character of the agencies and instrumentalities employed by the Almighty for the accomplishment of his purposes among men.

In their selection the Lord sees to it that their very nature will reveal the power back of them. The manifest inadequacy of the thing or person used is bound to direct the eye and thought of the observer to God, and so, of course, the glory and praise travel in the right direction.

In sending a man to talk to a great king and lead a vast body of captive people out from bondage earthly wisdom would have selected a golden-tongued orator or a renowned warrior with a sword rivaling that of Richard Couer de Lion or Saladin, the Arabian prince. Instead of this God chose a man slow of speech, and, for a wand of authority, let him carry to the court and palace of Pharoah a rod which

Moses himself had cut out of a thicket to guide and protect his flocks.

In another instance horns were used to knock down the walls of a city; an ox-goad to secure a nation's deliverance from bondage; handkerchiefs to carry health to the sick; while a hammer and nail in a woman's hand got rid of a great enemy of Israel whom the army had been powerless to capture and destroy.

In the victory God proposed giving to Gideon, trumpets, lamps and pitchers were to be used. If the Midianites could have seen the odd weapons beforehand what laughter and scorn would have been occasioned. How strange, even to-day, appears the peculiar panoply of the "Three Hundred." It must have been a great trial of faith to the men themselves as they marched through the night to their posts with a trumpet in one hand and a pitcher containing a burning lamp in the other. But God had so commanded through Gideon, and they obeyed.

The Lord has never ceased to work wonders after the same manner. He uses the ordinary means, but again and again breaks in with instrumentalities that are extraordinary because of their evident inadequacy.

Let the reader turn to First Corinthians

and read in the first chapter the kind of men God has taken to confound the world and achieve stupendous victories for the truth, and he is bound to be impressed and amazed. Paul says "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence."

Over and over have we seen the Spirit of God resting upon and using a man who was uncouth, illiterate, obscure, unknown, but who was devout and completely given up to the will of Heaven. We have beheld such men achieve victories and secure wonderful results where other individuals with scholarship, eloquence and high position had utterly failed. It was Gideon's humble soldiers and weapons all over again.

Again we have seen the pitchers, lamps and trumpets lifted and waved before the eyes of the world, and used of God to-day, in a song, a shout, a cry, an amen, a mannerism, a lisp, a gesture and other simple things, to accomplish what could not be done or was not done by practiced anthems, labored discourses and learned volumes.

According to old-time methods an ordinary lamp in a homely pitcher sent a panic to the heart of a great congregation. A piece of common goods brought health to a big church or community. There was a plain-looking hammer in the pulpit that day and not much was expected, but God supplied the nail, and the man struck the truth and drove conviction through head and heart and fastened his hearers to the altar and to the floor.

Again, we have seen a mere stick of a man as to outward polish or inward gifts. He was no scholar, had no remarkable natural endowments, but was endued with the Holy Ghost; and we have noticed that when he lifted his voice in prayer, testimony, song or preaching, somehow the fire fell and ran along among the people as in the days of Moses. Let it not be supposed that the Lord despises and discounts great natural gifts, intellectual ability and acquisitions of knowledge. The trouble is that most of such endowed people will not allow God to use them. Then another difficulty is that, even when such individuals are surrendered to the Lord's will and service, outsiders get the idea that their success and influence springs from their wisdom and eloquence. Hence it is that God has to break in with his lowly human trumpets, lamps

and pitchers and places His treasure in earthen vessels, in order to bring men to their senses, direct all eyes to heaven and show to the world that the excellency of the power is not of man but all of God.



XII.

“EVERY MAN STOOD IN HIS PLACE.”



THE above sentence is a simple one and, doubtless, overlooked by many in reading the history of Gideon's devoted band, but it is not the less wonderful. The faithfulness, obedience and courage contained in that single line meant everything in that famous night conflict, and means as much to-day.

In order to surround the vast camp of the Midianites, Gideon's Three Hundred could not be deployed in compact ranks, but had to stand far apart. This meant loneliness and called for individual faithfulness and personal bravery.

The night had settled, and, evidently, it was a dark one; a great host was stretched out before these men; each man had a thousand of the enemy upon his hand; and yet, in face of the tremendous odds, the natural apprehensions which struggled in their breasts, they were true and every man stood in his place.

May we all learn the lesson. There is

a post of duty for each one of us. God's Spirit and Providence will lead us to it and the Lord would have us to remain there. To leave such a divine appointment and trust is not only disastrous to our own spiritual life, but it is as direful in its effect upon others. We are placed there for a blessed purpose. God has need for us at that point. Somebody is to be cheered, helped and delivered by our consecrated lives. Some evil is to be met and put down by us. An attack is to be made upon sin wherever it is and the armies of the aliens put to flight.

Happy for the man and happy for the world when God can find his servant always at the post of duty; that when he needs his voice, influence and life and turns to lay His hand upon him, he is there waiting for the touch and listening for the call.

We wonder how many Christian parents there are who are not in their place in regard to the duty of family worship. Then there are empty pews in the church and vacant seats in the prayer-meeting and protracted meeting that declare the same fact. Besides this, there are men in the practice of law and medicine and still others in the store and on the farm who ought to be preachers and missionaries. In a word,

the man in not in his place and this means loss to the cause of God, absence of blessing to the human race and trouble and judgment to the faithless one himself.

The place God calls us to fill is not always pleasant. It is a station sometimes where darkness abounds, loneliness is felt, the majority is against us, and the prospect, from a human standpoint, anything but cheerful, promising and reassuring.

And yet right there the Lord has placed some who read these lines—and right there he wants them to remain. He knows our frame and just how much we can endure. As the Captain of the Guard He is making continual rounds. When He comes to visit the lonely vidette, or relieve by change of post or circumstance, or promote to Heaven itself, may He find us, as was said of Gideon's Band, each one standing faithful and true in his own place.



XIII.

THE BATTLE AND VICTORY.

WHETHER heard or read of such a battle as is here related in the Bible, where three hundred men actually surrounded or encircled a vast army, taking with them as weapons of conquest such peaceful, harmless instruments as pitchers, lamps and trumpets?

At a given signal from Gideon every man blew his trumpet, broke his pitcher, waved his lamp and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" This was all, and anyone can see it was perfectly inadequate in itself to accomplish what was seen in an immediate, overwhelming victory.

Of course a good deal can be said about the panic created by the sudden blare of three hundred trumpets, the crash of as many pitchers and the flash of long lines of lights which seemed to burst out of the darkness on all sides.

But a panic will not make a fleeing army hew itself to pieces; and but for God the multitude of frightened, maddened Midianites would have run over Gideon's

little company and trampled that body out of existence, even as a stampeded herd of buffalo grinds a plain into powder, sweeping all before its wild, destructive flight, and a mob, in its mad rush under alarm, has trod hundreds of people to death.

God was in the awful fear that fell upon the Midianites, and He was in it to so guide and direct the frantic rush that the three hundred escaped all harm, while their adversaries drew their swords and slew one another on every hand.

The ordinary retreat of an army is a remarkable spectacle, while one conducted under fire is simply dreadful. Even to read of the evacuation of Moscow by the French army and their flight through Russia is so full of horror that it never can be forgotten. But the stampede of the Midianites was especially shocking in that, while they fled, they kept wounding, striking down and killing one another, until over one hundred thousand corpses lined the roads and covered the fields.

This was a greater fatality than the loss sustained at Mannasseh, Gettysburg, Chickamauga, Shiloh, Corinth and Fredericksburg, six of the largest battles of the Civil War.

The truth taught in this occurrence is that God can set the enemies of His people

fighting among themselves, a fact not only shown in the Bible, but proved in history and recognized in our own immediate generation and community.

We have all seen combinations and coalitions formed against devoted servants of God, and soon after beheld them torn and divided with internal discords, while the hands once raised in wrath and violence against the Lord's people were now turned in bitterness and cruelty against each other.

We have gone down among the adversaries of Holiness and found anything but agreement and peace among them. Their tongues slash, their pens puncture and their hands wound one another.

There is also discord in the columns of formal and stately ecclesiasticisms. There is war between the different theologies, creeds and catechisms. There is bitter rivalry between the church on the street and the one located on the avenue.

The strife is seen continued in the ranks of the people who sidetrack on some false conception of duty or misunderstanding of the Bible or religious experience. Such seceding bodies always get in time to fighting among themselves, and then the public is treated to a spectacle of divisions and subdivisions until the heart sickens and the mathematical faculty fairly reels.

The only unity existing in the great battle against the Midianites was in Gideon's Band. That harmony and unification was the great factor in God's hands of securing the triumph and of pressing the victory to the very end.

We seem slow to learn Bible teaching and backward in understanding the Spirit; but nothing has been more plainly taught by the Lord than that He will not go out to battle with a company of people who are fighting among themselves. This fact alone is sufficient to justify the prediction of the coming defeat and failure of all striving bands and bodies. The house divided against itself cannot stand; and they who use the sword shall perish by the sword.

The trumpet stands for testimony and the lamp represents the shining life. The two must go together if we would obtain victory over the hosts of evil against us. The combination of the two was essential the night of Gideon's battle, and is as vitally necessary to-day. The testimony and life must be seen together in blessed agreement and fellowship. The one without the other would be like the lamp without the trumpet, or the trumpet without the lamp, when the charge was made on the Midianites. It was the two coming together

which brought the confusion, fright, panic, flight and victory.

As for the broken pitchers, they stand for these human vessels of ours which go down under the fatigue, exhaustion, labors and wounds that come in the service and the battles of the Lord. The lamp is plainly seen when the pitcher is broken. That means that, through our toils, sufferings and death, the flame of Truth and the light of experience in us will flash forth all the more clearly and powerfully. The self-denials, the cross-bearing, the daily dying, the being ground to pieces for the truth, humanity and Christ's sake, are marvelous crevices and apertures for the glory of God in us to shine through. And it does gleam forth and men see it: the pitcher is broken, but the lamp is thereby made visible, the light flashes forth, conviction is awakened, salvation flows and victory comes.



XIV.

THE MEN OF NAPHTALI.

IN the seventh chapter and twenty-third verse of the Book of Judges we read that when Gideon, with his chosen band had defeated the Midianites and the scattered remnants of that army were fleeing for their lives, that *then* the men of "Naphtali, Asher and Mannasseh gathered themselves together and pursued after the Midianites."

It is difficult to read this without a smile, because it is so like poor, fallen human nature, and as we see it still to-day.

These were the very people who, through fear of the Midianitish host, had left the battlefield and gone home. But now that the enemy had been defeated and was in full retreat, who so bold as the men of Naphtali! Here they come! Make way for them! Look how they charge! Did anyone one ever see the like? How bold they are! How they sweep everything before them! How they press close upon the fugitives who were already doing their best to get away!

Those wonderful men of war have long ago passed away, but they have left a numerous posterity behind them whom we cannot fail to recognize.

As seen to-day the Naphtalites appear at church when a difficult protracted meeting has suddenly flowered into a glorious revival. A faithful little band had held on to God through much surrounding indifference and opposition and prayed through and over trials of most heart-sickening nature; moreover, they were allowed to struggle on alone and unaided by hundreds of the membership who were under as great obligation to obtain the moral and spiritual victory as themselves; but when the fire fell and the success of the meeting was unquestionable, here came the absentees in perfect droves to take part in the triumph. These modern men of Naphtali declared that they had faith all along that victory would come, and though they were not present at first in body, yet they were there in spirit from the beginning, etc., etc.

The Tribe of Naphtali is seen again when a man succeeds in life. While the struggle was going on with him and in him to keep his head above the water, or his feet fixed on slippery ground, not a member of that remarkable tribe could be seen. The lonely struggler needed sympathy,

friendship, affection or material help. He craved these things, sought for them, but did so in vain. At last the long deferred success came; victory perched on his banner, and everybody could see that the man had won in the great battle of life and was now rich or famous in some way, when lo! and behold! here came the Naphtalites marching down in crowds to meet the conqueror and offer help where none was needed.

Yes indeed! They had always been his friends! They always said he would come out all right! They would knock anybody down who dared to say anything against him!

Nor is this all. Some of them suddenly discovered that they were related to this life success; others named their babies after him; while still others claimed, with knowing looks and nods of the head, that they had a great deal to do with the securing of the success and had also much to do with the making of the man himself.

O these men of Naphtali, Asher and Mannasseh! These people who are missing when we want help most and who turn up armed to the teeth when we have won the battle and need assistance now from nobody! Who has not seen them, laughed at them and grieved over them? And yet, no matter how the glaringly inconsistent

life and the true character become evident to all, yet, as a people, they continue to live and flourish, leading the van when the retreat is sounded, bringing up the rear when the advance guard is fighting, plundering the wagon train when the victory is won and performing in tongue prodigies of valor when the war is all over and peace has been declared.

We once heard it said of a preacher that he was invisible six days and incomprehensible the seventh. The Naphtalite is equally remarkable. Invisible when needed; visible when not wanted; a soldier in time of peace; an absentee in time of war; a toiler when the harvest has been gathered; and the rest of the time a blusterer and braggadocio when he has nothing in the world to boast about.



XV.
THE HUMILITY OF GIDEON.

IN little things the character of men is constantly revealed; the small actions of life being like crevices in a building through which is seen the light, furniture and inhabitants within.

In the war cry adopted by Gideon, in the proper placing of the name of God, the man's self-distrust, his dependence upon God, in a word, his humility, are all clearly made manifest. The battle-cry was, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The Lord was put first, and he placed himself last.

This is not the rule of procedure with very many of God's people by any manner of means. As a young preacher we were much struck with letters written in the various "Advocates" from the different stations and circuits, and it required quite a little while to understand them. They ran about as follows:

"Mr. Editor.—When I was sent to this charge by the last Conference I found everything on the circuit in a most lamentable condition. The church

buildings needed repairs, the parsonage was scarcely habitable, the people would not come to the House of God, quarrels and dissensions abounded and religion was at a low ebb.

"But I at once took hold and went to work, and the results are simply wonderful. I have repaired two of the church buildings, repainted the parsonage and held meetings all over the work. I have received many accessions, reorganized four Sunday-Schools and took in three new Sunday afternoon appointments. Nor is this all. Family altars have been raised, many reconciliations effected, the Conference collections doubled, the preacher's salary paid in full and the whole work is on fire. Never in all its history has the circuit been so prosperous; but it cost me the hardest year's work of my life to bring it about.

"'To God be all the glory.'"

"I. M. A. Hornblower."

The last sentence, "To God be all the glory," seemed to be a kind of afterthought with the brother. He came near forgetting that God had done anything at all, when suddenly it seemed to strike him that it would look better to acknowledge that God was present in the year's work, and so the reluctant sentence, "To God be all the glory." Different from Gideon's words, the letter really read, "The sword of Myself and the lord."

The writer once heard a gentleman say

that he knew a sprightly young man whose father took him into business with him, giving him a fourth or fifth share of the profits. The sign in front of the store read, "John Smith & Son." Needing to be repainted after a dusty season, it was taken down for repairs. The junior partner, at his own urgent request, was allowed to superintend the painting; when, to the astonishment of the father as he came down town next morning, the sign read, "James Smith & Father."

Of course men would be ashamed to uplift such signs in the religious life, but their conversations, letters, spirit, manner and life itself plainly indicate that with them God is the junior member of the firm. The burden of their talk is not what the Lord did, but what a certain sermon accomplished, their skill and judgment prevented and wise management and general ability effected. Then if all these wondrous doings appear in the form of a public bulletin on the Chanticleer order, some conscientious pangs left in the breast may occasion the lugging in at the very end of the report the modest, easily-overlooked sentence, "To God be all the glory!"

The great characters of the Bible were little in their own sight. Moses could not see why God had chosen him. Gideon

had to have signs and miracles wrought in his sight before he could believe that he would be a mighty conqueror. The truly great are always simple, natural, approachable and gracious. Their very greatness enables them to behold merit in others and at the same time recognize their own deficiencies.

The morally and mentally little man is dreadfully afraid of being overlooked, and so we behold on his part a swagger, pomposity, and boastfulness, that, however impressive it may be to the ignorant and uninitiated, is disgusting to the discriminating and wise.

We remember, as a boy, overlooking the quiet figure of a plainly-dressed general who commanded a corps of twenty thousand men, and being deeply impressed and awed by a third lieutenant, who, richly adorned in tinsel, brass buttons and plumes, paraded and sunned himself on a hotel gallery as a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

It was some time before we discovered that the violet is in society as well as in the garden, and that the full head of wheat droops, and that the stalk does not stand as straight and as high as the one that has nothing upon it.

Truly the meek and childlike spirit is lovely in all, but in none is it more so than

with those who occupy high and exalted positions.

If men were morally great who are officially and financially prominent this would be blessed for all; but, unfortunately, the two kinds of greatness are not often linked together.

The rule is that the higher the position and office the more difficult it is to get on speaking and friendly terms with the individual and the more certain are we to expect rebuffs.

It is ten thousand millionfold easier to have audience with God, the Almighty King of the Universe, than to obtain a glance or word from men who are dressed in a little brief authority.



XVI.

THE MAGNANIMITY OF GIDEON.



THE word magnanimity is a compound from the Latin *magnus*, great; and *ánimus*, mind or soul; so that to be magnanimous is to be great-hearted, noble-spirited, large-souled.

The characteristics of such a nature are found to command admiration and approval from their very moral excellence and superiority. The whole life is diametrically and eternally opposed to that spirit and conduct described under the word "littleness." It cannot do what is called a low and contemptible thing.

The truly magnanimous man could not stoop to take an advantage; could not retaliate; could not originate or circulate a slander; and would be incapable of doing anything in a spirit of meanness or revenge. Neither would such a character cherish unworthy suspicions of another; nor, under the guise of friendliness, lay verbal traps to bring about the humiliation of a brother. In a word, we cannot

conceive of a great-souled man doing anything little and despicable.

One striking feature of soul or character is the readiness to overlook and forgive slights, wrongs and injuries of different descriptions.

A second feature is the quickness to give credit to others for the merit they possess and works they have performed. Such a man does more than this: he is willing to pass in silence over his own achievements and victories, and his commendation and praise be given to others who otherwise would have been overlooked. This is true greatness. This is magnanimity itself.

Gideon possessed this spirit in an abundant measure. It cropped out when he was in the flush of his wonderful victory over the Midianites, in the reply he made to the angry speech of the Ephraimites. It will be remembered that these last-named people did not join in the battle until Gideon had defeated the enemy and was driving them towards the Jordan. The tribe above mentioned then joined in the pursuit and killed the two Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. After the fight the Ephraimites chided Gideon very sharply about his failure to send for them earlier; whereupon this great-minded leader of the three hun-

dred made one of the noblest speeches of his life in the words: "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? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you?"

It took a noble man to make this speech. A little character could not have uttered it. The two-by-four nature would have found it not only difficult, but impossible to divide honors, much less give the greater credit to anyone else than himself.

Admiral Sampson found himself unable to state, in his dispatches to Washington City, that Schley had won the Santiago victory. Even preachers discover an unwillingness to give credit to others of their vocation for mighty sermons and mightier performances in the Christian life. Then men damn each other with faint praise. The fear with many seems to be that the stock of honor and glory is not enough to go around, and so they would appropriate all that can be had.

We recently read two letters from the same writer, and which appeared in the same copy of the paper. In one the Evangelist gave a most glowing and flattering description of his own meeting, not sparing

certain adjectives and adverbs. In the other letter he referred to another Evangelist's meeting which he attended for several days, and the reference was without a word of commendation, but contained a blow instead; and then the writer passed on to speak of a second meeting of his own which he had begun, and which he proceeded to puff, and yet the revival services he ignored had resting upon them, from beginning to end, the favor and power of God. The composer of the two letters did not possess the magna anima. Had he met the Ephraimites, as did Gideon, he would have reversed the speech of that leader, and said: "You do well, you men of Ephraim, to worry and be mortified. You did almost nothing, while I did everything. You killed two men who were running and doing their best to get away, while I put a whole army to flight and slaughtered them by thousands. But your getting angry does not alter facts. You did simply nothing in comparison with me."

Magnanimity is notably lacking in other instances and lives that we have not space to mention in this chapter. We have confined ourselves to its manifestation in Gideon in his giving praise to others rather than to himself, and, more than that,

ascribing greater honor to them than he reserved for his own proneness and achievements.

The noble leader of Israel actually anticipated, by his own lips, the words of Paul, and was "In honor preferring one another."



XVII.
THE SNARE OF GIDEON.



HE first man in the land was now Gideon. He was the conqueror of the enemies of his country and had been made Judge of Israel. The blessing of God was upon him, and he possessed the favor, confidence and love of the people. And yet, in the face of all this honor and glory, we see the man going down under the double snare of gold and false worship. The fall brought not only trouble to himself, but evil to the nation, as a degenerate leader and corrupted religion are bound to bring woe to any people.

In the very flush of his victory Gideon got his eyes fixed on certain golden ornaments worn by the Ishmaelites, which represented a vast fortune. And so he secured them. With the entrance of covetousness came idolatry, for the Bible declares that "Covetousness is idolatry." An image of worship was made out of a part of the gold and afterwards erected or set up in Ophrah; and the Bible says that "all Israel went thither a whoring after it." After this, on

the death of Gideon, the people worshipped Baal, one wrong step leading to others deeper, darker and more damnable.

Why is it that so many great and useful men, before finishing their course on earth, will write, say or do something that, if it does not undo all their previous work, leaves some kind of blemish on the good name or fame, causing the wicked to laugh and the righteous to grieve?

The Bible tells of just such happenings in the lives of Saul, Samson, Balaam, David, Judas, Demas, Mark and a number of others.

History bears witness to the same melancholy fact from John Calvin, who had a man burned at the stake on theological and doctrinal grounds, and to Aaron Burr, who, after a life of brilliant service, plotted the overthrow of his country.

S. S. Prentiss, the gifted orator from Mississippi, fell back exhausted at the conclusion of one of his most wonderful speeches, when a member of Congress leaped to his feet, bent over the prostrate man and shouted in his pallid face: "Die, Prentiss, die!" His idea was that the eloquent speaker before him had reached the highest point of earthly success and glory, and should pass away thus at his very best.

When we study the spiritual life, the

same character of facts confront us. Paul said to the Galatians: "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?"

The "hindrance," it is noticeable, came after the "running well." The twofold snare of Gideon presented itself after his great victory. David's temptation drew nigh after he had performed some of the noblest acts of his life and composed a number of his sweetest Psalms.

The teaching from these and many other scriptural instances is, that awful moral lapses and falls may take place after years of remarkable services and faithful living.

An humble-spirited preacher is made a bishop and develops into an autocrat or pope. A gifted but lowly-hearted country boy enters the ministry, has success, gets his head turned, develops oratory, strives for popularity, and by-and-by a backslider in heart and life is in the pulpit giving announcements and pounding the Bible. A faithful layman, entrusted with a large sum of money, is true for years, and then, in middle life, listens to the Tempter, and first uses, and, later, purloins sacred funds and flies from the country a disgraced man.

Time would fail to tell of men who, after ten, twenty, thirty and forty years of correct moral and even religious living, went down under some sudden or prolonged

temptation, and got as far from God as they had been previously distant from the world and the Devil.

The snares that trap and catch men are different; but Satan, who seems to give no man up while he is living, finds some way by which to confuse, entangle, sidetrack and secure his downfall if it be possible.

The snare in Gideon's case, as has been said, was gold; with Samson and David, lust; with Saul, envy; with Balaam and Judas, money; with Demas, the love of this present world.

To this day men are falling away from duty and God on account of these things. And because the Devil has had such success in the employment of these baited traps and flower-covered pitfalls, he is as persistent in his temptations these days as in former times. He knows the power of the snare and the weakness of the nature he has to deal with, and never seems to be discouraged.

This is the reason that the Bible has so much to say about "Watching and Praying;" about working out one's salvation with fear and trembling; and utters the peculiarly solemn words, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

We have all known men who not only

thought they stood, but really did stand in grace and were used of God; and yet we have seen them sour, grow bitter, become envious, backslide in heart, backslide in life and then lay around for years as helpless, useless and melancholy in appearance as the wrecks of ships thrown by a storm on the beach and left after that to whiten and fall to pieces as the days and months rolled by.

God save us from the snare of Gideon and from those of Saul, Samson, David, Judas and Demas and from any and every other kind which the enemy of our souls would place in position to cripple and capture us, and finally, to destroy and damn us, both soul and body, in hell forever.



XVIII.
THE FINAL SCENE.



HE writer of the Book of Judges says, in the conclusion of the eighth chapter, that Gideon "died in a good old age." In another verse is the statement that as soon as Gideon was dead the "children of Israel turned again and went after Baal." In Hebrews Paul says that "he died in the faith."

From these different passages we gather that the famous leader of the "three hundred" must have repented of his error and got right with God, for it is said that "he died in the faith."

Not only that, but his influence for good must have been re-established, for the instant he died, and not until he died, the people of Israel went after Baal. This teaches most unmistakably the restraining power of the man and the ascendancy for good he regained and which he then wielded until the hour of death.

Not all men get back to God from their life-strayings, but when such wanderers do return, the coming home rejoices not only

Heaven but every true child of God on earth. The more prominent and useful they were the sadder their lapse or fall is felt to be, and the deeper is the joy if they get back to salvation and usefulness.

A man's gifts and power for good will naturally make him a target for the Devil. In the Boer War, in South Africa, the best marksmen were stationed in tree-tops and upon lofty crags to pick off the English officers, and, as a consequence, we read that the mortality among them was simply dreadful.

Satan knows that some men are worth more to God than others, and that their fall would mean more than that of those less prominent and successful; and so he makes peculiar and persistent and violent attacks upon them. Death is said to love a shining mark; and so does the great adversary. How he must gloat in entangling them in his toils on earth and seeing them bound in everlasting chains in hell.

If such a character is wounded, but recovers strength and power again, it naturally brings dismay to the Devil and a great joy and thankfulness to the people of God.

But how much more blessed and inspiring it is to see a man faithful to God and truth and duty from the start to the finish of his career. It commends the cause of

God, commands respect, stimulates faith and brings in a great army of new volunteers.

David, Samson and Gideon went into sin and error before completing their course in life. They were restored, and died in the faith; but the blemish was left on their name and fame and the blot on the pages of their history.

There were other characters like Job, Daniel, Joseph and Paul who never failed. They were true to God through trouble, temptation, worldliness and persecution. Heaven has long ago approved them. Nor is this all, for mankind itself, in reading of their trials and triumphs, their battles and victories, has also passed sentence and declared them to be the real heroes and victors of this world. Truly, it is better to be like this latter class than the former; and we can be.

The Scripture is faithful to warn us concerning the possibility of disastrous failure. "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?" Again we have the passage, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, that I, after having preached the Gospel to others, may be a castaway;" and still again, the solemn passage, "Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The same Bible, however, tells us that we need not fall. The promise is that "He will keep us from falling;" that "He is able to do for us exceeding abundant above all that we can ask or think;" while Paul adds, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day."

It was a heart-stirring scene in the old-time days of the South to see all the slaves gather from the fields at dusk with their bags and baskets stuffed full and piled high with beautiful snow-white cotton. The laborers would stand or sit around in the shadows of the early night, while their days' work was weighed and publicly proclaimed.

But it will be a far more wonderful sight to behold the toilers of Christ coming up from every land, and, at the Judgment Day, lay down before their God their trophies, sheaves and good works—the labors of a lifetime.

The unspeakably sorrowful feature connected with the close of a great war and the return of the soldiers is that so many who went forth never come back, but are left sleeping under the soil of many a bloody battlefield or in the obscure graveyard of some far distant hospital or prison.

Far sadder than this will it be if many

who were once soldiers of Christ and marched away to fight His battles should have been wounded, captured or destroyed by the enemy and never come back.

The Devil will finally surrender, the war on earth be over and then the Celestial army, the Church Triumphant, will appear returning to enter upon everlasting peace, when lo! it is seen that many who once fought in the ranks for Christ are not beheld in the home-coming. They have been left on some distant field of sin. They were mortally wounded by Satan. They were not faithful unto death. Like the angels, they kept not their first estate. Like Baalam, Judas, Saul and Demas, they fell and "went unto their own place" in the world of the lost, the eternal captives of the Devil.

How we pray that all of God's Israel may be saved, that those who read these lines, as well as he who writes them, may endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ, fight a good fight, keep the faith, and dying, find our latest foe under our feet at last. May we be in our places on that wonderful day when the Saints come marching into Heaven from all climes and nations of the earth. And may we all have the King to smile upon us, and bless us, and say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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