

trumpet (Judges 6: 34) to gather them together. But God gave Gideon two signs. A fleece was wet with dew, but there was no dew on the ground. The next night there was dew on the ground and none on the fleece. Gideon gathered an army of 32,000 men, but God reduced it to 300. Each man had a pitcher with a torch in it and also a trumpet. They kept the torches in the pitchers so as not to be seen until they got close to the Midianites. Then throwing down the pitchers they raised the torches aloft, blew the trumpets with all their might and shouted the battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" The Midianites were utterly confused at the sudden blaze of the torches and the shrill sound of the trumpets, and fled in terror. Midianites: an ancient people who bought and sold goods in Palestine in the time of Jacob. (Gen. 37: 28.) Moses fled from Egypt to Midian (Ex. 2: 15), and married the daughter of a priest of Midian, Jethro (Ex. 3: 1). The Midianites lived in the peninsula of Arabia near Mount Sinai. They had large herds of cattle and camels, and jewellery in abundance (Judges 8: 26), which Gideon took for spoil.

I. GIDEON'S ARMY.—Ver. 1.—Jerubabai: a name that was given him from his destroying the groves and altars of Baal. It means, "Let Baal plead;" thus speaking of Gideon as one who was "in conflict with Baal." Gideon: "hewer," or "feller." Well of Harod: supposed to be a great fountain seen at the foot of Mount Gilboa, on the north side. In the valley: of Jezreel, here six miles (north to Moreh or "Little Hermon").

Ver. 2.—Too many: if they gained the victory, they would think it was their own bravery, and not the Lord's might that had prevailed. Mine own hand hath saved me: God would not let Israel say that. It is God who saves us from the yoke of sin!

Ver. 3.—Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return: and the Midianites being more than four to one, 22,000 of the people went home discouraged. Oh! soft hearts, when God was among them! From Mount Gilead: perhaps there was another "Mount Gilead" west of the Jordan—some elevation so called. Or "Mount Gilead" might be a rallying cry, indicating the cause or standard of Gideon, who was of Gilead. Some think it is a copyist's error for "Gilboa."

II. THE LORD'S THREE HUNDRED.—Ver. 4.—Yet too many: still the people would think they delivered themselves. What a foe to all right trust *self-trust* is! I will try them: test them, or put them to the proof. They would know nothing of this—only Gideon. We often do not know when we are being tested: but we have the benefit of the trial all the same.

Ver. 5.—Lappeth of the water: in the East they often throw up water into the mouth with the hand very skillfully. Much less time consumed than in getting down to the water with the mouth. These men showed watchfulness and zeal. They would suppose they were marching to battle, and would waste no time, nor indulge themselves.

Ver. 6.—Three hundred men: Gideon's three hundred, the three hundred at Thermopylae, Scarlett's onset of three hundred at Balaklava—thus in history "three hundred men" have often distinguished themselves. Bowed down: the Rabbies explain it that these men had been accustomed to abject and long prostrations in Baal's worship, and the two different actions indicated (though unthought of by themselves) who were of Baal, and who of Jehovah.

Ver. 7.—By the three hundred men: by these men who have been drawn out of the large number; by the men of faith; for God can save by many or by few. What an influence, for ages after, this deliverance must have had on the public mind.

Ver. 8.—Victuals in their hand, and trumpets: a question may be asked, "Did the rest of the 32,000 men

do anything to help Gideon's victory?" Yes; they left provisions for the three hundred, and each chief of a band led his trumpet and torch (or "lamp") so that each man of the three hundred, posted a distance apart, and blowing his trumpet, and flashing his torch, and breaking his "pitcher," would seem in the darkness like the leader of a band. And the Midianites would think an overwhelming host had suddenly attacked them.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. The victory of Gideon is a strength to good principles all over the world, and for all time. Christianity is engaged now in just such an onset, and the enemy is "beneath us in the valley."

2. Whenever God has work to do, He finds a man to do it.

3. In as small things as "lapping water," a man's character is revealed and tested.

4. Many in heaven will be surprised to find themselves ranked with Gideon as great conquerors for God.

5. Where is Gideon referred to, with commendation, in the New Testament?

THE ARMY OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON.

Sept. 2, 1893.

THE DEATH OF SAMSON.

{ Judges 16: 21-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people."—Ps. 68: 35.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Pride brings destruction; prayer brings strength.

CONNECTION.—From Gideon's victory to Samson's death is computed to be 126 years. Samson was of the tribe of Dan, born at Zorah, near the border of the Philistines, north-west of the portion of Judah. He was a Nazirite, devoted to God from his birth. He had gained victories over the Philistines, and had ruled as "Judge" in (perhaps only a part of) Israel for twenty years. A Philistine woman, with whom he had formed a weak and sinful intimacy, betrayed him to his doom as a prisoner and slave, by getting from him the secret of his great strength—which was keeping his Nazirite vow, and cutting his hair broke that vow. His character showed great blemishes.

NOTES.—Philistines: were in Palestine when Abraham arrived there (Gen. 21: 34), and were a warlike people, so that the children of Israel in coming from Egypt passed by their country (Ex. 13: 17). They lived in a narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean sea, forty miles long, and on the western borders of the tribe of Judah. Goliath was a Philistine from the city of Gath (1 Sam. 17: 4). They were frequently at war with the Israelites. Gaza is one of the oldest cities in the world, and was in existence before Sodom was destroyed. (Gen. 10: 19.) It was one of the principal cities of the Philistines, and now has a population of 16,000. Dagon: one of the gods of the Philistines. His idol had the body of a fish and the face and arms of a man. It was a temple of Dagon that Samson pulled down at Gaza. He also had a temple at Ashdod (1 Sam. 5: 3) where the idol was found fallen flat on the floor the morning after the ark of the Lord was placed beside it.

I. SAMSON'S CAPTIVITY.—Ver. 21.—Philistines; dwelling near the sea-coast; an active and warlike people; idolaters. "Palestina" and "Palestine" are derived from "Philistine." Put out his eyes: a cruelty often practised anciently upon prisoners in war. It was supposed they could never be dangerous again. Bound him with fetters of brass: prison-life in heathen and uncivilized lands is, above all conception horrible. Brass here means