

war, all Israel went up to battle, and the unity of the people was thereby strikingly manifested. The first conflict at Ai (Josh. vii. 1-5), the only exception to this rule, resulted in the defeat of those who took part in it. In a time of declension, it is otherwise. When all the people went up with Gideon, Jehovah said to him : " the people that are with thee are *too many* for me to give the Midianites into their hands," for the danger was that Israel would *vaunt themselves* against Jehovah, saying : " Mine own hand hath saved me." At such a period God takes special care to repress the pride that would attach credit to man in a work which belongs exclusively to Himself. Christendom in the present day boasts of the number of its adherents, under the impression that it sees therein a factor in the work of God. If any work is wrought of Him, she attributes it to herself ; and, like Laodicea, prides herself in her resources : " I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

This then is the first characteristic of God's testimony in the midst of ruin : fewness of numbers and absence of display.

In verse 3, we find the second characteristic : " Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead." Moses had formerly given this command to the children of Israel : " What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted ? let him go and return unto his house, *lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart* "