

That erstwhile were his spirit's citadel,
 He bade her watch the door and say to those
 Who sought him that she knew not where he was;
 And then this humbled man whose brandished spear
 Oft struck dread to the heart of Israel,
 Tired, thirsty, craved a drink! Thus fortune oft
 Will pluck us from the place we fain would keep;
 And when the vessel to his mouth he raised—
 His eyes erect—she saw her time and grasped
 A hammer, and with rapid strokes she smote
 The foe she long had hated in her heart;
 So he fell down as the stalled ox that falls
 Before the deadly blow of some strong swain.
 Thus Sisera died, and when proud Barak came,
 Seeking alive the man they all had feared,
 Jael exultant, cried: "Lo, there he lies!"
 So God subdued the foe of Israel,
 And it was meet within the ridded land
 That Deborah should smite her lyre again,
 And so we have the rich and deathless song:

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"Praise ye the Lord, for victory He wrought,
 Sing for the yoke of years is broken quite.
 Thank Him that when upon our borders late
 The boastful enemy deemed us their prey.
 Our men left flock and field and routed them,
 As when sere leaves are scattered by the blast.
 Hear, all ye rulers of the neighboring realms,
 This was the God of Hosts our fathers knew
 In stress of war, or when from Sinai's height
 His will was read, and He has come once more
 Back to the needy world and shown Himself.
 'Tis like the break of day when the long night
 Encouraged harmful things to leave their dens.
 Alas! dark days were ours in Israel—
 Order and Peace had fled our common ways,
 Terror and Anarchy held carnival
 Where erstwhile meek Content sat by the fire.
 At all our gates the shout of War was heard.
 But in our hands nor spear nor shield was seen.
 Strange gods usurped the place that Yahveh held.
 But that is changed! and now my heart is warmed
 To those brave men who jeopardized their lives;
 And all those folk who company with Peace,
 And maidens fair who gather at the well,
 Will hear men who wrought Sisera's overthrow
 Rehearse their tales of the great days of war.
 My heart is moved and Passion bids me shame
 Those who of Reuben so unstable proved,
 Who held a shepherd's crook when the day called
 For spears, and roamed at ease the dreamy hills!
 Dan, Asher, Gilead, wedded to their ships
 And gain, recked not that others risked their lives.
 Time puts a mark against those thewless tribes
 No tears of after years shall wash away.
 But words fail me to tell of Zebulun,
 Of Naphtali and Issacher, the men
 Who braved the danger in the harried North;

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Of Benjamin and Ephraim, in the South.
 The patriot souls who put their armour on
 When Barak blew his trumpet; ah, that shout
 Will linger everlastingly, yea it
 Will be a rallying cry in far off times
 Whenever Freedom asks heroic things!
 Their re-inforcements were the very heavens,
 The horses broke their hoofs in sheer retreat.
 A lasting curse to Meroz must belong.
 For he stood neutral in this trying time.
 But lasting glory shall to Jael cling;
 Her death-fraught hammer Destiny will hang
 Within that wondrous armoury where bide
 Weak things by which God oft confounds the strong.
 Ah! war has tragedies, for there remain
 At home those who the loneliest vigils keep
 And in Harosheth, behind lattices
 Sisera's mother and her ladies wait,
 Counting beforehand the rich spoils they deem
 That he again will wrest from Israel;
 But the day wanes, and up the long white road
 No dust of victor's chariot wheels appears.
 Hear them forecast the fate of Israel's maids.
 Hear them count o'er the toll of needlework;
 But they will learn that Evil has an end.
 And Sisera's hands hold nothing in them now!
 While Jael's blows have earned her deathless fame.
 So may Thine enemies all perish, Lord,
 But ever may the cause of Righteousness
 Grow into glory like a summer's morn.

* * * * *

And now the land had rest for forty years.

Alexander Louis Fraser

Park St. Manse,
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