

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 40.)

What characterizes declension?(Ch. I 17-36.)

We have seen signs of declension in the verses which we have been considering, while the state of the people was still good. Now we shall see in what declension, properly speaking, consists. It is not the same as ruin, which is declension fully matured, such as we find in Ch. ii. Both reappear in the history of the Church, and in proof of this we have but to read the epistles to the seven churches. (Rev. ii, iii.) Declension in Ephesus leaving her first love,—ruin in Laodicea, whom the Lord is obliged to spew out of His mouth.

What, then, is declension? In a word, we may say, *worldliness*. The heart, principles and walk are in unison with the world. This is invariably how declension begins, and we may well understand the "Take good heed to yourselves" in Josh. xxiii. 11. How easily this snare might be avoided, if the hearts of God's children were upright before Him. But instead of dispossessing the Canaanites, Israel is afraid of them, tolerates them, and dwells with them. So, also, the Church, looked at as a whole, is allied with the world. Later on we shall see the disastrous results of this alliance. Suffice it for the present that God's