

10 p.m. *Newly set the watch*; just posted the guards, so that the attack was planned for soon after 10. *Blew . . trumpets . . brake . . pitchers . . held . . lamps . . cried.* The sudden blare of the horns, the crashing of the pitchers, the blaze of the torches and the cry of the three hundred, breaking in at midnight on the slumbering Midianites, would throw the camp into the wildest confusion. There is a story of an Arab chief in the eighteenth century, who, with his followers, escaped from a fortress in which he was besieged by a vastly superior force, through the employment of a device like that of Gideon.

V. 21. *Stood every man in his place*; not rushing in, sword in hand, but remaining as they were, on three sides of the camp, waving their flaring torches and shouting their war cry. *All the host ran . . cried . . fled.* Panic-stricken, they made off in the one direction open to them.

Light from the East

THE DAY OF MIDIAN—The people of Palestine have never made friends with the sea; they have never been sailors. But on

that side of the country which lies away from the Mediterranean Sea lies the desert, a great sea of sand and gravel. With the desert the men of Palestine have always had a great deal to do. From the desert came the ancestors of the Canaanites as well as the fathers of Israel. Out of the desert came Israel's brethren and rivals, Moab, Ammon and Edom, Midian and Amalek. The inhospitable coast line is a great barrier, but Palestine rolls off into the desert without a dividing line. The land may be invaded at any point by hungry nomads who are ready to carry off your grain or your cattle. Boaz had to sleep on his threshing floor. The men of the desert swarm into Moab, Gilead and to Hauran; they swarm across the Jordan as in ancient time. The villagers have no way to secure their crops except by buying off the marauders. They pay them a tithe of their grain and are safe. This tax they call a "gift of brotherhood"; villagers and nomads are brothers! We should call it blackmail. If the tax of brotherhood is withheld, the nomads clear the threshing floors.

THE LESSON APPLIED

The Weakness of Numbers, vs. 1-4. Gideon was facing the Midianites with thirty-two thousand men under his command. The word came from the Lord, "The people that are with you are too many." So the offer was made that those who were afraid to fight might retire. Twenty-two thousand were safety-first men. Two out of three were cowards. This left Gideon with only ten thousand men. Again came the word, "The people are yet too many." So another test was arranged to reduce the numbers, and Gideon was left with only three hundred men to engage in battle.

The lesson is that numbers are less important than spirit. Gideon would have been defeated with twenty-two thousand men who would flee and disorganize the battle when the fighting began. Better three hundred men who would not quit. Cromwell did not trust to large numbers, but to the quality of his Ironsides who feared God but did not fear men. Communion rolls are not

to be judged by the number of names carried, but by the energy and consecration of the church members. Better a hundred active Christian workers than a thousand drones. Jesus Christ entrusted his work to twelve men whom he had trained.

We attach great weight to statistics in which every one is counted alike, when one person in earnest will do more than a hundred nominal supporters. A few consecrated men praying at the side of a haystack have counted more in the history of Christian missions than thousands whose Christian service stopped with formal piety. "Is the immediate conquest of the world possible? The question is ridiculous. The world contains millions of Christians. But the task does not need millions. Millions ought to be able to evangelize the entire universe. Fifty men of the stamp of Paul and Xavier and Wesley would make Christ known to every living soul on the face of the earth in fifty years. If I could call spirits from the vast deep, and if