

skill some have shown! This man at our left has been a famous Canaan-fighter all the days of his manhood, while his neighbors have been captains of heroic bands of patriots. If each of the ten thousand is a match for his thousand assailants, then come on, Midian and Amalek! Ten millions of men—as good as they—will meet you.

Does Gideon's heart swell with pride?

"Too many," God is saying. But how will he get rid of any of these when no one wishes to go? Strange indeed is the command that is issued. Let Gideon's army go to the water and drink! There they are, drinking away, one lapping the gathered crystal out of his hand, another bowing his mouth to the water, and all wondering, doubtless, what crazy motive Gideon has in this compulsory drinking by ten thousand men.

"Take those that lap with their tongues," God is saying. What, not the historic fighters, the men who

have been Canaan's foes so many years? Not the men who have been leaders of war bands? They may be the best-armed fighters in the camp. Let them go, let them go! They did not lap when they drank. "O, crazy Gideon!" the people say. "What do you mean? Only three hundred chosen, and not because they can fight, or have weapons, but can lap water! This expected battle may be their first, and have they weapons? Nothing is said of sword or spear. They may have come with only their hands, and now into these are put—trumpets? See them, the poor, pitiful three hundred, with only trumpets in their hands! They shall have other armor, and, in the mean time can you not imagine them turning in their helplessness to the almighty Jehovah in the skies? Up there is the armor for Gideon's band, but when weapons are received, they are only—lamps and pitchers!

B. C. 1120.]

Judg. 16, 21-31.



[Commit to memory verses 29, 30.]

21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Ga'za, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

23 Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Da'gon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, Our god hath delivered Sam'son our enemy into our hand.

24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Oell for Sam'son, that he may make us sport. And they called for Sam'son out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26 And Sam'son said unto the lad that held him by

LESSON XI. DEATH OF SAMSON.

[Dec. 16.

the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women: that beheld while Sam'son made sport.

28 And Sam'son called unto the LORD, and said, O LORD God, remember me. I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Sam'son took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Sam'son said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him, and buried him between Zo'rah and Es'h'ta-el, in the burying-place of Ma-no'ah his father; and he judged Is'ra-el twenty years.

General Statement.

From the time of Gideon we pass over a century and a quarter to the time of Samson. A new enemy has arisen, more powerful and more relentless than the former foes of Israel. For a hundred years the Philistines were the terror of the land, requiring not one deliverer, as the previous oppressors, but many in succession. The last three judges and the first of the kings carried on a constant and often unavailing war against these oppressors. Not until David sat on the throne did victor and vanquished change places and the five cities of the Philistines become subject to the twelve tribes. At the time when Samson arose to begin the deliverance the Philistines held all Palestine under absolute subjection, which no revolt could break. The hero was endowed with the power and the gifts which might have made him the liberator of his land. Had he but fulfilled God's plan, and lived to accomplish his mission, the Philistine yoke might have

been broken a century earlier in the history. But he lived an aimless, frivolous, selfish, and sensual life, playing practical jokes when he should have been winning victories, spending his time in guilty pleasure, and soiling his Nazirite consecration. The champion became the captive, and with blinded eyes dragged the heavy millstones in the prison. But the day of vengeance came at last. With lengthening locks came renewed strength. Samson stands now between the pillars of the Philistine temple, with a thousand nobles before him, and multitudes on the roofs above. He breathes a prayer to the God of Israel, a prayer for vengeance upon his foes; then summons all his strength, and plunges into death with himself all the Philistine hosts. In the destruction of that hour was wrought the first in a series of great victories completed a century later in the conquest of David.

Explanatory and

Practical Notes.

He possessed great opportunities of freeing Israel, but lost them by his own folly and lust. See the previous verses of this chapter for an account of his capture by the Philistines. We trace the failure of his life to four causes: 1. His frivolity: living for pleasure instead of purpose. 2. His selfishness: doing all his great deeds for himself instead of his nation. 3. His worldly companionship: seeking his associations among Philistines and not Israelites. 4. His sensuality: throwing away his strength while blind with lust. (1) How many noble lives have been wrecked on these rocks! Put out his eyes. A common practice in ancient warfare, portrayed on the Assyrian monuments. It was wrought either with a spear or a red-hot iron. Says Bishop Hall: "His eyes were the first offenders



Verse 21. The Philistines. A powerful people living on the Mediterranean shore bordering the tribe of Judah. They held five strong cities, Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Gath, in a confederation; and during most of the time from Samson to David they held control over southern Israel. The name *Philistine* is a corruption of the word *Philistia*. Took him. Samson, the thirteenth judge, the son of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan.