

holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but *shall surely be put to death.*" It would take me too far from my purpose to attempt to vindicate this law or examine the criticisms which have been offered upon the last clause: one remark of most extensive application must suffice. He who gives and sustains life has an unchallenged right to take it away again in any manner that he may see fit to determine. There is a fallacy in the use of the term murder in relation to this transaction. If it be universally true that the killing of a human being constitutes murder, then Abraham, when he took the knife to slay his son in obedience to the divine command, was preparing to commit murder! If this be not so, then neither did Jephthah commit murder when in obedience to the law he executed the rash vow which he had made.

The mention made of Jephthah's name among the worthies who by the power of faith "waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens," presents no difficulty, when it is remembered that it occurs in the same category with that of Samson. The writers of Scripture often commend the characteristics of men in general, without intending to justify every particular action; the case of Lot may be cited as an example. From all that is recorded, Jephthah would certainly appear to have repented of his rashness as heartily as Samson did of his folly.

But it may be objected—would you represent the Deity as taking delight in human sacrifices, and granting success upon such a condition? I would desire to speak reverently when canvassing the will and conduct of Him whose ways are far above out of our sight. But I would suggest whether there is any proof that He takes delight in a state of celibacy forcibly imposed, or

whether a state of civil and social extinction be more pleasing to Him than one of natural death. Again; let it be considered on whom the calamity would have fallen most heavily upon the supposition of a life spent in perpetual virginity; upon the innocent daughter, not upon the rash father. For she must still have lived in her father's house, the temple not having been built, and no provision being made for the attendance of any but the tribe of Levi about the Tabernacle; and religious houses for unmarried women being unknown at that period, he would therefore enjoy her company and filial attentions; but she —. I need not, however, follow the saddening train of thought, so convinced am I that it is a fiction of the imagination.

The full weight of the bitter stroke must have fallen upon the surviving father, if she died in the prime of youth, and that through his rash impetuosity. To live and have the light of life quenched in darkness by his own hand, to look upon her empty seat and reflect that his hasty words had made it vacant, to have his recollection of glorious achievements dashed by the vision of his beloved daughter as she came forth to greet her victorious father, to falter in the relation of his military exploits, because the dreadful sequel would obtrude itself upon his mind: this must have been to die a thousand deaths without the glory that her one death purchased for her.—And is not this in perfect harmony with the usual course of the divine procedure, in which the guilty party though apparently suffering less, in reality endures far more than his victim? I have said far less than might be said on this interesting subject; and if any one thinks that I have omitted some points that seem to him important, let him ascribe it, not to any want of disposition fairly to meet every difficulty, but to an anxiety to