

There is something very suggestive in the position in which we find Gideon when he is first introduced to our notice. John Newton, whose praise is in all the Churches, wrote three essays, which he was pleased to call A, B, and C. The one describes grace in the blade; B, grace in the ear; C, the full corn in the ear. A young clergyman, in conversation with Newton, with singular modesty, told him he recognized his own likeness in C. "Ah!" says Newton, "I made a serious omission in describing C's character. I left out a very prominent feature." "O, what is it?" "C never recognizes his own likeness." This is a characteristic of true greatness. It is better known to others than to the professor. Self-conceit and true eminence never meet in the same person. Gideon was better known by others than by himself. Remarkable is the salutation of the angel—"Thou mighty man of valour." In the translation we see only a man of great physical strength, and brute courage to bring it into exercise. The word rendered "valour" is used to express intellectual and moral eminence as well as natural superiority. The "able men," entitled in God's judgment to rule, are according to the translation before us as "men of valour." Pharaoh wished Joseph to set such of his brothers as he knew to be "men of activity"—*men of valour*—over his cattle. There can be no doubt that in the former case there is more respect to *intellectual* than physical power; in the latter, Pharaoh must be understood to attach special importance to intellectual and moral qualities. Samuel's "virtuous woman" is a woman of *valour*. Ruth was known to be a *woman of valour*. We cannot doubt, therefore, that God's estimate of Gideon was founded on mental qualities rather than corporeal strength. The people of Abiezer knew him to be a man of great decision and energy of character. Although prudence suggested the propriety of destroying his father's idolatrous altar and grove by night, that he might do it without obstruction, there was no difficulty in fixing on the perpetrator of the outrage on the popular worship. So soon as the question is raised, any one can tell that it was Gideon who had done it. His father knew his worth; and when his life is demanded by a furious rabble, he is not so utterly besotted by idolatry, but that his natural good sense is called into exercise by parental affection, he refuses to give him up, and sternly insists that if Baal be a God he can take care of himself; and if not, the man who pleads for him should be promptly executed. Gideon seems to be the only one who was ignorant of his own great qualities. He was ready to acknowledge the humble position of his father's family, and esteemed himself the least in it. If ever the aspiring hope of taking a lead in Israel, or of successfully interposing for their deliverance from Midian, took hold of his mind, we have no recorded evidence of it. When the angel addresses him, we find him acting in conformity with the depressed circumstances of himself and his people—he is threshing wheat by the wine-press to hide it from the Midianites. God calls him to occupy a higher sphere. When God called Moses, he was tending the flock of his father-in-law in the desert. While still in Pharaoh's palace, the young courtier seems to have cherished some ambitious aspirations, and was disappointed that his brethren did not recognise their future deliverer; and God puts him into harness, to teach him that the man who is qualified to rule must have learned to serve. Court