

be thinned. The timid and fearful in an army being frequently a source of weakness, it would be without much regret that he should see the "twenty and two thousand" depart, although the discovery that so large a portion of the army were lacking in courage must have been a real disappointment. But how great must have been his surprise when he was told that there was yet too many, and that he must still further weaken his diminished force! But in this way he learned that God makes use only of such instruments as will magnify him. Had the deliverance which he proposed to work for Israel been ascribed to their strong army, where would have been their gratitude and praise to God, and where their trust in him for the time to come?

2. Every one knew why the twenty-two thousand had been sent back, but only Gideon knew there was to be a yet further diminution of the numbers. In perfect unconsciousness to the tests set them, the warriors went down to the water. In drinking they followed the natural dictates of their character and temperament, some throwing themselves on their knees, thoroughly to enjoy the refreshing draught, the others catching up hastily what was sufficient for their need, while still keeping the attitude of readiness and watchfulness. This slight difference made it evident which were the men to be relied upon, which were ready in a moment to respond to the call of their leader, and, disregarding their own desires, to carry out his designs. And so the decision was given. "By the three hundred men that lapped," was the word of the Lord to Gideon, "will I save you." God uses such instruments as fully respond to his purpose.

That battle-cry of Israel against the Midianites has not yet died away. "The sword of the Lord and of his warriors" still goes out against the enemy. For the Lord, now as then, uses human instruments for the carrying out of his purposes. But whom will he use?

(a) *Humble Instruments.* Not necessarily those who are poor in this world's goods, or humble in this world's esteem, though he does use multitudes of these; but those who are "poor in spirit," humble in mind, who know and confess that the power is in him alone, not in them.

(b) *Responsive Instruments.* Those who can sit loose to this world's interests and pleasures, even to such of them as are lawful and good. Those who can put aside their own ease. Those who are quick to hear His voice, and alert to answer the call. To such only is

given the honour of being "labourers together with God." 1 Cor. 3. 9. Is it not an honour worth seeking?

BEREAN METHODS.

Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Very briefly name or call forth from the class the oppressions and judges of the two hundred years between Joshua and Gideon. . . . Show the condition of Israel at this time. . . . Draw a map of the region here referred to: Mount Tabor; Hill Moreh; Mount Gilboa; Plain of Esdraelon, etc. . . . Show the relative positions of the two armies. . . . How Gideon came to lead the movement for freedom. . . . The testing by the water, what it showed. (See note on vers. 5, 6). . . . How the victory was gained. . . . Results of the victory. . . . Notice the character of a true leader in God's cause. (See Analytical and Biblical Outline). . . . Show illustrations of Gideon's character from the events of his life, both before and after the lesson. . . . Notice its teachings concerning those who are in God's warfare or work. (Gideon's three hundred. See Additional Practical Lessons). . . . Notice how God honours and rewards faith. . . . ILLUSTRATIONS. Small things may lead to great teachings. Prof. Agassiz was shown a petrification of a single fish-scale, and from it described, fully and precisely, the fish to which it belonged, though none had yet been discovered. Years afterward a petrified fish of the same kind was found in Kansas, and found to be just as the scientist had declared. So a small act, a look, the gait, or a feature, will reveal secret character. . . . "One man with God on his side is a majority," said a great reformer. . . . Cromwell's advice, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry."

References. FOSTER'S ILLUSTRATIONS. Prose, 2114, 6561. Ver. 3: Prose, 1122, 1123, 2256, 2264, 2272, 8707. Ver. 7: Prose, 1846, 1901, 1905, 4080, 7292, 9175; Poetical, 2157. Prose, 2985, 6043, 7227, 7228, 11370.

Lesson Word-Pictures.

"Crazy Gideon!" That is the opinion of an old warrior among Gideon's men. And see! Look off from the top of this hill down upon the tents of the invading Midianites. What a noisy, confused, vast grasshopper-swarm of idolaters! And beside the well of Harod, there is little Israel! "And yet our numbers are too large!" says the old warrior. "All the timid to go home! They might stay and help make our show respectable. Crazy Gideon!" Off they hurry. All day long they are going, by twos, by threes, by the score or hundred. Gideon's army all day is dropping