

us that "the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel : and because of the Midianites the Children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the Children of the East, even they came up against them ; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come to Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass, for they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude ; for both they and their camels were without number : and they entered into the land to destroy it."—Judges vi. 2–5. There must have been a great disparity in numbers between these vast predatory hordes and Gideon's small army. Yet, history furnishes many illustrious instances of small bodies of men having been victorious over great undisciplined masses ; especially when the former, as must have been the case with the Israelites, have been well acquainted with the local features of the country, and have been able to choose their own positions for defence or attack, and, when at the same time, they have been fired with enthusiasm, or roused to desperation in fighting for their country, their homes, and their lives. However, the very possibility that Gideon's army might have prevailed through resolute bravery, or any of what are called the chances of war, became, in God's account, an objection to their going into the battle in such numbers. He himself was to give them the victory, for their cry had come up before him, (vi. 7 ;) and, therefore, they must be so reduced in numbers as to have no ground "for vaunting themselves against Him, and saying, mine own hand hath saved me."—vii. 2. It had been established as a law in Israel, that on the occasion of making a general levy of the people for war, there should be a liberal exemption from actual service for those whose domestic or private circumstances had peculiar claims upon them. And the fearful and faint-hearted, especially, were to be warned to retire from the ranks.—(See Deut. xx. 8.) We find no instances on record