

altars, and every morning they went out early to pray at these.

One day Gideon was at work threshing out grain. He was working quietly in a hidden place because the Midianites (the enemy that we are to hear about in our story) came every year at harvest time and took away the cattle and the grain and all the things that the farmers of Israel had. Suddenly an angel came to Gideon and told him that God would save the country from the Midianites, and that he should be the leader. But first he must destroy the altar where his own father worshipped the heathen god.

Early in the morning when the men of Israel came out to pray, they found that their altar was broken, and when they knew that Gideon had done it they were so angry that they wanted to kill him. But Gideon's own father saved him, and talked to them about how wrong it was to have turned away from the God who had led them out of Egypt and had helped and blessed them for so many, many years. There is not time to tell all of the story, but Gideon became their leader, and soon, in answer to his message, soldiers from every town were hurrying to him.

The Midianites had come as they had so many other years at harvest time, and with them other soldiers, so that, as they lay at night in their great camp, they covered the seaside like grasshoppers, the Bible says,—hundreds and hundreds of them. At night Gideon and his servant went softly over to the edge of the great camp and there he heard a soldier telling about a dream he had had in which defeat came through "Gideon the son of Joash." Even the enemy knew that God was helping Gideon, and with a prayer of thanksgiving, and with greater faith and courage than ever, Gideon and his servant crept back through the darkness.

"Arise, for the Lord hath delivered unto

your hand the host of Midian," he said to his little band of three hundred soldiers. There had been many, many more soldiers with him, but God had wanted Israel to know that he was saving them from the enemy by his own love and power, and he could show them best if Gideon's army was very small. So first he sent back home every man that was the least bit afraid of the great army with its soldiers and spears, and its "camels without number." But there were still too many left, so God said to Gideon, "When your soldiers stop at the river to drink, the men who do not take time to kneel down and drink, but just dip up some water in their hands, are the ones you are to choose to help you."

The picture roll will show you the men drinking. That is how it happened that the soldiers of Gideon were so few. Another strange thing was that they did not carry any weapons at all, not a spear or a bow and arrow. Gideon gave each man a trumpet, a torch and an earthen pitcher! Surely these were strange things to fight with, weren't they?

The little army was divided into three parts, and softly, softly they crept down through the darkness to where the sleeping hosts of Midian lay. Suddenly all together they blew the trumpets and then cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and as they shouted they dashed the earthen pitchers to the ground where they crashed loudly, and the torches flashed out into the frightened, sleepy eyes of the enemy. It seemed to the Midianites as if there were Israelites everywhere when they saw the three hundred torches, and they were so terrified that they fled away, blindly slashing about with their swords and killing their own men as they ran.

And in all the world there has never been a greater victory than the one of Gideon and his band of brave men.

FROM THE PLATFORM

The first thing to which attention should be called is **THE DIMINISHED ARMY**. Question about the plan by which the force under Gideon was reduced until it numbered only 300. Discuss the reason for this reduction. Was it in order that, when the victory was won, the Israelites should have no reason to boast, but that it would be quite clear that it was God who had won the battle. Next, the **DEVICE OF GIDEON** (Print) should be taken up. The scholars will be interested in telling about the trumpets and pitchers and torches and the use that was to be made of them. The last point is the **DEFEAT OF MIDIAN** (Print). Bring out the com-