

cause of his weakness in virtuous ways. True, there was a grim humour pervading his life. The turning adrift into the Philistines' standing corn the foxes with the firebrands tied to their knotted tails, was not only vengeance, but a droll prank on the part of a giant. Indeed, the name Samson indicates "sunny," bright, and the jocular vein is seen in all his mighty doings. Yet the twenty years during which he judged Israel could not have been exhausted by the records we have regarding him, the inference plainly being that by those doings the Philistines were rendered comparatively harmless, and those twenty years of comparative peace were enjoyed through the means of one man. Peace presents few records; none the less is it truly great and good. The real history of righteousness is often that of uneventful sowing beside all waters. The connection of xvi. 1 with xv. 20 make plain that under Samson Israel had rest until the strong man, forfeiting his integrity, became weak as a child in the hands of his foes. Most frequently the cultivation of mere physical strength does not make sensitive the moral faculty; giants in muscle are not thereby made giants in heart and mind. Samson must therefore be judged by the rude times in which he lived, the situation of his tribe, and in light of those peculiarities of temperament most generally associated with possession of gigantic strength. Thus judged, we shall find much to commend, even follow. His strength was ever exercised upon his country's side, or in the redressing of a wrong; and we must not forget that in the absence of a central authority, each man becomes the avenger of his own wrong, and he who thus redresses a private wrong from a troublesome neighbour is really a public vindicator and benefactor: this was Samson.

Jephthah possesses more marked lines of heroism. The son of an u. married woman, he was thrust out from his father's house as though a bastard had no rights others were bound to respect. Dwelling apart, his brethren sought him. The spirit of revenge at least is absent, and his—what we would call—diplomatic correspondence with the king of Ammon, with the final appeal to Jehovah as judge (Judges xi.), show moral strength and courage. His vow is an acknowledged difficulty, and yet the heroism of both father and daughter sheds a kindlier light than the

sacrificial fire. Our living poet has caught the spirit of the daughter, which is but the reflex of the father's:—

"My God, my land, my father! these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that nature gave;
Lowered softly with a threefold cord of love,
Down to a silent grave.

"When the next moon was rolled into the sky,
Strength came to me that equalled my desire;
How beautiful a thing it was to die,
For God and for my sire!"

The deed was hateful, but the spirit which yielded an only child—the entire surroundings show tender attachments—was a spirit of heroic trust.

I can account for the enrolment of these names on this roll call of faith upon the principle nominal Christianity is too prone to forget, and which pressed upon the narrow-hearted Rabbis the truth that "other" than Jewish outcasts are to be gathered in. For those of us to whom Christ is preached, and upon whose acceptance He is constantly pressed, no excuse can be urged that will free us from the dread responsibility of rejection. By our light we shall be judged. If you say, "I cannot believe," after having earnestly sought, I can only say, God demands not impossibilities; but if you spell cannot by a latent *will not*, you cannot complain if upon you should fall the weight of eternal damnation. But no man has a right to be as severe with another as with himself; not that he is to allow compromise with evil. Samson's lust is hateful exceedingly; it was the wreck of his life, and the tale of vengeance is simply told. We are not at all concerned with any attempt to render the proceedings narrated in "Judges" less hateful than they should appear; lust is debasing, superstition cruel; but the man born amid and moulded by such surroundings may be at heart loyal to truth and supremely trustful in the God they have made their own. 2 Cor. viii. 12 states a rule of God's judgment. The widow's mite weighs more in eternity's balance than the wealth of the wealthy heartlessly given; and the rugged, oft-times mistaken, faith of those whose entire surroundings are against moral growth may have a truer grasp upon God's mercy than the sleek respectability which has no sincerity or usefulness to commend it. Judged by their light and intent, Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah have been deemed worthy of a place where names of worth alone are found. Judged by *our*