

ninth century had all but confined it within the walls of Constantinople. It is quite possible that the misgovernment of Samuel's sons may have opened the door to the re-establishment of Philistine rule. It is, at least, rather a strong course to dismiss the whole narrative as unhistorical because it presents some difficulties. History proverbially repeats itself, and history is full of improbabilities. The history of the siege of Leyden, as related by Motley, is as improbable as the Exodus, and if a similar story were recorded in the Old Testament, critics of Wellhausen's type would say that there was "not a word of truth" in it; that it was concocted to exaggerate the cruelty of the invaders and the heroism of the inhabitants of the land, and to create a belief in miraculous Divine interpositions. Especially would the story of the fall of the wall, leaving, as it did, the whole city undefended, having frightened away soldiers so valiant and experienced and hitherto so successful as the Spaniards, be dismissed with the most absolute contempt. To re-write history on the principle of abstract probabilities would be as futile a task as it would certainly be a dull one.

Among the instances of the skill of Wellhausen in finding contradictions where an ordinary intellect finds none, the story of Deborah and Barak stands pre-eminent. Most of us have read Deborah's song and the narrative that precedes it without discovering any glaring inconsistency. But in fact, we are told, the two stand in the most open opposition. The history deliberately falsifies the facts. Out of the kings of Canaan it makes one, as though Canaan were a single kingdom. Sisera, the head of the whole confederacy, descends in the narrative to the simple position of a general.¹ Sisera is killed in his sleep by a nail through his temples, whereas as a fact the blow was given while he was in the act of drinking, and he lay dead in the place where he fell. In our innocence we had supposed that the poet was permitted to indulge in a little idealism. It is a mistake. His statements must be as strictly accurate as a mathematical formula. It is a wonder

¹ One wonders sometimes whether critics of this school have ever read history. For instance, the tale of eight kings rowing their over-lord Edgar on the Dee.