

In those old times opposing forces would fight until their swords were broken, and then each would throttle his man until they both fell, teeth to teeth, grip to grip, death stare to death stare, until the plain was one tumbled mass of corpses, from which the last trace of manhood had been washed out.

Jephthah wins the day. Twenty cities lay captured at his feet. Sound the victory all through the mountains of Gilead. Let the trumpets call up the survivors. Homeward to your wives and children. Homeward with your glittering treasures. Homeward to have the applause of an admiring nation. Build triumphal arches. Swing out flags all over Mizpeh. Open up your doors to receive the captured treasures. Through every hall spread the banquet. Pile up the viands. Fill high the tankards. The nation is redeemed, the invaders are rooted, and the national honor is vindicated.

Huzza for Jephthah the conqueror ! Jephthah, seated on a prancing steed, advances amid acclaiming multitudes, but his eye is not on the excited populace. Remembering that he had made a solemn vow, that returning from victorious battle, whatsoever first came out of the doorway of his home, that should be sacrificed as a burnt offering, he has his anxious look upon the door. I wonder what spotless lamb, what brace of doves will be thrown upon the fires of the burnt offering. Oh horrors ! Paleness of death blanches his cheek. Despair seizes his heart. His daughter, his only child, rushes out of the doorway to throw herself in her father's arms and shower upon him more kisses than were wounds on his breast or dents on his shield. All the triumphal splendor vanishes. Holding back his child from his heaving breast, and pushing the locks back from the fair brow, and looking into the eyes of

inextinguishable affection, with choked utterance, he says, "Would God I lay stark on the bloody plain. My daughter, my only child, joy of my home, light of my life, thou art the sacrifice !"

The whole matter was explained to her. This was no whining, hollow-hearted girl into whose eyes the father looked. All the glory of sword and shield vanishes in the presence of the valor of that girl. There may have been a tremor of the lip as a roseleaf trembles in the sough of the south wind ; there may have been the starting of a tear like a raindrop shaken from the anther of a water-lily ; but with a self-sacrifice that man may not reach, and only woman's heart can compass, she surrenders herself to fire and to death. She cries out in the words of my text, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do unto me whatsoever hath proceeded from thy mouth."

She bows to the knife, and the blood, which so often at the father's voice had rushed to the crimson cheek, smokes in the fires of the burnt offering. No one can tell us her name. There is no need that we know her name. The garlands that Mizpeh twisted for Jephthah the warrior had gone into the dust ; but all ages are twisting this girl's chaplet. It is well that her name came not to us, for no one can wear it. They may take the name of Deborah, or Abigail, or Miriam, but no one in all the ages can have the title of this daughter of sacrifice.

Of course this offering was not pleasing to the Lord ; but before you hurl your denunciations at Jephthah's cruelty, remember that in olden times, when vows were made, men thought they must execute them, perform them, whether they were wicked or good. There were two wrong things about Jephthah's vow. First he ought never to have made it. Next having