

there is no "theology," and its praise of Jael is revolting to our moral sense. But it is still clear that, in so far as there is unity and strength to fight for *national* existence, it is inspired by the common faith of Yahweh. Samson marries outside his clan; the sons of Benjamin take wives by capture; Jephthah, the son of a strange woman, sacrifices his daughter; Gideon takes the spoils of war to make an image; Micah's mother uses the restored silver to make an image "unto Yahweh"; and the children of Dan think it a fine thing to steal the religious apparatus that other people have got carefully together (Jg. 18/17). This is not very edifying reading, either from the Jewish or the Christian point of view, but it is full of interest as a picture of life, political and religious, in those rude days. The noble effort of the great founder seems to have failed; it looks as if nothing great or permanent can come out of this disorder, this apparently disconnected and aimless struggle. But it is the turmoil of a new life, and not the convulsive struggles that betoken the last agony. Much in the previous civilization might be decadent, sensual; religious indulgence had weakened the life of the country, and its cities had no real bond of unity; but here were members of a new and virile race, fresh from the open country, their faces set towards the future, their faith alive in a real God, who showed His goings forth in the mightiest movements of nature and in the battles of their daily life. So even here there was a real movement towards a unity higher than that of the mere family or clan. From these stories we learn that religious ceremonies were connected with all the chief facts of life. The father of the family or head of the clan might officiate as the representative of the community, but there were also professional priests, men attached to a family or local sanctuary or wandering tribe. Men offered sacrifices and consulted the oracle on behalf of their patrons. But the elaborate system and finely regulated spiritual hierarchy of later times had not come into existence, though the ideas that it represented were in some cases struggling for expression. The prophet and the priest were not as clearly separated as in later days. Samuel acts in both capacities. One general difference there was, namely,