

chosen men of Gibeah, weakness which became strength in the Lord's service when it was an Ehud who fought. Here the left-handed were skilful against the Lord ; the hand which ought to have been apt in defence, was strong to attack and deceive those who confronted them.

When every preliminary was exhausted, Israel asked counsel of God (ver. 18). Judah shall go up first, was the reply of Him who was about to discipline Israel, and twenty-two thousand men of Judah were destroyed down to the ground. What grace God displayed in this defeat ! Israel must learn that, in contests between brethren, there could be neither victors nor vanquished, but that all must be vanquished for the Lord to triumph at the end. God made use of this defeat for the restoration of His beloved people. Israel came forth strengthened from a combat which had cost him his troops, for he came out of it judged in reality by God himself. When the twenty-two thousand fell, the men of Israel encouraged themselves (ver. 22). See what fruit their chastisement bore : First : It led them to seek again the presence of Jehovah. Secondly : Instead of human indignation, they were filled with sorrow according to God and their tears were the proof of it. Thirdly : Their sorrow was not transient, for they wept until even. Fourthly : They learnt to depend more truly on the word of God, and no longer say, "Which of us shall go up first ?" but "Shall I go up again ?" Fifthly : Affection for their brother