

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

CHAPTER I.

Judges i.

19 And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain: but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

Judges ii.

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

THIS book, supposed to have been written by Samuel the Prophet, covers a period of 300 years. During all of this time the children of Israel are in constant friction with the Lord and neighboring tribes, never loyal to either. When at peace with the Lord, they are fighting with their neighbors; when at peace with them, worshiping their gods and giving them their daughters in marriage, then the Lord is angry, and vents His wrath on them. Thus, they are continually between two fires; now repenting in sackcloth and ashes, and now, with the help of the Lord, blessed with victories.

Life with them was a brief period of success and defeat. It seems that the Lord, according to their ideas, had His limitations, and could not fight tribes who had iron chariots.

What could iron chariots be in the way of that Great Force which creates cyclones, hurricanes and earthquakes, or the pyrotechnics of a thunderstorm. How little these people knew of the Great Intelligence behind the laws of the universe, with whom they pretended to talk in the Hebrew language, and from whom they claimed to have received directions as to their treatment of women?

In the opening of this book Joshua still governs Israel. After

his death, the Lord raised up a succession of Judges, remarkable for their uprightness and wisdom; but they found it impossible to keep the chosen people in the straight and narrow path. The children of Israel did not learn wisdom by experience. They tired of a rigid code of morals, of a mystical system of theology, and of the women of their own tribe. There was a fascination in the manners and the appearance of a new type of womanhood which they could not resist. There should have been some allowance for these human proclivities. If the Jews of our day had followed this tendency of their ancestors and intermarried with other nations, there would have been by this time no peculiar people to persecute.

The most important feature of this book is the number of remarkable women herein described; six in number, Achsah, Deborah, Jael, Jephthah's daughter, Delilah, and two whose names are not mentioned—she who slew Abimelech, and the concubine of a Levite, whose fate was terrible and repulsive. There are many instances in the Old Testament where women have been thrown to the mob, like a bone to dogs, to pacify their passions; and women suffer to-day from these lessons of contempt, taught in a book so revered by the people.

E. C. S.

The writer of the Book of Judges is unknown. Professor Moore, of Andover Theological Seminary, supposes that the author used as a basis for his work an older collection of tales wherein the heroes of Israel and the varying fortunes of the people were related, and which, like all good tales, pointed a moral. In all Jewish literature is to be found the same moral—namely, that the prime cause of all of the evils which befell the Jewish people was unfaithfulness to Jehovah. "Adherence to the written law brings God's favor, while disobedience is followed by God's wrath and punishment."

It is not obedience to the inner truth of the individual soul that is made the spring of action, but obedience to an external authority, to a book, to a prophet, to a judge or to a king. In Judges, to woman in various ways is given an exalted position; she is not the abject

slave or unclean vessel, the drudge, the servile sinner, the nonentity, as depicted in other parts of the Bible.

Woman has at no time of the world's history maintained the high position which she commands to-day in the hearts of the best and most enlightened; but there were stages when her independence was an assured fact. With Christianity came the notion of man's dual nature; the physical was looked upon as sinful; this earth was merely preparatory for a life beyond. Woman, as the mother of the race, was not honored and revered as such, the monastic idea being considered more God-like, she was made the instrument of sin. To be born into this life was not a blessing so long as ascetism ruled supreme.

The Bible has been of service in some respects; but the time has come for us to point out the evil of many of its teachings. It now behooves us to throw the light of a new civilization upon the women who figure in the Book of Judges. We begin with Achsah, a woman of good sense. Married to a hero, she must needs look out for material subsistence. Her husband being a warrior, had probably no property of his own, so that upon her devolved the necessity of providing the means of livelihood. Great men, heroic warriors, generally lack the practical virtues, so that it seems befitting in her to ask of her father the blessing of a fruitful piece of land; her husband would have been satisfied with the south land. She knew that she required the upper and the nether springs to fertilize it, so that it might yield a successful harvest.

C. B. N.

CHAPTER II.

Judges iv.

4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, judged Israel at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

7 And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army,

with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet; and Deborah went up with him.

SOME commentators say that Deborah was not married to a man by the name of Lapidoth, that such a terminology is not customary to the name of a person, but of a place. They think that the text should read, Deborah of Lapidoth. Indeed, Deborah seems to have had too much independence of character, wisdom and self-reliance to have ever filled the role of the Jewish idea of a wife.

“Deborah” signifies “bee;” and by her industry, sagacity, usefulness and kindness to her friends and dependents she fully answers to her name. “Lapidoth” signifies “lamps.” The Rabbis say that Deborah was employed to make wicks for the lamps in the Tabernacle; and having stooped to that humble office for God's service, she was afterward exalted as a prophetess, to special illumination and communion with God—the first woman thus honored in Scripture.

Deborah was a woman of great ability. She was consulted by the children of Israel in all matters of government, of religion and of war. Her judgment seat was under a palm tree, known ever after as “Deborah's Palm.” Though she was one of the great judges of Israel for forty years, her name is not in the list, as it should have

been, with Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah. Men have always been slow to confer on women the honors which they deserve.

Deborah did not judge as a princess by any civil authority conferred upon her, but as a prophetess, as the mouthpiece of God, redressing grievances and correcting abuses. The children of Israel appealed to her, not so much to settle controversies between man and man as to learn what was amiss in their service to God; yet she did take an active part in the councils of war and spurred the generals to their duty.

The text shows Barak hesitating and lukewarm in the last eventful battle with Sisera and his host. He flatly refused to go unless Deborah would go with him. She was the divinely chosen leader; to her came the command, "Go to Mount Tabor and meet Sisera and his host." Not considering herself fit to lead an army, she chose Barak, who had already distinguished himself. He, feeling the need of her wisdom and inspiration, insisted that she accompany him; so, mounted on pure white jackasses, they started for the field of battle. The color of the jackass indicated the class to which the rider belonged. Distinguished personages were always mounted on pure white and ordinary mortals on gray or mottled animals.

As they journeyed along side by side, with wonderful insight Deborah saw what was passing in Barak's mind; he was already pluming himself on his victory over Sisera. So she told him that the victory would not be his, that the Lord would deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. It added an extra pang to a man's death to be slain by the hand of a woman. Fortunately, poor Sisera was spared the knowledge of his humiliation. What a picture of painful contrasts his death presents—a loving mother watching and praying at her window for the return of her only son, while at the same time Jael performs her deadly deed and blasts that mother's hopes forever! What a melancholy dirge to her must have been that song of triumph, chanted by the army of Deborah and Barak, and for years after, by generation after generation.

We never hear sermons pointing women to the heroic virtues of Deborah as worthy of their imitation. Nothing is said in the pulpit to rouse them from the apathy of ages, to inspire them to do and dare

great things, to intellectual and spiritual achievements, in real communion with the Great Spirit of the Universe. Oh, no! The lessons doled out to women, from the canon law, the Bible, the prayer-books and the catechisms, are meekness and self-abnegation; ever with covered heads (a badge of servitude) to do some humble service for man; that they are unfit to sit as a delegate in a Methodist conference, to be ordained to preach the Gospel, or to fill the office of elder, of deacon or of trustee, or to enter the Holy of Holies in cathedrals.

Deborah was a poetess as well as a prophetess, a judge as well as a general. She composed the famous historical poem of that period on the eventful final battle with Sisera and his hosts; and she ordered the soldiers to sing the triumphant song as they marched through the the land, that all the people might catch the strains and that generations might proclaim the victory.

Judges iv.

18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink: for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him to drink, and covered him.

20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

21 Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.

The deception and the cruelty practised on Sisera by Jael under the guise of hospitality is revolting under our code of morality. To decoy the luckless general fleeing before his enemy into her tent, pledging him safety, and with seeming tenderness ministering to his wants, with such words of sympathy and consolation lulling him to sleep, and then in cold blood driving a nail through his temples, seems more like the work of a fiend than of a woman.

The song of Deborah and Barak, in their triumph over Sisera, has been sung in cathedrals and oratorios and celebrated in all time for its beauty and pathos. The great generals did not forget in the

hour of victory to place the crown of honor on the brow of Jael for what they considered a great deed of heroism. Jael imagined herself in the line of her duty and specially called by the Lord to do this service for his people.

Nations make their ideal gods like unto themselves. At this period He was the God of battles. Though He had made all the tribes, we hope, to the best of His ability; yet He hated all, the sacred fabulist tells us, but the tribe of Israel, and even they were objects of His vengeance half the time. Instead of Midianites and Philistines, in our day we have saints and sinners, orthodox and heterodox, persecuting each other, although you cannot distinguish them in the ordinary walks of life. They are governed by the same principles in the exchanges and the marts of trade.

E. C. S.

Judges v.

Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying,

2 Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

4 Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

5 The mountains melted from before the Lord even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.

6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through byways.

7 The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I, Deborah, arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

The woman who most attracts our attention in the Book of Judges is Deborah, priestess, prophetess, poetess and judge. What woman is there in modern or in ancient history who equals in loftiness of position, in public esteem and honorable distinction this gifted and heroic Jewish creation? The writer who compiled the story of her gifts and deeds must have had women before him who inspired him with such a wonderful personality. How could Christianity teach and preach that women should be silent in the church when already among the Jews equal honor was shown to women? The truth is that Christianity has in many instances circumscribed woman's sphere of action, and has been guilty of great injustice toward the whole sex.

Deborah was, perhaps, only one of many women who held such high and honorable positions. Unlike any modern ruler, Deborah dispensed justice directly, proclaimed war, led her men to victory, and glorified the deeds of her army in immortal song. This is the most glorious tribute to woman's genius and power. If Deborah, way back in ancient Judaism, was considered wise enough to advise her people in time of need and distress, why is it that at the end of the nineteenth century, woman has to contend for equal rights and fight to regain every inch of ground she has lost since then? It is now an assured fact that not only among the Hebrews, but also among the Greeks and the Germans, women formerly maintained greater freedom and power.

The struggle of to-day among the advanced of our sex is to regain and to reaffirm what has been lost since the establishment of Christianity. Every religion, says a modern thinker, has curtailed the rights of woman, has subjected her to man's ruling; in emphasizing the life beyond, the earthly existence became a secondary consideration. We are learning the great harm which comes from this one-sided view of life; and by arousing woman to the dignity of her position we shall again have women like Deborah, honored openly and publicly for political wisdom, to whom men will come in time of need.

Genius knows no sex; and woman must again usurp her Divine prerogative as a leader in thought, song and action. The religion of the future will honor and revere motherhood, wifeness and maidenhood. Asceticism, an erroneous philosophy, church doctrines based not upon reason or the facts of life, issued out of crude imaginings; phantasms obstructed the truth, held in check the wheel of progress. Let our church women turn their gaze to such characters as Deborah, and claim the same recognition in their different congregations.

The antagonism which the Christian church has built up between the male and the female must entirely vanish. Together they will slay the enemies—ignorance, superstition and cruelty. United in every enterprise, they will win; like Deborah and Barak, they will clear the highways and restore peace and prosperity to their people. Like Deborah, woman will forever be the inspired leader, if she will

have the courage to assert and maintain her power. Her aspirations must keep pace with the demands of our civilization. "New times teach new duties."

God never discriminates; it is man who has made the laws and compelled woman to obey him. The Old Testament and the New are books written by men; the coming Bible will be the result of the efforts of both, and contain the wisdom of both sexes, their combined spiritual experience. Together they will unfold the mysteries of life, and heaven will be here on earth when love and justice reign supreme.

C. B. N.

Judges viii.

30 And Gideon had three score and ten sons: for he had many wives.

31 And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

Judges ix.

52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.

54 Then he called hastily unto the young man, his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

Abimelech destroyed the city of Thebez, drove all the people into a tower and then tried to set it on fire, as he had done in many places before in his war on other tribes; but here he lost his life, and at the hand of a woman, which was considered the greatest disgrace which could befall a man. Commentators say that as Sisera and Abimelech were exceptionally proud and lofty, they were thus degraded in their death. Sisera was spared the knowledge of his fate by being taken off when asleep; but Abimelech saw the stone coming and knew that it was from the hand of a woman, an added pang to his death agony. He had no thoughts of his wicked life nor his eternal welfare, but with his dying breath implored his armor-bearer to thrust him through with his sword, that it might not be said that he was slain by the hand of a woman.

Abimelech had three score and ten brethren. It is said that his mother roused his ambition to be one of the judges of Israel. To at-

tain this he killed all his brethren but one, who escaped. He enjoyed his ill-gotten honors but a short space of time. We find many such stories in the Hebrew mythology which have no foundation in fact.

Judges xi.

30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

31 Then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou has brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

36 And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

A woman's vow, as we have already seen, could be disallowed at the pleasure of any male relative; but a man's was considered sacred even though it involved the violation of the sixth commandment, the violation of the individual rights of another human being. These loving fathers in the Old Testament, like Jephthah and Abraham, thought to make themselves specially pleasing to the Lord by sacrificing their children to Him as burnt offerings. If the ethics of their moral code had permitted suicide, they might with some show of justice have offered themselves, if they thought that the first-born kid would not do; but what right had they to offer up their sons and daughters in return for supposed favors from the Lord?

The submission of Isaac and Jephthah's daughter to this violation of their most sacred rights is truly pathetic. But, like all oppressed classes, they were ignorant of the fact that they had any natural, inalienable rights. We have such a type of womanhood even in our day. If any man had asked Jephthah's daughter if she would not like to have the Jewish law on vows so amended that she might dis-

allow her father's vow, and thus secure to herself the right of life, she would no doubt have said, "No; I have all the rights I want," just as a class of New York women said in 1895, when it was proposed to amend the constitution of the State in their favor.

The only favor which Jephthah's daughter asks, is that she may have two months of solitude on the mountain tops to bewail the fact that she will die childless. Motherhood among the Jewish women was considered the highest honor and glory ever vouchsafed to mortals. So she was permitted for a brief period to enjoy her freedom, accompanied by young Jewish maidens who had hoped to dance at her wedding.

Commentators differ as to the probable fate of Jephthah's daughter. Some think that she was merely sequestered in some religious retreat, others that the Lord spoke to Jephthah as He did to Abraham forbidding the sacrifice. We might attribute this helpless condition of woman to the benighted state of those times if we did not see the trail of the serpent through our civil laws and church discipline.

This Jewish maiden is known in history only as Jephthah's daughter—she belongs to the no-name series. The father owns her absolutely, having her life even at his disposal. We often hear people laud the beautiful submission and the self-sacrifice of this nameless maiden. To me it is pitiful and painful. I would that this page of history were gilded with a dignified whole-souled rebellion. I would have had the daughter receive the father's confession with a stern rebuke, saying: "I will not consent to such a sacrifice. Your vow must be disallowed. You may sacrifice your own life as you please, but you have no right over mine. I am on the threshold of life, the joys of youth and of middle age are all before me. You are in the sunset; you have had your blessings and your triumphs; but mine are yet to come. Life is to me full of hope and of happiness. Better that you die than I, if the God whom you worship is pleased with the sacrifice of human life. I consider that God has made me the arbiter of my own fate and all my possibilities. My first duty is to develop all the powers given to me and to make the most of myself and my own life. Self-development is a higher duty than

self-sacrifice. I demand the immediate abolition of the Jewish law on vows. Not with my consent can you fulfill yours." This would have been a position worthy of a brave woman. E. C. S.

The ideal womanhood portrayed by ancient writers has had by far too much sway. The prevailing type which permeates all literature is that of inferiority and subjection. In early times Oriental poets often likened woman to some clear, flawless jewel, and made them serve simply as ornaments, while, on the other hand, they were made subordinate by the legislation of barbarous minds; and men, because of their selfish passion, have inflicted woe after woe upon them. Ancient literature is wholly against the equality of the sexes or the rights of women, and subordinates them in every relation of life.

The writings of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are no exception to this rule. The reference, "The sons of God and daughters of men," while it admits of many interpolations, legendary or mythical as it may be, portrays the real animus of the Scriptures. To what extent the sentiment of the Hebrews favored sons rather than daughters, and the injustice of this distinction is fully exemplified by the stories of Abraham and Isaac, and of Jephthah and his daughter. Abraham was commanded by his God to sacrifice his son Isaac, after the manner of the Canaanites, who often slew their children and burnt them upon their altars in honor of their deities. But when all was made ready for the sacrifice an angel of Jehovah appeared, the hand of Abraham was stayed, and a ram was made a substitute for the son of promise.

The conditions were quite different in the case of Jephthah and his daughter. The Israelites had been brought very low in their contest with the Ammonites, and they chose the famous warrior, Jephthah, to lead them against their foe, who with warlike zeal summoned the hosts to battle. The risk was enormous, the enemy powerful, and the general, burning for victory, intent on securing the assistance of the Deity, made a solemn and fatal vow.

In the first case it was a direct command of God, but means were found to revoke this explicit command with regard to a son; in the second case it was only a hasty and unwise promise of a general going to war, and the prevailing sentiment of the age felt it unnecessary to evade its fulfillment—the victim was only a girl. The unhappy father must sacrifice his daughter!

What a masculine coloring is given to the rest of the narrative: "A maiden who did not mourn her death, but wandered up and down the mountain mourning her virginity." So much glamor has been thrown by poetry and by song, over the sacrifice of this Jewish maiden, that the popular mind has become too benumbed to perceive its great injustice. The Iphigenias have been many and are still too numerous to awaken compassion. We must destroy the root of this false and pernicious teaching, and plant in its place a just and righteous doctrine.

What women have to win for the race is a theory of conduct which shall be more equitable. The unalterable subserviency of woman in her natural condition can never be overcome and social development progress so long as there is a lack of distributive justice to every living soul without discrimination of sex. L. S.

CHAPTER III.

Judges xiii.

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren.

3 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God to the day of his death.

8 Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah: and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

WE come now to a very interesting incident, giving proof of the remarkable knowledge which the writers had of some intrinsic laws and the power of transmission which, even to-day, are known and adhered to only by a very small minority of wise, thoughtful mothers. However, the wife of Manoah, the future mother of Samson, is visited by an angel, giving her instructions as to her way of living during pregnancy. It appears that the writer was acquainted with some pre-natal influences and their effect upon the unborn.

We are just now beginning to investigate the important problem of child culture. Many good thoughts have been given on this sub-

ject by earnest thinkers. A knowledge of these important laws of life will do away with the most harassing evils and sins which human flesh is heir to. Intelligent, free mothers will be enabled to forecast not only the physical, but also the psychical, traits of their offspring. How and why this once recognized knowledge was lost we know not. We may, however, rightly infer that so long as woman was not the arbiter of her own destiny she had no power to make use of this knowledge. Only the thoughtful, independent wife can administer the laws and the rules necessary for her own wellbeing and that of her offspring. Freedom is the first prerequisite to a noble life.

Observe how simple and trustful the relation is between this husband and wife. Manoah is thoughtful and ready to unite with his wife in all that the angel had commanded. There is no trace of disunion or of disobedience to the higher law which his wife had been instructed to follow. To her the law was revealed, and he sustained her in its observance. Mark, however, one difference from our interpretation of to-day, and how the omission of it worked out the destruction of the child. All the injunctions received were of a physical nature; strength of body and faith in God were to be the attributes through which Samson was to serve his people. The absence of moral traits is very evident in Samson; and this is the reason why he fell an easy prey to the wiles of designing women. It was not moral, but physical heroism which distinguished Samson from his combatants. Vengeance, cruelty, deceit, cunning devices were practised not only by the Philistines, but likewise by the Nazarite.

The angel who appeared to Manoah's wife was probably her own inner sense, and the appearance is to be understood rather as a figure of speech than as an actual occurrence, although there may have been, as there are to-day, people who were so credulous as to believe that such things actually occurred. The angel who whispers into our ears is knowledge, foresight, high motive, ideality, unselfish love. A conscious attitude towards the ideal still unattained, a lofty standard of virtue for the coming offspring, an intelligent, pure fatherhood, and a wise, loving motherhood must take the place of a mysterious, instinctive trust—the blind faith of the past. C. B. N.

One would suppose that this woman, so honored of God, worthy to converse with angels on the most delicate of her domestic relations, might have had a name to designate her personality instead of being mentioned merely as the wife of Manoah or the mother of Samson. I suppose that it is from these Biblical examples that the wives of this Republic are known as Mrs. John Doe or Mrs. Richard Roe, to whatever Roe or Doe she may belong. If she chance to marry two or three times, the woman's identity is wholly lost. To make this custom more ludicrous, women sometimes keep the names of two husbands, clinging only to the maiden name, as Dolly Doe Roe, ignoring her family name, the father from whom she may have derived all of her talent. Samson's wife had no name, nor had the second woman on whom he bestowed his attentions; to the third one is vouchsafed the name of Delilah, but no family name is mentioned. All three represented one type of character and betrayed the "consecrated Nazarite," "the canonized Judge of Israel."

It would be a great blessing to the race, if parents would take heed to the important lesson taught in the above texts. The nine months of ante-natal life is the period when the mother can make the deepest impression in forming future character, when she has absolute power for weal or for woe over the immortal being. Locke, the philosopher, said, "Every child is born into the world with a mind like a piece of blank paper, and we may write thereon whatever we will;" but Descartes said, "Nay, nay; the child is born with all its possibilities. You can develop all you find there, but you cannot add genius or power." "*Nascitur, non fit,*" although our learned blacksmith, Elihu Burritt, always reversed this motto. E. C. S.

No body of ecclesiastics has taught the message of the angel of the Lord to Manoah's wife as a message of direction from the Lord to save the race from the disastrous results of strong drink and impure food. And although the degree of enlightenment attained shows that science and the instructions of the angel to Manoah's wife agree, this knowledge does not protect the unborn child from the

effects of the use by the mothers of to-day of wine, strong drink and unclean food.

Could the light which reveals to the mother what would be a saving power to her child, be followed carefully by both herself and the father during ante-natal life, the race would more rapidly be brought to the full stature of its destined perfection. Not only is physical endowment available to the child through the wholesome sustenance of the mother, but the qualities of the higher nature may also be transmitted, and moral grandeur be an inheritance equally with grand physical powers.

The theological teaching that has made human nature depraved and cut off from the divine source of all perfection, has hindered the development of the higher faculties of understanding. It has led to a misapprehension of the creative power of parenthood. From the idea that the creation of humanity was finished "in the beginning," and that man fell from his high estate as the image of God, has resulted a demoralized race. The instruction of the angel to Samson's mother, was in accord with the dominant spirit that wrought the victories of Israel over enemies, and the reign of physical force that characterized the people of that age.

The woman, having had no experience of motherhood, had not been subject to the deep soul-stirring that belongs to the mystery of life in a developed womanhood. Nor did that experience evidently transmit to Samson a high degree of moral strength. He was but a well developed physical organism, which the spirit of life could act through without limitation. He consorted with the harlot, but it was the woman whom he loved who succeeded in wringing from him the secret of his strength, and thus the possibility of delivering him to his enemies.

In the relation of women to this man of might there is illustrated the dominant characteristics of the purely animal man. The father of Samson's first wife gave her to another man after Samson had gone in anger to his father's house, and when he returned and proposed to resume his conjugal relations, this father proposed that he should take the younger sister, who "was fairer than she."

It is a significant suggestion of the quality of the relation that

Samson's first wife (who had also no name of her own) and Delilah, whom he loved, were both more loyal to their own people, and had more regard for them, than for the man to whom they had been "given."

L. B. C.

Judges xiv.

1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

So the father and the mother, much against their wishes, went down to Timnath and secured for Samson the desired wife. He conformed to the custom of the Philistines; and on the occasion of the nuptial solemnities he made a great feast, and invited thirty young men to join in the festivities, which lasted seven days. These feasts were enlivened with interesting discussions, stories and riddles. Samson propounded one, with promises of valuable gifts to those who guessed the riddle: "Out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came forth sweetness."

It seems that on one occasion, being attacked by a lion, Samson, without any weapon of defense, tore the lion to pieces. Passing the vineyard some time after, he went in to see if the lion still rested there; and lo! the skeleton was a hive of bees. He partook freely of the honey and carried some to his parents. Being proof against the lion's paws, he had no fear of the bees. Day after day passed, and the young men could not guess the riddle. So they persuaded the wife to coax him for the answer, with promises of silver if she succeeded, and threatenings of wrath if she failed. So, with constant weeping and doubts of his love, she at last worried the answer out of him, with promises of secrecy.

As soon as Samson saw that he was betrayed he sent his wife back to her father's house, who gave her at once to one of the leaders at the festivities. As Samson loved the woman, he forgave her, and sought to bring her back to his own home. The father informed him that he had already given her to another, and that he might have

the younger daughter, if he chose, who had far more grace and beauty. The commentators say that it was very generous in Samson to make this concession, as he was the party offended. But Samson was himself a riddle and a paradox of a man. "He saw something in her face which pleased him well." "He that in the choice of a wife is guided by his eye, and governed by his fancy, must afterwards blame himself if he find a Philistine in his arms." It is a great calamity that even able men are so easily influenced by weak and wicked women to do what they know is dangerous; and yet they feel it a disparagement to follow the advice of a good wife in what is virtuous and praiseworthy.

Samson was most unfortunate in all his associations with women. It is a pity that the angel who impressed on his parents the importance of considering everything that pertained to the physical development of the child, had not made some suggestions to them as to the formation of his moral character. Even his physical prowess was not used by him for any great purpose. To kill a lion, to walk off with the gates of the city, to catch three hundred foxes and to tie them together by their tails two by two, with firebrands to burn the cornfields and the vineyards—all this seems more like the frolics of a boy, than the military tactics of a great general or the statesmanship of a Judge in Israel.

Samson does not seem to have learned wisdom from experience in his dealings with women. He foolishly trusted another woman, "whose face pleased him," with the secret of his great strength, which she, too, worried out of him with tears and doubts of his affection. For the betrayal of his secret the Philistines paid her eleven hundred pieces of silver.

In the last act of this complicated tragedy, it is said that Samson at his death killed more people than in all his life before. After Delilah betrayed him into the hands of the Philistines, they put out his eyes, and left him to grind in the prison house. As was their custom, they brought him out to make sport for the people assembled in a spacious building. As his hair had begun to grow, he braced himself against the door posts, overturned the building, and killed all of its occupants, and himself, gladly ending his own sad life.

The name Delilah is fitly used to describe those who with flattery bring destruction on those whom they pretend to love. Many a strong man has been slain by this type of designing woman. Commentators do not agree as to whether Delilah was an Israelite or a Philistine, probably the latter, as Samson seemed to be more pleased with the women of that tribe than with those of his own. One hesitates to decide which is most surprising—Samson's weakness or Delilah's wickedness.

E. C. S.

The writer of the Book of Judges would fail in his endeavor to present a complete picture of his time, did he omit the important characteristic of a woman and her influence upon man therein portrayed.

In Delilah, the treacherous, the sinister, the sensuous side of woman is depicted. Like Vivian, in the Idyls of King Arthur, Delilah uses—nay, abuses—the power which she had gained over Samson by virtue of her beauty and her personal attractions. She uses these personal gifts for a sinister purpose. They serve her as a snare to beguile the man whose lust she had aroused.

What a lesson this story teaches to men as well as to women! Let man overcome the lust of his eyes and prostitution will die a natural death. Let woman beware that her influence is of the purest and highest; let her spiritual nature be so attractive that man will be drawn toward it. Forever "the eternal womanly draweth man" onward and upward. Soul unity will become the rule when the same chastity and purity are demanded of the sexes alike. Woman's chastity is never secure as long as there are two standards of morality.

C. B. N.

"Colonial days" is the felicitous term given by Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott to the period of nearly three centuries following the campaign against the inhabitants of Canaan, when the Israelites took possession of their land. The Book of Judges is a record of those "colonial days;" and they are described also in the first part of the

book which bears the name of the prophet Samuel. During those Hebrew "colonial days," as Dr. Abbott states, "there was no true Capital—indeed, no true Nation. There were a variety of separate provinces, having almost as little common life as had the American colonies before the formation of the Constitution of the United States. In war these colonies united; in peace they separated from each other again."

But in one thing they were united. They clung to the teachings of their great law-giver, Moses, and emphasized a belief in one righteous God. Whether expressed by priestly ritual or in prophetic declaration, the truth was clearly revealed that the Jews were a people who worshiped one God, and that they accorded to Him the attribute of righteousness. He was a sovereign, but a just one. And to this belief they clung tenaciously, believing themselves justified in conquering the nations about them, because their God was the only ruler.

The Book of Judges contains the record of many harrowing events; but what besides savagery can be expected of a warring people whose Deity is invoked as the "God of battles," and who believed themselves Divinely commissioned to drive other tribes from off the face of the earth! The book is as sensational as are our newspapers; and if each chapter and verse were illustrated as are the papers of what is termed the "New Journalism," they would present an appearance of striking and painful similarity.

The fate of Adoni-besek, an example of retributive justice; the treacherous act of the left-handed Ehud, causing the death of the fat King Eglon of Moab; the inhospitable cruelty—or cruel inhospitality—of Jael, the wife of Heber, whose hammer and nail are welded fast in historical narration with the brow of the sleeping guest, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army; the famous exploits of Gideon, who, if he was a superior strategist and warrior, gave little evidence, by his seventy sons, of his morality according to Christian standards; the death of Abimelech, which was half suicidal lest it should be said that a woman's hand had slain him; these, and more also of the same sort, leave the impression on the mind that those "colonial days" of the Hebrew nation were far from days of peace or of high morality;

and the record of them is certainly as unfit for the minds of children and of youth as are the illustrated and graphic accounts of many unholy acts which are to found in our daily newspapers.

General Weyler, in his Cuban warfare, has, in many respects, a prototype in General Gideon, and also in General Jephthah, "a mighty man of valor" and "the son of a harlot," as the author of the Book of Judges declares him to have been. We deprecate the savage butchery of the one—what ought we to say of the renown of the others? War is everywhere terrible, and "deeds of violence and of blood" are sad reminders of the imperfections of mankind. The men of those "colonial days" were far from being patterns of excellence; and the women "matched the men," in most instances. Deborah, as a "mother in Israel," won deserved renown, so that her song of victory is even now rehearsed, but it is a query that can have but one answer, whether her anthem of triumph is not a musical rehearsal of treacherous and warlike deeds, unworthy of a woman's praise?

In the Book of Judges Delilah appears, and if the mother of her strong lover, Samson, was not a perfect woman, in the modern sense, she has helped to make some readers feel that the law of heredity is a revealer of secrets, and that the story of the angel of the Lord may be received with due caution. The name "Delilah" has become a synonym for a woman tempting to sin, and the moral weakness and physical strength of Samson show the power of heredity. But whether the stories should be in the hands of our youth, without sufficient explanation and wise commentaries, is a question which coming days will solve to the extent of a wise elimination. Solemn lessons, and those of moral import, are given in the Book of Judges; yet, as a whole, the book does not leave one with an exalted opinion of either the men or the women of those days. But it certainly gives no evidence that in shrewdness, in a wise adaptation of means to ends, in a persistent effort after desired objects, in a successful accomplishment of plans and purposes, the women were the inferiors of the men in that age. They appear to have been their equals, and occasionally their superiors.

P. A. H.