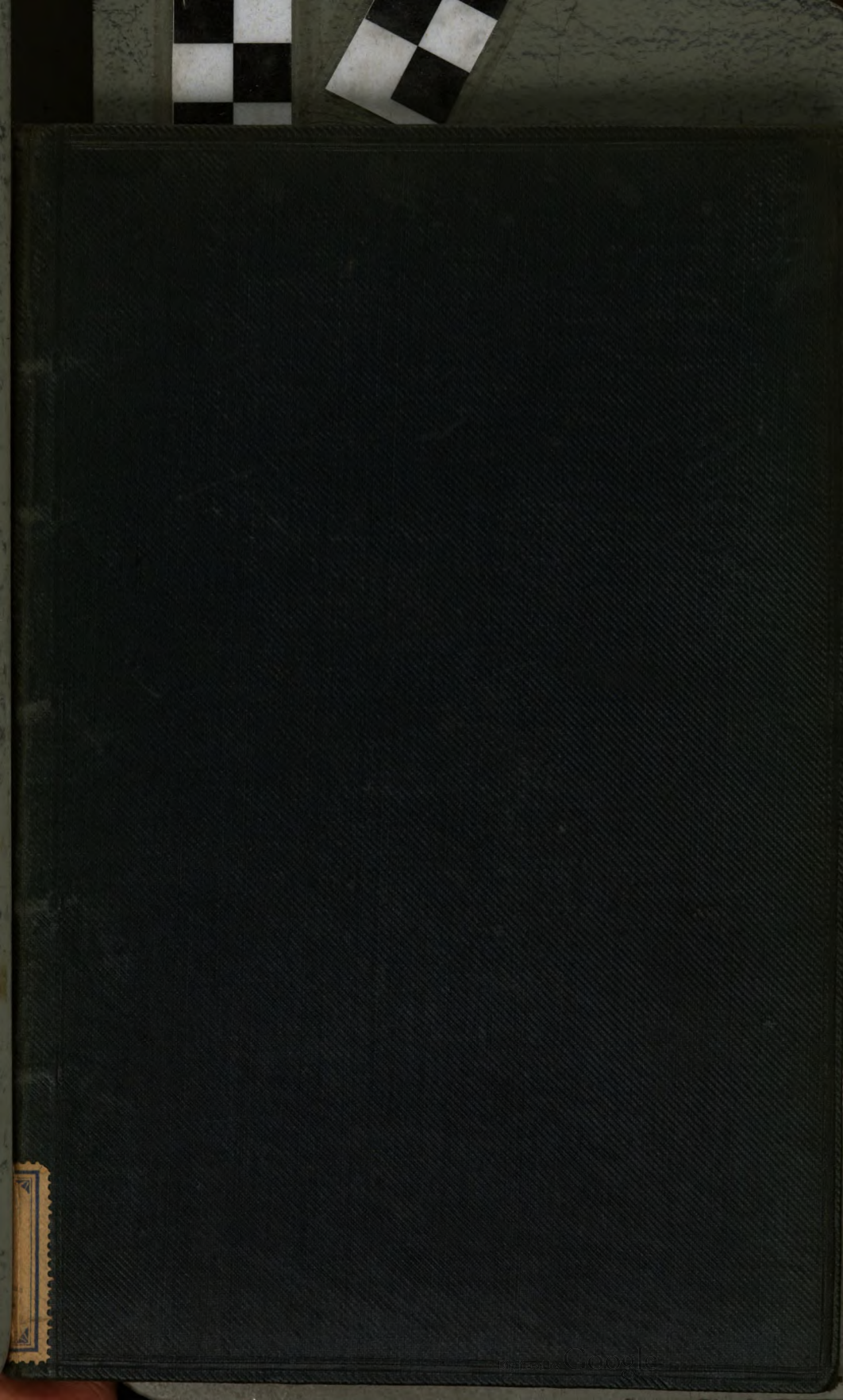

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>







Edward Akroyd.

GIDEON,

OR

TRIALS OF FAITH.

GIDEON,
OR
TRIALS OF FAITH.
A SEATONIAN POEM.

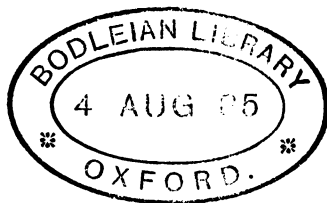
BY
JOHN MURRAY, M.A.
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
AUTHOR OF "THE MIRACLES TYPICAL,"—A HULSEAN DISSERTATION.



CAMBRIDGE:
PRINTED BY JOHN W. PARKER, UNIVERSITY PRINTER;
FOR J. & J. J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE,
AND BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH.

M.DCCC.XXXIX.

14770. C. 44.



ADVERTISEMENT.

“THE Rev. THOMAS SEATON, M.A. late Fellow of Clare Hall, bequeathed to the University (in 1738) the rents of his Kislingbury estate, now producing clear £40. per annum, to be given yearly to that Master of Arts who shall write the best English Poem on a sacred subject. The Vice-Chancellor, the Master of Clare Hall, and the Greek Professor (who are the disposers of this premium) determine the subject, which is delivered out in January, and the Poem is to be sent to the Vice-Chancellor on or before the 29th of September following. The Poem is to be printed, and the expense deducted out of the product of the estate: the remainder is given as a reward to the composer.”

CAMBRIDGE, *October, 1839.*

*The above PREMIUM was this year awarded to JOHN MURRAY,
M.A. of Trinity College.*

GIDEON,
OR
TRIALS OF FAITH.

FIRST TRIAL.

DOUBT.

“ For the time would fail me to tell of **GIDEON**, &c..... Who **THROUGH FAITH** subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. Ep. Heb. xi. 32, 34.

I.

ON Jezreel's plain the sun has set,
But his last beams illumine yet
 The hills of Galilee ;
Still on the land he loves the best,
He lingers, e'er he plunge his crest,
Behind old Carmel's rose-clad breast,
 Into the Mighty Sea¹ :

¹ The Mediterranean is commonly called in Scripture the Great Sea.

On Lebanon the cedars old
 Still wave their giant tops in gold ;
 While nearer, Hermon's dewy hill,
 Gilboa, and mount Tabor², still
 Give back his parting ray :
 But gradual on the mountain's side,
 The dark'ning shadows upwards glide,
 Till, like the falling brave³, at length
 In one last blaze he pours his strength,
 Then dies at once away.
 Her dewy tribute nature weeps,
 While high o'er head the azure sleeps,
 So deep, so clear, so fair ;
 That, as in some lake's waveless face,
 Fancy might almost seem to trace
 Earth's features imaged there.
 And lo,—as if she mocked the eye—
 As the bright legions of the sky
 Come rushing on the sight,
 Ten thousand rays of baser birth
 Seem answering back to them from earth ;
 Till not a heavenly light
 But finds a sister spark below,
 And heaven and earth are all a-glow
 With cressets of the night.

² Hills situated on or near the skirts of the *μεγα πεδιον*, or valley of Jezreel.

³ Byron.

II.

For countless as the insect throng
 That fills the summer fields with song,
 Stretch'd far and wide that plain along,
 Lies Midian's mighty host,
 The warriors of the wilderness,
 With steeds and camels numberless
 As sand on the sea-coast⁴.
 And wafted on the echoes rife,
 While all around is still,
 The ceaseless hum of crowded life
 Comes mellow'd to the hill;
 And ever as the breezes swell,
 Mixed with the camel's peaceful bell,
 Come the loud laugh, th' exulting cry
 That tell of mirth and revelry.
 For many a chief spoke impious boasts
 That night against the Lord of Hosts,
 Who saw his people Midian's slave,
 Who lov'd the land yet could not save.
 How many, e'er to-morrow's light,
 Of all that wassail'd on that night,
 And long'd for coming day,
 Shall feebly draw the ebbing breath,
 Or coldly lay the head in death,
 Upon a bed of clay?

⁴ And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude: and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude. Judges vii. 12.

III.

There is one who looks down⁵, from the wild mountain side,
 On that host in the hour of its power and its pride,
 Sees the watch-fires out-number the stars of the sky,
 And yet looks on the scene with a resolute eye;
 Hears the voice of defiance swell high on the gale,
 Yet his cheek does not blanch, and his heart does not quail;—
 'Tis the chosen of God— 'tis the queller of Baal!
 And where is his host? Is that cowering band,
 Are these the defenders of Israel's land?
 Shall the stream of the mountain pretend to restrain
 The impetuous flow of the far-rolling main?
 With a handful of men will he venture to go
 'Gainst the myriads of Midian that cluster below?
 He asks not for more: he has plac'd not his trust
 In the bow, or the spear, or the arm of dust;
 He has trusted in Him who is Mighty and True;—
 And the harvest is ripe, though the reapers are few.

IV.

Dauntless he stood, for his a race
 That look'd grim danger in the face;
 And yet, if for a moment's space
 Some shade of doubt there ran

⁵ And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. Judges vii. 8.

O'er his pale brow, seek not his mood
 Too curiously to scan ;
 Enough, his faith was unsubdu'd,
 Remember he was man.
 Enough, that in each change that pass'd,
 Like summer cloud in air,
 Across his mind, his eye was cast
 To heaven in silent prayer.
 Oh ! ever in this vale of tears,
 'Mid griefs, and agonies, and fears,
 The heart, no other ray that cheers,
 Will still find comfort there.

V.

“No, Phurah, no,” (for lingering by
 Phurah observ'd his master's eye,
 To read his purpose there ;
 If lion-heart and stedfast will,
 E'en in that hour could trample still
 On danger and despair ;)
 “No, my good Phurah, think not now,”
 'Twas thus his master spoke,
 “To see the soul of Gideon bow
 Once more beneath the yoke ;
 I turn not back, I falter not,
 Till Israel's sufferings are forgot
 In freedom or the grave ;
 Till I shall either cease to be,
 Or cease to be a slave.

Yet tho' I've girt me for this hour,
 And death itself have not the pow'r
 To bend me from my way;
 I say not that I do not feel
 Some anxious doubts for Israel's weal,
 In the dread game we play.
 Yes! fears will rise!—Yet wherefore fear,
 As if the Lord refused to hear?—
 Oh, hard of heart! and can I still
 Presume to doubt the heavenly will?
 Have I so soon forgot the morn,
 When first the summons came,
 That raised the Abi-ezrite's horn,
 (The humblest of his name⁶),
 Brought him from poverty and scorn,
 And gave him power and fame?

VI.

'Twas when the prophet raised on high,
 By heaven's command, the warning cry;
 I stood by our ancestral oak⁷,
 And slave-like crouching to the yoke,

⁶ Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. Judges vi. 15.

⁷ And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. Judges vi. 11.

Our niggard store of grain prepared,
 The gleanings of the land,
 Which oversight, not pity, spared
 From the destroyer's hand.
 So sunk, alas, is Israel now,
 E'en honest toil must hide his brow,
 And bend, as guilt should bend, the head,
 To earn our wives', our children's bread!
 Like war-horse fretting on the rein,
 My spirit loathed the servile stain,
 And burned, in its indignant mood,
 To wash away that stain in blood.
 "And shall we ne'er be free again,"
 I cried, "has Jeshurun no men,
 Have Israelites no sword,
 To man one rush⁸ against the foe,
 To make one struggle, strike one blow,
 For freedom and the Lord?
 The Lord!—We may no longer claim
 As Israel's shield that sacred name:
 Alas, from his rebellious race
 The Lord, offended, hides his face.
 Oh Israel, Israel, from thy brow
 The glory is departed now!
 Land of the prophet, patriarch, saint,
 In vain I pour the loud complaint,
 Thyself has sunk thee thus!

⁸ Man but a rush against Othello's breast, and he retires. SHAKSP.

Why should we murmur at the rod?
 'Tis we who have forsaken God,
 Not God forsaken us.—
 How long, O Lord, shall heathen spurn,
 How long thy people wrong?
 Oh, wilt thou ne'er again return?
 Will thy hot wrath for ever burn?
 How long, O Lord, how long?"

VII.

I rais'd my eyelids as I spoke,
 When lo, beneath that aged oak
 A stranger sitting by⁹!
 Phurah, thou needest not again
 Be told of what I knew not then,
 That guest was from on high!
 It shames me now to think how cold
 I listen'd, as the angel told
 Of wrath denounced against the foe,
 Spake peace to me, and bade me go
 To smite them in my might¹⁰:
 Nay, deigned a sign to chase my woe,
 Then vanish'd from my sight.

⁹ And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? &c. Judges vi. 12, 13.

¹⁰ And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? &c. Judges vi. 14, 15.

But when I knew the heavenly guest¹¹,
 Unwonted terror seiz'd my breast
 And death itself seemed nigh;
 Till, fraught with mercy, from above
 Came the blest words of peace and love,
 “Fear not, thou shalt not die!”
 That night I girt me to fulfil,
 Strong in His strength, His holy will,
 And where Idolatry had trod,
 To magnify the living God.
 Bear witness, groves unholy burn'd,
 Baal's priests defied, his shrines o'erturn'd,
 Bear witness too, the name I bear,
 If Jerub-baal falter'd there,
 In that avenging night.
 Vainly might Baal against me plead,
 In vain his servants curse the deed;
 Unneeded all, mine honour'd Sire,
 E'en thy bold words that sham'd their ire¹²;
 No, they were impotent to harm
 Him, whom the God of Jacob's arm
 Protected from their might.

And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Judges vi. 22.

¹² Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning.....Therefore on that day he called him Jerub-baal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar. Judges vi. 30—32.

VIII.

Yet even then when all seemed bright,
 When hopes were high, and hearts were light ;
 When rising at the trumpet sound,
 All Abi-ezer gathered round¹³ ;
 Her chilling cautions memory brought,—
 Experience all too well had taught
 The painful lesson, still the same,
 Of Israel's pride, and Israel's shame !
 Then, with a sinking heart I cried
 To thee, my Comforter and Guide ;
 And twice the Fleece, by power divine,
 Fulfilled the pre-appointed sign—

The test myself had given—
 Thick as on yonder Hermon's top
 The dew-drops fell, yet not a drop
 Save where ordain'd by heaven !—
 Another trial ! even then,
 When faith had but reviv'd again,
 To see my thousands melt away,
 Like hoar-frost in the morning ray.
 They came, but oh ! how few there came
 In humble faith upon the Name
 And promise of the Lord !

¹³ And he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

He knew their hearts, He knew the pride
 That oft his loving-kindness tried,
 And murmur'd at his word.
 Twice has he prov'd them!—Where are they
 Who spoke so proudly yesterday?
 With but three hundred here I stand,
 A feeble chief, and feeble band!—
 O Lord, a wretched worm and weak,
 Behold, I have presum'd to speak;
 And if thy servant still should ask
 One smile to nerve him for his task,
 Let not thy wrath be sore;
 Grant but one glimpse of light divine,
 One signal that the choice was thine,
 And Gideon's doubts are o'er."

IX.

He spoke, and all was silence deep;
 When over nature seem'd to creep
 A strange and shuddering awe;
 And every thing above, below,
 The presence of its God to know
 True to its being's law.
 Then through the gloom a voice there came,
 And Gideon knew that voice the same
 That bade his trouble cease,
 Bade his death-stricken heart rejoice;
 It was Jehovah-Shalom's voice,
 The God of Love and Peace!

"Arise, my servant", thus the word,
 "Arise, thou favor'd of the Lord,
 Thou, and thy chosen band ;
 Get you unto the plain:—for know,
 I have deliver'd up the foe
 This night into your hand.
 Or if thou still dost fear to go,
 With Phurah seek the camp below,
 To their own words give ear ;
 So shall thy hand be bless'd with might,
 Thy heart with confidence to smite
 The Midian without fear."

X.

In Midian's camp the joyous rout,
 The song, the blasphemy, the shout
 Have died e'er now away ;
 And many a head to rest is laid,
 No prayer uprais'd, no vesper said,
 That shall not see the day.
 With heedful eye, and cautious tread,
 By fav'ring brake, or torrent bed,
 The warriors sought the plain ;
 And oft they linger'd, as they heard,
 Where the steed stamp'd or sleeper stirr'd,
 Till all was still again.
 The warder slumbers at his post,
 The watch fires scarcely glow ;
 Unseen, unchalleng'd, 'mid the host,
 They gaze upon the foe.

And did not Gideon's pulses beat
 Wildly, when at his very feet
 The stern oppressor lay,
 And vengeance long and vainly sought,
 But for one moment breathe the thought,
 "Behold thy tyrants!—slay."
 But hush! a sound has met his ear,
 It is some restless sleeper near
 From troubled slumber breaks,
 And trembling with his tale of fear,
 In haste his fellow wakes.
 "Comrade, I dreamt a dream¹⁴," he said,
 "And lo! a cake of barley bread—
 (How, whence, I cannot tell)—
 Rushed on the host, and in its course
 Came on a tent with crushing force,
 And smote it that it fell!"
 The other spake, inspired by heaven,
 "This is the sword of Gideon!
 For to his hand the Lord has given
 This night the host of Midian!"

XI.

The Israelite has bent the knee,
 In praise, O living God, to thee!
 Then turned to breast the mountain path,
 Swift as the tempest in its wrath;

¹⁴ Judges vii. 13, 14.

Nor paused to breathe before he stood,
 Like some blest messenger of good,
 Where the three hundred lay.
 "Arise, the hour is come," he cried,
 "That Midian's guilt and Midian's pride
 Is fated to repay.
 I lead you not against the foe,
 Trusting in buckler or in bow ;
 I bid you not the sword to wield—
 Jehovah is our sword and shield—
 But, each his trumpet in his hand¹⁵
 His pitcher and his lamp,
 In threefold order take your stand
 Around yon midnight camp ;
 Then do as ye shall see me do,
 And doubt not that ye shall subdue
 The myriad host of Midian.
 Rise at the bidding of the Lord !
 Quit ye like men, and be the word
 That sounds to liberty, The sword—
 The sword of the Lord and of Gideon !"¹⁶

¹⁵ And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise, &c. Judges vii. 16—18.

SECOND TRIAL.

ACTION.

I.

As some torrent, high swoln with its burden of snow,
Rushes headlong and dark on the valley below;
As the Eagle descends from her home in the rocks,
Bearing fear to the shepherd, and death to the flocks;
So swiftly and sternly they strode on their path,
In threefold array to their mission of wrath.
'Tis the mid-watch of night¹! for but now they had heard
The quick tread of men, and the clash (as they stirred)
Of their arms, and the sentinel give the word,
And hasten to sleep, as he hopes, till the day;
Perchance he may sleep for aye!

II.

They gain their posts! and not a sound
Disturbs the list'ning silence round,
And each may hear his breath;
Where millions all unconscious lie,
Without a dream of danger nigh,
Without a thought of death.

¹ So Gideon and the three hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch: and they had but newly set the watch. Judges vii. 19.

Is there no vision of the air?
 No warning voice to cry, Beware!
 The lion is abroad?
 Where is their idol? Where is Baal?
 Does he too sleep, or does he quail
 Before the living God?
 Frail reed on which their hopes rely!
 Godless they live, must Godless die.

III.

One moment all is still as death!—
 Ere they may draw another breath,
 Bursts, like a thunder clap, the blare
 Of the loud trump upon the air,
 While thrice a hundred trumpets there
 Breathe forth the note of war;
 And all the echoing mountains share
 And swell it from afar;
 While louder than the trumpet call,
 Re-echoing through the sky,
 The voice of Gideon, high o'er all,
 Peals forth the battle cry.
 One moment dark as is the grave!—
 The next three hundred torches gave
 The hills, the vale to glow,
 While dusky forms appeared to wave
 Their weapons round the foe.

IV.

Started the sleeper in fear from his bed
At that midnight alarm, as may start the dead
 From their slumbers in the tomb,
At the warning peal of that trumpet dread,
 That shall call them to their doom !
As the waving torch casts its glare on the ground,
What terrors arise to their fancy around !
For the shade of the hills armed foemen appears,
And the pines' waving branches their banners and spears.—
'Tis the harvest of death ! for Jehovah has set
Each man 'gainst his friend, and the spear is wet
In a brother's heart's blood, and they fall as fast
As the forest leaves in the first winter blast !
And the long patient camel was masterless then,
And rag'd through the host on his tyrants men ;
And the steed trampled wildly o'er dying and dead,
With his eye-ball of fire, and his nostril blood-red ;
And the millions of Midian have perished or fled.—
At the blaze of a torch, at a trumpet's blast,
That proud army has vanished, its glory has pass'd² !—

² Dr Harmer in his *Observations*, quotes from Niebuhr an occurrence in modern Arabian History very similar in its circumstances to the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon. There is an essential difference, however, between the cases, which leaves the miraculous nature of the Bible history unaffected, namely that Gideon's party were unarmed, and there must therefore have been an entire dependence on the Divine Agency.

V.

Far, far and fast, through all that night,
 The vanquish'd urged their frantic flight ;
 And e'er the morrow's dawning light
 Looked on that scene of wrath,
 Beth-shittah saw the race of fear,
 Still onwards in its mad career,
 Rush past upon its path ;
 Nor till in Jordan's wave the sun
 Had bath'd,—the foremost, one by one,
 (Abel-meholah's borders won,)³
 Ventur'd to pause, and dream at last,
 Pursuit was baffled, danger past ;
 While many a straggler, far, far back,
 Still heard the avenger on his track,
 And struggled onwards faint and slow,
 Or sank to meet the fatal blow.
 For where a foe remained to kill,
 Gideon and his three hundred still
 Plied the avenging sword !
 Stedfast in sunshine as in storm,
 His hand relaxed not to perform
 The labor of the Lord.

³ And the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah unto Tabbath. Judges vii. 22.

VI.

"The fords of Jordan"!—If the foe
 Shall pass them, e'er another blow
 Be struck to clench the first, they gain
 The desert, and man tries in vain
 To crown what God has done!
 Haste to Mount Ephraim! away—
 Tell them to place them in array,
 Full on the fords, in Midian's way,
 And let them finish—if they may—
 What Gideon has begun."

VII.

No rest for Midian! Ephraim's sword
 Awakes to vengeance at the ford.
 In vain they struggle! man and horse,
 The living blended with the corse,
 Are whelmed together in the flood,
 Which crimsones at the work of blood.
 Zeëb and Oreb long could tell⁵
 The spot where Midian's princes fell;

⁴ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan." Judges vii. 24.

⁵ And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeëb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeëb they slew at the winepress of Zeëb; and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeëb to Gideon on the other side Jordan. Judges vii. 25.

But not a stone remained to say
 What nameless thousands bled that day ;
 Till her dread work of slaughter o'er,
 In triumph back to Israel's shore,
 Her bleeding trophies Ephraim brought,
 Glutted with death but sated not.
 And now the conqueror must learn
 How hard the task from men to earn
 Of gratitude the meed,
 And pause upon his glorious path,
 To speak the words that soften wrath,
 To those whom he had freed.⁶
 Think not the hero of the war
 The only conqueror !—there are
 More glorious triumphs still
 For him, who hears the thankless chide,
 Yet chains his tongue, can vanquish pride,
 And mortify self-will.

VIII.

On in pursuit !—let others go,
 Recount their triumphs o'er the foe,
 Or slumber if they will ;

⁶ And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?.....Then their anger was abated toward him when he had said that. Judges viii. 1—3.

But Gideon and his faithful few
 Leave not the work they have to do,
 Faint, but pursuing still.
 Devoted to the work of heaven,
 While life remains, while strength is given,
 Through faith in Him they serve,
 'Mid perils of the wilderness,
 'Mid cold and hunger, and distress,
 They falter not nor swerve !
 Succoth's proud princes may disdain
 The way-worn stranger and his train⁷,
 Nor grant them bread,—an humble boon!—
 The time shall come, and come too soon,
 They shall, by bitter anguish torn,
 Be *taught* to feel for those that mourn⁸ !
 Penue! cold sons the brave may spurn
 Unpitied from her gate, or turn
 In mockery to the foe⁹ ;
 Not her proud name,¹⁰ nor boasted tower
 Shall save her in the evil hour
 From retribution's blow !

⁷ And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give I pray you loaves of bread unto the people that are with me: for they be faint, &c. And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna now in thine hand that we should give bread unto thy army, &c. Judges viii. 4—8.

⁸ And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. Judges viii. 16.

⁹ And the men of Penue! answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. And he spake also unto the men of Penue!, saying, When I come again in peace I will break down this tower. Judges viii. 8, 9.

¹⁰ And Jacob called the name of the place Penue!: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. Gen. xxii. 30.

Let Zeba and Zalmunna boast
 That Gideon fears the war ;
 With triumph view the gallant host,
 That rallies from afar :
 And dream of victory again
 Amid their desert countrymen¹¹.
 In vain ! The foe is on the way,
 The bolt is in the air :
 And scarce a man of all that lay
 In fond security that day
 At Karkor¹², shall escape to say
 How Gideon triumphed there !

IX.

The warrior now has sheathed his sword,
 The patriot's task is o'er,
 And from the votary the Lord
 Demands not service more :
 A moment now to self belongs,
 To the man's griefs, the brother's wrongs.
 "Bring forth the captive kings !" And lo,
 They stand before their country's foe ;
 E'en at that hour with bearing high,
 Prepared like desert chiefs to die !

¹¹ Now Zeba and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, &c. Judges viii. 10.

¹² And Gideon went up by way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah and smote the host : for the host was secure. Judges viii. 11.

Calm and inscrutable he stood ;
 Yet if they could have read his mood,
 The captives would have found,
 A heart that sickened to its core
 With anguish at that scene of gore,
 And longed to hide where never more
 The note of war should sound.
 "Princes of Midian," thus he said,
 While his voice shook with secret dread
 To find his bodings true,
 "The men ye did at Tabor slay,
 How looked they?—Say, ye princes, say,
 Like whom were those ye slew¹³?"
 In their wild eye-balls, as he spoke,
 A savage gleam of gladness broke,
 A joy which death itself defied,
 That joy which vengeance gratified
 To savage hearts can bring.
 Then thus, "As thou art were they all,
 Of noble port and stature tall,
 Like children of a king."
 "They were my brethren!" Gideon said,
 "Enough! your deaths be on your head ;

¹³ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother; as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. Judges viii. 18, 19.

They were my mother's sons; I swore
 To spare not those who spilt their gore,
 And I will keep my vow.
 As the Lord liveth, cruel men,
 If ye had spared my brethren then,
 I would not slay you now.
 Jether¹⁴, my first-born, up and slay!—
 Nay, wherefore dalliest thou? 'twas they
 Who slew thine uncles, boy."
 But still abashed the stripling stood,
 Yet all unused to human blood,
 Untutored to destroy.
 "Rise thou and fall on us," at length
 The captives cried, "In thee the strength
 And dignity combine;
 Believe it is no stripling's task,
 And Zeba and Zalmunna ask
 No meaner arm than thine."

X.

They spoke, and Gideon sped the blow;
 But pause we here;—and would you know
 How he, whose heart, in darkest hour,
 Reposed on the Almighty power,
 Though hope itself seemed past;

¹⁴ And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us for as the man is, so is his strength. Judges viii. 20, 21.

He, who in action's furnace tried,
Swerved not from duty, conquered pride,
 And triumphed to the last ;
How he, (fate's darkening tempests o'er),
The last, the hardest trial bore,
 Fortune's too prosperous ray ;
Then deign to bear with me once more
 In my concluding lay.

LAST TRIAL.

PROSPERITY.

I.

A MORN of joy! The voice
Of mirth through Israel!
Ten thousand hearts rejoice,
Ten thousand voices swell!
For Israel's sons are free
From the oppressor's rod;
Free as that race should be,
The favourite of God!—
He comes in simple state
The conqueror of the war!
No captive monarchs wait
Round his triumphal car.
More truly, simply great,
That victor's trophies are;
Such trophies as alone impart
A bliss without alloy;
The blessings of a nation's heart
A people's tears of joy.

II.

Bright in the ray of morning glancing,
Far, far o'er hill and vale advancing,
The glad procession sweeps along,
With harp, with harp, and voice of song.

Mothers hold high their babes to see,
 And bless the man that made them free ;
 And as the thousands round him grow,
 Before him Judah's maidens go,
 And in the joyous dances meeting,
 With glancing eyes, and bosoms beating,
 (While ever the loud timbrels ring),
 Answering each other thus they sing.

III.

Sing, all ye ten thousands of Israel, sing ;
 Break forth in the praise of your heavenly King !
 Sons of Judah, rejoice ! sing, Israel's daughters !
 Sing, ye who are saved at the drawing of waters¹.
 Oh sing that the Lord has redeemed us from Midian,
 Shout, shout ye, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon !"

For Jeshurun sinned², and deserted her Maker,
 And provoked the just God of her sires to forsake her.
 Then for seven long years³ lay the Midianites' hand—
 Oh, how heavy it lay !—on the Israelites' land.
 In the caves of the earth, in the holds of the rocks⁴,
 We fed with the eagle, we couched with the fox ;

¹ See the Song of Deborah, Judges v. 11. Such places are frequently the scenes of ambush in times of war in the East. HARMER'S *Observations*.

² Deut. xxxii. 15.

³ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord ; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. Judges vi. 1.

⁴ And because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. Judges vi. 2.

There was war in our gates⁵,—till we cried to our God;—
He hath loosened the yoke, He hath broken the rod!

Oh sing, &c.

Awake, Jerub-besheth⁶, arouse thee, O Gideon,
Lead captivity captive, thou queller of Midian;
Go up, ye three hundred, go up in your might;
The spoiler is spoiled, ye have conquered in fight.
When the chosen went down in the name of the Lord,
Then the lamp was their buckler, the trumpet their sword;
Then sank the pale coward, then trembled the brave,
And they called on their gods, but their gods could not save;
For the Lord had looked out from his glory on high,
The most Mighty had girded his sword on his thigh!
Oh sing that the Lord has redeemed us from Midian,
Shout, shout ye, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

IV.

But Gideon's heart is faithful yet,
He calls not this his own;
He knows his triumphs are a debt,
Due to the Lord alone.
What though the path of fame he trod?
'Twas not for fame he fought;
He fought for freedom and for God,
And glory came unsought.

⁵ Judges v. 8.

⁶ 2 Sam. xi. 21.

V.

Triumph! Far other feelings now
 Have set their seal upon his brow.
 Behold the house of woe!—the spot,
 His brethren's home, where they—*are not*.
 Ah, who will greet him now?—*but one*,
 The sorrowing sire his only son.
 Ye, who have seen earth close above
 The friend, the brother of your love,
 In his cold and narrow bed;
 Seen him, in youth's unclouded morn,
 From life, from hope, from friendship torn,
 And number'd with the dead;
 And felt, as ye have turn'd to part,
 How large a portion of your heart
 Lay buried with him there;
 How much to which the mem'ry clings,
 Visions of old familiar things,
 Thoughts which were twin'd with your heart strings,
 Which none but he could share;
 Ye know how poor a thing appears
 All the success of after years,
 Now he is gone;
 That fate's best blessings here below
 Have less of pleasure than of woe,
 Enjoy'd alone!
 Nor will ye marvel if, 'mid all
 The mirth of Israel's festival,

A thousand thoughts awoke that slept,
Past days return'd,—and Gideon wept.

VI.

No longer storms on Gideon lower ;
Behold the crown within his power,
 The sceptre at his feet !
How will he bear this tempting hour,
 How this last trial meet ?
When Israel's elders kneel before him,
In grateful homage, and implore him,
That Gideon,—aye, and Gideon's seed
Should rule the land that Gideon freed⁷,
He felt no joy at the request ;
His arms he folded on his breast,
 And sternly thus he spake ;
“ Ask me not, brethren, 'tis in vain,
I will not over Israel reign,
Nor shall my son ; and ne'er, I trust,
Shall Jacob's seed a son of dust
 To be their ruler take !
The King of Kings shall be your King ;
Oh may He keep you 'neath his wing
 For your forefathers' sake !

⁷ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you. Judges viii. 22, 23.

But if your bosoms own a debt
 To my poor arm uncancell'd yet,
 And fain would ease the load,
 Give me the ear-rings of your prey^s,
 I own I'd gladly bear away
 Some relic of the fight, that may
 E'en to my children's children say,
 'Your father triumph'd in the day
 That broke oppression's rod ;'
 That to some holy use assign'd,
 May help to sanctify the mind,
 And raise it up to God."

VII.

So gradual are the steps that lead
 Down to the depths of sin,
 We deem no watchfulness we need,
 While ev'ry step that we proceed
 Plunges us deeper in.
 How oft by virtue's lovely name
 The tempter hides the bait ;
 Nor wake we to our guilt and shame,
 Or only wake too late !

^s And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey. (For they had golden ear-rings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give them, &c. Judges viii. 24, 25.

How prone, alas, are mortals blind
 From simple faith to part,
 And in their pride to make or find
 An idol in the heart !

VIII.

So Gideon found ! For even then
 When faith so brightly burn'd,
 When the most tempting gifts of men
 Indignantly he spurn'd ;
 The germs of sin were lurking there,
 Which strength'ning in their growth,
 Prov'd to his careless feet a snare,
 His and his people's both^o.
 Alas, he fell !—but let us scan
 Gently the faults of such a man,
 And hope he was forgiven ;
 He fell, it may be but to show,
 That the most perfect here below
 Is far remov'd from heaven ;
 To teach us all to watch and pray,
 That in temptation's evil day
 We may have strength to stand,
 May sink untroubled in the tomb,
 And, when we meet the day of doom,
 Be plac'd at God's right hand.

^o And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah ; and all Israel went thither a whoring after it : which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. Judges viii. 27.

IX.

Cease we our song ; nor linger o'er
The saddened theme that charms no more ;
 Here close the sacred page,
Lov'd, record of eternal truth,
Darling of childhood, friend of youth,
 And comforter of age !
Blest book, where e'en the worldly mind
More sage, more stirring tales can find
 Of wisdom and of glory,
Than all the boasted marvels told
In modern tomes, or annals old
 Of Greek or Roman story.
Well may the youthful bosom glow
 O'er the proud lines that tell,
How Sparta's monarch midst the foe,
 With *his* three hundred fell ;
Bought for himself eternal fame,
And made Thermopylæ a name,
Sacred beyond the reach of time,
The household word of every clime.
Well may the patriot love the page
That tells how Rome's unbending sage,
 When danger's call was o'er,
When Rome no longer asked his arm,
Resigned the fasces for the farm,
 And dreamt of power no more.

But Grecian valour, Roman pride,
That borrow virtue's name,
What are they all, when weighed beside
The purer, holier flame,
That fired the servant of the Lord,
Taught him to scorn an earthly sword,
To look on death with stedfast eye,
Not from hot mood, or anger high,
But faith and humble love;
Taught him to trample, with disdain,
On earthly crowns, that he might gain
A heavenly one above!

X.

My task is o'er; may heaven bestow
Its blessing on the work, and though
It win not earthly glory,
Oh, may its lessons touch my heart,
Nor profitless the hours depart
I gave to Gideon's story!



