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Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. R. C. FORD, M.A., GRIMSBY.

God's Use of Imperfect Men.

'The Lord raised up judges which delivered them.'—
 JUDGES ii. 16.

CHILDREN often lightly esteem privileges and blessings which their parents have purchased at a heavy cost. Joshua and the elders of his day purchased their freedom to worship God with great efforts and much toil. While the memory of these things was fresh in the minds of the Israelites, they easily kept from idolatry; but when a new generation arose to enter upon the possession of these blessings, they cared little for them, and preferred to imitate the heathen practices of their neighbours. It seemed, therefore, as though God's purpose in the election of Israel would be frustrated. But His resources are never exhausted.

I. GOD ACCOMPLISHES HIS GREATEST PURPOSES BY HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY.—He sends forth His commandment upon the earth, the stormy winds fulfil His word. These are rough and coarse instruments, and unfitted for God's highest work, which is the deliverance of His people. He can use even wicked men for this purpose, so as to make the wrath of man praise Him; and men, unconscious that they are God's instruments, do His will, as when Cyrus was used by God for the deliverance of His people. But God's finest instruments are men filled with the consciousness

that they are doing His work. The history of the world is practically the history of the deeds of such God-inspired men.

II. GOD NEVER LACKS MEN FOR HIS WORK.

—It is often matter for discussion with us whether the times produce the man, or the man the times. But neither is true. God produces the man when the times require it. 'No wonder Patrick Henry grew here,' said an American senator, as he alighted at a little railway station in Virginia, and gazed around on the glorious mountains. 'Yes, sir,' replied the native, 'but the mountains have always been here, and we have only had one Patrick Henry.' God prepares His instruments in seclusion while the times are ripening. If He needs children of Abraham, they will be forthcoming, though He raise them up from the stones of the street. When the judges were needed, God 'raised them up.'

III. GOD USES IMPERFECT MEN FOR HIS WORK.—It is easy to point out the faults of these heroes: they do not reach our nineteenth-century standard. Gideon was distrustful, Samson of low morality; and these two were the most famous. We must judge them by their superiority to their contemporaries, not by their shortcomings from our standard of saintliness. And it is fortunate for us that God does use such men, or we should have no part or lot in the great work. Each man has the faults of his quality, and of his