

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

IV. DEBORAH AND BARAK (*continued*).

WHEN we broke off last time, we left Barak, with his forces massed, on Mount Tabor. The Great Plain opens out before him ; and there we can picture him watching the “lengthening line of the enemy’s chariots” emerging from the opposite angle, some 16 miles off, in which (probably) just behind the projecting spur of the Galilæan hills, Harosheth was situated, and advancing across the Plain. We are not told the exact site of the battle ; but we may infer from Judges v. 19 that it was very near Taanach and Megiddo. We read, viz.—

¹⁹ The kings of Canaan came, they fought,
Then there fought the kings of Canaan ;
At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo,
Gain of silver they did not take.

Taanach (15 miles S.W. of Tabor, and 4 miles behind the Kishon), and Megiddo (6 miles N.W. of Taanach, also behind the Kishon), both on the slope of the hills, are the Canaanite fortresses (Jud. i. 27) we have spoken of before. The “waters of Megiddo” will no doubt be rivulets—several of which are marked on the larger maps—running down from the “copious springs”¹ in the hills above it into the Kishon. Somewhere on the plain, between Taanach and Megiddo and Tabor, the armies met : but particulars fail us, and we cannot say exactly where. But wherever it was, the Canaanites, in spite of their 900 chariots, could not withstand the “fierce highland charge” of Barak’s men—“Into the Vale were they let loose at his feet” :—perhaps they fell upon them at some point unfavourable for the manœuvring of chariots : it is highly probable also, to judge from the words of the poem—

¹ W. Ewing in *D.B.* iii. p. 46.

²⁰ From heaven fought the stars,

From their courses they fought against Sisera—

that, as Josephus states, a violent storm of sleet and hail burst at the moment from the E. or N.E. full in the faces of the advancing foe: the powers of heaven seemed thus to take their part in the fray. Dean Stanley¹ reminds us of the battle of Cressy, when the slingers and archers were disabled by the rain, and the swordsmen crippled by the biting cold.

The Canaanites turned in flight—it is natural to suppose, down the Plain towards Harosheth. But the treacherous Kishon, swollen by the sudden rain, rose into a flood: and when they attempted—or were driven—to cross it, carried them away; and the chariots and horses, which they expected would be their mainstay, only assisted in their ruin.

²¹ The wady Kishon swept them away,

The on-coming² wady, the wady Kishon.

The precipitate retreat of the Canaanites we seem even now to hear in the verse describing, with a piece of graphic word-painting, the stampede of the horses in their impetuous flight—

²² Then did the horsehoofs stamp,

Through the gallopings, the gallopings of his chargers.

Where exactly all this took place, we again cannot be sure: but the “gallopings of the chargers” must have been in some part of the Plain. If the Canaanites really retired to el-Hārithiyeh, many may have perished in the narrow pass, a mile or so S. of it, where the valley contracts to a few rods, and where the river “dashes against the perpendicular base of Carmel,”³ so that swollen by the

¹ *Jewish Church*, i. 329. He adds an even more exact parallel in the defeat of the Carthaginians by Timoleon in Sicily.

² Comp. the cognate verb קָרַב , to meet (Deut. xxiii. 4), come before (Ps. xc. 2),—in a hostile sense, to come upon in front (Ps. xviii. 5, 18; Isa. xxxvii. 33).

³ Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine*, p. 215.

rains, and deeper and swifter than it would be higher up, it would the more readily entangle and carry away horses, chariots, and men together.

The Plain of the Kishon is often dangerous ground. In summer, at least in its higher reaches, it is a "diminutive, insignificant stream, but in winter it overflows, and turns the surrounding country into a morass" (*E.B. s.v.*). The conditions, moreover, writes Mr. Ewing,¹ who resided for long at Tiberias, and knows the locality well, "change with great rapidity, intensifying the treacherous character of the river. A few hours of such rain as sometimes falls on the encircling mountains are sufficient to change the dry bed into the channel of a rushing stream, and the baked earth along the banks into a quagmire." "The ground about Megiddo is extremely treacherous," as in 1892 Mr. Ewing² himself experienced, "even as late as the month of May." There is said to be³ a parallel to Sisera's defeat in the battle between the French and the Turks in April, 1799, when many of the latter were drowned while attempting to pass the morass in their flight.⁴

The pursuit must have been a long one. One place, by which pursued and pursuers both passed, gave no help, and is bitterly denounced in consequence for its lack of patriotism—

"Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Yahweh,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;
Because they came not to the help of Yahweh,
To the help of Yahweh among the mighty.

¹ *D.B.* iii. p. 5a.

² *Ibid.*

³ But see Moore, p. 159 n. ¶.

⁴ Psalm lxxxiii. 10 speaks of *En-dor* as the spot where "Sisera and Jabin" perished. *En-dor* is about 2 miles S. of Tabor, on the hills on the S. side of the valley between, and thus in an angle of the Great Plain, some 8 miles from the Kishon, and 15 miles from Taanach and Megiddo, far away from the site for the battle suggested by Judges v. The allusion, it seems, must be to some incident not mentioned in Judges iv., v. at all.

No doubt it was an Israelite village, whose inhabitants, instead of cutting off the fleeing enemy, allowed them through indifference or cowardice to escape. Such disloyalty deserved a curse. Was some punishment meted out to it, as in the rather similar case of Succoth and Penuel, in Judges viii. ? The site is unknown—*El-Muruşşus*, 9 miles almost due E. of Jerzeel—not, however, on the straight way down the valley to the Canaanite fortress, Bethshean, but—some 500 ft. up in the hills, two miles to the N., has been suggested : but the names do not agree phonetically ; nor does the site seem very probable.

So much the more glorious seemed to the poet to be the deed of Jael, wife of Heber, the Kenite. Sisera fled on foot. There are, however, uncertainties as to the locality in which Heber's tent was, and consequently as to Sisera's route ; and these, before going further, we must briefly consider. Let us look at the Map again. Sisera flees to the tent of Jael (iv. 17), by Kedesh (iv. 11). This certainly reads as if it were the Kedesh of verses 9, 10, and the Kedesh of Naphtali of verse 6 : if so, he fled 43 miles N.N.E. from (about) Megiddo, as the crow flies, over a rough and mountainous country, while Barak (ver. 16) pursues the chariots and host as far as Harosheth, 10 miles N.W. of Megiddo, and 37 miles from Kedesh of Naphtali. There Barak, learning, we may suppose, in what direction Sisera had fled, turns off in pursuit of him ; and after a 37 miles' journey over a mountainous country, passes by Jael's tent just after she has killed Sisera. Is such a coincidence probable ? Perhaps, in estimating it, we should remember that the account is condensed : it is silent, for instance, as to the impediments which Sisera may have met with on his flight, and on the information which Barak may have received, as to the direction he was taking ; the flight and the pursuit may also each have well occupied several days.

Nevertheless the difficulty has led Conder (*T. W.* 68 f.), and G. A. Smith after him (*H. G.* 395 f.), to identify the Kedesh of verse 11—Conder, also, the Kedesh of verses 9, 10, and the two do seem to go together—with the *Kadish* S.W. of the Sea of Galilee (see above, p. 32), 25 miles North-East of Megiddo. As Tabor, the rallying-point of the Israelites, was mid-way between Megiddo and Kadish, one would think that this was a dangerous and unlikely direction for Sisera to take: it is also very difficult to reconcile with *iv.* 16, which says expressly that Barak “pursued after the chariots and the host, as far as Harosheth” (i.e. 10 miles North-West of Megiddo: if (*H. G.* p. 396 *n.*) the narrator meant that Barak only despatched his troops to Harosheth in pursuit of the main body of fugitives, while he himself went in a north-easterly direction, after Sisera, would he not have expressed himself differently? On the whole, especially if Jabin, king of Hazor (see. p. 28), had really nothing to do with Sisera’s rising, the improbability of Barak overtaking Sisera near Kedesh of Naphtali is not decisive; and *Josh. xix.* 33 (see the footnote) strongly supports the usual view that the Kedesh of *iv.* 9, 10, 11 is the Kedesh of Naphtali of verse 6.¹

¹ The natural sense of the narrative seems certainly to be that the Kedesh of verse 11 is the same as that of verses 9, 10, and as the Kedesh of Naphtali in verse 6. Still, it is no doubt in itself possible that the Kedesh of verses 9–11 is the Kadish S.W. of the Sea of Galilee. It must not, however, be forgotten that the apparently forcible argument by which Conder seeks to support this identification is philologically unsound (above, p. 32 *n.*), and that there is really no ground whatever for supposing that a “plain” (!), or even that a place, called anciently Bets’annim (in *Jud. iv.* 11, בִּצְעַנִּים, in *Jos. xix.* 33, בִּצְעַנִּים—the vocalisation is uncertain), has been discovered S.W. of the Sea of Galilee.

Not only this, but, if words mean anything, *Joshua xix.* 33 shows beyond question that the “oak of Bets’annim,”—and with it Kedesh,—was in the *North* of Naphtali. It is there said, viz., that the border of Naphtali extended “from Heleph, from the oak of Bets’annim, and Adami-ha-Nekeb, and Jabneel, to Lakkum,” after which it ended at the Jordan, and then turned back westwards to Aznoth-Tabor, presumably a place near Mount Tabor. The site of Heleph is not known, though, to judge

But, wherever Heber's tent was, Sisera's course took him past it. He halts to beg a drink of water; and Jael, adding liberality to hospitality, but with treachery in her heart, offers him a bowl of *leben*, or soured milk, a grateful and refreshing drink, highly esteemed in the East, and the best that the Bedawin have to give; and while he buries his face in it in his thirst and haste, she deals him a blow on the head with a heavy mallet, which fells him to the ground at her feet—

“Blessed above women shall Jael be,¹

Above women in tents² shall she be blessed.

“Water he asked, milk she gave,

She brought forth *leben* in a lordly bowl:

from the “from,” it was at the N. end of the border of Naphtali. In a passage in the Jer. Talmud (*Megillah* i. 1: see Neubauer, *Géogr. du Talmud*, p. 224 f.), dealing with this verse, it is said that Adami is *Damin*, not improbably (Buhl 218) *ed-Dāmiyeh* (see G. A. Smith's maps), 5½ miles W.N.W. of Kadish; and that Jabneel is *Kephar-Yama*, no doubt (Buhl, *ib.*) *Yemma*, 5 miles S.E. of *ed-Dāmiyeh* and 4 miles S.W. of Kadish: the site of Lakkum is unknown. If, now, these identifications are incorrect, they afford no further clue as to the site of Bets'annim; if they are correct, they do *not* favour Conder's site, Bessum; for the terms of Joshua xix. 33 clearly imply that the “oak of Bets'annim” was somewhere near the N. end of the border of Naphtali, if not the very spot near Heleph where the border began, whereas Bessum is *south* of *ed-Dāmiyeh* (Adami),—1½ miles from it by the large P.E.F. Map,—and so near the *South* end of the border.

As has been already remarked, G. A. Smith's maps, invaluable as they are, do not, for whatever reason, always express his own views; and the fact has to be borne in mind by those who use them. A notable case is Gibeah: contrast *Jerusalem*, ii. 92 (“3 miles north of Jerusalem”), with the map in vol. i (9 miles N.W. of Jerusalem). We have another instance here. In *H. G.* p. 396 *n.* the site *ed-Dāmiyeh* is accepted, at least with “perhaps,” for Adami; but in his *maps* (following the ¾ inch to the mile map of the P.E.F., and P.E.F. *Memoirs*, [ii. 89] Adami is placed, without any (?), at *Admah*, 6 miles S. of the Sea of Galilee. This seems quite incompatible with Joshua xix. 33: the border is described from N. to S.: Adami is mentioned *before* Jabneel, and will consequently be north of it, whereas “*Admah*” is four miles *south* of it!

¹ The words which here follow, “The wife of Heber the Kenite,” disturb the parallelism of the verse, and are probably a gloss from iv. 17.

² I.e., women living in tents, nomad women (cf. Gen. iv. 20 “he was the father of such as *dwell in tents*,” where the Hebrew word is a collective singular, as here).

- ¹⁶ She stretched out her hand to the peg,
 And her right hand to the workmen's ¹ hammer ² ;
 And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she effaced ³ his head,
 She shattered, and pierced through his temple :
¹⁷ Between her feet he sank down, he fell, he lay,
 Between her feet he sank down, he fell,
 Where he sank down, there he fell, undone ! ⁴

That Sisera is struck down while he is drinking the *leben*, seems clearly to be the representation of verse 27 : כָּרַע is often used of *bending down* on the knees, as to drink, Judges vii. 5, 6, or in prayer, 1 Kings viii. 34, also (2 Kings ix. 24) of Ahaziah, who, when mortally wounded, "*sank down* in his chariot"; and "fall" distinctly implies a previously upright position.⁵ On the other hand the prose version (iv. 21) represents Jael as killing her victim by driving a tent-peg through his temples while he is lying on the ground asleep. And verse 26 in the poem agrees with this, in so far as it represents her as making use of a tent-peg, though it neither says nor implies that this was done while he was asleep : on the contrary, the effect

¹ Lit. *labourers* (Prov. xvi. 26).

² Not the word used in iv. 21, but cognate with the verb in the next line, rendered, to preserve the connexion with this line, "with the hammer she smote."

³ If the text is correct, this, or something like this, must be the meaning : for the word, though not found elsewhere in the Old Testament, occurs in post-Bibl. Heb. in the sense of *rub off, rub away, rub out* ; in the Mishnah (*Shabb. vii. 2*) it denotes two of the kinds of "work" prohibited on the Sabbath, viz., rubbing the hair off a skin (in tanning), and erasing writing. In Arabic the corresponding word means to "*destroy utterly* so that no trace of the thing remains."

⁴ Lit. *violently entreated* (נִרְצָה), a victim of violence. The word does not mean *dead* : see R.V.m., and (e.g.) Ps. xvii. 9 ("From the wicked that *spoil* me"). The verb is often used of devastating a city, a country, or a people, being usually rendered *lay waste, or spoil*, as Is. xv. 1, xxxiii. 1 ; Jer. iv. 13, 20 ; and it is applied occasionally to individuals, as Ps. xvii. 9 just quoted, and Prov. xix. 26 ("He that *violently entreateth* (R.V.m.) his father, and chaseth away his mother").

⁵ This is the general view of recent scholars : see e.g. G. A. Cooke, *D.B.* iv. 551b.

of the blow (ver. 26) is that he *falls* (ver. 27). Perhaps we may suppose that she first struck him to the ground with the hammer, and then, as this alone might not have done more than stun him, completed the deed by driving the tent-peg through his temples; and that this gave rise to the version according to which she did this in his sleep.

Sisera is slain: but the poet does not leave him yet; and in a singularly dramatic scene transports us from his lifeless corpse into the palace at Harosheth, where he pictures the queen-mother anxiously expecting her son's return. "The presentiment of evil which she herself stifles, the sanguine confidence of her princesses, who see in imagination the division of the booty, an Israelite maiden or two for each man, and abundance of the richly dyed, ornamented stuffs which they themselves prize so highly—all this is depicted with inimitable skill. Their light-hearted anticipations form a striking contrast to the ill-suppressed forebodings of the mother's heart; and the whole scene produces on the reader, who knows the ghastly reality, an incomparable effect. Lowth says justly that there is nothing in literature more perfect in its kind than these verses."¹

²⁰ Through the window she looked forth, and cried,

The mother of Sisera (cried) through the lattice:

"Why doth his chariot disappoint in coming?"

"Why tarry the hoof-beats of his chariots?"

²¹ Her wisest³ princesses gave answer,

Yea, *she* returned her answer to herself:⁴

²² "Are they not finding, are they not dividing spoil?"

"A damsel or two for every man,

¹ Moore, p. 166 f.

² See the same idiom in Exodus xxxii. 1.

³ Notice the irony implied in this epithet.

⁴ In the same words, viz., which the princesses use, and which now follow: her son's return is delayed by the immense booty he has secured.

⁵ The vividness of the original has vanished in the tame (and incorrect) rendering of A.V., R.V. "Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?" The tense is the graphic Hebrew imperfect.

"Spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,

"A piece of embroidery or two for the neck of the queen!?"

¹ So perish all thine enemies, O Yahweh!

But may those that love him be as when the sun cometh forth
in his might.

The "So" is very expressive. As Moore remarks, it brings again the whole scene before our eyes—the defeat, the panic, the wild flight, the king's humiliating death by a woman's hand: "So may all thine enemies perish"—with the same completeness, and the same dishonour! And in the last line the triumph of the loyal worshippers of Yahweh is compared finely to "the full burst of the sun out of the darkness of the night or the darkness of a storm, 'a hero [Ps. xix. 5] in his strength.'" ²

The poem is a masterpiece of lyric poetry; and ranks high among the triumphal odes which the literature of the world possesses. The poet's literary power is indeed remarkable, and is such as to make it evident that poetry had long been cultivated among the Hebrews. By its exuberant buoyancy it reflects the ecstasy of elation into which the people were thrown by their success. It excels in vigour, picturesqueness, and dramatic force. First, in a fine exordium, the national God is thanked for the martial ardour with which the people have been inspired—

³ When the locks grow long in Israel,

When the people offer themselves willingly, ⁴ bless ye Yahweh!

¹ The text has here for the second line—

[Spoil of dyed stuffs,] a piece of embroidery,

[Dyed stuff,] two pieces of embroidery, for the neck of the spoil.

But the lines are ill-balanced, and seem over-loaded; and the words enclosed in brackets are probably glosses. "Spoil" at the end cannot be right; and though other emendations have been suggested, Ewald's *the queen* (לשנל for שגל; the word used in Ps. xlv. 9; Neh. ii. 6) remains the best.

² Stanley, *Jewish Church*, i. 329.

³ A mark of devotion to the sacred work of war; so W. R. Smith in *Black's Judges* (in the *Smaller Cambr. Bible for Schools*, 1892, p. 39); comp. Moore, p. 138. For שגל locks, see Numbers vi. 5; Ezekiel xliv. 20, comp. Deuteronomy xxxii. 42; and for the verb שגל, comp. Numbers v. 18, Leviticus xxi. 10, and elsewhere.

⁴ I.e. come forward readily in war; so ver. 9. Comp. Ps. cx. 3.

- * Hear, O kings ; give ear, O rulers ;
 I, unto Yahweh I will sing,
 I will make melody unto Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Then, in words echoed in Psalm lxviii. 7, 8, the poet describes the storm and earthquake with which he pictures Yahweh as marching forth from Edom, His ancient home in the far South, to the help of His people—

- † Yahweh ! when thou camest forth from Seir,
 When thou marchedst from the field of Edom,
 The earth quaked, yea, the heavens shook,¹
 The clouds also dropped water ;
- ‡ The mountains poured down (torrents) at the presence of Yahweh,
 At the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

In a thunderstorm the Hebrews imagined Yahweh, enveloped in light, to be borne along in the dark thunder-cloud : the flashes of lightning were glimpses of the brilliancy within, caused by the clouds parting ; and the thunder was His voice (see especially Ps. xviii. 10-13, xxix. 3-9). Hence a theophany is habitually pictured by them as accompanied by a great thunderstorm (e.g. Mic. i. 4 ; Nah. i. 3b, 5, 6b, Hab. iii. 3-4, 6-8, 10-11). Those who have read the Rev. F. W. Holland's graphic description of a terrific storm in the Sinaitic Peninsula, witnessed by him in 1867, in which the lightning and thunder were incessant, rain came down in sheets, and torrents of water, many feet deep, poured down the wadys, carrying with them huge boulders and other *débris*, and completely transforming the surface of the soil, will be aware that there is little hyperbole in this, or the other passages cited.²

After this there follows the graphic picture of the helpless

¹ Reading either יָרָדוּ (Ehrlich) or יָרָדוּ (Moore), for יָרָדוּ : cf. LXX (MSS.) ἐραράχθη, ἐξεσάθη, and ἐξέστη. Dropped no doubt came in by error from the next line : a variation in the verb used is a great improvement. For the idea, see 2 Samuel xxii. 8 ; Job xxvi. 11 ; Isaiah xiii. 13. The Hebrews thought of the heavens as something *solid*.

² The description is quoted in my *Minor Prophets*, (Nah.-Mal.) in the *Century Bible*, p. 100. Comp. also my notes on Nah. i. 3b, 5, 6, and Hab. iii.

condition of the country (vers. 6-8), which has been already quoted (above, p. 29), the invitation to all—in words which in part, it is clear, are unfortunately corrupt—to praise Yahweh for the deliverance (vers. 9-12), ending with the inspiriting apostrophe—

Awake, awake, Deborah !

Awake, awake, utter a song !

Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity¹ captive,

Thou son of Abinóam !

We have next the mustering of the troops, the encomiums passed on those who responded, and the sarcastic reproof of those who remained aloof (vers. 13-18), the vivid descriptions of the rout of the foe (vers. 19-23), and the fate of Sisera (vers. 24-27), the dramatic scene in his palace at Harosheth (vers. 28-30), and the patriotic close (ver. 31)—all combining to make a whole of astonishing brilliancy and power. Parts, as has been remarked, are corrupt ; but they do not impair our comprehension of the poem as a whole. We are impressed by the fire and animation which breathe throughout it, by the sudden transitions of mood and scene, and by the felicity and lightness of touch with which the poet has chosen and treated particular episodes so as to call up a picture of the whole.

But the Song is also important historically. It is one of the oldest extant monuments of Hebrew literature ; and almost the only quite contemporary writing earlier than the monarchy. Yahweh, it seems, is not yet fully domiciled in Canaan : His home is in the distant south ; and thence He comes forth to the help of His people in Canaan. That Yahweh should be described as coming from *Edom*, a country generally so hostile to Israel, is remarkable : but the representation recurs elsewhere. Thus in Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2 (dating not improbably from the time of Jeroboam I.), we read—

¹ I.e., thy captives. So in the reminiscence, Psalm lxxviii. 18.

Yahweh came from Sinai,
 And beamed forth unto them from Seir ;
 He shone forth from Mount Paran,
 And came from Meribath-Kadesh,¹

viz., to guide His people through the wilderness to Canaan. Seir, it need hardly be remarked, is the name of the mountainous region inhabited by the Edomites (Gen. xxxii. 3 ; xxxvi. 9, etc.). Mount Paran (or, collectively—the mountains of Paran) will be some mountain, or range of mountains—it is uncertain what—on the W. of Edom, between Elath and Kadesh. And Habakkuk, in the fine Ode (ch. iii.) in which he describes the appearance of Yahweh in a theophany to judge and redeem His people, writes—

* God came from Teman,
 And the Holy One from Paran ;
 His majesty covered the heavens,
 And the earth was full of his glory.

Teman was a district in the north of Edom (Ez. xxv. 13), mentioned also elsewhere (e.g. Amos i. 12). Perhaps, if we were better acquainted than we are with the ancient religion of Edom, the reason for Yahweh's being represented as coming from it might be apparent.

We have seen already what the historical situation was at the time. The Canaanites were still strong in many parts of the land : their fortresses cut off the four northern tribes from their brethren in central Canaan ; the land was overrun by bands of armed Canaanites ; their " kings," under a formidable leader, had continued to take the aggressive against the Israelites ; and the position of Israel in

¹ The Massoretic text has *out of holy myriads* (sc. of angels) ; but the parallelism leads us to expect a fourth name of a place. Ewald, Dillmann, and other recent scholars all read, for קדש . . . קרנב . . . קדש *out of holy myriads*, מַמְרַבַּת קדש *from Meribath-Kadesh* (Numb. xxvii. 14 ; Ez. xlvi. 28). The Israelites, according to J, stayed at Kadesh nearly the whole of the forty years in the wilderness (comp. Numb. xiii. 26 with xx. 16, 14, 16) ; and their departure from it marked the beginning of the final stage of their journey to Canaan.

Canaan was seriously threatened. The victory marked a turning-point in the early history of the nation. It gave a blow to the Canaanites from which they never recovered; and it saved the integrity of Israel, at a time when the northern tribes were in danger of being torn from it. The poem, however, teaches us more than this. It shows us that "when Israel is arrayed in arms against Canaan, every tribe and clan,"—except perhaps Judah, which throughout this period is isolated from the other tribes, and even afterwards was united with them only for a short time—"is bound to come forward to the support of the national God." This is important. As Moore points out,¹ it shows "that the Israelite tribes, though separated and to some extent broken up in the invasion and settlement of Palestine, and the transition from nomadic to agricultural life with all its profound changes, felt themselves to be one people. This consciousness must have come down from a time when the tribes were more closely united than they were in the first centuries of their settlement in Canaan. But it does not spring solely from the fact that they were, or believed themselves to be, of one race, or from the memory of the days in which they had wandered and fought side by side; it has a deeper root in their religion. Israel is the people of Yahweh (Judg. v. 11, 13); its enemies are His enemies (ver. 31); its victories, His victories (ver. 11)." He is praised for the martial ardour with which Israel has been inspired (vers. 2, 3): His angel curses Meroz for not coming forward bravely to His aid. "The whole Ode is a triumphal Te Deum to Yahweh, Israel's God."

"Yahweh was not a god of Canaan, whose worship Israel, in settling in the land and learning to till the soil, had adopted from the natives, but the god of the invaders, by whose help they conquered Canaan. His seats were in the distant

¹ P. 134.

South, whence he comes forth to succour his people, and discomfit their foes. Thither, long after the time of Deborah, Elijah journeyed through the desert to the old holy mountain, where he found Yahweh (1 Kings xix.). It is the old and constant tradition that at this 'holy mountain,'—the 'mountain of God' of Exodus iii. 1; iv. 27; xviii. 5; xxiv. 13; 1 Kings xix. 8,—Israel solemnly adopted the religion of Yahweh (Exod. xix., xxiv.). This coincides with the implications of the poem noted above, and explains, as hardly anything else could, the strength of the religious feeling, and the consciousness of religious unity which express themselves in the Ode." Though the political unity of Israel was incomplete, the poem reveals clearly a belief in a common national life and national unity, bound up with the acknowledgement of Yahweh as the national God, and a belief in His interest in the national weal. "The union of Yahweh's people at Deborah's call in a holy war must have done much to strengthen the feeling of oneness in race and religion; and their success must have deepened their faith in Yahweh of armies, the God of the embattled ranks of Israel." Israel was on its way to become an organised nation; and the one thing which made it possible for it to hold its own in a country only partially conquered, and to advance to higher stages of political, social and religious life, was this common belief in their national God—a God, whose religion, as Kamphausen and Montefiore have justly pointed out,¹ must already, and indeed from the beginning, have possessed a distinctive *ethical* character, which alone could have saved the comparatively small number of Israelites from being absorbed by the Canaanites, and adopting their religion as their own. Israel's religion inspired its warriors with patriotic ardour, and filled them with confidence. National interests were at stake; and

¹ See the quotations in *Exodus*, in the *Cambridge Bible*, p. 414.

so the aspects of Yahweh's character which appealed most strongly to national feeling are those which find expression in the poem : He is a " man of war," and fights Israel's battles : the time was not yet ripe for His spiritual and ethical attributes to be realised and emphasised as they were afterwards by prophets and Psalmists.

I close with a few remarks on the art of Jael. Taking chapters iv., v., as they stand, it is, so far as we can see, not possible to acquit Jael of a treacherous murder. The Arabs have strong feelings on the rights of guests : a stranger who has once even touched the tent-ropes of an Arab, still more if he has partaken of his hospitality, is under his protection ; to do him any harm is a flagrant violation of the sacred duties of a host. The East changes little : and it is reasonable to suppose that similar feelings prevailed in Sisera's time. It is also expressly said (iv. 17*b*) that there was peace between Jabin and the house of Heber. Hence Sisera, in accordance with what may be reasonably inferred about the feelings of the time, had every claim upon Jael's protection. In so far, however, as the song differs from the prose-narrative, it may perhaps be held that it does not paint Jael's deed in such black colours. The poem does not distinctly say that Sisera had partaken of Jael's hospitality. He had asked for refreshment, and she had offered it to him : it is not said that he actually drank it. The distinction is a fine one : but in the East there is much punctiliousness on such matters ; and we must not demand that Jael should be governed by the ethical principles of the Sermon on the Mount. An interesting parallel has been quoted in this connexion. Some of you may remember how at the end of the *Talisman*, when Saladin offers the Master of the Templars a bowl of sherbet, and he then suddenly strikes off his head with a sabre for his many crimes, he is careful to do this before he has tasted the liquid ;

and Sir W. Scott makes him say, "Had he murdered my father, and afterwards partaken of my food and of my bowl, not a hair of his head could have been injured by me."¹ If, however, Jael really did what is attributed to her in chapter iv., there can be no question of her treachery.

But there remains a further possibility to be reckoned with. As I said, there are reasons for thinking, and many critics do actually think, that Jabin is no original element in the Sisera-story, and that the notices about him have come in by a confusion of tradition. If this view is right, the notice about peace between Jabin and the house of Heber will disappear. If, however, there was no Jabin at this time for Heber to be at peace with, how does that affect our estimate of Jael's act? The Kenites were friendly to Israel: Sisera, an open enemy of Israel, takes refuge in the tent of one who is friendly to Israel, if not an ally of Israel: is Jael then blameworthy, if she takes advantage of the opportunity, and slays the enemy of Israel? I suppose we may say that, even according to western ideas, she would not be: the enemy's general would have entered her tent with his eyes open, and at his own risk; and his death, even after having partaken of hospitality, would, *in a state of war*, have been justifiable upon national grounds.

The question must, however, be considered also from the point of view of those who may not be satisfied that iv. 17b is not an integral part of the narrative. The difficulty arises, of course, not from the mere fact, as such, that Jael acted treacherously, but because, her act being, or being accounted to be, treacherous, she is eulogised for it in the poem. In judging of this eulogy, we must naturally have regard to the circumstances of the age and of the occasion. The education of the Jewish nation, as of mankind at large,

¹ Cf. the note at the end of the novel; and Gibbon, ch. lix. (vol. vii. p. 258, in the ed. of 1862).

was gradual; and the revelation contained in the Old Testament was progressive likewise. This is the great fact which we ought ever to bear in mind: it is often admitted in principle, but the consequences which follow from it are not always perceived. This is due partly to the fact that most of the teaching of the Old Testament does stand, spiritually and morally, upon such a high level, that we forget, and are unwilling to allow, that parts are not on that level; partly it is due to an unhistorical view of the history and literature of the Old Testament, the older history being often brought before us, not as it actually happened, but as it was viewed by a much later age. We must not, however, on *à priori* grounds adopt a theory of inspiration inconsistent with the facts supplied by the Bible itself. A study of the Bible shows that the Spirit of God does not always, in precisely the same degree, subordinate to itself the men who are its instruments; and human passion, and human interests, sometimes assert themselves. In Judges v. the poet glorifies the great principles of freedom, patriotic spirit, and national unity, which have often in the world's history been nobly contended for: it is a triumph-song not only of a nation victorious against its oppressors, but also of a more spiritual religion over one that was unspiritual. We may rightly admire the poet for the power and beauty with which these great and true thoughts have been expressed by him; but we must remember also the limitations incident to his age and position, and not elevate his impassioned outburst of patriotic feeling, uttered, be it remembered, more than 1100 years before Christ, into the deliberate and coolly pronounced justification of what—assuming iv. 17*b* to be an integral part of the narrative—can be described only as an act of basest treachery.¹

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¹ In my last paper, p. 34 note, for העמלקי read העמלק.