

YOUNG MEN OF MONTAGUE DISCUSS GIDEON THE ICONOCLAST

FOREST FIRES NEAR HALIFAX

(The following Essay was read before the Young Men's Guild at Montague by the Essayist on Sunday the 24th instant with President L.H. Coffin, Manager of the C. Bank of Commerce, presiding.)

By Wendell H. Gordon, Teacher. (Nom de plume: "Lo-Lo.") To a lengthened period of serfdom there had followed in the history of the Israelites a time of dwelling in tents, when the camp of the tribes, half-military, half-pastoral, clustered about the Tabernacle, moved with it from point to point through the desert. But now the march was over; the nomads had become settlers. On opening the story of the Judges, we find ourselves in a warlike atmosphere. At once we are plunged into military preparations; the popular heroes are those who smite the uncircumcised hip and thigh.

For forty years peace reigned in Israel after Deborah and Barak had delivered the Israelites from the yoke of Jabin and Sisera. After this period of rest from strife, the Hebrews because of their disobedience to Jehovah were for seven years so sorely scourged by a confederation of Arab tribes (composed of the Midianites, Amalekites and other nomadic tribes) that they were forced to seek refuge in the cover of the hills, in caverns and gullies and in strongholds on hill tops. Fire and sword spread terror on every hand. Their crops were destroyed, their country was laid waste.

In their despair help is sought from Jehovah and a prophet is sent. The prophet, Jewish legend says it was Phinehas, reminds them of how God had taken the Israelites out of the bondage of the Egyptians, and he then administers the stern reproof: "But you have not obeyed Jehovah." The life of the Hebrews seems to have been spent upon a short ladder in going up, in coming down, in going up to play, in coming down to sin and drying the penitent tears; and in climbing again, and then descending, miles short of heaven.

Among the hills of Manasseh at Ophrah lived Gideon the son of Joash the Abi-azrite. To Gideon while secretly threshing wheat in a cave there appeared near him under an oak in Ophrah an angel (Malakh). This word "Malakh" means in the Septuagint "messenger" and is mentioned seven times. The angel said to Gideon: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor!" The divine messenger then informed him that he, Gideon, should save Israel. Modest Gideon was astounded that he should be divinely appointed to deliver the suffering Israelites, and from habitual caution asked for a sign, proof or test that the angel was in very deed the messenger of God.

When Gideon's present of a kid and unleavened cakes had been laid on a rock, the angel touched the offering with his rod, fire at once came out of the rock and consumed the flesh and cakes. Then the angel vanished. An altar was built there by Gideon and called Jehovah-Shalom.

Now there came a test to be applied to Gideon, and he appears as a reformer and iconoclast or image-breaker. By God's warrant, he with ten true and faithful men pulled down at night Baal's altar, the symbol of Israel's infidelity, and cut down the grove or great wooden mast of Asherah, the sign of Israel's degradation. He next offered on the new altar of Jehovah a burnt sacrifice of a seven year old bullock. To overturn merely is no service; Gideon not only destroyed one system but also well and truly laid the firm foundation of another.

In the morning, the men of the city discovered what had been done and sought to kill Gideon. But his father Joash in defending his son exclaimed: "If Baal be a god let him plead for himself!" and he threatened death to those who should protest for Baal. The people changed the name of Gideon which in Hebrew is "The Hewer," to Jerubbaal which means literally "Baal's antagonist."

By signs, tests or tokens from Heaven showing symbolically that God will save Israel, Gideon was encouraged. Gideon's fleece—which is to be wet one morning while the threshing-floor is dry, and dry next morning while the threshing-floor is wet—was the means of testing the Divine Presence and approval. Wool, as a good radiator of heat would, under ordinary conditions, receive a plentiful deposit of dew, but so would the surrounding grass and soil. The second miracle was still more remarkable, inferior radiators receiving dew, when a better radiator, wool, remained dry. A somewhat similar example of repeated pleadings with Jehovah is Abraham's repeated requests when interceding for Sodom (Gen. XVIII:23-33). In ancient history we are told about another famous fleece—the Golden Fleece, and the long and fruitless search of the hero Jason with his forty-nine companion Argonauts for it.

Gideon rose early in his camp by the wall of Harod on Mount Gilead. Men of Manasseh, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali to the number of thirty-two thousand (32,000) composed his camp. The hosts of the Arabs, one hundred and thirty-five thousand (135,000) strong, were encamped on the north side, in the valley of Jezreel.

Proclamation is made that those who are fearful and trembling shall return to their homes. The name of

the well of Harod at which they were encamped means "trembling" or "fear." By morning, twenty-two thousand (22,000) or two-thirds of the Hebrew people had deserted the camp.

The remaining ten thousand (10,000) are tried by the test of the stream of water which flows between their camp and that of the enemy's. Nine thousand, seven hundred (9,700) kneel or lie down to take a long and leisurely draught, but three hundred (300) bending swiftly down carry water to their mouths in the hollow of the hand. These men in wise haste, alert and under self-control, do not kneel but lap the water and pass over lapped separately themselves and are by their great leader proved fit for the work that is to be done. The others are left behind as a reserve.

Guided by the great Jehovah, Gideon and Phurah heard a man in the enemy's camp relating to his companion the dream of the cake of barley bread—such bread as Israel had been reduced to, the bread of poverty—that tumbled into the host of Midian, and the other man giving the interpretation that it was the sword of Gideon who was by God's aid to destroy the Midian's camp. As the result of this reconnoitre, which proved that the camp of the foe was full of doubt and fear, Gideon was greatly strengthened in courage.

After midnight, the surprise assault began. Israel represented by a three hundred chosen men, divided into three companies, act on the orders issued by Gideon: they blow their trumpets on every side of the enemy's camp, they shout their war-cry: "The sword for Jehovah and Gideon!" they break their pitchers and the torches which were concealed in them they flash in the air.

We are told that the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and the lights of Heaven may also be said to have battled against the bewildered and panic-stricken Midianites. The complete rout and flight of the Arabs followed the unexpected and daring night attack. At the ford there was dreadful bloodshed. Their two chiefs, Zibah and Zalmuna, were captured;

and his son Jether failing to do so, they are, because they had killed his brothers, slain by Gideon's own hand. The men of Ephraim being now called by Gideon, they gained a great victory over the fleeing host and killed two sub-chiefs Oreb (the Crow) and Zeeb (the Wolf). One hundred and twenty thousand (120,000) men in all were killed, and the remaining fifteen thousand (15,000) fled to Karbor. This remnant of the mighty host was later attacked by the Israelites and completely defeated.

The refusal of the men of Succoth and Penuel to furnish provisions to Gideon's "faint yet pursuing" army which had passed over the Jordan is avenged on his victorious return by scourging the seventy-seven elders, demolishing the water-tower the pride of Penuel and decimating the men of the city.

The great victory of Gideon—Jehovah's victory as he himself acknowledged—had this special significance, that it ended the incursions into Canaan of the wandering races of the desert. The slaughter became in the literature of Israel a symbol of the destruction which must overtake the foes of Jehovah. On his return from the campaign the people expressed their desire that he would assume the title of King; but he refused from motives of caution as he would have to engage in civil war before his royal power could be firmly established, and also Gideon looked on the priestly office as his proper calling. A strong but not spiritual religiousness is the chief note of Gideon's character. We shall now treat of Gideon the Ecclesiastical.

Of the gold taken from the Midianites he made an ephod (idolat, a kind of linen surplice worn by the Jewish priests) and placed it in Ophrah as a symbol or sign of Jehovah's presence, among the people. When it is supposed that Gideon fell away from his first faith in making this image the error lies in overestimating his spirituality at the earlier stage. We must not think that at any time the use of a symbolic image would have seemed wrong to him. It was not against images but against the worship of false and impure gods that his zeal

HALIFAX, July 4—Forest fires on the eastern side of the Arm, and in the woods on the shores of the First Dartmouth lake caused some alarm yesterday.

A blaze occurred in the woods of the Fleming park, pretty close to the Memorial tower. Residents nearby hastened to the place and some help came from this side so that the fire was extinguished without material damage.

A crowd of nearly one hundred persons worked yesterday afternoon in the woods on the shores of the Dartmouth lake in a hard fight to save the camps and prevent the destruction of valuable forest acres. The fire department rendered assistance during part of the afternoon. The center of the fire district was back of James Harrison's place. Mr. Innor, Mr. Creighton, Mr. Sterns and other campers strove valiantly and they succeeded in stopping the progress of the fire.

Water had to be carried from the lake, 200 yards distant. This was used with effect. Another method of combating the flames was to beat them with brush. At nightfall it looked as tho the danger were past but towards midnight ten or a dozen men were still engaged in the fire fighting operations.

was at first directed.

Gideon may have understood the Second Commandment only as forbidding the use of an image of any creature and the worship of a creature by means of an image. We know that the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies (Sanctum Sanctorum) were symbolic of the Thummim (Hebrew "perfections") of creation and through them the greatness of the Supreme Being was realized. So it was with Gideon's ephod or symbolic image, which was however by the northern tribes used in seeking oracles from The Grand Architect. But this ephod proved a snare to Gideon, perhaps (it is surmised) in the way of bringing in wealth and creating a spirit of avarice; for those who applied to him as a revealer brought gifts with

(Continued on page 8.)

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"As The Years Roll On"

Words by EDGAR SELDEN. As sung by DAISY LEON with JEFFERSON DE ANGELES in Frazer and Lederer's musical production "THE PEARL MAIDEN." Music by MELVILLE J. GIDEON. New York Theatre, New York

Musical score for "As The Years Roll On" featuring lyrics and piano accompaniment. The lyrics include: "Can't you see, can't you hear, Won't you Give me this, just one kiss, And be- un der stand; What I'd say, if I fore we part; Let me say, while a- may, While I hold your hand? You're my way, You're my own sweet heart. For I'll life, you're my all, 'Till a gain years, to re turn While your arms we meet; By the gar den wall, when on twine. By the gar den wall, when

Musical score for "As The Years Roll On" featuring lyrics and piano accompaniment. The lyrics include: "rose leaves fall, I'll then te peat. rose leaves fall, I'll make you mine. CHORUS. As the years roll on, As they come and go, You are more to me, Than you'll ev er know; In this world's vast space, None can take your place, And I'll love you, love you, love you, As the years roll on.

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