

THE  
WOMEN OF THE BIBLE;

DELINEATED IN A SERIES OF

SKETCHES OF PROMINENT FEMALES

MENTIONED IN

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY CLERGYMEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

ILLUSTRATED BY EIGHTEEN CHARACTERISTIC STEEL ENGRAVINGS.

EDITED BY

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## DEBORAH.

DOUBTLESS, if Deborah had lived in our day, and been an American, the people would have elected her for President of the United States. There is such a madness in the world after military glory, that nothing but her piety and poetry, with her hatred of slavery, would have prevented her political success.

And yet, the glory of Deborah was no part of it military, except that her course of conduct arose out of faith, which is essentially the main point in the character of a Christian warrior. She aroused and animated Barak to the fight, but led it not herself, and only reported the commands of God. Barak's faith, at first, seemed mainly to have been in Deborah; Deborah's faith was in God. Barak relied upon her, almost as if she were in the place of God: "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." This was straightforward and decided, though looking a little like trusting in an arm of flesh. Perhaps, however, the cause of this may be found not in any deficiency of Barak's own faith in God, nor in any undue reliance upon Deborah; but in the fact of her known vast influence over all Israel, as the Lord's acknowledged prophetess and constituted judge over the people, whom her presence would greatly encourage to gather together at Kedesh, to go out against the enemy. Barak probably felt that without the sanction and animating

power of her co-operation, he would not have been able to gather his ten thousand men from Zabulon and Naphtali. So she left her tent beneath the palm-tree, and went down with Barak to Kedesh. There she probably remained in prayer, while he went forth with the men of Zabulon and Naphtali to the conflict.

Barak relied upon Deborah, because he knew that God himself spake by her and guided her, and all Israel knew that in her dwelt the wisdom and Spirit of the Lord. Her office, in this case, was simply to communicate God's commands. And she did it with such an enthusiastic earnestness of determination to have them obeyed, that not only the command went from her, but the obedient impulse with it. She did it with a sublimity and energy of purpose and feeling, a decision of character, a rapidity, heartiness, and power of faith, that made hers the animating mind, while Barak the warrior simply executed her plan for the conflict. It is good to see the mingled fire of piety and patriotism so pure and bright in her own soul, and the energetic impulse it communicated to others. It was the undoubting, unhesitating nature of her faith,—the Lord had thus given her dominion over the mighty,—combined with the inevitable influence which an imaginative and heroic mind would wield over common ones, that made her authority so absolute. When the time came for action, there could be no delay: "Up! this is the day. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive!" What an energetic, whirlwind style of prophetic enthusiasm and command! Barak could not resist it, but went forth with his ten thousand men, no longer demanding the presence of Deborah, but relying upon that of God. And, in this reliance upon God, they gained a complete victory. The faith of Barak followed that of Deborah, being assured of God's presence through her.

Now it is somewhat singular that among the names celebrated in



the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find that of Barak, but not that of Deborah. How are we to account for this? We rather think it is because, in the case of Barak, the instance is a remarkable one of a mind "out of weakness made strong," by the power of faith sustaining it; whereas, in the case of Deborah, the faith being that of a person a long while honored with direct communications from God, its particular exercise in that immediate juncture was not so very remarkable, although the degree of habitual faith in her may have been much greater than in Barak. Her whole life had been one of faith, so that she was a mother in Israel, and at a special crisis like this a great faith was demanded and expected in her as a matter of course: but with Barak it was different; in him it was an extraordinary development. Deborah's natural endowments were greater than Barak's; and her discipline for years having been that of such direct communion with God, it had been a shame indeed if she had not, at such a time as this, possessed and manifested a great faith. Of her it might be said that out of *habitual faith* she was made strong. Whereas, in the case of Barak, the example was that of a person perhaps naturally timid and distrustful, but now, out of that habitual weakness, raised to such a strength of faith, as made it a fit instance for the divine record. It was the grace and power of the Divine Spirit in a new and unexpected display. The development of character in both these cases is exceedingly natural and interesting.

And now comes the great song of praise and triumph—one of the sublimest pages of poetry within the compass of the Scriptures. It is the only war-song in existence that has the divine mingled with the human, the very deepest and sweetest spirit of grateful piety with the loftiest temper of patriotism and martial enthusiasm. Its sublime apostrophes, its bursts of feeling, its rapid and startling changes of thought, its lightning-like descriptions, its comprehensive historic

allusions, its questionings, its solemn adjurations, its benedictions, its grandeur of faith in God and gratitude to him, all make it one of the most extraordinary compositions in the Bible. If we should consider it as an effort of human genius, it would be unrivalled; there is nothing to be compared with it in the world of literature. And how noble, how religious, how beautiful its close! "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might!"

The land had rest, after this, forty years; and probably before the revival of the spirit of devotion in the people had utterly ceased, Deborah was buried beneath the palm-tree, where the bones of the beloved nurse of Rebekah were resting. But the very next chapter begins with the old record of depravity: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." Neither mothers nor fathers in Israel could create for another generation the spirit of obedience and love.

The case of Deborah shows what strong faith and habitual deep piety in a single woman may do for the Church of God, and even for a whole nation. It may possibly do more, at the present period in the world's history, than ever before. It does not need an appointment to the office of a prophet, nor the exercise of public gifts, nor the commanding genius of a poet, but a patient, earnest, persevering spirit of faith and prayer. The unseen interpositions of God in answer to prayer may be more and greater than those that are seen. They are not now chronicled as of old in a divine record, and thus made to shine out in the notice of all mankind, observable, undeniable; nevertheless, they may be just as real as those recorded in the Scriptures, which are indeed but solitary examples of what God is constantly doing. Here and there the supernatural agencies by which God works are made visible, to keep the fire of our faith burn-

ing, and to prevent us from losing sight of God in common things. Faith and prayer may be answered daily, though the chain of connection between God and us may not be visible. When God, by his Spirit, abides remarkably in a holy soul, that soul, though its tabernacle may be as lowly as the poor widow's, who glided in and out with her two mites among the rich men at the Jewish treasury, occupies the place of a prophetess, and divine impulses from God may be communicated to her, and announced in her, in answer to prayer, as truly as in the case of the wife of Lapidoth.