

**Ludlow—Deborah: A Tale of the Times of
Judas Maccabæus.** By James M. Ludlow.
Revell. \$1.50.

The era of the Maccabees was the heroic age of Israel. Then, for a little while, the Jews knew what was national life. Into this heroic age, Dr. Ludlow, like others before him, has been tempted to stray and collect materials and write a story,—yes, and print it too. There's the gravamen! This story is like a barn, where you go inside and see the exposed framework. Besides, there is no interior decoration and the construction is clumsy. Still, a barn is good for its purpose,—and in the divine economy of the universe doubtless the book "Deborah" has a peculiarly fit place. One may take sand and soda, and mix them, but, until fire fuses, they do not make glass. Dr. Ludlow has taken history, archæology, local color, love, and war, and mixed them, but the light does not shine through. The fire of inspiration is lacking. He can do better, and he will.

The story covers the epoch from the beginning of the struggle of the sons of Mattathias to the reign of Judas. The pharisaic party of that day is lauded by our author, who cannot hint anything sufficiently evil to express his opinion of the morals of the other party. His antitheses are inartistic. Menelaos, Glaucon, Antiochos, Appolonius,—all are set down as degenerates. The only good Greek who appears is Dion, and at the end he turns out to be a Jew. Agatholles is too shadowy to call for consideration. Besides, he is obviously dragged in late in the day to relieve a strained situation. Ben Sirach is another late invention. The blind boy and the lame boy are the most interesting because of their natural and lifelike character. At first they are alive. Toward the end of the story Meph, the lame boy, loses his spontaneousness as a character and appears at several times when not needed by the exigencies of the story. It is painful to write these things, for, as Dr. Ludlow makes Judas Maccabæus say (the finest thing in the book!), "But what is justice? God is just, and we—we are only men." Nevertheless, the literary critic is sad when he cannot praise. Yet this he rejoices to be able to say, in a day of tainted fiction,—this novel is morally clean,—so we thank God and take courage.