## STORY OF HAMAN.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Used It to Good Advantage.

He Drew From It Many Instructive Lessons -Pride Goeth Before a Fall-Earthly Possessions Do Not Bring Happiness - Reward of Fidelity.

The tragic tale which the popular Washington divine used as a basis for his most recent sermon (a) be found in Esther 7: 10: "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai."

Here is an oriental courtier, about the most offensive man in Hebrew history, Haman by name. He plotted for the destruction of the Israelitish nation, and I wonder not that in some of the Hebrew synagogues to this day when Haman's name is mentioned the congregation clench their fists and stamp their feet and cry, "Let his name be blotted out!" Haman was prime minister in the magnificent court of Persia. Thoroughly appreciative of the honor conferred he expects everybody that he passes to be obsequious. Coming in one day at the gate of the palace the servants drop their heads in honor of his office, but a Hebrew, named Mordecai, gazes upon the passing dignity without bending his head or taking off his hat. He was a good man, and would not have been negligent of the ordinary courtesies of life, but he felt no respect either for Haman or the nation from which he had come. So he could not be hypocritical, and while others made oriental salaam, getting clear down before this prime minister when he passed, Mordecai, the Hebrew, relaxed not a muscle of his neck and kept his chin clear up. Because of that affront Haman gets a decree from Ahasuerus, the dastardly king, for the massacre of all the Israelites, and that, of course, will include Mordecai.

To make a long story short, through

Queen Esther this whole plot was revealed to her husband, Ahasuerus. One night Ahasuerus, who was afflicted with insomnia, in his sleepless hours calls for his secretary to read him a few passages of Persian history. and so while away the night. In the book read that night to the king an account was given of a conspiracy, from which Mordecai, the Hebrew, had saved the king's life, and for which kindness Mordecai had never heveived any reward. Haman, who had been fixing up a nice gallows to hang Mordecai on, was walking outside the door of the king's sleeping apartment and was called in. The king told him that he had just had read to him the account of some one who had saved his, the king's life, and he asked what reward ought to be given to such an one. Self-conceited Haman, supposing that he himself was to get the honor, and not imagining for a moment that the deliverer of the king's life was Mordecai, says: "Why, your majesty ought to make a triumph for him, and put a crown on him and set him on a splendid horse, high-stepping and full-blooded, and then have one of your princes lead the horse through the streets, crying, 'Bow the knee, here comes a man who has saved the king's life!'" Then said Ahasuerus in severe tones to Haman: "I know all about your scoundrelism. go out and make a triumph for Mordecai, the Hebrew, whom you hate. Put the best saddle on the finest horse, and you, the prince, hold the stirrup while Mordecai gets on, and then lead his horse through the street. Make haste!"

What a spectacle! A comedy and a tragedy at one and the same time. There they go, Mordecai, who had been despised, now starred and robed, in the stirrups. Haman, the chancel-lor, afoot, holding the prancing, rearing, champing stallion. Mordecal bends his neck at last, but it is to look down at the degraded prime minister walking beneath him. Huzza for Mordecai! Alas for Haman! But what a pity to have the gallows, recently built, entirely wasted! It is fifty cubit high, and built with care. And Haman had erected it for Mordecai, by whose stirrups he now walks as groom. Strange and more startling than any romance, there go up the steps of the scaffolding, side by side, the hangman and Haman, the ex-chan-"So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai."

Although so many years have passed since cowardly Ahasuerus reigned, and the beautiful Esther answered to his whims, and Persia perished, yet from the life and death of Haman we may draw many living lessons of warning and instruction. At first we come to the practical suggestion that, when the heart is wrong, things very insignificant will destroy our comfort. Who would have thought that a great prime minister, admired and applauded by millions of Persians, would have been so nettled and harrassed by any-thing trivial? What more could the great dignitary have wanted than his chariots and attendants, and palaces and banquets? If ffluence of circumstances can make a man contented and happy surely Haman should have been contented and happy. No; Mordecal's refusal of a bow takes the glitter from the gold, and richness from the purple, and the speed from the chariots. With a heart puffed up with every inflation of vanity and revenge, it was impossible for him to be happy. The silence of Mordecai at the gate was louder than the braying of trumpets at the palace. Thus shall it always be if the heart is not right. Circumstances the most trivial will disturb the spirit.

It is not the great calamities of life that create the greatest worriment. I have seen men felled by repeated blows of misfortune arising up from the dust, never despondent. But the most of the disquiet which men suffer is from insignificant causes; as a lion attacked by some beast of prey, turns easily around and slays him, yet runs roaring through the forest at the alighting on his brawny neck of a few insects. You meet some great loss in business with comparative composure; but you can think of petty trickeries inflicted upon you which arouse all your capacity for wrath, and remain in your heart an unbearable annoyance. If you look back on your life you will find that most of the vexa-lons and disturbances of spirit, which

you felt, were produced by circumstances that were not worthy of notice. If you want to be happy you must not care for trifles. Do not be too minute in your inspection of the treatment you receive from others. Again: I learn from the life of the man under our notice that worldly vanity and sin are very anxious to have piety bow before them. Haman was a fair emblem of entire worldliness, and Mordecai, the representative of unflinching godliness. Such were the usages of society in ancient times that, had this Israelite bowed to the prime minister it would have been an acknowledgment of respect for his character and nation. Mordecai would, therefore, have sinned against his religion had he made any obeisance or dropped his chin half an inch before Haman. When, therefore, proud Haman attempted to compel an homage which was not felt, he only did what the world ever since has tried to do, and when it would force our holy religion in any way to yield to its dictates. Daniel, if he had been a man of religious compromise, would never have been thrown into the den of lions. He might have made some arrangements with King Darius whereby he could have retained part of his form of religion without making himself so completely obnoxious to the idolaters. Paul might have retained the favor of his rulers and escaped martyrdom if he had only been willing to mix up his Christian faith with a few errors. His unbending Christian character was taken as an

Fagot and rack and halter in all ages have been only the different ways in which the world has demanded obeisance. It was once, away up on the top of the temple, that Satan commanded the Holy One of Nazareth to kneel before him. But it is not now so much on the top of churches as down in the aisle and the pew and the pulpit that Satan tempts the espousers of the Christian faith to kneel before him. Why was it that the Platonic philosophers of early times, as well as Toland, Spinoza, and Bolingbroke of later days, were so madly opposed to Christianity? Certainly not because it favored immoralities, or arrested civilization, or dwarfed the intellect. The genuine reason, whether admitted or not, was because the religion of Christ paid no respect to their intellectual vanities. Blount, and Boyle, and the host of infidels, hatched out by the vile reign of Charles the Second, as reptiles crawl out of a marsh of slime, could not keep their patience, because, as they passed along, there were sit-ting in the gate of the church such men as Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John who would not bend an inch in respect to their philosophies.

Satan told our first parents that they would become as gods if they would only reach up and take a taste of the fruit. They tried it and failed, but their descondants are not yet satisfled with the experiment. We have now many desiring to be as gods, reaching up after yet another apple. Reason, scornful of God's word, may foam and strut with the proud wrath of Haman, and attempt to compel the homage of the good, but in the presence of men and angels it shall be confounded. "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." When science began to make its brilliant discoveries there were great facts brought to light that seemed to overthrow the truth of the The archaeologist with his crowbar, and the geologist with his hammer, and the chemist with his batteries, charged up the Bible. Moses' account of the creation seemed denied by the very structure of the earth. The astronomer wheeled around his telescope until the heavenly bodies seemed to marshal themselves against the Bible as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Observatories and universities rejoiced at what they considered the extinction of Christianity. They gathered new courage at what they considered past victory, and pressed on their conquest into the kingdom of nature until, alas for them! they discovered too much. God's word had only been lying in ambush that, in some unguarded moment, with a sudden bound, it might tear infidelity to pieces.

Again: Learn the lesson that pride goeth before a fall. Was any man ever so far up as Haman who tumbled so far down? Yes, on a smaller scale every day the world sees the same thing. Against their very advantages men trip into destruction. When God humbles proud men, it is usually at the moment of their greatest arrogancy. If there be a man in your community greatly puffed up with worldly success you have but to stand a little while and you will see him come down. You say, I wonder that God allows that man to go on riding over others' heads and making great assumptions of power. There is no wonder about it. Haman has not yet got to the top. Pride is a commander, well plumed and caparisoned, but it leads forth a dark and frowning host. We have the best of authority for saying that "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." The arrows from the Almighty's quiver are apt to strike the man when on the wing. Goliath shakes his great spear in defiance, but the small stones brom the brook Elah make him stagger and fall like an ox under the butcher's bludgeon. He who is down cannot fall. Vessels scudding under bare poles do not feel the force of the storm, but those with all sails set capsize at the sudden descent of the tem-

Again: This Oriental tale reminds us of the fact that wrongs we prepare for others return upon ourselves. The gallows that Haman built for Mordecai became the Prime Minister's strangulation. Robespierre, who sent so many to the guillotine, had his own head chopped off by the horrid instrument. The evil you practice on others will recoil upon your own pate. Slanders come home. Oppressions come

home. Cruelties come home. Furthermore, let the story of Haman teach us how quickly turns the wheel of fortune. One day, excepting the king. Haman was the mightiest man in Persia; but the next day, a lackey. So we go up, and so we come down. You seldom and any man twenty years in the same circumstances. Of those who, in political life twenty years ago, were the most prominent, how few remain in conspicuity. Political parties make cer-tain men do their hard work, and then, ofter using them as hacks, turn them out on the commons to die. Every

four years there is a complete revolution, and about five thousand men who ought certainly to be the next president are shamefully disappointed; while some, who this day are obscure and poverty-stricken, will ride upon the shoulders of the people, and take their turn at admiration and the spoils of office. Oh, how quickly the wheels turn! Ballot-boxes are the steps on which men come down as often as they go up. Of those who were long ago successful in the accumulation of property, how few have not met with reverses! while many of those who then were straightened in circumstances now hold the bonds and the bank keys of the nation. Of all fickle things in the world, fortune is the most fickle. Every day she changes her mind, and woe to the man who puts any confidence in what she promises or proposes!

Again; this Haman's history shows us that outward possessions and circumstances cannot make a man happy. While yet fully vested in authority and the chief adviser of the Persian monarch, and everything that equipage and pomp and splendor of residence could do were his, he is an object lesson of wretchedness. There are to-day more aching sorrows under crowns of royalty than under the ragged caps of the houseless. Much of the world's affluence and gaiety is only misery in colors. Many a woman seated in the street at her apple stand is happier than the great bankers. The mountains of worldly honor are covered with perpetual snow. Tamerlane conquered half the world, but could not subdue his own fears. Ahab goes to bed, sick, because Noboth will not sell him his vineyard. Herod is in agony because a little child is born in Bethlehem. Great Felix trembles because a poor minister will preach righteousness, temperance, and judg-ment to come. From the time of Louis the Twelfth to Louis the Eighteenth was there a straw-bottomed chair in France that did not sit more solidly than the great throne on which the French kings reigned?

Were I called to sketch misery in its worst form, I would not go up to the dark alley of the poor, but up to the highway over which prancing Bucephali strike the sparks with their hoofs and between statuary and parks of stalking deer. Wretchedness is more bitter when swallowed from gemmed goblets than from earthen pitcher or pewter mug. If there are young people here who are looking for this position and that circumstance, thinking that worldly success will bring peace of the soul, let them shatter the delusion. It is not what we get, it is what we are. Daniel among the lions is happier than King Darius on his throne. And ween life is closing, brilliancy of worldly surroundings will be no solace. Death is blind, and sees no difference between a king and his clown, between the Nazarene and the Athenian, between a bookless hut and a national library. The frivolities of life cannot, with their giddy laugh, echoing from heart to heart, entirely drown the voice of the tremendous conscience which says: "I am immortal. The stars shall die, but I am immortal. the heavens flee at the glance of the science, and assurance of life eternal through the Lord Jesus Christ, are the

only securities." The soul's nappiness is too large a craft to sail up the stream of worldly pleasure. As ship carpenters say, it draws too much water. This earth is a bubble, and it will burst. This life is a vision, and it will soon pass away. Time! It is only a ripple, and it breaketh against the trone of judgment. Our days! They fly swifter than a shuttle, weaving for us a robe of triumph or a garment of shame. Begin your life with religion and for its greatest trial you will be ready. Every day will be a triumph. and death will be only a king's servant calling you to a royal banquet.

In olden time the man who was to receive the honors of knighthood was required to spend the previous night fully armed, and with shield and lance to walk up and down among the tombs of the dead. Through all the hours of that night his steady step was heard, when morning dawned, amid grand parade and the sound of cornets, the honors of knighthood were bestowed. Thus it shall be with the good man's soul in the night before

Fully armed with shield and sword and helmet, he shall watch and wait until the darkness fly and the morning break, and amid the sound of celestial harpings the soul shall take the honors of Heaven amid the innumerable throng with robes snowy white streaming over seas of sapphire.

Mordecai will only have to wait for his day of triumph. It took all the preceding trials to make a proper background for his after successes. The scaffold built for him makes all the more imposing and picturesque the horse into whose long white mane he twisted his fingers at the mounting. You want at least two misfortunes, hard as flint, to strike fire. Heavy and long-continued snows in the winter are signs of good crops next summer. So, many have yielded heavy harvests of benevolence and energy because they were for a long while snowed under. We must have a good many hard falls before we learn to walk straight. It is on the black anvil of trouble that men hammer out their fortunes, Sorrows take up men on their shoulders and enthrone them. Tonics are nearly always bitter. Men, like fruit trees, are barren, unless trimmed with sharp knives. They are like wheat-all the better for the flailing. It required the prison darkness and chill to make John Bunyan dream. It took Delaware ice and cold feet at Valley Forge, and the whizz of bullets, to make a Washington. Paul, when he climbed up on the beach at Melita, shivering his wet clothes, was more of a Christian than when the ship struck the breakers. Prescott, the historian, saw better without his eyes than he could ever have seen with them. Mordecal, despised at the grate, is only, predecessor of Mordecal grandly mounted.

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