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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
ESTHER

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ESTHER

THE son and successor of the famous Persian king Xerxes was *Artaxerxes*, surnamed *Longimanus*, or, in Persian, [Persian] *Ardsheer Diraz dest, the long-handed Ardshur*. This prince, on coming to the throne, had powerful opponents and competitors in the children of *Artabanus*, uncle to Xerxes, and in his own brother *Hystaspes*. The former, and their adherents, he overthrew in a bloody battle; and in the following year obtained a complete victory over his brother, and totally subdued the *Bactrians*, who had espoused his cause: and thus rendered himself the undisputed possessor of the Persian empire. About his *third* year, which was 462 before Christ, the history of *Esther* begins, which, in its connection with the Persian history, is thus ably introduced by Dr. *Prideaux*:—

“After Artaxerxes had obtained these successes, and thereby firmly settled himself in the peaceable possession of the whole Persian empire, (*Esther* i.) he appointed a solemn rejoicing on this account: and caused it to be celebrated in the city of Shushan, or Susa, in feastings and shows, for the term of a *hundred and eighty days*; on the conclusion of which he gave a great feast for all the princes and people that were then in Shushan, for *seven days*; and Vashti, the queen, at the same time, made a like feast in her apartment for the women. On the *seventh* day, the king’s heart being merry with wine, he commanded the *seven* chamberlains to bring Queen Vashti before him, with the crown royal on her head, that he might show to the princes and people her beauty. But for her thus to show herself in such an assembly being contrary to the usage of the Persians, and appearing to her, as indeed it was, very indecent, and much unbecoming the modesty of a lady, as well as the dignity of her station, she refused to comply, and would not come; whereon the king, being very much incensed, called his seven counsellors to take advice with them about it, who, fearing this might be a bad example through the whole empire, in encouraging women to contemn and disobey their husbands, advised that the king should put Vashti away for ever from him, and give her royal state to another, that should be better than her; and by his royal edict, give command throughout the whole empire that all wives should pay honour and obedience to their husbands, and that every man should rule absolutely in his own house. Which advice pleasing the king, he commanded it accordingly to be put in execution; and Vashti never more after that came again into the king’s

presence: for the decree whereby she was removed from him was registered among the laws of the Medes and Persians, and therefore it could never again be altered. After this, orders were given out through the whole empire for the gathering together at the palace at Shushan all the fair virgins in every province, that out of them one might be chosen whom the king should best like to be made queen in her place. At the time when this collection of virgins was made, (Esther ii..) there lived in Shushan a certain Jew named Mordecai, who was of the descendants of those who had been carried captive to Babylon with Jeconiah king of Judah, and, by his attendance at the king's gate, seems to have been one of the porters of the royal palace. He, having no children, did bring up Hadassah, his uncle's daughter, and adopted her as his own. This young woman, being very beautiful and fair, was made choice of among other virgins on this occasion; and was carried to the king's palace, and there committed to the care of Hege, the king's chamberlain, who was appointed to have the custody of these virgins; whom she pleased so well by her good carriage, that he showed her favour before all the other virgins under his care; and therefore he assigned her the best apartment of the house, and provided her first with those things that were requisite for her purification: for the custom was, that every virgin thus taken into the palace for the king's use was to go through a course of purification, by sweet oils and perfumes, for a whole year; and therefore Hadassah, having been, by the favour of the chamberlain, of the earliest provided with these things, was one of the first that was prepared and made ready for the king's bed, and therefore was one of the soonest that was called to it. The term, therefore, of her purification being accomplished, her turn came to go in unto the king; who was so much pleased with her that he often called her by name, which he used not to do but to those only of his women whom he was much delighted with. Esther growing still farther in the king's favour, and gaining his affections beyond all the rest of the women, (Esther ii..) he advanced her to higher honour; and on the *tenth* day of the *tenth* month, which falls about the end of our year, did put the royal diadem upon her head, and declared her queen in the place of Vashti; and in consequence thereof, made a solemn feast for his princes and servants, which was called Esther's feast; and, in honour of her, at the same time made a release of taxes to the provinces, and gave donatives and presents to all that attended him, according to the grandeur and dignity of his royal estate. *Haman*, an *Amalekite*, of the posterity of *Agag*, who was king of *Amalek*, in the time of *Saul*, growing to be the chief favourite of King *Artaxerxes*, all the king's

servants were commanded to pay reverence unto him, and bow before him; and all of them obeyed the king's order but *Mordecai the Jew*, who, sitting in the king's gate, according to his office, paid not any reverence to *Haman* at such times as he passed by into the palace, neither bowed he at all to him; at which, being told, he was exceedingly displeased: but scorning to lay hands on one man only, and being informed that he was a *Jew*, he resolved, in revenge of this affront, to destroy, not only him, but also his whole nation with him; and to this act he was not a little excited by the ancient enmity which was between them and the people of whom he was descended; and therefore, for the accomplishing of this design, on the *first day* of the *first month*, that is, in the month *Nisan*, he called together his diviners, to find out what day would be the most fortunate for the putting this plan into execution: and they having, according to the manner of divination then in use among those Eastern people, cast lots first upon each month, did thereby determine for the *thirteenth* day of the twelfth month following, called *Adar*, as the day which they judged would be the most lucky for the accomplishing of what he purposed: whereon he forthwith went in unto the king; and having insinuated to him that there was a certain people dispersed all over his empire who did not keep the king's laws, but followed laws of their own, diverse from the laws of all other people, to the disturbance of the good order of his kingdom, and the breach of that uniformity whereby it ought to be governed; and that, therefore, it was not for the king's profit that they should any longer be suffered; he proposed, and gave counsel that they should be all destroyed and extirpated out of the whole empire of *Persia*; and urged it as that which was necessary for the establishing of the peace and good order of his government: to which having gained the king's consent, and an order that on the *thirteenth* day of *Adar* following, according as was determined by the divination of the lots, it should be put in execution, he called the king's scribes together to write the decree; and it being drawn as he proposed, on the *thirteenth* day of the same month of *Nisan* copies thereof were written out, and sent into all the provinces of the empire, commanding the king's lieutenants, governors, and all other his officers in every one of them, to destroy, kill, and cause to perish, all *Jews*, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even on the *thirteenth* day of *Adar* following; and to take the spoil of them for a prey: which day was full *eleven* months after the date of the decree. The lot which seems to have pointed out that day appears to have been directed by the special providence of God, that so long a space intervening, there might be time

enough to take such measures as should be proper to prevent the mischief intended. It is hard to find a reason for *Mordecai's* refusing to pay his respect to *Haman*, which may be sufficient to excuse him for thus exposing himself and all his nation to that destruction which it had like to have drawn upon them. That which is commonly said is, that it was the same adoration which was made to the king of *Persia*; and that, consisting in the bowing of the knee, and the prostration of the whole body to the ground, it was avoided by *Mordecai*, upon a notion which he had of its being idolatrous: but this being the common compliment paid to the kings of *Persia*, by all that were admitted into their presence, it was no doubt paid to this very king by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, when they had access to him, and after also by *Mordecai* himself; for otherwise he could not have obtained that admission into his presence, and that advancement in his palace, which was afterwards there granted unto him; and if it were not idolatrous to pay this adoration to the king, neither was it idolatrous to pay it to *Haman*. The Greeks would not pay this respect to the kings of *Persia* out of pride; and excepting *Themistocles*, and two or three others, none of them could ever be brought to it. I will not say that this was the case with *Mordecai* in respect to *Haman*: it seems most probable that it was from a cause that was personal in *Haman* only. Perhaps it was because *Haman*, being of the race of the *Amalekites*, he looked upon him as under the curse which God had denounced against that nation; and therefore thought himself obliged not to give that honour to him. And if all the rest of the Jews thought the same, this might seem reason enough to him to extend his wrath against the whole nation, and to meditate the destruction of them all in revenge. But whatever was the cause that induced *Mordecai* to refuse the payment of this respect to the king's favourite, this provoked that favourite to procure the decree above mentioned, for the utter extirpation of the whole *Jewish* nation in revenge for it. When *Mordecai* heard of this decree, he made great lamentation, as did also all the *Jews* of *Shushan* with him; and therefore, putting on sackcloth, he sat in this mournful garb without the king's gate, (for he would not be allowed to enter within it in that dress,) which being told *Esther*, she sent to him to know what the matter was. Whereon *Mordecai* acquainted her with the whole state of the case; and sent her a copy of the decree, that she might fully see the mischief that was intended her people; to absolutely destroy them, and root them out from the face of the earth: and therefore commanded her forthwith to go in unto the king and make supplication for them. At first she excused herself, because of the law, whereby it was ordained that whosoever, whether man

or woman, should come in unto the king in the inner court who was not called for, should be put to death, excepting such only to whom the king should hold out the golden sceptre in his hand that he might live; and she was afraid of hazarding her life in this cause. Whereon *Mordecai*, sending to her, again told her, that the decree extended universally to all of her nation, without any exception, and that, if it came to execution, she must not expect to escape more than any other of her people; that Providence seemed to have advanced her on purpose for this work; but if she refused to act her part in it, then deliverance should come some other way, and she and her father's house should perish; for he was fully persuaded that God would not suffer his people to be thus totally destroyed.

“Whereon *Esther*, resolving to put her life on the hazard for the safety of her people, desired *Mordecai* that he and all the *Jews* then in *Shushan* should fast three days for her, and offer up prayer and humble supplication that God would prosper her in the undertaking: which being accordingly done, on the third day *Esther* put on her royal apparel and went in unto the king, while he was sitting upon his throne in the inner part of his palace. And as soon as he saw her standing in the court he showed favour unto her, and held out his golden sceptre; and *Esther*, going near and touching the top of it, had thereby her life secured unto her: and when the king asked her what her petition was, at first she only desired that he and *Haman* would come to a banquet which she had prepared for him.

“And when *Haman* was called, and the king and he were at the banquet, he asked her again of her petition, promising it should be granted her to the half of his kingdom: but then she desired only that the king and *Haman* should come again to the like banquet on the next day, intimating that she would then make known her request unto him. Her intention in claiming thus to entertain the king twice at her banquet before she made known her petition unto him was, that thereby she might the more endear herself unto him, and dispose him the better to grant the request which she had to make unto him.

“*Haman*, being proud of the honour of being thus admitted alone with the king to the queen's banquet, went home to his house much puffed up: but on his return thither, seeing *Mordecai* sitting at the gate of the palace, and still refusing to bow unto him; this moved his indignation to such a degree, that on his coming to his house, and calling his friends about him to relate to them the great honour that was done to him by the king and queen, and

the high advancement which he had obtained in the kingdom, he could not forbear complaining of the disrespect and affront that was offered him by *Mordecai*. Whereon they advised him to cause a gallows to be built of *fifty* cubits in height, and next morning to ask the king to have *Mordecai* hanged thereon: and accordingly he ordered the gallows immediately to be made; and went early the next morning to the palace, for the obtaining of the grant from the king to have *Mordecai* hanged on it. But that morning the king awaking sooner than ordinary, and not being able to compose himself again to sleep, he called for the book of the records and chronicles of the kingdom, and caused them to be read unto him; wherein finding an account of the conspiracy of *Bigthan* and *Teresh*, and that it was discovered by *Mordecai* the Jew, the king inquired what honour had been done to him for the same. And being told that nothing had been done for him, he inquired who was in the court; and being told that *Haman* was standing there, he ordered him to be called in, and asked of him what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour: whereon *Haman*, thinking this honour was intended for himself, gave advice that the royal apparel should be brought which the king used to wear, and the horse which he kept for his own riding, and the crown which used to be set upon his head; and that this apparel and horse should be delivered into the hands of one of the king's most noble princes, that he might array therewith the man whom the king delighted to honour, and bring him on horseback through the whole city, and proclaim before him 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.' Whereon the king commanded him forthwith to take the apparel and horse, and do this to *Mordecai* the Jew, who sat in the king's gate, in reward for his discovery of the treason of the two eunuchs: all which *Haman* having been forced to do in obedience to the king's command, he returned with great sorrow to his house, lamenting the disappointment and great mortification he had met with in being thus forced to pay such signal honour to his enemy, whom he had intended to have hanged on the gallows which he had provided for him. And on his relating this to his friends, they all told him, that if this *Mordecai* were of the seed of the Jews, this bad omen foreboded that he should not prevail against them, but should surely fall before him. While they were thus talking, one of the queen's chamberlains came to *Haman's* house to hasten him to the banquet: and seeing the gallows which had been set up the night before, fully informed himself of the intent for which it was prepared. On the king's and *Haman's* sitting down to the banquet, the king asked again of *Esther* what was her petition, with like promise that it

should be granted to her to the half of his kingdom: whereon she humbly prayed the king that her life might be given her on her petition, and her people at her request; for that a design was laid for the destruction of her and all her kindred and nation. At which the king asking, with much anger, who it was that durst do this thing, she told him that *Haman* then present was the author of the wicked plot; and laid the whole of it open to the king. Whereon the king rose up with much wrath from the banquet, and walked out into the garden adjoining; which *Haman* perceiving, he fell down before the queen upon the bed on which she was sitting, to supplicate for his life; in which posture the king having found him upon his return, spoke out in great passion, What, will he force the queen before me in the house? At which words the servants present immediately covered his face, as was then the usage to condemned persons; and the chamberlain, who had that day called *Haman* to the banquet, acquainting the king with the gallows he saw in his house there prepared for *Mordecai*, who had saved the king's life in detecting the treason of the two eunuchs, the king ordered that he should be forthwith hanged thereon, which was accordingly done; and all his house, goods, and riches, were given to *Queen Esther*; and she appointed *Mordecai* to be her steward to manage the same. On the same day the queen made the king acquainted with the relation which *Mordecai* had unto her; whereon the king took him into his favour, and advanced him to great power, riches, and dignity in the empire; and made him the keeper of his signet, in the same manner as *Haman* had been before. But still the decree for the destruction of the *Jews* remaining in its full force, the queen petitioned the king a second time to put away this mischief from them; but, according to the laws of the *Medes* and *Persians*, nothing being to be reversed which had been decreed and written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, and the decree procured by *Haman* against the *Jews* having been thus written and sealed, it could not be recalled. All therefore that the king could do, in compliance with her request, was, to give the *Jews*, by a new decrees such a power to defend themselves against such as should assault them, as might render the former decree ineffectual: and for that end he bid *Esther* and *Mordecai* draw such a decree in words as strong as could be devised, that so the former might be hindered from being executed, though it could not be annulled. And therefore the king's scribes being again called on the *twenty-third* day of the *third* month, a new decree was drawn just *two* months and *ten* days after the former; wherein the king granted to the *Jews*, which were in every city of the *Persian* empire, full license to gather themselves together and

stand for their lives; and to destroy, slay, and cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that should assault them, with their little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. And this decree being written in the king's hand, and sealed with his seal, copies thereof were drawn out, and especial messengers were despatched with them into all the provinces of the empire.

“The *thirteenth* day of *Adar* drawing near, when the decree obtained by *Haman* for the destruction of the *Jews* was to be put into execution, their adversaries everywhere prepared to act against them, according to the contents of it: and the *Jews*, on the other hand, by virtue of the second decree which was obtained in their favour, by *Esther* and *Mordecai*, gathered themselves together in every city where they dwelt, throughout all the provinces of King *Artaxerxes*, to provide for their safety: so that on the said *thirteenth* of *Adar*, through the means of these two different and discordant decrees, a war was commenced between the *Jews* and their enemies throughout the whole *Persian* empire. But the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, the deputies, and the other officers of the king, knowing with what power *Esther* and *Mordecai* were then invested, through fear of them so favoured the *Jews*, that they prevailed everywhere against those that rose against them; and on that day, throughout the whole empire, slew of their enemies *seven thousand five hundred* persons; and in the city of *Shushan*, on that day and the next, *eight hundred* more; among whom were the ten sons of *Haman*, whom by a special order from the king they caused all to be hanged; perhaps upon the same gallows on which *Haman*, their father, had been hanged before. These transactions took place in the *thirteenth* year of *Artaxerxes*, about *four hundred and fifty-two* years before Christ.” *The reader is requested to refer to the notes on all these passages.*

“The *Jews*, being delivered thus from this dangerous design which threatened them with nothing less than total extirpation, made great rejoicings for it on the two days following, that is, on the *fourteenth* and *fifteenth* days of the said month *Adar*: and by the order of *Esther* and *Mordecai* these two days, with the *thirteenth* that preceded them, were set apart, and consecrated to be annually observed for ever after in commemoration thereof; the *thirteenth* as a fast, because of the destruction on that day intended to have been brought upon them, and the other *two* as a feast because of their deliverance from it; and both this fast and feast they constantly observe every year on those days, even to this time. The fast

they call the fast of *Esther*; and the feast, the feast of *Purim*, from the Persian word *Purim*, which signifies lots; because it was by the casting of lots that *Haman* did set out this time for their destruction. This feast is the *Bacchanals* of the *Jews*, which they celebrate with all manner of rejoicing, mirth, and jollity; and therein indulge themselves in all manner of luxurious excesses, especially in drinking wine, even to drunkenness; which they think part of the duty of the solemnity, because it was by means of the wine banquet, they say, that *Esther* made the king's heart merry, and brought him into that good humour which inclined him to grant the request which she made unto him for their deliverance; and therefore they think they ought to make their hearts merry also, when they celebrate the commemoration of it. During this festival the book of *Esther* is solemnly read in all their synagogues from the beginning to the end; at which they are all to be present, men, women, children, and servants, because all these had their part in this deliverance which *Esther* obtained for them. And as often as the name of *Haman* occurs in the reading of this book, the usage is for them all to clap with their hands, and stamp with their feet, and cry out: *Let his memory perish.*

“This is the last feast of the year among them, for the next that follows is the *Passover*, which always falls in the middle of the month, which begins the *Jewish* year.”

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Chronological Notes relative to this Book

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, 3540.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 460.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 464.
- Year of the Julian Period, 4250.
- Year since the flood of Noah, 1904.
- Year of the Cali Yuga, or Indian era of the Deluge, 2638.
- Year from the vocation of Abram, 1458.
- Year from the destruction of Troy, 721.
- Year from the foundation of Solomon's temple. 547.
- Year since the division of Solomon's monarchy into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, 511.
- Year of the era of Iphitus, 421.
- Year since Corœbus won the prize at the Olympic games, 313.
- First year of the *seventy-ninth* Olympiad.
- Year of the Varronian era of the building of Rome, 290.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Cato and the Fasti Consulares, 289.
- Year from the building of Rome according to Polybius the historian, 288.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 284.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, 284.
- Year since the commencement of the first Messenian war, 280.
- Year since the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, 258.
- Year since the commencement of the second Messenian war, 222.
- Year from the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, 125.
- Year since the publication of the famous edict of Cyrus, king of Persia, empowering the Jews to rebuild their temple, 72.
- Year since the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses, 62.

- Year since the abolition of the tyranny of the Pisistratidæ at Athens, 43.
- Year since the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome, which put an end to the regal government of the Romans, 44.
- Year since the famous battle of Marathon, 26.
- Year after the commencement of the *third* Messenian war, 2.
- Year before the commencement of the *first* sacred war concerning the temple at Delphi, 17.
- Year before the commencement of the celebrated Peloponnesian war, 34.
- Year before the celebrated retreat of the *ten thousand* Greeks, and the expulsion of the *thirty* tyrants from Athens by Thrasybulus, 65.
- Year before the commencement of the era of the Seleucidæ, 152.
- Year before the formation of the famous Achæan league, 183.
- Year before the commencement of the first Punic war, 200.
- Year before the fall of the Macedonian empire, 296.
- Year before the destruction of Carthage by Scipio, and of Corinth by Mummius, 317.
- Year before the commencement of the Jugurthine war, which continued *five* years, 354.
- Year before the commencement of the Social war, which continued for *five* years, and was finished by Sylla, 374.
- Year before the commencement of the Mithridatic war, which continued for *twenty-six* years, 376.
- Year before the commencement of the Servile war, under Spartacus, 392.
- Year before the extinction of the reign of the Seleucidæ in Syria, on the conquest of that country by Pompey, 399.
- Year before the era of the Roman emperors, 433.
- Year of Archidamus, king of Lacedæmon, and of the family of the Proclidæ, or Eurypontidæ, 6.
- Year of Plistoanax, king of Lacedæmon, and of the family of the Eurysthenidæ, or Agidæ, 3.
- Year of Alexander, the *tenth* king of Macedon, 34.
- Year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, 1.
- Roman Consuls, Aulus Postumius, and Sp. Furius.

CHAPTER 1

Ahasuerus makes royal feasts for his nobles and people, 1-9. Vashti is sent for by the king, but refuses to come, 10-12. Vashti is disgraced; and a law made for the subjection of women, 13-22.

The whole history of this book in its *connected* order, with the occurrences in the *Persian empire* at that time, will be found in the *introduction*: to which the reader is referred.

Concerning the *author* of this book there are several opinions: some attribute the work to *Ezra*; some to one *Joachim*, a high priest; others, to the *men of the Great Synagogue*; and others to *Mordecai*. This latter is the most likely opinion: nor is that to be disregarded which gives to *Mordecai* for co-partner *Ezra* himself; though it is likely that the conclusion, from ^{<17023>}**Esther 9:23** to the end of the book, was inserted by another hand, and at a later time. Though some Christians have hesitated to receive the book of *Esther* into the sacred canon; yet it has always been received by the Jews, not only as perfectly *authentic*, but also as one of the most excellent of their sacred books. They call it **hl ygm megillah**, THE VOLUME, by way of eminence; and hold it in the highest estimation. That it records the history of a real fact, the observation of the feast of *Purim*, to the present day, is a sufficient evidence. Indeed, this is one of the strongest evidences that any fact can have, viz., that, to commemorate it, a certain rite, procession, feast, or the like, should have been instituted at the time, which, without intermission, has been continued annually through every generation of *that people*, and in whatsoever place they or parties of them may have sojourned, to the present day. This is the fact concerning the feast of *Purim* here mentioned; which the Jews, in all places of their dispersion, have uninterruptedly celebrated, and do still continue to celebrate, from the time of their deliverance from the massacre intended by Haman to the present time. *Copies* of this book, widely differing from each other, exist in *Hebrew*, *Chaldee*, *Syriac*, *Greek*, and *Latin*. All these differ much from the *Hebrew* text, particularly the *Greek* and the *Chaldee*: the former has many additional paragraphs; and the latter, as it exists in the *London Polyglot*, contains five times more than the *Hebrew* text. To notice all the various readings, additions, and paraphrases, in the above copies, would require a volume of no inconsiderable magnitude. The reader who is curious may consult the above *Polyglot*. This book does not appear to be

extant in *Arabic*, or in any other of the Oriental languages, besides the *Hebrew* and *Syriac*.

The question may naturally arise, What was the original of this book? or, In what language was it written? Though learned men in general decide in favour of a *Hebrew* original, yet there are many reasons which might be urged in favour of the *Persian*. Several of the proper names are evidently of a *Persian* origin; and no doubt all the others are so; but they are so transformed by passing through the *Hebrew*, that they are no longer discernible. The *Hebrew* has even retained some of the *Persian* words, having done little else than alter the character, e.g., *Esther*, *Mehuman*, *Mishak*, *Melzar*, *Vashti*, *Shushan*, *Pur*, *Darius*, *Paradise*, &c., several of which will be noted in their proper places. The *Targum* in the *London Polyglot* is widely different from that in the *Complutum*, *Antwerp*, and *Paris* editions. The principal additions in the *Greek* are carefully marked in the *London Polyglot*, but are too long and too numerous to be inserted here. It is a singular circumstance that the *name of God* does not once occur in the whole of this book as it stands in *Hebrew*.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1

Verse 1. Now it came to pass] The *Ahasuerus* of the *Romans*, the *Artaxerxes* of the *Greeks* and *Ardsheer* of the *Persians*, are the same. Some think that this *Ahasuerus* was *Darius*, the son of *Hystaspes*; but *Prideaux* and others maintain that he was *Artaxerxes Longimanus*.

Reigned from India even unto Ethiopia] This is nearly the same account that is given by *Xenophon*. How great and glorious the kingdom of *Cyrus* was beyond all the kingdoms of *Asia*, was evident from this: Ωρισθη μεν πρως εω τη Ερυθρα θαλαττη, προς αρκτον δε τω Ευξεινω ποντω, προς εσπεραν δε Κυρω και Αιγυπτω, προς μεσημβριαν δε Αιθιοπια. "It was bounded on the east by the Red Sea; on the north by the Euxine Sea; on the west by Cyprus and Egypt; and on the south by Ethiopia."-CYROP. lib. viii., p. 241, edit. *Steph.* 1581.

Verse 2. Sat on the throne of his kingdom] Having subdued all his enemies, and brought universal peace to his empire. See the commencement of the *introduction*.

Shushan the palace] The ancient city of *Susa*, now called [*Persian*] *Shuster* by the *Persians*. This, with *Ecbatana* and *Babylon*, was a residence

of the Persian kings. The word **hrybh** *habbirah*, which we render *the palace*, should be rendered *the city*, **εν Σουσοις τη πολει**, as in the *Septuagint*.

Verse 4. The riches of his glorious kingdom] Luxury was the characteristic of the Eastern monarchs, and particularly of the *Persians*. In their feasts, which were superb and of long continuance, they made a general exhibition of their wealth, grandeur, &c., and received the highest encomiums from their poets and flatterers. Their ostentation on such occasions passed into a proverb: hence *Horace*:—

*Persicos odi, puer, apparatus:
Displicent nexæ philyra coronæ;
Mitte sectari, rosa quo locorum
Sera moretur.*

*I tell thee, boy, that I detest
The grandeur of a Persian feast;
Nor for me the linden's rind
Shall the flowery chaplet bind.
Then search not where the curious rose
Beyond his season loitering grows.
FRANCIS.*

Verse 5. A feast unto all the people] The first was a feast for the *nobles* in general; this, for the *people* of the city at large.

In the court of the garden] As the company was very numerous that was to be received, no apartments in the palace could be capable of containing them; therefore the *court of the garden* was chosen.

Verse 6. White, green, and blue hangings] It was customary, on such occasions, not only to hang the place about with elegant curtains of the above colours, as Dr. Shaw and others have remarked, but also to have a *canopy* of rich stuffs suspended on cords from side to side of the place in which they feasted. And such courts were ordinarily paved with *different coloured marbles*, or with *tiles* painted, as above specified. And this was the origin of the *Musive* or *Mosaic work*, well known among the Asiatics, and borrowed from them by the *Greeks* and the *Romans*.

The **beds of gold and silver** mentioned here were the couches covered with gold and silver cloth, on which the guests reclined.

Verse 7. Vessels being diverse] They had different services of *plate*.

Verse 8. None did compel: for so the king had appointed] Every person drank what he pleased; he was not obliged to take more than he had reason to think would do him good.

Among the Greeks, each guest was obliged to *keep the round*, or leave the company: hence the proverb Η πιθι, η απιθι ; *Drink or begone*. To this *Horace* refers, but gives more license:—

*Pasco libatis dapibus; prout cuique libido est.
Siccatur inæquales calices conviva, solutus
Legibus insanis: seu quis capit acria fortis
Pocula; seu modicis humescit ætius.
HORAT. Sat. lib. ii., s. vi., ver. 67.*

*There, every guest may drink and fill
As much or little as he will;
Exempted from the Bedlam rules
Of roaring prodigals and fools.*

*Whether, in merry mood or whim,
He fills his goblet to the brim;
Or, better pleased to let it pass,
Is cheerful with a moderate glass.*

FRANCIS.

At the Roman feasts there was a person chosen by the cast of *dice*, who was the *Arbiter bibendi*, and prescribed rules to the company, which all were obliged to observe. References to this custom may be seen in the same poet. ODAR. lib. i., *Od.* iv., ver. 18:—

Non regna vini sortiere talis.

And in lib. ii., *Od.* vii., ver. 25:—

*Quem Venus arbitrum
Dicet bibendi?*

Mr. *Herbert*, in his excellent poem, *The Church Porch*, has five verses on this vile custom and its rule:—

*Drink not the third glass, which thou canst not tame
 When once it is within thee, but before
 Mayst rule it as thou list; and pour the shame,
 Which it would pour on thee, upon the floor.
 It is most just to throw that on the ground,
 Which would throw me there if I keep the round.
 He that is drunken may his mother kill,
 Big with his sister; he hath lost the reins;
 Is outlawed by himself. All kinds of ill
 Did with his liquor slide into his veins.
 The drunkard forfeits man; and doth divest
 All worldly right, save what he hath by beast.
 Nothing too severe can be said on this destructive practice.*

Verse 9. Also Vashti the queen [Persian] *Vashti* is a mere *Persian* word; and signifies a *beautiful* or *excellent* woman.

Made a feast for the women] The king, having subdued all his enemies, left no competitor for the kingdom; and being thus quietly and firmly seated on the throne, made this a time of *general* festivity. As the *women* of the East never mingle with the men in public, *Vashti* made a feast for the Persian ladies by themselves; and while the men were *in the court of the garden*, the women were *in the royal house*.

Verse 10. He commanded Mehuman] All these are doubtless *Persian* names; but so disguised by passing through a Hebrew medium, that some of them can scarcely be known. [Persian] *Mehuman* signifies a *stranger* or *guest*. We shall find other names and words in this book, the Persian etymology of which may be easily traced.

Verse 11. To bring Vashti the queen] The Targum adds *naked*.

For she was fair to look on.] Hence she had her name [Persian] *Vashti*, which signifies *beautiful*. See ^{<170109>}**Esther 1:9**.

Verse 12. Vashti refused to come] And much should she be commended for it. What woman, possessing even a common share of *prudence* and *modesty*, could consent to expose herself to the view of such a group of drunken Bacchanalians? Her *courage* was equal to her modesty: she would resist the royal mandate, rather than violate the rules of *chaste decorum*.

Her *contempt of worldly grandeur*, when brought in competition with what every modest woman holds dear and sacred, is worthy of observation. She

well knew that this act of disobedience would cost her her *crown*, if not her *life* also: but she was regardless of both, as she conceived her virtue and honour were at stake.

Her *humility* was greatly evidenced in this refusal. She was *beautiful*; and might have shown herself to great advantage, and have had a fine opportunity of gratifying her vanity, if she had any: but *she refused to come*.

Hail, noble woman! be thou a pattern to all thy sex on every similar occasion! Surely, every thing considered, we have few women like Vashti; for some of the highest of the land will dress and deck themselves with the utmost splendour, even to the *selvedge* of their fortunes, to exhibit themselves at balls, plays, galas, operas, and public assemblies of all kinds, (nearly half naked,) that they may be seen and admired of men, and even, to the endless reproach and broad suspicion of their honour and chastity, figure away in *masquerades*! Vashti must be considered at the top of her sex:—

Rara avis in terris, nigroque simillima cygno.

A black swan is not half so rare a bird.

Verse 13. To the wise men] Probably the *lawyers*.

Verse 14. And the next unto him—the seven princes] Probably, the privy counsellors of the king. *Which saw the king's face*—were at all times admitted to the royal presence.

Verse 16. Vashti-hath not done wrong to the king only] This reasoning or arguing was inconsequent and false. Vashti had not *generally* disobeyed the king, therefore she could be no *precedent* for the general conduct of the Persian women. She disobeyed only in one *particular*; and this, to serve a purpose, Memucan draws into a *general consequence*; and the rest came to the conclusion which he drew, being either too drunk to be able to discern *right* from *wrong*, or too intent on reducing the women to a state of vassalage, to neglect the present favourable opportunity.

Verse 18. The ladies of Persia] *twrc saroth*, the *princesses*; but the meaning is very well expressed by our term *ladies*.

Verse 19. That it be not altered] Let it be inserted among the *permanent laws*, and made a part of the *constitution* of the empire. Perhaps the

Persians affected such a degree of *wisdom* in the construction of their laws, that they *never could be amended*, and should never be *repeated*. And this we may understand to be the ground of the saying, *The laws of the Medes and Persians, that change not*.

Verse 22. That every man should bear rule in his own house] Both God's law and common sense taught this from the foundation of the world. And is it possible that this did not obtain in the Persian empire, previously to this edict? The *twentieth* verse has another clause, *That all wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small*. This also was universally understood. This law did nothing. I suppose the parade of enactment was only made to deprive honest Vashti of her crown. The Targum adds, "That each woman should speak the language of her husband." If she were even a *foreigner*, she should be obliged to learn and speak the language of the king. Perhaps there might be some common sense in this, as it would oblige the foreigner to devote much time to study and improvement; and, consequently, to make her a better woman, and a better wife. But there is no proof that this was a part of the decree. But there are so many additions to this book in the principal versions, that we know not what might have made a part of it originally.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 2

The counsellors advise that a selection of virgins should be made throughout the empire, out of whom the king should choose one to be queen in place of Vashti, 1-4. Account of Mordecai and his cousin Esther, 5-7. She is chosen among the young women, and is placed under the care of Hegai, the king's chamberlain, to go through a year's purification, 8-11. The manner in which these young women were introduced to the king, and how those were disposed of who were not called again to the king's bed, 12-14. Esther pleases the king, and is set above all the women; and he makes her queen in the place of Vashti, and does her great honour, 15-20. Mordecai, sitting at the king's gate, discovers a conspiracy formed against the king's life by two of his chamberlains; he informs the king, the matter is investigated, they are found guilty and hanged, and the transaction is recorded, 21-23.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 2. Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king] This was the usual way in which the *harem* or *seraglio* was furnished: the finest women in the land, whether of high or low birth, were sought out, and brought to the *harem*. They all became the king's concubines: but *one* was raised, as *chief wife* or *sultana*, to the throne; and her issue was specially entitled to inherit.

Verse 3. Hege the king's chamberlain] Ēl mh syrs agh *Hege seris hammelech*, "Hege, the king's *eunuch*;" so the Septuagint, Vulgate, Targum, and Syriac. In the Eastern countries the women are intrusted to the care of the *eunuchs* only.

Let their things for purification be given them] ^hyqrm t *tamrukeyhen*, their *cosmetics*. What these were we are told in <71212> **Esther 2:12**; *oil of myrrh*, and *sweet odours*. The myrrh was employed for *six* months, and the odours for *six* months more, after which the person was brought to the king. This space was sufficient to show whether the young woman had been *chaste*; whether she were with *child* or not, that the king might not be imposed on, and be obliged to father a spurious offspring, which might have been the case had not this precaution been used.

Instead of the *oil or myrrh*, the Targum says it was the oil of unripe olives which caused the hair to fall off, and rendered the skin delicate.

Verse 5. Whose name was Mordecai] The Targum says, “He was the son of Jair, the son of Shimea, the son of Gera, the son of Kish.” And “this was the same Shimea that cursed David; and whom David forbade Joab to slay because he saw, in the spirit of prophecy, that he was to be the predecessor of *Esther* and *Mordecai*; but when he became *old*, and incapable of having children, David ordered Solomon to put him to death.”

Verse 7. He brought up Hadassah] *hcdh hadassah* signifies a *myrtle* in Chaldee: this was probably her first or *Babylonish name*. When she came to the *Persian court*, she was called *Esther*, [Persian] *aster*, or [Persian] *sitara*, which signifies a *star* in Persian: the name is undoubtedly Persian. *Esther* was the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of *Mordecai*, and therefore must have been *Mordecai*'s cousin, though the Vulgate and Josephus make her *Mordecai*'s *niece*: but it is safest here to follow the Hebrew.

Verse 9. The maiden pleased him] He conceived a partiality for her above the rest, probably because of the propriety of her deportment, and her engaging though unassuming manners.

Seven maidens] These were to attend her to the *bath*, to anoint and adorn her, and be her servants in general.

Verse 10. Esther had not showed her people] This might have prejudiced her with the king; for it was certainly no credit at the *Persian court* to be a *Jew*; and we shall find from the sequel that those who were in the *Persian dominions* were far from being *reputable*, or in a *safe state*. Besides, had her lineage been known, *envy* might have prevented her from ever having access to the king.

Verse 12. Six months with oil of myrrh] See on ~~118~~ **Esther 2:3**. The reason of this purification seems not to be apprehended by any writer I have seen. The most beautiful of all the young virgins of all the provinces of *Babylon* were to be selected; and these were taken out of all *classes* of the people, indiscriminately; consequently there must have been many who were brought up in low life. Now we know that those who feed on coarse strong food, which is not easily digested, have generally a copious perspiration, which is strongly odorous; and in many, though in every respect amiable, and even beautiful, this odour is far from being pleasant.

Pure, wholesome, easily digested, and nourishing aliment, with the frequent use of the *hot bath*, continued for twelve months. the body frequently rubbed with *olive oil*, will in almost every case remove all that is disagreeable of this kind. This treatment will give a healthy action to all the subcutaneous vessels, and in every respect promote health and comfort.

Verse 13. Whatsoever she desired] When any of the young women were called to go to the king, it appears that it was an ordinance that whatever kind of *dress stuff, colour, jewels, &c.*, they thought best to set off their persons, and render them more engaging, should be given them.

Verse 14. She returned into the second house] This was the place where the king's *concubines* were kept. They went out no more, and were never given in marriage to any man, and saw the king's face no more unless specially called.

Custody of Shaashgaz] This is probably another *Persian* name; [Persian] *sheshkhunj, beardless*, a proper epithet of a *eunuch*; or [Persian] *sestgunj, weak loins*, for the same reason. Names of this kind at once show the reason of their imposition, by describing the *state* of the person.

Verse 15. She required nothing] She left this entirely to her friend Hege, who seems to have been intent on her success. She therefore left her decorations to his judgment alone, and went in that dress and in those ornaments which *he* deemed most suitable.

Verse 16. The tenth month-Tebeth] Answering to part of our *December* and *January*.

Verse 17. Set the royal crown upon her head] Made her what is now called in the East the SULTANA, the *queen*. She was the mistress of all the rest of the wives, all of whom were obliged to pay her the most profound respect.

Verse 18. Made a release to the provinces] Remitted some kind of *tribute* or *impost*, in honour of Esther, at her coronation, as our kings generally do when they are crowned, ordering a discharge from prison of many who are confined for minor offenses. As it was the custom of the Persian kings to give their queens something like what is called with us the *aurum reginæ*, "queen gold," which was a tenth of all fines, &c., above what was given to the king; (for they gave them such a city to buy them *clothes*, another for their *hair*, a third for their *necklaces*, a fourth for their

pearls, &c.;) it is probable that, on this occasion, Esther so wishing, he relieved those cities and provinces which had before paid this *queen gold* from all these expenses; and this would tend greatly to make the queen *popular*.

Verse 21. Mordecai sat in the kings gate] Mordecai might have been one of the *officers* of the king, as the *gate* was the place where such usually attended to await the king's call. It is not likely that he was the *porter*; had he been only such, *Haman* could have removed him at once.

Two of the king's chamberlains] Eunuchs. *Why* they conspired against the life of the king, we are not informed. The *Targum* says that they found out that Esther had intended to use her influence with the king to get them removed from their office, and Mordecai put in their place; therefore they determined to poison Esther, and slay the king in his bedchamber. It is very likely that they were creatures of Haman, who probably affected the kingdom, and perhaps were employed by him to remove the king, and so make his way open to the throne.

Verse 22. Was known to Mordecai] Josephus says that a Jew, named *Barnabasus*, overheard the plot, told it to Mordecai, Mordecai to Esther, and Esther to the king, in Mordecai's name; and *he* was registered as the discoverer.

Verse 23. It was found out] It was proved against them, in consequence of which they were *hanged*. Perhaps the words $\times[\text{ I } [\text{ wl } \text{ tyw } \text{ vaiyittalu } \text{ al } \text{ ets, they were hung upon wood or a tree, may refer to their being impaled. A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out by the side of the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies.$

It has been observed that the *name of God* does not once occur in this book. This is true of the *Hebrew* text, and all *translations* from it; but in the *Septuagint* we find the following words, in ^{<7722>}**Esther 2:20**, after, *Esther had not showed her kindred: Ουτως γαρ ενετειλατο αυτη Μαρδοχαιος, φοβεισθαι τον Θεον, και ποιειν τα προσταγματα αυτου, καθως ην μετ' αυτου;* "For so Mordecai had charged her to fear GOD, and to keep his commandments, as she did when with him." This, as

far as the *Septuagint* is concerned, takes away the strange reproach from this book. It must be owned that it was not because there were not many fair opportunities that the sacred name has not been introduced.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 3

Ahasuerus exalts Haman the Agagite, and commands all his officers to do him reverence, which Mordecai refuses, 1-3. Haman, informed of Mordecai's refusal, plots his destruction, and that of the Jews, 4-6. Lots are cast to find out the proper time, 7. Haman accuses the Jews to Ahasuerus, counsels him to destroy them, and offers ten thousand talents of silver for the damage which the revenue might sustain by their destruction, 8, 9. The king refuses the money, but gives Haman full authority to destroy them, 10, 11. Letters are written to this effect, and sent to the king's lieutenants throughout the empire, and the thirteenth day of the month Adar is appointed for the massacre, 12-15.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3

Verse 1. Haman-the Agagite] Perhaps he was some descendant of that Agag, king of the *Amalekites*, spared by Saul, but destroyed by Samuel; and on this ground might have an antipathy to the Jews.

Set his seat above all the princes] Made him his *prime minister*, and put all the officers of state under his direction.

Verse 2. The king's servants, that were in the king's gate] By *servants* here, certainly a higher class of *officers* are intended than *porters*; and Mordecai was one of those officers, and came to the gate with the others who were usually there in attendance to receive the commands of the king.

Mordecai bowed not] [rky al lo yichra. "He did not bow down;" nor did him reverence, hwj tvy al w velo yishtachaveh, "nor did he prostrate himself." I think it most evident, from these two words, that it was not *civil reverence* merely that Haman expected and *Mordecai* refused; this sort of respect is found in the word [rk cara, to bow. This sort of reverence *Mordecai* could not refuse without being guilty of the most inexcusable *obstinacy*, nor did any part of the Jewish law forbid it. But Haman expected, what the Persian kings frequently received, a species of *Divine adoration*; and this is implied in the word hj v shachah, which signifies that kind of *prostration* which implies the *highest degree of reverence that can be paid to God or man*, lying down flat on the earth, with the hands and feet extended, and the mouth in the dust.

The *Targum*, says that Haman set up a *statue* for himself, to which every one was obliged to bow, and to adore Haman himself. The Jews all think that Mordecai refused this prostration because it implied *idolatrous adoration*. Hence, in the Apocryphal additions to this book, Mordecai is represented praying thus: “Thou knowest that if I have not adored Haman, it was not through pride, nor contempt, nor secret desire of glory; for I felt disposed to kiss the footsteps of his feet (gladly) for the salvation of Israel: but I feared to give to a man that honour which I know belongs only to my God.”

Verse 7. The first month] That is, of the *civil* year of the Jews.

The month Nisan] Answering to a part of our *March* and *April*.

The twelfth year of king Ahasuerus] According to the chronology in our Bibles, about *five hundred and ten years* before Christ.

They cast Pur, that is, the lot] This appears to be the Hebrew corruption of the pure Persian word [Persian] *pari*, which signifies any thing that *happens fortuitously*. There is an addition here in the Greek text that was probably in the *original*, and which makes this place very plain. I shall set down the whole verse, and give the Greek in a parenthesis, that it may be read consecutively with what is in the Hebrew: “In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman, from day to day, and from month to month.”

(ὡστε ἀπολεσαι εν μια ημερα το γενος Μαρδοχαιου, και επεσεν ο κληρος εις την τεσερακαιδεκατην του μηνος ος εστιν Αδαρ, “that they might destroy in one day the people of Mordecai; and the lot fell on the *fourteenth* day of the month Adar.”)

We see plainly intimated by the Hebrew text that they *cast lots*, or used a *species of divination*, to find *which* of the *twelve months* would be the most *favourable* for the execution of Haman’s design; and, having found the desired *month*, then they *cast lots*, or used *divination*, to find out which *day* of the said month would be the *lucky day* for the accomplishment of the enterprise. But the *Hebrew* text does not tell us the result of this *divination*; we are left to guess it out; but the *Greek* supplies this deficiency, and makes all clear. From it we find that, when they cast for the *month*, the month *Adar* was taken; and when they cast for the *day*, the *fourteenth* (Heb. *thirteenth*) of that month was taken.

Some have questioned whether *Pur* may not have signified also some *game of chance*, which they played before or with Haman, from day to day, to divert him from his melancholy, till the lucky time came in which he was to have the gratification of slaying all the people who were objects of his enmity; or they cast lots, or played, who should get the property of such and such opulent families. *Holinshed*, one of our ancient historians, informs us that, previously to the battle of *Agincourt*, the English army, under Henry V., were so thinned and weakened by disease, and the French army so numerous, that “Frenchmen, in the mean while, as though they had been sure of victory, made great triumphe, for the captaines had determined before how to *divide the spoil*; and the souldiers, the night before, had *plaid the Englishmen at dice*.” To this the chorus of *Shakspeare* alludes:—

*“Proud of their numbers, and secure of soul,
 The confident and over-lusty French
 Do the low-rated English play at dice.
 —————The poor condemned English,
 Like sacrifices by their watchful fires,
 Sit patiently and inly ruminat
 The morning’s danger; and their gestures sad,
 Investing lank-lean cheeks, and war-worn coats,
 Presenteth them unto the gazing moon
 So many horrid ghosts.
 HEN. V.*

Monstrelet, who is an impartial writer, does not mention this.

Did *Haman* and his flatterers intend to divide the spoils of the designed-to-be-massacred Jews in some such manner as this?

Verse 8. Their laws are diverse from all people] Such they certainly were; for they worshipped the *true* God according to *his own laws*; and this was not done by any other people then on the face of the earth.

Verse 9. Let it be written that they may be destroyed] Let it be *enacted* that they may all be put to death. By this he would throw all the odium off himself, and put it on the king and his counsellors; for he wished the thing to pass into a law, in which *he* could have but a small share of the blame.

I will pay ten thousand talents of silver] He had said before that *it was not for the king’s profit to suffer them*; but here he is obliged to

acknowledge that there will be a *loss* to the revenue, but that loss he is willing to make up out of his own property.

Ten thousand *talents of silver* is an immense sum indeed; which, counted by the *Babylonish* talent, amounts to *two millions one hundred and nineteen thousand pounds sterling*; but, reckoned by the *Jewish* talent, it makes more than double that sum.

Those who cavil at the Scriptures would doubtless call this *one* of the many absurdities which, they say, are so plenteously found in them, supposing it almost impossible for an individual to possess so much wealth. But though they do not believe the Bible, they do not scruple to credit *Herodotus*, who, lib. vii., says that when *Xerxes* went into Greece, *Pythius* the Lydian had *two thousand* talents of silver, and *four millions* of gold darics, which sums united make near *five millions and a half sterling*.

Plutarch tells us, in his life of *Crassus*, that after this Roman general had dedicated the tenth of all he had to Hercules, he entertained the Roman people at *ten thousand* tables, and distributed to every citizen as much corn as was sufficient for *three* months; and after all these expenses, he had *seven thousand one hundred* Roman talents remaining, which is more than a million and a half of English money.

In those days silver and gold were more plentiful than at present, as we may see in the yearly revenue of Solomon, who had of gold from *Ophir*, at one voyage, *four hundred and fifty* talents, which make *three millions two hundred and forty thousand* pounds sterling; and his annual income was *six hundred and sixty-six* talents of silver, which make *four millions seven hundred and ninety-five thousand two hundred* pounds English money.

In addition to the above I cannot help subjoining the following particulars:—

Crassus, who was mentioned before, had a landed estate valued at one million six hundred and sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence.

C. Cæcilius Ridorus, after having lost much in the civil war, left by will effects amounting to one million forty-seven thousand one hundred and sixty pounds.

Lentullus, the augur, is said to have possessed no less than three millions three hundred and thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three pounds six shillings and eight pence.

Apicius was worth more than nine hundred and sixteen thousand six hundred and seventy-one pounds thirteen shillings and four pence; who, after having spent in his kitchen eight hundred and thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three pounds six shillings and eight pence, and finding that he had no more left than eighty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three pounds six shillings and eight pence, considered it so little for his support, that he judged it best to put an end to his life by poison!

The superfluous furniture of *M. Scaurus*, which was burnt at *Tusculum*, was valued at no less than eight hundred and thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-two pounds thirteen shillings and four pence.

Anthony owed, at the *ides or March*, the sum of three hundred and thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three pounds six shillings and six pence, which he paid before the *calends of April*.

None of these men were in trade, to account for the circulation of such immense sums through their hands. See DICKSON'S *Husband. of the Anc.*

Verse 10. The king took his ring] In this ring was no doubt included his *privy seal*, and he gave this to Haman, that when he had formed such a *decree* as he thought fit, he might seal it with this *ring*, which would give it its due force and influence among the rulers of the provinces. The *privy seal* of many of our sovereigns appears to have been inserted in their *rings*; and the seals of Eastern potentates were worn in rings upon their fingers. One such seal, once the property of the late *Tippoo Sultan*, lies before me; the inscription is deeply cut in *silver*, which is set in a *massy carriage of gold*. This, as fitted to the finger, he probably kept always on his hand, to be ready to seal despatches, &c., or it might be carried by a confidential officer for the same purpose, as it seems to refer to one of the *chief cutcheries*, or *military officers*.

Verse 12. Unto the king's lieutenants] *ynprdvj a achashdarpenny*.

This is in all probability another *Persian* word, for there is nothing like it in the *Hebrew* language, nor can it be fairly deduced from any *roots* in that tongue. The *Vulgate* translates *ad omnes satrapas regis*, to all the *satraps* of the king. It is very likely that this is the true sense of the word, and that

the **ynprdvj a achsadrapani**, as it may be pronounced, is the Chaldee or Hebrew corruption of the *Persian word* [Persian] *satraban*, the plural of [Persian] *satrab*, a Persian peer, though the word is now nearly obsolete in the Persian language; for since the conquest of Persia by Mohammedanism, the names of officers are materially changed, as something of *Islamism* is generally connected with the titles of officers both civil and military, as well as religious.

Verse 13. To destroy, so kill, and to cause to perish] To put the whole of them to death in *any manner*, or by *every way* and *means*.

Take **the spoil of them for a prey.**] Thus, whoever killed a Jew had his property for his trouble! And thus the hand of every man was armed against this miserable people. Both in the *Greek* version and in the *Latin* the copy of this order is introduced at length, expressing “the king’s desire to have all his dominions in quiet and prosperity; but that he is informed that this cannot be expected, while a certain detestable people are disseminated through all his provinces, who not only are not subject to the laws, but endeavour to change them; and that nothing less than their utter *extermination* will secure the peace and prosperity of the empire; and therefore he orders that they be all destroyed, both male and female, young and old,” &c.

Verse 15. The posts] Literally, the *couriers*, the *hircarrahs*, those who carried the public despatches; a species of public functionaries, who have been in use in all nations of the world from the remotest antiquity.

The decree was given at Shushan] It was *dated* from the royal Susa, where the king then was.

The city Shushan was perplexed.] They saw that in a short time, by this wicked measure the whole city would be thrown into confusion; for, although the *Jews* were the only objects of this decree, yet, as it armed the *populace* against them, even the Persians could not hope to escape without being spoiled, when a desperate mob had begun to taste of human blood, and enrich themselves with the property of the murdered. Besides, many Persian families had, no doubt, become united by intermarriages with Jewish families, and in such a massacre they would necessarily share the same fate with the Jews. A more impolitic, disgraceful, and cruel measure was never formed by any government; and one would suppose that the king who ordered it must have been an idiot, and the counsellors who

advised it must have been madmen. But a despotic government is ever capable of extravagance and cruelty; for as it is the bane of popular freedom and happiness, so is it the disgrace of political wisdom and of all civil institutions. Despotism and tyranny in the state are the most direct curses which insulted justice can well inflict upon a sinful nation.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 4

On hearing the king's decree to exterminate the Jews, Mordecai mourns, and clothes himself in sackcloth, 1, 2. The Jews are filled with consternation, 3. Esther, perceived Mordecai in distress at the palace gate, sends her servant Hatach to inquire the reason, 4-6. Hatach returns with the information, and also the express desire of Mordecai that she should go instantly to the king, and make supplication in behalf of her people, 7-9. Esther excuses herself on the ground that she had not been called by the king for thirty days past; and that the law was such that any one approaching his presence, without express invitation, should be put to death, unless the king should, in peculiar clemency, stretch out to such persons the golden sceptre, 10-12. Mordecai returns an answer, insisting on her compliance, 13, 14. She then orders Mordecai to gather all the Jews of Shushan, and fast for her success three days, night and day, and resolves to make the attempt, though at the risk of her life, 15-17.

NOTES ON CHAP. 4

Verse 1. Mordecai rent his clothes] He gave every demonstration of the most poignant and oppressive grief. Nor did he hide this from the city; and the Greek says that he uttered these words aloud: *Αἰρεταὶ ἔθνος μηδὲν ἠδικηκός*, *A people are going to be destroyed, who have done no evil!*

Verse 2. Before the king's gate] He could not enter into the gate, of the place where the officers waited, because he was in the habit of a mourner; for this would have been contrary to law.

Verse 3. Fasting, and weeping, and wailing] How astonishing, that in all this there is not the slightest intimation given of *praying to God!*

Verse 4. Sent raiment] She supposed that he must have been spoiled of his raiment by some means; and therefore sent him clothing.

Verse 5. Then called Esther for Hatach] This eunuch the king had appointed to wait upon her, partly, as is still the case in the East, to *serve her*, and partly, to *observe her conduct*; for no despot is ever exempt from a twofold torture, *jealousy* and *suspicion*.

Verse 8. That she should go in unto the king] The Greek adds, “Remember the time of your low estate, and in what manner you have been

nourished, and carried in my arms; and that Haman, who is next to the king, has got a decree for our destruction. Pray, therefore, to the Lord, and plead with the king, that we may be delivered from death.” But there is not a word of this either in the *Hebrew*, *Syriac*, or *Vulgate*.

Verse 11. Into the inner court] We have already seen that the Persian sovereigns affected the highest degree of *majesty*, even to the *assuming of Divine honours*. No man nor woman dared to appear *unveiled* before them, without hazarding their lives; into the inner chamber of the *harem* no person ever entered but the king, and the woman he had chosen to call thither. None even of his courtiers or ministers dared to appear there; nor the most beloved of his concubines, except led thither by himself, or ordered to come to him. Here was Esther’s difficulty; and that difficulty was now increased by the circumstance of her not having been sent for to the king’s bed for *thirty* days. In the last verse of the preceding chapter we find that the *king and Haman sat down to drink*. It is very likely that this wicked man had endeavoured to draw the king’s attention from the queen, that his affection might be lessened, as he must have known something of the relationship between her and Mordecai; and consequently viewed her as a person who, in all probability, might stand much in the way of the accomplishment of his designs. I cannot but think that *he* had been the cause why Esther had not seen the king for *thirty* days.

Verse 13. Think not-that thou shalt escape] This confirms the suspicion that Haman knew something of the relationship between Mordecai and Esther; and therefore he gives her to understand that, although in the *king’s palace*, she should no more *escape than the Jews*.

Verse 14. Then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise] He had a confidence that deliverance would come by some means; and he thought that *Esther* would be the most likely; and that, if she did not use the influence which her providential station gave her, she would be highly culpable.

And who knoweth whether thou art come] As if he had said, “Is it likely that Divine providence would have so distinguished thee, and raised thee from a state of abject obscurity, merely for *thy own sake*? Must it not have been on some *public account*! Did not *he* see what was coming? and has he not put thee in the place where thou mayest counteract one of the most ruinous purposes ever formed?” Is there a human being who has not some particular station by an especial providence, at some particular time, in

which he can be of some essential service to his neighbour, in averting evil or procuring good, if he be but faithful to the *grace* and *opportunity* afforded by this station? Who dares give a negative to these questions? We lose much, both in reference to *ourselves* and *others*, by not adverting to our *providential situation* and *circumstances*. While on this subject, I will give the reader two important sayings, from two eminent men, both keen observers of human nature, and deeply attentive in all such cases to the operations of Divine providence:—

“To every thing there is a season; and a time to every purpose under heaven. Therefore withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. SOLOMON.

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries.
SHAKESPEARE.*

Has there not been a case, *within time of memory*, when evil was designed against a whole people, through the Hamans who had poisoned the ears of well-intentioned men; in which *one poor man*, in consequence of a situation into which he was brought by an astonishing providence, used the influence which his situation gave him; and, by the mercy of his God, turned the whole evil aside? By the association of ideas the following passage will present itself to the reader’s memory, who may have any acquaintance with the circumstance:—

“There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; *yet no man remembered that same poor man!*”

“Then said, I, *Ah, Lord God! They say of me, DOTH HE NOT SPEAK PARABLES?*” Rem acu tetigi.

Verse 16. **Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days]** What a strange thing, that still we hear nothing of *prayer*, nor of *God!* What is the ground on which we can account for this total silence? I know it not. She could not suppose there was any *charm* in fasting, sackcloth garments, and lying on the ground. If these were not done to turn away the displeasure of

God, which seemed now to have unchained their enemies against them, what were they done for?

If I perish, I perish.] If I lose my life in this attempt to save my people, I shall lose it cheerfully. I see it is my duty to make the attempt; and, come what will, I am resolved to do it. She must, however, have depended much on the efficacy of the humiliations she prescribed.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 5

Esther presents herself before the king, and finds favour in his sight, 1, 2. He asks what her request is, and promises to grant it, 3. She invites him and Haman to a banquet, which they accept, 4, 5. He then desires to know her request; and she promises to make it known on the morrow, if they will again come to her banquet, 6-8. Haman, though overjoyed at the manner in which he was received by the queen, is indignant at the indifference with which he is treated by Mordecai, 9. He goes home, and complains of this conduct to his friends, and his wife Zeresh, 10-13. They counsel him to make a gallows of fifty cubits high, and to request the king that Mordecai may be hanged on it, which they take for granted the king will not refuse; and the gallows is made accordingly, 14.

NOTES ON CHAP. 5

Verse 1. On the third day] Most probably the third day of the *fast* which she has prescribed to Mordecai and the Jews.

Verse 2. She obtained favour in his sight] The *Septuagint* represents “the king as being at first greatly enraged when he saw Esther, because she had dared to appear before him unveiled, and she, perceiving this, was so terrified that she fainted away; on which the king, touched with tenderness, sprung from his throne, took her up in his arms, laid the golden sceptre on her neck, and spoke to her in the most endearing manner.” This is more circumstantial than the Hebrew, but is not *contrary* to it.

The golden sceptre that was in his hand.] That the kings of Persia did wear a *golden sceptre*, we have the following proof in *Xenophon*: *Οτι ου τοδε το χρυσειον σκηπτρον το την βασιλειαν διασωζον εστιν, αλλ πιστοι φιλοι σκηπτρον βασιλευσιν αληθεστατον και ασφαλεστατον*. See *Cyrop.*, lib. viii., p. 139, edit. *Steph.* 1581. *It is not*, said Cyrus to his son Cambyses, *the GOLDEN SCEPTRE that saves the kingdom; faithful friends are the truest and safest sceptre of the empire.*

Verse 4. Let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet] It was necessary to invite Haman to prevent his suspicion, and that he might not take any hasty step which might have prevented the execution of the great design.

Verse 6. The banquet of wine] At that part of the banquet when the *wine* was introduced.

Verse 8. I will do to-morrow] She saw she was gaining on the king's affections; but she was not yet sufficiently confident; and therefore wished another interview, that she might ingratiate herself more fully in the king's favour, and thus secure the success of her design. But Providence disposed of things thus, to give time for the important event mentioned in the succeeding chapter.

Verse 9. That he stood not up, nor moved for him] This was certainly carrying his integrity or inflexibility to the highest pitch. But still we are left to conjecture that some reverence was required, which Mordecai could not conscientiously pay.

Verse 11. The multitude of his children] The Asiatic sovereigns delight in the number of their children; and this is one cause why they take so many wives and concubines.

Verse 13. Yet all this availeth me nothing] *Pride* will ever render its possessor unhappy. He has such a high opinion of his own worth, that he conceives himself defrauded by every one who does not pay him all the respect and homage which he conceives to be his due.

The soul was made for God, and nothing but God can fill it and make it happy. *Angels* could not be happy in *glory*, when they had cast off their allegiance to their Maker. As soon as his heart had departed from God, *Adam* would needs go to the forbidden fruit, to satisfy a desire which was only an indication of his having been unfaithful to his God. *Solomon*, in all his glory, possessing every thing heart could wish, found all to be *vanity* and *vexation of spirit*; because his soul had not God for its portion. *Ahab*, on the throne of Israel, takes to his bed, and refuses to eat bread, not merely because he cannot get the *vineyard of Naboth*, but because he had not God in his heart, who could alone satisfy its desires. *Haman*, on the same ground, though the prime favourite of the king, is wretched because he cannot have a *bow* from that man whom his heart even despised. O, how distressing are the inquietudes of vanity. And how wretched is the man who has not the God of Jacob for his help, and in whose heart Christ dwells not by faith!

Verse 14. Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high] The word \times [*ets*, which we translate *gallows*, signifies simply *wood*, a *tree*, or *pole*; and this was to be *seventy-five* feet high, that he might suffer the greater ignominy, and be a more public spectacle. I believe *impaling* is here also meant. **See Clarke's note, "Esther 2:23"**.

IN former times the Jews were accustomed to burn Haman in effigy; and with him a *wooden cross*, which they pretended to be in memory of that which he had erected for the suspension of Mordecai; but which was, in fact, to deride the *Christian religion*. The emperors, *Justinian* and *Theodosius*, abolished it by their edicts; and the practice has ceased from that time, though the principle from which it sprang still exists, with the same virulence against Christianity and its glorious Author.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 6

That night the king, not being able to sleep, orders the chronicles of the kingdom to be read to him; and finds there the record concerning the discovery of the treason of the two eunuchs, made by Mordecai, 1, 2. He inquires whether Mordecai had been rewarded, and was answered in the negative, 3. At this time Haman arrives, in order to request the king's permission to hang Mordecai; and being suddenly asked what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour, supposing that himself must be meant, presented the ceremonial, 4-9. The king orders him to give Mordecai those honours; which he performs, to his extreme mortification, 10, 11. He informs his wife Zeresh of these transactions, who predicts his downfall, 12-13. He is hurried by the eunuchs to the queen's banquet, 14.

NOTES ON CHAP. 6

Verse 1. On that night could not the king sleep] The *Targum* says the king had a dream, which was as follows:—"And the king sat one in the similitude of a man who spoke these words to him: Haman desireth to slay thee, and to make himself king in thy stead. Behold, he will come unto thee early in the morning, to ask from thee the man who rescued thee from death, that he may slay him: but say thou unto Haman, What shall be done for the man whose honour the king studieth? And thou wilt find that he will ask nothing less from thee than the royal vestments, the regal crown, and the horse on which the king is wont to ride."

The records of the chronicles] It may be well asked, Why should the king, in such a perturbed state of mind, wish such a dry detail, as *chronicles* afford, to be read to him? But the truth is, as chronicles were composed among the *Persians*, he could not have brought before him any work more instructive, and more entertaining; because they were all written in verse, and were generally the work of the most eminent poets in the empire. They are written in this way to the present time; and the famous epic poem of the finest Persian poet, *Ferdusi*, the *Homer* of India, is nothing else than a collection of chronicles brought down from the creation to the reign of Mohammed Ghezny, in the beginning of the *tenth* century. After *thirty* years' labour, he finished this poem, which contained *one hundred and twenty thousand* lines, and presented it to the Sultan

Mahmoud, who had promised to give him a *dinar* (*eight shillings and sixpence*) for every line. The poem was finished A.D. 984; and was formed out of compositions of a similar nature made by *former poets*. This chronological poem is written in all the harmony, strength, and elegance of the most beautiful and harmonious language in the universe; and what adds greatly to its worth is, that it has few *Arabic* words, with which the beautiful Persian tongue was loaded, and in my opinion *corrupted*, after the conquest of the major part of Asia by the Mohammedans. The pedants of Hindoostan, whether they *speak* or *write*, in *prose* or in *verse*, affect this commixture of Arabic words; which, though they subjugate them to Persian rules, are producing a ruggedness in a language, which in *Ferdusi*, flows deep and strong like a river of oil over every kind of channel. Such, I suppose, was the *chronicle* that was read to Ahasuerus, when his distractions prevented his sleep, and his troubled mind required that soothing repose which the gentle though powerful hand of poetry is alone, in such circumstances, capable of affording. Even our *rough* English ancestors had their *poetic chronicles*; and, among many, the *chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* is proof in point. I need not add, that all that is real in *Ossian* is of the same complexion.

Verse 3. What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai] It is certain he found nothing in the record; and had any thing been done, that was the most likely place to find it.

Verse 4. Who is in the court?] This accords with the *dream* mentioned by the Targum; and given above.

Now Haman was come] This must have been very *early* in the morning. Haman's pride and revenge were both on the tenters to be gratified.

Verse 6. The king said unto him] He did not give him time to make his request; and put a question to him which, at the first view, promised him all that his heart could wish.

Verse 8. Let the royal apparel be brought] *Pride* and *folly* ever go hand in hand. What he asked would have been in any ordinary case against his own life: but he wished to reach the pinnacle of honour: never reflecting that the higher he rose, the more terrible would be his fall. The *royal apparel* was never worn but by the king: even when the king had lain them aside, it was death to put them on. The *Targum* has *purple robes*.

And the horse-and the crown royal] Interpreters are greatly divided whether what is called here *the crown royal* be not rather an *ornament* worn on the *head of the horse*, than what may be called the *royal crown*. The original may be understood both ways; and our version seems to favour the former opinion; but I think it more likely that the royal crown is meant; for why mention the ordinary trappings of the royal steed?

Verse 9. One of the king's most noble princes] Alas, Poor Haman! Never was the fable of the *dog and shadow* more literally fulfilled. Thou didst gape at the *shadow*, and didst lose the *substance*.

Verse 10. Make haste, and take the apparel-and do even so to Mordecai] O mortifying reverse of human fortune! How could Haman bear this? The *Targumist might* speak according to *nature* when he said that "Haman besought the king to kill him rather than degrade him so." How astonishing is the conduct of Divine providence in all this business! From it we plainly see that there is neither counsel nor wisdom against the Lord; and that he who digs a pit for his neighbour, is sure to fall into it himself.

Verse 12. Mordecai came again to the king's gate] He resumed his former humble state; while Haman, ashamed to look up, *covered his face*, and ran home to hide himself in his own house. *Covering the head and face* was a sign of *shame* and *confusion*, as well as of *grief*, among most people of the earth.

Verse 13. But shalt surely fall before him.] The *Septuagint* adds, **οτι ο Θεος ο ζων μετ αυτου**, *for the living God is with him*. But this is a sentiment that could scarcely be expected to proceed from the mouth of *heathens*, such as these were.

Verse 14. Hasted to bring Haman] There was a dreadful banquet before him, of which he knew nothing: and he could have little appetite to enjoy that which he knew was prepared at the palace of Esther.

ONE grand design of this history is, to show that he who lays a snare for the life of his neighbour, is most likely to fall into it himself: for, in the course of the Divine providence, men generally meet with those evils in life which they have been the means of inflicting on others: and this is exactly agreeable to the saying of our Lord: "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you withal."

ESTHER

CHAPTER 7

The king at the banquet urges Esther to prefer her petition, with the positive assurance that it shall be granted, 1, 2. She petitions for her own life, and the life of her people, who were sold to be destroyed, 3, 4. The king inquires the author of this project, and Haman is accused by the queen, 5, 6. The king is enraged: Haman supplicates for his life; but the king orders him to be hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, 7-10.

NOTES ON CHAP. 7

Verse 2. At the banquet of wine] *Postquam vino incaluerat*, after he had been heated with wine, says the *Vulgate*. In such a state the king was more likely to come into the measures of the queen.

Verse 3. Let my life be given me] This was very artfully, as well as very honestly, managed; and was highly calculated to work on the feelings of the king. What! is the life of the queen, whom I most tenderly love, in any kind of danger?

Verse 4. To be destroyed, to be slain] She here repeats the words which Haman put into the *decree*. See ^{<7B13>} **Esther 3:13**.

Could not countervail the king's damage.] Even the *ten thousand* talents of silver could not be considered as a compensation to the state for the loss of a whole nation of people *throughout all their generations*.

Verse 5. Who is he, and where is he] There is a wonderful abruptness and confusion in the original words, highly expressive of the state of mind in which the king then was:

ʿk twc [l wbl wal m rva aw hz yaw hz aw hz ym
mi hu zeh veey zeh hu asher melao libbo laasoth ken.

“Who? He? This one? And where? This one? He? Who hath filled his heart to do thus?” He was at once struck with the horrible nature of a conspiracy so cruel and diabolic.

Verse 7. Haman stood up] He rose from the table to make request for his life, as soon as the king had gone out; and then he fell on his knees before the queen, she still sitting upon her couch.

Verse 8. Will he force the queen] On the king's return he found him at the queen's knees; and, professing to think that he intended to do violence to her honour, used the above expressions; though he must have known that, in such circumstances, the thought of perpetrating an act of this kind could not possibly exist.

They covered Haman's face.] This was a sign of his being devoted to death: for the attendants saw that the king was determined on his destruction. When a criminal was condemned by a Roman judge, he was delivered into the hands of the serjeant with these words: *I, lictor; caput obnubito, arbori infelici suspendito*. "Go, serjeant; cover his head, and hang him on the accursed tree."

Verse 9. Behold also, the gallows] As if he had said, Besides all he has determined to do to the Jews, he has erected a very high gallows, on which he had determined, this very day, to hang Mordecai, who has saved the king's life.

Hang him thereon.] Let him be instantly impaled on the same post. "Harm watch, harm catch," says the proverb. *Perillus* was the first person burnt alive in the brazen bull which he had made for the punishment of *others*; hence the poet said:—

———*Nec lex est justior ulla,
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*

"Nor can there be a juster law than that the artificers of death should perish by their own invention."

ESTHER

CHAPTER 8

Ahasuerus invests Mordecai with the offices and dignities possessed by Haman, 1, 2. Esther begs that the decree of destruction gone out against the Jews may be reversed, 3-6. He informs her that the acts that had once passed the kings seal cannot be reversed; but he instructs her and Mordecai to write other letters in his name, and seal them with his seal, and send them to all the provinces in the empire, giving the Jews full liberty to defend themselves; which is accordingly done; and the letters are sent off with the utmost speed to all the provinces: in consequence, the Jews prepare for their own defence, 8-14. Mordecai appears publicly in the dress of his high office, 15. The Jews rejoice in every place; and many of the people become Jews, because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them, 16, 17.

NOTES ON CHAP. 8

Verse 1. The king-give the house of Haman] As Haman was found guilty of treasonable practices against the peace and prosperity of the king and his empire, his life was forfeited and his goods confiscated. And as Mordecai had been the means of preserving the king's life, and was the principal object of Haman's malice, it was but just to confer his property upon him, as well as his dignity and office, as Mordecai was found deserving of the former, and fit to discharge the duties of the latter.

Verse 2. The king took off his ring] In the *ring* was the *seal* of the king. Giving the *ring* to Mordecai was tantamount to giving him the *seal of the kingdom*, and constituting him the same as *lord chancellor* among us.

Verse 6. To see the destruction of my kindred?] She had now informed the king that she was cousin to Mordecai, and consequently a *Jewess*; and though her own life and that of Mordecai were no longer in danger, Haman being dead, yet the decree that had gone forth was in full force against the *Jews*; and if not repealed, their destruction would be inevitable.

Verse 8. May no man reverse.] Whatever had passed the royal signet could never be revoked; no *succeeding* edict could destroy or repeal a *preceding* one: but one of a similar nature to the *Jews* against the *Persians*, as that to the *Persians* was against the *Jews*, might be enacted, and thus the

Jews be enabled *legitimately* to defend themselves; and, consequently, placed on an equal footing with their enemies.

Verse 9. The month Sivan] This answers to a part of our *May* and *June*.

Verse 10. On mules, camels, and young dromedaries] What these beasts were is difficult to say. The word **vk^r** *rechesh*, which we translate *mules*, signifies a *swift chariot horse*.

The strange word **μ^ynr^tv^j** *a achashteranim* is probably a *Persian* word, but perhaps incurably corrupted. The most likely derivation is that of *Bochart*, from the *Persian* [*Persian*] *akhash*, *huge*, *large*, *rough*, and [*Persian*] *aster*, a *mule*; large mules.

The words **μ^ykm^rh^ynb** *beney harammachim*, *the sons of mares*, which we translate *dromedaries*, are supposed to signify *mules*, produced between the *he ass* and the *mare*, to distinguish them from those produced between the *stallion* and the *ass*, But there is really so much confusion about these matters, and so little consent among learned men as to the signification of these words, and even the true knowledge of them is of such little importance, that we may well rest contented with such names as our modern translations have given us. They were, no doubt, the *swiftest* and *hardiest beasts* that the *city* or *country* could produce.

Verse 11. To destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish] The same words as in Haman's decree: therefore the Jews had as much authority to slay their enemies, as their enemies had to slay them.

Little ones and women] This was the ordinary custom, to destroy the whole family of those convicted of great crimes; and whether this was right or wrong, it was the custom of the people, and according to the laws. Besides, as this edict was to give the Jews the same power against their enemies as they had by the former decree against them, and the women and children were there included; consequently they must be included here.

Verse 14. The decree was given at Shushan] The contrary effect which it was to produce considered, this decree was in every respect like the former. See ^{<1708>}**Esther 3:8-15**.

Verse 15. Blue and white] Probably stripe interchanged with stripe; or *blue* faced and bordered with *white* fur.

A great crown of gold] A large *turban*, ornamented with gold, jewels, &c.

Fine linen and purple] See on ^{<0144>}Genesis 41:42. The *xb butts*, here mentioned, is most probably the same with the *byssus* of the ancients; supposed to be the beautiful *tuft* or *beard*, growing out of the side of the *pinna longa*, a very large species of *muscle*, found on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, of which there are a pair of gloves in the British Museum. This *byssus* I have described elsewhere.

Shushan-was glad.] Haman was too *proud* to be *popular*; few lamented his fall.

Verse 17. Many-became Jews; for-fear] These were a species of *converts* not likely to bring much honour to true religion: but the sacred historian states the simple fact. They did profess Judaism for fear of the Jews, whether they continued steady in that faith or not.

It is only the Gospel which will not admit of coercion for the propagation and establishment of its doctrines. It is a spiritual system, and can be propagated only by spiritual influence. As it proclaims holiness of heart and life, which nothing but the Spirit of God can produce, so it is the Spirit of God alone that can persuade the understanding and change the heart. If the kingdom of Christ were of this *world*, then would his servants *fight*. But it is not from *hence*.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 9

On the thirteenth of the month Adar the Jews destroy their enemies, and the governors of the provinces assist them, 1-5. They slay five hundred in Shushan, and kill the ten sons of Haman, but take no spoil, 6-10. The king is informed of the slaughter in Shushan, 11. He desires to know what Esther requests farther; who begs that the Jews may be permitted to act on the following day as they had done on the preceding, and that Haman's sons may be hanged upon the gallows; which is granted; and they slay three hundred more in Shushan, and in the other provinces seventy-five thousand, 12-16. A recapitulation of what was done; and of the appointment of the feast of Purim to be observed through all their generations every year, 17-28. Esther writes to confirm this appointment, 29-32.

NOTES ON CHAP. 9

Verse 1. Now in the twelfth month] What a number of providences, and none of them apparently of an extraordinary nature, concurred to preserve a people so signally, and to all human appearance so inevitably, doomed to destruction! None are ever too low for God to lift up, or too high for God to cast down. Must not these heathens have observed that the uncontrollable hand of an Almighty Being had worked in behalf of the Jews? And must not this have had a powerful tendency to discredit the idolatry of the country?

Verse 3. And all the rulers of the provinces] Mordecai being raised to the highest confidence of the king, and to have authority over the whole realm, these officers assisted the Jews, no doubt, with the troops under their command, to overthrow those who availed themselves of the former decree to molest the Jews. For it does not appear that the Jews slew any person who did not rise up to destroy them. See ^{<17095>} **Esther 9:5**.

Verse 6. And in Shushan] It is strange that in this city, where the king's mind must have been so well known, there should be found *five hundred* persons to rise up in hostility against those whom they knew the king befriended!

Verse 10. The ten sons of Haman] Their names are given above. And it is remarked here, and in ^{<17096>} **Esther 9:16**, where the account is given of the

number slain in the provinces, that the Jews *laid no hands on the spoil*. They stood for their lives, and gave full proof that they sought their own personal safety, and not the *property* of their enemies, though the decree in their favour gave them authority to take the property of all those who were their adversaries, ^{<אָרְבֵּי>} **Esther 8:11**.

Verse 13. Let Haman's ten sons be hanged] They had been slain the preceding day, and now she requests that they may be exposed on posts or gibbets, as a terror to those who sought the destruction of the Jews.

Verse 15. And slew three hundred men] Esther had probably been informed by Mordecai that there were still many enemies of the Jews who sought their destruction, who had escaped the preceding day; and, therefore, begs that this *second* day be added to the former permission. This being accordingly granted, they found *three hundred* more, in all *eight hundred*. And thus Susa was purged of all their enemies.

Verse 18. The Jews-assembled-on the thirteenth-and on the fourteenth] These *two* days they were employed in slaying their enemies; and they rested on the *fifteenth*.

Verse 19. The Jews of the villages] They joined that to the preceding day, and made it a day of festivity, and *of sending portions to each other*; that is, the *rich* sent portions of the sacrifices slain on this occasion to the *poor*, that they also might be enabled to make the day a day of festivity; that as the *sorrow* was *general*, so also might the *joy* be.

It is worthy of remark that the ancient *Itala* or *Ante-hieronimian* version of this book omits the whole of these *nineteen* verses. Query, Were they originally in this book?

Verse 20. Mordecai wrote these things] It has been supposed that thus far that part of the book of Esther, which was written by *Mordecai* extends: what follows to the end, was probably added either by *Ezra*, or the *men of the Great Synagogue*; though what is said here may refer only to the letters sent by Mordecai to the Jews of the provinces. From this to the end of the chapter is nothing else than a recapitulation of the chief heads of the preceding history, and an account of the appointment of an annual feast, called *the feast of Purim*, in commemoration of their providential deliverance from the malice of Haman.

Verse 23. The Jews undertook to do as they had begun] They had already kept the *fifteenth* day, and some of them in the country the *fourteenth* also, as a day of rejoicing: Mordecai wrote to them to bind themselves and their successors, and all their proselytes, to celebrate this as an *annual* feast throughout all their generations; and this they *undertook to do*. And it has been observed among them, in all places of their dispersion, from that day to the present time, without any interruption.

Verse 26. They called these days Purim] That is from [Persian] *pari, the lot*; because, as we have seen, Haman cast lots to find what month, and what day of the month, would be the most favourable for the accomplishment of his bloody designs against the Jews. See on ~~אֶסְתֵּר~~ **Esther 3:7**.

And of that which they had seen] The *first letter* to which this *second* refers, must be that sent by Mordecai himself. See ~~אֶסְתֵּר~~ **Esther 9:20**.

Verse 29. Esther-wrote with all authority] Esther and Mordecai had the king's license so to do: and their own authority was great and extensive.

Verse 31. As they had decreed for themselves and for their seed] There is no mention of their receiving the approbation of any *high priest*, nor of any authority beyond that of Mordecai and Esther; the king could not join in such a business, as he had nothing to do with the Jewish religion, that not being the religion of the country.

Verse 32. The decree of Esther confirmed these matters] It was received by the Jews universally with all respect, and they bound themselves to abide by it.

The *Vulgate* gives a strange turn to this verse: *Et omnia quæ libri hujus, qui vocatur Esther, historia continentur*; "And all things which are contained in the history of this book, which is called Esther."

The *Targum* says, *And by the word of Esther all these things relative to Purim were confirmed*; and the roll was transcribed in this book. The *Syriac* is the same as the *Hebrew*, and the *Septuagint* in this place not very different.

ESTHER

CHAPTER 10

Ahasuerus lays a tribute on his dominions, 1. Mordecai's advancement under him, 2. His character, 3.

NOTES ON CHAP. 10

Verse 1. Laid a tribute upon the land] On the *one hundred and twenty-seven* provinces of which we have already heard.

The isles of the sea.] Probably the isles of the Ægean sea, which were conquered by *Darius Hystaspes*. Calmet supposes that this *Hystaspes* is the *Ahasuerus* of Esther.

Verse 2. The book of the chronicles of Media and Persia?] The Persians have ever been remarkable for keeping exact chronicles of all public events. Their *Tareekhs*, which are compositions of this kind, are still very numerous, and indeed very important.

Verse 3. Was next unto king Ahasuerus] He was his prime minister; and, under him, was the governor of the whole empire.

The *Targum* is extravagant in its encomiums upon Mordecai: "All the kings of the earth feared and trembled before him: he was as resplendent as the evening star among the stars; and was as bright as Aurora beaming forth in the morning; and he was chief of the kings."

Seeking the wealth of his people] Studying to promote the Jewish interest to the utmost of his power.

Speaking peace to all his seed.] Endeavouring to settle their prosperity upon such a basis, that it might be *for ever permanent*. Here the *Hebrew* text ends; but in the ancient *Vulgate*, and in the *Greek*, *ten* verses are added to this chapter, and *six whole chapters* besides, so that the number of chapters in *Esther* amounts to *sixteen*. A translation of these may be found in the Apocrypha, bound up with the sacred text, in most of our larger English Bibles. On any part of this work it is not my province to add any comment.

THIS is the last of the historical books of the Old Testament, for from this time to the birth of Christ they had no *inspired writers*; and the interval of their history must be sought among the apocryphal writers and other historians who have written on Jewish affairs. The most complete *supplement* to this history will be found in that *most excellent work* of Dean *Prideaux*, entitled *The Old and New Testaments connected, in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations, from the Declension of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the time of CHRIST*, 4 vols. 8vo. 1725. The editions prior to this date are not so complete.

We have already seen what the *Feast of PURIM* means, and why it was instituted; if the reader is desirous of farther information on this subject, he may find it in the works of *Buxtorf*, *Leusden*, *Stehlin*, and *Calmet's* Dictionary, article *Pur*.

MASORETIC NOTES ON THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Number of verses, 167. Middle verse, ~~1757~~ **Esther 5:7**. Sections, 5.

The following excellent remarks on the history of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, I borrow from Dr. *John Taylor's* Scheme of *Scripture Divinity*, and make no doubt I shall have the thanks of every reader whose thanks are *worth having*.

“After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews no more lapsed into idolatry, but remained steady in the acknowledgment and worship of the one living and true God. Even then they fell into new ways of perverting religion, and the wise and holy intentions of the Divine law: 1. By laying all the stress on the *external* and *less momentous* parts of it, while they neglected the *weighty* and *substantial*, true holiness of heart and life. Mankind are too easily drawn into this error; while they retain a sense of religion, they are too apt to listen to any methods by which it may be reduced to a consistency with the *gratification of their passions, pride, and avarice*. Thus, by placing religion in *mere profession*, or in the zealous observance of *rites and ceremonies*, instead of *real piety, truth, purity, and goodness*, they learn to be *religious* without *virtue*. 2. By speculating and commenting upon the Divine commands and institutions till their force is quite enervated, and they are refined into a sense that will commodiously allow a slight regard instead of sincere obedience. 3. By confirming and establishing the two former methods of corrupting religion by tradition, and the authority of learned rabbins, pretending that there was a system of religious rules

delivered by *word of mouth* from Moses explanatory of the written law, known only to those rabbins, to whose judgment and decision, therefore, all the people were to submit.

“This in time (the space of *two hundred and nineteen years*) became the general state of religion among the Jews, after they had discarded idolatry: and this spirit prevailed among them for some ages (*two hundred and ninety years*) before the coming of Messiah; but, however, it did not interfere with the main system of Providence, or the introducing the knowledge of God among the nations, as they still continued steadfast in the worship of the true God, without danger of deviating from it.

“Thus the Jews were prepared by the preceding dispensation for the reception of the Messiah, and the just notions of religion which he was sent to inculcate; insomuch that their guilt must be highly aggravated if they rejected him and his instructions. It could not be for want of capacity, but of integrity, and must be assigned to *wilful* blindness and obduracy. Out of regard to temporal power, grandeur, and enjoyments, they loved darkness rather than light.

“For many ages the Jews had been well known in the *Eastern empire*, among the *Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes, and Persians*; but till the time of Alexander the Great they had no communication with the *Grecians*.

“About the year before Christ 332 Alexander built Alexandria in Egypt; and to people his new city, removed thither many of the *Jews*, allowing them the use of their own laws and religion, and the same liberties with the *Macedonians* themselves. The Macedonians, who spake the Greek language, and other Greeks, were the principal inhabitants of Alexandria; from them the Jews learnt to speak Greek, which was the common language of the city, and which soon became the native language of the Jews that lived there, who on that account were called *Hellenists*, or *Greek Jews*, mentioned ~~<400>~~ **Acts 6:1, 9; 11:20**. These Greek Jews had synagogues in Alexandria, and for their benefit the *Five Books of Moses*, which alone at first were publicly read, were translated into Greek, (by whom is uncertain,) and were read in their synagogues every Sabbath day; and in the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, about 168 years before Christ, the *prophets* were also translated into Greek for the use of the Alexandrian Jews.

“This translation contributed much to the spreading the knowledge of true religion among the nations in the western parts of the world.

“For the Jews, their synagogues and worship there, after Alexander’s death, dispersed almost everywhere among the nations. *Ptolemy*, one of Alexander’s successors, having reduced Jerusalem and all Judea about 320 years before Christ, carried *one hundred thousand* Jews into Egypt, and there raised considerable numbers of them to places of trust and power, and several of them he placed in *Cyrene* and *Libya*. *Seleucus*, another of Alexander’s successors, about 300 years before Christ, built Antioch in Cilicia, and many other cities, in all *thirty-five*, and some of the capital cities in the Greater and Lesser Asia, in all which he planted the Jews, giving them equal privileges and immunities with the Greeks and Macedonians, especially at Antioch in Syria, where they settled in great numbers, and became almost as considerable a part of that city as they were at Alexandria. On that memorable day of Pentecost (~~401B~~ **Acts 2:5, 9, 11, 12**) were assembled in Jerusalem, *Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven*, namely, Parthians, Medes, and Persians, of the province of Elymais, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Cyrene in Libya, and Rome, Cretes, and Arabs, who were all either Jews natural, or *devout men*, i.e., *proselytes* to the Jewish religion. And in every city of the Roman empire where Paul preached, he found a body of his countrymen the Jews, except in *Athens*, which was at that time, I suppose, a town of no considerable trade, which shows that the Jews and their synagogues, at the time of our Lord’s appearance, were providentially scattered over all the Roman empire, and had in every place introduced more or less, among the nations the knowledge and worship of God; and so had prepared great numbers for the reception of the Gospel.

“About the time that Alexander built Alexandria in Egypt, the use of the *papyrus* for writing was found out in that country. This invention was so favourable to literature, that *Ptolemy Soter* was thereby enabled to erect a *museum* or *library*, which, by his son and successor, *Philadelphus*, who died *two hundred and forty-seven years* before Christ, was augmented to *seven hundred thousand* volumes. Part of this library happened to be burnt when *Julius Cæsar* laid siege to Alexandria; but after that loss it was again much augmented, and soon grew up to be larger, and of more eminent note, than the former; till at length it was burnt and finally destroyed by the Saracens, in the year of our Lord 642. This plainly proves how much the

invention of turning the *papyrus* into *paper* contributed to the increase of *books*, and the advancement of learning, for some ages before the coming of our Lord. Add to all this, that the world, after many changes and revolutions, was, by God's all-ruling wisdom, thrown into that form of civil affairs which best suited with the great intended alteration. The many petty states and tyrannies, whose passions and bigotry might have run counter to the schemes of Providence, were all swallowed up in one great power, the ROMAN, to which all appeals lay; the seat of which, *Rome*, lay at a great distance from *Jerusalem*, the spring from which the Gospel was to rise and flow to all nations; and therefore as no material obstruction to the Gospel could come but from *one quarter*, none could *suddenly* arise from thence, but only in *process of time*, when the Gospel was sufficiently opened and established, as it did not in the least interfere with the *Roman polity* and *government*.

“The Gospel was first published in a time of *general peace* and *tranquillity throughout the whole world*, which gave the preachers of it an opportunity of passing freely from one country to another, and the minds of men the advantage of attending calmly to it.

“Many savage nations were civilized by the Romans, and became acquainted with the arts and virtues of their conquerors. Thus the darkest countries had their thoughts awakened, and were growing to a capacity of receiving, at the stated time, the knowledge of true religion; so that all things and circumstances conspired now with the views of heaven, and made this apparently *the fullness of time*, (~~ROM~~ Galatians 4:4,) or the *fittest juncture* for God to reveal himself to the Gentiles, and to put an end to idolatry throughout the earth. Now the minds of men were generally ripe for a purer and brighter dispensation; and the circumstances of the world were such as favoured the progress of it.”-P. 368.

Hated and despised as the *Jews* were among the proud *Romans*, and the still more proud and supercilious *Greeks*, their sojourning among them, and their *Greek version* of the *Scriptures*, commonly called the *Septuagint*, were the means of furnishing them with truer notions, and a more distinct knowledge of *vice* and *virtue*, than they ever had before. And on examination we shall find that, from the time of Alexander's conquest of Judea, a little more than *three hundred years* before our Lord, both *Greeks* and *Romans* became more correct in their theological opinions; and the sect of *eclectic philosophers*, whose aim was to *select from all preceding*

sects what was most consistent with reason and truth, were not a little indebted to the progress which the light of God, dispensed by means of the *Septuagint*, had made in the heathen world. And let it be remembered, that for *Jews*, who were settled in Grecian countries, this version was made, and by those *Jews* it was carried through all the places of their dispersion.

To this *version* Christianity, under God, owes much. To this version we are indebted for such a knowledge of the *Hebrew* originals of the Old Testament, as we could never have had without it, the pure Hebrew having ceased to be vernacular after the Babylonish captivity; and Jesus Christ and his apostles have stamped an infinite value upon it by the general use they have made of it in the New Testament; perhaps never once quoting, *directly*, the Hebrew text, or using any *other version* than *some copy* of the *Septuagint*. By this version, though prophecy had ceased from the times of Ezra, Daniel, and Malachi, yet the law and the prophets were *continued down to the time of Christ*; and this was the grand medium by which this conveyance was made. And why is this version neglected? I hesitate not to assert that no man can ever gain a thorough knowledge of the *phraseology* of the *New Testament writers*, who is unacquainted with this version, or has not profited by such writers as derived their knowledge from it.

A. CLARKE.

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