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COMMENTARY

Barnes' Notes on the Bible
Volume 3 -
Esther
By A. Fuller

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ESTHER

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Esther is entitled by the Jews, “the volume of Esther,” or simply “the volume.” In ancient times, it was always written on a separate roll, which was read entirely at the Feast of Purim. The Greek translators retained only “Esther,” which thus became the ordinary title among Christians.

1. There is much controversy concerning the date of “Esther.” The extreme minuteness of the details and vividness of the portraits in “Esther” certainly suggest the hand of a contemporary far more decidedly than any occasional expressions suggest a composer who lived long after the events commemorated. And the tone of the book is in accord with the history which it narrates, and is not unlike that of Zechariah. Therefore, on the whole, there is no sufficient ground for placing the composition of Esther later than that of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, or the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus. On the other hand, there is no ground for regarding Esther as earlier than the other post-captivity historical books — much less for placing it in the reign of Xerxes. Assuming Ahasuerus to be Xerxes (see point number 3 below), it may be said that both the opening sentence and the conclusion of the work indicate that the reign of Xerxes was over. Consequently, the earliest date that can reasonably be assigned to the book is 464 B.C.; and it is, on the whole, most probable that it was composed 20 or 30 years later (444-434 B.C.).

2. There are no means of determining who was the author of “Esther.” He was not Ezra. He may have been Mordecai, or, more probably, a younger contemporary of Mordecai’s.

The author, whoever he was, almost certainly wrote in Persia, where he had access to the royal archives, which contained an account, more or less full, of the transactions he was desirous of recording. Much also must have been derived from personal observation, and from communications with Mordecai and (perhaps) Esther.

(As the description of Susa (^{<7016>}Esther 1:5,6), that of the royal posts (^{<7080>}Esther 8:10,14), of Mordecai's apparel (^{<7085>}Esther 8:15), and the like.)

(For example, the genealogy of Mordecai (^{<7085>}Esther 2:5), his private communications with Esther (^{<7020>}Esther 2:10,11,20,22) and Hatach (^{<7006>}Esther 4:6-16).)

The book is more of a purely historical book than any other book in Scripture. Its main scope is simply to give an account of the circumstances under which the Feast of Purim was instituted. The absence of the name of God, and the slightness of the religious and didactic elements are marked characteristics. The author's Persian breeding, together probably with other circumstances, has prevented his sharing the ordinary Jewish spirit of local attachment, while at the same time, it has taught him a reticence with respect to the doctrines of his religion very unusual with his countrymen.

The narrative is striking and graphic; the style remarkably chaste and simple; and the sentences clear and unambiguous. The vocabulary, on the contrary, is, as might have been expected, not altogether pure, a certain number of Persian words being employed, and also a few terms characteristic of the later Hebrew or "Chaldee" dialect.

(The language of Esther is even more impregnated with Persian than that of Ezra. Several Persian words, as "akhashdarpan, genez (g'naz), iggereth (iggera)", and "pithgam (pithgama)", are common to both books. In addition to these, Esther has, besides some words of doubtful origin, the following list of terms, almost certainly Persian: — "akhashteranim", "royal;" "karpas", "cotton;" "kether" "crown;" "partemim", "nobles;" "pathshegen", "a copy, a transcript;" and "pur", "the lot.")

3. The authenticity of the history of Esther has been impugned; but the main circumstances of the narrative, which at first sight appear improbable, are not so if the especially extravagant and capricious character of the Persian monarch be taken into account. Etymologically, the name Ahasuerus is identical with the Persian "Khshayarsha" and the Greek "Xerxes"; and it is to this particular Persian monarch that the portrait of Ahasuerus exhibits a striking similarity. The chronological notices in the work also exactly fit this monarch's history; and the entire representation of the court and kingdom is suitable to his time and character. That we have no direct

profane confirmation of the narrative of Esther must be admitted, for the identity of Mordecai with Matacas (see ^{<TAB>}Esther 2:5) is too doubtful to be relied upon; but that we have none, is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that the accounts of the reign of Xerxes after his 6th year, and more particularly, of his domestic life, are scanty in the extreme, the native records being silent, and the Greek writers concerning themselves almost entirely with those public events which bore upon the history of Greece. “Esther” is, in fact, the sole authority for the period and circumstances of which it treats; if untrue, it might have easily been proved to be untrue at the time when it was published, by reference to the extant “book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia,” which it quotes (^{<TAB>}Esther 2:23; 10:2). It has, moreover, always been regarded by the Jews as an authentic account of the great deliverance which they celebrate annually by the feast of Purim.

4. In the Septuagint version occur “additions” to Esther consisting of five principal passages.

1. The first is introductory. It is dated in the second year of Ahasuerus, and contains:

(a) the pedigree of Mordecai, an anticipation of ^{<TAB>}Esther 2:5;

(b) a dream which he is supposed to have had;

(c) an account of the conspiracy of the two eunuchs and Mordecai’s discovery of it;

(d) a statement that Mordecai was at once rewarded with gifts; and

(e) a statement that Haman wished ill to Mordecai and his people on account of the affair of the eunuchs.

2. The second occurs after ^{<TAB>}Esther 3:13, and consists of a pretended translation of the letter sent out by Ahasuerus at the request of Haman.

3. The third follows on the close of Esther 4, and comprises:

(a) a long prayer ascribed to Mordecai;

(b) another still longer prayer ascribed to Esther; and

(c) an expanded account of Esther’s venturing before the king unsummoned, in lieu of ^{<TAB>}Esther 5:1,2.

4. The fourth is interposed between ~~<17813>~~ Esther 8:13 and ~~<17814>~~ Esther 8:14, and consists of a pretended copy of the letter sent out in the king's name by Mordecai.

5. The fifth and last occurs at the close of Esther 10. It comprises:

(a) Mordecai's application of his dream to the events;

(b) his appointment of the days of Purim as a permanent festival; and

(c) an epilogue stating that the Greek version of Esther was brought (to Alexandria) in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra by a certain Dositheus, a priest, and was said by him to have been translated by a certain Lysimachus, of Jerusalem.)

Their unauthenticity is very evident. They contradict the original document, and are quite different in tone and style from the rest of the book.

The principal intention of the "additions" is clear enough. They aim at giving a thoroughly religious character to a work in which, as originally written, the religious element was latent or only just perceptible. On the whole we may conclude that the Greek book of Esther, as we have it, was composed in the following way:

- 1.** First, a translation was made of the Hebrew text, honest for the most part, but with a few very short additions and omissions;
- 2.** Then, the markedly religious portions were added, the opening passage, the prayers of Mordecai and Esther, the exordium to Esther 5, the religious touches in ~~<17808>~~ Esther 6:1,13; and the concluding verses of Esther 10.
- 3.** Finally, the "letters of Ahasuerus" were composed by a writer more familiar than most Hellenists with the true spirit of the Greek tongue, and these, being accepted as genuine, were inserted in Esther 3 and Esther 8.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

NOTES ON ESTHER 1

<BOOK> **Esther 1:1.** *Ahasuerus.* Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis. His empire is rightly described as from India even unto Ethiopia. The satrapies of Darius Hystaspis reached 29 in number, and the nations under Xerxes were about 60. The 127 “provinces” include probably sub-satrapies and other smaller divisions of the great governments.

<BOOK> **Esther 1:3.** *In the third year* In this year, 483 B.C., Xerxes assembled the governors of provinces at Susa, in connection with his contemplated expedition against Greece.

The nobles literally, “the first men.” The Hebrew word used is one adopted from the Persian.

<BOOK> **Esther 1:5.** Feasts on this extensive scale were not unusual in the East. Cyrus is said on one occasion to have feasted “all the Persians.” Even ordinarily, the later Persian monarchs entertained 15,000 persons at their table.

<BOOK> **Esther 1:6.** Rather, “where was an awning of fine white cotton and violet.” White and blue (or violet) were the royal colors in Persia. Such awnings as are here described were very suitable to the pillared halls and porches of a Persian summer-palace, and especially to the situation of that of Susa.

The beds Rather, “couches” or “sofas,” on which the guests reclined at meals.

A pavement ... See the margin. It is generally agreed that the four substances named are stones; but to identify the stones, or even their colors, is difficult.

<BOOK> **Esther 1:8.** *According to the law* An exception to the ordinary practice of compulsory drinking had been made on this occasion by the king’s order.

Esther 1:9. *Vashti* If Ahasuerus is Xerxes, Vashti would be Amestris, whom the Greeks regarded as the only legitimate wife of that monarch, and who was certainly married to him before he ascended the throne. The name may be explained either as a corruption of Amestris, or as a title, vahishta, (Sanskrit: vasishtha, the superlative of vasu, “sweet”); and it may be supposed that the disgrace recorded (**Esther 1:19-21**, see the note) was only temporary; Amestris in the later part of Xerxes’ reign recovering her former dignity.

Esther 1:11. *To bring Vashti the queen* This command, though contrary to Persian customs, is not out of harmony with the character of Xerxes; and is evidently related as something strange and unusual. Otherwise, the queen would not have refused to come.

Esther 1:13. *Wise men ...* Not “astrologers,” who were unknown in Persia; but rather men of practical wisdom, who knew the facts and customs of former times.

For so was the king’s manner Some render it: “for so was the king’s business laid before all that knew law ...”

Esther 1:14. In Marsena we may perhaps recognize the famous Mardonius, and in Admatha, Xerxes’ uncle, Artabanus.

The seven princes There were seven families of the first rank in Persia, from which alone the king could take his wives. Their chiefs were entitled to have free access to the monarch’s person. See the margin reference note.

Esther 1:18. Translate it: “Likewise shall the princesses of Persia and Media, which have heard of the deed of the queen, say this day unto all the king’s princes.”

Esther 1:19. *That it be not altered* Compare the margin reference. This was the theory. Practically, the monarch, if he chose, could always dispense with the law. It was therefore quite within his power to restore Vashti to her queenly dignity notwithstanding the present decree, if he so pleased.

Esther 1:29. *He sent letters* The Persian system of posts incidentally noticed in the present book (^{170B2}Esther 3:12-15; 8:9-14), is in entire harmony with the accounts of Herodotus and Xenophon.

Into every province according to the writing thereof The practice of the Persians to address proclamations to the subject-nations in their own speech, and not merely in the language of the conqueror, is illustrated by the bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of the Achaemenian monarchs, from Cyrus to Artaxerxes Ochus, each inscription being of the nature of a proclamation.

The decree was not unnecessary. The undue influence of women in domestic, and even in public, matters is a feature of the ancient Persian monarchy. Atossa completely ruled Darius. Xerxes himself was, in his later years, shamefully subject to Amestris. The example of the court would naturally infect the people. The decree therefore would be a protest, even if ineffectual, against a real and growing evil.

And that it should be published ... Render it: “and speak the language of his own people;” in the sense that the wife’s language, if different from her husband’s, should in no case be allowed to prevail in the household.

NOTES ON ESTHER 2

Esther 2:1ff. These events must belong to the time between the great assembly held at Susa in Xerxes' third year (483 B.C.), and the departure of the monarch on his expedition against Greece in his fifth year, 481 B.C.

Esther 2:3. *The house of the women* i.e. the “gynaeecon,” or “haram” — always an essential part of an Oriental palace (Compare ^{<1008>}1 Kings 7:8). In the Persian palaces it was very extensive, since the monarchs maintained, besides their legitimate wives, as many as 300 or 400 concubines (compare ^{<1024>}Esther 2:14).

Esther 2:5. Mordecai, the eunuch (^{<1007>}Esther 2:7,11), has been conjectured to be the same as Matacas, who, according to Ctesias, was the most powerful of the eunuchs during the latter portion of the reign of Xerxes. Mordecai's line of descent is traced from a certain Kish, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in 598 B.C. — the year of Jeconiah's captivity — who was his great-grandfather. The four generations, Kish, Shimei, Jair, Mordecai, correspond to the known generations in other cases, for example:

High-Priests	Kings of Persia	Royal Stock of Judah
Seraiah	Cambyses	Jeconiah
Jozadak	Cyrus	Salathiel
Jeshua	Darius	Zerubbabel
Joiakim	Xerxes	Hananiah

The age of Mordecai at the accession of Xerxes may probably have been about 30 or 40; that of Esther, his first cousin, about 20.

Esther 2:7. Hadassah, *Hidasah* ^{<11919>} from *hadas* ^{<11918>} (“myrtle”) would seem to have been the Hebrew, and Esther the Persian, name of the damsel. Esther is thought to be connected through the Zend with αστηρ ^{<792>}, “star.” But there is not at present any positive evidence of the existence in Old Persian of a kindred word.

Esther 2:10. The Persians had no special contempt for the Jews; but, of course, they despised more or less all the subject races. Esther, with her Aryan name, may have passed for a native Persian.

Esther 2:11. Mordecai occupied, apparently, a humble place in the royal household. He was probably one of the porters or doorkeepers at the main entrance to the palace (^{<T21>}Esther 2:21).

Esther 2:14. *The second house of the women* i.e. Esther returned to the “house of the women,” but not to the same part of it. She became an inmate of the “second house,” or “house of the concubines,” under the superintendence of a distinct officer, Shaashgaz.

Esther 2:15. *She required nothing* The other virgins perhaps loaded themselves with precious ornaments of various kinds, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, and the like. Esther let Hegai dress her as he would.

Esther 2:16. Tebeth (compare the corresponding Egyptian month, “Tobi” or “Tubi”), corresponded nearly to our January.

In the seventh year of his reign In December, 479 B.C., or January, 478 B.C. Xerxes quitted Sardis for Susa in, or soon after, September, 479 B.C. It has been regarded as a “difficulty” that Vashti’s place, declared vacant in 483 B.C., was not supplied until the end of 479 B.C., four years afterward. But since two years out of the four had been occupied by the Grecian expedition, the objection cannot be considered very weighty.

Esther 2:18. *A release* Either remission of taxation, or of military service, or of both.

Esther 2:19. *When the virgins ...* Rather, “when virgins” etc. The words begin a new paragraph. There was a second collection of virgins (after that of ^{<T18>}Esther 2:8), and it was at the time of this second collection that Mordecai had the good fortune to save the king’s life.

Esther 2:21. Conspiracies inside the palace were ordinary occurrences in Persia. Xerxes was ultimately murdered by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and Aspamitras, a chamberlain and eunuch.

Esther 2:23. *Both hanged on a tree* i.e. “crucified” or “impaled” the ordinary punishment of rebels and traitors in Persia.

The book of the chronicles Ctesias drew his Persian history from them, and they are often glanced at by Herodotus.

NOTES ON ESTHER 3

Esther 3:1. The name, Haman, is probably the same as the Classical Omanes, and in ancient Persian, “Umana”, an exact equivalent of the Greek “Eumenes.” Hammedatha is perhaps the same as “Madata” or “Mahadata”, an old Persian name signifying “given by (or to) the moon.”

The Agagite The Jews generally understand by this expression “the descendant of Agag,” the Amalekite monarch of 1 Samuel 15. Haman, however, by his own name, and the names of his sons (**Esther 9:7-9**) and his father, would seem to have been a genuine Persian.

The Classical writers make no mention of Haman’s advancement; but their notices of the reign of Xerxes after 479 B.C. are exceedingly scanty.

Esther 3:2. Mordecai probably refused the required prostration, usual though it was, on religious grounds. Hence, his opposition led on to his confession that he was a Jew (**Esther 3:4**).

Esther 3:4. *Whether Mordecai’s matters would stand* Rather, “whether Mordecai’s words would hold good” — whether, that is, his excuse, that he was a Jew, would be allowed as a valid reason for his refusal.

Esther 3:6. *To destroy all the Jews* In the East massacres of a people, a race, a class, have at all times been among the incidents of history, and would naturally present themselves to the mind of a statesman. The Magophonia, or the great massacre of the Magi at the accession of Darius Hystaspis, was an event not then fifty years old, and was commemorated annually. A massacre of the Scythians had occurred about a century previously.

Esther 3:7. *In the first month ...* i.e. in March or April of 474 B.C.

“Pur” is supposed to be an old Persian word etymologically connected with the Latin “pars”, and signifying “part” or “lot.” The practice of casting lots to obtain a lucky day still obtains in the East, and is probably extremely ancient. A lot seems to have been cast, or a throw of some kind made, for each day of the month and each month of the year. The day and month which obtained the best throws were then selected. Assyrian calendars note

lucky and unlucky days as early as the eighth century B.C. Lots were in use both among the Oriental and the Classical nations from a remote antiquity.

“Adar,” the twelfth month, corresponds nearly to our March. It seems to have derived its name from “adar”, “splendor,” because of the brightness of the sun and the flowers at that time.

<TAB2> **Esther 3:9.** *Ten thousand talents of silver* According to Herodotus, the regular revenue of the Persian king consisted of 14,560 silver talents; so that, if the same talent is intended, Haman’s offer would have exceeded two-thirds of one year’s revenue (or two and one-half million British pound sterling). Another Persian subject, Pythius, once offered to present Xerxes with four millions of gold darics, or about four and one-half pounds.

<TAB2> **Esther 3:11.** *The silver is given to thee* Some understand this to mean that Xerxes refused the silver which Haman had offered to him; but the passage is better explained as a grant to him of all the property of such Jews as should be executed (<TAB3> Esther 3:13).

<TAB2> **Esther 3:12.** *On the thirteenth day* Haman had, apparently (compare <TAB2> Esther 3:7 with <TAB3> Esther 3:13), obtained by his use of the lot the 13th day of Adar as the lucky day for destroying the Jews. This may have caused him to fix on the 13th day of another month for the commencement of his enterprise. So, the Jews throughout the empire had from 9 to 11 months of warning of the peril which threatened them.

<TAB2> **Esther 3:13.** Present, the Jews keep three days — the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th of Adar — as connected with “the Feast of Purim;” but they make the 13th a fast, commemorative of the fast of Esther (<TAB6> Esther 4:16), and keep the feast itself on the 14th and 15th of Adar.

<TAB2> **Esther 3:15.** *Shushan was perplexed* Susa was now the capital of Persia, and the main residence of the Persians of high rank. These, being attached to the religion of Zoroaster, would naturally sympathize with the Jews, and be disturbed at their threatened destruction. Even apart from this bond of union, the decree was sufficiently strange and ominous to “perplex” thoughtful citizens.

NOTES ON ESTHER 4

Esther 4:2. *None might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth* This law is not elsewhere mentioned; but its principle — that nothing of evil omen is to be obtruded on the monarch — has been recognized throughout the East in all ages.

Esther 4:4. *Esther's maids ... told it her* Esther's nationality and her relationship to Mordecai were probably by this time known to her attendants, though still concealed from the king. See **Esther 7:4**.

Esther 4:11. *The golden scepter* In all the numerous representations of Persian kings at Persepolis the monarch holds a long tapering staff (probably the scepter of Esther) in his right hand. It was death to intrude on the privacy of the Persian king uninvited.

Esther 4:14. *From another place* i.e. "from some other quarter." Mordecai probably concluded from the prophetic Scriptures that God would NOT allow His people to be destroyed before His purposes with respect to them were accomplished, and was therefore satisfied that deliverance would arise from one quarter or another.

Thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed i.e. "a divine vengeance will overtake thee and thine, if thou neglectest thy plain duty." Though the name of God is not contained in the Book of Esther, there is in this verse a distinct, tacit allusion to God's promises, and to the direction of human events by Divine Providence.

Esther 4:16. Again the religious element shows itself. Esther's fast could have no object but to obtain God's favor and protection in the dangerous course on which she was about to enter.

NOTES ON ESTHER 5

Esther 5:1. *Over against the gate* This is the usual situation of the throne in the “throne-room” of an Oriental palace. The monarch, from his raised position, can see into the court through the doorway opposite to him, which is kept open.

Esther 5:3. *It shall be even given thee ...* Xerxes, on another occasion, when pleased with one of his wives, offered to grant her any request whatever, without limitation. Compare the margin reference.

Esther 5:4. Esther seems to have been afraid to make her real request of Xerxes too abruptly. She concluded that the king would understand that she had a real petition in the background, and would recur to it, as in fact he did (**Esther 5:6; 7:2**).

Esther 5:6. *The banquet of wine* After the meats were removed, it was customary in Persia to continue the banquet for a considerable time with fruits and wine. During this part of the feast, the king renewed his offer.

Esther 5:9. *He stood not up, nor moved for him* This was undoubtedly a serious breach of Persian etiquette, and may well have angered Haman.

Esther 5:10. *Zeresh* This name is probably connected with the Zend zara, “gold.” Compare the Greek “Chrysis.”

Esther 5:11. *The multitude of his children* Herodotus tells us that, next to prowess in arms, it was regarded as the greatest proof of manly excellence in Persia to be the father of many sons.” Haman had ten sons (see the margin reference).

Esther 5:14. A gallows, in the ordinary sense, is scarcely intended, since hanging was not a Persian punishment. The intention, no doubt, was to crucify (see the **Esther 2:23** note) or impale Mordecai; and the pale or cross was to be 75 feet high, to make the punishment more conspicuous.

Speak thou unto the king ... Requests for leave to put persons to death were often made to Persian kings by their near relatives, but only rarely by others.

NOTES ON ESTHER 6

~~708~~ **Esther 6:3.** It was a settled principle of the Persian government that “Royal Benefactors” were to receive an adequate reward. The names of such persons were placed on a special roll, and care was taken that they should be properly recompensed, though they sometimes waited for months or years before they were rewarded.

~~708~~ **Esther 6:8.** The honors here proposed by Haman were such as Persian monarchs rarely allowed to subjects. Each act would have been a capital offence if done without permission. Still, we find Persian monarchs allowing their subjects in these or similar acts under certain circumstances.

~~702~~ **Esther 6:12.** It is quite consonant with Oriental notions that Mordecai, after receiving the extraordinary honors assigned him, should return to the palace and resume his former humble employment.

NOTES ON ESTHER 7

~~<700>~~ **Esther 7:4.** The king now learned, perhaps for the first time, that his favorite was a Jewess.

Although the enemy ... i.e. “although the enemy (Haman) would not (even in that case) compensate (by his payment to the treasury) for the king’s loss of so many subjects.”

~~<700>~~ **Esther 7:8.** Like the Greeks and Romans, the Persians reclined at their meals on sofas or couches. Haman, in the intensity of his supplication, had thrown himself upon the couch at Esther’s feet.

They covered Haman’s face The Macedonians and the Romans are known to have commonly muffled the heads of prisoners before executing them. It may have also been a Persian custom.

NOTES ON ESTHER 8

Esther 8:1. *Give the house of Haman* Confiscation of goods accompanied public execution in Persia as in other Oriental countries.

Esther 8:2. *His ring* i.e. the royal signet by which the decrees of the government were signed.

Over the house of Haman Not only the building and the furniture, but the household — the vast train of attendants of all kinds that was attached to the residence of a Persian noble.

Esther 8:3. Though Haman was dead, his work was not yet undone. The royal decree had gone forth, and, according to Persian notions, could not be directly recalled or reversed (**Esther 8:8**). Mordecai did not dare, without express permission from the king, to take any steps even to stay execution. And Esther, being in favor, once more took the initiative.

Esther 8:8. *Write ... as it liketh you ...* (See the **Esther 1:19** note. Practically, Ahasuerus reversed the “device” of Haman).

Esther 8:9. Sivan corresponds nearly to our June; it was the second month from the issue of the first edict (**Esther 3:12**).

Esther 8:10. *Riders on mules, camels and young dromedaries* Most moderns translate “riders upon coursers and mules, the offspring of mares;” but the words translated “mules” and “mares,” are of very doubtful signification, since they scarcely occur elsewhere. The real meaning of the clause must remain doubtful; perhaps the true translation is, “riders upon coursers of the king’s stud, offspring of high-bred steeds.” So **Esther 8:14**.

Esther 8:11. This fresh decree allowed the Jews to stand on their defense, and to kill all who attacked them. It has been pronounced incredible that any king would thus have sanctioned civil war in all the great cities of his empire; but some even of the more skeptical critics allow that “Xerxes” might not improbably have done so.

Esther 8:14. *Being hastened* Between Sivan, the third month (June), when the posts went out, and Adar, the twelfth month (March), when the

struggle was to take place, the interval would be one of more than 8 months; but all haste was made, with the object of their being no misunderstanding.

<1785> **Esther 8:15.** See the <17006> Esther 1:6 note. The “crown” was not a crown like the king’s, but a mere golden band or coronet.

A garment Or, “an inner robe.” The tunic or inner robe of the king was of purple, striped with white.

<1787> **Esther 8:17.** *Became Jews* Joined the nation as proselytes, so casting in their lot with them.

NOTES ON ESTHER 9

Esther 9:1. *Drew near* Or, “arrived,” or “reached the time” specified (^{<7013>}Esther 3:13; 8:12).

Esther 9:3. *All the rulers ... helped the Jews* i.e. the Persians, who formed the standing army which kept the Empire in subjection, and were at the disposal of the various governors of provinces, took the Jews’ side. The enemies of the Jews (e.g. ^{<7016>}Esther 9:16) were almost entirely to be found among the idolatrous people of the subject nations, for whose lives neither the Persians generally, nor their monarchs, cared greatly.

Esther 9:6. By “Shushan the palace (or the fort),” is probably meant the whole of the upper town, which occupied an area of more than 100 acres, and contained many residences besides the actual palace. The Jews would not have ventured to shed blood within the palace-precincts.

Esther 9:7-10. Most of these names are Persian, and readily traceable to Old Persian roots.

Esther 9:10. *On the spoil laid they not their hand* As they might have done (see the margin reference).

Esther 9:15. *Shushan* Here probably the lower town, which lay east of the upper one, and was of about the same size (compare the ^{<7016>}Esther 9:6 note).

Esther 9:16. *Seventy and five thousand* The Septuagint gives the number as 15,000; and this amount seems more in proportion to the 800 slain in Susa.

Esther 9:18. See ^{<7013>}Esther 3:13 note.

Esther 9:19. *The Jews of the villages ...* Rather, “the Jews of the country districts, that dwelt in the country towns,” as distinguished from those who dwelt in the metropolis.

Esther 9:29. *This second letter of Purim* Mordecai’s first letter (^{<7010>}Esther 9:20) was to some extent tentative, a recommendation. The

Jews generally having accepted the recommendation (^{<17023>}Esther 9:23,27), he and Esther now wrote a second letter which was mandatory.

^{<17021>}**Esther 9:31.** *The matters of the fastings and their cry* The Jews of the provinces had added to the form of commemoration proposed by Mordecai certain observances with respect to fasting and wailing, and Mordecai's second letter sanctioned these.

^{<17022>}**Esther 9:32.** As “the book” elsewhere in Esther always means a particular book — “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia” — (^{<17023>}Esther 2:23; 6:1; 10:2) it seems best to give it the same sense here.

NOTES ON ESTHER 10

<T00B> **Esther 10:1.** *A tribute* Perhaps an allusion to some fresh arrangement of the tribute likely to have followed on the return of Xerxes from Greece.

Upon the isles of the sea Cyprus, Aradus, the island of Tyre, Platea, etc., remained in the hands of the Persians after the victories of the Greeks, and may be the “isles” here intended.

<T00B> **Esther 10:2.** *Power and ... might* In the later years of Xerxes his “power and might” were chiefly shown in the erection of magnificent buildings, more especially at Persepolis. He abstained from military expeditions.

Kings of Media and Persia Media takes precedence of Persia because the kingdom of Media had preceded that of Persia, and in the “book of the Chronicles” its history came first.

<T00B> **Esther 10:3.** *Mordecai ... was next unto king Ahasuerus* See

<T00B> Esther 2:5 note. Artabanus (<T0014> Esther 1:14 note) was favorite toward the end of Xerxes’ reign, i.e. in his 20th and 21st years.