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THE GOSPEL IN THE NAVY—DIVINE SERVICE ON BOARD A UNITED STATES WAR-SHIP. (See page 456.)

## THE METROPOLITAN PULPIT



## Gallows for Haman.

A Sermon by Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D., } So they hanged Haman on the gallows  
on the Text: Esther 7: 10, . . . . } that he had prepared for Mordecai.



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

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

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

Although so many years have passed

since cowardly Ahasuerus reigned, and the beautiful Esther answered to his whims, and Persia perished, yet from the life and death of Haman we may draw living lessons of warning and instruction. And, first, we come to the practical suggestion that, when the heart is wrong, things very insignificant will destroy our comfort. Who would have thought that a great Prime Minister, admired and applauded by millions of Persians, would have been so nettled and harassed by anything trivial? What more could the great dignitary have wanted than his chariots and attendants, and palaces and banquets? If affluence of circumstances can make a man contented and happy, surely Haman should have been contented and happy. No; Mordecai's refusal of a bow takes the glitter from the gold, and the richness from the purple, and the speed from the chariots. Thus shall it always be if the heart is not right. Circumstances the most trivial will disturb the spirit.

It is not the great calamities of life that create the most woe. I have seen men, felled by repeated blows of misfortune, arising from the dust, never desponding. But the most of the disquiet which men suffer is from insignificant causes; as a lion attacked by some beast of prey turns easily around and slays him, yet runs roaring through the forests at the alighting on his brawny neck of a few insects. You meet some great loss in business with comparative composure; but you can think of petty trickeries inflicted upon you, which arouse all your capacity for wrath, and remain in your heart an unbearable annoyance. If you look back upon your life, you will find that the most of the vexations and disturbances of spirit, which you felt, were produced by circumstances that were not worthy of notice. If you want to be happy you must not care for trifles. Do not be too minute in your inspection of the treatment you receive from others. Who cares whether Mordecai bows when you pass, or stands erect and stiff as a cedar?

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

Again: Learn the lesson that pride goeth before a fall. Was any man ever so far up as Haman, who tumbled so far down? Yes, on a smaller scale every day the world sees the same thing. Against their very advantages men trip into destruction. When God humbles proud men, it is usually at the moment of their greatest arrogance. If there be a man in your community greatly puffed up with worldly success, you have but to stand a little while and you will see him come down. You say, I wonder that God allows that man to go on riding

over others' heads and making great assumptions of power. There is no wonder about it. Haman has not yet got to the top. Pride is a commander, well plumed and caparisoned, but it leads forth a dark and frowning host. We have the best of authority for saying that "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." The arrows from the Almighty's quiver are apt to strike a man when on the wing.

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

You will yet be a lackey walking beside the very charger on which you expected to ride others down. When Charles the First, who had destroyed Strafford, was about to be beheaded, he said, "I basely ratified an unjust sentence, and the similar injustice I am now to undergo is a sensible retribution for the punishment I inflicted on an innocent man." Lord Jeffries, after incarcerating many innocent and good people in London Tower, was himself imprisoned in the same place, where the shades of those whom he had maltreated seemed to haunt him, so that he kept crying to his attendants: "Keep them off, gentlemen, for God's sake, keep them off!" The chickens had come home to roost. The body of Bradshaw, the English judge, who had been ruthless and cruel in his decisions, was taken from his splendid tomb in Westminster Abbey, and at Tyburn hung on a gallows from morning until night in the presence of jeering multitudes. Haman's gallows came a little late, but it came. Opportunities fly in a straight line, and just touch us as they pass from eternity to eternity, but the wrongs we do others fly in a circle, and however the circle may widen out, they are sure to come back to the point from which they started. There are guns that kick!

Furthermore, let the story of Haman teach us how quickly turns the wheel of fortune. One day, excepting the king, Haman was the mightiest man in Persia; but the next day, a lackey. So we go up, and so we come down. You seldom find any man twenty years in the same circumstances. Of those who, in political life twenty years ago, were the most prominent, how few remain in conspicuity. Political parties make certain men do their hard work, and then, after using them as hacks, turn them out on the commons to die. Every four years there is a complete revolution, and about five thousand men who ought certainly to be the next President are shamefully disappointed; while some, who this day are obscure and poverty-stricken, will ride upon the shoulders of the people, and take their turn at admiration and the spoils of office. Oh, how quickly the wheel turns! Ballot-boxes are the steps on which men come down as often as they go up. Of those who were long ago successful in the accumulation of property, how few have not met with reverses! While many of those who then were straitened in circumstances now hold the bonds and the bank-keys of the nation. Of all fickle things in the world, fortune is the most fickle. Every day she changes her mind, and woe to the man who puts any confidence in what she promises or proposes! She cheers when you go up, and she laughs when you come down. Oh, trust not a moment your heart's affections to this changeable world! Anchor your soul in God. From Christ's companionship gather your satisfaction. Then, come sorrow or gladness, success or defeat, riches or poverty, honor or disgrace, health or sickness, life or death, time or eternity, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Again: this Haman's history shows us that outward possessions and circumstances cannot make a man happy. While yet fully vested in authority and the chief adviser of the Persian monarch, and everything that equipage and pomp and splendor of residence could do were his, he is an object-lesson of wretchedness. There are to-day more aching sorrows under crowns of royalty than under the ragged caps of the houseless. Much of the world's affluence and gaiety is only misery in

colors. Many a woman seated in the seat at her apple-stand is happier than the great bankers. The mountains of woe and honor are covered with perpetual snow.

Were I called to sketch misery in its worst form, I would not go up to the alley of the poor, but up the highway over which prancing Bucephali strikers sparks with their hoofs and bestride stately and parks of stalking eagles. Wretchedness is more bitter when lowered from gemmed goblets than earthen pitcher or pewter mug. It is for this position and that circumstance thinking that worldly success will peace of the soul, let them shatter to dust. It is not what we get, it is what we are. Daniel among the lions is a fiercer than King Darius on his throne. And when life is closing, brilliant worldly surroundings will be no more. Death is blind, and sees no difference between a king and his clown, between a Nazarene and the Athenian, between a bookless hut and a national library. The frivolities of life cannot, with their laugh, echoing from heart to heart, tirely drown the voice of a tremulous conscience which says: "I am immortal. The stars shall die, but I am immortal. One wave of eternity shall drown the depths, but I am immortal. The heavens shall have a shroud of flame and the heavens flee at the glance of the Lord. I am immortal. From all the heights of my nature rings down the rings up, and rings out the word 'I am immortal.'" A good conscience, and assurance of life eternal through the Lord Christ are the only securities.

The soul's happiness is too large a craft to sail up the stream of life for pleasure. As ship-carpenters say, it is too much water. This earth is a bubble and it will burst. This life is a vapor and it will soon pass away. Time is only a ripple, and it breaketh again the throne of judgment. Our days! fly swifter than a shuttle, weaving a robe of triumph or a garment of woe. Begin your life with religion and the greatest trial you will be ready to die will be a triumph, and death will be only a King's servant calling you to a royal banquet.

In olden time the man who was to receive the honors of knighthood was required to spend the previous night in prayer, armed, and with shield and lance to stand up and down among the tombs of the dead. Through all the hours of that night a steady step was heard, and, when morning dawned, amid grand parade a sound of cornets the honors of the hood were bestowed. Thus it shall be with the good man's soul in the night before heaven. Fully armed with prayer and sword and helmet, he shall wait until the darkness fly and the morning break, and amid the sound of celestial harpings the soul shall take the honors of heaven amid the innumerable throngs of robes snowy white streaming over the crown of sapphire.

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