No. 161

Haman & Mordecai

9/29/1822 +6
Esther v. 13. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, as long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate."

The king of Persia had conferred upon him the highest honours, and it was in the power of royalty to confer. He had distinguished him from his fellow counsellors by peculiar marks of favour and confidence. He stood by the king's side, shared the honour of his counsels and secrets. His master smiled gravely on him; this was enough to draw around him all the expressions of veneration that ternom from others. These contemptible beings, who hover round a court, & watch the heir of kings..."
for the sign to admire or hate, all made their suit to Haman, did him reverence, because he stood in the sunshine of royal favour. But there was one man, who had independence, and self-respect enough not to yield him that homage. This pride demanded the folly of others as readily paid. This man was Mordecai, a Jew, living at that time with his scattered and despised brethren in Persia. This formlessness was crime not to be forgiven by the haughty minion of the king, who was not content with executing vengeance on the offender alone. He meditated a plan of wide and bloody revenge. He resolved upon exterminating the whole race of Jews throughout the dominions of Persia. For this purpose obtained the consent of the king to a decree, which gave up the Jews everywhere to be plundered and murdered. His scheme of quenching his thirst for blood was, however, at both disappointed. Yet before his disappointment dawned in the midst of his greatness, he was snatched because the inexorable Jew refused to do him reverence. As a mark of distinguished favour, he alone
was selected to be a guest at the king's court, at a sumptuous banquet. The historian tells us, 
"he went forth that day joyful with a glad heart; but before night his heart was heavy and his brow clouded; for when he saw that Mordecai stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of 
dignation. He went home and told his friends his family of the riches and glory which had been conferred 
upon him; of the rank to which he had been advanced, of the favours of the king; of the fear of 
story of his fellow courtiers. He told them too of the last mark of honour he had received in being 
single out to be invited to the queen's feast. What next did he tell them? What was the 
conclusion of this story of his dignity and advancement? Why truly this: 'just all this 
availed me nothing so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate.' Who would have 
expected this conclusion, honest, dutiful, humble?
try of greatness; cast them then as weak, so early
made enemies. He would trust to this pretty,
fringes. Yet Haman had one resource, for as it
was, that was deadly revenge. By the advice
of his friends he erected a gallows; trusting to his
influence with the king, he meant that Morde-
cai should hang there, the monument of his ren-
geance (the triumph of his power). But man
how soon God can pluck down the haughtiness of
abandoned ambition, or make pride fall by the
arrows she had prepared for an enemy. The historian
proceeds to relate that this lofty conqueror was so
compelled to hang on the very gallows he had
raised for the king; thus all his glory passed
like an exhalation of the evening.

This piece of history, my sir, is full of valuable instruc-
tion; let us now deduce from it some reflections for
our own improvement and edification.

1. It sits before us in a striking light the absolu-
tape temper of insatiable spirit of pride and ambition.
A slight difficulty is enough to set it on flame, the
from I now, a single word to make him unhappy. It was all in vain for Ramoun that he dwelt in the beams of royal favour; that riches, honours, power were heaped upon him; that wherever he went, the multitude bowed before him. Thousands sought his aid and waited for his smile. He stood on a pinnacle, where those gazed upon him with admiration and envy. This good fortune— all this was in vain, because a single poor, low, rebellious, petulant, in withholding his homage. Wherever he turned his eye, he could see but one head that did not bend down in reverence, but one face that did not look submissive and fear; but that one was enough to plant a thorn in his breast. To send him home sad, refining, wretched? Such is the manufacturing I would add too, such is the dependant spirit of ambitious pride. It is never satisfied; till every thing is bent to its sway of haughty prostrate at its feet. It thinks nothing gained, while ought remains; has a voracious appetite, that can be satisfied with nothing less than devouring whatever falls in its way. It swells, it rages at the least opposition, reminding us of
it in a state of gathering irritation. Imagination plants a thorn in the heart, if we suffer to remain there, it will become the fruitful source of pain or disease. Observe the man, who seems to be surrounded with every species of earthly bliss, who has a competency of the gifts of fortune, who in the midst of loving and beloved friends, of whom every one appears to be tinct with the brightest rays of hope, inquire of that man, if he will keep open his heart. I dare not venture to affirm, he will tell upon the subject he is very happy, were it not for one thing, there will be one circumstance to make a light: he will tell you of some worm that rots on the flower, of a serpent that has crept into his paradise. This disposition pervades every age of life. The youth would be happy, if he could but have the fancied importance and power of manhood. When he arrives at that middle age, a crowd of new wants start up, the gratification of one desire but makes room for another to hurry in, so that there is always one thing at last wanting to felicity: when at last he reaches old age, it is spent in idle tears and regrets for what can
not be remedied, it rests cravings for what can not be had. This it is through life; what we have is embittered or made tasteless, because there is something we have not; while we indulge the means of enjoyment, we too often think, if not say, with Haman, all this avails us nothing, unless we see something in the distance which we have not obtained.

Nor is this all, nor the worst of it. The single misfortune, so often taints or destroys our happiness, is in most cases wholly imaginary; the single want is an artificial want. It is bad enough to suffer a real evil to make us wretched; but when imagination is permitted to run riot in search of evil, we cannot admit for a moment any excuse for the folly. This was Haman's case. The miserable man had been oppressed with luxury and wealth, that he, poor fellow, would have it, to give the usual testimony of honour had peace to make him wretched. Of what importance was it to this great man, whether Mordecai stood up a more fit for him or not? Surely nothing but a fancy made sick of wanton by prosperity could have induced its happiness to this trifling circumstance. But
are we not all more or less guilty of this folly? We set our hearts passionately on many things, as having no value except in our own imagination; when these are absent or taken from us, there is an end of all peace of felicity. There is a sort of false light thrown upon objects by our fancy, as they vanish them a brief brilliancy, that wholly vanishes, when that light is withdrawn. It may be affirmed, that almost the suffering of life proceeds from a diseased state of the imagination; for it is worthy of remark, as an admirable trait in the character of man, that the natural and real evils of life may only be borne, but turned into sources of improvement, whereas fancied evils, these of our own making, are almost in every case intolerably painful, serve only to exasperate the passions, corrupt the heart. In adversity we suffer these hardships, what please G's providence to lay upon us: in prosperity we suffer those which are pleased to lay upon ourselves; and these latter are more onerous, as they are generally more poignant than the former. Hence it is, that where we are surrounded with signs of affluence, adulation, and flattery, the mind grows
dainty quickly, like a puny body that has been
feasted on delicacies I never traced by exposure to the
been winds of heaven. In this state disappointment,
ment, no matter how silly or trifling the object, pre-
moves to the quick, of like Haman, we suffer imagina-
tion to fashion spirits together some childish evil,
and when she returns with her foolish story, we suf-
fer ourselves to grow wretched over it.

It is scarcely necessary, my sir, to point out to you the
guilt of absurdity of this disposition. It is both impri-
ous of foolish. It is impious, because it is chargeable
with the most arrogant discontent under the measures
of God's government. What can be more presumptuous, the
its murmur of anger, because some single desire among
ungratified? It is as much as saying, that God must in
every instance do for us what we deem fit, or we have
nothing to thank him for, or no disposition to thank
him. We do not treat human benefactors so; we have
the measure of their bounty to their own choice, are
grateful for what they bestow, without insisting that
they should give some other thing, which we happen to
want. But if our Heav. Faith, withhold a single favor
or impose one trial, we immediately forget all
his mercies, dwelt into rebellion or sensual passion, as if we lived under the administration of an infinite tyrant. When Haman uttered the words, all this availed me nothing, for his heart was full of wickedness, no way of discontent, but of impiousity against God. My friends, we ought to view this subject in a solemn light. We ought to remember that this fruitful impatience, because all our childish desires are not satisfied, is something worse than an offence against our own peace and that of our families and friends; it is impatience to the God of mercies, it is impatience to the God of holiness. To mourn over imaginary evil is certainly an abominable insult to the Majesty of heaven; and even if the evil be real, or rather if it be really painful, does not God know a design was best good? did it fail to lift the hand of rebellion, then we are disciplined by mercy? "Take care, sit down, whatever you meet with in the way, that you forget not your path. When you are proud, rebuke yourself; by your triumphs, while you are poor; in sorrow, hear the voice of your Lamentation: say, had I loved them, I should have corrected them too; I gave them up to the ways of their own hearts; but to my children, if I gave sorrow, it is that I may lead them to a crown of glory that fadeth not away." And this hope...
other is not only impious; it is foolish. At the same time that it affronts God, it injures ourselves. What- 
so ever to be always wretched, as he whose diseases 
feels at every pore, who for me remain scarce 
tent to resign himself to refining & despondence. It 
is the part of prudence, with regard to this work, 
to foreclose as many of the avenues to uneasiness, as 
possible, by activity in duty & by submission to God. 
But the man, who like Haman, can say, that all 
with he has avails him nothing, so long as there 
is something else he wants, has spread as broad 
a surface as possible to the shafts of the enemies of 
his peace... When Haman was sore displeased at 
the neglect & contempt of the Jews, he little thought 
perhaps, that he was a much worse enemy to him 
self, than Mordecai could possibly be. How much 
do we pity the weakness of folly of children, when 
they cry? (2d), because they cannot have everything 
they want; now we are children in the great fami-
ly of God, it is surely equal folly in us to be dis- 
contented or restless, because every wish is not grati-
fied. (2d) The real stin, after all, is not only the good man; 
he is the only truly wise man.
2. Another lesson which we learn from this story is the bad effects of unrepentant rage. Haman became furious at the rights of Mordecai, and gave himself up to plans of vengeance. If you would know what was the consequence of this tempest of anger, read his history, and you will find that he resolved to put to death every Jew that could be found in the king's dominion for the fault of Mordecai. Thus it is, that anger is evil and indiscriminatingly ever leads to crime.

In his calmer moments, Haman himself, found reflecting on his deeds, would doubtless have cherished with this great offering of blood to satisfy revenge: but when reason was displaced by passion, he rushed to commit the strangest crime. Here, indeed, is an impressive warning.

No state of the mind is more fertile in crime than anger. Leave out of the account its dreadful effects on the character, and happiness of the individual. For nothing of its withering and blighting effect in the heart, you know that it is to the soul what the whirlwind is to nature, that it uproots, plucks out states, and darkens. But besides these effects, it
is the parent of many crimes, or who would otherwise never have been committed or planned. It is not merely the unsettling of reason, or the turmoil of the mind, that we are to deplore in the indulgence of anger: it is the consequences to which it leads; the destruction of moral sensibility, of moral judgment, or what is worse, the thirst for revenge, of the carelessness of those the means of revenge. He, they might or wrong. I know of nothing more likely to end in the total want of principle, than the frequent indulgence of anger. The angry man is tempted to sacrifice every thing, even this integrity, honesty, sincerity, in order to gratify his pride like passions. If thou wouldst not expose yourself to the total wreck of virtue, good feeling, forbear from anger. Revenge may be sweet for a moment, but soon 'tis back on itself recalled. Consider that when you indulge in feelings of resentment, however just you may imagine the cause to be, you are preparing yourself like Raman, for the commission of crimes, what any other times you would abhor: you are
thine yourself into that state of mind, where moral distinctions will be almost entirely lost, and you will afterwards think only with beholding remove.

3. One more lesson to be learned from our history is the justice of Providence in making pride anger, frustrate their own purposes. Haman went off to fight his vengeance, and prepared for such a death as might make his revenge most public and original. But when the king heard of the gallows fifty cubits high, on which he had built, he said, 'Hang him thereon.' Thus the king's wrath was appeased. From the giddy height of honour, while his breast was burning with plans of vengeance, he descended at once to an ignominious death, stands in history an awful monument of the infatuation of rage and the utterness of pride in its best estate. And it is the very nature of such a temper, as that of Haman, to work its own ruin. Blind, heedless, inflated, it rushes on without regard to consequences, without a thought that the day of retribution would come; the wing is
must come. What ever new perhaps some

ged of God as abroad with a commission to check
its arrogance & suppress its fury. It never calculates
in the possibility of a defeat; so therefore when de-
feat comes, it has a sting & a bitterness wh the
haughty only knows. We scarcely are aware, my
friend, of the risk we run, when we indulge our pas-
sions. We are almost inevitably looking only at
the nature of things. That pride, anger,
should rise triumphant; it is in the decree of
God's providence, cannot be evaded, that the path
in which they walk should be slippery & unsafe.
You may see this exemplified in the records
of the civil concerns of man. Look at the long list
of potentates, whose names blacken & disgrace the
history of humanity: you may see them, it is true,
going forth conquering & to conquer, - in the
same step they step on the heads of their fellow-men by leaps
into the jaws of death, A moment making the earth drunk
with their blood, - adding province to province, by
the blood of the world, - adding empire to empire,
with its fruits, with its nations.
spurning with the neglect of human welfare of man, you may look in this till the eye is weary of the mind prodigeous; but look a little longer, you will see these sons of evidence of pride brought down, you will see them pressing the steeps of fate, when an assault or secret treachery they stand in hand of frightful ruin. The providence of God may for a while put off its claims, but its chariot wheels though slow in coming will come, it must have its day of visitation. And in humble scenes, the same law of God's government operates; though not so strikingly. The pride of angry man inevitably prepares the way for his own ruin. He hardens himself a host of prejudices and resentments, insensible blindly in the midst of hatred, to be, not knowing how many hands there are prepared to the first occasion, to strike the blow that shall bring down his haughtiness or check his rage. And even if he meets no opposition, having abandoned reason, he does not, cannot act rashly to effect his own purposes, bad as they are. He is aidless without being cunning or sagacious; malicious...
without the skill to gratify his malice. Passion has hoodwinked him; he sees not the way in which he is going; he cannot apply means judiciously to accomplish ends, but must leave to the calmness and humility of virtue the privilege of being a successful and as happy as believed. Morally uplifted heart, like Haman's, has been brought down without warning or forethought; it is a part of the plan of infinite wisdom, that envious and extravagant passion should ruin itself.

Such are a few of the reflections suggested by the history of Haman. More instruction might be drawn from it; but the topics I have entered seem to be most obvious. This portion of sacred story, considered as a whole, leaves on the mind a most strong impression of the inefficacy of every thing but virtue or religion, to secure happiness. You see Haman writhed in the midst of affluence, stripped by the smile of envy, by the form of his master, dying at last, thrown into the presence of another. He might truly have
said, as another great man whose fate was cut
dissimilar, said, 'had I not served my king, I would not have
half the zeal I served my king, he would not have
left me naked to my enemies.' 'Thieves, have you en-
riched the favorites of fortune, the sons of renoun go.
reverently no; remember that while you are
are active strike in the discharge of your duty
to God and man, walk in the steps of your sires, be
your condition what it may, you are achieving for
yourself a possession worth more than renown, the
possessions of humble, faithful, patient virtue.

Sept. 1822.
At home, Sept. 29th 1822. forenoon. very rainy.
At Mr. Ripley's, March 29, 1823. afternoon.
At Mr. Gannett's, March 9, 1823. forenoon.
At Mr. Richardson's (Humahm) June 6th, 1824. forenoon.
At home, Aug. 15th, 1824. forenoon.
At Mr. Barret's (Boston) March 15th, 1825. afternoon.
At Duxbury, April 10th, 1825. afternoon.