

LAZY!

It cannot be possible that that big, burly, yawning boy on the back bench is yawning because he is lazy! What a shame it is! His slate is on the floor, and his book on the bench beside him, but they do him no good, because he is too lazy to use them. Strange, is it not, that nobody can gain knowledge in any other way than by learning each one for himself. The king cannot buy it, although he may purchase the companionship of those who are learned. But the boy in the picture is not one of that kind, and he never will be one unless he picks up his books and goes bravely to work. Laziness never made anybody prosper, but it has ruined millions. Are any readers of the MESSENGER lazy? We hope not, and if they are let them turn over a new leaf and try to do better.

THE STORY OF HEROD THE GREAT.

You would like to know something about Herod, you say, who was king when Jesus was born?

He was called Herod the Great, but why I cannot tell you, for, unlike our Saxon king Alfred, or Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, who both bore the surname, he did not excel in one really great quality, or one noble virtue.

When quite young his father made him governor of Galilee, which was then infested with robbers. These Herod soon put down, capturing their leader, Hezekiah, and bringing him to justice, which gained him the friendship of the governor of Syria, and the name of being courageous. But he was lacking in true courage, for however praiseworthy this action might be, he would have been a far braver and nobler man if he had fought half as well the daily and hourly battles of life, conquering his own bad temper and other evils, that stand out like great blots on his character. He was extremely selfish, very ambitious, and so passionate that, in moments of frenzy, he committed acts of cruelty and injustice which caused him to be disliked by the Jews, and which make us think of him with something like a shudder.

Herod was not himself a Jew, though he professed the Jewish faith, married Jewish women, and tried to gain the favor of the Jews. His father, Antipater, was an Idumean, or Edomite, and had been made governor of Judea by Julius Cæsar. Previous to Herod's time, the Jews, under the Maccabees, had subdued their old enemies the Edomites, and compelled them to be governed by Jewish prefects, to obey Jewish laws, and observe Jewish rites. And as the Edomites had settled in the south of Palestine, they almost formed a part of the Jewish nation.

So Herod was well acquainted with the customs of the Jews; and to please his subjects, he professed great zeal for the Law of Moses. But they soon found that he was not sincere, and never fully trusted him. On the death of his father, Herod was made governor of Judea, under the Romans, and soon honored with the title of king.

To please the Jews he offered to re-build, in a most splendid manner, the Temple at Jerusalem, some parts of which were falling into decay. For nine years he had 18,000 workmen constantly employed; and he spared no expense to make the Temple one of the most costly edifices that could possibly be.

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which the Jews did not like to see. For they could not forget how great and glorious a nation they had once been; and to be constantly reminded of their deep fall grieved and vexed them, and alienated them from the king who could so humble them before their enemies. Herod built a temple, and dedicated it to Augustus, too, which the Jews regarded as idolatry. So it was no wonder that the Jews neither liked nor trusted him; and his treatment of his Jewish wives still further widened the breach.

The story of Mariamne, the most beautiful of his ten wives, is a very sad one. She belonged to the Asmonean line, or family of the Maccabees, whose princes for a hundred and twenty-six



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the Temple, of which they were most proud, made great and glorious, and no doubt they would have been very grateful to Herod, if he had only acted consistently afterwards. But when, over the chief entrance to the Temple, he set up a golden eagle, which was the Roman ensign, and therefore an abomination to the Jews, their anger was roused, and they lost all confidence in him.

He should have been more considerate about the feeling of his subjects; but his ambition made him wish to please the Romans no less than the Jews. Not far from the Temple he built an amphitheatre, where he had games celebrated in honor of the Roman emperor, and he placed about it trophies of Roman victories,

years had governed the Jews. She was as virtuous as she was beautiful; and, after a selfish fashion of his own, Herod loved her. But he was cruel to her nearest and dearest relations. Poor Aristobulus, her noble and generous brother, was drowned by order of Herod, when only eighteen years of age, because as high priest, he had gained the affections of the Jews. And the aged Hyrcanus, Mariamne's grandfather, was executed on unfounded charges, though he once saved the life of Herod, when in his youthful days it was threatened by the Sanhedrin.

But I wish I could tell you that his rash cruelty ended even here. The virtuous and lovely queen was herself brought to the block.

The jealous mother and sister of Herod tried in every way to make the king angry with her, and they did not hesitate to bring false charges against her, and to bribe false witnesses. And Herod, instead of finding out whether their accusations were true, flew into a rage, and ordered her execution.

Then, all too late, the rash and unjust king came to himself, and so bitterly mourned his loss that he could not attend to state affairs. Into so deep a melancholy did he sink, that he often called for Mariamne, or gave orders for her to be brought to him; but she had gone "where the wicked cease from troubling," and so was spared further trouble and sorrow.

Though, to atone for his rashness, and to conciliate the Jews, Herod built a tower in Jerusalem called Mariamne, in honor of his wife, he became still more cruel and tyrannical to the surviving members of her family. Not long afterwards he ordered her mother Alexandria to be put to death. And when her two sons, Aristobulus and Alexander, grew up, and were married, and had little ones needing a father's care, Herod, as rashly and unjustly as in the case of Mariamne their mother, had them put in prison and strangled, though their greatest fault was that they were beloved by the Jews.

This caused the Jews to dislike him more than ever, and he became very melancholy again, especially as he had a most tedious and serious illness, and he suspected his subjects of wishing he might die.

They naturally did wish for his death; and one day a company of young men, hearing that Herod was dead, beat down the golden eagle over the Temple gate. But they soon discovered their mistake, for Herod had upwards of forty of them burned alive.

It was during this last illness that tidings were brought to Herod of the visit of the wise men to Jerusalem, and their strange question as to Him who was born King of the Jews, whose star they had seen in the East. And Herod, who had lost all control over his jealous temper, fearing that the Jews would make the newly-born child their king, ordered the slaughter of all the baby-boys in and around Bethlehem, thinking that Jesus would be killed with the rest.

After this Herod's sickness became more trying, and he bore it so impatiently that no one cared to go near him. And now he began to reap more fully the fruits of his evil passions. There was no gentle Mariamne to minister to his wants, no loving voice soothed his ruffled spirit, no fond children flocked around him to comfort him, and no bright promise rose like a star of hope to cheer his future path. All was darkness.