



LESSON VI.—NOVEMBER 5, 1905.

Esther Pleading for Her People.

Esther iv, 10-5, 3.

Golden Text.

The Lord preserveth all them that love him.
—Ps. cxiv, 20.

Home Readings.

Monday, October 30.—Est. iv, 1-9.
Tuesday, October 31.—Est. iv, 10-15; 3.
Wednesday, November 1.—Est. i, 10-22.
Thursday, November 2.—Est. ii, 5-7; 17-23.
Friday, November 3.—Est. iv, 6-17.
Saturday, November 4.—Est. v, 1-14.
Sunday, November 5.—Est. viii, 7-17.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

The Book of Esther is like a mountain stream. It is transparent and swift. It runs its course in ten short chapters. Yet the little book is a mirror of the human soul. It reflects all passions and emotions. It has been described as a truly wonderful and paradoxical history, and it is affirmed that the customs and arrangements of the Persian court are vividly and correctly depicted in it. Aside then from the question of inspiration, the book commends itself to those who seek the best literature.

The fate of a race of exiles trembles in the balance held in the hand of a capricious despot. How the irreversible decree shall be reversed is the problem. In the solution the destiny of the Hebrew nation is involved and with that also the Scripture, ritual, and hope of the Messiah. On the dark background of the plot the characters of the deliverers stand like white cameos in clear-cut outline and high relief.

Mordecai, by a sign ever significant among the Jews, arrests the queen's attention; and even through the watchful cordon of a Persian seraglio, conveys to his adopted daughter the fearful news and the urgent request for mediation. That Esther hesitates enhances the heroism of her ultimate course. Life is dear to her, as it always is to a young and thoroughly healthful nature. She does not covet or court martyrdom. Yet at length, having viewed the case from every standpoint and weighed the matter thoroughly she deliberately assumes the mediatorship, exclaiming, 'If I perish, I perish.' The courage, patriotism, piety in that act is unsurpassed.

Yet even then she used the utmost tact. She drew upon all the fertile resources of her womanly wit. With no lachrymose face, nor dishevelled hair, or piercing cries did she run into the king's presence; but, every inch a queen, with dignified and womanly carriage, with completest toilet, and all the witching charm of her peerless beauty, she stood unbidden and fully conscious of her peril. Her jewelled foot pressed her grave. A score of cimeters flashed in air, and the tessellated pavement might have taken one more hue, a crimson one; but again the fickle heart of Xerxes was in the Lord's hand. He held out the golden sceptre. Esther touched it, and was safe.

This peerless drama hastens to its denouement. The queen makes no request. Instead she gives an invitation. Xerxes and Haman are the guests. Then comes a second invitation. The changeable, violent, cruel tyrant is fairly tangled in the silken meshes of the net that love has spun. Between the first and second banquets comes that indescribable significant scene in which Mordecai is lifted from the dunghill and mounted like a prince, while Haman, pride's very incarnation, is made to

hold his bridle-rein. Changes of fortune are of God.

After the second banquet Haman goes to the gallows he had built for Mordecai, and the latter takes the vacant premiership. The decree of destruction can not be annulled, but it is made inoperative by a counter-decree, and the Jews have light and gladness and joy and honor.

To celebrate this glorious providential deliverance a new feast is instituted—Purim—gladdest of the whole Hebrew year.

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

The Book of Esther. Mirror of soul.
Reflects human emotions and passions.
A piece of good literature.
Esther: Her character.
Haman, prime minister; his character.
Mordecai refuses obeisance.
Haman's anger and plot.
Esther's mediation besought.
Hesitation; final heroic decision.
Tact, peril, success.
The denouement.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

Carlisle characteristically calls the Bible 'all men's book.' It may be called 'all women's book.' The noblest ideals of womanly character are irradiated and exemplified in the Scriptures. It has done more to elevate woman than any book. There is no abuse of woman it does not resist.

If the Bible is the temple of womanhood the Book of Esther is its holy of holies.

A king once asked a scholar what he thought the strongest evidence for the authenticity of the Bible. 'The Jews, your majesty,' was the laconic answer.

The feast of Purim is a strong collateral evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the Book of Esther. If, two thousand years from the next Fourth of July, the day should be celebrated with rockets and crackers and the reading of the Declaration of Independence, and it could be shown that the day had been so celebrated annually for that space of time, could the historic verity of the event or the integrity of that instrument called the Declaration be doubted? The evidence for the truth of the Book of Esther is not a whit less conclusive.

Esther undertook her delicate and hazardous task only after a season of devotion. She engaged in the penitential exercise of fasting. She secured the advantage of concert in this approach to God. The abstemious and praying company in the palace was matched by one in the city.

The name of Deity is not once mentioned in the Book of Esther. Yet no Scripture is a more perfect mirror of Providence.

Esther's greatest honor was not when she was crowned, but when she was called. As the queen of Xerxes she would have been forgotten. Her call to deliver her people made her immortal.

Timidity and indecision in times of peril increase danger. Resolution and courage reduced it to a minimum.

Mordecai's refusal to do obeisance to Haman can not be justified on account of racial prejudice, or even the recognition of the unworthiness of the man. On such ground his action would be reprehensible as bringing unnecessary ruin. His motive was religious. (iii, 4.) The posture required was such as a Jew could only take before Deity.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Nov. 5.—Am I keeping my Christian Endeavor covenant? Mal. ii, 5, 6; Ps. li, 6; II. Cor. viii, 21. (Consecration meeting.)

AM I KEEPING MY COVENANT?

The principal of the contract is common and familiar. It underlies domestic, civic, and commercial life. It inheres in the commonest daily acts. The bit of cardboard you call your ticket is really a contract. So is the telegram blank and the express company receipt. Organized society can scarcely be conceived of without forms of contract. There is a spiritual analogy to this. Lift the principle to the plane of religion, and you call it a covenant, but it is essentially the same thing. The

Deity and man can come to terms of agreement. Faith can be pledged each to the other. The Bible is largely a history of the Divine covenant, in which the condescension and steadfastness of God are illustrated. If one has entered into personal covenant relations with the Deity it is a most sacred thing, to be guarded with scrupulous care and all the conditions met with fidelity.

Junior C. E. Topic.

A WEAK STRONG MAN.

Monday, October 30.—His birth foretold. Judg. xiii, 2-23.

Tuesday, October 31.—God's Spirit with him. Judg. xiii, 24, 25.

Wednesday, November 1.—Samson and the lion. Judg. xiv, 5-9.

Thursday, November 2.—Samson's riddle. Judg. xiv, 10-19.

Friday, November 3.—Samson's strength. Judg. xv, 1-17.

Saturday, November 4.—Samson's weakness. Judg. xvi, 4-20.

Sunday, November 5.—Topic—A story of a strong man who was weak. Judg. xiii, 24; xvi, 16-20.

'Only.'

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me, Matthew xxv, 40.

Only a word for the Master,
Lovingly, quietly said;
Only a word!
Yet the Master heard;
And some fainting hearts were fed.

Only a look of remonstrance,
Sorrowful, gentle and deep;
Only a look!
Yet the strong man shook;
And he went alone to weep!

Only one cry from the sinner,
Bitterly earnest and wild;
'Help, Lord! I die!'
Rose in agony;
And the Saviour saved His child.

Only some act of devotion,
Willingly, joyfully done;
'Surely 'twas naught'
(So the proud world thought),
But yet souls for Christ were won!

Only an hour with the children,
Pleasantly, cheerfully given;
Still seed was sown
In that hour alone,
Which would bring forth fruit for heaven!

'Only'—but Jesus is looking
Constantly, tenderly down
To earth, and sees
Those who strive to please;
And their love He loves to crown.

—Waif.

Let the Bible go Through You

A friend remarked that a member of his church, with an air of pride, came to him, and said, 'I have been through the Bible five times this year.'

His pastor looked at him a little while, and then queried: 'How often has the Bible been through you?'

He reads and hears God's Word well who seeks to realize it in his life. More knowledge of God's Word will be gained by a single effort to live one of its commands than by a year of reading with no effort to keep the Word of God. Trusting a promise will enable one to know its sweetness far better than to commit it to memory.—The Ausburg Teacher.

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