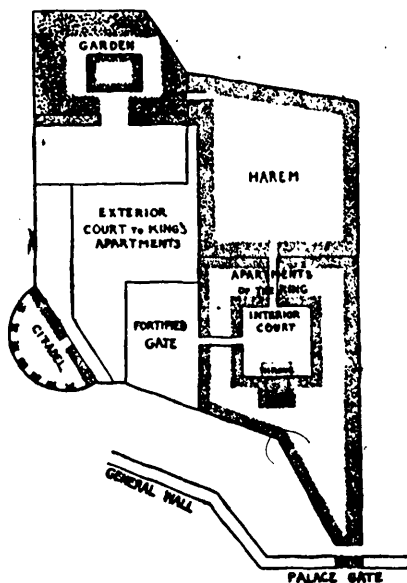


Reverse the letters devised by Haman. This was not possible according to the laws of the Medes and Persians (Dan. 6:15). But the king found a way of practically annulling the decree by issuing another. It has been urged against the credibility of the book of Esther that it is not probable the king would allow edicts to be issued that in one case planned the slaughter of a whole nation, and in the other virtually brought on a civil war. But the explanation is found in the character



PLAN OF XERXES' PALACE

Discovered at Susa, and excavated by M. Dieulafoy. The feast was held in the Gardens. Esther's home was in the Harem. Xerxes sat on the Throne in the Interior Court when Esther approached him. Mordecai's place was by the Palace Gate.—Peloubet.

of the king. "Born in the purple, the weak and irresponsible Xerxes was accustomed to act like a spoilt child who never realizes the results of its wishes and commands." (Sayce.)

V. 6. *How can I endure to see the evil?* It does not appear that the king, although Esther had been queen for about four years, knew that she was a Jewess. Perhaps she was afraid to make known the fact that she belonged to a captive race. But this incident gave her an opportunity of doing so

with perfect security; and she pleads for her kindred. (See chs. 1:20; 7:3, 4.)

II. The King's Consent, 7, 8, etc.

V. 7. *To Mordecai the Jew.* Mordecai had been made prime minister in Haman's place (8:2) and it is in his official capacity that the king now addresses him. *The house of Haman.* His property had been confiscated and given to the queen (8:1). *Hanged upon the gallows.* The mode of execution was not by hanging as we understand it. The word translated gallows means simply wood, a tree or pole. It was a sharpened pole 75 ft. high (5:15) on which the victim was impaled. The height of the pole seems excessive; there may have come some error in copying which has increased the number.

V. 8. *Write ye also . . . as it liketh you.* Since the decree could not be rescinded, permission was granted Mordecai and the queen to issue another edict, sealed with the king's seal, allowing the Jews in every province to defend themselves by force. (v. 11.) Royal posts throughout the whole of the empire had been established by Cyrus the Great. At every station the postman carrying the mails found a second ready to start on with a mule or camel (v. 11) on which, after receiving the mail bag, he sprang like the wind, to hand his charge to a third postman at the next station. These couriers were called Angoroi, and were believed to be the swiftest riders in the world. By this means copies of the decree, prepared by the government clerks, were sent through all the provinces (8:9, 10). *Sealed it with the king's seal.* The seal was set in the ring and gave royal sanction to any document to which it was affixed.

III. The Great Deliverance, 15-17.

V. 15. *And Mordecai went out . . . in royal apparel.* He was no longer the petty official at the king's gate (2:21). He held the position of grand vizier, or prime minister, which had been formerly occupied by Haman (8:2). He was dressed in the royal robe of state, which was rich and costly. "The royal dress of Xerxes was reckoned by the Greeks as worth 12,000 talents (millions of dollars)" (Gieble); and Mordecai as the representative