

Sunday School Lesson---Young Peoples Topic

Edited by Wm. T. Ellis

A WOMANLY QUEEN; A QUEENLY WOMAN.
The International Sunday School Lesson for November 5, "Esther pleading for her People." Esther 4; 1-5:3.

By WILLIAM T. ELLIS.

This is the "woman lesson" of the year, the story of beautiful Estera, whose patriotism saved a people. The Book of Esther is of interest in this day of unrest concerning the status of woman. The absurd masculinity of the royal decree sent out after Vashti's rebellion, that all wives might be taught to obey their husbands, will not escape the shafts of feminine wit, as this lesson is studied by millions of persons.

In truth, the whole story reeks of ancient and oriental masquerade. In its light we perceive how far the lot of woman has improved. While there is nobleness to be honored and emulated, the nobleness of both the deposed Persian Queen Vashti, and of her successor the lovely Jewish Queen Estera, neither woman may be taken for an example today. A moment's thought concerning Estera's real state and standing in the harem of Xeres will show how utterly odious it would be for a modern Christian woman. Teachers should bewareful how they advise young people to be Esteras.

The Woman Question.

The incident in ancient history is a fair starting place for a frank discussion of the fundamental issues of what we term "the woman question." Shrewd students will not overlook the fact that today woman's place has become a question; it was unquestioned a generation ago. Whether woman is to be, as was Estera's lot, the mere toy of man's caprice, the suppliant attendant, the benighted beguiler, holding admiration by every art of dress, and mitigation by every art of flattery, or whether she is to be adorned, comraded and counseled of man, and his accepted spiritual mentor and inspiration, are fair and timely themes for consideration in this connection. In this Estera story there is revealed a luminous strain of persistence, a womanly will, however, strength. Her womanly will, however, strength. Her womanly will, however, strength. Her womanly will, however, strength.

Persia, Then and Now.

Every tale must be read in the light of its time. We must take down our ancient Greek histories as communications upon this subject. Xerxes, or Ashuerus, was a ruler of the world. He was contemplating the invasion of Greece, a vain attempt that has made Marathon and Thermopylae familiar words. His word was law to uncounted millions. Persia was then the greatest power on earth.

Today it is one of the meanest.

"Cahoon" may be written over it. The glory is even departing from the Persian rug industry, owing to the use of aniline dyes.

Perhaps I have a grudge against Persia.

for, after the snow in the upper passes had blocked a visit to Teheran in the early part of this year (not to mention the question of the time involved) I was not even permitted to visit the ruins at Susa, which is the Shushan of this story, and Persepolis, where the ancient Persian kings had their capital. The bandits are in such complete control of this part of Persia that the consuls will not permit foreigners to risk their lives by entering it. It was at Susa that the French archaeologist, De Morgan, made several sensational finds, including the famous code of Mammudabal, a collection of laws of the time of Abraham. This inscribed stone was almost as great a blow to the high forehead of the critics as David's people was to Goliath; for in their sapiently they had been assuring the world that in the time of Moses society was not sufficiently organized to have such a complete set of laws as the Ten Commandments and the Levitical code. Now the critics who are casting doubt on the story of Estera may be confounded by the discovery of a copy of Ashuerus' decree, or of Mordecia's seal. This is the very sort of thing the archaeologists are digging up, and I myself have samples which I got in Babylonia.

When the Bagdad Railway gets to

running many of us may take the short trip across the Persian Gulf and see the ruins at Susa of the palace where this drama of Estera was enacted. Then we shall better realize the autocratic authority, and the opulent magnificence of the court in which the beautiful young Jewess found herself a potent figure. Reading history of the spot, and amid persisting oriental conditions, we may appreciate afresh the absolute power of an oriental despot. Susa is a long way from London or Washington, or other capitals of a constitutional form of government.

Palace Intrigues.

One of the best commentaries upon the Book of Estera is a good picture of life in an oriental palace, as the recent work by Bland and Backhouse, "China Under the Empress Dowager." One must understand the constant atmosphere of intrigue and sycophancy amid which an oriental monarch lives in order to comprehend the sudden rise of Haman, and his more sudden fall, with Mordecia's elevation. The best key to the present news from China is some knowledge of the palace intrigues in Peking.

"Face" is more than life in the East. Haman, the chief favorite of the king, lost "face" when Mordecia, the Jew at the gate, would not bow to him. Therefore he plotted a truly oriental vengeance, not only upon Mordecia, but upon his family and race as well. All of this is clear and comprehensible and natural to any reader "East of Suez." The most occidental phase of the story is the sturdy old Jew's independence, and his confidence that his people would somehow be saved from vengeance, even though his enemy did possess the king's signet ring. Let us tarry a moment to cheer for Mordecia, the loyal. He stood by the king, he stood by the little girl dependent upon him, he stood by his people, he stood by his self-respect, he stood by Jehovah. He was true to his home with that chivalrous loyalty which is in a peculiar measure a tradition of the South. The Jews have also had it always. To this day the sense of racial unity binds the poor Jews in Persia and Palestine with wealthy Jewish Bankers in New York and Paris and London. Loyalty is often a greater virtue than love; indeed, it is an essential part of true love; for, as Shakespeare says, "Love is not love which altereth when it alternation finds."

A Woman's Mission.

The mad hate of Haman imperilled the lives of all Jews. Closer than he to the king stood the beautiful favorite, Estera, whom Assauerus did not know to be a Jewess. We may not think of Estera in terms of a modern wife in a Christian land. She was but one of many wives of a fickle and dissolute monarch, albeit the favorite member of his harem. The intimacy and confidence of the western husband and wife undreamed of Estera at first feared to approach the king in behalf of her people; she took her life in her hands if she approached the king without being sent for. A similar story is told in connection with Abdul Hamid, of Turkey.

The highest use of life is not merely to live. Sometimes life has been best employed when it has been thrown away. That is the hero message from history, with the cross as the chief example. Cried Estera, "If I perish I perish"—as a woman, a Jewess and a Queen; which is far better than to live as a fearful and remorseful slave. When her meager side is touched woman can be small and spiteful and frivolous; but when her nobler nature is appealed to she reveals a capacity for heroism superior to man's. This best aspect of woman is the truer to her real nature. To cite instances of the noble courage and fearless sacrifice of womanhood, in illustration of the Estera story, would be merely stressing the obvious. The young queen could dare her king's wrath and risk her own life, for the sake of a great loyalty and a great ideal. We think none the less of her that she employed her womanly wiles to accomplish her purpose.

Vain has been this study of one of the Old Testament hero tales if it has not fired hearts with the purpose to do some service for race and religion. One should seek to serve the time and the world, "his day and generation" as the old phrase has it, in larger, deeper ways. The Briton should do

something distinctively for the Empire; the American for his country; and both for world brotherhood. Write a poem or a book, a song or a sermon, do a self-forgetting deed, labor for some great ideal; belong effectively to some national or world-movement; give and pray for the biggest cause you know; in some way it is possible for the least of us to follow Estera's example in serving her own people.

"Hanged High as Haman." Boastful Haman—still true to the oriental type—recited to his family and his parasites the honors that had come upon him. He basked in their adulation and flattery. And in their hearing he made boasts of vengeance upon his enemy, Mordecia. Sure of his status at court, he built a high gallows for the Jew, so that his honor might be avenged.

There is no better caution than "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Also there is a proverb about falling into the pit one has dugged for another. The essential difference between Haman and Mordecia was that one was a small and corrupt man, though high, and the other was a great and honorable man, though obscure. John Randolph Stidman has a pertinent poem:

"After all, and after all,
Since ever the world began,
Just two have lived, and two have died,
In lowly mien, in lordly pride,
The rogue and the honest man.

"After all, and after all,
The classes are but two;
And both are rich and both are poor,
And both still know, as they knew before,
The things that they ought to do.

"After all, and after all,
Escape it we never can;
Only the choice of one have we,
And you must be and I must be
A rogue or an honest man."

At one and the same time Haman sought his own elevation and his enemy's downfall. He really secured the reverse. Mordecia was made first before the king, and Haman was hanged on his own gallows. It is such instances of poetic justice as this—and they are not infrequent—that remind us that

"Still, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above his own."

SWEETENING A SON OF THUNDER
Tears Comments Upon the Uniform Prayer Meeting Topic. The Young

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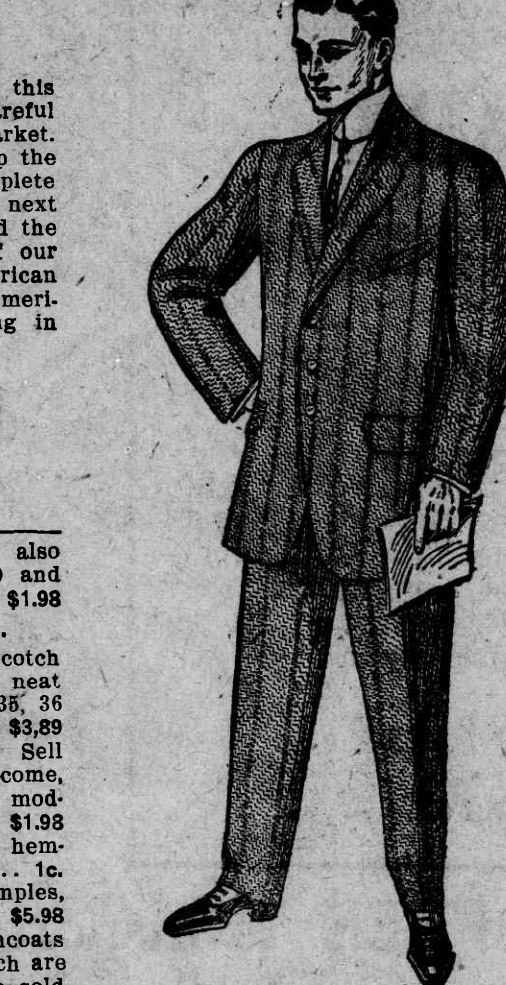
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Boy's and Children's novelty Overcoats that we bought to sell at \$5.00 will be closed out at \$2.98

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Trousers—Men's dark mixed, also stylish striped, retail at \$3.00 and \$3.50, at \$1.98
\$15.00 MEN'S SUITS, \$3.89.
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New Fall Derby Hats, \$1.98. Sell for \$3.00 everywhere. First come, first served. Latest 1911-1912 models. Choice \$1.98
Men's white Handkerchiefs, hem-stitched, at 1c.
Men's Suits, agents' samples, worth \$16.50, stylish cut \$5.98
Boy's and young men's Raincoats of very desirable patterns, which are slightly "stock damaged." We sold them at \$6.50, this sale will close out the lot, each at \$2.89
Trousers in pure all wool worsteds, finely tailored, choice patterns, to close at \$2.98
Close at \$2.98
Half and one-third real value, 19c., 16c. and 9c.
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Children's Shoes, hard sole shoes. Come in brown, patent leather and vici, worth \$1.00 29c.
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Sizes 5 to 11 only. To close the One lot of Ladies' Krippendorf & Dittmar Shoes, patent, vici and gun metal, worth \$2.00 to \$2.50; bunched to close at \$1.59
Men's Shoes, tans, black, patent leather, gun metal, vici, worth \$3.50, at \$2.49
A large lot of Men's Shoes for Winter wear, worth \$1.75 and \$2.00; the entire lot bunched at \$1.24
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ALL DRUGGISTS

God. There is proved truth in the line of the hymn:

"To do the will of Jesus—that is best."

A great example and a great inspiration are character-shaping forces. Josh had both in his new leader, Jesus.

Once Jesus told his band that only to those nearest to him was it given to know the secrets of his mind. Nearness promotes understanding. The closest friends of Christ know him best. John was the favorite disciple, and he it is who gives us the deepest, most intimate vision of the heart of the Master.

Everybody has something of the chameleon in him. We take our color from our environment. Association with refined persons promotes refinement. To keep close company with vulgar persons tends to vulgarize. Life in a musical atmosphere promotes a knowledge of music. And to walk with Jesus Christ, as John walked with him, is to become Christlike, even as John became Christlike.

There is a beautiful poem by Frances Eastwood, called "St. John the Aged," which pictures amid his friends at Ephesus the apostle who began youngest to follow Jesus, and who lived longest. There is room for only three fragments from it:

"I'm growing very old. This weary head
That hath so often leaned on Jesus' breast,
In days long past that seem almost a dream,
Is bent and hoary with its weight of years.
These limbs that followed him, my Master, oft
From Galilee to Judah; yea, that stood
Beneath the cross and trembled with his groans,
No longer bear me even through the streets
To preach unto my children. E'en my lips
Refuse to form the words my heart sends forth.
My ears are dull; they scarcely hear the sobs
Of my dear children gathered 'round my couch;
My eyes so dim, they can not see their tears.
God lays his hand upon me—yes, his hand
And not his rod—the gentle hand that I
Felt, those three years, so often pressed
In mine, ed in mine,
(Continued on Page Thirteen.)

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