Emily M. Bloch.

HAMAN AND MORDECAI,

A PURIM PLAY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

—BY—

CLIFTON HARBY. Levy

THE JEWISH BOOK CONCERN,

CINCINNATI, O., 1886.

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Published and Sold by
THE BLOCH PUBLISHING AND PRINTING CO.
CINCINNATI, O.

Jewish Book Concern
E1386

PERSONS IN THE DRAMA

AHASUERUS, *King of Persia.*
HAMAN, *Grand Vizier of the King.*
MORDECAI, *a Jew, cousin to Esther.*
A SCRIBE OF THE KING.
FIRST EUNUCH.
SECOND EUNUCH.
VASHTI, *Queen of Persia, afterwards maid to Esther.*
ESTHER, *cousin to Mordecai, afterwards Queen of Persia.*
Executioner, Attendants, Pages, Maids and Eunuchs.

SCENES.

In Shushan, the Persian Capital.

1. The Audience Room of the King.
2. The Apartments of the Queen.

COSTUMES.

For King Ahasuerus, royal robes, as rich as possible, and crown and sceptre.

For Queen Esther, royal robes and crown.

For Vashti, flowing robes of varied colors.

For Scribe, tights and cloak of purple.

For Eunuchs, Turkish trousers and loose jackets.

For Executioner, entire suit of black.

Other attendants, pages, etc., in as pretty and varied oriental costumes as possible.

-21762-

HAMAN AND MORDECAI.

ACT I. Scene 1.

Audience Room of the Palace. A feast spread and King Ahasuerus, Haman and guests discovered.

Ahasuerus.—I have feasted long my inner man,
Long have we sat the festive board beside;
Then offer up your thanks to Epicurus,
Who long ago did grant to men immunity from Godly interference.
We'll drink to him who gave us freedom to eat and drink
As would best please the wishes of the passing hour.
He taught us "To enjoy is highest virtue,"
And to-day we praise the wisdom of his words;
But it seems to me these viands do pall upon my palate,
This wine doth taste as it were youngest must,
Enough, enough, give o'er this wearying bout.
There is a pleasure I have long enjoyed,
And I, the same, would to your own vision grant;
My lovely queen, whose eyes like to the twin stars
Do shine upon her royal mate,
And shall upon our loyal people.
The beams of that fair moon upon your faces all shall shine.
What, Haman, seek Queen Vashti now,
And bring her to our presence straight.
Haste thee, for I would not here detain
My subjects tried and trusty in their faith. [*Exit Haman.*
Now ye that are blind, prepare to see,
That on earth's fairest daughter your eyes may light.
Ye that are deaf, prepare to hear,

That sounds as of a thousand angels' harps
May flow upon your ears when she doth ope her lips.
Ye that are dumb, prepare to speak,
That ye may see her turn her full, fair face on you
As she doth to your words bend an attentive ear.
[*Enter Haman.*

Why, how now Haman? Why waits our queen without,
Will her sweet fear of my majestic power awe her
So that she dare not come within our presence? (*Rising.*)
Wherefore art silent? has aught befallen her?
Speak, man, or I do tear thee limb from limb
And glut the dogs that run about our court.

Haman.—My gracious liege, lord of the world,
I prithee vent not thy vengeance dire on me.
Hear only what I have to say, then work thine own desire.
Thy message, fairly, meekly did I present our Queen,
Who when she heard thy just command,
Did forthwith tear her hair, and did bemoan herself,
That she was now despised of her lord,
Who would disgrace her 'fore her people dear,
And ending her wails did vow that never
Would she before any one save her lord appear
Unveiled to the public view as not becomes a woman and a queen.

Ahasuerus.—What, will she dare defy the orders of her king and mate?
Shall a wife forget her duty to her husband, a subject to her king?
Such precedent within our realm we will not now set up.
Cause then to be proclaimed throughout our kingdom wide,
Vashti no more is queen, she has rebelled and is expelled the court.
Let every woman know that what her mate does say is law,

And what a king his subject orders, must be done.
Away, to your houses and your homes, the feast is o'er—
But stay, our palace must not be without a queen;
Proclaim throughout the land that all the maidens fair,
Of beauty, rare and pliant to their master's will,
Shall here assemble, that I may choose therefrom
One worthy to wear the crown which Vashti has put off.
[*Exeunt all except Ahasuerus, Haman and Eunuchs.*
My heart o'erflows with grief that I must send the queen of hearts
Forth from mine house and take unto myself another,
But such is the unhappiness which broods o'er crowned heads.
My people would rebel did I but pass this over,
So be it, I yield to what can not be overcome
And I will choose one worthy to take her place. [*Exit Ahas.*

Haman.—How, Fate, art thou kind unto thy child!
My star shines bright in heaven's highest height.
I see before me visions of what shall be;
The death of King Ahasuerus would make me first
In this broad Persian realm.
Come now, all my deepest thoughts,
Ye sprites of counsel rise within my brain,
How shall I compass all my heart would have,
How shall the black-robed messenger come to Persia's king?
(*Sees Eunuchs.*)

Fortune supplies my instruments in these.
(*To Eunuchs.*) Come nigh, approach—would ye have rich rewards,
Rule over those who rule over you;
Have in your hands power o'er all your enemies,
To avenge your wrongs and bring low your ancient foes?
Then hearken to me; let secrecy hold guard upon your lips,
Do but obey me and ye shall be great in riches and in power.
The king will on the morrow choose for him a bride;

Your chance will come after the honeymoon is past,
When he shall have sucked the honey from her lips,
And Luna reigns queen within his brain.
He'll think of Vashti who has gone away,
Perturbing thoughts will from his eyes chase sleep,
And walking in the court you'll seize him,
A dagger's stroke and all is over.
Your fortune's made and I'm the king,
Who wi l do all you may desire.
So seal your lips as though, if you did open them,
Poison would flow within and freeze the blood your veins do hold.
Here's earnest of mine honesty toward you, (*gives coin*)
And do but serve yourselves in serving me.

Both Eunuchs.—My lord's behests are to his servants laws,
And to his will our heart's best blood is dedicated. [*Exit.*

CURTAIN.

ACT II. Scene 1.

The Apartments of the Queen. Vashti alone.

Vashti.—Such is the state of woman in this accursed land,
We have no souls and are but slaves of our mates.
O, that the same feelings might be within the breasts of men
Who first do gaze upon the rising sun,
As lies within the beings of the Occidental clime.
There is truly the paradise of women, where their souls can speak
Divinest words of sympathy and love to those with whom they dwell,
While we, bound within our harems, dare not even think,
And languish in chains, less irksome scarce than those of iron.

But even in the face of this royal proclamation,
I can not, nay, will not leave the lord who rules my soul,
Who in his heart encases mine, as his hand does clutch the sceptre.
I'll offer service to the queen chosen for me, and if she but love him,
I will love her as I value life, and her will I preserve
From all those harms which crowd upon the high in rank.
Here comes this Esther, selected for the queenly place,
And right royally she bears her new and blushing honor.
[*Enter Esther.*

Queen of this land, full flowering blossom to this court transplanted,
A suppliant seeks you in this triumphal hour and begs a boon.

Queen Esther.—Speak to your sister-woman as a sister, not a queen,
This honor is not sought, 'tis thrust upon my youthful head.
With trembling and with fear I tread this court as queen,
And pray that fortune smile upon my new born dignity.
Address me freely, and I will grant whatever you would ask.

Vashti.—I would, my queen, serve thee in this, thy palace,
And watching supply each wish ere you yourself had formed it.

Esther.—Rise, embrace now her whose heart is already thine,
Thou shalt be first of my maids and nearest to me ever,
And thou, too, shalt teach me the ways of kings and queens,
Since thou art well acquaint with court and palace.

Vashti.—I thank thee from my inmost soul for those kind words,
And if I serve thee not as queen should service have,
May all our gods send down about my head
The heavens and their hosts of shining stars. [*Exit.*

Scene 2.

The King's Audience Room. Mordecai discovered.

Mordecai.—At last my cousin is wife to Persia's ruler,
And I, although unknown, am cousin to the king.
Esther's beauty, excelling all the daughters of the East,
Shall save her people in time of terror and destruction.
But who comes here? I'll step aside 'til they pass by.
[*Enter Eunuchs.*

First Eunuch.—To-morrow's sun will be the last that on our master lights,
For ere the third sun rise, his soul will be sped forth to meet his gods.
He passes along this gallery as he leaves his new-crowned queen,
You from behind that pillar, I from this will creep upon him,
And this (*touching his dagger*) shall silence his shriek before it meet the open air.

Second Eunuch.—Let the full moon as it shines through yonder window
Shine upon us here together, and when we part
Ahasuerus will be dead and our fortunes made.
Till then, adieu.

First Eunuch.—Let caution be the lamp before our feet,
And silence guide us to our long-sought goal. Farewell.
[*Exit.*

Mordecai.—Oh, happy moment, that found me in this place to hear the plot
Gainst our good king, the husband of my cousin,
And happier fortune that I am in time to warn the king thro' her.
There goes her maid, to whom I'll now tell all,
That she may carry to her royal mistress this important news.

Stop—I would speak with thee.
Go tell the queen those eunuchs who but now retired
Had planned to slay the King to-morrow night.
Let her, in my name, warn him this night,
And have these plotters seized and within the hour executed.

Vashti.—What do I hear? The life of him I love in danger?
O, leaden limbs, change now to wings, and let me soar aloft
To bear this news, before your breath is scattered in the air.
[*Exit.*

Haman (*entering*).—Bow down, stiff-necked Jew, bow to the very dust,
For there is now before thee the Grand Vizier of Persia's provinces.
Will that proud head not bend before my presence?
Then look to find me revenged ere many months are passed.
Vengeance shall season every dream that comes to me upon my couch.
Vengeance shall be a walking spectre while I wake.
Vengeance shall be my meat and drink till I do glut it with thee
And all of thine accursed race within our realm. [*Exit.*

Mordecai.—So he would vengeance have on me and on all Israel;
Little thinks he that to a Jewess he bows down each day,
But thro' her we'll thwart whatever plans may in his fertile brain grow up.
And trusting in Judah's God, his schemes shall be in vain.
[*Exit.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III. Scene 1.

The King's Audience Room. Haman alone.

Haman.—Another cause for vengeance is now against the Jew;
Through him Ahasuerus still breathes the living air.
My instruments have suffered death for *their* ambition.
Such did they deserve, for *their* ambition was but vile.
Mine is worthy of a better fate; I seek no wealth,
Only that I may press the throne of Persia.
As they would have helped me to my ends, I mourn them;
As foolish in their plottings, say I they are well sped.
But now for repayment of my debt of hate to Mordecai.
What can my mind devise to deal him double evil for evil?
He loves his race more than himself, and there's the butt for my revenge.
The minister of the King shall mold his decrees of wax
As I would have them 'gainst this stiff-necked race.
Their name will be no cause of scruples to the King.
I'll tell him their faults without their name, and gain an edict 'gainst their lives.
I'll cast my lots to seek the day, and then for vengeance.
[*Enter Ahasuerus.*
O, King of this broad kingdom, descendant of the mighty gods,
May they preserve thee as they have this day,
And turn th' assassin's knife against themselves,
As they have done this day for our happiness.
The cause of many of your evils, it doubts me not of this,
Is one little people, whose laws do from all others differ,
Who bow to no gods whom we with reverence worship,
And obey the edicts of their royal master at no time.
Let there be celebrated this thy deliverance by a decree 'gainst them,
That on a certain day they may be slain, both old and young,
And man and woman, of a race so hateful.

Ahasuerus.—My dearest officer and most faithful subject,
We know full well that our best interests
Would by thy devoted mind conserved be;
And so we grant thee thy request, and all details
Unto thy care and deep contrivings are for arrangement left.
Cast then lots, Purim, and find what day the fates allot,
And date thy edict so and fully seal it with my signet,
Which into thy faithful hand I now confide. (*Gives ring.*)

Haman.—I thank thee, liege, for thine unbounded trust,
And worse than worst of beasts would I then be
Did I thy royal confidence abuse, thus given by thee to me.
May Time stop in his course when to thy form he comes,
And dull his scythe upon my neck ere it reach thee.

Scene 2.

The Queen's Apartment. Vashti and Esther discovered.

Vashti.—My Queen and friend, woe unto thee and thine is come.
Mordecai has bid me tell thee that Haman's intent 'gainst your people
Is shaped to use the King to gain his end.
This day an edict is sent forth through all the provinces,
That on the thirteenth day of month Adar shall Deaths' dark angel
Brood low and black o'er Israel's host in this wide realm.
Thy cousin bid me tell thee thou shalt not escape the general fate,
And thou must risk all to save thy people and thyself.

Esther.—I need no word from cousin, or man or woman.
I feel my duty rise within my heart and bid me on.
Proclaim among my maids a solemn fast, three suns in length,
And after that I'll risk the king's displeasure and my life.
Where duty leads I'll follow, though life were sacrificed.

Some days have passed since I have seen him come within
these doors.
I fear me some dipleasure keeps him hence,
And Haman works all against my people and 'gainst me.
My trust in Israel's God, who watches over all, I'll put,
And save my people though my life be lost.

Scene 3.

The King's chamber. Ahasuerus, scribes and attendants present.

Ahasuerus.—O, I am weary for my queen of queens.
Would Vashti had obeyed my voice and here remained.
I love this Esther; truly and well doth she become her station.
But there is not yet healed up the wound
Made when Vashti, the queen of my youth, was torn from me,
Not by force, but by mine own commands,
Which makes me torturer to mine own soul.
I would awhile my thoughts avert from her,
So bring me here the annals of our reign.

Scribe.—Here is a portion concerning most nearly your
royal welfare,
Dated so lately that the ink is but just now dried.
"On this day, a murderous plot 'gainst King Ahasuerus was
discovered,
And most fully was it disclosed by Mordecai, the Jew.
Two eunuchs had contrived a plan (but one night from ful-
fillment)
By which the King should be deprived of breath and life,
And being overheard by this same Mordecai, the Jew,
Captured were ere they could carry out their fell design.
Even as death seemed ready to snatch their souls,
They seemed that they would somewhat have disclosed,
But death too speedily did still their palsied tongues.
The reason of their plan is therefore unto our minds un-
known,
And only Time the secret motive may to us unfold."

Ahasuerus.—I now recall unto my wearied mind the
strange occurrence,
But in vain seek I to remember that I have done aught
In recompense to Mordecai, my savior.

Scribe.—Indeed my lord speaks truly to the purpose,
For naught has this man from thy hand received.
[*Enter Haman.*

Ah, worthy counsellor and pillar of our state,
I would thine counsel have upon a case of present need.
There is within our city one whom I do seek to honor,
But my wishes exceed the powers of my mind
To form honors sufficient to express my will.
Always, unto this day has thine advice been good,
And now I pray thee once more aid me.

Haman (*aside*).—Whom can the King more worthy think
of honor than myself?
How are my fondest hopes unto fruition reaching,
The greatest yet remains, which too will follow.

Ahasuerus (*aside*).—This man puffed up with pomp and
pride of glory
Would think himself the man whereof I speak,
And for this same presumption shall he smart.
(*Aloud.*) What, thy wit is ever ready, come, a plan!

Haman.—Master of all thy people, ruler of rulers,
Exalted King of this broad, great, domain!
Favored indeed of Heaven is he whom thou wouldst honor.
And HONORED *am* I that me shouldst thou ask in the matter.
Let him of whom you speak, whoever he be,
Clothed in thy royal robes of purple shining,
Sit on thy charger, by his office sanctified,

And as he rides along the streets of this gay capital,
Let walk before him the noblest of thy lords,
And in a voice both loud and clear proclaim,
"This is the man whom the King wishes to honor."

Ahasuerus.—Well hast thou spoken as thy wont, then this
I tell thee do:
Take Mordecai, the Jew, who sitteth at my palace gate,
And follow out each nice particular of this, thy plan.

Haman.—I bow before my master's royal will,
And if in any single point I fail, may all the gods descend
And tear me part from part to satisfy the bloody appetite
Of all mine enemies upon this world below.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV. Scene 1.

Queen's Apartment in the Palace. Enter Mordecai and Vashti, afterwards Esther.

Mordecai.—Go, bid Queen Esther hasten her tardy plans,
For now not many days remain before that day
Of which I dread with terror the approach.
Bid her risk all to save her people and herself,
And dare, sith the King comes not to her,
To approach him seated on his throne.
Even at the peril of that life which would soon be sacrificed,
Unless she nerve herself to fight the battle for Israel.
[*Exit.*

Vashti.—In deadly peril now my queen is placed,
And but one more resort is to her, unhappy, left.
Had only my King not yielded to that base desire,
To shame me in the public gaze,
I would this Haman's scheme to naught have turned,
[*Enter Queen.*

Ah, at the very fittest moment, you approach;
Your cousin's voice now warns us that Time has spread his
wings,
And even now is speeding from our tardy grasp.
Thy maidens, at thy will, have fasted for three days,
And no more propitious moment could tell thee, seek the
King;
Go, ere it be too late, and save those unto destruction des-
tined.

Queen Esther.—O God, thy trial of my strength is indeed
great,
Into thy hands I now entrust my soul, my life, my all,
Aid me in mine endeavor in thy cause and for thy people,
Soften toward me my mate's hard heart,
Let the twin doves of mercy and peace find rest within his
bosom.
And grant that redemption unto Israel now,
Which was of old done by thy wondrous might,
As Pharaoh's hosts pursued the flying slaves,
Be my strength in this supreme distress,
And save our people surely from that foe,
Who now upon our battlements is showering
The hailing arrows of calumny and falsehood,
So that, by this deliverance, the world may through them
learn thy name,
And worship it in holinesss and love.

Scene 2.

King's Audience Room. Haman alone.

Haman.—The King's commands have been by me fulfilled,
And from my heart each drop of blood was gone as I did
blush for shame,
But back to its chambers did I bring that blood,
When I bethought me of my vengeance dire now approaching.
The day is here almost at last, and I already see

The writhing of my victims in their tortures,
And first of all I see that Mordecai bowing low to me.
I have ordered in my house a gallows high and strong,
On which his form shall dangle within a few short days.
The gods but tortured me of late to make me feel the more
What great and whelming joy shall soon be mine.
[*Enter King.*

Ahasuerus.—Ah, Haman, thou hast done thy duty well,
And for this pleasantry I'll make amends in time.

Haman (*aside*).—Calls he it pleasantry, then most unpleasant pleasantry it is to me,
And for this same pleasantry thy blood shall flow
To wash away the stain of shame which burns upon my cheek.

Ahasuerus.—My mind feels merry and I feel so glad
That I could almost wish my queen were here,
Did I not think of Vashti who is gone. [*A stir without.*
Who enters our presence without a summons?
Who dares to come before our throne uncalled for at this time?

Haman.—Queen Esther, as I live, my lord.
[*Executioner starts toward Esther.*

Ahasuerus (*to executioner*).—O stay that hand that would have cut the golden thread
Which binds to life my queen, the mistress of my soul.
Come, tell me thy will, what brings thee here, my queen?
Has harm e'er ventured within thy palace wall?
Acquaint me now with thy demand, and for the love I owe thee, it is thine.

Esther.—My King, of late the portals of my chambers
Have not within their precincts welcomed thy royal person;

Long days have passed and many since I within thine arm was locked,
So I would beg thee, on this day, come thou to dine with me,
And I will set thee forth a feast of love than honey sweeter, and than wine more strong.
Bring with thee, too, thy Vizier Haman to join us in our joy,
And I will smooth those furrows of care which mar thy brow,
And woo thy heart from sorrow into gladness.

Ahasuerus.—Sweet queen, I will attend thee on the moment,
For time would irk me till each hour passed.
And Haman shall in our company proceed.

Haman.—I, too, would thank thee, royal mistress, for thy favor,
And my dearest duty shall be thine invitation filling,
When tardy time shall drag along the length of two dull hours. [*Exeunt Ahasuerus and Esther.*
The queen smiles on my fortune even now,
As promise of what might be when our king is dead;
And if I compass not that wished-for end
Ere many moons have fed upon the stars and burst,
Then am I worthy of my low estate and merit not to wear a crown.

CURTAIN.

ACT V. Scene 1.

Queen's Apartments. A table spread. Haman, Ahasuerus and Esther discovered.

Ahasuerus.—Twice hast thou asked us here to dine with thee,
Twice have we feasted both on viands and love,
And still the boon which thou wouldst ask hast ne'er revealed.

Come now, when we are merry with our wine, and tho' it did include
The value of my kingdom's half, still 'twould be thine.

Esther.—Ruler of men and king of the heart that beats within this frame!
An edict is gone forth from thee of late against a certain race,
'Tis not through thine own wish, but that of Haman here,
Who has befouled thine ear with falsehoods vile.
[*Enter Messenger.*

Messenger.—There's one who 'waits the King without and craves immediate audience.

Ahasuerus.—I'm with you even now, but will return, this business being despatched,
And fully will find out whatever may be against my Vizier charged.
Till then, dear soul, adieu! [*Exit.*

Haman.—Queen Esther, I beseech thee spare me from disgrace and terror, (*Kneels and grasps Esther's hand.*)
I'll make all reparation—as Vizier my power is great—
I'll give thee all thou canst desire but only shield me now,
What carest thou then for this vile race, these faithless Jews,
Whose beards I spit upon as I do walk our streets,
And who of naught more worthy are, than having made more stiff
Their stiffened necks by hanging on a scaffold.
(*Endeavoring to free herself.*)

Esther.—Enough, base man, if I can call you even man,
Animal in human shape, I bid thee know one thing,
I, your queen, a Jewess, stand before you, our race's foe,

Shall I then pity him who never merciful has been?
Think'st thou I would not tell all unto my king?
[*Enter King.*

Ahasuerus.—How, is it not enough that thou mine own ears hast deceived,
Wouldst also now take from my heart my queen?
(*To Esther.*)—Come tell me quickly this tale of him before I snatch
Those eyes from out their sockets and tear that tongue of falsehood out.

Esther.—Know then that most foully has he maligned the faithful Jews,
And on the Thirteenth of Adar would have them slain thro' all thy realm.
Within his house a lofty gallows gapes for Mordecai,
Who would not bow to any one except his God above,
Whom Haman would unto destruction carry with all his race.
Know, too, of that same race am I, and if that day should come,
Before the edict is by thee revoked another queen is from thee taken,
I beg thee then, for my sake and my people's, declare as void the deed,
And pardon grant unto thine innocent and faithful subjects.

Ahasuerus.—The laws of the Medes and Persians can never be revoked.
But I do grant unto the Jews right to defend themselves
On the day appointed for their destruction,
And I myself will send them aid in this time of trouble,
As for my queen, she'll shelter find within these two strong arms;
My heart shall be the fortress of her life,

And love shall rule us both while we do live.
Guards, seize on this prisoner and bear him to the gallows,
Set up by him for Mordecai, the Jew, whom now bring here,
And make him Vizier to the Persian King.

Haman.—So must end my hopes of glory and of power.
Ambition's staff has bent beneath me and I am fallen to the dust.
Had faithfulness filled half the space of pride,
Still next to king would my position be,
But now my name is to posterity a name
For all that's wicked, full of guile and hate;
And death is but the just reward of all my schemes.
Grace I would seek in vain and therefore ask it not,
And resignation must mark the hours 'twixt now and death.
[*Exit.*

Vashti (*aside.*)—I see all's well and fittingly fulfilled,
My king is happy in my queen's great love,
And my affection finds its joy in his content.
My own love's duty is done to full extent,
And I acquit myself the self-imposed task
Of seeing peace and love enthroned here;
And so, my own dear King once lover,
I bid thee farewell forever and for aye,
And may the gods shower on both your heads
All blessings they have for mortals now in store,
And make you happy all your days on earth.
For *me*, some distant land my body shall enclose,
When breath shall from this carcass pass away,
And then my spirit shall be joined to yours,
Throughout all endless space and time. Farewell!

Esther.—An order now send forth, my King,
To all thy people Israel, my race;
And let them keep for years to come

This festival so full of joy to all.
To-day art thou from a dangerous foe made free,
And Judah's glad in Haman's worthy death;
So let it be a law for all these Jews,
Who live within the confines of our realm,
To keep this happy festival with gladness and with joy,
And as our foe cast lots to find the day,
So let its name be Purim to the end,
That may remind us of the deliverance great,
Wrought by our God at all times, as at this,
Whom we do beg te guard us evermore,
And help us ever in distresses sore,
That we may live his glory to declare
And make all nations his great name to hear;
Until they shall in loud, united tone
Proclaim aloud that he is One alone.

CURTAIN.