

UNBELIEF.

There is no unbelief: Whoever plants the seed beneath the soil, And waits to see it push away the clod, Trusts he in God.

Visitor Pulpit.

ON A PICTURE BY MATTHEW.

BY REV. D. A. STEELE, A. M.

Matthew 14: 1-12.

Here we have the usual accompaniments, dancing and drinking. A licentious king and a debauched court constitute the very atmosphere of revelry.

As we gaze upon this sombre picture, we note the varying hues of criminality; the mingling of dark and yet darker shades. We will consider the story in order as we read. It is plain and suggestive.

THE ALARMED MONARCH.

The first glance at the picture reveals an unusual sight, a king ill at ease. Wonderful reports reach him of a new prophet, what is there in these to disquiet him?

But all this is torture to his majesty. Jesus must be John! He himself is risen from the dead, and therefore these wonders work mightily in him.

THE EXPLANATION.

Why Herod had spoken thus to his servants: "For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him and put him in prison for Herodias's sake, his brother Philip's wife, for John had said, it is not lawful for thee to have her."

The whole transaction is narrated in graphic detail. John Baptist is a preacher of righteousness to all men, to peasant, to soldier, to Pharisee and to Publican, to multitudes and to individuals.

THE BIRTH DAY FEAST AND ITS TRAGEDY.

The ruler of the land gave a great feast. There were gathered there, as guests upon the occasion his ministers, the chief men of the province, and the officers of the Roman legions.

THE DANCING DAUGHTER

of Herodias. She is the immediate occasion of the terrible tragedy which he is about to present. The introduction of a lady to perform such an office was against all the proprieties of Oriental life.

who made it their calling, clothed in garments of gauze that but half concealed the form. Then, as now, it was an outrage upon virgin modesty to thrust a young lady into a room full of strange men, to dance before them, or to dance with them.

THE EXTRAVAGANT OATH.

Men heated with wine are very apt to promise impossible things. The gratified voluptuary, his senses dazzled by the god he worships, is in just the mood to lavish the resources needed for the legitimate purposes of life.

THE TERRIFIC DEMAND.

Straightway the maiden went to her mother, who, glad the opportunity had arrived to gratify her revenge, prompted her daughter to ask, as the price of having gratified the company, the head of the prophet confined in the fortress.

The daughter, fit child of such a mother; bleached not from her task. There was that strange combination of characteristics sometimes observable. Feminine sweetness and grace, the lithe frame, and springing motion, every movement the poetry of action, the luxuriant tresses falling to her waist, the flashing black eye, the bewitching voice, and winsome ways.

Young men! keep the company of no woman who does not endeavour to help you to stem the current of frivolity, and earthliness, and sensuality. Such is no true woman.

What shall she ask, this daughter of a Queen? Think now, young ladies, what would have been your modest request. A necklace of pearls? a flashing diamond? A sum of gold sufficient for all the exigencies of your life?

This woman has no such request to prefer. Jewels, property, place, are trifles, the baubles a woman loves are nothing when laid in the balance against a woman's revenge. If you would see the hell of a woman's heart when under the influence of this master passion, listen to the request of the dancing maiden.

WHAT IS THIS GLEAM OF LIGHT?

The king is "sorry, sorry!" No soul sorrow; it is but half drunken regret. There is no conscience in such a being. "He would have put him to death" before, "but that he feared the people, for all counted John as a prophet."

And so, because of the rash word of a drunken king, all the centuries have mourned the untimely end of one who is venerated by all who call themselves by the Christian name. It is significant of the wide influence of the forerunner of our Lord, that from one extreme of Christianity to the other, from the purple clad dignity of the Church of Rome to the plainest Baptist pastor, the same is held in the highest esteem.

THE END.

Let us draw near to the fortress of Machaerus, and behold the end of this hero, this witness to God's truth before the royal sinner who had outraged it. The evangelists calmly relate the story—they give us the bare facts, with no pathetic comments. Yet what room for the portrayal of the heaving breast, the quick beating heart, the tear-bedewed face, the play of all the sad emotions brought into action by such a scene!

THE MORAL.

Revelry is alike in every age, and in every phase of society. We cannot tone it down, till it becomes harmless. It never can become the handmaid of religion. Dancing and drinking are the prolific parents of other evils. They inevitably and always bring these evils in their train.

indifferent of both sexes. Are our Baptist mothers prepared for the consequences of fashionable conformity? are they willing to have their tender girls encircled by the arms of a stranger, who probably has not the *entree* of their houses?

"On with the dance!" say the "liberal" Christians, who quote the example of "other denominations," and "other places." Are they prepared to receive the invariably concomitants of the dance? or do they have some mysterious shield with which to preserve us from the evils which have invariably followed?

The picture before us in which the head of a magnificent preacher was the price of the banquet, is simply the concrete of all the wickedness attaching to this fashionable folly. In this custom, lie the seeds of evils innumerable, and that is a shortsighted Christian who cannot discern these evils.

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