

Messenger and Visitor

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Editor

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THE WAR.

Trustworthy news from the theatre of war in the Far East during the past week has been of the most meagre character. It is evident that the Japanese appreciate the value of secrecy in connection with their military movements, and they are not giving anything to newspaper correspondents which would be of advantage to the enemy. Occasionally some purveyor of war news manufactures a batch to satisfy the world's appetite for something startling. Accordingly, we were told, early in the week that Japanese warships had again battered Port Arthur and the remains of Russian fleet there inflicting considerable damage on some of the Russian vessels. This turned out to be a canard. The report of the destruction by the Japanese of a mile or more of the railway between Vladivostok and Harbin may be true, as the landing of a Japanese force at Possiet Bay had been previously reported. If true it is significant as involving the interruption of railway communication between two important Russian posts. It is known that Japanese troops are still being poured into Korea and are being sent forward to confront the Russian forces in the vicinity of the Yalu River. Large numbers of Japanese troops have been landed at Chumulpo, but it is reported that now landing is being effected at Hwang-Ju, the movement of ice from its harbor having permitted this. As Hwang Ju is more than a hundred miles farther north than Chumulpo, it is a great advantage for the Japanese to land troops there and thus save a long and difficult march. It is understood that the Japanese forces are being concentrated principally in the vicinity of Ping Yang, and that the country between that point and the Yalu River is more or less occupied by the Russians. Their most southerly position of importance appears to be the city of Anju which is perhaps fifty miles south of the Yalu, and is separated from Ping Yang by a range of hills. It is hardly likely that there will be any important engagement for some little time yet, as Japan can hardly be ready to force the fighting, and the Russians are not likely to make any strongly aggressive movement. Reports of skirmishes between outposts may however be looked for at any time. There is a report from Niuchwang that a Japanese force is likely to attempt a landing there. Niuchwang is in Manchuria at the head of the Liaotung Gulf, a hundred miles or more north of Port Arthur, and a slightly less distance south of Mukden. Such a force might be intended to co-operate in an attack on Port Arthur. It is reported that information has reached Washington through official channels that a combined land and sea attack on Port Arthur will not occur for two weeks, and there is an expectation that the place will be taken. From Vienna comes the statement that Russia is believed not to have more than 175,000 troops in Manchuria and that it would be unwise to add largely to this number, owing to the limitations of the Siberian railway in transporting supplies. If this is to be accepted, Russia's prospect of coping successfully with the forces Japan is able to bring against her in the East does not appear to be bright. The latest news—which comes through Russian channels—gives an account of the bombardment of Vladivostok on the afternoon of Sunday, the 6th, by five Japanese battleships and two cruisers. The bombardment which was directed against the shore batteries and the town, was at long range, and, as the Russians report, effected little damage as the Japanese shells for the most part failed to explode. It is stated that the Russian batteries did not return the fire of the Japanese vessels, and if the Russian Vladivostok squadron was in port—which is doubtful—it remained concealed in the harbor.

ROCKWOOD PARK AND SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.

It appears that a majority of the directors of the Horticultural Association of St. John have come to the decision to permit the sale of refreshments in Rockwood Park on

Sundays. It is assumed, we observe, by some of our daily contemporaries that this decision will meet the approval of a great majority of the citizens. We are not informed on what this assumption is based. Have a great majority of the people, by petition or in any other way, signified their desire for this innovation? Is there any substantial grounds for the belief that even any very considerable minority of the people of St. John desire to see a Sunday refreshment business started in the park? We do not believe there is. The people of St. John are not asking for greater laxity in the enforcement of Sabbath legislation, and we are inclined to believe that the course pursued by Mr. A. H. Hannington who has felt it to be his duty to protest against the action of the directors in this matter by resigning his seat upon the board, will meet with very general approval. There is of course a comparatively small minority which clamors for the removal of the restraints which are necessary to the safe guarding of our Sunday as a day of rest. But we do not believe that the attempts which are made from time to time in the interest of avarice or convenience to mar the character of the day as a day of rest and of freedom from business are supported by the prevailing sentiment of the community. And until the sentiment of the people shall find expression in some definite way in favor of such an innovation as we are told has been determined upon, what right can the directors of the Horticultural Society have to assume that the people of St. John desire to see a refreshment business established in the park on Sundays? It is represented, of course, that what is proposed does not seriously effect the observance of the day of rest. It is only to provide soda water and other light refreshments for tired and thirsty persons who frequent the park on Sunday afternoons, and pathetic pictures are drawn of the hardships suffered by the thirsty person who cannot procure a glass of soda water in the park or of the mother who cannot purchase even a glass of milk for her thirsty child. One would hope indeed that life might be sustained in comparative comfort by either man or child during a leisurely walk through the park on the beverage which nature provides there in abundant measure and of excellent quality. The fact is that the providing of refreshments in the park on Sundays cannot be regarded as a work either of necessity or of mercy. It would doubtless prove a fairly profitable business from a financial point of view, but that is not a sufficient reason for the violation of our Sabbath observance laws in the park or elsewhere. There is no more valid reason for permitting a Sunday refreshment business in the park than there is for permitting a similar business in different parts of the city. And if one branch of business is allowed to infringe upon the day of rest, how long will it be before a similar demand is made on behalf of others? Why should the vender of soda water and the tobacconist be permitted to carry on a thriving trade on Sundays, and the grocer and other tradesmen be compelled to shut up their shops? The question of Sabbath observance is not on its legal side a religious question. We do not believe that any man or body of men have the right to impose their religious views upon a community. Large liberty must be granted to the individual as to the manner in which he may choose to spend his Sundays, but the people of this country have the same right to establish by law a weekly day of rest as they have to enact other laws. The legislation which secures to the people of this country one day of rest in seven is of the highest importance to the welfare of the commonwealth, and any attempt to break down that legislation and the public sentiment which gives it sanction should be vigorously resisted.

HEROD AND JOHN.

The personages to whom we are introduced in our Bible lesson for the week are not for the most part of a character to command our respect. There is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great—a weak, cruel and voluptuous prince who had inherited his father's vices without his strength of character. Given up to the sway of his lusts and ambitions, he retained just enough of conscience to fill him with superstitious dread when he contemplated his great crime of killing a prophet of the Lord. There is Herodias, daughter of one of the sons of Herod the Great, the divorced wife of another of his sons and now the wife of a third—an imperious, cruel, revengeful woman and apparently undisturbed in her wicked career by any reproaches of conscience. There is Salome, daughter of Herodias and her divorced husband, Herod Philip, evidently an apt pupil in her mother's school, and lending herself readily to the wishes of that ambitious woman for the accomplishment of her revengeful and murderous design. And then there are Herod's lords and high captains feasting with the king upon his birthday—none of whom it would seem was possessed of manhood enough to lift a protesting voice against the murder of a just man to satisfy the demand of a revengeful woman.

We are apt perhaps to think of Herod and Herodias as monsters of vice and cruelty. But how much worse were they essentially than many of the men and women of our own day? They were indeed somewhat more imperious and savage in the execution of their designs, but the lusts and the ambitions that respect no law of God, nor any law of man that can be evaded or set at naught, find their embodiment in human form today as in the days of Herod

Antipas. The condemning fact in the lives of Herod and Herodias was that they did not set the fear of God before their eyes. They took counsel of their lusts and their ambitions, they despised righteousness and virtue, and so far as they could they throttled conscience and silenced every accusing voice. That is just what thousands are doing today, and the maxims and practices of this materialistic age have a tremendous power over men and women to lead them to forget God. The surrender of the soul to the god of this world—the supreme regard for wealth and pleasure and for the things that minister to a sense of worldly power, the closing of the ears and the hardening of the heart to the counsels and the warnings of God's prophets indicates the popular path to perdition.

The great question is one of principle. What is the attitude of one's soul toward God? One may not have contracted incestuous and unlawful marriage, he may not have imprisoned and beheaded a prophet of God, he may not have had the opportunity or the inclination to commit all the crimes which have made Herod's name infamous. And yet if he is living for self and for the indulgence of selfish appetites and ambitions and setting his heart against the counsels and reproofs of God's truth, he belongs in the same class with Herod, and the fact that his deeds are less infamous from a human point of view does not materially affect the result. The question which determines destiny is not whether one is more or less wicked or more or less moral, but whether his heart is set upon the seen things or the unseen, whether his aim is the present or the eternal, whether he worships the god of this world or the God of Heaven. Wickedness may be so arrayed in royal robes as to attract the admiration and the envy of men and women, but when it is seen in its real proportions it will always appear as that deformed and hideous thing which God hates. And the essence of wickedness is a contempt of God's truth a resistance of His Spirit.

The lesson exhibits truth on the scaffold and wrong on the throne. John the Baptist who had the courage and the faithfulness to rebuke a Herod for his sins is cast into prison and dies by a tyrant's will to satisfy the vengeance of a wicked woman, while Herod and Herodias live to enjoy their guilty pleasures. It is often like that. Does that mean that it is better to be a Herod than a John the Baptist? Yes, if God, and truth, and right, and virtue are mere names that connote nothing real or authoritative. In that case the gain is Herod's. He has his little day, he has chosen wisely. But it is hard to make the world believe that. Herod could not quite believe it. There were lashings of conscience and a certain fearful looking for of judgement on account of his own sins. And the modern Herod cannot quite believe it either, however much they may wish to do so. A voice which will not be silenced declares that

"God is God, and right is right
And right the day must win."

and that the martyrs for faith and truth are not vanquished in the conflict and do not live and die in vain.

Editorial Notes.

—Dr. H. C. Creed, of Fredericton, Editor of the Year Book, wishes us to say that there are a good many copies of the Year Book left over, and that he can supply persons desiring copies for themselves or their friends. The postage on a single copy is four cents.

—The Toronto Globe says editorially of the late Dr. D. M. Welton: "Professor Welton of McMaster University, one of the charter members of the staff, was a singularly attractive gentleman, apart from his other admirable qualifications for his position. He came to Toronto from Nova Scotia over twenty years ago, when, after the establishment of the Toronto Baptist College in 1881, its theological faculty was enlarged by the amalgamation of that of Acadia College with it. Dr. Welton was since 1883 a resident of Toronto, and, in spite of his unassuming manner and retiring disposition, he took a deep and intelligent interest in the progress of the city of his adoption."

—A note from Rev. H. Morrow of Tavoy, Burma, written under date of January 21, has just come to hand. Mr. Morrow reports that both Mrs. Morrow and he are enjoying good health, although more than burdened with work and care. "I do not think," writes Mr. M., "that we have ever had such a year of work as that just passed or ever had such uninterrupted health." When he wrote they were on the point of setting out for their association in a distant village in the Mergui district. The journey was to be made by sea in an open boat. Mr. Morrow expresses gratification at the return of F. D. Crawley, who was then supposed to be on his way back to Burma to resume his ministry in connection with the English work at Maulmain. Mr. Crawley's work, as we should expect, is very highly appreciated.

—The present winter has been so remarkable all through that a thunder storm early in March should not perhaps greatly surprise us. An electric storm of considerable violence passed over New Brunswick on Thursday evening last. A house was struck at Lancaster, near St. John, and another at Lakeside, about twenty miles out on the Intercolonial. In Toronto early on Thursday morning the Parliament building was struck by lightning and set on