

Dr. Merrill cautions us against judging the conduct of Salome too severely, yet there is no precedent on record for a Jewish maiden of noble rank entertaining a company of the opposite sex by dancing before them. We cannot imagine a time, or nation, in which such conduct would not have been deemed highly improper, unless it was an index of a lower tone of morality in all concerned.

*Maidenly modesty and reserve cannot be too carefully guarded.* We do not advocate a Spanish *duenna* system, by any means, but when one observes the freedom which is permitted to young girls, especially in our cities, in promenading the streets in the late evening and appearing in places of public resort without an escort, we must acknowledge that a stricter code of propriety would be more conducive to the welfare of our young people of both sexes.

2. We do not suppose that Herod meant his promise to be taken literally. He would have laughed at the girl if she had asked for Perea as her *targesse*. He was simply imitating the bombastic style of greater men. He had no kingdom to give away. He was but a *parvenu*, dependent upon the good will of the Roman Emperor and the strength of his influence at the corrupt court of Rome.

He backs up his promise, too, with a royal oath, as if to bind himself past repentance to the performance of a maiden's wish. An oath was doubtless necessary to obtain credence for any promise made by Herod, but to a Christian, or any honorable man, his *oath* is not more sacred than his word.

We remember once asking an eminent lawyer, now a titled ornament of the bench, whether it would not be possible to abolish judicial oaths and attach to falsehood the penalties of perjury. His reply in effect was that whilst this might be done for the great mass of God-fearing and truth-loving men, it would fail in getting at the truth in the case of many of those with whom courts of justice have to deal, defective in moral character, yet of a superstitious cast of mind. Often he had heard a witness ask "Did you not say so and so to certain persons, yet now testify to the contrary?" and the answer was "I was'n't on my oath then."

The Christian's code says "Let your conversation be 'yea yea: nay, nay.'"

3. The extravagant promise of Herod

suggests also to us that *men are willing to give more for mere personal gratification than for worthy objects.*

We have seen a circus come to the village, and gather in the whole country side at fifty cents a head, while the collection plate at the missionary meeting just a week previous was loaded down with copper coins.

We see illustrations of the same self-pleasing disposition on every hand. Christian liberality and beneficence is a grace for which we should pray, for it is not native in the human heart, and like all other graces we must cultivate it if we wish to grow in it.

But how few really wish this. It is easier to plume oneself on his attainments than to lament his shortcomings. What astonishment would seize upon a prayer meeting if some brother would express his regret that he could not bring himself to be more liberal—not that he could not afford it, but that he didn't care to give as he ought. Yet such a confession in regard to lack of any other christian grace would be deemed beautiful humility and eminently praiseworthy.

4. At once Salome hastened to her mother and said "What shall I ask?" *Is this not the question that our children are putting to us every day, and we are answering it.*

"What is this wondrous life into which I have come? What has it for me that is worthy of striving after? How should I regard it? What should I long for? How turn my ambitions, my affections, my growing energies? And our influence in every way is a reply. Alas when parental influence is prostituted to ends of wickedness and revenge. It is not so much the cruelty of Herodias, as her horrible outrage upon motherhood's sacred responsibility that strikes us. Yet she is only a representative of many, who, while they shudder at her depravity, fail to discharge their own duty towards those whom God has placed in filial relationship to them.

5. The "King" had sworn and could not retract. Had he been asked to do something offensive to the company, or constructively treasonable to Cæsar he would have promptly declined to be bound by any oath. But such a trifling thing as the head of a fanatical preacher might not be denied in the presence of men who disliked and feared John's denunciation of hypocrisy and sin as much as Herodias did.