



LESSON XII. — MAR. 20.

John the Baptist Beheaded.

Matt. xiv., 1-12. Memory verses, 6-10.

Golden Text.

'Keep thy heart with all dilligence; for out of it are the issues of life.' (Prov. iv., 23.)

Home Readings.

- M. Matt. xiv., 1-13. — John the Baptist beheaded.
- T. Mark vi., 14-29.—Herod's guilty conscience.
- W. Dan. v., 1-31. — Belshazzer's drunken feast.
- T.Prov. iv., 14-27.—'Keep thy heart with all dilligence.
- F. I. Thess. v., 1-28.—'Let us watch and be sober.'
- S. Rom. xiii., 1-14. — 'Not in rioting and drunkenness.'
- S. Eph. v., 1-21.—'Be not drunk with wine.'

Lesson Story.

Herod, the tetrarch, or ruler of Gallilee, had slain John the Baptist, forerunner of Jesus, and was now haunted by the fear that this prophet had arisen from the dead in the person of Jesus Christ.

Herod put John the Baptist in prison because John had fearlessly rebuked him for a terrible sin. Herod had married his own brother's wife, while his brother was yet alive, her name was Herodias. They were very, very angry with John, and would have killed him right away had they not feared the people, who looked upon him as a prophet. So John languished in prison for some months. One day Herod was having a great feast as it was his birthday. The daughter of Herodias went into the banquet hall and danced before Herod and his companions. Herod was so delighted with her performance that he promised to give her anything she chose to ask for, even if it should be half of his kingdom.

Then the dancing girl's eyes sparkled with triumphant cruelty, for her mother had told her what she should ask for. Boldly she made her request. With sickening callousness she replied, 'Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.'

Herod was taken aback, he had expected some plea for rich jewels or gorgeous attire. The request sobered him somewhat; he did not want to kill John, he was still afraid of what the people might say, but he was still more afraid of the nobles who sat at his feast. He had promised before them, and felt that in their sight he must fulfil his wicked oath, so he gave orders to his servants to go and behead John the Baptist and bring the head on a platter to the dancing girl, who took it to her mother.

The forerunner of the Messiah perished thus miserably in the eyes of the world, but for him a glorious entrance was granted into the everlasting heaven. His followers buried the mortal remains of John the Baptist, and carried their grief-stricken hearts to him who alone has healing balm for all such wounds.

Jesus Christ gives comfort which is strength.

Lesson Hymn.

Jesus knows thy sorrow,
Knows thine every care;
Knows thy deep contrition,
Hears thy feeblest prayer;
Do not fear to trust him—
Tell him all thy grief;
Cast on him thy burden,
He will bring relief.

Trust the heart of Jesus,
Thou art precious there;
Surely he would shield thee
From the tempter's snare;
Safely he would lead thee,
By his own sweet way,
Out into the glory,
Of a brighter day.

Jesus knows thy conflict,
Hears thy burdened sigh;
When the heart is wounded,
Hears the plaintive cry;
He thy soul will strengthen,
Overcome thy fears;
He will send thee comfort,
Wipe away thy tears.

—Ira D. Sankey.

Lesson Hints.

'Herod'—Antipas, son of Herod the Great. 'Tetrarch' — a tributary prince, originally the word meant 'ruler of a fourth part.' Herod was ruler of Galilee and of Perea, beyond Jordan, his yearly income is said to have been \$328,500. Herod Antipas married the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia Petraea, but sent her home when he saw and loved Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. King Aretas promptly made war upon and defeated the wretched Herod, who some years later was banished for life to France. 'Said unto his servants' — probably the whole court was full of speculations about the miracle-working Prophet of Galilee. In the thought of John the Baptist having risen from the dead, Herod might find a certain consolation for the awful crime of his murder. Then, again, if Jesus were but a reincarnation of John, he could not be the Messiah. The other popular idea concerning Jesus was that he was Elijah or that he was one of the old prophets come to life again.

'Daughter of Herodias danced' — it was very improper for a young girl to come before these drunken men. Dancing was rightly considered a low pastime in which it was most unbecoming for any self-respecting person to take part. Dancing has never helped to save a soul, on the contrary, many thousands of bright young souls have been wrecked on this rock of offence. One person may dance with perfect safety, but another taking pattern from him, may dance on to ruin of body and soul. Does your example point men on to heaven, are they sure of getting there if they follow your steps?

'Charger'—a platter or large dish. 'The king was sorry'—but he was a coward. He did not dare own up to his fault like a man. A bad promise is better broken than kept.

'Told Jesus'—who comforted them with his divine sympathy.

Primary Lesson.

'They went and told Jesus.' The followers of John the Baptist had had a terrible sorrow. Their beloved leader had been killed by a cruel king to please a wicked dancing girl. Their hearts were almost broken with their loss, they felt, too, that their own lives were in danger. What could they do? Which way should they turn for comfort?

Perhaps, after the quiet little funeral was over, they stood around the grave for a while wondering what to do next. The day seemed very dark and gloomy to them. Their way seemed filled with clouds. It seemed to them as if the sun could never again shine so brightly as it used to, the birds could never again sing so sweetly for them. Life scarcely seemed worth living.

At last some one thought of a plan, and the others all followed. They did the only thing that could bring them comfort, the only thing that could make their lives worth living, the only thing that has brought comfort to any broken heart in all the ages since then — 'they went and told Jesus.'

Dear little people, sometimes you have great sorrows to bear. Sometimes the world seems very dark to you, sometimes you think your heart is broken. What can you do? Did you ever hear of the person who binds up broken hearts?

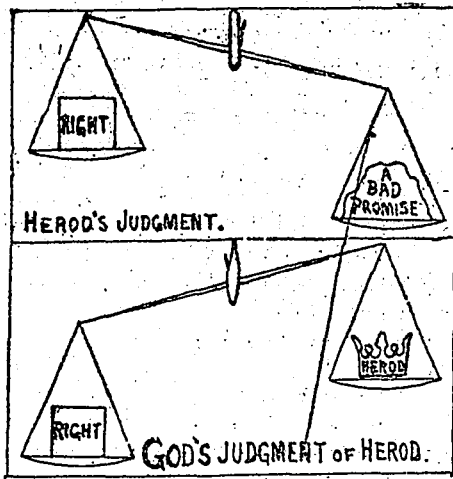
It is Jesus Christ. Come and tell Jesus all your troubles. Tell him the things you cannot tell any one else, he will understand, he will help you. Jesus will heal your wounded heart. Jesus will clear away the clouds, and make every day bright with the sunshine of his love. Jesus will comfort you, as only he can. In every trouble and difficulty you will find that the best and often the only way out is to go and tell Jesus, and obey his voice of love.

Suggested Hymns.

'Praise the Saviour,' 'For all thy saints who from their labor rest,' 'Tell it to Jesus alone,' 'I must tell Jesus,' 'What a Friend we have in Jesus,' 'The best Friend to have is Jesus,' 'Yield not to temptation,' 'Out of my bondage,' 'I've found a Friend in Jesus.'

The Lesson Illustrated.

This tells its own story. Herod weighed the law of God, his own knowledge of what was right, and the life of a good man, against a drunken promise, and to him the bad promise weighed heaviest. Therefore he executed John, and, therefore, God weighed



ed Herod in the balance, and he was found wanting, and his kingdom taken from him. If you can borrow such a pair of scales it will be an interesting change from the blackboard work. Of course you can make cardboard models of 'right,' the 'bad promise,' and the 'crown,' of the right weights to produce these results.

Practical Points.

MARCH 20. — Matt xiv., 1-12.

A. H. CAMERON.

A superstitious mind will trust imagination or sentiment rather than Providence, Verses 1, 2. He who dares to do right will not fear to rebuke wrong. Verses 3, 4. The greatest cowards are those who love darkness, and will not come to the light lest their deeds be reproved. Verse 5: I. John ii., 11. A dancing girl was the means of John the Baptist's execution. Better to break a bad oath than to keep it. Verses 6, 7. It is often the unexpected that happens, and King Herod was caught in his own trap. Neither moral courage nor love of truth came to the rescue of a tottering will. Verses 8, 9. The bleeding head of John the Baptist preached a sermon that still haunts the memory of Herodias and her daughter. Verses 10, 11. Slightly, mournfully, the little group of tender-hearted disciples gather up for burial the remains of the great preacher, though the Master seems to have been absent from the funeral. Then they do what grief-stricken souls have done so often from then till now,—'went and told Jesus.' Verse 12.

Tiverton, Ont.
Christian Endeavor Topics.
Mar. 20.—The evils of all intemperance.—Prov. xxiii., 20, 21, 29-35.

How Can We Do Better.

The superintendent of a great and successful Sunday-school, sometimes says, 'During this week, I wish every one of you, teachers and scholars, to give at least ten minutes to thinking how we may make our Sunday-school better.' At a later meeting suggestions are in order. No one is too insignificant to be considered. Four-year-old Mary comes home from the infant-school and tells mamma that she wishes some things were done differently. Her childish notion may be entirely impracticable; then, of course, nothing can be done save to help in becoming wiser. But possibly the child is right. She wants something in Sunday-school that she does not get but might have. Then the superintendent and teachers set their brains at work to devise some way in which little Mary's need can be met. This is only a simple illustration of the spirit of the good school whose leaders mean to make it better. Every suggestion is considered. Many are visionary. Some come from chronic grumblers who find fault but never give a thought to improvement. Well, whatever may be the source of the hints or the spirit which prompts them, see if anything can be got out of them for the general good. Think what needs improving and study how to do better. Thus you are kept out of the 'ruts,' and may be going on unto perfection.—'Living Epistle.'