

sowing and growing, is coming. A harvest that will be in kind like the seed sown. Twenty-five hundred years ago, Babylon sowed pride, avarice, pleasure, and haughtiness. It was prophesied, "Thy harvest shall become a heap." The ruins and the desolation of the site to-day witness to the truth. The tares ripened for destruction were bound into bundles. The wicked are in bundles now, from choice, in billiard halls, saloons, on race-tracks, etc. Then it will be without choice. The rich man did not want his five brothers to be tied in the same bundle with him in the "fire." In harvesting the good seed, "Christ sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied."



LESSON 12.—MARCH 20, 1898.

## John the Baptist Beheaded.

(Lesson Text: Matt. 14: 1-12. Memory Verses: 6-10.)

(If used as a Temperance lesson, read the account of Belshazzar's drunken feast, Dan. 5: 1-31.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."—Prov. 4: 23.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: Matt. 14: 1-12. Tuesday: Luke 23: 1-12. Wednesday: Jer. 26: 8-15. Thursday: Acts 24: 22-27. Friday: Luke 3: 7-20. Saturday: Luke 7: 19-28. Sunday: Rev. 20: 1-6.

### The Heart of the Lesson.

In selecting the Golden Text, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," the Lesson Committee seem to have had in mind the fact that the individual is no better and no worse than his heart (Pro. 23: 7, Matt. 15: 19). If the fountain of the heart be impure, then the "issues" of the heart must be a wicked life. "Herod," says Farrar, "was about as weak and miserable a prince as ever disgraced the throne of an afflicted country." When he heard John preach, "he did many things and heard him gladly"; but instead of keeping "his heart with diligence," he tried to buy off conscience by compromise.

During a visit to his brother Philip, Herod had been beguiled by Herodias, an unprincipled and bewitching woman, who was ambitious to be a queen and to stand at the head of a court. She forsook her husband and persuaded Herod, for her sake, to dismiss his faithful wife. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, was a girl of shameless immodesty, who could dance in the midst of the sensual company of the voluptuous monarch. She was without principle, having no settled purpose to do right. Her heart was not kept and regulated by the truth, but moved

by passion, impulse, and her surroundings; hard-hearted, she had no fear of God or the judgment. Her womanly pity had been drowned, like a half-fledged bird, in the torrent of her passion.

John the Baptist was no busy-body or time-server. He stood like another Elijah, kindled into a white heat against another Jezebel. Like a tipped arrow flies the message from his lips (v. 4). For this bold speech he was cast into prison. Herod, notwithstanding his inward respect for his faithful reprover (Mark 6: 20), would, for the sake of Herodias, at once have put him to death, had he not been feared of the Jews (v. 5).

Consider, now, the immediate circumstances where the "issue" of these three hearts coalesced and accomplished the death of John. Two scenes are represented to us. (1) The merry monarch and his gay company in the brilliant palace (v. 6, Mark 6: 21). A gorgeous festival, like Belshazzar's feast—a satanic carnival. (2) The forgotten prisoner loaded with chains in the dark dungeon. As we view the contrast we are tempted to say that the ways of God

