



## St. John Baptist Before King Herod.

“It is not lawful for thee!”—bold and clear,  
 The warning rings the pillar'd hall within;  
 —Thro' yonder open portal, comes the Seer,  
 The desert-prophet, in his camel-skin:

The Baptist, whom the King doth dread, yet love,  
 Aye, love the more, because that fearless Saint,  
 The son of Zachary, is set above  
 All base time-serving—every venal taint.

How gaunt and weird he stands before him now,  
 His deep eyes full of heaven's purest light!  
 The godlike majesty upon his brow,  
 Beseemeth well his noble, towering height.

“It is not lawful!”—lo! the King Divine,  
 The Lord of lords; (whose will should ours compel)  
 Forbids thee hold thy brother's wife as thine!—  
 Let her depart,—and save thy soul from hell!”

The spouse of Philip, near the royal seat,  
 Watches the King with cat-like vigilance,—  
 And while her daughter crouching at his feet,  
 Plays with her tambour, waiting for the dance;

The dance, whose witching grace shall garnish Guilt,  
 Whose meed shall be a life beyond all price,—  
 A Saint's pure blood for Truth and Justice spilt,  
 A hero slain, for Lust's foul sacrifice!

See! guilty Herod, (writhing in his chair),  
 Settles and darkens 'neath the Baptist's eye!  
 He hears not in his shame and black despair,  
 The woman's hissing whisper, “He shall die!”

Yet knows he that a mighty Grace hath come  
 And gone, despised. — Remorse is in that frown,—  
 Child of Herodias! art thou deaf and dumb?  
 A martyr waits to win, through thee, his crown!  
 —Eleanor C. Donnelly.