

A PREACHER WHO LOST HIS HEAD

The International Sunday School Lesson for October 15 is "The Ministry of John the Baptist."—Luke 3.

By William T. Ellis.

Once there was a preacher who had his head cut off: to-day there are some preachers who have had their message killed. Which is worse? Would you rather lose your head, or your message?

That question is answered in the asking. The decapitated prophet is still speaking to the ages—to-day the Sunday School millions of the world sit at his feet—but the teachers who have no clear word of truth and authority are without followers even in their own time.

There may be more tragic spectacles than that of the man cited to preach who has nothing to say to his own times, but I cannot think of any at the moment.

To occupy the office of a shepherd of souls and to be unable to function therein is worse than the fate of the Christian in Asia Minor. Most of us are familiar with instances of men who, from lack of courage or lack of devotion or lack of obedience or lack of sensitiveness to truth and to their times, completely fail to function as prophets of the Most High. They strive earnestly for the arts of men-pleasing; but nobody ever wins or holds the favor of man who has not been loyal to God and his own soul.

First of all to men and women who should be leaders and interpreters, of their generation, representatives of the mind of the Most High, comes this ever-stirring story of John the Herald, who died for being true, and still lives wherever men honor manhood and loyalty and freedom and spiritual power.

critics and creators.

Persons who watch literary tendencies are pointing out that this is the day of the critic and not of the creator. A large proportion of the books that pour from the presses of our time are criticisms of creative work; and even criticisms of criticisms. Writers are turning their talents to analysis and comment upon the great works, old and new, rather than to delivering an original message. In a word, there are more echoes than voices. On editorial pages of newspapers, in magazines, in books, on the lecture platform and in the pulpit, we are having little except echoes of echoes. What magazine has published a really great and original article within the past year? Who has heard a clear, strong, original sermon?

This John the Baptist was a voice. He spoke the real, the new and the true. In the desert alone with God—and the desert is as essential a part of a prophet's equipment as a library or a vocabulary—this son of promise lived open-souled to the great truths. In solitude he acquired that which made him fit to speak to the multitude. All of us, whether we have an avowedly public mission or not, need to get away from crowds, to get away from people, and draw apart in soul-solitude, to learn what God has to say unto us. The oriental mystic who shuts himself up for a life of silent meditations may not have grasped the whole truth, but he has hold of one end of it. John the Baptist, trained in the desert, is an admonition to parents and teachers. Few of us spend enough time apart from people. The modern idea of a "good time" is associated with company and crowds and light and noise and chatter. How can we ever learn to think for ourselves, until we first learn to dwell alone where our soul may be still? "The world is too much with us."

Lonely folks become "peculiar," we say, "peculiar" being our synonym for individuality. Most of us moderns would rather be "peculiar" than singular. We eat standardized food, from packages and tins; we wear standardized, machine-made clothes, so that a common dress alike; we read the same "popular" magazines and books; we follow slavishly the prevailing fashions; until all the savor and tang of personality is gone from our minds and from our outward appearance. Our music and thinking is set to the strains of "Everybody's doing it!" Nowadays such an individualist as John the Baptist does not get a chance to speak in even the least discriminating of our churches; he would be not only unfashionable and unconventional, but he would be voted downright "queer" and "radical."

Sticks and Fingerboards. Not every stick is a fingerboard—but it may be. Christians who are becoming "talented" are long needed only recall that any stick, so long as it is straight, may point. And the chief mission of the Christian, as of John the Baptist, is to point to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. This sensational prophet from the desert did not set himself up to be any great preacher. Of course he had crowds, as has every fresh, zealous voice; but his crowds did not fill him with pride or self-exaltation. He knew that he was only a herald, a forerunner, an advance agent. His sole business was to cry "Behold!" If he merely set people to talking about his own greatness he would know himself a failure. His congregation did not go away crying "What a wonderful preacher!" but "What a wonderful message!"

This was the greatest greatness of John: he kept himself steadily to the work of proclaiming a Greater! He was big enough to belittle himself. He was a first-class man who proudly accepted a second place. So clear was John's perception of the all-importance of Christ that he cried, in season and out, "He must increase; I must decrease. His success lay not in exalting himself, but in holding very high and steady the name and character of the Coming One. He knew that while he had no philosophy, equal to the needs of his day, he proclaimed a Person who was entirely adequate. Right here is where the Herald from

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the wilderness speaks the word of words to our troubled time. We are in a perilous period of history. All the forces upon which mankind has pinned its hope have failed us. Military might has proved inadequate. Councils of statesmen have been worse than useless. The League of Nations has been impotent in the gravest issues. "Enlightened self-interest" has proved a broken reed.

What, then, is our refuge? Where may we look for escape? John has the word: "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" It is not a system, but a Saviour, that can deliver us. Instead of councils and conferences, we need Christ. Nothing less than a Redeemer and Lord, to master human life, can save us from the mire pit in which civilization to-day finds itself. Every man and woman who is truly following Christ and really preaching Christ is contributing most effectively to the way out of the world's welter of woes. Now, as in that hour of international destiny in which John the Baptist lived, only Jesus Christ can lead mankind to safety and peace.

The Preacher and the Profiteer. This man John was greater than his times. He saw things in the large, even to their causes. His was the long look and the wide lung that took in the onmarch of life, and understood its component parts. There was an eternal note in his message: what he said would not have been the truth for the time if it had not also been the truth for all times. His conclusions were general, but his applications were also particular.

Naturally, general conclusions without particular applications are "safe"; and therefore we have plenty of them. This is a partial explanation of why so many writers and speakers run to platitudes. John, however, drove the meaning of his message straight home to "Thou art the man." Hear him: "He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." "And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees, every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

"And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?" "And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." "And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?" "And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you." "And soldiers also, asked him, saying, And we, what shall we do?" "And he said unto them, Extort no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages."

No trucking and no demagoguery there. The Herald pierced to the marrow of the complacent aristocracy and of the grafting tax-collectors and of the unruly proletariat. There is no comfort for the class conscious in what this desert preacher said. Had John been alive today we know he would have excoriated the profiteers and the pussy-footing politicians; and the shameless law-breakers. No truth is vitally true that does not apply to present life and present persons.

After All, The Executioner. A vengeful, and designing woman, and a sensual and spiteful man, ended John's life by the sword, so that his head was served up on a platter by a shameless dancer for the jeers of drunken courtiers. But that was only an incident in a career of consummate success. It does not matter to a real man whether he dies or lives, so long as he is true to his duty. The Baptist lives in a myriad lives to-day; and Herod and his paramour have for centuries been deep in the pit of the world's contempt and execration. Courage is the first and last quality. When courage goes, all is gone. Because John was brave, his wisdom became effective. He dared make enemies of the mighty and of the mob; but at the same time, he made friends with God, and truth, and posterity. High among the mightiest of all the men that ever lived stands this rough messenger from the desert, who was so humble that he deemed himself unworthy to untie the sandals of the Coming One; and so fearless that he dared rebuke the king on his throne and the crowd in his sins. He was a preacher with a social message if ever there was one.

In their slack age, when the popular teaching is that which echoes the words of the serpent in the garden "Ye shall be as gods"; and when men and women are fond of magnifying the glory and freedom of their own personalities, we welcome the shock of John's needed message, "Repent!" Making man's face, the angel call care can see daylight in a dark time. Nations and people have got to repent of their sins and turn to the Lamb of God—eternal symbol of sacrifice and suffering—before they can find the peace for which the whole creation hungers and thirsts.

(Copyright, 1922, by The Ellis Service.) At Collin's Bay. Collin's Bay, Oct. 9.—Owing to the rain on Sunday the rally day services were postponed until Nov. 5th. A. M. Rankin, M.P.F., has received boat loads of coal. Mr. and Mrs. M. McDonald spent the week-end at H. E. Bell's. A. Lane and family, Belleville, are at A. Finley's.

The news of Miss Dorothy Bushell's death on Monday was received here with deep regret. The sympathy of this community goes out to the bereaved parents and brother. Mrs. S. McDonald, who has been visiting friends in Battersea, has returned home.

The people are very glad to welcome Wm. Bussard and family back to their home here again after an absence of nearly a year. George Leonard, who has been laid up with blood poisoning in his hand, is better. Mr. and Mrs. W. Frink visited at H. Bridgehead on Sunday.



ESCAPED FROM HAILEYBURY INFERNO.

James Daw, principal of Haileybury Business College, and his family were among the refugees from the town who spent the first night after the fire on the beach and in the icy lake waters. Mr. Daw was so badly burned that a copper in his pocket was defaced on one side by the intense heat of the fire. Baby Audrey (left) was the first prize baby at Haileybury Horticultural Show this summer.



SURVIVORS RESCUE GEESE FROM RUINS.

Above are shown members of the Vurney family at Haileybury recovering African geese amid the ruins of their homestead. The fowl remained around the barnyard throughout the conflagration. The gander weighs 25 pounds.

HEARD SEVEN SHOTS IN EARLY MORNING

Mystery of the Shooting on University Avenue is Still Unsolved.

The mystery surrounding the firing of shots on University avenue, in the vicinity of Earl and Clergy streets, remains unsolved. In the Whig, on Tuesday, it was stated that a resident of that district had reported hearing three shots about 1-30 o'clock. On Wednesday, another resident of that district stated that he was awake at that time, there being sickness in his family, and that he distinctly heard seven shots fired. He could give no reason for the shooting, but thought that some person was trying to frighten off some cats or dogs or some person might be practicing shooting for the Queen's initiation ceremonies. However, at the time of the firing of the shots, he thought that perhaps the police were having a gun fight with some burglars.

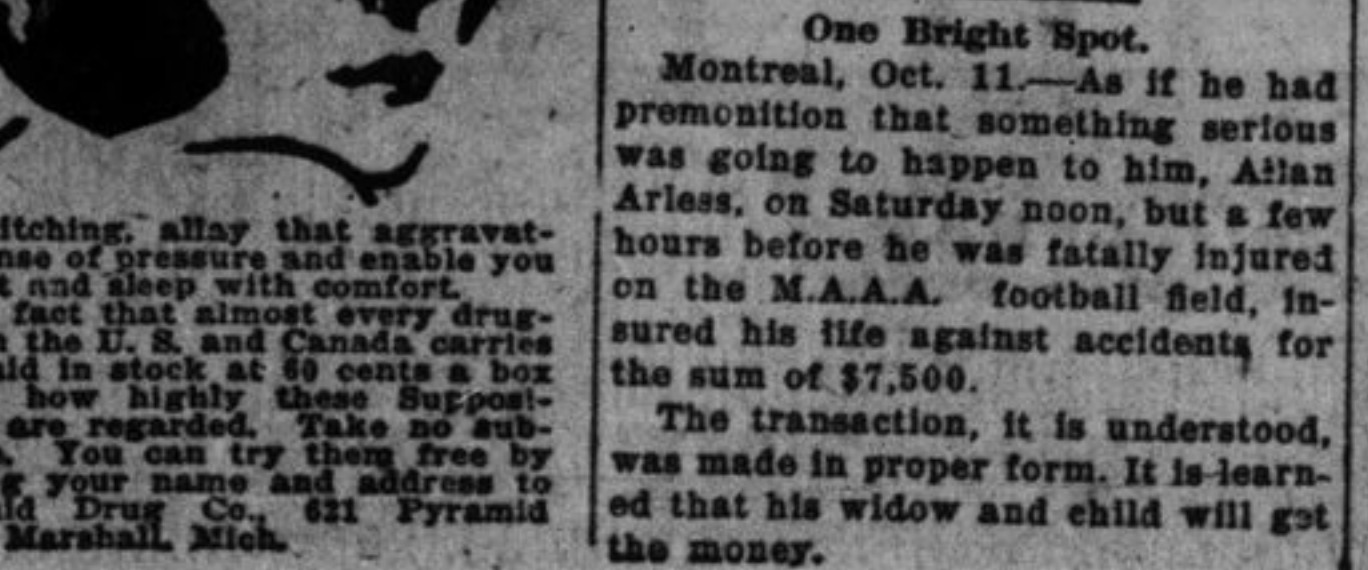
AN INTERESTING ADDRESS

To Young Woman's Missionary Auxiliary of St. Andrew's Church. Miss Cora Messer, of Scott House, Toronto, gave an interesting address to the Young Woman's Missionary Auxiliary of St. Andrew's church on Monday evening. Her talk dealt mainly with the mission field in Saskatchewan, but in opening, Miss Messer spoke briefly of her work at Scott House, the "All People's Mission." There the work is carried on somewhat after the manner of the settlements, with religious instruction.

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