

Nudity

Author: Miss Maud Gwendolen Allan

To the pure, all is pure; to the pervert, all is perverted. I wish to use this proverb to clarify the so-called nudity in my dancing. Some witty Budapest newspapers have seized upon my costume as a joke (prank), making incorrect remarks' (allegations) that I perform but partly-clothed. How can there be any other purpose that I leave single (separate) parts and surfaces (of my body) uncovered than that of raised artistic effect? Even for purposes of a joke, I cannot imagine such. Such joking in my opinion is not right.

This is how it is. The dancer's body is her instrument, the raw material, just as is the violin to the violinist and clay to the sculptor. Is it really possible to cover up this raw material when it is precisely this that brings about (causes) the desired (called forth) artistic effect? No, this would be truly foolish. The same kind of foolishness as closing up a grand piano or to push over a statue after unveiling.

Besides, I am not even going to explain this in detail. The Budapestians anyway understood and were truly sympathetic and appreciative. I only wrote these few words about this so-called nudity since the kind editor invited me to do so. Behold, it is here thus.

I salute the editor (e.g. yours truly)

(Budapest)

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Maud Gwendolen Allan

in "A H E T"

1907

# How I Startled the World

By  
MAUD  
ALLAN

Confessions of the San Francisco  
Dancer Who Shocked and Fasci-  
nated Kings, Critics and Society;  
Her Romances, Trials, Triumphs

By MAUD ALLAN

## CHAPTER IV

THE awakening is that of her childish heart. The realization of a superior, a stronger power has taken possession of her. The ivory calmness of the face of the martyred Baptist speaks of a life dedicated not to passions and to pleasures, but to purity.

Now, instead of wanting to conquer she longs to be conquered. She longs for the spiritual guidance of the man whose life was ended at her word. Not knowing what she does, Salome bends and presses her warm vibrating lips against the marble lips of the dead. She begs for mercy. There is no response. Then in an agony of remorse she abases herself before the Prophet of the Lord. In that moment she is no longer Salome whose word is law in the palace among her slaves and menials, but a child trembling into womanhood and seeking for some sign that will guide her into the higher life.

As she lies prostrate upon the floor she makes atonement for her mother's sin.

After my first presentation of "Salome" I was the storm center of one of the most amazing upheavals of modern theatrical life. The critics seemed bewildered. Many praised. Some were scornful, and a few frankly could not understand it. But every night I had a wonderful ovation from packed audiences, and the "House Full" boards were much in evidence.

My mailbag bulged with letters. Some of them were really amusing, although they were not written in a spirit of levity. I give one characteristic specimen:

"Woman: Have you no conscience or sense of decency? By your public display of licentious wickedness do you never realize that you are a menace to society, and that you are leading the younger generation to hell? Such as you have much to answer for."

And another:

"The wrath of God is now being shown in Europe because of exhibitions such as yours, and which have led to the fall of many a young girl. Thank God, you will not be here long."

On the other hand, some of the clergy praised me. Preaching in London, the Rev. J. Tyssul Davis, B. A., said:

"Go to a music hall and see Maud Allan. By her gestures and restrained movements that great artist can make you realize many things that I shall probably fail to do."

Another wrote:

"August 29.—Behheading of John the Baptist. The commemoration of St. John made me remember you, and constrains me to thank you for the pleasure and inspiration that your perfect gift has given me and many others."

After I had completed my engagement at the Palace, London, I was engaged to fulfill contracts at the leading provincial theaters. One of my first and most important bookings was in Manchester.

A few days before I was due there, and after the posters and advertising matter had been got out, the watch committee informed the management

of the theater that they could not allow the performance. Pressed for a reason, they seemed at a difficulty to find one. But the manager was persistent, and at length a statement was issued to the effect that the committee considered the performance immoral and improper, shocking to religious people as dramatizing an incident from the Scriptures, and also—and here the mosquito's sting was found in the tail of the communication: "We are informed that Miss Allan appears upon the stage with bare feet."

The action of the committee produced a great upheaval throughout the Manchester district. The city was divided into two camps—the "Salomites" and the "anti-Salomites." However, in the meanwhile I went on with my tour elsewhere, for, of course, the incident had got into the newspapers and was an excellent advertisement. But it vexed me that my performance should seem to be improper, and I registered a vow that some day I would convince those city fathers that they were misinformed.

I had to wait some years for the consummation of my hopes, but the day came, at last when I appeared with tremendous success at Manchester, and some of my warmest supporters were those who had united to ban my performance!

One of my bitterest opponents at this time was Archdeacon Sinclair. I therefore took my courage in both hands one afternoon, and with much inward quaking called upon him at the Chapter House. His kind gravity and dignity impressed me greatly. Appreciating his kindness in seeing me I came straight to the point at once, and said bluntly: "I hear that you object to my 'Vision of Salome.' I have come to see you, knowing that you would be just enough to tell what is your specific objection."

He replied: "So I will. Do you for a moment think that I have ever regarded your work as not being artistic? But I feel that there are Christians in my flock who may be repulsed at the thought of Christ's forerunner being made the subject of a scene for the stage, or, for that matter, any biblical story being put upon the stage. Therefore I feel it my duty to pass my criticism upon this number in your program."

Then I explained my views, and he listened so kindly and with such attention that I felt I was gaining ground. We parted excellent friends and very soon afterward I was invited to take tea with the archdeacon and his sister at the Chapter House and had the pleasure of being present with my parents at a service in noble St. Paul's. And finally I had the deep pleasure in knowing that I had converted the archdeacon to the view that my performance was in no way irreverent, or that it need give pain to the most sensitive Christian.

I conclude this brief account of controversy raised by by "Salome" with the words of a high English cleric addressed to me in a letter: "I think of you as one who has made this beautiful world more beautiful, and given pure joy to others."

To Be Continued

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SAN FRANCISCO  
POST.

By MAUD ALLAN

## CHAPTER III

NOW this is the Dance of  
"Salome."

I want you to visualize as I do every time that I dance this creation of mine the apartments in the Palace of Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, a man mighty in wrath, but easily moved to gusts of sudden impulse. These gorgeous apartments have been set apart for the use of the Princess "Salome," the young daughter of Herodias, and granddaughter of the late procurator; she was, therefore, closely related to Herod.

Picture the somber beauties of the palace. The pillared halls strewn with rare draperies and Tyrian purple, the sumptuous couches to which all Arabia had contributed her embroideries. Amid these beauties the Princess "Salome" is seen. She was but a child; probably about fourteen. Perhaps she did not realize that all the glory in which she was embowered was part of the marriage portion of her aunt, the daughter of Arctas, king and lord of Arabia, whom her uncle, the Tetrarch, had put away that he might marry her mother, the ravishing Herodias. Try and imagine the life of "Salome" lapped in incredible luxury of an Oriental court, at the dawn of womanhood from an Eastern point of view.

Into this velvet life there must have come a sudden reminder that sorrows can intrude even into the palace. She caught a half stifled impression that the position of herself and her mother was being made the subject of vitriolic gossip on the part of the Jewish population, and no doubt she witnessed some of those almost demoniac fits of fury exhibited by her mother when the news came that John, chaste prophet of the Most High God, was stalking through the city denouncing the wife of Herod as sinful and accursed; that her mother and new stepfather were living in defiance of what this burning young prophet (for John was not much more than a youth) called the "law of God." His voice, likened by the people to a silver trumpet, rang out even in the courtyards of the palace: "O accursed woman of sin . . . thy white and tender flesh shall burn in Tophet . . . while Herod shall be cast down even from the golden throne of Galilee and Perea."

Now, all the dim whisperings of the affrighted servants and the guarded gossip of her bower maidens must

the couch moans, the dulcimer sounds its melling melody and drum, hautboy and pipe make up the orchestra of barbaric music.

Herod has told his guests of the dancing of "Salome." He has painted her art in the language of true Oriental exaggeration. Woe to her if she shame his words.

To the blare of insolent music she springs into the great hall. Blind to the circle of inflamed eyes that devour her pure young beauty, she sees only her mother uplifted on a glittering throne by the side of Herod, the dread Tetrarch. And so she dances, while silence falls upon the barbarian guests as with twinkling feet and ingenious witcheries she gives them of her art. Then at last she lies panting in obeisance at the foot of the throne, while the music dies in a last sobbing wall.

The great Ruler, with parched tongue and dull eyes, leans forward and makes the tremendous promise in the moment of his gratification:

"Ask, Salome, my Flower of the Forest—ask what thou wilt, yea, even to the half of my kingdom." Awed by the strange look in the eyes of the King and stunned by his astounding offer she takes refuge in her mother's bosom.

"What shall I ask?" she whispers. And the wife, tormented and distempered with hatred of the Baptist, whose clarion denunciations of her sin are now ringing out over the waters of Jordan, answers without hesitation:

"Ask for the head of John the Baptist upon a charger."

And so the young dancer bends again before the feet of the King and utters her request:

"I will that thou shalt give me the head of John the Baptist upon a dish."

What follows is mirrored in the poignant words of the historian, Mark the Evangelist:

"And the King was exceeding sorry. Yet for his oath's sake and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

"And immediately the King sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison.

"And brought his head in a charger and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother."

Buoyed up by the excitement of the mother she places the gory trophy in the hands of the vengeance-glutted mother. Then she flees on naked feet back to her own apartments and stands aghast as she views her blood-dabbled hands—dyed purple with the blood of holy John, the Mystic, the Voice denouncing uncleanness and shame.

This was the Dance of "Salome." And as she stood motionless, with the whole scene vivid before her imagination, there came to her the Vision of "Salome."

As in a dream she lives again through the mad moments of excitements when she danced in the Hall of Herod while his lords and captains

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How, all the dim whisperings of the affrighted servants and the guarded gossip of her bower maidens must have perplexed the pure mind of "Salome," the young virgin innocent.

Then there came the night when it was the whim of Herod to "make a supper to his lords, high captains and chief estates of Galilee." And suddenly the great gong that hung over the much guarded apartments of "Salome" reverberated with its clanging summons: "Salome" must come and dance before the king and his wine flushed lords and captains.

For hers was the strange gift—the gift of dancing, brought from Egypt by those settlers whom she claimed as ancestors. It had been her pride to dance, her mother's pleasure and the joy of her dead father.

And now she must attire herself in her silks and stuffs, hang jewels upon her supple form and, leaving her cloistered seclusion, dance before Herod's friends, while the cymbals clash,

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As in a dream she lives again through the mad moments of excitements when she danced in the Hall of Herod while his lords and captains bathed her with the breath of their fierce admiration. Again, too, she sees that strange expression in the eyes of her royal stepfather as he hoarsely vows her half of his kingdom if her desires stretch so far. Then slowly there forms before her the pallid, sublime face of the Baptist. It seems to be at her feet. Moved by an irresistible force she stoops and lifts it by the black curls. Every fiber of her youthful body is quivering, a sensation hitherto unknown to her. She reverently lays down the severed head, and then in a whirl of sudden madness she commences to dance around it. Soon exhaustion breaks the spell. "Salome," princess of Galilee, lies prone on the gray, cold marble.

To Be Continued

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