

Whom did he marry?
 What law did he break in doing this? **God's law.**
 Who rebuked him?
 Who became very angry?
 Why did not Herod kill John?
 What party did Herod give?
 Who danced before him?
 What did he promise to do?

Who told her what to say?
 For what did she ask?
 How did the king feel?
 Why did he grant her request?
 Did God forget his servant John?

Remember—

"Prisons would palaces prove
 If Jesus would dwell with me there."

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

On the eastern shore of the Dead Sea rises a gloomy building, at once a garrisoned outpost to the kingdom and a prison for the victims of the king's dislike or dread. In a lonely dungeon of that castle sits a young man, the last and greatest of the prophets, the herald of the world's Redeemer. He that was wont to enjoy the freedom of the wilderness has for a year breathed the fetid air of the prison, and clanked his chain, and wrestled with his doubts (Matt. 11, 2, 3), and wearily waited for his crown. Herod's birthday has come, and there is a banquet in the castle. Nobles, generals, and courtiers recline around the tables, feast upon the delicious viands, and drink the health of their monarch in full cups. There is a patter of soft footfalls on the marble floor as Princess Salome, in the dress of a dancing girl, enters, and the nobles behold her graceful attitudes and motions with delight. King Herod, in the thrill of excitement, pledges the fair damsel to grant her any request, even at the cost of half of his realm, and seals his promise with a vow. The girl goes forth; there is a whispered consultation without; she returns, and holding out her white arms she speaks in triumph, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger!" The king starts from his throne in surprise, and a shadow comes across his face. But his word has passed, and he dare not face the scorn of his guests by refusing to fulfill it. A command is given, the heavy tread of a soldier is heard upon the stairs, a door creaks upon rusty hinges, a scimitar flashes, and the noblest head in Herod's kingdom falls upon the dungeon floor. There is seen a gory head upon a plate, upheld by fair hands, and borne to a mother in whom revenge has steeled the heart against pity. But all is not over. There sits on the throne a king whose face shows remorse entering within his soul. He cannot rest, and when men tell of wonders wrought by a new Prophet, he speaks in tones of terror, "It is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead!"

Verse 17. Herod. Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great; he had become by inheritance "tetrarch" of Galilee and Perea. He was just now hard beset in a war with King Aretas of Arabia; for Herod had cast aside his lawful wife, the daughter of Aretas, to take Herodias in her place, and the Arab king in hot blood had avenged this insult by invading Perea, and an alarming number of Herod's subjects sympathized with the enemy. **Laid hold upon John.** He hardly dared to leave him at liberty, for John had fearfully denounced Herod's crime. **Bound him in prison.** This had been done just before the opening of Jesus's Galilean ministry. The "prison," as we learn from Josephus, was in Machærus, a fortress on the edge of Herod's country. It was a huge building within whose grim, sturdy walls were not only barracks for soldiers and arsenals of weapons, but beautiful palaces for court festivities, and festering dungeons so remote from all public life that prisoners of state might be there securely kept. In its ruins may still be seen two cells with holes in their walls where staples of wood and iron were fixed. In one of these John lay. It is likely, though not

certain, that Herod's birthday party was held in Machærus, and that there Salome danced. **For Herodias' sake.** Herod has been called the Ahab of the New Testament, and in John he had to deal with the New Testament's Elijah. Like Ahab, Herod repented when the truth was powerfully preached, but like Ahab, he surrendered his soul to a bad woman; he was a weak man and, morally, did more drifting than steering. **His brother Philip's wife.** The circumstances of Herod's crime greatly aggravated it. His claim to the tetrarchy had been vigorously disputed in the early days; he hurried to Rome to urge his cause before the senate, and became the guest of his brother Herod Philip I (who must be carefully distinguished from the Herod Philip who built Caesarea Philippi, whom Luke calls Philip the tetrarch, and who is usually known as Herod Philip II). He repaid his brother's hospitality by enticing away his wife and daughter. **He had married her.** While trampling on great moral principles he tried to be scrupulous about the letter of the law. (1) *Sins do not walk singly.*

18. John had said unto Herod. Had repeatedly said. We are left in the dark as to