

21 And *f* when a convenient day was come, that Herod, *g* on his birthday, made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

f Matt. 14, 6.—*g* Gen. 40, 20.

22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, *h* and danced and pleased Herod and them that set with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

h Isa. 3, 16.

23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever *i* thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

i Esth. 5, 3, 6; 7, 2; Eccl. 5, 2; Rom. 1, 28-31; Heb. 11, 36-38; Jas. 2, 13; Rev. 6, 9-11.

24 And she went forth and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, *j* The head of John the Baptist.

j Prov. 12, 10.

25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26 And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

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

29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and *k* took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

k Acts 8, 2.

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 dancer to grant her any request, even at the cost of half 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 with 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 scimeter 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 eating 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!"

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 14. King Herod. This was Herod Antipas, the son of the Herod who was reigning when Jesus was born, and like his father in crime, though lacking his father's abilities. He inherited Galilee and Perea, the fourth part of Herod's kingdom, with the title of tetrarch, but was styled *king* by courtesy. **Heard.** He now heard of Jesus for the first time, being a profligate prince, neglectful of his realm and devoted to his own pleasures. We learn from Luke 8, 3, and Acts 13, 1, that there were friends of Jesus even in the court of Herod, and through these the report of Christ's works may have reached the royal ear. **John...was risen.** Herod was a Sadducee, disbelieving in a hereafter or a separate existence of the soul and body, yet his guilty conscience was stronger than his unbelief. 1. "One flash of conscience will destroy a whole creed when that creed is founded on falsehood." **Mighty works.** "These powers work in him." [Revised Version.] Herod imagined that a resurrection had clothed John with a new power.

15, 16. It is Elias. The prophet Elijah, who was expected to reappear on the earth to prepare the way for the Messiah's coming. **A prophet, or as one of the prophets.** "Even as one of the prophets." [Rev. Ver.] That is, a prophet who was more than a religious teacher, as the more recent prophets had been, but one like Elijah and Elisha, commissioned with power to predict events and work miracles. **John, whom I beheaded.** The king accuses himself of what his nobles dared not accuse him. 2. A crime pursues with its own terrors the one who has committed it.

17. Bound him in prison. The imprisonment of John began just before the opening of Jesus' Galilean ministry, which had now been in progress for a year. The prison (as we learn from Josephus) was at Machærus, near the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Here was a castle, at once a royal residence, a fortress for the frontier, and a prison. In its ruins may still be seen two dungeons with holes in the wall where once staples were fixed. **For Herodias' sake.** Herodias was Herod's own niece, (the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus,) and the wife of his brother Herod Philip, at whose house in Rome Herod Antipas was a guest while prosecuting his claim to the throne before the Senate. He repaid his brother's hospitality by enticing his wife to forsake her husband, and