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KING AGAINST PROPHET

CAIUS OPIUS TO TULLIUS

JOHAN THE BAPTIST is the name of the Prophet of whom I spoke to thee in my first letter and who has just been imprisoned by order of the King of Galilee. His history merits the telling.

You know that Galilee and Peræa are governed under the protectorate of Rome in a more or less restrained measure by King Herod. He is one of the sons of Herod the Great, but he has inherited only the vices of his father. Married to the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, he seduced and carried away Herodias, wife of his brother Philip, who was also his own niece, and he married her. The daughter of Aretas returned to her father, who swore hatred and vengeance on Herod and who watches for a favorable occasion to make war upon him.

Meanwhile, Herodias enjoys her new made royalty, and the two lovers give themselves over to every pleasure. They live in a palace remarkable for its beauty and ostentation, in the pretty town of Tiberias, named in honor of our Emperor. It is a city of recent date, of which Herod has made a cosmopolitan center, as well as a Roman town. It is admirably situated on the borders of the lake, not far from Magdala, and when I rode there, I found the baths, the porticoes, the theatres and the places of amusement of Rome, in miniature.

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