

Jesus before Annas

It was towards midnight when Jesus reached the palace of Annas, and his guards immediately conducted him into a very large hall, where Annas, surrounded by twentyeight councillors, was seated on a species of platform, raised a little above the level of the floor, and placed opposite to the entrance. The soldiers who first arrested Jesus now dragged him roughly to the foot of the tribunal. The room was quite full, between soldiers, the servants of Annas, a number of the mob who had been admitted, and the false witnesses who afterwards adjourned to Caiphas's hall.



Annas was delighted at the thought of our Lord being brought before him, and was looking out for his arrival with the greatest impatience. The expression of his countenance was most repulsive, as it showed in every lineament not only the infernal joy with which he was filled, but likewise all the cunning and duplicity of this heart. He was the president of a species of tribunal instituted for the purpose of examining persons accused of teaching false doctrines; and if convicted there, they were then taken before the High Priest. Jesus stood before Annas. He looked exhausted and haggard; his garments were covered with mud, his hands manacled, his head bowed down, and he spoke not a word. Annas was a thin ill-humoured-looking old man, with a scraggy beard. His pride and arrogance were great; and as he seated himself he smiled ironically, pretending that he knew nothing at all, and that he was perfectly astonished at finding that the prisoner, whom he had just been informed was to be brought before him, was no other than Jesus of Nazareth. 'Is it possible,' said he, 'is it possible that thou art Jesus of Nazareth? Where are thy disciples, thy numerous followers? Where is thy kingdom? I fear affairs have not turned out as thou didst expect. The authorities, I presume, discovered that it was quite time to put a stop to thy conduct, disrespectful as it was towards God and his priests, and to such violations of the Sabbath. What disciples hast thou now? Where are they all gone? Thou are silent! Speak out, seducer! Speak out, thou inciter of rebellion! Didst thou not eat the Paschal lamb in an unlawful manner, at an improper time, and in an improper place? Dost thou not desire to introduce new doctrines? Who gave thee the right of preaching? Where didst thou study? Speak, what are the tenets of thy religion?' Jesus then raised his weary head, looked at Annas, and said, 'I have spoken

openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them; behold, they know what thing I have said.' At this answer of Jesus the countenance of Annas flushed with fury and indignation. A base menial who was standing near perceived this, and he immediately struck our Lord on the face with his iron gauntlet, exclaiming at the same moment, 'Answerest thou the High Priest so?' Jesus was so nearly prostrated by the violence of the blow, that when the guards likewise reviled and struck him, he fell quite down, and blood trickled from his face on to the floor. Laughter, insults, and bitter words resounded through the hall. The archers dragged him roughly up again, and he mildly answered, 'If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou me?' Annas became still more enraged when he saw the calm demeanour of Jesus, and, turning to the witnesses, he desired them to bring forward their accusations.

They all began to speak at once:—'He has called himself king; he says that God is his Father; that the Pharisees are an adulterous generation. He causes insurrection among the people; he cures the sick by the help of the devil on the Sabbath-day. The inhabitants of Ophel assembled round him a short time ago, and addressed him by the titles of Saviour and Prophet. He lets himself be called the Son of God; he says that he is sent by God; he predicts the destruction of Jerusalem. He does not fast; he eats with sinners, with pagans, and with publicans, and associates with women of evil repute. A short time ago he said to a man who gave him some water to drink at the gates of Ophel, "that he would give unto him the water of eternal life, after drinking which he would thirst no more." He seduces the people by words of double meaning,' etc. These accusations were all vociferated at once; some of the witnesses stood before Jesus and insulted him while they spoke by derisive gestures, and the archers went so far as even to strike him, saying at the same time, 'Speak; why dost thou not answer?' Annas and his adherents added mockery to insult, exclaiming at every pause in the accusations, 'This is thy doctrine, then, is it? What canst thou answer to this? Issue thy orders, great King; man sent by God, give proofs of thy mission.' 'Who art thou?' continued Annas, in a tone of cutting contempt; 'by whom art thou sent? Art thou the son of an obscure carpenter, or art thou Elias, who was carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot? He is said to be still living, and I have been told that thou canst make thyself invisible when thou pleasest. Perhaps thou art the prophet Malachy, whose words thou dost so frequently quote. Some say that an angel was

his father, and that he likewise is still alive. An impostor as thou art could not have a finer opportunity of taking persons in than by passing thyself off as this prophet. Tell me, without farther preamble, to what order of kings thou dost belong? Thou art greater than Solomon,—at least thou pretendest so to be, and dost even expect to be believed. Be easy, I will no longer refuse the title and the sceptre which are so justly thy due.’ Annas then called for the sheet of parchment, about a yard in length, and six inches in width; on this he wrote a series of words in large letters, and each word expressed some different accusation which had been brought against our Lord. He then rolled it up, placed it in a little hollow tube, fastened it carefully on the top of a reed, and presented this reed to Jesus, saying at the same time, with a contemptuous sneer, ‘Behold the sceptre of thy kingdom; it contains thy titles, as also the account of the honours to which thou art entitled, and thy right to the throne. Take them to the High Priest, in order that he may acknowledge thy regal dignity, and treat thee according to thy deserts. Tie the hands of this king, and take him before the High Priest.’

The hands of Jesus, which had been loosened, were then tied across his breast in such a manner as to make him hold the pretended sceptre, which contained the accusations of Annas, and he was led to the Court of Caiphas, amidst the hisses, shouts, and blows lavished upon him by the brutal mob. The house of Annas was not more than three hundred steps from that of Caiphas; there were high walls and common-looking houses on each side of the road, which was lighted up by torches and lanterns placed on poles, and there were numbers of Jews standing about talking in an angry excited manner. The soldiers could scarcely make their way through the crowd, and those who had behaved so shamefully to Jesus at the Court of Annas continued their insults and base usage during the whole of the time sent in walking to the house of Caiphas. I saw money given to those who behaved the worst to Jesus by armed men belonging to the tribunal, and I saw them push out of the way all who looked compassionately at him. The former were allowed to enter the Court of Caiphas.