

### The Patriarch

Mensario, '39

The uproar was over. David and I were sitting in the tavern when we were accosted by a grey-bearded patriarch who lived not far from my father's house. I knew him to be an interesting conversationalist and something of a philosopher, for, in his younger days, he had been an instructor in the Law, and so had gained a keen insight into human nature. Such opportunities are not to be wasted; at my suggestion, we sat together in a secluded corner to discuss the day's happenings over cups of red wine.

The old man stroked his beard and mused, as was his custom before he spoke. "Ah," (he began), "'twas justice, 'twas justice. He who will speak against Caesar, disregard the Law, teach mad doctrines, can expect no better fate. Those who called him king have but a poor king now.

"And yet, I cannot understand it. I knew him as a youth; his family lived a few leagues beyond the Gate. Surely, he got no strange ideas from them. They were simple people; his father was an old man, a carpenter by trade, his mother was little more than a child. Just three of them there were; they lived humbly and observed the Law. What better can be said ?

"The mother usually sent her boy to me for instruction. He was an intelligent youth, but quiet, very quiet, and a dreamer. He became well versed in the Law, as did his fellows, for there was no better instructor in the district. Never was a youth sent to me but he left knowing all such a one should know, aye, and more.

"Under my care he grew in wisdom and obedience. Both I deemed necessary qualities, and spared no pains to instil them. But the family was poor and his father needed another pair of hands to bring in what few pennies they could. There lay the trouble, no doubt; soon was he removed from my influence. I did much in what time was allotted to me. Perhaps if they had left his training to my care a little longer, this would not have occurred. It takes time to put a dreamer's head in order.

"Shortly after, I came to the city, feeling there was need for such a one as I in the great Temple here. Though the shepherd folk must be instructed just as those in the city, their simple wants are easily satisfied. Absorbed in the affairs of the metropolis, (many of the leading Pharisees

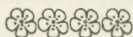


call me friend), all thought of rustic youths was driven from my mind.

"It seems that he took to calling himself a prophet, and went about preaching mad doctrines. All through the hills he wandered, gathering about himself a strange sect. Once I heard him speak, but from a secluded spot, lest I be recognized at such a motley gathering. His eloquence cast a spell over his illiterate hearers, for it was only they who followed him, unlearned fishers, shepherds, and public sinners. True, he performed wondrous feats, but it was evident to an intelligent man that he was in league with the devils. It was his blasphemy that at least drew the wrath of Yahweh upon his head and delivered him into the hands of Caiphas, the high priest.

"The rest is known to you. It is as I expected it to be. He is not an hour dead and his followers have already begun to deny him; before the next Sabbath he will be forgotten. And yet, it is a pity; no man had a better start than he whom I instructed. 'Tis no fault of mine! For a few beggardly pennies the boys father sold his life!

"Inkeeper, more wine!"



I have found you an argument;  
But I am not obliged to find you an understanding.

—Sam. Johnson.

