

CHAPTER V.

ARREST AND TRIAL.

BUNYAN'S preaching enterprise became an extraordinary success. All the Midland Counties heard of his fame, and demanded to hear him. He had been Deacon under Gifford at the Bedford Church; but he was in such request as a preacher, that, in 1657, he was released from his duties there as unable to attend to them. Sects were springing up all over England as weeds in a hot-bed. He was soon in controversy; controversy with Church of England people; controversy with the Ranters, who believed Christ to be a myth; controversy with the Quakers, who, at their outset, disbelieved in his Divinity and in the inspiration of the Scriptures. Envy at his rapidly acquired reputation brought him baser enemies. He was called a witch, a Jesuit, a highwayman. It was reported that he had "his misses," that he had two wives, etc. "My foes have missed their mark in this," he said, with honest warmth: "I am not the man. If all the fornicators and adulterers in England were hanged by the neck, John Bunyan, the object of their envy, would be still alive and well. I know not whether there be such a thing as a woman breathing under the cope of the whole heavens but by their apparel, their children, or common fame, except my wife."

But a more serious trial was now before him. Crom-