

CHAPTER VI.

THE BURNING OF ROME.

The furious madness of Nero had arrived at its paroxysm. It was the most horrible adventure the world had ever passed through. The absolute necessity of the times had delivered up everything to one alone, to the inheritor of the great legendary name of Cæsar: another Government was impossible and the provinces usually found it well enough; but it concealed a terrible danger. When the Cæsar lost his mind, when all the arteries of his poor head, disturbed by an unheard of power shivered at the same moment, then there were madneses without name! People were delivered up to a monster with no means of ridding themselves of him; his guard, made up of Germans who had everything to lose if he fell, were desperate around his person; the beast driven to bay acted like a wild boar and defended itself with fury. As for Nero, there was at the same time something frightful and grotesque, grand and absurd, about him. As Cæsar was well educated, his madness was chiefly literary. The dreams of all the ages, all the poems, all the legends, Bacchus and Sardanapalus, Ninus and Priam, Troy and Babylon, Homer, and the insipid poetry of the time, shook about in the poor brain of a mediocre, but very satisfied, artist to whom chance had entrusted the power of realising all his chimeras. We figure to ourselves a man very nearly as rational as the heroes of M. Victor Hugo, a Shrove-Tuesday character, a mixture of fool, cotquean and actor, clothed in all power and charged with the government of the world He had not the dark wickedness of Domitian, the love of evil for the sake of evil; he was not an extravagant like Caligula; he was a conscientious romancer, an emperor of the opera, a music-madman trembling before the pit and making it tremble, just like a citizen of our days whose good sense might be perverted by the reading of modern poems and who believed himself obliged to imitate Han of Islande and the Burgraves in his conduct. Government being the practical thing *par excellence*, romanticism is altogether out of place. Romance is with him in the domain of art; but action is the inverse of art. In what concerns the education of a prince especially, romance is fatal. Seneca, on this point, certainly did more harm to his pupil, by his bad literary

taste, than good by his fine philosophy. He had a great mind, a talent above the average, and was a man at bottom respectable, in spite of more than one blemish, but quite spoiled by declamation and literary vanity, incapable of feeling or reasoning without phrases. By dint of exercising his pupil to express things he did not think, by composing in advance sublime sentences, he made a jealous comedian of him, a mendacious rhetorician, saying some words of humaneness when he was sure people were listening to him. The old pedagogue saw deeply into the evil of his time, that of his pupil and his own when he wrote in his moments of sincerity: *Literarum intemperantia laboramus*.

These ridiculous things appeared at first very offensive to Nero; the ape sometimes was circumspect and watched the position that had been taken towards him. Cruelty did not show itself till after Agrippina's death; soon it took complete possession of him. Every year, henceforth, is marked by his crimes; Burrhus is no more, and everybody believes that Nero killed him; Octavia has left the world filled with shame; Seneca is in retirement, expecting his arrest every hour, dreaming of nothing but tortures, strengthening his thoughts by meditation on punishment, trying to prove to himself that death is deliverance. Tigellinus being master of everything the *saturnalia* was complete. Nero proclaims daily that art alone should be held as a serious matter, that all virtue is a lie, that the brave man is he who is frank and avows his complete immodesty, and that the great man is he who can abuse, lose, and waste everything. A virtuous man is to him a hypocrite, a seditious person, a dangerous personage, and, above all, a rival; when he discovers some horrible baseness which gives proof to his theories, he shows great delight. The political dangers of bombast and that false spirit of emulation, which was from the first the consuming worm of the Latin culture, unveiled themselves. The player had succeeded in obtaining the power of life and death over his auditory; the *dilettante* threatened the people with the torture if they did not admire his verses. A monomaniac drunk with literary glory, who, turning the fine maxims which they have taught him into pleasantries of a cannibal, a ferocious *gamin* looking for the applauses of the street roughs—that is the master to which the empire is subjected.

Nothing equal in extravagance has ever been seen. The Eastern despots, terrible and grave, had nothing of these mad jests, these debauches of a perverted æsthetic. Caligula's madness had been short; it was a fit, and he was, above all, a buffoon, although he certainly possessed some wit; on the contrary, the folly of this man, commonly nasty, was sometimes shockingly tragical. It was one of the most horrible things to see him, by way of declamation, playing with his remorse, making this the material for his verse. With that melodramatic air which belonged to himself, he spoke of himself as being tormented by the furies, and quoted Greek verses on the parricides. A jocular God appeared to have created him to present him as the horrible *charivari* of a human nature, all whose springs grated on each other, the obscene spectacle of an epileptic world, such as might a Saraband of Congo apes, or a bloody orgy of a king of Dahomey.

By his example all the world seemed struck with vertigo. He had formed a company of odious fellows who were called "the chevaliers of Augustus," having as their occupation to applaud the follies of the Cæsar, and to invent for him some amusements as prowlers in the night. We shall soon see an emperor coming forth from that school. A flood of fancies, bad tastes, platitudes, expressions claiming to be comic, a nauseous slang, analogous to the wit of the smallest journals, entered Rome and became the fashion. Caligula had already created this sort of wretched imperial actorship. Nero took him for his perfect model. It was not enough for him to drive chariots in the circus, to wrestle in public, or to make singing excursions in the country; people saw him fishing with golden nets which he drew with purple cords, arranging his *claqueurs* himself, and obtaining false triumphs, decreeing to himself all the crowns of ancient Greece, organising unheard-of *fêtes*, and playing at the theatres in nameless parts.

The cause of these aberrations was the bad taste of the century, and the misplaced importance they yielded to a declamatory art, looking at the enormous, dreaming only of monstrosities. In fact, what ruled him was the want of sincerity, an insipid taste like that of the tragedies of Seneca, a skill in painting unfelt sentiments, the art of speaking like a virtuous man without being one. The gigantic passed for

great; the æsthetic was nowhere seen; it was the day of colossal statues, of that material theatrical and falsely pathetic art whose chef d'œuvre is the Laocoon, certainly an admirable statue, but the pose being that of a first tenor singing his *canticum*, and where all the emotion is drawn from the pain of the body. They did not content themselves longer with the entirely moral pain of the Niobes, shining forth in beauty; they wished the likeness of physical torture. They would have delighted as the seventeenth century did in a marble by Puget. The senses were served; some grosser resources which the Greeks scarcely permitted in their most popular representations, became the essential element of art. The people were, thus literally, fascinated by shows, not serious spectacles, instructive tragedies, but scenes for effect, phantasmagoria. An ignoble taste for "tableaux vivants" had widely spread. People were no longer content to enjoy in imagination the exquisite stories of the poets; they wished to see the myths represented in the flesh, in whatever was most cruel or obscene; they went into ecstasies before the groupings and the attitudes of the actors; they sought there the effects of statuary. The applauses of 50,000 people, gathered together in an immense building, exciting one another, were such an intoxicating thing, that the sovereign himself came to envy the charioteer, the singer and the actor; the glory of the theatre passed as the first of everything. Not one of the emperors whose head had a weak spot was able to resist the temptations to gather crowns from these wretched plays. Caligula had left there the little reason he had; he passed his days in the theatre amusing himself with the idlers; and later, Commodus and Caracalla disputed with Nero for the palm of madness.

It became necessary to pass laws to prevent senators and knights from descending into the arena, from fighting the gladiators, or pitting themselves against the beasts. The circus had become the centre of life; the rest of the world seemed only made for the pleasures of Rome. There were unceasingly new inventions, each stranger than the other, conceived and ordered by the choragic sovereign. The people went from fête to fête, speaking only of the last day, waiting for the one that was promised them, and ended by becoming much attached to the prince who made

such an endless bacchanalia of his life. The popularity Nero obtained by these shameful means cannot be doubted; it is sufficient that after his death Otho could obtain the government by reviving his memory, by imitating him, and by recalling the fact that he had himself been one of the minions of his coterie.

One cannot exactly say that this wretched man was wanting in heart, or all sentiment of the good and beautiful. Far from being incapable of friendship, he often showed himself to be a good companion, and it was that very fact which made him cruel; he wished to be loved and admired for himself, and was irritated against all who had not those feelings towards him. His nature was jealous and susceptible, and petty treasons put him beside himself. Nearly all his revenges were exercised on persons whom he had admitted to his intimate circle (Lucain, Vestinus), but who abused the familiarity he encouraged to wound him with their jests; for he felt his weaknesses and feared their being detected. The chief cause of his hatred to Thraseas was that he despaired of obtaining his affection. The absurd quotation of the bad hemistich, *Sub terris tonuisse putes*, destroyed Lucain. Without putting aside the services of a Galvia Crispinilla, he really loved some women; and these women, Poppea and Actea, loved him. After the death of Poppea, accomplished by his brutality, he had a sort of repentance of feeling, which was almost touching; he was for a long time possessed by a tender sentiment, sought out everyone who resembled her, and pursued after the most absurd substitutions; Poppea on her side had for him feelings which a woman so distinguished would not have confessed for a common man. A courtesan of the great world, clever in increasing, by the charms of pretended modesty, the attractions of a rare beauty of the highest elegance, Poppea preserved in her heart, in spite of her crimes, an instinctive religion which inclined to Judaism. Nero seems to have been very sensible of that charm in women, which results from a certain piety associated with coquetry. These alternations of abandon and boldness, this woman who never went out but with her face partly veiled, this admirable conversation, and above all this touching worship of her own beauty which acted so that, her mirror having shown her some blemishes in it, she had a fit of perfectly womanlike despair, and wished to die; all this seized in a lively manner the

imagination of a young debauches, on whom the semblances of modesty exercised an all-powerful illusion. We shall soon see Nero, in his *rôle* as the Antichrist, creating in a sense the new æsthetic, and being the first to feast his eyes on the spectacle of unveiled Christian modesty.

The devout and voluptuous Poppea retained him by analogous feelings. The conjugal reconciliation which led to her death supposes that in her most intimate relations with Nero she had never abandoned that hauteur which she affected at the outset of their connection. As to Actea, if she was not a Christian, as it has been thought she was, she could not have so much of this. She was a slave originally from Asia, that is to say, from a country with which the Christians of Rome had daily correspondence. We have often remarked, that the beautiful freed women who had the most adorers were much given to the oriental religions. Actea always kept her simple tastes, and never completely separated herself from her little society of slaves. She belonged first to the family of *Annæa*, about whom we have seen the Christians moving and grouping themselves; it was asserted by Seneca that she played in the most monstrous and tragical circumstances, a part which, seeing her servile condition, cannot perhaps be described as honourable. This poor girl, humble, gentle, and whom many occasions show surrounded by a family of people bearing names almost Christian, *Claudia, Felicula, Stephanus, Crescens, Phœbe Onesimus, Thallus, Artemas, Helpis*, was the first love of Nero as a youth. She was faithful to him even to death; we find her at the villa of Phaon, rendering the last offices to the corpse from which every one drew aside in horror.

And we must say that singular as this should appear, we can quite imagine that in spite of everything, women loved him. He was a monster, an absurd creature, badly formed, an incongruous product of nature; but he was not a common monster. It has been said that fate, by a strange caprice, wished to realize in him the *hircoerf* of logicians, a hybrid bizarre, and incoherent being, most frequently detestable, but whom yet at times people could not refrain from pitying. The feeling of women resting more upon sympathy and personal taste than the vigorous appreciation of ethics, a little beauty or moral kindness, even terribly warped, is sufficient for their

indignation to melt into pity. They are especially indulgent to the artist, misguided by the intoxication of his art, for a Byron, the victim of his chimera, and pushing artlessness so far as to translate his inoffensive poetry into acts. The day on which Actea laid the bleeding corpse of Nero in the sepulchre of Domitius she no doubt wept over the profanation of natural gifts known to her alone; that same day, we can believe more than one Christian woman prayed for him

Although of mediocre talent, he had some parts of an artist's soul; he painted and sculptured well, his verses were good, notwithstanding a certain scholarly pomposity, and, in spite of all that can be said, he made them himself; Suetonius saw his autograph drafts covered with erasures. He was the first to appreciate the admirable landscape of Subiaco, and made a delicious summer residence there. His mind, in the observation of natural things, was just and curious: he had a taste for experiments, new inventions, and in curious things he wanted to know the causes, and separated charlatanism clearly from pretended magical sciences, as well as the nothingness of the religions of his age. The biography we are now quoting from preserves to us the account of the manner in which the vocation of singer awoke in him. He owed his initiation to the most renowned harpist of the century, Terpnos. We see him pass entire nights seated by the side of the musician, studying his play, lost in what he heard, in suspense, panting, intoxicated, breathing with avidity the air of another world which opened before him through contact with a great artist. There was there also the origin of his disgust for the Romans, generally weak connoisseurs, and his preference for the Greeks, according to him, alone capable of appreciating him, and for the Orientals, who applauded him to distraction. Thenceforth he admitted no other glory than that of art: a new life revealed itself to him; the emperor was forgotten; to deny his talent was the. State-crime *par excellence*; the enemies of Rome were those who did not admire him.

His desire in everything to be the head of fashion was certainly absurd. Yet it must be said that there was more policy in that than one would think. The first duty of the Cæsar (seeing the baseness of the times) was to occupy the people. The sovereign was above all a grand organizer of fêtes; the amuser-in-chief must be

made to expose his own person to danger. Many of the enormities with which they reproached Nero had their gravity only from the point of view of Roman manners, and the severe attitude to which people had been accustomed till then. This manly society was revolted by seeing the emperor give an audience to the senate in an embroidered dressing gown, and conducting his reviews in an intolerable *négligé*, without a belt, with a sort of scarf round his neck to preserve his voice. The true Romans were rightly indignant at the introduction of those Eastern customs. But it was inevitable that the most ancient and most worn-out civilization should dominate the younger by its corruption. Already Cleopatra and Antony had dreamed of an oriental empire. There was suggested to Nero a royalty of the same kind; reduced to despair, he will think of asking the prefecture of Egypt. From Augustus to Constantine every year represents progress in the conquest of the portion of the empire which speaks Greek over the portion which speaks Latin.

It must be recollected, moreover, that madness was in the air. If we except the excellent nucleus of aristocratic society which shall arrive at power with Nerva and Trajan, a general want of the serious made the most considerable men play in some sort with life. The personage who represented and summed up the time, "the honest man" of this reign of transcendent immorality, was, Petronius. He gave the day to sleep, the night to business and amusements. He was not one of those dissipated men who ruin themselves by grosser debaucheries, he was a voluptuary, profoundly versed in the science of pleasure. The natural ease and *abandon* of his speech and actions gave him an air of simplicity which charmed. While he was pro-consul in Bithynia and later on consul, he shewed himself capable of great management. Coming back to vice or the boasting of vice, he was admitted into the inner court of Nero, and become the judge of good taste in everything; nothing was gallant or delightful Petronius did not approve. The horrible Tigellinus, who ruled by his baseness and wickedness, feared a rival whom he saw surpassing him in the science of pleasures; he determined to destroy him. Petronius respected himself too much to fight with this miserable man. He did not wish however to quit life rudely. After having opened his veins he closed them again, then he opened them anew,

conversing on trifles with his friends, hearing them talk, not upon the immortality of the soul and the opinions of philosophers, but of songs and light poems. He chose this moment to reward some of his slaves and to have others chastised. He set himself down to table and fell asleep. This sceptical Merimée, with a cold and exquisite tone, has left us a romance of an accomplished and verve polish, at the same time of refined corruption, which is the perfect mirror of the time of Nero. After all, it is not the king of fashion who orders things. The elegance of life has its freedom outside of science and morality. The joy of the universe would want something if the world was only peopled by iconoclastic fanatics and virtuous blockheads.

It cannot be denied that the taste for art was not lively and sincere among the men of that age. They could scarcely produce any beautiful things, but they sought greedily for the beautiful things of the past ages. This same Petronius an hour before his death made them break his myrrh vase so that Nero should not have it. Objects of art rose to a fabulous price. Nero was passionately fond of them. Fascinated by the idea of the great, but joining to that as little good sense as was possible, he dreamed fantastical palaces, of towns like Babylon, Thebes, and Memphis. The imperial dwelling on the Palatine (the ancient house of Tiberius), had been modest enough and of a thoroughly private character until Caligula's reign. This emperor, whom we must consider in everything as the creator of the school of government, in which it can be readily believed that Nero was not the master, considerably enlarged the house of Tiberius. Nero affected to find himself straitened there, and had not jests enough for his predecessors, who were content with so little. He made the first draught in provisional materials of a residence which equalled the palaces of China and Assyria. This house which he called "transitory," and which he meditated soon making real, was quite a world. With its porticos three miles long, its parks where great flocks fed, its interior solitudes, its lakes surrounded by perspectives of fantastic towns, its vines, its forests, it covered a space larger than the Louvre, the Tuileries and the Champs-Élysées put together; it stretched from the Palatine to the gardens of Mecœnus, situated upon the heights of the Esquiline. It was a perfect

fairy land; the engineers Severus and Celer were surpassed there. Nero wished to have it executed in such a way that it could be called the "Golden House." People charmed him by speaking of foolish enterprises, which might make his memory eternal. Rome especially preoccupied his mind. He wished to rebuild it from top to bottom, and to have it called *Neropolis*.

Rome for a century back had been the wonder of the world; she equalled in grandeur the ancient capitals of Asia. Her buildings were beautiful, strong, and solid, but the streets appeared mean to the people of fashion, who every day went more and more in the direction of vulgar and decorative constructions; they aspired to those effects of harmony which make the delight of cockneys; they sought for frivolities unknown to the ancient Greeks. Nero was the head of the movement. The Rome which he imagined would have been something like the Paris of our day, or one of those artificial cities built by superior order on the plan which one has especially seen win the admiration of country people and foreigners. The irrational youth was intoxicated by these unwholesome plans. He desired also to see something strange, some grandiose spectacle worthy of an artist; he wished for an event which should mark a date in his reign. "Until me," said he "people did not know the extent that was permitted to a prince." All these inner suggestions of a disordered fancy appeared to take shape in a *bizarre* event which had for the subject which occupies us the most important consequences.

The incendiary mania being contagious and often complicated by hallucination, it is very dangerous to awake it in weak heads where it sleeps. One of the features of Nero's character was his inability to resist the fixed idea of a crime. The burning of Troy which he had played since his infancy, took possession of him in a terrible manner. One of the pieces which he had represented in one of his fêtes was the *Incendium* of Afranius, where a conflagration was seen upon the stage. In one of his fits of egotistical rage against fate, he cried: "Happy Priam, who could see with his own eyes his empire and his country perish at the same time!" On another occasion, having quoted a Greek verse from the Bellerophon of Euripedes, which signifies:—

When I am dead, the earth and the fire can mingle together;

"Oh, no," said he, "But while I am living!" The tradition according to which Nero burned Rome, only to have a repetition of the burning of Troy, is certainly exaggerated, since, as we shall show, Nero was absent from the city when the fire shewed itself. Yet this story is not destitute of all truth. The demon of perverse dramas who had taken possession of him was, as among wicked people of another age, one of the essential actors in the horrible crime.

On the 19th of July, 64, Rome took fire with a fear-fill violence. The conflagration began near the Capena gate, in the portion of the Grand Circus contiguous to the Palatine hill and Mons Cœlius. That quarter contained many shops, full of inflammable material, where the fire spread with a prodigious rapidity. From that point it made the tour of the Palatine, ravaged the Velabra, the Forum, the Cannes, and mounted the hills, greatly damaged the Palatine, went down again to the valleys, consuming during six days and nights some districts which were compact and full of tortuous streets. An enormous *abat* of houses which had been built at the foot of the Esquiline arrested it for some time; then it flamed up again and lasted three days more. The number of deaths was considerable. Of fourteen districts of which the city was composed, three were entirely destroyed, while other seven were reduced to blackened walls. Rome was a prodigious city closely built, with a very dense population. The disaster was frightful and such as has never been seen equaled.

Nero was at Antium when the fire broke out. He only entered the city at the moment the flames approached his "transitory" house. It was impossible for anything to resist the flames. The imperial mansions of the Palatine, the "transitory" house itself, with its dependencies, and the whole surrounding quarter, were destroyed. Nero evidently did not care much whether his residence could be saved or not. The sublime horror of the spectacle fascinated him. It was afterwards said that, mounted on a tower, he had contemplated the fire, and that there, in a theatrical dress, with a lyre in his hand, he had sung, to the touching rhythm of the ancient elegy, the ruin of Troy.

There was here a legend, a fruit of the age and of successive exaggerations; but one point upon which universal opinion pronounced itself was this, that the fire was ordered by Nero, or at least revived by him when it was about to go out. It was believed that members of his household were recognized setting fire to it at different points. In certain directions, the fire was kindled, it was said, by men feigning drunkenness. The conflagration had the appearance of having been raised simultaneously at many points at the same time. It is said that, during the fire, there had been seen the soldiers and the watchmen charged with extinguishing it, stirring it up, and hindering the efforts which were made to circumscribe it, and that with an air of threatening and in the style of people who executed official orders. Some large constructions of stone, in the neighbourhood of the imperial residence, and whose site he coveted, were turned over as in a siege. When the fire began again, it commenced in some buildings which belonged to Tigellinus. What confirmed these suspicions is that after the fire Nero, under pretext of cleaning the ruins at his expense to leave a free place to the owners took charge of removing the ruins, so much that he did not permit any person to approach them. It was much worse, when they saw him collect a good part of the ruins of the country, when they saw the new palace of Nero, that "House of Gold" which for a long time had been the plaything of his delirious imagination, rising upon the site of the old temporary residence, increased by the space which the fire had cleared. It was thought he had wished to prepare the grounds of this new palace, to justify the reconstruction which he had projected for a long time, to procure himself money by appropriating to himself the debris of the fire, in short, to satisfy his mad vanity, which made him desire to have Rome rebuilt, that it might date from him and that he might give it his name.

Everything leads us to believe that there was no calumny in that. The truth, so far as it concerns Nero, can scarcely be probable. It may be said that with his power he had more simple means than fire to procure the lands he desired. The power of the emperor, without bounds in one sense, soon found on another side its limit in the customs and prejudices of a people conservative in the highest degree of its religious monuments. Rome was full of temples, of holy places, of *areæ*, of buildings which no

law of expropriation could cause to disappear. Cæsar and many other emperors had seen their designs of public utility, especially in what concerns the rectification of the course of the Tiber, met by this obstacle. To execute his irrational plans, Nero had but really one means—fire. The situation resembled that of Constantinople and in the great Mussulman cities, whose renovation is prevented by the mosques and the *ouakouf*. In the East, fire is only a weak expedient; for, after the fire, the ground, considered as a sort of inalienable patrimony of the faithful, remains sacred. At Rome, where religion is attached more to the edifice than to the site, the measure was efficacious. A new Rome, with large and stretched out streets, was reconstructed quickly enough according to the plans of the emperor and on the premiums which he offered.

All honest men who were in the city were enraged. The most precious antiquities of Rome, the houses of the ancient leaders decorated yet with triumphal spoils, the most sacred objects, the trophies, the *ex-voto* antiques, the most esteemed temples—all the material of the old worship of the Romans had disappeared. It was like the funeral of the reminiscences and legends of the fatherland. Nero had in vain taken on himself the expense of assuaging the misery he had caused; it was stated in vain that everything was limited in the last analysis to an operation of clearing up and rendering wholesome; that the new city would be very superior to the old; no true Roman would believe it; all those for whom a city is anything more than a mass of stones were wounded to the heart; the conscience of the country was hurt. This temple built by Evander, that other erected by Servius Tullius, of the sacred *enceinte* of Jupiter Stator, the palace of Numa, those *penates* of the Roman people, those monuments of so many victories, those triumphs of Grecian art, how could the loss be repaired? What value compared with that was there is sumptuousness of parades, vast monumental perspective, and endless straight lines? They conducted expiatory ceremonies, they consulted the Sibyl's books, and the ladies especially celebrated divers *piacula*. But there remained the secret feeling of a crime, an infamy; Nero began to feel that he had gone a little too far.

CHAPTER VII.

MASSACRE OF THE CHRISTIANS—THE ÆSTHETICS OF NERO.

An infernal idea then came into his mind. He asked himself if there were not in the world some wretches still more detested than he by the Roman citizens, on whom he had brought down the odium of the fire. He thought of the Christians. The honor which those last showed for the temples and the buildings most venerated by the Romans rendered acceptable enough the idea that they were the authors of a fire, the effect of which had been to destroy those sanctuaries. Their gloomy air before the monuments appeared an insult to the country. Rome was a very religious city, and one person protesting against the national cults was very quickly observed. It must be remembered that certain rigorous Jews went even so far as not to touch a coin bearing an effigy, and saw as great a crime in the fact of looking at or carrying about an image, as in that of carving it. Others refused to pass through a gate of the city surmounted by a statue. All this provoked the jests and the bad will of the people. Perhaps the talk of the Christians upon the grand final conflagration, their sinister prophecies, their affectation in repeating that the world was soon to finish, and to finish by fire, contributed to make them be taken for incendiaries. It is not even inadmissible that many believers had committed imprudences and that men had had some pretexts to accuse them for having wished, by precluding the heavenly flames, to justify their oracles at any price. What *piaculum*, in any case, could be more efficacious than the punishment of those enemies of the gods. In seeing them atrociously tortured the people would say: "Ah! no doubt, these are the culprits!" It must be recollected that public opinion regarded as established facts the most odious crimes laid to the charge of the Christians.

Let us put far from us the idea that the pious disciples of Jesus had been culpable to any degree of the crime of which they were accused: let us only say that many indications might mislead opinion. This fire it may be they had not lit, but surely they rejoiced at it. The Christians desired the end of society and predicted it. In the Apocalypse, it is the secret prayers of the saints which burn the earth and make it tremble. During the disaster, the attitude of the faithful would appear equivocal:

some no doubt were wanting in showing respect and regret before the consumed temples, or even did not conceal a certain satisfaction. One could imagine such a conventicle at the base of the Transtevere, where it might be said: "is this not what we foretold?" Often it is dangerous to show oneself too prophetic. "If we wished to revenge ourselves," said Tertullian, "a single night and some torches would be sufficient" The accusation of incendiarism was very common against the Jews, because of their separate life. This very crime was one of these *flagitia cohærentia nomini* which made up the definition of a Christian.

Without having at all contributed to the catastrophe of the 19th July, the Christians could therefore be held, if one could so express it, incendiaries at heart. In four years and a half the Apocalypse will present a song on the burning of Rome, to which the event of 64 probably furnished more than one feature. The destruction of Rome by flames was indeed a Jewish and Christian dream; but it was nothing but a dream the pious secretaries were certainly contented to see in spirit the saints and angels applauding from high heaven what they regarded as a just expiation.

One can scarcely believe that the idea of accusing the Christians of the fire of the month of July should come of itself to Nero. Certainly, if Cæsar had known the good brothers closely, he would have strangely hated them. The Christians naturally could not comprehend the merit which lay in posing as an actor on the stage of the society of his age: now what exasperated Nero was when people misunderstood his talent as an artist and head of entertainments. Yet Nero could not but hear them speak of the Christians; he never found himself in personal relations with them. By whom was the atrocious expedient on which he acted suggested? It is probable besides that on many sides in the city some suspicions were entertained. The sect, at that time, was well known in the official world. We have seen that Paul had certain relations with some person attached to the service of the imperial palace. One thing very extraordinary is that among the promises which certain people had made to Nero, in case he should come to be deprived of the empire, was that of the government of the east and particularly of the kingdom of Jerusalem. The Messianic ideas among

the Jews at Rome often took the form of vague hopes of a Roman oriental empire; Vespasian profited at a later date by those fancies. From the accession of Caligula up till the death of Nero, the Jewish cabals at Rome did not cease. The Jews had contributed greatly to the accession and to the support of the family of Germanicus. Whether through the Herods or other intriguers, they besieged the palace, too often to have their enemies destroyed. Agrippa I had been very powerful under Caligula and Claudius; when he resided at Rome he played the part of an influential person. Tiberius Alexander on the other hand, occupied the loftiest functions. Josephus indeed shows himself to be very favourable to Nero; he says they have caluminated him, and lays all his crimes upon his evil surroundings. As to Poppea, he makes her out to be a pious person because she was favourable to the Jews, because she seconded the solicitations of the zealots, and also perhaps because she adopted a portion of their rites. He knew her in the year 62 or 63, obtained through her pardon for the arrested Jewish priests, and cherished the most grateful remembrance of her. We have the touching epitaph of a Jewess named Esther born at Jerusalem and freed by Claudius or Nero, who charges her companion Arescusus to keep watch that they put nothing on her tomb contrary to the Law, as for example, the letters D.M. Rome possessed some actors and actresses of Jewish origin: under Nero, there was in that a natural way of finding access to the emperor. There is named in particular a certain Alityrus, a Jewish player, much liked by Nero and Poppea; it was by him that Josephus was introduced to the empress. Nero, full of hatred for everything that was Roman, loved to turn to the east, to surround himself with orientals, and to concoct some intrigues in the east.

Is all this enough on which to found a plausible hypothesis? Is it allowable to attribute to the hatred of the Jews against the Christians the cruel caprice which exposed the most inoffensive of men to the most monstrous punishments? It was surely a pity that the Jews had this secret interview with Nero and Poppea at the moment when the emperor conceived such a hateful thought against the disciples of Jesus. Tiberius Alexander especially was then in his full favour, and such a man would detest the saints. The Romans usually confounded the Jews and the

Christians. Why was the distinction so clearly made on this occasion? Why were the Jews, against whom the Romans had the same moral antipathy and the same religious grievances as against the Christians, not meddled with at this time? The sufferings of some Jews would have been a *piacalum* quite as effectual. Clemens Romanus, or the author (certainly a Roman) of the epistle which is attributed to him, in the passage where he makes allusion to the massacres of the Christians ordered by Nero, explains them in a manner very obscure to us, but very characteristic. All these misfortunes are "the result of jealousy," and this word "jealousy" evidently signifies here some internal divisions, some animosities among the members of the same confraternity. From that was born a suspicion, corroborated by this incontestable fact that the Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem, were the real persecutors of the Christians, and neglected nothing which would make them disappear. A widespread tradition of the fourth century asserts that the death of Paul and even that of Peter, which they did not separate from the persecution of the year 64, had as its cause the conversion of the mistresses and one of the favourites of Nero. Another tradition sees in this a result of the defeat of Simon the magician. With a personage so fanciful as Nero every conjecture is hazarded. Perhaps the choice of the Christians for the frightful massacre was only a whim of the emperor or Tigellinus. Nero had no need of anyone to conceive for him a design capable of baffling, by its monstrosity, all the ordinary rules of historical induction.

At first a certain number of persons suspected of forming part of the new sect were arrested, and they were put together in a prison, which was already a punishment in itself. They confessed their faith, which was considered an avowal of the crime which was judged inseparable from it. These first arrests led to a great number of others. The larger portion of the accused appear to have been proselytes, observing the precepts and the rules of the pact of Jerusalem. It is not to be admitted that any true Christians had denounced their brethren; but some papers might be seized; some neophytes scarcely initiated might yield to the torture. People were surprised at the multitudes of adherents who had accepted these gloomy doctrines; they did not speak of them without fear. All sensible men considered the

accusation of having caused the fire extremely weak. "Their true crime," it was said, "is hatred to the human race." Although persuaded that the fire was Nero's crime, many of the thoughtful Romans saw in this cast of the police net a way of delivering the city from a most fatal plague. Tacitus, in spite of some pity, is of that opinion. As to Suetonius, he ranks among Nero's praiseworthy measures the punishments to which he subjected the partisans of the new and malevolent superstition

These punishments were something frightful. Such refinements of cruelty had never been seen. Nearly all the Christians arrested were of the *humiliores*, people of no position. The punishment of those unfortunates, when it was a matter of *lese-majesty* or sacrilege, consisted in being delivered to the beasts or burned alive in the amphitheatre, with accompaniments of cruel scourgings. One of the most hideous features of Roman manners was to have made of punishment a fête, and the witnessing of slaughter a public game. Persia, in its moments of fanaticism and terror had known frightful exhibitions of torture; more than once it has tasted there a sort of gloomy pleasure; but never before the Roman domination had there been this looking at these horrors as a public diversion, a subject for laughter and applause. The amphitheatres had become the places of execution; the tribunals furnished the arena. The condemned of the whole world were led to Rome for the supply of the circus and the amusement of the people. Let us join to that an atrocious exaggeration in the penalty which caused simple offences to be punished by death; let us add numerous judicial blunders, resulting from a defective criminal procedure, and we shall conceive that all the ideas were perverted. The punished were considered very soon to be as much unfortunate as criminal; as a whole, they were looked on as nearly innocent, *innoxia corpora*.

To the barbarity of the punishments, this time they added insult. The victims were kept for a fête, to which no doubt an expiratory character was given. Rome reckoned few days so extraordinary. The *ludus matutinus*, dedicated to the fights with animals, made an extraordinary exhibition. The condemned, covered with the skins of wild beasts, were thrust into the arena, where they were torn by the dogs; others were crucified, others again, clothed in tunics steeped in oil, pitch, or resin,

were fastened to stakes and kept to light up the fête at night. As the dusk came on they lit those living flambeaux. Nero gave for the spectacle the magnificent gardens he possessed across the Tiber, and which occupied the present site of the Borgo and the piazza and church of St. Peter. He had found there a circus, commenced by Caligula, continued by Claudius, and of which an obelisk brought from Hierapolis (that which at the present day marks the centre of the piazza of St. Peter) was the boundary. This place had already seen massacres by torchlight. Caligula caused to be beheaded there by the light of flambeaux a certain number of consular personages, senators, and Roman ladies. The idea of replacing those lights by human bodies impregnated by inflammable substances may appear ingenious. This punishment, this fashion of burning alive was not new; it was the ordinary penalty for incendiaries, what was termed the *tunica molesta*; but a system of illumination had never been made out of it. By the light of these hideous torches Nero, who had put evening races in fashion, showed himself in the arena, sometimes mingling with the people in the dress of a jockey, sometimes driving his chariot and seeking for their applause. But yet there were some signs of compassion. Even those who believed the Christians culpable and who confessed that they had deserved the last punishment, were horrified by these cruel pleasures. Wise men wished that they would do only what public utility demanded, that the city should be cleared of dangerous men, but that there should not be the appearance of sacrificing criminals to the cruelty of a single person.

Some women, some maidens, were mixed up with these horrible games. A fête was made out of the nameless indignities they suffered. The custom was established under Nero of making the condemned in the amphitheatre play certain mythological parts, involving the death of the actor. Those hideous operas, where the science of machinery attained prodigious results, were a new thing; Greece would have been surprised if they had suggested to it a similar attempt to apply ferocity to æsthetics, to produce art by torture. The unfortunate was introduced into the arena richly dressed as a god or a hero doomed to death, then represented by his punishment some tragic scene of fables consecrated by sculptors and poets. Sometimes it was

the furious Hercules, burned upon mount Cæta, drawing over his skin the lit tunic of pitch; sometimes it was Orpheus torn in pieces by a bear; Dedalus thrown from the sky and devoured by beasts; Pasiphæe submitting to the embrace of the bull, or Attys murdered; at other times, there were horrible masquerades, where the men were dressed as priests of Saturn, with a red mantle on their backs; the women as priestesses of Ceres, with fillets on their foreheads; and lastly some dramatic pieces, in the course of which the hero was really put to death, like Laureolus, or representations of tragical acts like that of Mucius Scævola. At the close, Mercury, with a rod of red hot iron, touched every corpse to see if it moved; some masked servants, representing Pluto or the *Orcus*, drew away the dead by the feet, killing with mallets all who still breathed.

The most respectable Christian ladies bore their part in these monstrosities. Some played the part of the Danaïdes, others those of Dircé. It is difficult to say why the fable of the Danaïdes could furnish a bloody tableau. The punishment which all mythological tradition attributes to these guilty women, and in which they are represented, was not cruel enough to minister to the pleasure of Nero and the *habitués* of his amphitheatre. Probably they marched bearing urns, and received the fatal blow from an actor representing Lynceus; or Anonyms, one of the Danaïds, was seen pursued by a Satyr and outraged by Neptune. Perhaps, in short, these unfortunates passed through the punishment of Tartarus one after the other, and died after hours of torment. Representations of hell were in fashion. Some years before (41) certain Egyptians and Nubians came to Rome, and had a great success by giving exhibitions at night, where they showed the horrors of the lower world, according to the paintings on the Syringe of Thebes, especially those on the tomb of Sethos I.

As to the sufferings of the Dircés there can be no doubt, We know the colossal group known by the name of the *Farnese Bull*, now in the museum at Naples. Amphion and Zethus fasten Dirce to the horns of an untamed bull which would draw her across the rocks and precipices of Cithero. This mediocre Rhodian marble, brought to Rome in the time of Augustus, was the object of universal admiration.

What finer subject for this hideous art which the cruelty of the age had put in vogue and which consisted in making *tableaux vivants* of famous statues? A text and a fresco from Pompeii appear to prove that this temple scene was often represented in the arena, when the person to be punished was a woman. Bound naked by the hair to the horns of a furious bull, the unfortunates satiated the lustful glances of the cruel people. Some of the Christian women thus sacrificed were weak in body; their courage was superhuman: but the infamous crowd had no eyes save for their opened entrails and their torn bosoms.

Nero was doubtless present at these spectacles. As he was short-sighted he had the habit of wearing in his eye, when he followed the gladiatorial fights, a concave emerald which he used as a *lorgnon*. He loved to parade his knowledge of sculpture; it is asserted that he made odious remarks over the corpse of his mother, praising this and disparaging that. Flesh palpitating under the teeth of the beasts, a poor timid girl veiling her nudity by a modest gesture, then tossed by a bull, and torn in pieces on the pebbles of the arena, would present some plastic forms and colours worthy of a connoisseur like him. He was there in the first rank upon the *podium*, mingling with the vestals and the curule magistrates, with his bad figure, his mean face, his blue eyes, his chestnut hair twisted in rows of curls, his cruel lips, his wicked and beastly air; at once the figure of a big ugly baby, happy, puffed up with vanity, while a brassy music vibrated in the air, waving through a stream of blood. He doubtless dwelt like an artist upon the modest attitude of these new Dirces, and found, I imagine, that a certain air of resignation gave to these poor women about to be torn in pieces a charm which he had never known till then.

For a long time that hideous scene was remembered, and even under Domitian when an actor was put to death in his part, especially one Loreolius, who really died upon the cross, they thought of the *piacula* of the year 64 and imagined him to represent an incendiary of the city of Rome. The names of *sarmentitii* or *sarmentarii* (people preparing the fagots) *semaxii* (the stakes) the popular cry of "The Christians to the lions" appeared also to date from that time. Nero, with a sort of clever art,

had struck budding Christianity with an indelible impress; the bloody *nævus* inscribed on the forehead of the martyr church shall never be effaced.

Those of the brethren who were not tortured had in some sort their part in the sufferings of the others by the sympathy which they shewed them and the care which they took to visit them in prison. They bought often this dangerous favour at the price of all their goods; the survivors of the crisis were utterly ruined. They scarcely thought of that, however, they saw nothing but the enduring reward of heaven and said continually: "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come."

Thus opened this strange poem of martyrdom, this *epopee* of the amphitheatre, which was to last for 250 years, and from which would come forth the ennoblement of women, the rehabilitation of the slaves by such episodes as these: Blandina on the cross turning her eyes upon her companions, who saw in the gentle and pale slave the image of Jesus crucified: Potanugina protected from outrage by the young officer who was leading her to punishment. The crowd was seized with horror when it perceived the humid breasts of Felicita; Perpetua in the arena pinning up her hair trampled by the beasts not to appear disconsolate. Legend tells that one of these saints proceeding to punishment met a young man who, touched by her beauty, gave her a look of pity. Wishing to leave him a souvenir she took the kerchief which covered her bosom and gave it to him; intoxicated by this gage of love the young man ran a moment later to martyrdom. Such was in fact the dangerous charm of those bloody dramas of Rome, Lyons, and Carthage. The joy of the sufferers in the amphitheatre became contagious as under the Terror the resignation of the "Victims." The Christians presented themselves above all to the imagination of the times as a race determined to suffer. The desire for death was henceforward their mark. To arrest the too deep desire for martyrdom the most terrible threatenings became necessary—the stamp of heresy, expulsion from the church.

The fault which the educated classes of the empire committed in provoking this feverish enthusiasm cannot be blamed enough. To suffer for his belief is a thing so sweet to man that this attraction is alone sufficient to make him believe. More than one unbeliever was converted without any other reason than that; in the east, one

even sees impostors lying only for the sake of lying and being victims of their own lies. There was no sceptic who did not regard the martyr with a jealous eye, and did not envy him that supreme happiness of affirming something. A secret instinct leads us besides to favour those who are persecuted. Whoever imagines that a religious or social movement can be arrested by coercive measures gives therefore a proof of his complete ignorance of the human heart, and shews that he does not know the true means of political action.

What happened once may happen again. Tacitus would have turned away with indignation if he had been shewn the future of those Christians whom he treated as wretches. The honest people of Rome would have cried out if any observer endowed with a prophetic spirit had dared to say to them: "These incendiaries will be the salvation of the world." Hence an eternal objection against the dogmatism of conservative parties, an irremediable warping of conscience, and a secret perversion of judgment. Some wretches despised by all fashionable people have become saints. It would not be good if madnesses of this kind were frequent. The safety of society demands that its sentences shall not be too frequently reformed. Since the condemnation of Jesus, since the martyrs have been found to have had success for their cause in their revolt against the law, there had always been in the matter of social crimes as a secret appeal from the thing judged. Not one of the condemned but could say: "Jesus was smitten thus. The martyrs were held to be dangerous men of whom society must be purged, and yet the following centuries have shewn that this was right." A heavy blow this to those clumsy assertions by which a society seeks to represent to itself that its enemies are wanting in all reason and morality.

After the day when Jesus expired on Golgotha, the day of the festivals of the gardens of Nero (one can fix it about the 1st of August in the year 64) was the most solemn in the history of Christianity. The solidity of a construction is in proportion to the sum of virtues, sacrifices and devotion which are laid as its foundations. Fanatics alone found anything. Judaism endures still by reason of the intense frenzy of its prophets and zealots; Christianity, because of the courage of its first witnesses. The orgy of Nero was the grand baptism of blood, which marked out Rome as the city of

the martyrs to play a part in the history of Christianity, and to be the second holy city. It was the taking possession of the Vatican hill by these conquerors of a kind unknown till then.

The odious madcap who governed the world did not perceive that he was the founder of a new order, and that he signed for the future a character written with *cinnebar*, whose effects would be reclaimed at the end of eighteen hundred years. Rome, made responsible for all the bloodshed, became, like Babylon, a sort of sacramental and symbolic city. Nero took in any case that day a place of the first order in the history of Christianity. This miracle of horror, this prodigy of perversity, was an evident sign to all. A hundred and fifty years after Tertullian writes: "Yes, we are proud that our position outside of the law has been inaugurated by such a man. When one has come to know him he understands that he who was condemned by Nero could not but be great and good." Already the idea had spread that the coming of the true Christ would be preceded by the coming of a sort of an infernal Christ who should be in everything the contrary of Jesus. That could not longer be doubted; the Antichrist, the Christ of evil, existed. The Antichrist was this monster with a human face made up of ferocity, hypocrisy, immodesty, pride, who paraded before the world as an absurd hero, celebrated his triumph as a chariot driver with torches of human flesh, intoxicated himself with the blood of the saints, and perhaps did worse than that. One is tempted to believe in fact that it is to the Christians that a passage in Suetonius refers as to a monstrous game which Nero had invented. Some youths, men, women and young girls were fastened to stakes in the arena. A beast came forth from the caves glutting itself upon these bodies. The freed man Doryphorus made as if he were fighting the beast. Now if the beast was Nero clothed in the skin of a wild beast, Doryphorus was a wretch to whom Nero had been married sending forth cries like a virgin when she is violated . . . The name of Nero has been discovered; it shall be THE BEAST. Caligula had been the *Anti-God*. Nero shall be the Anti-Christ, the Apocalypse. The Christian virgin who, attached to a stake, was subjected to the hideous embraces of the beast, will carry that fearful image with her into eternity!

That day was likewise the one upon which was created by a strange antithesis, the charming ambiguity on which humanity has lived for centuries and partly lives still. This was an hour reckoned in Heaven as that in which Christian chastity, until then so carefully concealed, should appear in the full light before fifty thousand spectators, and placed, as in the studio of a sculptor, in the attitude of a virgin about to die. Revelations of a secret which antiquity does not know! Brilliant proclamation of this principle that modesty is a joy and a beauty itself alone! Already we have seen the great magician who is called fancy, and who modifies from century to century the ideal of woman, working incessantly to place above the perfection of the form the attraction of modesty (Poppea only ruled by putting that on) and of a resigned humility (in that was the triumph of the good Actea). Accustomed to march always at the head of his age in the paths of the unknown, Nero was, it appears, the introducer of this sentiment, and discovered in his artistic debauches the philtre of love in the Christian female esthetic. His passion for Actea and Poppea proves that he was capable of delicate feelings, and as the monstrous mingled with everything he touched, he wished to realise for himself the spectacle of his dreams. The image of the grandmother of Cymodocea refracted itself like the heroine of an antique cameo in the focus of his emerald. By obtaining the applause of a connoisseur, so exquisite, a friend of Petronius, who perhaps saluted the *Moritura* by some of those quotations from the classical poets whom he loved, the timid nudity of the young martyr became the rival of the nudity, confident in itself, of a Greek Venus. When the brutal hand of this worn out world which sought its festival in the torments of a young girl had drawn aside the veil from Christian modesty, that might have said, "And I also am beautiful." It was the beginning of a new art. Hatched under the eyes of Nero, the aesthetic of the disciples of Jesus, which did not know itself till then, owes the revelation of its magic to the crime which tearing aside its robe despoiled it of its virginity.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.

We do not know with certainty the names of any of the Christians who perished at Rome, in the horrible events of August, 64. The arrested persons had been lately converted and their names were scarcely known. Those holy women who had astonished the church by their constancy were not known by names. They had been styled in Roman history as "The Danaïdes and the Dirces." Yet the images of the places remained lively and deep. The circus or naumachy, the two boundaries, the obelisk, and a turpentine tree which served as a rallying point for the reminiscences of the first Christian generations, became the fundamental elements of a whole ecclesiastical topography whose result was the consecration of the Vatican and the pointing out of that hill for a religious destiny of the first order. Although the affair had been special to the city of Rome and as it was necessary to appease the public opinion of the Romans, irritated by the fire, the atrocity ordered by Nero must have had some counterpart in the provinces and excited there a renewal of persecution. The churches of Asia Minor were heavily tried; the heathen population of these countries were prompt to fanaticism. There had been some imprisonments at Syrmna. Pergamos had a martyr who is known to us by the name of Antipas, who appears to have suffered near the temple of Esculapius, probably in a wooden theatre not far from the temple in connection with some festival. Pergamos was, with Cyzicus, the only town of Asia Minor which had a regular organization for gladiatorial shows. We know now that these plays were placed at Pergamos under the authority of the priests. Although there had been no formal edict forbidding the profession of Christianity, that profession was in reality against the law; *hostis, hostis patriæ, hostis publicus, humani generis inimicus, hostis deorum atque hominum*, such were the appellations written in the laws to designate those who put society in danger and against whom every man according to the expression of Tertullian became a soldier. The name alone of Christian was consequently a crime. As the most complete judgment was left to the judges for the estimation of such crimes, the life of every

believer from that day was in the hands of magistrates of a horrible harshness and filled with cruel prejudices against them.

It is allowable without unlikelihood to connect with the event of which we have given an account the deaths of the apostles Peter and Paul. A fate truly strange has decreed that the disappearance of these two extraordinary men should be enveloped in mystery. A certain thing is, that Peter died a martyr. Now it can scarcely be conceived that he had been a martyr elsewhere than at Rome, and at Rome the only historical incident known by which one could explain his death is the episode recorded by Tacitus. As to Paul, some solid reasons lead us also to believe that he died a martyr and died at Rome. It is therefore natural to connect his death likewise with the episode of July-August, 64. Thus was cemented by suffering the reconciliation of those two souls, the one so strong, the other so good; thus was established by legendary authority (that is to say, divine) this touching brotherhood of two men whose parties opposed each other, but who, we may believe, were superior to parties and always loved each other. The great legend of Peter and Paul parallel to that of Romulus and Remus founding by a sort of collaboration the grandeur of Rome—a legend which in a sense has had in the history of humanity nearly as much importance as that of Jesus—dates from the day which, according to tradition, saw them die together. Nero, without knowing it, was again in this the most efficacious agent in the creation of Christianity, he who placed the corner stone in the city of the Saints.

As to the nature of the death of the two Apostles, we know with certainty that Peter was crucified. According to ancient texts his wife was executed with him, and he saw her led to punishment. A story, accepted since the third century, says that, too humble to suffer like Jesus, he asked to be crucified with his head downwards. The characteristic feature of the butchery of 64 having been the search for odious rarities in the way of tortures, it is possible that Peter in fact had been offered to the crowd in this hideous attitude. Seneca mentions some cases where tyrants have been known to cause the heads of the crucified to be turned to the earth. Their Christian piety would have seen a mystic refinement in what was only a *bazarre*

caprice of the executioners. Perhaps the passage in the fourth gospel: 'Thou shalt stretch forth thine hands and another shall gird thee, and shall lead thee whither thou would'st not,' includes some allusion to a speciality in Peter's suffering. Paul in his capacity as *honestior* had his head cut off. It is probable besides that there had been in regard to him a regular decision, and that he was not included in the summary condemnation of the victims of Nero's fêtes. Timothy was, according to certain appearances, arrested with his master and kept in prison.

At the beginning of the 3rd century two monuments were already seen at Rome connected with the names of the Apostles Peter and Paul. One was situated at the foot of the Vatican hill: it was that of St. Peter; the other on the way to Ostia: it was that of St. Paul. They were called in oratorical style, "the trophies" of the Apostles. These were probably some *cellæ* or some *memoriæ* consecrated to the saints. Some such monuments existed before Constantine; we are entitled besides to suppose that these trophies were only known to the faithful; perhaps even they were nothing else than that Terebinth of the Vatican, with which the memory of Peter has been associated for ages, that Pine of the Salvian Waters, which was, according to certain traditions, the centre of the souvenirs relating to Paul. Much later these trophies became the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. About the middle of the 3rd century, in fact, there appeared two bodies which universal veneration held to be those of the Apostles, and which appeared to have come from the the catacombs of the Appian Way, where there had really been many Jewish Cemeteries. In the fourth century these corpses reposed in the neighbourhood of the "two trophies." Above these "trophies" were then raised two basilicas of which one had become the present basilica of St. Peter and of which the other, St. Paul-beyond-the-Walls, have kept their essential forms until our day.

Did the "trophies" which the Christians venerated about the year 200 really mark the places where the two Apostles suffered? That may be. It is not unlikely that Paul at the end of his life resided in the outskirts which stretch beyond the Lavernal gate upon the way from Ostia. The shadow of Peter, upon the other hand always wanders in the Christian legend towards the foot of the Vatican, the gardens and the circus of

Nero especially about the obelisk. This arises, it will be seen, from the fact that the circus spoken of preserved the souvenir of the martyrs of 64, with whom, failing precise indications, Christian tradition would connect Peter; we like better to believe, notwithstanding, that there was mixed with that some indication, and that the old place of the obelisk of the sacristy of St. Peter, marked at the present day by an inscription, points out somewhat nearly the spot where Peter on the cross satiated by his frightful agony the eyes of a populace greedy to behold him suffer. Were the bodies which since the third century had been surrounded by an uninterrupted tradition of respect, the very bodies of the two Apostles? We scarcely believe it. It is certain that attention in keeping up the memory of the tombs of the martyrs was very ancient in the church; but Rome was about 100 and 120 the theatre of an immense legendary work relating especially to the two Apostles, Peter and Paul; a work in which pious claims had a large part. It is scarcely believable that in the days which followed the horrible carnage in August, 64. they could have reclaimed the corpses of the sufferers. In the hideous mass of human flesh stoned, roasted, and trampled, which was that day drawn by hooks into the spoliarium, then thrown into the *puticuli*, it would have perhaps been difficult to recognize the identity of any of the martyrs. Often doubtless an authorization was obtained to withdraw from the hands of the executioners the remains of the condemned; but while supposing (which is very admissible) that some brethren had braved death to go and demand the precious relics, it is probable that instead of these being given to them they would have been themselves sent to add to the heap of corpses. During some days the mere name of Christian was a sentence of death. It is besides a secondary question. If the Vatican basilica does not really cover the tomb of the apostle Peter, it does not the less mark out for our remembrance one of the most really holy places of Christianity. The spot where the bad taste of the seventeenth century constructed a circus of theatrical architecture was a second Calvary, and even supposing that Peter had not been crucified there, there at least no doubt suffered the Danaïdes and the Dirces.

If, as we may be allowed to believe, John accompanied Peter to Rome, we can find a plausible foundation for the old tradition according to which John would have been plunged in the boiling oil, in the place where stood much later the Latin Gate. John appears to have suffered for the name of Jesus. We are led to believe that he was the witness, and up to a certain point the victim, of the bloody episode to which the Apocalypse owes its origin. The Apocalypse is to us the cry of horror from a witness who lived at Babylon, who had known the Beast, who had seen the bleeding bodies of his brother martyrs, who himself had felt the embrace of death. The unfortunate condemned who were used as living torches would be previously dipped in oil, or in an inflammable substance (not boiling, it is true). John was perhaps devoted to the same suffering as his brethren, and intended to illuminate the evening of the *fête* of the Faubourg of the Latin Way, a chance, a caprice had saved him. The Latin Way is indeed situated in the quarter in which the incidents of those terrible days passed. The southern part of Rome (the Capena gate, the Ostia road, the Appian Way, the Latin Way), forms the region around which appears to concentrate, in the time of Nero, the history of the budding church.

A jealous fate has willed that on so many points which greatly excite our curiosity, we should never escape from the penumbra where legend dwells. Let us repeat it once more; the questions relating to the death of the Apostles Peter and Paul present nothing but likely hypotheses. The death of Paul especially is wrapped in deep mystery. Certain expressions in the Apocalypse, composed at the end of 68 or the beginning of 69, would incline us to think that the author of this book believed Paul to be alive when he wrote. It is in no way impossible that the end of the great Apostle had been altogether unknown. In the career that certain texts attributed to him from the Western side, a shipwreck, a sickness, or some accident might carry him off. As he had not at that moment his brilliant crown of disciples around him the details of his death would remain unknown; later on, the legend would be filled up by taking account, on the one hand, the position of Roman citizenship which the *Acts* gives him, and on the other hand, the desire which the Christian conscience had to carry out a reconciliation between him and Peter. Certainly, an obscure death for the

ardent Apostle has something in it which pleases us. We like to dream of Paul sceptical, shipwrecked, abandoned, betrayed by his friends, struck by the disenchantment of old age; it pleases us that the scales should fall a second time from his eyes, and our gentle incredulity would have its little revenge if the most dogmatic of men had died sad, despairing (let us rather say, tranquil) on some Spanish road or shore, saying thus to himself, *Ego errovi!* But this would be to give too much to conjecture. It is certain that the two apostles were dead in 70; they did not see the ruins of Jerusalem, which would have made such a deep impression on Paul. We admit, therefore, as probable in all that follows of this history, that the two champions of the Christian conception disappeared at Rome during the terrible storm of the year 64. James was dead a little more than two years before. Of "apostle-pillars" there remained, therefore, only John. Some other friends of Jesus, no doubt, lived still in Jerusalem, but forgotten, as if lost in the gloomy whirlwind in which Judea was to be plunged for many years.

We shall show in the following book how the church consummated a reconciliation between Peter and Paul which, perhaps, death had sketched. Success was the reward. Apparently inalienable, the Judeo-Christianity of Peter and the Hellenism of Paul were equally necessary to the success of the future work. Judeo-Christianity represented the conservative spirit, without which it possessed nothing substantial; Hellenism, advance and progress, without which nothing really exists. Life is the result of a conflict between opposing forces. People die as well from the absence of all revolutionary feeling as from excess of revolution.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAY AFTER THE CRISIS.

The conscience of a society of men is like that of an individual. Every impression going beyond a certain degree of violence leaves in the *sensorium* of the patient a trace which is equivalent to a lesion, and puts it for a long time, if not for ever, under the power of hallucination, or a fixed idea. The bloody episode of August, 64, had equalled in horror the most hideous dreams which a sick brain could conceive. For many years to come the Christian consciousness shall be as if possessed. It is a prey to a sort of vertigo; monstrous thoughts torment. A cruel death appears to be the lot reserved for all believers in Jesus. But is not itself the most certain sign of the nearness of the Great day?

. . . The souls of the victims of the Beast were conceived if as waiting the sacred hour under the divine altar and crying for vengeance. The angel of God calms them, tells them to keep themselves in peace, and wait yet a little while; the moment is not far off when their brethren, destined for immolation, shall be killed in their turn. Nero shall charge himself with that. Nero is this infernal personage to whom God will abandon for a little his power on the eve of the catastrophe; it is this hellish monster who should appear like a frightful meteor in the horizon of the evening of the last days.

The air was everywhere as if impregnated with the spirit of martyrdom. The surroundings of Nero appeared animated against morality by a sort of disinterested hatred; there was from one end to the other of the Mediterranean, a struggle to the death between good and evil. That harsh Roman society had declared war against piety in all its forms; piety saw itself driven, forced to leave a world delivered up to perfidy, to cruelty, and to debauchery; there were no honest people who would run such dangers. The jealousy of Nero against virtue had risen to its height, philosophy was only occupied in preparing its disciples for the tortures; Seneca, Thraseas, Barea, Soranus, Musonius, and Cornutus had submitted, or were about to submit, to the consequences of their noble protest. Punishment appeared the natural lot of virtue. Even the sceptical Petronius, because he was of polished manners, could not

live in a world where Tigellinus ruled. A touching echo from the martyrs of this Terror has come to us through the inscriptions of the island of religious banishments, where one would not have expected it. In a sepulchral grotto near Cagliari a family of exiles, perhaps devoted to the worship of Isis, has left us its touching complaint, almost Christian. When the unfortunates arrived in Sardinia, the husband fell ill in consequence of the frightful insalubrity of the island; his wife, *Benedicta*, made a vow beseeching the gods to take her in place of her husband; she was heard.

The uselessness of the massacres was seen, besides, clearly in this circumstance. An aristocratic movement, peculiar to a small number of people, is stopped by a few executions; but it is not the same with a popular movement, for such a movement has neither need of leaders nor of learned teachers. A garden where the flowers have no root can exist no longer: a park mowed becomes better than before. Thus Christianity, far from being arrested by the lugubrious caprice of Nero, multiplied more vigorously than ever; an increase of anger took possession of the survivors' hearts; it would become more than a dream, they would become masters of the heathen ruling them, as they deserved, with a rod of iron. An incendiary, although another than he whom they accused of having lit this fire, shall devour this impious city, become the temple of Satan. The doctrine of the final conflagration of the world takes each day deeper roots. Fire only shall be capable of purging the earth from the infamies which soil it; fire appears the only righteous and worthy end to such a mass of horrors.

The greater part of the Christians at Rome who escaped the ferocity of Nero, doubtless quitted the city. During six or twelve years, the Roman Church found itself in extreme disorder, a large door was opened to legend. Yet there was not a complete interruption in the existence of the community. The Seer of the Apocalypse in December, 68, or January, 69, gives orders to his people to quit Rome. Even by making that passage a prophetic fiction, it is difficult not to conclude that the Church of Rome quickly resumed its importance. The chiefs alone definitively abandoned a city where their Apostolate for the moment could not bear fruit. The point in the Roman world where life was most supportable for the Jews was at that time the

province of Asia. There was between the Jewish community at Rome, and that at Ephesus, increasing communication. It was to that side that the fugitives directed themselves. Ephesus was the point where resentment for the events of the year 64 shall be most lively. All the hatreds of Rome were concentrated there; thence shall come forth in four years a furious invective, by which the Christian conscience shall reply to the atrocities of Nero.

There is no unlikelihood in placing among the Christian notables who came from Rome, the Apostle whom we have seen follow in everything Peter's fortunes. If the accounts relative to the incident, which was placed later on at the Latin Gate, have any truth, we may be permitted to suppose that the Apostle John, escaping punishment as by miracle, should have quitted the city without delay, and afterwards it was natural that he should take refuge in Asia. Like nearly all the data relating to the life of the Apostles, the traditions as to the residence of John at Ephesus are subject to doubt; they have yet also their plausible side, and we are inclined rather to admit them than reject them.

The Church at Ephesus was mixed; one party owned Paul's faith, another was Judeo-Christian. This latter fraction would preponderate through the arrival of the Roman colony, especially if that colony brought with it a companion of Jesus, a Jerusalem doctor, one of those illustrious masters before even whom Paul himself bowed. John was, after the death of Peter and James, the only apostle of the first order who still lived; he had become the chief of all the Judeo-Christian Churches; an extreme respect attached to him; we are led to believe (and no doubt the apostle himself says it), that Jesus had for him a special affection. A thousand stories were founded already upon these data. Ephesus became for a time the centre of Christianity, Rome and Jerusalem being, in consequence of the violence of the times, residences nearly forbidden to the new religion.

The struggle was soon lively between the Judeo-Christian community, headed by the intimate friend of Jesus and the families of the proselytes made by Paul. This struggle reached to all the churches of Asia. There were nothing but bitter declamations against this Balaam, who had sown scandal among the sons of Israel,

who had taught them that they could without sin intermarry with heathens. John, on the contrary, was more and more considered like a Jewish high priest. Like James, he bore the *petalon*, that is to say, the plate of gold upon his forehead. He was the doctor *par excellence*; they were even accustomed, perhaps because of the incident of the boiling oil, to give him the title of martyr.

It appears that among the number of fugitives who came from Rome to Ephesus was Barnabas. Timothy was imprisoned about the same time; we do not know in what place, perhaps in Corinth. At the end of some months he was set free. Barnabas, when he heard this good news, seeing the situation quieter, formed the project of visiting Rome with Timothy, whom he had known and loved as the companion of Paul. The apostolic phalanx dispersed by the storm of 64, sought to reform itself. Paul's school was the least consistent; it sought, deprived of its head, to support itself by one of the more solid portions of the Church. Timothy, accustomed to be led, would be little if anything after Paul's death. Barnabas, on the contrary, who had always kept in a middle path between the two parties, and who had not once sinned against charity, became the bond of the scattered debris after the great shipwreck. That excellent man was thus once more the saviour of the work of Jesus, the good genius of concord and peace.

It is the circumstances concerning him that, according to our view, connect the work which bears the title difficult to understand of the epistle to the Hebrews. This writing would appear to have been composed at Ephesus by Barnabas, and addressed to the Church of Rome in the name of the little community of Italian Christians who had taken refuge in the capital of Asia. By his position, in some degree intermediate at the point of meeting of many ideas hitherto never associated, the epistle to the Hebrews comes by right to the conciliatory man, who so many times prevented the different tendencies in the bosom of the young community from reaching an open rupture. The opposition of the Jewish Churches to the Gentile Churches appears, when one reads this little treatise, a question settled, or rather lost in an overflowing flood of transcendental metaphysics and peaceful charity. As we have said, the taste for the *midraschim* or little treatises of religious exegesis

under an epistolary form had made great progress. Paul was set forth quite fully as to his doctrine in his Epistle to the Romans; later on, the Epistle to the Ephesians had been his most advanced formula; the Epistle to the Hebrews would appear to be a manifesto of the same order. No Christian book so much resembles the work of the Alexandrian Schools, especially the tractates of Philo. Appollos had already entered on that path. Paul, the prisoner, was singularly pleased with him. An element foreign to Jesus, Alexandrianism, infused itself more and more into the heart of Christianity. In the Johannine writings we see this influence exercising itself in a sovereign manner. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Christian theology is shown to be strongly analagous to that which we have found in the Epistles in Paul's last style. The theory of the Word developed rapidly. Jesus became more and more "the second God," the *metratone*, the assessor of the divinity, the firstborn by right of God, inferior to God alone. As to the circumstances of the time in which it was written, the author explains these only by a few covert words; we feel that he fears to compromise the bearer of this letter, and those to whom it is addressed. A grievous weight appears to oppress him; his secret anguish escapes in brief but deep features.

God, after having formally communicated His will by the ministry of the prophets, has used in these last days the instrumentality of the Son by whom He had created the world, and who maintains everything by his power. This Son, the reflex of the Father's glory and the imprint of his essence, whom the Father has been pleased to appoint heir of the universe, has expiated sin by his appearance in this world; then he has gone to sit down in the celestial regions at the right hand of the majesty, with a title superior to that of the angels. The Mosaic law had been announced by the angels; it contains only the shadow of the good things to come; ours has been announced first by the Lord, then it has been transmitted to us in a sure manner by those who heard it from him, God bearing them witness by signs, prodigies, and all sorts of miracles, as well as by the gifts of the Holy Spirit; thanks to Jesus all men have been made sons of God, Moses has been a servant, Jesus has been the Son; Jesus has especially been *par excellence* the high priest after the order of Melchisedic.

This order is much superior to the Levitical priesthood, and has totally abrogated it; Jesus is priest throughout eternity.

“For such an high priest became us who is holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, and raised higher than the heavens, who does not need each day like the other priests to offer sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for those of the people. The old law made high priests of men who were liable to fall: the new law has constituted the Son to all eternity. We have such a high priest, who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty, as the minister of the true sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord hath built. Christ is the high priest of good things to come. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkle those who are unclean, gives carnal purity: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who has offered himself to God, a spotless victim, purify our conscience from dead works? It is thus He is the Mediator of the New Testament; for to have a testament it is necessary that the death of the testator should be proved, as a testament has no effect while the testator lives. The first covenant, also, was inaugurated with blood. It is by means of blood that everything is legally purged, and without shedding of blood there is no pardon.”

We are, therefore, sanctified once for all by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, who shall appear a second time to those who wait for him. The old sacrifices never attained their end since they were renewed unceasingly. If the expiatory sacrifice recurred every year on a fixed day, is that not a proof that the blood of the victims was powerless? In place of those perpetual holocausts Jesus has offered his single sacrifice, which renders the other useless. Consequently there is no longer need of a sacrifice for sin.

The feeling of the dangers which surrounded the Church fills the author’s mind. He has before his eyes only a perspective of sufferings. He thinks of the tortures which the prophets and the martyrs of Antiochus have endured; the faith of many succumbed. The author is very severe on these falls.

“ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again into repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth

herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His name in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Some believers already had shown themselves neglectful of attendance upon the gatherings in the church. The apostle declares that these gatherings are the essence of Christianity, that it is there we exhort, animate, and watch each other, and that it is necessary to be all the more assiduous in that as the great day of final appearance approaches.

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions. Partly while ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while he that shall come will come.

Faith sums up the attitude of the Christian. Faith is the steady waiting for that which is promised, the certainty of what is not yet seen. It is faith which made the great men of the ancient law, who died without having obtained the things promised, having only seen them and hailed them from afar, confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims upon this earth, always searching for a better country which they have not found, the heavenly. The author quotes on this subject the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Rahab the harlot.

What more shall I say, for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel and of the

prophets. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth. And these, all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.

The author then explains to the confessors that the sufferings which they endure are no punishments, but that they ought to be taken as paternal corrections such as a father administers to his son, and which are a pledge of his tenderness. He invitee them to hold themselves in readiness against light minds which, after the manner of Esau, give their spiritual patrimony in exchange for a worldly and momentary advantage. For the third time the author turns back upon his favourite thought that after a fall which has put one outside of Christianity, there is no return. Esau also sought to regain the paternal benediction, but his tears and regrets were useless. We know that there had been, in the persecution of 64, some renegades through weakness, who, after their apostacy, desired to re-enter the Church. Our doctor demands that they should be repulsed. What blindness, indeed, equals that of the Christian who hesitates or denies "after having come to the holy mountain of Sion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and myriads of angels in their choir, the Church of the firstborn written in heaven, and of God the universal Judge,

of the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, after having been purified by the blood of propitiation which speaks better things than that of Abel . . . ?”

The apostle closes by recalling to his readers the members of the Church who were still in the dungeons of the Roman authorities, and especially the memory of their spiritual leaders who were no more—those great initiators who had preached the word of God to them, and whose death had been a triumph for the faith. Let them consider the close of these holy lives and they will be strengthened. Let them beware of false doctrines, especially those which make holiness consist in useless ritual practices, such as distinction in meats. The disciple or friend of St. Paul is met here again. The fact is, the entire epistle is like the epistles of Paul, a long demonstration of the complete abrogation of the law of Moses by Jesus; to bear the shame of Jesus, to go forth from the world, “for we have no permanent city—we seek one which is to come; “to obey the chief ecclesiastics, to be very respectful to them, to render their task easy and agreeable, “since they watch over souls and must render an account of them,” that is the duty before them. No writing shows, perhaps, better than this the mystic *rôle* of Jesus increasing and closing by filling up completely the Christian conscience. Not only is Jesus the *Logos* who has created the world, but his blood is the universal propitiation, the seal of a new alliance. The author is so preoccupied with Jesus that he makes some errors in reading that he may find him everywhere. In his Greek manuscript of the Psalms, the two letters TIO of the word OTIA , in Ps. XI (xxxix.) v. 6, were a little doubtful; he has seen a M, and as the preceding word ends with an Σ , he reads $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ which presents a fine Messianic meaning: “Thou hast desired sacrifice no longer, but thou hast given me a body: then I said, ‘Lo I come!’”

A singular thing! the death of Jesus in Paul’s school takes a larger importance than his life. The precepts of the Lake of Gennesareth little interested this school, and appear to have been scarcely known to them; what they saw as the first plan was the sacrifice of the Son of God giving himself up for the expiation of the sins of the world. Absurd ideas which, restated later on by Calvinism, caused the Christian

theology to deviate widely from the primitive ideal. The synoptical Gospels which are the really divine part of Christianity, are not the work of Paul's school. We shall soon see them coming forth from little quiet family which still preserved in Judea the true traditions of the life and person of Jesus.

But what was wonderful in the beginnings of Christianity was that those who draw the car in the contrary way most obstinately were those who worked best to make it advance. The Epistles to the Hebrews, marked definitively in the history of the religious evolution of humanity, the disappearance of sacrifice, that is to say of what up till then had constituted the essence of religion. To primitive man God is an all-powerful Being who must be appeased or bribed. Sacrifice comes either from fear or interest. To gain God's favour we offer him a present capable of touching him, a fine piece of meat of the fattest kind, a cup of cocoa or wine. Plagues and diseases were considered as the blows of an offended God; and it was thought that by substituting another person for the persons threatened, the anger of the Supreme Being could be averted; perhaps indeed, it was said, God will be pleased with an animal, if the beast be good, useful, or innocent. God was thus judged after the pattern of men, and in fact in our day in certain parts of the East and of Africa, the aborigenes hope to gain a stranger's favour by killing at his feet a sheep, whose blood runs over his boots, and whose flesh will serve him for food; in the same way they imagine that the Supernatural Being will be sensible of the offering of an object, especially if by that offering he who presents the sacrifice deprives himself of something. Up till the great transformation of prophecy in the eighth century, B.C., the idea of sacrifice was not much more elevated among the Israelites than among other nations. A new era commences with Isaiah, crying in the name of Jehovah: "Your sacrifices disgust me, what are your goats or bullocks to me?" The day on which he wrote that wonderful page (about 740 B.C.) Isaiah was the real founder of Christianity. It was decided on that very day, that of two supernatural functions as to which the respect of the old tribes was divided, the hereditary sacrifices of the sorcerer, or inspired book which they believed to be the depository of the divine secrets, it was the second that should determine the future of religion. The sorcerer

of the Semitic tribes, the *nabi* became "the prophet," or sacred tribune, consecrated to the progress of social equity, and while the sacrificer (the priest) continued to boast the efficacy of the slaughters by which he profited, the prophet dared to proclaim that the true God cares much more for justice and mercy than for all the bullocks in the world. Ordained, however, by ancient rituals from which it was not easy to escape, and maintained by the interests of the priests, the sacrifices remained a law of ancient Israel. About the time of which we write, and even before the destruction of the third temple, the importance of these rites grew less. The dispersion of the Jews led to something secondary being seen in the functions which could not be accomplished at Jerusalem. Philo proclaimed that worship consisted especially in pious hymns, which must be sung by the heart as well as the mouth; he ventured to say that such prayers were worth more than offerings. The Essenes professed the same doctrine. St. Paul, in the epistle to the Romans, declares that religion is a worship of pure reason. The epistle to the Hebrews, in developing this theory that Jesus is the true High Priest, and that his death was a sacrifice abrogating all the others, struck a last blow at the bloody immolations. The Christians, even those of Jewish origin, ceased more and more to believe in the legal sacrifice, which they only countenanced by sufferance. The generating idea of the mass, the belief that the sacrifice of Jesus is renewed by the eucharistic act, appeared already, but in the still obscure distance.

CHAPTER X.

THE REVOLUTION IN JUDEA

The state of enthusiasm which held possession of the Christian imagination was soon complicated by the events which passed in Judea. These events appeared to give reason to the visions of the most frenzied brains. A fit of fever which cannot be compared with anything but that which seized France during the revolution, and Paris in 1871, took hold of the entire Jewish nation. Those "divine diseases" before which the ancient medical skill declared itself powerless, appeared to have become the ordinary temperament of the Jewish people. We should have that, determined in extremes it would have gone on to the end of humanity. For four years the strange race, which appears created alike to defy him who blesses it and him who curses it, was in a convulsion, before which the historian, divided between wonder and horror, must halt with respect, as before all that is mysterious.

The causes of this crisis were old, and the crisis itself was inevitable. The Mosaic law, the work of enthusiastic Utopians, possessed by a powerful Socialistic idea, the least political of men, was, like Islam, exclusive of a civil, parallel to the religious, society. That law which appears to have arrived at a condition of being re-edited when we read of it in the twelfth century B.C. would have even independently of the Assyrian conquest, made the little kingdom of the descendants of David fly to pieces. Since the preponderance created by the prophetic element the kingdom of Judah, at enmity with all its neighbours, moved by a continuous rage against Tyre, a hatred against Edom, Moab and Ammon, could not live. A nation which devotes itself to religious and social problems is lost as to politics. The day when Israel became a flock of God, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, it was written that it should not be a people like any other. Men do not accumulate contradictory destinies; they always expiate an excellence by some humiliation.

The Achemenidian empire put Israel a little at rest. That grand feudality, tolerant to all provincial diversities, was analogous to the caliphate of Bagdad, and the Ottoman empire, was the condition in which the Jews found themselves most pleasantly situated. The Ptolemaic domination in the third century B.C., appears

likewise to have been sympathetic enough with them. It was the same with the Seleucidæ. Antioch had become a centre of active Hellenistic propaganda; Antiochus Epiphanes believed himself obliged to install everywhere, as a mark of his power, the image of Jupiter Olympus. Then burst forth the first great Jewish revolt against profane civilization. Israel had borne patiently the disappearance of its political existence since Nebuchadnezzar; it could not keep any longer within bounds when it realized a danger for its religious institutions. A race, in general little military, was seized with a fit of heroism; without a regular army, without generals, without tactics, it conquered the Seleucidæ, maintained its revealed right, and created for itself a second period of autonomy. The Asmonean royalty nevertheless was always pervaded by deep interior vices; it did not last more than a century. The destiny of the Jewish people was not to be constituted a separate nationality; this people dreamed always of something international, its ideal was not the city, it was the synagogues; it is the free congregation. It is the same with Islam, which has created an immense empire, but which has destroyed all nationality among the peoples it has subjected, and has left them no other fatherland than the mosque and the *zaouia*. There is often applied to such a social condition the name of theocracy, and that is correct, if it is intended to say by that that the profound idea of the Semitic religious empires which have gone forth from it is the kingdom of God, conceived of as the sole master of the world and universal suzerain; but theocracy among these peoples is not synonymous with the domination of priests. The priest, properly speaking, plays a weak part in the history of Judaism and Islamism. The power belongs to the representative of God, to him whom God inspires, to the prophet and the holy man, to him who has received a mission from Heaven, and who proves his mission by miracle or success. Failing a prophet, the power rests in the maker of Apocalypses or Apocryphal books attributed to ancient prophets, or rather to the doctor who interprets the divine law, to the chief of the synagogue and, later still, to the head of the family, who keeps the deposit of the law and transmits it to his children. A civil power, a royalty, has nothing much to do with such a social organization. This organization is never better carried out than in the case where the

individuals who are the subjects of it are widely spread, in the condition of foreigners tolerated in a great empire where no uniformity reigns. It is the nature of Judaism to be subordinated, since it is incapable of drawing forth from its own bosom a principle of military power. The same fact is noticeable in the Greeks of our day; the Greek communities of Trieste, Syrmna and Constantinople are indeed much more flourishing than the little kingdom of Greece, because these communities are free from political agitation, in which a free race put prematurely in possession of liberty finds its certain ruin. The Roman domination established in Judea in the year 63 B.C., by the arms of Pompey, appeared at first to realize some of the conditions of Jewish life. Rome at that time did not as a rule assimilate the countries which she one after another annexed to her vast empire. She gave them the right of peace and war, and scarcely claimed anything but arbitration in great political questions. Under the degenerate remnants of the Asmonean dynasty and under the Herods, the Jewish nation preserved that semi-independence which sufficed for it since its religious condition was respected. But the internal crisis of the people was too strong. Beyond a certain degree of religious fanaticism man is ungovernable. It must be said also that Rome tended unceasingly to render her power in the East more effective. The little vassal kingdoms which she had at first conserved disappeared day by day, and the provinces returned to the empire pure and simple. After the year 6 after Christ, Judea was governed by procurators subordinated to the imperial legates of Syria and having beside them the parallel power of the Herods. The impossibility of such a régime revealed itself day by day. The Herods were little thought of in the East as either truly patriotic or religious men. The administrative customs of the Romans, even in their most reasonable aspects, were odious to the Jews. In general, the Romans shewed the greatest condescendence with respect to the fastidious scruples of the nation, but that was not sufficient; things had come to a point where nothing more could be done without affecting a canonical question. Those fixed religions, like Islamism and Judaism, endure no sharing of power. If they do not rule they call themselves persecuted. If they feel themselves protected they become exacting, and seek to render life impossible to all other religions except their

own. That is well seen in Algiers, where the Israelites, knowing themselves to be maintained against the Mussulmans, have become insupportable to them, and occupy without ceasing the attention of the authorities by their recriminations.

Certainly we would not believe, in this experience of an age which made the Romans and Jews live together, and which resulted in such a terrible disruption, that the faults were reciprocal. Many procurators were dishonourable men, others could be rough, harsh, and allow themselves to be led into impatience against a religion which annoyed them, and whose features they could not understand. It would have required one to be a perfect being not to be irritated by that narrow end haughty spirit, an enemy to Greek and Roman civilization, malevolent towards the rest of the human race, which superficial observers held to constitute the essence of a Jew. How could an administrator think otherwise of those always occupied in accusing him before the emperor, and forming cabals against him even when he was perfectly right? In that great hatred which for more than two thousand years existed between the Jewish race and the rest of the world, who had the first blame? Such a question ought not to be put. In such a matter all is action and reaction, cause and effect. These exclusions, these padlocks of the *Ghetto*, these separate costumes, are unjust things, but who first wished for them? Those who believed themselves soiled by contact with the heathen, those who sought for separation from them, a society apart. Fanaticism has created the chains, and the chains have redoubled the fanaticism. Hatred begets hatred, and there is only one means of escaping from this fatal circle: it is to suppress the cause of the hatred, those injurious separations which, at first desired and sought for by the sects, became afterwards their shame. In regard to Judaism modern France has solved the problem. By casting down all the legal barriers which surrounded the Israelite, she has removed what was narrow and exclusive in Judaism, I mean to say its practices and its isolated life, so much so that a Jewish family brought to Paris ceases almost altogether to lead the Jewish life in the course of one or two generations.

It would be unjust to reproach the Romans in the first century, for not having acted in this manner. There was a fixed opposition between the Roman empire and

orthodox Judaism. It was Jews who were often the most insolent, tormenting and aggressive. The idea of a common law which the Romans brought in germ with them was in antipathy to the strict observers of the *Thora*. These had moral needs in total contradiction to a purely human society, without any mixture of theocracy, as Roman society was. Rome founded the State, Judaism founded the church. Rome created profane and rational government; the Jews inaugurated the kingdom of God. Between this strict but fertile theocracy and the most absolute proclamation of the laic state which had ever existed, a struggle was inevitable. The Jews had their faith founded upon quite other bases than the Roman law, and at bottom quite irreconcilable with that law. Before having been cruelly harassed they could not content themselves, with a simple tolerance, those who believed that they had the words of eternity, the secret of the constitution of a righteous city. They were like the Mussulmans of Algeria. Our society, although infinitely superior, inspires in these only repugnance; their revealed law, at once civil and religious, fills them with pride and renders them incapable of giving themselves to a philosophical legislation, founded upon the simple idea of the relations of men to each other. Add to that a profound ignorance which hinders fanatic sects from taking account of the forces of the civilized world, and blinds them to the issue of the war in which they engage with light-heartedness.

One circumstance contributed much to maintain Judea in a condition of permanent hostility against the empire: it was that the Jews took no part in military service. Everywhere else the legions were formed from the people of the country, and it was thus with armies numerically feeble, the Romans held immense regions. The soldiers of the Romans and the inhabitants of the country were compatriots. It was not so in Judea. The legions which occupied the country were recruited for the most part at Cesarea and Sebaste, towns opposed to Judaism. Hence the impossibility of any cordial relation between the army and the people. The Roman force was in Jerusalem confined to its trenches as if in a condition of permanent siege.

It was certain, moreover, that the sentiments of the different fractions of the Jewish world should be the same in regard to the Romans. If we except some worldlings like Tiberias Alexander, become indifferent to their old faith and regarded by their co-religionists as renegades, everyone bore ill-will to the foreign rulers, but still were far from inciting to rebellion. We can distinguish four or five parties in Jerusalem:

1st. The Sadducean and Herodian party, the remainder of the house of Herod and his clientele, the great families of Hanan and of Boëthus in possession of the priesthood. A society of Epicureans and voluptuous unbelievers, hated by the people because of its pride, for its little devotion and for its riches; this party, essentially conservative, found a guarantee for its privileges in the Roman occupation, and, without loving the Romans, were strongly opposed to all revolution.

2nd. The party of Pharisean middle-class, an honest party composed of people sensible, settled, quiet, steady, loving their religion, observing it punctiliously, devoted, but without imagination; well educated, knowing the foreign world, and clearly seeing that a revolt could not end in anything but the destruction of the nation and the temple; Josephus is the type of that class of persons whose fate was that which appears always reserved to moderate parties in times of revolution, powerlessness, versatility, and the supreme disagreeableness of passing for traitors in the eyes of most people.

3rd. The enthusiasts of every kind, zealots, robbers, assassins, a strange mass of fanatical beggars reduced to the last wretchedness by the injustice and the violence of the Sadducees, who looked upon themselves as the sole inheritors of the promises of Israel, of that poor "beloved" of God, nourishing themselves upon prophetic books such as those of Enoch, violent Apocalypses, believing the kingdom of God about to be revealed, arrived at last at the most intense degree of enthusiasm of which history has kept records.

4th. Brigands, people without vagrants, adventurers, dangerous scoundrels, the result of the complete social disorganization of the country; these people for the

most part of Idmuean or Nabatean were little concerned about the question of religion; but they were creators of disorder, and they had a quite natural alliance with the enthusiastic party.

5th. Pious dreamers, Essenes, Christians, *Ebionim*, waiting peacefully for the kingdom of God, devoted persons grouped around the temple praying and weeping. The disciples of Jesus were of that number; they were still so small a body in the eyes of the public that Josephus does not reckon them among the elements of the struggle. We see all at once that in the day of danger these holy people knew only how to escape.

The mind of Jesus, full of a divine efficacy for drawing man away from the world, and consoling him, could not inspire the strict patriotism which created assassins and heroes.

The arbiters of the situation would naturally be the enthusiasts. The democratic and revolutionary side of Judaism showed itself in them in a terrible manner. They were persuaded, with Judas the Gaulonite, that all power came from the evil one, that royalty is a work of Satan (a theory which some sovereigns, such as Caligula and Nero, true demons incarnate, only justified too much) and they suffered themselves to be cut in pieces sooner than give to another than God the name of master; imitators of Matthias, the first of the zealots who, seeing a Jew sacrificing to idols, killed him; they avenged God by blows of the dagger. The mere fact of hearing an "uncircumcised" speak of God or of the law was enough to make them seek to surprise him alone; then they gave him the choice of circumcision or death. Executioners of those mysterious sentences which were left to "the hand of heaven," and believing themselves charged with rendering effectual that fearful penalty of excommunication, which is equivalent to placing beyond the law and giving up to death, they formed an army of terrorists in full revolutionary ebullition. It could be foreseen that these troubled consciences, incapable of distinguishing their gross appetite from passions which their frenzy represented to them as holy, went to the most extreme excess and stopped before no degree of folly.

Minds were under the influence of a permanent hallucination; some terrifying reports came from all directions. People only dreamed of omens; the apocalyptic colour of the Jewish imagination tinged everything with an aureole of blood. Comets, swords in heaven, battles in the clouds, a spontaneous light shining at night at the foundation of the temple, victims giving birth to unnatural productions at the moment of sacrifice, were what were spoken of in terror. One day, it was the enormous brazen gates of the temple which opened of themselves and refused to allow themselves to be shut. At the Passover of 65, about three hours after midnight the temple was for half-an-hour perfectly light as in the full day; it was believed that it was consuming inside. Another time, on the day of Pentecost, the priests heard the sound of many people making preparations in the interior of the sanctuary as if for removal, and saying to one another, "Let us go out from here! let us go out from here!" All this came only too late; but the deep trouble of souls was the best sign that something extraordinary was preparing.

It was the Messianic prophecies especially which excited in the people an unconquerable need of agitation. People would not resign themselves to a mediocre destiny when they claimed the kingdom of the future. The Messianic theories were summed up for the crowd in an oracle which was said to be drawn from Scripture, and according to which "there was to go forth at this time a prince who should be master of the universe." It is useless to reason against obstinate hope; evidence has no power to fight the chimera which a people has embraced with all the power of its heart.

Gersius Florus, of Clazomenes, had succeeded Albinus as procurator of Judea about the end of 64, or the beginning of 65. He was, as it would appear, a very bad man; he owed the position he occupied to the influence of his wife, Cleopatra, who was the friend of Poppea. The hatred between him and the Jews now grew to the last degree of exasperation. The Jews had become unbearable by their susceptibility, their habit of complaining about trifles, and the little respect they showed to the civil and military authorities; but it would appear that, on his side, he took a pleasure in defying them and making a parade of it. On the 16th and 17th May, of the year 66, a

collision took place between his troops and the Jerusalemites on some absurd grounds. Florus retired to Cesarea, only leaving a cohort in the Antonian tower. There was here a very blameable act. An armed power owes it to a city it occupies, when a popular revolt shows itself, not to abandon it to its own passions until it has exhausted all its means of resistance. If Florus had remained in the city, it is not probable that the Jerusalemites would have forced it, and all the misfortunes which followed would have been avoided. Florus once gone, it was written that the Roman army should not re-enter Jerusalem except through fire and death.

The retreat of Florus was, nevertheless, far from creating an open rupture between the city and the Roman authority. Agrippa II. and Berenice were at this moment in Jerusalem. Agrippa made some conscientious efforts to calm the peoples' minds; all moderate persons joined with him, they used even the popularity of Berenice, in whom the imagination of the people believed they saw living again her great-grandmother Mariamne, the Asmonean. While Agrippa harangued the crowd in the *Xystos* the princess showed herself upon the terrace of the palace of the Asmonean, which overlooked the *Xystos*. All was useless. Sensible men represented that war would be the certain ruin of the nation; they were treated as people of little faith. Agrippa, discouraged or frightened, quitted the city and retired to his estates in Batanea. One band of the most ardent kind departed at once and occupied by surprise the fortress of Massada, situated on the shores of the Dead Sea, two days' journey from Jerusalem, and nearly impregnable.

There was here an act of definite hostility. In Jerusalem the fight became daily more vigorous between the party of peace and that of war. The first of those two parties was composed of the rich, who had everything to lose in a revolution. The second, besides the sincere enthusiasts, comprehended that mass of the populace to whom a state of national crisis, fully putting to an end the ordinary conditions of life, derives most benefit. The moderate people depended upon the little Roman garrison lodged in the Antonian town. The high priest was an obscure man, Matthias, son of Theophilus. Since the deprivation of Hanan the Young, who caused the death of St. James, it seems there was a system of no longer taking the high priest from the

powerful sacerdotal families, the Hanans, the Cantheras, and the Boëthuses. But the true head of the sacerdotal party was the old high priest Ananias, son of Nabedeus, a rich and energetic man, little popular because of the pitiless vigour with which he enforced his rights, hated especially for the impertinence and rapacity of his servants. By a peculiarity which is not rare in times of revolution, the chief of the party of action was at this time Eleazar, son of this same Ananias; he held the important position of Captain of the Temple. His religious enthusiasm appears to have been sincere. Pushing to the extreme the principle that the sacrifices could not be offered but by Jews and for Jews, he caused to be suppressed the prayers that were offered for the Emperor and the prosperity of Rome. All the younger portion of the people were full of ardour. It is one of the characteristics of the fanaticism which the Semetic religions inspire that it shows itself with the utmost vivacity among the young. The members of the ancient sacerdotal families, the Pharisees, the reasonable and settled men, saw the danger. They put forward some authorized doctors, they had consultations of the rabbis, memorials from canonical laws, although quite in vain; for it was plain that the town clergy made common cause with the enthusiasts and Eleazar. The higher clergy and the aristocracy, despairing of gaining anything over the popular crowd, delivered up to the most superficial suggestions, sent to beg Florus and Agrippa to come and quickly put down the revolt, making them note that soon it would not be time to do so. Florus, according to Josephus, wished a war of extermination, which should cause the entire Jewish race to disappear from the world, and he evaded a reply. Agrippa sent to the party of order a body of three thousand Arab horsemen. The party of order with these horsemen occupied the upper city (the present Armenian and Jewish quarters). The party of action occupied the lower city and the temple (the present Mussulman, Mogharibi and Haram quarters). A real war was waged between the two quarters. On the 14th of August the rebels, commanded by Eleazar, Menahem, son of that Judas the Gaulonite, who first, sixty years previously, had raised the Jews by preaching to them that the true adorer of God ought not to recognise any man as his superior, stormed the higher town and burned the house of Ananias, and the palaces of

Agrippa and Berenice. The horsemen of Agrippa, Ananias his brother, and all the notables who could join them, took refuge in highest parts of the palace of the Asmoneans.

The morning after this success the insurgents attacked the Antonian tower; they took it in two days, and set it on fire. They besieged then the upper palace and took it (6th September). Agrippa's horsemen were allowed to go out. As to the Romans, they shut themselves up in the three towers named after Hippicus, Phasaël, and Mariamne. Ananias and his brother were killed. According to the rule in popular movements discord soon broke out among the leaders of the popular party. Menahem made himself intolerable by his pride as a democratic *parvenu*. Eleazar, son of Ananias, irritated beyond doubt by the murder of his father, pursued him and killed him. The remnant of Menahem's party retired to Massada, which was to be until the end of the war the bulwark of the most enthusiastic party of the zealots.

The Romans defended themselves a long time in the towers: reduced to extremity, they only asked that their lives should be spared. This was promised them, but when they had surrendered their arms, Eleazar put them all to death, with the exception of Metilius, *primipilus* of the cohort, who promised that he would be circumcised. Thus Jerusalem was lost by the Romans about the end of September A.D. 66, a little more than a hundred years after its capture by Pompey. The Roman garrison of the castle of Machero, fearing to be seen retreating, surrendered. The castle of Kypros, which overlooks Jericho, fell also into the hands of the insurgents. It is probable that Herodium was occupied by the rebels about the same time. The weakness which the Romans shewed in all these mutinies is something singular, and gives a certain likelihood to the opinion of Josephus, according to which the plan of Floras would have been to push everything to the extremes. It is true that the first revolutionary outbursts have something fascinating which makes it very difficult to stop them and causes wise minds to resolve to allow them to wear themselves out by their own excesses.

In five months the insurrection had succeeded in establishing itself in a formidable manner. Not only was it mistress of the city of Jerusalem, but by the

desert of Judea it obtained communication with the region of the Dead Sea, all of whose fortresses it held; from thence it came in contact with the Arabs, the Nabateans, more or less the enemies of Rome. Judea Ideamea, Perea, and Galilee were with rebels. At Rome during this time a hateful sovereign had handed over the functions of the empire to the most ignoble and incapable. If the Jews had been able to group around them all the malcontents of the East there would have been an end of Roman rule in these quarters. Unhappily for them, the effect was quite the opposite; the revolt inspired in the populations of Syria a redoubled fidelity to the empire. The hatred which they had inspired in their neighbours sufficed during the kind of torpor of the Roman power to excite against them some enemies not less dangerous than the legions.

CHAPTER XI.

MASSACRES IN SYRIA AND EGYPT.

A sort of general *mot d'ordre* in fact appeared at this time to have run through the East, inciting everywhere to great massacres of the Jews. The incompatibility of the Jewish life with the Greco-Roman life became more and more apparent. Each of the two races wishing to exterminate the other, it was evident that there would be no mercy between them. To conceive of these struggles it is necessary to understand to what extent Judaism had penetrated all the Oriental portion of the Roman empire. "They have spread over all the cities," says Strabo, "and it is not easy to mention a place in the world which has not received this people, or rather which has not been occupied by them. Egypt and Cyrenia have adopted their manners, observing scrupulously their precepts and deriving great profit from the adoption which they have made of their national laws. In Egypt they are admitted to dwell legally, and a great part of the city of Alexandria is assigned to them; they have their Ethnarc, who administers their affairs, exercises justice and watches over the execution of contracts and wills, as if he were the president of an independent state". This contact of two elements as opposed to one another as water and fire, could not fail to produce the most terrible outbursts. It is not necessary to suspect the Roman government of being implicated in this. The same massacres had taken place among the Parthians, whose situation and interest were quite otherwise than those of the West. It is one of the glories of Rome to have founded its empire upon peace; on the extinction of local wars, and by never having practised that detestable means of government, become one of the political secrets of the Turkish empire, which consists in exciting against each other the different populations of mixed countries; as to a massacre for religious motives, no idea was farther from the Roman mind. A stranger to all theology, the Roman did not understand the sect, and did not grant that persons ought to be divided for such a small matter as a speculative proposition. The antipathy against the Jews was moreover in the ancient world a sentiment so general that it had no need to be forced then. That antipathy marks one of the deep lines of separation which have ever been found in the human race. It

concerns something more than race, it is the hatred of the different functions of humanity, the hatred on the part of the man of peace content with his internal joys against the man of war, the man of the shop and counter against the peasant and the noble. It is probably not without reason that this poor Israel has passed its life as a people in being massacred. Since all nations and all ages have persecuted them, there must have been some motive. The Jew up to our time insinuates himself everywhere, claiming common rights but in reality the Jew was not within the common law. He kept his own special code; he wished to have guarantees from all, and once above the market, made his exceptions and his laws for himself. He wished the advantages of the nations without being a nation, without participating in the expenditure of nations. No people has ever been able to tolerate that. The nations are military creations founded and maintained by the sword. They are the work of peasants and soldiers; the Jews have not contributed in any degree to their establishment. That is the great misunderstanding involved in the Israelite pretensions. The stranger is tolerated because he is useful in a country, but on condition that the country does not allow itself to be taken possession of by him. It is unjust to claim the rights of a member of a family in a house which one has not built, as those birds do who install themselves in a nest which is not their own, or like those crustaceans who take the shell of another species.

The Jew has rendered to the world so many good and so many bad services, that people can never be just to him. We owe him too much, and at the same time we see too well his defects not to be impatient at the sight of him. That eternal Jeremiah, "that man of sorrows," is always complaining, presenting his back to blows with a patience which annoys us. This creature, foreign to all our instincts of religion and honour, boldness, glory and refinement of art; this person so little a soldier, so little chivalrous, who loves neither Greece nor Rome nor Germany, and to whom nevertheless we owe our religion, so much so that the Jew has a right to say to the Christian, "Thou art a Jew with a little alloy," this being has been set as the object of contradiction and antipathy; a fertile antipathy which has been one of the conditions of the progress of humanity!

In the first century of our era it appears that the world had a dim consciousness of what had passed, it saw its master in this strange, awkward, susceptible, timid stranger without any exterior nobility; but honest, moral, industrious; just in his business, endowed with modest virtues; not military, but a good trader a cheerful and steady worker. This Jewish family illumined by hope, this synagogue—the life commonly was full of charm—created envy. Too much humility, such a calm acceptance of persecution and insult and outrage; such a resigned manner of consoling himself for not being of the great world because he has a compensation in his family and his church, a gentle gaiety like that which in our days distinguishes the *rayah* in the east and makes him find his good fortune in his inferiority itself. In that little world where he has as much happiness as outside he suffers persecution and ignominy,—all this inspires with aristocratic antiquity his fits of deep bad temper, which sometimes lead him to the commission of odious brutalities.

The storm commenced to growl at Cesarea nearly at the same moment as when the revolution had succeeded in making itself mistress of Jerusalem. Cesarea was the city where the situation with the Jews and non-Jews (those were comprised under the general name of Syrians) presented the greatest difficulties. The Jews composed in the mixed villages of Syria the rich portion of the population; but this wealth, as we have said, came partly through injustice, and from exemption from military service. The Greeks and the Syrians, from among whom the legions were recruited, were hurt by seeing themselves oppressed by people exempt from the dues of the state, and who took advantage of the tolerance which they had for them. There were perpetual riots, and endless claims presented to the Roman magistrates. Orientals usually make religion a pretext for rascalities; Use less religious of men become singularly so when it becomes a question of annoying one's neighbour; in our days the Turkish functionaries are tormented by grievances of this kind. From about the year 60 the battle was without truce between the two halves of the population of Cesarea. Nero solved the questions pending against the Jews; hatred had only envenomed them; some miserable follies, or perhaps inadvertances on the part of the Syrians became crimes and injuries on the side of the Jews. The young

people threatened and struck each other, grave men complained to the Roman authority, who usually caused the bastinado to be administered to both parties. Gessius Floras used more humanity. He began by making them pay on both sides, then mocked those who claimed. A synagogue, which had a partition wall, a pitcher and some slain poultry which were found at the door of the synagogue, and which the Jews wished to pass off as the remains of a heathen sacrifice, were the great matters at Cesarea, at the moment Florus re-entered it, furious at the insult which had been given him by the people of Jerusalem. When it was known some months after that these people had succeeded in driving the Romans completely from their walls, there was much excitement. There was open war between the Jews and the Romans; the Syrians concluded that they could massacre the Jews with impunity. In one hour there were 20,000 throats cut. There did not remain a single Jew in Cesarea; in fact Florus ordered to the galleys all those who had escaped by flight. This crime provoked frightful reprisals. The Jews formed themselves into bands and betook themselves on their side to massacre the Syrians in the cities of Philadelphia and Hesbon, Gerasa, Pela and Scythopolis; they ravaged the Decapolis and Gaulonitis; set fire to Sebaste and Askelon, ruined Anthedon and Gaza. They burned the villages, and killed anyone who was not a Jew. The Syrians on their side killed all the Jews they met. Southern Syria was a field of carnage; every town was divided into two armies, who waged a merciless war. The nights were passed in terror. There were some atrocious episodes. At Scythopolis the Jews fought with the heathen inhabitants against their co-religionist invaders, which did not hinder them from being massacred by the Scythopolitans. The butcheries of Jews recurred with increased violence at Askelon, Acre, Tyre, Hippos, and Gadara. They imprisoned those whom they did not kill. The scenes of fury which occurred at Jerusalem made people see in every Jew a sort of dangerous mad-man whose acts of fury it is necessary to prevent. The epidemic of massacres extended as far as Egypt. The hatred of the Jews and the Greeks was at its height. Alexandria was half a Jewish town, the Jews formed there a true autonomous republic. Egypt had only some months previously as prefect a Jew, Tiberius Alexander, but a Jewish apostate little

disposed to be indulgent to the fanaticism of his co-religionists. Sedition broke out in connection with an assembly at the amphitheatre. The first insults came, it would appear, from the Greeks. The Jews replied to that in a cruel manner. Arming themselves with torches they threatened to burn within the amphitheatre the Greeks to the last man. Tiberius Alexander tried in vain to calm them. It was necessary to send for the legions, the Jews resisted; the carnage was frightful. The Jewish quarter of Alexandria called the Delta was literally crowded with corpses; the dead were computed as amounting to 50,000.

These horrors lasted for a month. In the north, they were stopped at Tyre; for beyond that the Jews were not considerable enough to give umbrage to the indigenous populations. The cause of the evil indeed was more social than religious. In every city where Judaism came to dominate, life became impossible for pagans. It is understood that the success obtained by the Jewish revolution during the summer of 66, had caused a moment of fear to all the mixed towns which bordered on Palestine and Galilee. We have insisted often on this singular character which makes the simple Jewish people include in their own bosom the extremes, and if we may say so, the fight between good and evil. Nothing in fact in wickedness equals Jewish wickedness; and yet we have drawn from her bosom the ideal of goodness, sacrifice, and love. The best of men have been Jews; the most malicious of men have also been Jews. A strange race—truly marked by the seal of God, who has produced in a parallel manner and like two buds on the same branch the nascent church and the fierce fanaticism of the Jerusalem revolutionaries, Jesus and John of Gischala, the apostles and the assassin zealots, the Gospel and the Talmud; ought one to be astonished if this mysterious birth was accompanied by mysteries, delirium, and a fever such as never had been seen before?

The Christians were no doubt implicated in more than one direction in the massacres of September, 66. It is nevertheless probable that the gentleness of these worthy sectaries and their inoffensive character often preserved them. The larger number of the Christians of the Syrian towns were what were called "Judaizers," that is to say, people of converted countries, not Jews by race. They were looked on with

hatred; but people did not dare to kill them; they were considered a species of mongrels—strangers from their own country. As to them, while passing through that terrible month, they had their eyes on heaven, believing that they saw in every episode of the frightful storm the signs of the time fixed for the catastrophe: "Take the comparison of the fig-tree; when its branches become tender and its leaves bud, ye conclude that summer is nigh: likewise, when ye see those things come to pass, know that He is near, that He is even at the door?"

The Roman authority was prepared meanwhile to re-enter by force the city it had so imprudently abandoned. The imperial legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, marched from Antioch towards the south with a considerable army. Agrippa joined him as guide to the expedition; the towns furnished him with auxiliary troops, in whom an inveterate hatred of the Jews supplied what was wanting in the matter of military education. Cestius reduced Galilee and the coast without much difficulty; and on the 24th of October he arrived at Gabaon, ten miles from Jerusalem. With astonishing boldness, the insurgents went out to attack him in that position, and caused him to suffer a check. Such a fact would be inconceivable if the Jerusalem army should be represented as a mass of devotees; fanatical beggars and brigands. It possessed certain elements more solid and really military, the two princes of the royal family of Adiabenes, Monobazus and Cenedeus; one Silas from Babylon, a lieutenant of Agrippa II., who was among the national party; Niger of Perea, a trained soldier; Simon, son of Gioras, who began thenceforth his career of violence and heroism. Agrippa believed the occasion favourable for making terms. Two of his emissaries came to offer the Jerusalemites a full pardon if they would submit. A large portion of the population wished that this should be agreed to; but the enthusiasts killed the envoys. Some people who showed anger at such a shameful act were maltreated. This division gave Cestius a moment's advantage. He left Gabaon and pitched his camp in the district named *Sapha* or *Scopus*, an important position situated to the north of Jerusalem, scarcely an hour's distance from it, and from which the city and the temple could be seen. He remained there three days, waiting for the result of having some spies in the place. On the fourth day (30th October), he marshalled his

army and marched forward. The party of resistance abandoned all the new town, and retired into the inner town (high and low) and into the temple. Cestius entered without opposition, and occupied the new town, the quarter of Bezetha, the wood market, to which he set fire, and approached the high town, disposing his lines in front of the palace of the Asmoneans.

Josephus declares that if Cestius Gallus had been willing to make the assault at this moment, the war would have been ended. The Jewish historian explains the inaction of the Roman general by intrigues in which the principal material was the money of Florus. It appears that they had seen on the wall some members of the aristocratic party, led by one of the Hanans, who called to Cestius, offering to open the gates to him. No doubt the legate feared some ambush. For five days he vainly tried to break through the wall. On the sixth day (5th November) he at length attacked the enceinte of the temple from the north. The fight was fearful under the porticoes; discouragement took hold of the rebels; the party of peace were making ready to admit Cestius, when he suddenly caused the retreat to be sounded. If Josephus' story is true, the conduct of Cestius is inexplicable. Perhaps Josephus, to support his argument, exaggerates the advantages Cestius had at first over the Jews, and lessens the real force of the resistance. What is certain is that Cestius regained his camp at Scopus and left the next day for Gabaon, harassed by the Jews. Two days after (8th November) he raised his camp, but was pursued as far as the descent from Bethoron, leaving all his baggage, and retreated not without difficulty to Antipatris.

The incapacity which Cestius showed in this campaign is truly surprising. The bad government of Nero must have indeed debased all the services of the state for such events to have been possible. Cestius only survived his defeat a short time; many attributed his death to chagrin. It is not known what became of Florus.

CHAPTER XII.

VESPASIAN IN GALILEE—THE TERROR AT JERUSALEM—FLIGHT OF THE CHRISTIANS.

While the Roman empire in the East was suffering this most terrible insult, Nero, passing from crime to crime, from one madness to another, was completely taken up by his chimeras as a pretentious artist. Every-thing which could be called taste, tact or politeness, had disappeared around him with Petronius. A colossal self-love gave him an ardent thirst to absorb the glory of the whole world; his enmity was fierce against those who occupied public attention; for a man to succeed in anything was a state crime. It is said that he wished to stop the sale of Lucan's works. He aspired to unheard-of fame; he turned in his brain some magnificent projects, such as piercing the isthmus of Corinth, a canal from Baia to Ostia, and the discovery of the sources of the Nile. A voyage to Greece had been his dream for a long time, not for any desire he had to see the *chefs-d'œuvre* of an incomparable art, but through the grotesque ambition he had to present himself in the courses founded in the different towns, and take the prize. These courses were literally innumerable: the founding of such games had been one of the forms of Greek liberality. Every citizen at all rich considered these, as in the foundation of our academical prizes, a sure method of transmitting his name to the future. The noble exercises which contributed so powerfully to the strength and beauty of the ancient race, and was the school of Greek art, had become like the tourneys of a later age, profitable to people who made it a trade, who made it their profession to run in the *agones*, and to gain crowns there. Instead of good and worthy citizens, there were seen there none except hateful and useless rascals, or people who created a lucrative specialty out of it. These prizes, which the victors showed as a species of decoration, kept the vain Cæsar from sleep. He saw himself already entering Rome in triumph, with the extremely rare title of *periodonice* or victor in the complete cycle of the solemn games.

His mania as a singer reached its height of folly. One of the reasons of Thræsea's death was that he never sacrificed to the "heavenly voice" of the emperor. Before the King of the Parthians, his guest, he wished only to show his talent in the chariot

races. There were some lyrical dramas put on the stage where he had the principal part, and where the gods and goddesses, the heroes and heroines were masqued and draped like him, or like the woman he loved. He thus played Ædipus, Thyeste, Hercules, Alcmeon, Orestes, and Canace; he was seen on the stage chained (with chains of gold) led like one blind, imitating a madman, feigning the appearance of a woman who is being confined. One of his last projects was to appear in the theatre, naked, as Hercules, crushing a lion in his arms, or killing it with a blow of his club. The lion was, it was said, already chosen and prepared when the emperor died. To quit one's place while he sang was so great a crime that the most ridiculous precautions were taken to do so unseen. In the competitions he disparaged his rivals, and sought to discountenance them; so much so that the unfortunates sang false in order to escape the danger of being compared to him. The judges encouraged him, and praised his bashfulness. If this grotesque spectacle made shame mount to anyone's forehead or gloom to his face he said that the impartiality of some people was suspected by him. Besides, he obeyed the rules as to the reward, and trembled before the agonothetes and the mastigophores, and prayed that they should not chastise him when he had deceived himself. If he had committed some blunder which would have excluded him he would grow pale; it was necessary to say to him quite low that this had not been remarked in the midst of the applauses and enthusiasm of the people. They overthrew the statues of the former laureates not to excite him to a mad jealousy. In the races they rode to let him come in first, even when he fell from his chariot. Sometimes, however, he allowed himself to be beaten, so that it might be believed that he played a fair game. In Italy, as we have said already, he was humiliated by having to owe his success only to a band of *claquers*, knowingly organised and dearly paid, who followed him everywhere. The Romans became insupportable to him; he treated them as rustics, and said that an artist who respected himself could only be so among the Greeks.

The much desired departure took place in November 66. Nero had been some days in Achaia when the news of the defeat of Cestius was brought to him. He felt that this war required a leader of experience and courage; but he wished above all

some one whom he did not fear. These conditions seemed to meet in Titus Flavius Vespasianus, a solid military man, aged sixty, who had always had much good fortune and whose obscure birth had only inspired him with great designs. Vespasian was at this time in disgrace with Nero, because he did not show sufficient admiration for his fine voice, when messengers came to announce to him that he was to have the command of the expedition to Palestine, he believed they had come with his death warrant. His son Titus soon joined him. About the same time Mucianus succeeded Cestius in the office of imperial legate of Syria. The three men who, in two years, will be the masters of the empire's fate were thus found gathered together in the East.

The complete victory which the rebels had gained over a Roman army, commanded by an imperial legate, raised their audacity to the highest point. The most intelligent and educated people in Jerusalem were sad; they saw with clearness that the advantage in the end could only be with the Romans; the ruin of the temple and nation appeared to them inevitable; and emigration began. All the Herodians, all the people attached to Agrippa's service, retired to the Romans. A great number of Pharisees, on the other hand, entirely pre-occupied by the observance of the law and the peaceful future they predicted for Israel, were of opinion that they ought to submit to the Romans, as they had submitted to the kings of Persia and the Ptolemies. They cared little for national independence: Rabbi Johanan ben Zaka, the most celebrated Pharisee of the time, lived quite apart from politics. Many doctors retired probably from that time to Jamnia, and there founded those Talmudic schools which soon obtained a great celebrity.

The massacres, moreover, began again and extended to some parts of Syria which up till now had been safe from the bloody epidemic. At Damas all the Jews were killed. The greater number of the women in Damas professed the Jewish religion, and there would certainly be some Christians among the number; precautions were taken that the massacre should be a surprise and quite unknown to them.

The party of resistance showed a wonderful activity. Even the slow were carried away. A council was held in the temple to form a national government, composed of the elite of the nation. The moderate group at this period were far from having abdicated. Whether they hoped to direct the movement, or that they had some secret hope against all the suggestions of reason by which one is lulled asleep easily in hours of crisis, it was left to them to conduct nearly everything. Some very considerable personages, many members of the Sadducean or sacerdotal families, the principal of the Pharisees, that is to say, the higher middle class, having at its head the wise and honest Simeon, Ben Gamaliel (son of the Gamaliel of the Acts, and the great-grandson of Hillel) adhered to the revolution. They acted constitutionally; they recognised the sovereignty of the Sanhedrim. The town and the temple remained in the hands of the established authorities, Hanan (son of the Hanan [Annas] who condemned Jesus) the oldest of the high priests, Joshua, Ben Gamala, Simeon, Ben Gamaliel, Joseph, Ben Gorion. Joseph, Ben Gorion and Hanan were named commissaries of Jerusalem. Eleazar, son of Simeon a demagogue without conviction, whose personal ambition was rendered dangerous by the treasures he possessed, was kept out designedly. At the same time commissaries were chosen for the provinces; all were moderate with the exception of one only, Eleazar, son of Ananias, who was sent to Idumea. Josephus, who has since created for himself such a brilliant renown as a historian, was prefect of Galilee. There were in this selection many grave men who were willing, to a large extent, to try to maintain order, with the hopes of ruling the anarchical elements which threatened to destroy everything.

The ardour at Jerusalem was extreme. The town was like a camp, a manufactory of arms; on all sides were heard the cries of the young people exercising. The Jews in places remote from the East, especially in the Parthian kingdom, hastened thither, persuaded that the Roman Empire had had its day. They felt that Nero was approaching his end, and were convinced that the empire would disappear with him. This last representative of the title of Cæsar, lowering himself in shame and disgrace, appeared to be a *pious* omen. By placing themselves at this point of view

they would consider the insurrection much less mad than it seems to be to us—to us who know that the empire had still within it the force necessary for many future *renaissances*. They could really believe that the work of Augustus was broken up; they imagined any moment to see the Parthians rush into the Roman territories; and this would indeed have happened if through different causes the Arsacide policy had not been very weak at the time. One of the finest images of Enoch is that where the prophet sees the sword given to the sheep, and the sheep thus armed pursuing in their turn the savage beasts, whom they cause to flee before them. Such were the feelings of the Jews. Their want of military education did not allow them to understand how deceptive was their success over Florus and Cestius. Coins were struck copied from the type of those of the Macabees, bearing the effigies of the temple or some Jewish emblem, with the legends in archaic Hebrew characters. Dated by the years “of deliverance” or “of the freedom of Sion” these pieces were at first anonymous or sent forth in the name of Jerusalem; later on, they bore the names of the party leaders who exercised supreme authority by the will of some portion probably, indeed, in the first months of the revolt, Eleazar, son of Simon, who was in possession of an enormous quantity of silver, had dared to coin money while giving himself the title of “high priest.” The monetary issues lasted, in any case, for a considerable time; they were called “the money of Jerusalem” or “the money of danger.”

Hanan became more and more the chief of the moderate party. He hoped still to lead the mass of the people to peace; he sought under hand to stay the manufacture of arms, to paralyse resistance by giving himself the appearance of organising it. This is the most formidable game in a time of revolution: Hanan was called a traitor by the revolutionaries. He had in the eyes of the enthusiasts the fault of seeing clearly; in the eyes of the historian, he cannot be absolved from having taken the falsest of positions, that which consists in making war without believing in it, only because he was impelled by ignorant fanatics. The commotion in the provinces was frightful. The complete Arab regions to the East and South of the Dead Sea threw into Judea masses of bandits, living by pillage and massacres. Order in such

circumstances was impossible, for to establish order, it is necessary to expel the two elements which make up a revolution's strength—fanaticism and brigandage. Terrible positions those which give no alternative but that between appeal to the foreigner and anarchy! In Acrabatena, a young and brave partisan Simon, son of Gioras, pillaged and tortured all the rich people. In Galilee, Josephus tried in vain to maintain some discipline: a certain John of Gischala, a knavish and audacious agitator combining an implacable personality with an ardent enthusiasm, succeeded in carrying all before him. Josephus was reduced, according to the eternal custom of the East, to enrol the brigands and pay them regular wages as the ransom of the country.

Vespasian prepared himself for the difficult campaign which had been entrusted to him. His plan was to attack the insurrection from the north, to crush it first in Galilee, then in Judea, to throw himself in some sort upon Jerusalem; and when he should have moved everything towards this central point, where fatigue, famine and factions, could not fail to produce fearful scenes; to wait, or if that were not enough, to strike a heavy blow. He went first to Antioch where Agrippa came to join him with all his forces. Antioch had not till now had its massacre of Jews, doubtless because it had in its midst a large number of Greeks who had embraced the Jewish religion (most frequently under the Christian form) which moderated their hatred. Even at this moment the storm broke; the absurd accusation of having fired the city led to butcheries, followed by a very severe persecution, in which doubtless many disciples of Jesus suffered, being confounded with the adherents of a religion which was only the half of theirs.

The expedition set off in March, 67, and, following the ordinary route along the sea-shore, established its head-quarters at Ptolemais (Acre). The first shock fell on Galilee. The population was heroic. The little town of Jondifat, or Jotapata, recently fortified, made a tremendous resistance; not one of its defenders would survive; shut up in a position without issue, they killed each other. "Gallilean" became from that time the synonym for fanatic sectaries, seeking death as their part, taking it with a sort of stubbornness. Tiberias, Taricheus, and Gamala were not taken until

after perfect butcheries; there have been in history few examples of an entire race thus broken. The waves of the quiet lake where Jesus had dreamed of the kingdom of Heaven were actually tinged with blood. The river was covered with putrefied corpses, the air was pestiferous, crowds of Jews took refuge on the coasts. Vespasian caused them to be killed or drowned. The rest of the population was sold. Six thousand captives were sent to Nero, in Achaia, to execute the most difficult work of piercing the Isthmus of Corinth; the old men were slaughtered. There was nothing but desertion. Josephus, whose nature had little depth, and who, besides, was always in doubt of the issue of this war, surrendered to the Romans, and was soon in the good graces of Vespasian and Titus. All his cleverness in writing had not succeeded in washing such a conduct from a certain varnish of cowardice.

The main part of the year 67 was employed in this war of extermination. Galilee had never recovered; the Christians who were found there took refuge beyond the lake. Henceforth there shall be nothing spoken of the country of Jesus in the history of Christianity. Gischala, which was taken last, fell in November or December. John of Gischala, who had defended it with fury, retreated, and sought to gain Judea. Vespasian and Titus made their winter quarters at Ceserea, preparing in the following year to lay siege to Jerusalem.

The great weakness of provisional governments organised for national defence is not being able to support defeat. In all cases, undermined by advanced parties, they fall on the day when they do not give to the superficial crowd what they have proclaimed—victory. John of Gischala and the fugitives from Galilee arriving each day at Jerusalem with rage in their hearts, still raised the diapason of fury in which the revolutionary party lived. Their breathing was hot and quick—"We are not conquered," they said, "but we seek better posts; why exhaust oneself in Gischala and these hovels when we have the mother city to defend?" "I have seen," said John of Gischala, "the machines of the Romans flying in pieces against the walls of the Gallilean villages; and, as they have not wings, they cannot break the ramparts of Jerusalem."

All the young people were for open war. Some troops of volunteers turned readily to pillage; bands of fanatics, either religious or political, always resemble brigands. It is necessary to live, and freebooters cannot live without vexing the people. That is why brigand and hero in times of national crisis are merely synonymous. A war party is always tyrannical; moderation has never saved a country, for the first principle of moderation is to yield to circumstances, and heroism consists generally in not listening to reason. Josephus, the man of order *par excellence*, is probably in the right when he represents the resolution not to retire as having been the deed of a small number of energetic people, drawing by force after them some tranquil citizens who would have asked nothing better than to submit. It is more often thus; people obtain a great sacrifice from a nation without a dynasty which terrorises it. The mass is essentially timid, but the timid count for nothing in times of revolution. The enthusiasts are always small in number, but they impose themselves upon others by cutting the road to reconciliation. The law of such situations is that power falls necessarily into the hands of the most ardent, and that politicians are fatally powerless.

Before this intense fever, increasing every day, the position of the moderate party was not tenable. The bands of pillagers, after having ravaged the country, fell back upon Jerusalem, those who fled from the Roman armies came in their turn to huddle up in the town and to starve. There was no effective authority; the zealots ruled; all those who were even suspected of "moderantism" were massacred without mercy. Up to the present the war and its excesses were arrested by the barriers at the temple. Now the zealots and brigands dwelt pell-mell in the holy house; all the rules of legal purity were forgotten, the precincts were soiled with blood, men walked with their feet wet with it. In the eyes of the priest this was no doubt a most horrible state of affairs; to many devotees the "abomination" foretold by Daniel as installing himself in the holy place just before the last days. The zealots, like all military fanatics, made little of rights and subordinated them to the sacred work *par excellence*—the fight. They committed a fault not less grave in changing the order of the high priesthood. Without having regard to the privilege of the families from

whom it had been the custom to take the high priests, they chose a branch little considered in the sacerdotal race, and they had recourse to the entirely democratic plan of the lot. The lot naturally gave absurd results. It fell upon a rustic whom it was necessary to bring to Jerusalem and clothe in spite of himself with the sacred garments, the high priesthood saw itself profaned by scenes of carnival. All the staid people, Pharisees, Sadducees, the Simeons, Ben Gamaliels, the Josephs, Ben Gorions were wounded in what was dearest to them.

So much excess at last decided the aristocratic Sadducean party to attempt a reaction. With much skill and courage Hanan sought to reunite the honest middle-class and all those who were reasonable, to over-turn this monstrous alliance between fanaticism and impiety. The zealots were arranged near, and obliged to shut themselves in the temple, which had become an ambulance for the wounded. To save the revolution they had recourse to a supreme effort; it was to call into the city the Idumeans—that is to say, troops of bandits accustomed to all manner of violence which raged around Jerusalem. The entrance of the Idumeans was marked by a massacre. All the members of the sacerdotal caste whom they could find were killed. Hanan and Jesus, son of Gamala, suffered fearful insults. Their bodies were deprived of sepulture, an outrage unheard-of among the Jews.

Thus perished the son of the principal author of the death of Jesus. The Beni-Hanan remained faithful up to the end of their part, and, if I might say so, to their duty. Like the larger number of those who seek to put a stop to the extravagances of sects and fanaticism, they were hot-headed, but they perished nobly. The last Hanan appears to have been a man of great capacity; he struggled nearly two years against anarchy. He was a true aristocrat, hard sometimes, but grave, and penetrated by a real feeling on public subjects, highly respected, liberal in the sense that he wished the government of the nation to be by its nobility, and not by violent factions. Josephus did not doubt that if he had lived he would have succeeded in making an honourable arrangement between the Romans and the Jews, and he regarded the day of his death as the moment when the city of Jerusalem and the republic of the Jews were definitely lost. It was at least the end of the Sadducean party, a party

often haughty, egotistical and cruel, but which represented according to him the opinion which alone was rational and capable of saving the country. By Hanan's death, people would be tempted to say, according to common language, that Jesus was revenged. It was the Beni-Hanan who, in presence of Jesus, had made this reflection: "The consequence of all this is that the Romans will come and destroy the temple and nation;" and who had added: "Better that one man should die than a whole people be lost!" Let us observe an expression so artlessly impious. There is no more vengeance in history than in nature; revolutions are no more just than the volcano which bursts or the avalanche that rolls. The year 1793 did not punish Richelieu, Louis XIV., nor the founders of French unity; but it proved that they were men of narrow views, if they did not feel the emptiness of what they had done, the frivolity of their Machiavellianism, the uselessness of their deep policy, the foolish cruelty of their reasons of State. Ecclesiastes alone was a sage, the day when he cried out, disabused: "All is vanity under the sun."

With Hanan (in the first days of 68) perished the old Jewish priesthood, entailed in the great Sadducean families who had made such a strong opposition to budding Christianity. Deep was the impression, people, those highly respected aristocrats, whom they had so lately seen clothed in superb priestly robes, presiding over pompous ceremonies, and regarded with veneration by the numerous pilgrims who came to Jerusalem from the whole world, thrown naked outside of the city, given up to the dogs and jackals, It was a world which disappeared. The democratic high-priesthood which was inaugurated by the revolution was ephemeral. The Christians at first believed to raise two or three personages by ornamenting their foreheads with the priestly petalon. All this had no result. The priesthood, no more than the temple on which it depended, was not destined to be the principal thing in Judaism. The principal thing was the enthusiast, the prophet, the zealot, the messenger from God. The prophet had killed royalty, the enthusiast, the ardent sectary, had killed the priesthood. The priesthood and the kingdom once killed, the fanatic remained, and he during two and a half years yet fought against fate. When the fanatic shall

have been crushed in his turn, there will remain the doctor, the rabbi, the interpreter of the *Thora*. The priest and the king will never rise again.

Nor the temple neither. Those zealots who, to the great scandal of the priests who were friends of the Romans, made the holy place a fortress and a hospital, were not so far as would appear at first sight from the sentiment of Jesus. What mattered those stones? The mind is the only thing which is reckoned, and that which defends the mind of Israel, the revolution, has a right to defile the stones. Since the day when Isaiah said: "What are your sacrifices to me? they disgust me; it is the righteousness of the heart I wish," material worship was an old-fashioned routine which must disappear.

The opposition between the priesthood and the national party, at bottom democratic, which admitted no other nobility than piety and observance of the law, is felt from the time of Nehemiah, who was already a Pharisee. The true Aaron, in the mind of wise men, is the good man. The Asmoneans, at once priests and kings, only inspired aversion among pious men. Sadduceeism, each day more unpopular and ravenous, was only saved by the distinction which people made between religion and its ministers. No kings—no priests—such was at bottom the Pharisaic ideal. Incapable of forming a State of its own, Judaism must have arrived at the point at which we see it through eighteen centuries, that is to say, to live like a parasite in the republics of others. It was likewise destined to become a religion without a temple and without a priest. The priest rendered the temple necessary: its destruction shall be a kind of riddance. The zealots who, in the year 68, killed the high priest and polluted the temple to defend God's cause, were therefore not outside the real tradition of Israel.

But it was clear that, deprived of all conservative ballast, delivered to a frantic management, the vessel would go to frightful perdition. After the massacre of the Sadducees terror reigned in Jerusalem without any restraining counterpois. The oppression was so great that no one dared openly to weep nor inter their dead. Compassion became a crime. The number of suspects of distinguished condition who perished through the cruelty of these madmen was about 12,000. Doubtless it is

necessary here to consider the statements of Josephus. The history of that historian as to the domination of the zealots has something absurd in it; some impious and wretched people would not have had to be killed as they were. As well might one seek to explain the French Revolution by the going out from the prison of some thousands of galley slaves. Pure wickedness has never done anything in the world; the truth is that these popular movements being the work of an obscure conscience and not of reason, are compromised by their very victory. According to the rule of all movements of the same kind the revolution of Jerusalem was only occupied in decapitating itself. The best patriots, those who had most contributed to the success of the year 66, Guion, Niger, the Perea, were put to death. All the people in comfortable circumstances perished. We are specially struck by the death of a certain Zacharias, son of Barak, the most honest man of Jerusalem and greatly beloved by all good people. They introduced him before a traditional jury who acquitted him unanimously. The zealots murdered him in the middle of the temple. Thus Zacharias, the son of Barak, would be a friend of the Christians, for we believe that we can trace an allusion to him in the prophetic words which the evangelists attribute to Jesus as to the terrors of the last days.

The extraordinary events of which Jerusalem was the theatre struck indeed the Christians in the highest degree. The peaceable disciples of Jesus, deprived of their leader, James the brother of the Lord continued at first to lead in the holy city their ascetic life, and waited about the temple to see the great reappearance. They had with them the other survivors of the family of Jesus, the sons of Clopas, regarded with the greatest veneration even by the Jews. All that occurred would appear to them an evident confirmation of the words of Jesus. What could these convulsions be if not the beginning of what was called the sufferings of Messiah, the preludes of the Messianic Incarnation? They were persuaded that the triumphant arrival of Christ would be preceded by the entry upon the scene of a great number of false prophets. In the eyes of the presidents of the Christian community, these false prophets were the leaders of the zealots. People applied to the present time the terrible phrases which Jesus had often in his mouth to express the plagues which should announce

judgments. Perhaps there were seen rising in the bosom of the Church some enlightened persons pretending to speak in the name of Jesus. The elders made a most lively opposition to them; they were assured that Jesus had announced the coming of such seducers and warned them concerning them. That was sufficient; the hierarchy, already strong in the Church, the spirit of docility, the inheritance of Jesus arrested all the impostures; Christianity benefited by the great skill with which it knew how to create an authority in the very heart of a popular movement. The budding episcopacy (or to express it better, the presbytery) prevented those aberrations from which the conscience of crowds never escapes when it is not directed. We feel from this point that the spirit of the Church in human things shall be a sort of good average sense, a conservative and practical instinct, and practice a defiance of democratic chimeras contrasting strangely with the enthusiasm of its supernatural principles.

This political wisdom of the representatives of the Church of Jerusalem was not without merit. The zealots and the Christians had the same enemies, namely, the Sadducees, the Beni-Hanan. The ardent faith of the zealots could not fail to exercise a great seduction on the soul, not less enthusiastic, of the Judeo Christians. Those enthusiasts who carried away the crowds to the deserts to reveal to them the Kingdom of God resembled much John the Baptist and Jesus a little. Some believers to whom Jesus appeared joined the party and allowed themselves to be carried away. Everywhere the peaceful spirit inherent in Christianity carried it with it. The heads of the Church fought with those dangerous tendencies by the discourses which they maintained they had received from Jesus. "Take heed that they do not seduce you," for many shall come in my name saying: "The Messiah is here, or he is there." Do not believe them. For there shall arise false Messiahs, and false prophets, and they shall do great miracles, so, as if it were possible, to seduce the very elect. Recollect what I have told you before. If then some come saying to you, "Come, see, he is in the desert" do not go forth; "Come, see, he is in a hiding-place" do not believe them. There were doubtless some apostacies and treasons of brethren by brethren. Political divisions led to a coldness of affection, but the majority, while

feeling in the deepest manner the crisis of Israel, gave no countenance to anarchy even when coloured by a patriotic pretext. The Christian manifesto of that solemn hour was a discourse attributed to Jesus, a kind of apocalypse, connected perhaps with some words pronounced by the Master, and which explained the connection of the final catastrophe, thenceforth held to be very near, with the political situation through which they were passing, It was not much later after the siege that the piece was written entirely; but certain words they have placed in Jesus' mouth are connected with the moment we have arrived at. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation of which the prophet Daniel speaks, set up in the holy place (let the reader here understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the roof not come down to his house to remove anything; let him who is in the fields not return to seek his cloak! Unfortunate shall be they who either nurse children or bear them in these days. And pray that your flight should not take place in the winter or the Sabbath day; for there shall be a tribulation such as has never been since the beginning of the world and never shall be again."

Other apocalypses of the same kind, circulated it appears, under Enoch's name, and presented with the discourses, attributed to Jesus some singular conflicting thoughts. In one of them the Divine Wisdom, introduced as a prophetic personage, reproaches the people with their crimes, the murder of prophets, hardness of heart. Some fragments which may be supposed to be preserved appear to allude to the murder of Zacharias, the son of Barak. There was here also a matter as to the "height of offence," what would be the highest degree of honour to which human malice could rise, and which appears to be the profanation of the temple by the zealots. Such monstrosities prove that the coming of of the Well-Beloved was near, and that the revenge of the righteous would not tarry. The Judeo-Christian believers especially held still too much to the temple for such a sacrilege to fill them with fear. Nothing had been seen like this since Nebuchadnezzar.

All the family of Jesus considered it was time to flee. The murder of James had already much weakened the connections of the Jerusalem Christians with Jewish orthodoxy; the divorce between the Church and the Synagogue was ripening every

day. The hatred of the Jews to the pious sectaries, being no longer supported by the Roman law, led without doubt to more than one act of violence. The life of the holy people who as a habit dwelt in the precincts and conducted their devotion then were very much distressed, since the zealots had transformed the temple into a place of arms and had polluted it by assassinations. Some allowed themselves to say that the name which suited the city thus profaned was no longer that of Sion, but that of Sodom, and that the position of the true Israelites resembled that of their captive ancestors in Egypt.

The departure seems to have been decided on in the early months of 68. To give more authority to that resolution a report was spread to the effect that the heads of the community had received a revelation on this matter; according to some this revelation was made by the ministry of an angel. It is probable that all responded to the appeal of the leaders, and that none of the brethren remained in the city, which a very correct instinct showed them was doomed to extermination.

Some indications lead us to believe that the flight of the peaceful company was not carried out without danger. The Jews, as it would appear, pursued them, the terrorists in fact exercised an active overlook on the roads, and killed as traitors all those who sought to escape, unless at least they could pay a good ransom. A circumstance which is only indicated to us in covert words saved the fleeing people. "The dragon vomited after the woman (the Church of Jerusalem) a river to overwhelm and drown her; but the earth helped the woman, opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon had vomited towards her, and the dragon was full of anger against the woman." Possibly the zealots were among those who wished to throw the whole body of the faithful into the Jordan, and that they succeeded in escaping by passing through a part where the water was low; perhaps the party sent to destroy them wandered and also lost the tracks of those whom they pursued. The place chosen by the heads of the community to serve as the primitive seat for the fugitive church was Pella, one of the towns of the Decapolis, situated near the left bank of the Jordan, in an admirable site commanding on one side the plan of the Ghor, on the other some precipices, below which rolled a torrent. They could not

have made a better choice. Judea, Idumea, and Perea, were concerned in the insurrection; Samaria and the coast were profoundly troubled by war; Scythopolis and Pella were the two most neutral towns near Jerusalem. Pella, by its position beyond the Jordan, could afford more tranquility than Scythopolis, which had become one of the military stations of the Romans. Pella was a free city like all the places in the Decapolis, but it appears that it was given to Agrippa II. To take refuge there was to express strongly their horror of the revolt. The importance of the town dated from the Macedonian conquest; a colony of veterans from Alexandria was established there and changed the Semitic name to another which recalled their native country to the old soldiers. Pella was taken by Alexander Janneus; the Greeks who lived there refused to be circumcised and suffered much from Jewish fanaticism. Doubtless the heathen population had become rooted again there, for in the massacre of 66 Pella figures as a town of the Syrians and found itself again sacked by the Jews. It was in this Anti-Jewish town that the church of Jerusalem had its retreat during the horrors of the siege. It was well placed, and the church looked upon this locality as a safe abode, as a desert which God had prepared for it in which to wait in quietness, far from the torments of mankind, the home of the reappearance of Jesus. The community lived upon its savings, and they believed that God himself would take care to nourish it, and many saw in such a fate, so different from that of the Jews, a miracle which the prophets had foretold. Doubtless the Christians of Galilee on their side had passed to the East of the Jordan and the lake into Batanea and the Gaulonites. In this manner the lands of Agrippa II, were a country of adoption for Judeo-Christians of Palestine. What gave a special importance to this Christian body in retirement is that it carried with it the remainder of the family of Jesus, surrounded by the most profound respect, and designated in Greek by the name of *Deposyni*, the relations of the Master. We shall soon see indeed the Trans-Jordanic Christianity continued in Ebionism, that is to say the very tradition of the word If Jesus. The synoptical gospels were the product of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH OF NERO.

Since the first appearance of the spring of the year 68, when Vespasian undertook the campaign, his plan, we have already said, was to crush Judaism step by step, proceeding from the north and west towards the south and east, to force the fugitives to shut themselves up in Jerusalem, and there to slay without mercy that seditious multitude. He advanced as far as Emmaus, seven leagues from Jerusalem, at the foot of the great acclivity which stretches from the plain of Lydda to the Holy City. He did not consider that the time had yet come for this latter plan. He ravaged Idumea and Samaria, and on the 3rd of June he established his general quarters at Jericho, when he sent to massacre the Jews of Perea. Jerusalem was besieged on all sides, a circle of extermination surrounded it. Vespasian returned to Cesarea to assemble his entire forces, where he received news which made him stop short, and whose effect was to prolong by two years the resistance and the revolution at Jerusalem.

Nero died on the 8th of June. During the great struggles in Judea which we are relating, he had carried on in Greece the life of an artist; he only returned to Rome at the end of 67. He had never enjoyed himself so much; for his sake they had made all the games coincide in one year, all the towns sent him the prizes of their games, at every moment deputations came to seek him, to beg him to sing to them. The great child ninny, or perhaps jester, was entranced with joy. The Greeks alone know how to hear, said he, the Greeks alone are worthy of me and of my efforts. He extended to them great privileges, he proclaimed the liberty of Greece to the two isthmuses, paid liberally the oracles who prophesied to his taste, suppressed those who did not please him, and it is said caused to be strangled a singer who did not use his voice so that it did not appear better than his own. Heliuss, one of the wretches to whom at his departure he had left full powers over Rome and the Senate, pressed him to return. The gravest political symptoms began to show themselves. Nero replied that his reputation was the first thing to be considered, and it obliged him to harbour his resources for a time when he should have no empire.

His constant prepossession was indeed that if fortune should ever reduce him to a private condition he would be able quite well to make his art sufficient for him; and when they made the remark to him that he was fatiguing himself too much, he said that the exercise which for him was only the pastime of a prince, would perhaps be his bread winner. One of those things which most flatters the vanity of people of the world who occupy themselves a little in art or literature, is to imagine that if they should become poor they could live by their talents. As to that he had a voice which was weak and hollow, although he observed, in order to preserve it, medical prescriptions; his *phonasque* did not quit him and ordered him at every moment the most puerile precautions. We blush to think that Greece stained itself by this ignoble masquerade. Some towns indeed received him very well. The wretch did not dare to enter Athens; he was not asked. The most alarming news was brought to him; it was nearly a year since he had quitted Rome; he gave the order for return. In every town they gave him triumphal honours; they levelled the walls to let him enter. At Rome there was an extraordinary carnival. He mounted the car on which Augustus had his triumph; beside him was seated the musician Diodorus; upon his head he had the Olympic crown; in his right hand the Pythic crown, before him they bore the other crowns, and upon some placards the roll of his victories; the names of those he had conquered, the titles of the pieces in which he had played, the claquers, trained in three kinds of claque, and the knights of Augustus followed. They pulled down the arch of the grand circus to allow him to enter, and cries were heard: "Long live the Olympian! the Pythi hero Augustus! Augustus! Nero-Hercules! Nero-Apollo! only Periodonicist! The only one who has ever been Augustus! Augustus! So sacred voice! Happy those who could hear it!" The thousand eight hundred and eight crowns, which he had brought back from Greece, were placed in the grand circus and attached to the Egyptian obelisk, which Augustus had placed there to serve as a *meta*. At last the conscience of the noble portions of human nature awoke. The East, with the exception of Judea, bore without a blush this shameful tyranny and contented themselves with it; but the feeling of honour still lived in the West. It is one of the glories of France that the overthrow of such a tyranny was its work. While

the German soldiers, full of hatred against the republicans and slaves for their principle of fidelity, played in regard to Nero as to all the emperors, the part of good Swiss and *gardes du corps*; the cry of revolt was raised by an Aquitanian, a descendant of the ancient kings of the country. The movement was truly French. Without calculating the consequences the Gallican regions threw themselves into the revolution with enthusiasm. The signal was given by Vindex about the 15th of March, 68. The news came quickly to Rome. The walls were soon chalked over with scandalous inscriptions, "By the dint of singing, say vile scoffers, he has awakened the cocks (Gallos)." Nero at first laughed. He felt quite glad, that he had been furnished with an occasion of enriching himself by pillaging the Gauls. He continued to sing to amuse himself until the moment when Vindex began to post proclamations in which he was treated as a wretched artist. The actor wrote then from Naples, where he was, to the Senate to demand justice, and took the route for Rome. He affected only however to interest himself in some musical instruments newly invented, and especially in a kind of hydraulic organ, upon which he solemnly consulted the Senate and the Knights.

The news of the defection of Galba (3rd April) and the alliance of Spain with Gaul, which he received while he was at dinner, came upon him like a thunder-clap. He overturned the table where he ate, tore up the letter and smashed two engraved vases of great value, out of which he was accustomed to drink.. In the ridiculous preparations which he began, his principal care was for his instruments, the theatrical baggage for his women, whom he had dressed as Amazons, with targets and hatchets, and having their hair cut short. There were strange alternations of depression and buffoonery, which we hesitate sometimes whether to take as serious, or rather to treat as absurd; all the acts of Nero floating between the black wickedness of a cruel booby and the irony of a *roué*. He had not an idea which was not childish. The pretended world of art in which he lived had rendered him completely silly. Sometimes he thought less of fighting than going to weep without arms before his enemies. Thinking to touch their hearts, he composed already the *epinicium* which he should sing with them on the morning of the reconciliation; at

other times he wished to have all the senate massacred, to bum Rome a second time, and to let loose the beasts of the amphitheatre upon the city. The French especially were the objects of his rage; he spoke of causing those who were in Rome to be killed, as being implicated with their compatriots and wishing to join them. At intervals he had the thought of changing the seat of his empire and retiring to Alexandria. He remembered that some prophets had promised him the empire of the east and especially the throne of Jerusalem, and he dreamed that his musical talent would give him a means of livelihood, and this possibility, which would be the better proof of his talents, afforded him a secret joy. Then he consoled himself with literature; he made the remark that his position had something particular about it, all that had happened to him was quite unheard of; never had any prince lost alive such a great empire. Never in the days of his most bitter anguish did he change any of his habits. He spoke more of literature than of the affairs of the French; he sang, he made jests, he went to the theatre incognito, wrote with his own hand to an actor who pleased him: "Keep a man so busy, it is bad."

The little agreement in the armies of Gaul, the death of Vindex, and the weakness of Galba would perhaps have adjourned the deliverance of the world, if the Roman army in its turn had not made itself heard. The praetorians revolted and proclaimed Galba; on the evening on the 8th of June Nero saw that all was lost. His ridiculous mind suggested to him nothing but grotesque ideas. Clothing himself in mourning habits he went to harangue the people in this dress, employing all his scenic power to obtain thus a pardon of the past, or, for want of better, prefecture of Egypt. He wrote his speech. He was told before he arrived at the forum he would be torn in pieces. He lay down; awaking in the middle of the night he found himself without guards. They already had pillaged his room. He rose and struck at different doors and no one replied. He came back, wished to die, and asked for the *myrmillon* Spicullus, a brilliant slayer, one of the celebrities of the amphitheatre. Everyone deserted him. He went out wandering alone in the streets, thought of throwing himself into the Tiber, and then retraced his steps. The world appeared to make a void about him. Phaon, his freed man, offered him then his villa residence, situated

between the Salarian and Nomentan ways, about a league and a half off. The unfortunate man, slightly clothed, covered with a poor mantle, mounted on a wretched horse, his face covered so as not to be recognised, went forth, accompanied by three or four of his freed men, among whom were Phaon, Sporus, Epaphroditus, his secretary. It was not yet quite light; in going through Colline gate he heard in the camp of the Prætorians, near which he passed, the cries of the soldiers who cursed him and proclaimed Galba. A start of his horse caused by the stench of a corpse thrown in the way, caused him to be recognised. He was able to reach Phaon's villa by gliding flat on his belly under the bushwood, and concealing himself behind the rose trees.

His comical mind and vulgar slang did not abandon him. They wished him to squat in a hole like a pouzzalana, as is often seen in some places. This was for him the occasion of a joke. "What a fate, to go to live under the earth." His reflections were like a running fire intermixed with dull pleasantries and wooden-headed remarks. He had upon each circumstance a literary reminiscence, a cool antithesis; "he who once was proud of his numerous suite, has now no more than three freed men." Sometimes the memory of his victims would come back to him, but only struck him as figures of rhetoric, never led to a moral act of repentance. The comedian survived through all. His situation was for him nothing but a drama—a drama which he had recited. Recalling the parts in which he had figured as a patricide or princes reduced to the condition of beggars, he remarked that now he played all that on his own account and would sing this verse, which a tragedian had placed in the mouth of Œdipus:

"My wife, my mother, my father
Pronounce my death warrant."

Incapable of a serious thought, he wished them to dig his grave the size of his body, and made them beat pieces of marble, some water and wood at his funeral procession, weeping and saying. "What an artist this is who has died!"

The courier of Phaon meanwhile brought a despatch. Nero tore it from him; he read that the senate had declared him the public enemy and had condemned him to be punished according to the ancient custom. "What is that custom?" asked he. They told him that the head of the culprit, quite bare, was stuck into a fork while they beat it with rods until death followed. Then the body was drawn by a hook and thrown into the Tiber. He trembled, took two poignards which he had on him, tried their points, sheathed them again, saying the fatal hour had not yet come. He engaged Sporus to begin his funeral dirge, tried hard to kill himself and could not. His awkwardness, this kind of talent which he had for making all the fibres of the soul vibrate falsely, that laugh at once brutal and infernal, that pretentious stupidity which made his whole life resemble the memory of Agrippa's *Sabbat*, attained to the sublime of absurdity. He could not succeed in killing himself. "Is there no one here to set an example to me?" he said. He redoubled his quotations, spoke in Greek, and made some bits of verse. All at once they heard the noise of a detachment of cavalry which came to take him alive.

The steps of the heavy horses fall upon my ears,
said he. Epaphroditus then took his poignard and plunged it into his neck. The centurion came in nearly at the same moment. He wished to stop the blood, and sought to make him believe he had come to save him. "Too late!" said the dying man, whose eyes rolled in his head and glazed with horror, "Behold where fidelity is found!" added he, expiring. It was his last comic feature. Nero giving vent to a melancholy complaint upon the wickedness of his century, upon the disappearance of good faith and virtue! Let us applaud, the drama is complete! Once more, Nature, with the thousand faces, thou hast known how to find an actor worthy of such a part!

He had held much to this, that they should not deliver his head to insults, and that they should not burn him entirely. His two nurses and Actea, who loved him still, hound him secretly in a rich white shroud, embroidered with gold and with all the luxury they knew he loved. They laid his ashes in the tomb of Domitius, a great mausoleum which commanded the gardens (The Pincio) and made a fine effect from the Campus Martius. From thence his ghost haunted the Middle Ages like a vampire;

to conquer the apparitions which haunted the district, they built the Church of *Santa Maria del Popolo*.

Thus perished, at thirty-one years of age, after having reigned thirteen years and eight months, the sovereign —not the most foolish or the most wicked, but the vainest and the most ridiculous, whom the chance of events had brought into the first ranks of history. Nero is beyond everything a literary perversion; he was far from being destitute of all talent or of all honesty; this poor young man, intoxicated with bad literature, drunk with acclamations, who forgot his empire for Terpnos, who, receiving the news of the revolt of the Gauls did not withdraw from the spectacle at which he assisted, shewed his favour to the athlete, and did not think during many days of anything but his lyre and his voice. The most culpable in all of this were the people most greedy of pleasure, who exacted above all that their sovereign should amuse them, and also the false taste of the time, which had inverted the order of greatness, and gave too large a value to the man of renown in letters and the artist. The danger of literary education is that it inspires an inordinate love of glory without ever affording a serious moral, which fixes the meaning of true glory. It was destined that a natural and subtle vanity, longing for the immense and the infinite, but without any judgment, should make a deplorable shipwreck. But his qualities, such as aversion to war, became fatal, by leaving him with no taste but for ways of shining which should not have been his. At least, as he was not a Marcus Aurelius, it was not good to be so far removed from the prejudices of his caste and his condition. A prince is a soldier, a great prince can and should protect letters. He ought not to a literateur. Augustus, Louis XIV., presiding over a brilliant development of mind, are, after the cities of genius like Athens and Florence, the finest spectacle of history. Nero, Chilperic, King Louis of Bavaria, are caricatures. In the case of Nero the enormous nature of the imperial power, and the harshness of Roman manners, caused that caricature to appear outlined in blood.

It is often asserted, to shew the irremediable nature of the masses, that Nero was popular in some points of view. The fact is that he had upon his own account two currents of opposite opinion. All those who were serious and honest detested

him, the lower people loved him, some artlessly and by the vague sentiment which makes the poor plebeian love his prince if he has a brilliant exterior, the others because he intoxicated them with feasts. During those fêtes they saw him mixing with the crowd, dining, eating in the theatre in the midst of the mob. Did he not besides hate the Senate, the Roman nobility, whose character was so harsh and so little popular? The companions who surrounded him were at least amiable and polite. The soldiers of the guard always preserved their affection for him. For a long time his tomb was found always ornamented with fresh flowers, and portraits of him were placed in the *rostra* by unknown hands. The origin of the good fortune of Otho was that he had been his confidant and that he imitated his manners. Vitellius, to make himself acceptable at Rome, affected openly to take Nero as his model, and to follow his methods of government. Thirty or forty years after, all the world wished he were still living, and longed for his return.

This popularity, in reward to which there is no need to be too much surprised, had in fact a singular result. The report was spread abroad that the object of so many regrets was not really dead. During the life of Nero, there had been seen to dawn in the staff of the emperor, the idea that he would be dethroned at Rome, but that there would commence for him a new reign, Oriental and almost Messianic. People have always had a difficulty in believing that men who have a long time occupied the attention of the world disappear for ever. The death of Nero at Phaon's villa in the presence of a small number of witnesses had not had a very public character. All that concerned his burial had passed among three women, who were devoted to him. Icellus almost alone had seen the corpse; nothing recognisable remained of his person. They might believe in a substitution; some affirmed that the body had never been found, others declared that the gash he had made in his neck had been bandaged and healed. Nearly all maintained that at the instigation of the Parthian ambassador at Rome, he had taken refuge among the Arsacides, his allies, eternal enemies of the Romans, or that he had gone to the king of Armenia, Tiridatus, whose journey to Rome in 66, had been accompanied by magnificent fêtes, which had struck the people. There he was planning the ruin of the empire. Soon

they would see him return at the head of the cavaliers of the East to torture those who had betrayed him. His partisans lived in that hope. Already they raised statues to him, and made edicts even to be current in his signature. The Christians, on the contrary, considered him as a monster, and, when they heard such reports, in which they believed as much as the other people, were smitten with terror. The imaginations which he kindled lasted for a very long time, and, according to what occurs nearly always in similar circumstances, there were many false Neros. We shall see soon the counterpart of that opinion in the Christian church, and the place which it holds in the prophetic literature of the time.

The strangeness of the spectacles in which they has taken part left few winds in their sober senses. Human nature had been pushed to the limits of the possible, there remained the vacuum which follows fits of fever;—everywhere spectres and visions of blood. It was said that at the moment when Nero came out through the Colline gate to take refuge in Phaon's villa, a flash struck his eyes, and that at the same moment the earth trembled as if it were opening, and that the souls of all those whom he had killed threw themselves upon him. There was in the air as it were a thirst for vengeance. Soon we shall assist at one of the interludes of the grand heavenly drama, where the souls of the slain, lying under God's altar, cry with a loud voice "Oh Lord, how long till thou shalt demand our blood from those who inhabit the earth," and there shall be given to them a white robe because they have to wait a little longer!

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAGUES AND PROGNOSTICS.

The first impression on the Jews and Christians at the news of the revolt of Vindex had been that of extreme joy. They believed that the empire would end with Cæsar's house, and that the revolted generals, full of hatred to Rome, would not think of anything except rendering themselves independent in their respective provinces. The movement of the Gauls was accepted in Judea as having a significance analogous to that of the Jews themselves. There war was a deep error. No part of the empire, Judea excepted, wished to see broken up that great association which gave to the world peace and material prosperity. All the countries on the borders of the Mediterranean, once at enmity, were delighted to live together. Gaul itself, although less peaceful than the rest, limited its revolutionary desires to the overthrow of the bad emperors, to demanding reform, and to seeking for a liberal government. But we can imagine that people, accustomed to the ephemeral kingdoms of the East, should have regarded as finished an empire whose dynasty was about to be extinguished, and should have believed that the different nations subjugated one or two centuries before would form separate States under the generals who held the command. For eighteen months, in fact, none of the leaders of the revolted legions succeeded in putting down his rivals in a permanent way. Never had the world been seized with such a trembling; at Rome the nightmare of Nero scarcely dispelled; at Jerusalem a whole nation in a state of madness; the Christians under the stroke of the fearful massacre of the year 64; the earth itself a prey to the most violent convulsions; the whole world was as in a vertigo. This planet appeared to be shaken and unable to endure. The horrible degree of wickedness which heathen society had reached, the extravagances of Nero, his golden house, his absurd art, his colossi, his portraits more than a hundred feet in height, had literally made the world mad. Some natural plagues broke out in all directions, and held men's minds in a kind of terror.

When we read the Apocalypse without knowing the date or having its key, such a book appears the work of the most capricious and individual fancy; but when we

replace the strange vision in this interregnum from Nero to Vespasian, in which the empire passed through the gravest crisis it had known, the work appears in the most extraordinary sympathy with the state of men's minds; we may add with the state of the globe, for we shall soon see that the physical history of the world at the same period furnishes its elements. The world really dotted on miracles; never had it been so impressed by omens. The God-Father appeared to have veiled his face; certain unclean larvæ, monsters coming forth from a mysterious slime, appeared to be wandering through the air. Everyone believed that the world was on the eve of some unheard-of event, Belief in the signs of the times and prodigies was universal; scarcely more than a few hundreds of educated men saw their absurdity. Some charlatans, more or less authentic depositaries of the old chimeras of Babylon, played on the ignorance of the people and pretended to explain omens. These wretches became personages; the time was passed in expelling and then recalling them; Otho and Vitellius especially were entirely given up to them. The highest politics did not disdain to take note of these puerile dreams.

One of the most important branches of Babylonian divination was the interpretation of monstrous births, considered as implying certain indications of coming events. This idea more than any other had overrun the Roman world; the many-headed *fœtus* especially was considered as an evident omen, each head, according to a symbolism we shall see adapted by the author of the Apocalypse, representing an emperor. There were some real or pretended hybrid forms In that matter also the unwholesome visions and incoherent images of the Apocalypse are the reflection of the popular tales with which peoples' minds were filled. A pig with a hawk's talons was held to be the very picture of Nero. Nero himself was very curious in regard to these monstrosities.

Men were also preoccupied with meteors and signs in the sky. The *bolides* made the greatest impression. It is known that the frequency of the *bolides* is a periodic phenomenon, which occurs nearly every thirty years. On these occasions there are some nights when, literally, the stars have the appearance of falling from heaven. Comets, eclipses, parhelia, and aurora borealis, in which were seen crowns, swords,

and stripes of blood; burning clouds of plastic forms, in which were designed battles and fantastic animals; were greedily remarked and never appear to have been observed with such intensity as during these tragic years. People spoke only of showers of blood, astonishing effects of lightning, streams flowing upwards to their course, and rivers of blood. A thousand things to which people had paid no attention obtained through the feverish emotion of the public an exaggerated importance. The infamous charlatan, Balbillus, took advantage of the impression which these events sometimes made on the emperor, to excite his suspicions against the most illustrious, and to draw from him the cruellest orders.

The plagues of the period, besides, justified up to a certain point these madnesses. Blood ran in floods on all sides. The death of Nero, which was a deliverance in many points of view, began a period of civil wars. The battle of the legions of Gaul under Vindex and Virginius had been frightful; Galilee was the theatre of an unexampled extermination; the war of Corbulon among the Parthians had been most murderous. There was still worse than that in the future; the fields of Bedriac and Cremona soon exhaled an odour of blood. Punishments made the amphitheatre like hell. The cruelty of the military and civil manners had banished all pity from society. Withdrawing themselves trembling to their humble abodes, the Christians doubtless again repeated the words they attributed to Jesus: "When ye hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled, for this must be; but the end is not yet. Nation shall be seen rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom; there shall be great earthquakes, shakings, famines, pestilences on all sides, and great signs in the heavens. These are the beginnings of sorrows."

Famine, indeed, was added to the massacres. In the year 68 the arrivals from Alexandria were insufficient. At the beginning of March, 69, an inundation of the Tiber was most disastrous. The wretchedness was fearful; a sudden eruption of the sea covered Lycia with mourning. In the year 65, a horrible pestilence afflicted Rome; during the autumn the dead were reckoned at 30,000. In the same year everybody spoke of the fearful fire at Lyons. And the Campagna was ravaged by

water-spouts and cyclones, whose outbreaks were heard even at the gates of Rome. The order of nature seemed reversed; fearful storms spread terror in all directions.

But what struck people most was the earthquakes. The globe underwent a convulsion parallel to that of the moral world; it seemed as if the world and the human race had fever at the same time. It is a peculiarity of popular movements to mix together all that excites the imagination of the crowds, at the time when they are carried out. A natural phenomenon, a great crime, a crowd of things accidental or without apparent connection, are linked together in the grand rhapsody which humanity composes from age to age. It is thus that the history of Christianity is incorporated with everything which at different periods has shaken the people. Nero and the Solfatara had as much importance there as theological argument; a place must be given to geology, and the Solfatara and the catastrophes of the planet. Of all natural phenomena besides earthquakes are those which most cause men to abase themselves before unknown forces. The countries where they are frequent, Naples and Central America, have superstition in an endemic condition; there must be said as much for the ages in which they raged with a peculiar violence. Now never were they more common than in the first century. No time could be remembered when the surface of the old continent had been so greatly agitated.

Vesuvius was preparing for its terrible eruption of 79. On the 5th February, 63, Pompeii was nearly engulfed by an earthquake. A great number of the inhabitants would not re-enter it. The volcanic centre of the Bay of Naples at the time of which we speak was near Pouzzoles and Cuma. Vesuvius was still silent, but that series of little craters which constitute the district to the west of Naples and which are called the Phlegrean Fields, shewed everywhere the mark of fire. Avernus, the *Acherusia palus* (the lake Fusaro), the lake Agnano, the Solfatara, the little extinct volcanoes of Astroni, Camaldoli, Ischia, and Nisida, present to-day something squalid; the traveller takes away an impression of them rather more pleasant than frightful. Such was not the sentiment of antiquity. These stoves, these deep grottoes, these thermal springs, those bubblings up, those miasmas, those hollow sounds, those yawning mouths, (*bocche d'inferno*) vomiting out sulphur and fiery vapours, inspire Virgil.

They were likewise one of the essential factors in the Apocalyptic literature. The Jew who disembarked at Pouzzoles to proceed to business or intrigue at Rome, saw this ground smoking in all its pores, shaking without ceasing, as if its bowels were peopled by giants and agonies. The Solfatara especially appeared to him the pit of the abyss, the airhole scarcely shutting out hell. Was the continuous jet of sulphurous vapour which escapes through this opening not in his eyes the manifest proof of a subterranean lake of fire destined plainly, like the lake of Pentapolis, for the punishment of sinners? The moral spectacle of the country did not astonish him less. Baïa was a town of waters and baths, the centre of luxury and pleasure, the favourite residence of light society. Cicero did himself harm among grave people by having his villa in the midst of this kingdom of brilliant and dissolute manners. Propertius only wished his mistress dwelt there; Petronius placed there the debauches of Trimalcion, Baïa, Bauli, Cuma, Misena, saw, in fact, all follies and all crimes. The basin of azure blue waves included in the contour of this delicious bay was the bloody *naumachia*, into which they cast thousands of victims in the fêtes of Caligula and Claudius. What a reflection would arise in the mind of the pious Jew, of the Christian who called with fervour for the conflagration of the world at sight of this nameless spectacle, the absurd construction, in the midst of the waves, those baths, the object of horror to the puritans? Only one. "Blind that they are," they would say, "their future dwelling is under these; they dance over the hill which is to swallow them up."

Nowhere is such an expression which is applied to Pouzzoles or other places of the same character more striking than in the book of Enoch. According to one of the authors of that bizarre Apocalypse, the residence of the fallen angels is a subterraneous valley situated in the west near the "mountain of metals." This mountain is filled with flames of fire, it breathes an odour of sulphur; there go forth from it bubbling and sulphurous streams (thermal waters) which are used to cure diseases and near which the kings and great men of the earth gave themselves up to all sorts of pleasures. The fools! they see every day the chastisement which they are preparing for themselves, and nevertheless they do not pray to God. This valley of

fire is perhaps the valley of Gehenna, to the east of Jerusalem, bounded at the depression of the Dead Sea by the *Quadi en-nâr* (the valley of fire), then there are the springs of Callirrhoe, the pleasure place of the I3erods, and the entire demoniacal region of Machero, which is in the neighbourhood. But thanks to the elasticity of the apocryphal topography the baths can also be those of Baïa and Cuma. In the valley of fire there can be recognised the Solfatara of Pouzzoles or the Phlegrean fields in the mountain of metals, Vesuvius, such as it was before the eruption of 79. We shall soon see these strange places inspiring the author of the Apocalypse, and the pit of the abyss revealing itself to him ten years before nature, by a singular coincidence, reopened the crater of Vesuvius. For the people, that was no chance occurrence. It caused that the most tragic country in the world, that which was the theatre of the great reigns of Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, was found at the same time the country *par excellence* of phenomena, which nearly the whole world then considered as infernal. could not be without result.

It was besides not only Italy, it was the eastern regions of the Mediterranean which trembled. For two centuries Asia Minor was in one continual quake. The towns were unceasingly occupied in reconstructing themselves; certain places like Philadelphia experienced shocks every day. Tralles was in a condition of perpetual falling down; they were obliged to invent for the houses a system of mutual support. In the year 17 the destruction of fourteen towns in the district of Timolus and Messogis took place; it was the most terrible catastrophe of which mention had ever been made till then. In the years 23, 34, 37, 46, 51 and 53 there were partial misfortunes in Greece, Asia and Italy. Thera tans in a condition of active labour, Antioch was incessantly shaken. From the year 59, indeed, there was scarcely a year which was not marked by some disaster. The valley of the Lycus in particular, with its Christian cities of Laodoea and Colosse, was engulfed in the year 60. When we reflect that exactly there was the centre of the millenarian ideas, we are persuaded that a close connection existed between the revelation of Patmos and the overturnings in the globe, so much so that there is here one of the rare examples which can be quoted of a reciprocal influence between the material history of the

planet and the history of mental development. The impression of the catastrophes in the valley of the Lycus is found likewise in the Sibylline poems. These earthquakes in Asia spread terror everywhere; people spoke about them over the world, and the number of those who did not see in those accidents the signs of an angry divinity was very small

All this made a sort of gloomy atmosphere, in which the imagination of the Christians found a strong excitement. Now, in view of the commotion of the physical and moral world, would not the believers cry with more assurance than ever, *Maranatha, Maranatha!* "Our Lord is coming, our Lord is coming." The earth appeared to them to be crumbling, and already they believed they saw the kings and powerful men and the rich fleeing as they cried "Mountains, fall upon us, hills, conceal us." A constant habit of mind of the old prophets was to take occasion by some natural plague to announce the near approach of the "day of Jehovah." A passage in Joel which was applied to Messianic times gave as certain prognostications of the great day signs in heaven and on the earth, prophets arising from all parts, rivers of blood, fire, pillars of smoke, the sun darkened, the moon bloody. They believed likewise that Jesus had announced earthquakes, famines, and pestilences as the overtures to the great day; then, as foregoing indexes of his coming, eclipses, the moon obscured, the stars falling from the firmament, the whole heaven troubled, the sea foaming, the people flying despairing, without knowing on which side was safety or death. Fear became thus an element of the whole Apocalypse; the idea of persecution was associated with it. It was admitted that the Evil one before being destroyed would redouble his rage and give proof of a skilful art in order to exterminate the saints.

CHAPTER XV.

THE APOSTLES IN ASIA.

The province of Asia was that most agitated by those terrors. The church at Colosse had received a mortal blow by the catastrophe of the year 60. Hierapolis, although built in the midst of the most *bizarre* dejections of a volcanic eruption, did not suffer, it seems. It was perhaps there that the Colossian believers took refuge. Everything shows us from that time Hierapolis as a city apart. The profession of Judaism was public there. Some inscriptions still existing among the wonderfully preserved ruins of that extraordinary city mention the annual distributions which should be made to some corporations of workmen, from "the feast of unleavened bread," and from "the feast of Pentecost." Nowhere were good works, charitable institutions, and societies for mutual help among people following the same trade of so much importance. Kinds of orphanages, *crèches* or children's homes, evidence philanthropic cares singularly developed. Philadelphia presents an analogous aspect; the state bodies there became the basis of political divisions. A peaceful democracy of workmen, associated among themselves and not occupied with politics, was the social form of almost all those rich towns of Asia and Phrygia. Far from being forbidden to a slave, virtue was considered to be the special portion of the man who suffers. About the time we are writing of, was born at Hierapolis an infant even so poor that they sold it in its cradle, and never knew it except under the name of the "bought slave," *Epictetus*, a name which, thanks to him, has become the synonym of virtue itself. One day there shall come forth from his instructions, the wonderful book, a manual for strong souls who reject the supernatural of the Gospel, and who believe that duty is falsified by creating in it any other charm than that of its austerity.

In the eyes of Christianity Hierapolis had an honour which far surpassed that of having given birth to Epictetus. It gave hospitality to one of the few survivors of the first Christian generation, to one of those who had seen Jesus, the Apostle Philip. We may suppose that Philip came into Asia after the crises which rendered Jerusalem uninhabitable for peaceful people, and expelled the Christians from its midst. Asia

was the province where the Jews were most at peace; thither flowed the others. The relations between Rome and Hierapolis were likewise easy and regular. Philip was a priestly personage and belonged to the old school, very analogous to James. It was pretended that he wrought miracles, even the raising of the dead. He had four daughters, who were prophetesses. It appears that one of these died before Philip came into Asia. Of the three others, two grew old in their virginity; the fourth married during her father's life, prophesied like her sisters, and died at Ephesus. These strange women were very famous in Asia. Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis about the year 130, had known them, but he had never seen the Apostle himself. He heard from these old enthusiastic women some extraordinary facts and marvellous recitals of their father's miracles. They also knew many things as to the other Apostles or Apostolic personages, especially a Joseph Barnabus, who, according to them, had drank a deadly poison without being harmed.

Thus, on John's side, there was constituted in Asia a second centre of authority and Apostolic tradition. John and Philip elevated the countries which they had chosen to reside in nearly to the level of Judea. "These two great stars of Asia," as they were called, were for some years the lighthouse of the church, deprived of its other pastors. Philip died at Hierapolis and was buried there. His virgin daughter arrived at a very advanced age and was laid near him; she that was married was interred at Ephesus; all the graves, it was said, were visible in the second century. Hierapolis had thus Apostolic tombs, rivals of those at Ephesus. The province would appear to be ennobled by those holy bodies, which they imagined they could see rising from the dead on the day in which the Lord should come, full of glory and majesty, to raise his elect from the dead.

The crisis in Judea, by dispersing, about 68, the apostles and apostolic men, would yet bring to Ephesus and into the valley of the Meander, other considerable personage in the nascent Church. A very great number of disciples, in any ease, who had seen the Apostles at Jerusalem, were found in Asia, and appear to have led that wandering life from town to town which was much to the taste of the Jews. Perhaps the mysterious personages called *Presbyteros Johannes* and Aristion were among the

emigrés. Those listeners to the Twelve spread throughout Asia the tradition of the Church of Jerusalem, and succeeded in giving Judeo-Christianity the preponderance there. They were eagerly questioned as to the sayings of the apostles and the authentic words of Jesus. Later on those who had seen them were so proud of having drunk from the pure source, that they despised the little writings which claimed to report the discourses of Jesus.

There was something very peculiar about the state of mind in which these churches lived buried in the depths of a province whose peaceful climate and profound heaven appeared to lead to mysticism. In no place did the Messianic ideas so much preoccupy men's attention. They gave themselves up to extravagant imaginations, the most absurd parabolic language, coming from the traditions of Philip and John, were propagated. The gospel which was formed on this coast had something mythical and peculiar about it. It was imagined generally that after the resurrection of the bodies which was nigh at hand there would be a corporeal reign of Christ upon the earth which should last a thousand years. The delights of this paradise were described in a thoroughly materialistic way; they actually measured the size of the grapes and the strength of the ears of corn under Messiah's reign. The idealism which gave to the simplest words of Jesus such a charming velvety aspect was for the most part lost.

John at Ephesus strengthened daily. His supremacy was recognised throughout the whole province, except perhaps at Hierapolis, where Philip lived. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodoea had adopted him as their head, listening with respect to his statements, his councils, and his reproaches. The Apostle, or those whom he gave the right to speak for him, generally assumed a severe tone. A great rudeness, an extreme intolerance, a hard and gross language against those who thought otherwise than he did appeared to have been a part of John's character. It is, it was said, in regard him that Jesus promulgated this principle, "whosoever is not for us is against us." The series of anecdotes which were told of his sweetness and indulgence seem to have been invented agreeably to the model which is visible in the Johannine epistles, epistles whose authenticity is very

doubtful. Features of an opposite kind, and which show much violence, accord better with the evangelical records and with the Apocalypse, and prove that the hastiness which had gained him the surname of Son of Thunder had only grown greater with age. It may be, however, that these qualities and contradictory defects might not be so exclusive of each other as one might think. Religious fanaticism often produces in the same person the extremes of harshness and goodness; just as an inquisitor of the middle ages, who made thousands of unfortunates burn for insignificant subtleties, was at the same time the gentlest, and in one sense the humblest, of men. It was especially against the little conventicles of the disciples of him whom they called the new Balsam that the animosity of John and his followers appeared to have been lively and deep. Such was the injustice inherent in all parties, such was the passion which filled these strong Jewish natures, that probably the disappearance of the "Destroyer of the law" was hailed with cries of joy by his adversaries. To many the death of this blunderer, this mar-plot, was a relief. We have seen that Paul at Ephesus felt himself to be surrounded by enemies; the last discourses which are attributed to him in Asia are full of sad forebodings. At the beginning of the year 69, we find the hatred against him bitter still; then the controversy shall grow calm, silence shall fall around his memory. At the point we have reached no one appears to have upheld him, and there is precisely in this what vindicated him later on. The reserve, or if it must be said, the weakness of his partisans, brought about a reconciliation: the boldest thoughts finished by gaining acceptance on condition that they yielded a long time without reply to the objections of the conservatives.

Rage against the Roman empire, delight in the misfortunes which befel it, the hope of soon seeing it dismembered, were the innermost thoughts of all the believers. They sympathized with the Jewish insurrection, and were persuaded that the Romans had not quite reached their end. The time was distant since Paul, and perhaps Peter, preached the acceptance of the Roman authority, attributing even to that authority a sort of divine character. The principles of the enthusiastic Jews in the refusal to pay taxes, as to the diabolic origin of all profane power, as to the idolatry

implied in acts of civil life according to the Roman usages, carried them away. It was the natural consequence of persecution; moderate principles had ceased to be applicable. Without being so violent as in 64, persecution continued secretly. Asia was the province where the fall of Nero had made the deepest impression. The general opinion was that the monster, cured by Satanic power, kept himself concealed somewhere and was about to re-appear. One could imagine what kind of effect these rumours would produce among the Christians. Many of the faithful at Ephesus, beginning perhaps with their head, had escaped from the great butchery of 64. What! The horrible beast saturated with luxury, fatuity, going to return! The thing was clear, those continued to think who still supposed that Nero was Anti-Christ. See him, this mystery of iniquity who would appear to be assassinated, making everybody martyrs before the luminous advent. Nero is that Satan incarnate who shall accomplish the slaughter of the saints, A little time yet and the solemn moment shall come! The Christians adopted this idea so much the more willingly that the death of Nero had been too mean for an Antiochus; persecutors of that species usually perished with greater éclat. It was concluded that the enemy of God was reserved for a more splendid death which should be inflicted on him in sight of the whole world and the angels gathered together by the Messiah.

This idea, which gave birth to the Apocalypse, took every day more distinct forms; the Christian conscience had arrived at the height of its enthusiasm when a matter which took place in the neighbouring isles of Asia gave body to what up till then had been only imagination. A false Nero appeared and inspired in the provinces of Asia and Achaia, a lively sentiment of either curiosity, hope, or fear. He was, it would appear, a slave from Pontus, according to others an Italian of servile rank. He much resembled the deceased emperor; he had his large eyes, his strong hair, his haggard look, his theatrical and fierce face; he knew like him how to play the guitar, and to sing. The impostor found around him a first nucleus composed of deserters and vagabonds, and attempting to reach by sea Syria and Egypt, was cast by a tempest on the island of Cythnos, one of the Cyclades. He made that island the centre of a propaganda, increased his band by enrolling some soldiers who were returning

from the east, did some bloody deeds, pillaged the merchants and armed the slaves, The excitement was great, especially among the kind of people who from their credulity were open to the most absurd reports. From the month of December, Asia and Greece had no other subject of talk. The waiting and the terror increased every day. That name whose fame had filled the world turned heads anew, and made people believe that what they had seen was nothing like to what they would see.

Other things which took place in Asia or in the Archipelago, and whose date we cannot fix for want of sufficient indications, increased the agitation still more. An ardent Neronian who joined to political passion some marks of a sorcerer, declared himself loudly for either the Cythnian impostor or for Nero, who was thought to have taken refuge among the Parthians. He apparently forced peaceable people to recognise Nero. He re-established his statues and ordered them to be honoured; we are sometimes even tempted to believe that a coin was struck with the legend *Nero redux*. What is certain is, that the Christians imagined they would be forced to honour Nero's statues, the money, token, or stamp in the name of "the beast" "without which one could neither sell nor buy," and thus caused them insurmountable scruples; the gold marked with the sign of the great head of idolatry burned their fingers. It appears that rather than lend themselves to such acts of apostasy some of the believers in Ephesus were exiled; we can suppose that John was of that number. This incident, obscure for us, plays a large part in the Apocalypse, and was perhaps its prime origin. "Attention" said the seer, "there is here the end of the patience of the saints who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." The occurrences in Rome and Italy gave reason for this feverish expectancy. Galba did not succeed in establishing himself, up till Nero, the title of dynastic legitimacy created by Julius Cæsar and by Augustus, had stifled the thought of a competition for Empire among the generals; but since that title had been barred by limitation, every military chief could aspire to the heritage of Cæsar. Vindex was dead, Virgilius had loyally submitted; Nymphidius Lavinus, Macer, Fonteius, Capito, had expiated by death their revolutionary ideas; nothing was done, however. On the 2nd January, 69, the legions of Germany proclaimed Vetillius, on the 10th Galba

adopted Piso, on the 15th Otho was proclaimed at Rome. For some hours there were three emperors; in the evening Galba was killed. Faith in the empire was terribly shaken, people did not believe that Otho could manage to reign alone; the hopes of the partisans of the false Nero of Cythnos and those who imagined every day to see the emperor's so much regretted return from beyond the Euphrates, could not be concealed. It was then, at the end of January, in the year 69, that there was spread among the Christians of Asia a symbolic manifesto representing itself as a revelation of Jesus Christ himself. Did the author know of the death of Galba or had he only foreseen it? It is as much more difficult to say that a feature of the Apocalypses is that the writer puts forward sometimes, to the profit of his pretended foresight, some recent news which, he believes, he alone knows. Thus the publicist, who composed the book of Daniel, appears to have had a hint of the death of Antiochus. Our Seer appears to be possessed of special information on the political condition of his time. It is doubtful if he knew Otho; he believed that the restoration of Nero would immediately follow the fall of Galba. This latter appears to him already condemned. The eve of the Beast's return is, therefore, reached. The ardent imagination of the author then appears to him a collection of views "upon what must arrive in a little while," and thus the successive chapters of a prophetic book are unrolled, the object of which is to make clear the conscience of the believers in the crisis through which they are passing, and reveal to them the meaning of a political situation which disturbed the strongest spirits, and especially to reassure them as to the fate of their brethren already slain. It must be remembered that the credulous sectaries, whose sentiments we seek to discover, were a thousand miles from the ideas of the immortality of the soul, which have come forth from Greek philosophy. The martyrdoms of the last year were a terrible crisis for a society which trembled artlessly when a saint died, and asked if that one would see the Kingdom of God. People showed an unconquerable need to represent the faithful already passed into rest and blessed, although with a provisory in the midst of the plagues which struck the earth. Their cries of vengeance were heard; they considered their saints

impatient, they called for the day on which God would arise and avenge his own elect.

The form of "Apocalypse" adopted by the author was not new in Israel. Ezekiel had already inaugurated a considerable change in the old prophetic style, and we may in a sense regard it as the creator of the Apocalyptic class. To fervent preaching, accompanied sometimes by extremely allegorical acts, he had substituted, doubtless under the influence of Assyrian art, the vision, that is to say, a complicated symbolism, where the abstract idea was presented by means of chimerical beings conceived outside of all reality. Zachariah continues to walk in the same path; a vision becomes the necessary framework of all prophetic instruction. Indeed, the author of the book of Daniel, by the extraordinary popularity he obtained, fixed absolutely the rules of the class. The book of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses and certain sibylline poems were the fruit of his powerful initiative. The prophetic instinct of the Semites, their tendency to group facts in view of a certain philosophy of history, and to present their individual thought under the form of a divine absolute, their aptitude for seeing the great lines of the future, finding in this fantastic framework some singular facilities. In every critical situation of the people of Israel, they, in fact, demanded an apocalypse. The persecution by Antiochus, the Roman occupation, the profane reign of Herod had excited some ardent visionaries. It was inevitable that Nero's reign and the siege of Jerusalem should have their apocalyptic protest, as later on had the severities of Domitian, Hadrian, Septimus Severus, Decius, and the invasion of the Goths in 250 called forth for themselves.

The author of this bizarre writing, which a still more bizarre fate destined to such different interpretations, laid down in it the whole weight of the Christian conscience, then addressed it under the form of an epistle to the seven principal Churches of Asia. He asked that it should be read, as was the custom with all apostolic epistles, to the assembled faithful. There was perhaps in that an imitation of Paul, who preferred to act by letters than personally. Such communications in any case were not rare, and it was always the coming of the Lord which was their object. Some pretended revelations on the nearness of the last day circulated under the name of

different apostles, so much so that Paul was obliged to warn his churches against the abuse which might be made of his writing to support such frauds. The work begins by a title which was worthy of its origin and its lofty theme:—

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sat and signified it by his angel unto his servant John, who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.*

JOHN, TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES which are in Asia, Grace to you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne: and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood: and he made us to be a kingdom to be priests unto his God and Father, to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

Behold he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him, even so, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest write in a book, and send it to the seven churches, unto Ephesus and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which spake unto me, and having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters, and he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last and the living one. And I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades Write therefore the things which thou sawest

and the things which are and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou rawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

In the Jewish conceptions, among the Gnostics and Cabbalists who were dominant about this time, every person, and indeed every moral being, such as death or grief, has its angel; there was thus the angel of Persia and the angel of Greece; the angel of the waters, the angel of fire, and the angel of the abyss. It was therefore natural that each church should have thus its heavenly representative. It is to this kind of fervour or genius of each community that the Son of Man addresses his statements one after the other:—

To the angel of the church of Ephesus;

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks I know thy works and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. And thou hast borne and had patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna:

These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive. I know thy works and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

And to the angel of the church of Pergamum:

These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges: I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balsam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

And unto the angel of the church of Thyatira:

These things saith the son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I give her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold I will cast her into a bed and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine and which have not known the depths of Satan as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And unto the angel of the church of Sardis:

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to

die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And to the angel of the church of Philadelphia:

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take my crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem; which cometh down out of Heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And unto the angel of the church of Laodicea:

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with, him and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,

even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Who is this John who dares to make himself the interpreter of these celestial mandates, who speaks to the Churches of Asia with such authority, who boasts that he has passed through the same persecutions as his readers? It is either the Apostle John or a homonym of the Apostle John, or some one who has a desire to pass for the Apostle John. It is scarcely admissible that in the year 69, during the apostle's life or a little after his death, some one had usurped his name without his consent for such searching counsels and reprimands. Among the apostle's homonyms, no one would have dared to take up such a position. The *Presbyteros Johannes* (the only person who is alleged to have done so), if he ever existed, was, it would seem, of a later generation. Without denying the doubts which rest on nearly all these questions as to the authenticity of the apostolic writings, seeing the emit scruple which is made in attributing to apostles and holy persons the revelations to which they wished to give authority, we regard it as probable that the Apocalypse is the work of the Apostle John, or at least that it was accepted by him and addressed to the Churches of Asia under his patronage. The strong impression of the massacres of the year 64, the feeling of the dangers through which the author has run, the horror of Rome, appear to us to point to the apostle who, according to our hypothesis, had been at Rome and could say, in speaking of those tragic events: *Quorum pars magna fui*. Blood stifled him, filled his eyes, and prevented him from seeing nature. The images of the monstrosities of Nero's reign take hold of him as a fixed idea. But some grave objections here render the task of criticism very difficult. The taste for mystery and apocrypha which the first Christian generations possessed has covered with an unpenetrable mystery all the questions of literary history relating to the New Testament. Fortunately the soul shines out in those anonymous and pseudonomic writings in accents which cannot lie. The part of each man, in popular movements, it is impossible to discern—it is the sentiment of all which constitutes the true creator spirit.

Why did the author of the Apocalypse, whoever he was, choose Patmos for the place of his vision? It is difficult to say. Patmos or Pathos is a little island about four leagues in length, but very narrow. It was in the antiquity of Greece, flourishing and very populous. In the Roman period, it kept all the importance which its smallness warranted, thanks to its fine port, formed in the centre of the island by the isthmus which joins the massive rocks of the north to those of the south. Patmos was, according to the habits of the coasting trade then, the first or the last station for the traveller who went from Ephesus to Rome or from Rome to Ephesus. It is wrong to represent it as a rock or a desert, Patmos was and will become again one of the most important maritime stations of the Archipelago: for it is at the branching off of many lines. If Asia should renew its youth, Patmos would be for it something analagous to what Syra is for modern Greece, to what Delos and Rhenia among the Cyclades, a sort of emporium in the eyes of the merchant marine, a point of "correspondence" useful to travellers.

It was probably this which caused this little island to be selected—a selection from which has resulted later on such a high Christian celebrity to the spot. Whether the apostle had retired thither to escape some persecuting measure of the Ephesian authorities; or whether, returning from a voyage to Rome, or on the eve of seeing his faithful people again, he had prepared, in one of the *cauponæ* which would be on the shore of the port; the manifesto he wished to precede him in Asia; or whether, taking a kind of step backward to strike a heavy blow, and being of opinion that the place for the vision could not be made Ephesus itself, he had chosen the island in the Archipelago which, removed by about a day's journey, was connected with the metropolis of Asia by a daily sailing; or whether he desired to keep the recollection of the last stoppage on the voyage, full of emotions, which he made in 64; or whether it was a simple accident of the sea which had obliged him to spend several days in this little port. Those navigations of the Archipelago are full of danger; the crossing of the ocean cannot give any idea of it: for in our seas there are constant winds ruling which help us, even when they are contrary. There, there are one after another dull calms, and when the narrow straits are being sailed through, violent

winds. One has no control over one's movement: he stops where he can and not where he will.

Men so ardent as those bitter and fanatical descendants of the old prophets of Israel carried their fancies wherever they went, and that imagination was so completely shut in within the circle of the old Hebrew poetry that the nature which surrounded them did not exist for them. Patmos resembles all the islands of the Archipelago: an azure sea, limped air, a serene sky, rocks with jagged peaks, only occasionally clad with a light downy verdure, The aspect is naked and sterile; but the forms and colour of the rock, the living blue of the sea, pencilled by beautiful white birds, opposed to the reddish tints of the rocks, are something wonderful. Those myriads of isles and islets of the most varied forms which emerge like pyramids or shields on the waves, and dance an eternal *rondo* around the horizon, resemble a fairy world in a circle of marine gods and oceanides, leading a brilliant life of love, youth and sadness, in grottoes of a glaucous green, on shores without mystery, alternately sweet and terrible, luminous and sombre. Calypso and the Sirens, the Tritons and the Nereides, the dangerous charms of the sea, its caresses at once voluptuous and sinister, all these fine sensations which have their inimitable expression in the *Odyssey*, escaped the dark visionary. Two or three peculiarities, such as the great preoccupation of the sea, the image of "a mountain burning in the midst of the sea," which seem borrowed from the Thera, have alone some local reference. From a small island, used as the basis of the picture in the delicious romance of *Daphnis* and *Chloe*, or of pastoral scenes like those of Theocistus and Moselms, he makes a black volcano, belching forth ashes and fire. Yet he must have tasted more than once upon these waves the silence full of serenity, of nights on which one hearing nothing but the groaning of the halycon and the dull whisper of the dolphin. For whole days he was facing Mount Mycale, without thinking of the victory of the Greeks over the Persians, the finest which has ever been accomplished after Marathion and Thermopylæ. At this central point of all the great Greek creations, at some leagues from Samos, Cos, Miletus, Ephesus, he was dreaming of something else than the prodigious genius of Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Thales, and

Heraclitus: the glorious memories of Greece had no existence for him. The poem of Patmos ought to have been some *Hero and Leander*, or rather a pastoral in the style of Longus, telling of the play of beautiful children on the threshold of love. The gloomy enthusiast, thrown by chance on these Ionian shores, never quitted his Biblical recollections. Nature for him was the living chariot of Ezekiel, the monstrous cherub, the deformed Nineveh bull, an uncouth zoology, setting statuary and painting at defiance. This strange defect, which the eye of the Orientals has for altering the images of things, a defect which made all the pictured representations coming from their hands appear fantastic and bereft of the spirit of life, was with him at its height. The disease which had possession of his entrails tinged everything with its hues; he saw with the eyes of Ezekiel, with those of the author of the Book of Daniel, or rather he saw nothing but himself, his sufferings, his hopes, and his anger. A vague and dry mythology, already cabalistic and gnostic, wholly founded upon the transformation of abstract ideas in the divine hypostases, put him beyond the plastic conditions of art. Never has anyone been more isolated from his surroundings; never has anyone denied more openly the tangible world to substitute for the harmonies of reality the contradictory chimera of a new earth and a new heaven.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE APOCALYPSE.

After the message to the seven churches, the course of the vision unrolls itself. A door is opened in heaven; the Seer is wrapped in spirit, and through this opening his look penetrates to the very heart of the heavenly court. All the heaven of the Jewish cabala reveals itself to him. A single throne exists, and upon that throne, around which is the rainbow, is seated God himself, like a colossal ruby, darting forth its fires. Around the throne are twenty-four secondary seats, upon which are seated four-and-twenty elders clothed in white, having upon their heads crowns of gold. It is humanity represented by a senate of its *élite*, who form the permanent court of the Eternal; in front burn seven lamps, which are the seven spirits of God (the seven gifts of the divine wisdom). Behind are four monsters, composed of features borrowed from the cherubs of Ezekiel, and *seraphs* of Isaiah. These are: the first in the form of a lion, the second in the form of a calf, the third in the form of a man, the fourth in the form of an eagle with outspread wings. These four monsters in Ezekiel formerly represented the attributes of the divine being: wisdom, power, omniscience, and creation. They have six wings and are covered with eyes over their whole bodies. The angels, creatures inferior to the great supernatural personifications which had been spoken of, a sort of winged servants, surround the throne in thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads. An eternal rolling of thunder comes forth from the throne. In the foreground there stretches an immense azure surface, like crystal (the firmament). A sort of divine liturgy proceeds without end. The four monsters, organs of universal life (nature), never sleep, and sing night and day the heavenly *trisagion*, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and shall be." The four-and-twenty elders (humanity) unite in this canticle by prostrating themselves and casting their crowns at the feet of the throne of the creator.

Christ has not figured up till now in the court of heaven; the Seer makes us assist at the ceremony of his enthronement. At the right of him who is seated on the throne there is seen a book in the form of a roll, written on both sides and sealed

with seven seals. It is the book of the divine secrets, the great Revelation. No one either in earth or heaven has been found worthy to open it or even to look upon it. John then begins to weep; the future, the only consolation of the Christian, is not there to be revealed to him. One of the elders encourages him. In fact he who should open the book is soon found. It may be divined without difficulty that it is Jesus, for in the very centre of the great assembly at the foot of the throne in the midst of the animals and elders upon the crystalline altar appears a slain lamb. It was the favourite image under which the Christian imagination loved to picture Jesus to itself; a lamb slain became a Paschal victim and always with God. He has seven horns and seven eyes, symbols of the seven spirits of God, whose fulness Jesus has received, and who are through him about to be spread over the whole world. The Lamb rises, goes right up to the throne of the Eternal, and takes the Book. A wondrous emotion then fills heaven. The four animals, the four-and-twenty elders fall on their knees before the Lamb. They hold in their hands harps and vials of gold full of incense (the prayers of saints) and sing a new song: "Thou, thou alone art worthy to take the book and to open its seals; for thou hast been slain and with thy blood hast thou gained unto God a company of elect out of every tribe and tongue and people and race, and thou hast made of them a kingdom of priests, and they shall reign on the earth. The myriads of angels join in this canticle and discern in the Lamb the seven great prerogatives (power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing); all the creatures who are in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth, and in the sea, join in this heavenly ceremony and cry: "To him who is seated upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing, and honour, and glory, and strength through the ages of ages." The four animals representing nature, with their deep voice say Amen; the elders fall down and worship.

Thus is Jesus introduced in the highest rank of the celestial hierarchy. Not only the angels, but also the four-and-twenty elders, and the four animals who are superior to the angels, prostrate themselves before him. He has mounted the steps of the throne of God and has taken the book placed at the right hand of God, which no one could even look upon. He opens the seven seals of the book and the grand

drama begins. The *début* is brilliant. According to a conception of the most righteous people, the author places the origin of the Messianic agitation at the moment in which Rome extends its empire to Judea. At the opening of the first seal a white horse comes forth. The rider who is mounted on him carries a bow in his hand, a crown surrounds his head, he gains victory everywhere. This is the Roman Empire, which up till the time of the Seer none could resist, but this triumphal prologue is of short duration; the signs coming before the brilliant appearance of Messiah shall be unheard-of plagues, and it is by the most terrific images that the celestial tragedy is carried out. We are at the beginning of what is called "the period of the sorrows of the Messiah." Each seal which is opened henceforth brings upon humanity some horrible misfortunes.

At the opening of the second seal a red horse comes forth. To him who rides upon it is given power to take away peace from the earth and to make men slay each other; there is put into his hand a great sword. It is War. Since the revolt of Judea, and especially since the insurrection of Vindex, the world was in fact nothing but a field of carnage, and peaceable men knew not where to flee.

At the opening of the third seal a black horse leaps forth. His rider holds a balance. In the midst of the four animals the voice which tariffs in heaven the prices of commodities for poor mortals, says to the horseman, "A bushel of wheat for a penny, three bushels of barley for a penny, and touch not the oil or the wine." That is famine, not to speak of the great dearth which took place under Claudius; the scarcity in the year 68 was extreme.

At the opening of the fourth seal a yellow horse comes forth. His rider was called Death. *Sheol* followed him, and there was power given to him to kill the quarter of the world by the sword, pestilence, and wild beasts.

Such are the great plagues which announce the approaching advent of the Messiah. Justice wills it that immediately the divine wrath shall be lit against the world. In fact at the opening of the fifth seal the Seer is witness of a touching spectacle. He recognises under the altar the souls of those who have been slain for