

higher ground, yet as saving trouble to the policeman. Why did a government, usually so tolerant, make an exception of the best deserving of its subjects? Why, as was certainly the fact, was enmity to Christianity a characteristic of the best emperors, not of the worst? Why do we find the darkest persecution in the reign, not of a Domitian or a Commodus, but under the mild, just rule of a Trajan, a Marcus Aurelius, a Severus, or a Diocletian?

No more valuable addition could be made to theological history than an account of the impression made by Christianity on the minds of cultivated Romans of the highest order of ability, while its message was still new, before long acceptance had made its strangest features familiar, and before the powers which it eventually exerted commanded attention and respect. Few such men, unfortunately, condescended to examine its nature with serious care. Tacitus, Pliny, Lucian, glanced at the Christians with contemptuous pity, as victims of one more of the unaccountable illusions to which mankind were subject. They were confounded at first with the Jews; and the Jews, as the Romans had found to their cost, were troublesome fanatics whom it was equally difficult to govern or destroy. When the political constitution of a nation is abolished, its lands taken