

nized, gained his retreat. Just before reaching it, however some alarm induced him to abandon his horse, and plunged into a thicket by the road side, and through reeds and brambles, with torn clothes and lacerated flesh, he reached his transient, insecure asylum.

The senate, in the meantime, had assembled, and emboldened by the universal insurrection and by the approaching legions of Galba, pronounced Nero a tyrant, and doomed him to death, *more majorum*, that is, according to ancient custom. The decree soon reached the ears of the trembling Nero.

"What is it," he inquired, "to die *more majorum*?"

"It is," was the very unconsoling reply, "to be stripped naked, to have the head fastened in the pillory, and in that posture to be scourged to death."

Nero had been highly amused in witnessing sufferings far more dreadful inflicted upon his innocent victims; but the idea of such a death for himself was any thing but amusing. Indeed, he was so horror-stricken, that he seized a dagger and *pricked* himself. But it hurt. So he laid the dagger aside and groaned. He then tried to talk himself into courage. "Ought Nero to be afraid?" he said. "Shall the emperor be a coward? No! let me die courageously." Again he grasped the dagger, looked at its point earnestly, but it was so sharp! Again he laid it aside, and groaned in despair.

Just then he heard the sound of horses' feet, and looking up saw, in the distance, soldiers approaching. In a few moments his retreat would be discovered, and he would be in their hands. There would then be no escape from the stripping, the pillory, and the scourge. In frenzy he entreated one of his servants, a freed man, to hold the dagger so that he might run his throat fiercely against it. This time he succeeded in severing an artery, and the blood gushed forth. He sank upon the floor just as the soldiers entered, and looking up to them with a malignant scowl, said, "You are too late," and died. There is a theory of false religion which

says that there is no punishment in the future world; and that the spirit of Nero ascended to heaven to be greeted with the words, from the lips of our heavenly Father, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But the Bible assures us that "after death cometh the judgment." This is the only solution of such a career as that of Nero. This monster reigned thirteen years, and died in the thirty-second year of his age.

Servius Galba, who had not yet reached Rome, was immediately proclaimed by the senate emperor. He was an old man, seventy-two years of age, and he was also childless. Galba, conscious that it would require much time to effect a reform of the corruptions which pervaded the whole empire, and that he, already oppressed with the infirmities of age, had not long to live, adopted as his successor a young man of very noble character and rare virtue, Piso Lucianus. But a depraved people do not wish for a virtuous sovereign. The Roman army, accustomed to plunder and to licentiousness, and to enormous bribery, though weary of the wanton cruelty of Nero, still wished for a leader who would gratify their luxurious and lustful desires.

A young man by the name of Otho, appealing to these corrupt passions, formed a conspiracy in the encamped army of Galba. He ridiculed his severe discipline, the restraints he imposed, and his neglect to enrich the soldiers with plunder and bribes. He assured them that Piso would tread in the steps of Galba, and that the affectation of such "virtues," as they were called, was absurd in such a world as this. Probably earth has never witnessed a more diabolical band than was presented in a Roman army. The conspiracy ripened. The soldiers, at the appointed time, in a mass, raised the shout of revolt, lifted Otho upon their shoulders, and with the clashing of weapons and huzzas, declared Otho their emperor. The venom with which the virtuous Galba was

pursued, seems to have been as malignant as that which was emptied upon Nero.

A tumultuous band, with oaths and imprecations, rushed to the tent of Galba. The heroic old man, conscious that no resistance would be of any avail, as the assassins burst into his tent, looked up calmly and said, "If you wish for my head, here it is. I am willing at any time to surrender it for the good of the people." The words were hardly uttered ere the heavy broadsword of a Roman soldier fell with its keen edge upon his neck, and his head rolled upon the floor of the tent. Another seized it by the hair, thrust a pike into the palpitating flesh, and, with shoutings of tumultuous thousands, the gory trophy was paraded through the camp. His body was kicked about, until one of his slaves dug a hole and buried it. Thus died Galba, after a reign of but three months. The senate, overawed by the army, and impotent, ratified the foul deed, and Otho was declared emperor. Such was the condition of Rome A. D. 67.

It is supposed that the apostle Paul suffered martyrdom at Rome during the persecution under Nero. Chrysostom says that a cup-bearer and a concubine of Nero, through the preaching of the apostle, became converts to the religion of Jesus, and that this so enraged the tyrant, that Paul was immediately beheaded.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EMPERORS, GOOD AND BAD.

FROM A. D. 67 TO A. D. 133.

OTHO AND VITELLIUS.—THE CONFLICT.—THE TRIUMPH OF VESPASIAN.—TITUS DESTROYS JERUSALEM.—HIS ACCESSION TO THE THRONE.—SUCCESSION OF DOMITIAN.—ADORNMENT OF THE CAPITOL.—HIS DEPRAVITY AND DEATH.—THE CROWN CONFERRED ON NERVA.—TRAJAN, ASSOCIATE EMPEROR.—REIGN OF TRAJAN.—HIS COLUMN.—CORRESPONDENCE WITH PLINY.—CONQUESTS OF TRAJAN.—REIGN OF ADRIAN.—ANTONINUS PIUS.—HIS NOBLE CHARACTER.—MARCUS AURELIUS.—VEEUS, HIS COLLEAGUE.—DEATH OF AURELIUS.

OTHO was one of the parasites of Nero, having passed his youth in the midst of the corruption and debauchery of the imperial palace. He had surrendered to Nero his very beautiful and very infamous wife Poppæa, which wife, soon after died from a kick which she received from her regal spouse, just before she was about to give birth to a child. Otho had received, in exchange for his wife, the proconsulship of Lusitania, one of the provinces of Spain. He had squandered all his vast resources, and was hopelessly embarrassed by debt.

There was, at that time, at the head of the Roman legions on the banks of the Danube, a general by the name of Aulus Vitellius. He was descended from one of the most illustrious families in Rome, and had received his education, in all the luxuries and vices of the times, in company with Tiberius Cæsar, in his retreat at Capreæ. Hearing of the death of Nero, immediately followed by the death of Galba, Vitellius secured, with large bribes and promises, the coöperation of his army, and had himself proclaimed emperor, with all the military parade of his camp. Otho and Vitellius were both instantly on the march to settle their claims on the field of battle.