



THE PERSECUTION

OF

THE JEWS.

PART I.

BY



SALADIN.

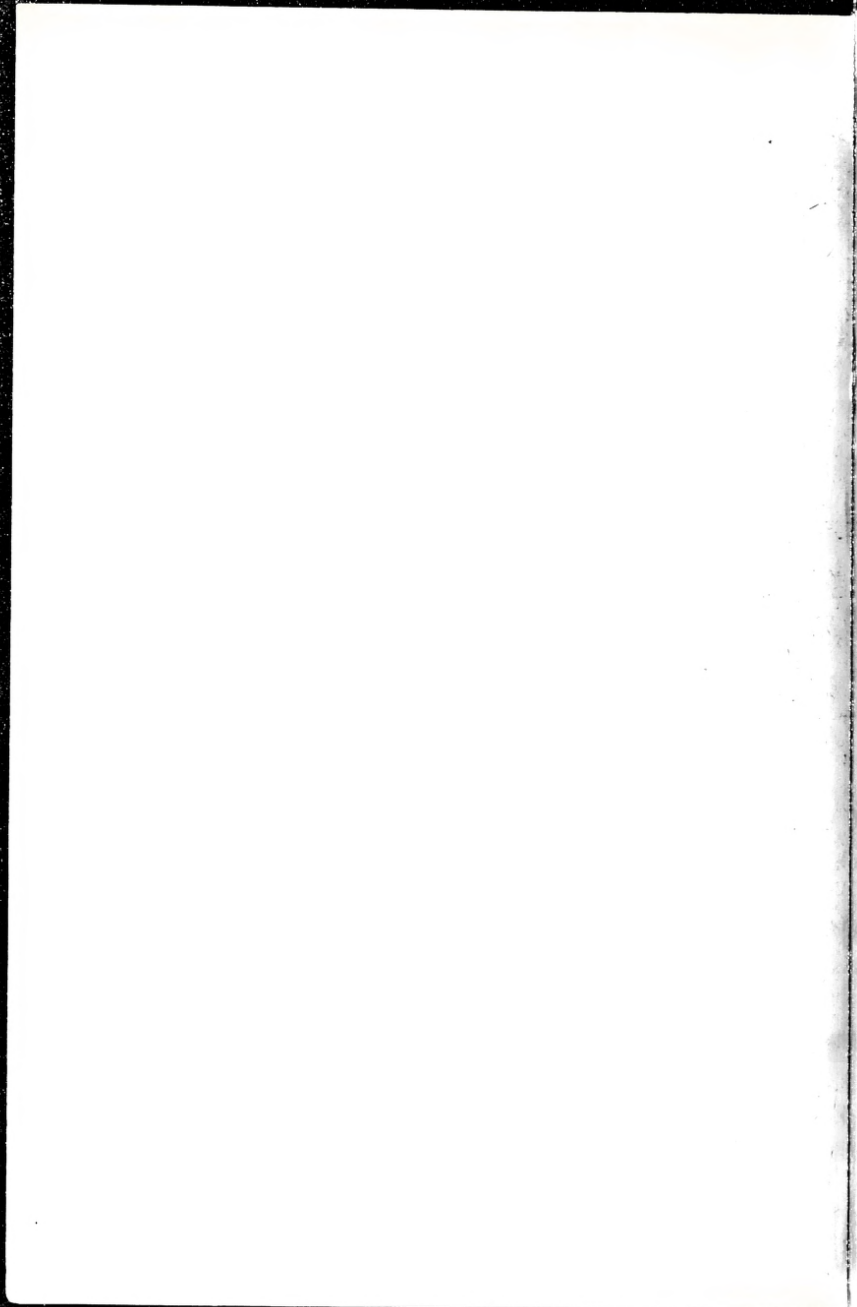
[REPRINTED FROM "THE SECULAR REVIEW."]



LONDON :

W. STEWART & Co., 41, FARRINGDON ST., E.C.





THE

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS.

THROUGH circumstances intrinsic and extrinsic, the Jews occupy the position of the most remarkable people in the world's history. It is a far cry from Abraham to Moses Montefiore, from Miriam to Sarah Bernhardt, from David to Disraeli; but between these pillars on the left and right horizon of history there is not a single gap where the Jewish people had ceased to be—a single breach in the invulnerable line of the Jewish nationality and faith. The Jews alone, as a distinct and specialised race, link the dim morning of the Past with the mid-day warmth of the Present. We have now no Chaldeans, no Assyrians, no Persians, no Egyptians, no Greeks, no Romans, as history knew them in the ages of their power and pride. But the Jew of ancient Ai and Jericho is the Jew of modern Houndsditch and Petticoat Lane. The Nathan with whom you pledge your finger ring has the blood, the features, and the faith of the Abraham who dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees. The ancient Greek, in spite of his art, has perished; the ancient Roman, in spite of his arms, has vanished from the earth; but the monotheistic sept of Syrian shepherds survive long after the last hour of the Greek epic and the Roman legion has been struck on the clock of Time. Nearly one-third of the inhabitants of the globe, the Christians and Mohammedans combined, are indebted for their religion to this primitive tribe of husbandmen and cattle-drovers.

Our Bible is a surviving shred of their ancient literature; and, on the maternal side, their blood flowed in the veins of the Redeemer. They have survived, while the most indestructible tower, temple, and monument in their Palestine have crumbled into undistinguishable

ruin. Lost among the nations of the earth, as a drop of water is lost in a bucketful, they yet retain their inflexible individuality. The God of Jacob is still their God, the Mighty One of Israel their rock and stay; and, through a perfect hell-fire of persecution, burning through the centuries, they have passed, impervious as a sheet of asbestos to the fierce flame-forks of the furnace. For eighteen centuries they have been strangers in a strange land, repudiating the Messiahship of the Son of Mary, and waiting, with patience unalterable and faith invincible, for the coming of Shiloh.

Not only is Judaism the root from which Christianity has sprung, but the first Christian preachers in the Roman empire were Jews, with whom it seemed that Judaism and Christianity were reconcilable. They practised the rite of circumcision, and, like their fathers, conformed to the Mosaic law, and moulded the polity of the Christian Church upon that of the Jewish synagogue. But the conservatism of Judaism on the one hand, and the obstinacy of Christian fanaticism on the other, soon led to the parting of the ways. A council was held at Jerusalem about the year 49 A.D., which forever divorced Judaism and Christianity, and left them, as regarded each other, in an attitude of aversion, which it needed only time to ripen into one of implacable hostility. Originally, all that was necessary for a Jew who desired to enter the Christian fold was to admit that he believed Jesus Christ to be the promised Messiah, and, as an outward seal to this admission, submit to the rite of baptism. But immediately the Hebrew race perceived that the Messiah who competed for their suffrages did not establish a temporal kingdom for the people of Israel, they would have none of him. Instead of any prospect of imperial ascendancy, they saw Jerusalem compassed about with armies, and the prospect of the legions of Vespasian blotting the kingdom of David and Solomon out of the map of the world. And, if any further barrier were wanted to completely arrest the ingress of the Jews into the Christian Church, the doctrine of the Trinity furnished that barrier. The Christian constructed his three-pronged God out of sundry shreds and patches, in order that that God might

be all things to all men. He was *three* to win over Roman Polytheism; he was *one* to conciliate Jewish Monotheism. But the arithmetical juggle pleased none, except those in the inner circle, and who had vested interests in its propagation. The Romans declined to accept this numerical puzzle in the place of their three *dii majores*; and the Jews, whose devotion to the Monotheistic principle amounted to fanaticism, objected to see their one and indivisible living and true God split up into a sort of breakfast-fork, with three prongs. And before, under Constantine, Christianity had mounted the throne of the Cæsars, the Jews had washed their hands of it forever. It takes thousands of pounds now-a-days to convert a single Jew, as the statistics of Christian missions among them testify; and even when this Jew is converted, he turns out such a questionable specimen that his fellow-Christians have to keep their eye upon him, lest he should steal the communion plate or skedaddle with the trappings of the altar.

Down through all their ancient history, full of blood and tenderness, guilt and simplicity, we are constrained to follow the Jews with an absorption of interest such as the readers of the world have never extended to the primitive annals of any other people whatsoever. I am exceptionally interested in all their crimes and follies, and in their wars and amours, whose fringes are illumed by a poetic halo in all that lies between the blood-soaked grass of Esdrælon and the heads of yellow grain that gleamed among the fingers of Ruth as she gleaned in the field of Boaz. But the interest reaches a point of dark and terrible intensity when the dial of Time indicates that it is 1,130 years, seven months, and fifteen days from the laying of the foundation of the Temple by Solomon. Then it was that the kingdom of Judah expired in a convulsion of fire and gore, and threw the remnant of her desolate children upon the tender mercies of all the nations of a hostile world. My lip has quivered, and tears have coursed down my cheeks, as, in the pages of their own Josephus, my blood has alternately curdled and boiled in the contemplation of the colossal and tragic *tableau* when the fire, leaping and roaring over the roof of the holy of holies, threw a

light, lurid and unearthly, up the slope of Calvary and Olivet and the hills that encompassed Jerusalem.

What mystical terror, portent, and prodigy hushed the earth and air during the year that preceded the siege by Titus? Who can withhold his sympathy from the race of old whom their God had, at last, forsaken, who no longer guided them with the cloud and the pillar of flame? No longer did the *shekinah*, the visible symbol of the invisible God of the Hebrews, glow between the cherubim. But, on the eighth of the month Xanthicus, at the ninth hour of the night, for full half-an-hour, a light, which was not the light of the God of Jacob, lingered over the altar while the Passover was being celebrated, bursting in upon the blackness of night with a radiance baleful and terrible. The clouds were full of chariots and armed men, while the wind was sobbing with cries of pain and waving the garments on the limbs of the dead. And, for a full year—fearful omen of doom—over Jerusalem a comet lay weirdly across the sky—a comet shaped like a sword. Its hilt was bloody red, and its blade streamed away in tracks of illimitable fire. The portents beheld by the Ancient People were not in vain: the Roman conquered—Jerusalem fell; the glory of Judea and the world is a chaos of corpses and cinders and death. Scorched black from the conflagration of their Temple, and wet-shod in the blood of their own kindred, a remnant escaped to wail, for century upon century, that the Temple was no more.*

* On the Passover night, in the houses of many of the Jews, it has been observed that, as soon as the out-doors are set open, and the master of the house hath uttered these passages of Scripture—namely, Psalms lxxix. 6, lxxix. 24, and Lam. iii. 66—some one slips cunningly, as if he would not be seen, into the room where they sup, clad in linen, or other extraordinary vestments, to the end the children may believe that Elias is present, while the company perform the ordinary closing religious offices at table, concluding all with the following most singular prayer for the rebuilding of the Temple:—"Almighty God, now speedily and quickly build thy temple; quickly in our days, out of hand; now build it, now build it, now build it, now build it, now speedily build thy temple. Merciful God, great God, gentle God, highest God, good God, sweet God, excellent God, God of the Jews, speedily restore thy temple; quickly, quickly, in our days; now build it, now build it, now build it, now quickly build thy temple. Powerful God, living

The winds of winter were kinder than the Gentiles to the now scattered remnant of the People of God :—

“ Oh, where shall Israel lave her bleeding feet ?
 And when shall Zion's songs again seem sweet ?
 The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
 Mankind their country—Israel but the grave.”

For 300 years Christianity waged a tooth-and-nail battle for existence. Toleration was such in the Roman empire that no religious sect was prosecuted in its capacity as a religious sect. But Christianity was prosecuted, not for its tenets, but for its crimes. Its votaries were the off-scourings of the human race—the Cat-and-Ladleites of Asia Minor. Their feebly-treasonable ravings about Jesus being a king Rome could afford to sneer at ; but when the lascivious rabble, in their *Agapæ*, indulged in secret but fiendish rites, involving murder, incest, and promiscuous sexual intercourse, in defence of the lives and morals of her citizens, Rome stepped in with the scourge of punishment ; and, if certain of the Christian miscreants were burnt to death, they were consumed in a fire less baleful than that of their own lasciviousness ; and they were never torn to pieces by wild beasts who were such ignoble beasts as they were themselves

Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, found it politically expedient to clothe this maniacal rabblement with the purple of power. It was meet that Constantine, one of history's thorough-paced villains, and the murderer of his own wife and son, should be the first Christian Emperor. And, further, it was meet that the Salvation Army, made up of the roughs, not of to-day, but of eighteen centuries ago, should hasten to dip their foul hands in human blood. In the Jews they saw the descendants of those who had slain Christ, and, accordingly, against this inoffensive people they directed the full fury of persecution. Even if it were true that, some

God, mighty God, famous God, mild God, eternal God, terrible God, choicest God, royal God, rich God, beautiful God, faithful God, now speedily restore thy temple : quickly, quickly, in our days ; speedily, quickly ; now build it, now build it, now build it, now build it ; now quickly build thy temple.”—Bradshaw's “Josephus,” pp. 551, 552, note.

three centuries earlier, the Jews had executed the half-fabulous Christ, what then? It is alleged that Christ came from heaven for the express purpose of being crucified, and surely the Christians should have felt themselves under a heavy obligation to the Jews for crucifying him. According to their theory, if he had not been crucified, the world would have been lost. In fact, to what is called "the Christian scheme of salvation" Judas Iscariot was as necessary as Jesus Christ himself. But, with the consistency for which the Christians have always been remarkable, and the benevolence for which they have ever been distinguished, they set themselves to persecuting and slaughtering the Jews, although they owed the wondrous birth of their Christ to a Jewish woman, and the atoning death of their Christ to a Jewish betrayer. They assailed the Hebrew and other heretics "with stones, and other manifestations of rage." Rather an apt way this was, it must be admitted, of following "the meek and lowly Jesus," who flogged certain parties out of the Temple with knotted cords! A brick or paving stone describing a parabola has ever been, and forever must remain, one of the most convincing of Christian arguments. A paving stone, as a projectile, carries more syllogistic reasoning about it than does a polemical burlesque like Paley's "Evidences." Brains incapable of the reception of Christian *truth* should be beaten out with a brick-bat, so that the Lord be glorified.

Constantine, the debauchee and murderer, permitted his Christians to hurl stones at the Jews; but should a Jew, by way of self-defence or retaliation, throw a stone at a Christian, that Jew would be forthwith tied to the nearest stake, fuel would be piled round him and ignited, and, amid Christian jeer and hiss and yell, the descendant of Abraham would be burned to a cinder in the name of his own fatal countryman, Jesus of Nazareth.

When the Roman Empire fell to pieces there was plenty of ignorance, the very kind of manure upon which the upas-tree of Christianity grows most rankly. The follower of the Lamb was absorbed in superstitious monkery and brutalising militarism: he was either bending his servile knee at a shrine or having his few brains knocked out

in a fight. And these ignorant swaggerers of crucifix and dagger had, as is the rule, conceit commensurate with their ignorance. They, in their own opinion, were the salt of the earth. The poor visionary and fanatic who was a carpenter and a god had come down specially from heaven to offer for them a sacrifice of blood, and they took care to offer him a sacrifice of blood in return: their lips were ever uttering *credos*, and their swords were ever red.

The Jews, encouraged and abetted by the Saracens, kept Europe from receding to absolute military barbarism and the cultus of the Galilee fishermen. "The intellectual activity of the Asiatic and African Jews soon communicated an impulse to those of Europe. The Hebrew doctor was viewed by the vulgar with wonder, fear, and hatred; no crime could be imputed to him too incredible. Thus Zedekias, the physician to Charles the Bold, was asserted to have devoured at one meal, in the presence of the court, a waggon-load of hay, together with its horses and driver. The titles of some of the works that appeared among them deserve mention, as displaying a strong contrast with the mystical designations in vogue. Thus Isaac Ben Soleiman, an Egyptian, wrote 'On Fevers,' 'On Medicine,' 'On Food and Remedies,' 'On the Pulse,' 'On Philosophy,' 'On Melancholy,' 'An Introduction to Logic.' The simplicity of these titles displays an intellectual clearness and a precision of thought which have ever been shown by the Israelites. Since it was by the power and patronage of the Saracens that the Jewish physicians were acting, it is not surprising that the language used in many of their compositions was Arabic. Translations were, however, commonly made into Hebrew, and, at a subsequent period, into Latin. Through the ninth century the Asiatic colleges maintained their previous celebrity in certain branches of knowledge. Thus the Jew, Shabtai Donolo, was obliged to go to Bagdad to complete his studies in astronomy. As Arabian influence extended itself into Sicily and Italy, Jewish intelligence accompanied it, and schools were founded at Tarentum, Salerno, Bari, and other places. Here the Arab and Jew Orientalists first amalgamated with a truly European element—the Greek

—as is shown by the circumstance that in the college at Salerno instruction was given through the medium of all three languages. At one time Pontus taught in Greek, Abdallah in Arabic, and Elisha in Hebrew. A similar influence of the Arab and Jew, combined, founded the University of Montpellier.”*

But what university did Christianity found? Its university, if it had founded one, would have had four chairs—Ignorance, Devotion, Cruelty, and Lust. “Mahomedanism had all along been the patron of physical science; paganising Christianity not only repudiated it, but exhibited towards it sentiments of contemptuous disdain and hatred. Hence physicians were viewed by the Church with dislike, and regarded as Atheists by the people, who held firmly to the lessons they had been taught, that cures must be wrought by relics of martyrs and bones of saints, by prayers and intercessions, and that each region of the body was under some spiritual charge—the first joint of the right thumb being in the care of God the Father, the second under that of the blessed Virgin, and so on of other parts. For each disease there was a saint. A man with sore eyes must invoke St. Clara; but, if it were an inflammation elsewhere, he must turn to St. Anthony. An ague would demand the assistance of St. Pernel. For the propitiating of these celestial beings it was necessary that fees should be paid, and thus the practice of imposture-medicine became a great source of profit.”†

On far other bases did the subtle and thoughtful Hebrew build his system of therapeutics. “In the eleventh century nearly all the physicians in Europe were Jews. This was due to two different causes: the Church would tolerate no interference with her spiritual methods of treating disease, which formed one of her most productive sources of gain; and the study of medicine had been formally introduced into the rabbinical schools. The monk was prohibited a pursuit which gave to the rabbi an honourable emolument. If thus

* “The Intellectual Development of Europe,” vol. ii., pp. 120, 121.

† Ibid., vol. ii., pp. 121, 122.

the social condition of the rabbis, who drew no income from their religious duties, induced them to combine the practice of medicine with their pursuits, great facilities had arisen for mental culture through the establishment of so many schools. Henceforth the Jewish physician is recognised as combining with his professional skill a profound knowledge of theology, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, music, law. In a singular manner he stands aloof in the barbarian societies among whom he lives, looking down like a philosopher upon their idolatries—permitting, or even excusing, them, like a statesman. Of those who thus adorned the eleventh century was Rabbi Solomon Ben Isaac, better known under the abbreviation Raschi—called by his countrymen the Prince of Commentators. He was equally at home in writing commentaries on the Talmud, or in giving instructions for great surgical operations, as the Cæsarean section. He was the greatest French physician of his age.

“Spain, during the same century, produced a worthy competitor to him, Ebn Zohr, physician to the court of Seville. His writings were in Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and both in prose and verse. He composed a treatise on the cure of diseases, and two on fevers. In singular contrast with the superstitious notions of the times, he possessed a correct view of the morbid nature of marsh miasm. He was followed by Ben Ezra, a Jew of Toledo, who was at once a physician, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, critic, poet. He travelled all over Europe and Asia, being held in captivity for some time in India. Among his medical writings was a work on theoretical and practical medicine, entitled ‘Book of Proofs.’ Through the wars arising in Spain between the Mohammedans and Christians, many learned Jews were driven into France, imparting to that country, by their presence, a new intellectual impulse. Of such were Aben Tybbon, who gave to his own profession a pharmaceutical tendency by insisting on the study of botany and the art of preparing drugs. Ben Kimchi, a Narbonnese physician and grammarian, wrote commentaries on the Bible, sacred and moral poems, a Hebrew grammar. Notwithstanding the opposition of the ecclesiastics, William,

the Lord of Montpellier, passed an edict authorising all persons, without exception, to profess medicine in the university of his city. This was specially meant for the relief of the Jews, though expressed in a general way. Spain, though she had thus lost many of her learned men, still continued to produce others of which she had reason to be proud.

“Moussa Ben Maimon, known all over Europe as Maimonides, was recognised by his countrymen as ‘the Doctor, the Great Sage, the Glory of the West, the Light of the East, second only to Moses.’ He is often designated by the four initials, ‘R. M. B. M.’—that is, Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon, or, briefly, Rambam. His biography presents some points of interest. He was born at Cordova A.D. 1135, and, while yet young, wrote commentaries on the Talmuds, both of Babylon and Jerusalem, and also a work on the Calendar; but, embracing Mohammedanism, he emigrated to Egypt, and there became physician to the celebrated Sultan, Saladin. Among his works are medical aphorisms, derived from former Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic sources; an abridgment of Galen; and of his original treatises, which were very numerous, may be mentioned those ‘On Hemorrhoids,’ ‘On Poisons and Antidotes,’ ‘On Asthma,’ ‘On the Preservation of Health’ (the latter being written for the benefit of the son of Saladin), ‘On the Bites of Venomous Animals’ (written by order of the Sultan), ‘On Natural History.’ His ‘Moreh Nevochim,’ or ‘Teacher of the Perplexed,’ was an attempt to reconcile the doctrines of the Old Testament with reason. In addition to these, he had a book on Idolatry, and one on Christ. Besides Maimonides, the Sultan had another physician, Ebn Djani, the author of a work on the medical topography of the city of Alexandria. From the biographies of these learned men of the twelfth century it would seem that their religious creed hung lightly upon them. Not unfrequently they became converted to Mohammedanism.”*

Meanwhile the Christians were progressing satisfactorily in divinity and dirt. They called themselves

* Ibid, vol. ii., pp. 122, 123, 124.

followers of the Lamb; followers of the Skunk would have been more appropriate. They did not build, like the Saracens and Jews, museums, observatories, colleges, and hospitals; but they built monasteries for lewd and lazy monks, and they built convents which were frequently only ecclesiastical brothels. They also built castles to harbour tyrants, dungeons to incarcerate heretics, and fires to roast them. The laity were as ignorant as bullocks, and most of the clergy could not even read. Their learning lay in the discussion of such questions as whether Adam, having had no mother, had a navel, and whether Christ, when chewed and swallowed in the sacramental bread, was digestible or not.

By the middle of the fourteenth century Christian dirt and offal converted much of Western Europe into a sepulchre. Cleanliness is next to godliness; but Christendom stuck so fast to godliness that it never approached the virtue that lay next to it. To describe the houses and streets of the fourteenth century, in Christian countries, would be an outrage upon modern credence. Thirteen centuries of Jesus, Paul, neo-Platonism, Popery, and Aristotle had converted some of the finest countries of the world into a hideous arena, which was, at one and the same time, a dunghill and a battle-field. On the dunghill the rank grubs and maggots stood on end and gored and smashed each other to death, in the name of some more exalted maggot whom they yclept a king. As if filth and stench did not furnish the tomb fast enough, sword and dagger were called in to assist. And they burned villages and towns till the glare reddened heaven as if from the conflagration of Sodom or hell, and they blared on brass and rattled on sheep-skin over desolation and suffering and slaughter and garments rolled in blood. And over all the infernal clang rang the bells of the abbey and convent; and abbot and monk, in the name of him of Nazareth, blessed the dirty demons who had succeeded in adding most corpses to an already putrescent world. Stinks were in perfection, rags were in all their glory, and lice in their billions and trillions bade fair to eat man off the face of the globe and take it to themselves. They had eaten the human skin into putrid holes and festering sores. Their principal diffi-

culty lay in penetrating the dirt with which the skin was covered. Not unfrequently a coat of tar was laid on the top of the other dirt for the express purpose of preventing the tarred one from being devoured by vermin. Europe did three things only: it scratched itself, it cut its neighbour's throat, and it prayed. Christianity was then in her golden prime—no "Infidels" then—and Ignorance was in the zenith of her pride. The priest bestrode the world like a colossus. The destinies of mankind hung from the rope that bound the gaberdine of the monk. God had it all his own way, and proved himself the God of battles—and dunghills. Everywhere there were sanctity and stench, prayers and putrescence, matins and middens, vespers and vermin, deity and dirt, Jesus and jaundice.

Out from among the hideous rotteness to which I have alluded stalked **THE BLACK DEATH**. Christianity did not attribute to the jakes, but to the Jews, this visitation of the Destroying Angel. The premonitions the Angel gave were shivering, sickness, and headache. These were frequently followed by delirium and a place in the trench-grave before you were quite cold, or even quite dead. Dying and grave-digging came to be the principal industry in many parts of Italy, Switzerland, France, and Germany. The dying and the grave-digging were often performed by the same person in the same day. In the morning you drove the loaded dead-cart; before the evening, swollen and blotched with black spots, you, with a number of others, were tumbled into the burial-trench amid the grating of spades and a blinding cloud of quick-lime.

It was Death's harvest day, and, with his scythe, he laid low the ripe and the green. According to recent and careful estimates by the great German physician, Hecker, the number who died of the Black Death during the six years of its continuance amounted to twenty-five millions, or the fourth part of the then inhabitants of Europe. In many large towns more than half the population perished under the visitation of the plague. The malady first broke out in Italy in 1348, and, in a few months, Florence had lost 60,000, Siena 70,000, and Venice 100,000 inhabitants. In Naples man and

beast perished together under the breath of the pestilence.

Like the millennial mania, and every other scourge to Europe, the Black Death was quite a god-send to the Christian Church. The priests of the poor Galilean who had not where to lay his head exulted in untold wealth and boundless luxury. Every person of means who found the hand of the Black Death upon him, or in anticipation of its being laid upon him, rushed to cathedral, convent, or abbey, and gave all he had to the Lord, that it might be well with his soul when his body lay in the dead-cart. In the ever-open and insatiable grave many beheld the punishment for their sins and the retributive vengeance of an angry God. Many were of opinion that Satan had been let loose by the Almighty to take the souls of half Europe to the abode of the damned. Many, on the other hand, were not ready to admit that they had perpetrated sins so heinous as to justify a special outpouring of the vials of Divine wrath ; and they laid the whole blame of the Black Death at the door of the Jews. What gave some colour and pretext to this terrible suspicion of the guilt of Israel was the fact that comparatively very few of the Jews were swept away by the plague. Because their social morals and the sanitary arrangements of their food and their homes were cleanliness itself compared with those of the Christians, they were comparatively impervious to the ravages of the pestilence. From the chaos of Christian ignorance, death, and filth, the cry arose that the Jews had put poison in the springs and wells of Europe, and the sword and torch of Christian fanaticism and hate shed the blood and burnt the homes of the ancient people of God. Staggering on the edge of the grave, dirt introducing them through death to dirt, they yet had time to mix up their terrified hymns and agonised prayers with butchering their Jewish fellow-citizens and burning their homes with the old man, the maiden, and the sucking child.