

recorded in history. It is quite certain that, here in Rome, a certain Simon, who was sometimes called Simon Peter, and at other times Simon Magus, actually in public flew up high into the air; but his charm having slipped out of his belt he fell and broke both his legs; for which reason he was obliged to be crucified with his head downwards."

"Then are all Christians necessarily sorcerers?" asked Scaurus.

"Necessarily; it is part of their superstition. They believe their priests to have most extraordinary power over nature. Thus, for example, they think they can bathe the bodies of people in water and their souls acquire thereby wonderful gifts and superiority, should they be slaves, over their masters and the divine emperors themselves."

"Dreadful!" all cried out.

"Then again," resumed Calpurnius, "we all know what a frightful crime some of them committed last night in tearing down a supreme Edict of the imperial deities; and even suppose (which the gods avert) that they carried their treasons still further and attempted their sacred lives they believe that they have only to go to one of those priests, own the crime, and ask for pardon; and if he gives it they consider themselves as perfectly guiltless."

"Fearful!" joined in the chorus.

"Such a doctrine," said Scaurus, "is incompatible with the safety of the state. A man who thinks he can be pardoned by another man of every crime is capable of committing any."

"And that, no doubt," observed Fulvius, "is the cause of this new and terrible Edict against them. After what Calpurnius has told us about these desperate men, nothing can be too severe against them."

Fulvius had been keenly eyeing Sebastian, who had entered during the conversation; and now pointedly addressed him.

"And you, no doubt, think so too, Sebastian; do you not?"

"I think," he calmly replied, "that if the Christians be such as Calpurnius describes them, infamous sorcerers, they deserve to be exterminated from the face of the earth. But even so, I would gladly give them one chance of escape."

"And what is that?" sneeringly asked Fulvius.

"That no one should be allowed to join in destroying them who could not prove himself freer from crime than they. I would have no one raise his hand against them who cannot shew that he has never been an adulterer, an extortioner, a deceiver, a drunkard, a bad husband, father, or child, a profligate, or a thief. For with being any of these no one charges the poor Christians."

Fulvius winced under the catalogue of vices, and still more under the indignant but serene glance of Sebastian. But at the word "thief" he fairly leapt. Had the soldier seen him pick up the scarf in Fabius's house? Be it so or not, the dislike he had taken to Sebastian at their first meeting had ripened into hatred at their second; and hatred in that heart was only written in blood. He had only intensity now to add to that feeling.

Sebastian went out; and his thoughts got vent in familiar words of prayer. "How long, O Lord, how long? What hopes can we entertain of the conversion of many to the truth, still less of the conversion of this great empire, so long as we find even honest and learned men believing at once every calumny spoken against us; treasuring up from age to age every fable and fiction about us, and refusing even to inquire into our doctrines because they have made up their minds that they are false and contemptible?"

He spoke aloud, believing himself alone, when a sweet voice answered him at his side: "Good youth, whoever thou art that speakest thus, and methinks I know thy voice, remember that the Son of God gave light to the dark eye of the body, by spreading thereon clay, which in man's hands would have only blinded the seeing. Let us be as dust beneath His feet if we wish to become His means of enlightening the eyes of

men's souls. Let us be trampled on a little longer in patience; perhaps even from our ashes may come out the spark to blaze."

"Thank you, thank you, Cæcilia," said Sebastian, "for your just and kind rebuke. Whither tripping on so gaily on this first day of danger?"

"Do you not know that I have been named guide of the cemetery of Callistus? I am going to take possession. Pray that I may be the first flower of this coming spring."

And she passed on, singing blithely. But Sebastian begged her to stay one moment.

(To be continued.)

THE STATE AND LABOR

(By JOSEPH HUSSEIN, S.J., in *America*.)

Before the advent of the Church the duty of the State towards labor was almost entirely ignored. Even among the Jews the conditions of labor were far from ideal, although the hardships of the bought or hired servant were greatly reduced by the Divinely-given legislation. Religion has ever been the main defence of the working man. Paganism in its most complete material development despised labor under every form. The history of labor in the ancient pagan world is mainly the history of slavery, and slaves were the merest chattel in the eyes of the pagan State. According to the wording of the Roman law they were to be regarded: "*Pro nullis, pro mortuis, pro quadrupedibus*"; "As nothing, as dead things, as four-footed beasts." That, in brief, was their legal status. They could not even contract a marriage which the law would recognize.

The same conditions returned when Christianity was swept away by the barbarian hordes before the new dawn of the Ages of Faith. The slave was the master's property. Even with returning civilisation his testimony could not be received in court except under torture. Such were the rights of labor in the eyes of the State, except where Christianity had been able to bring relief. After the lapse of centuries the Church succeeded in impressing upon the public administration a new concept of the rights and dignity of the laborer, which the State was bound to safeguard under the Christian dispensation. By her doctrine of brotherly love and the example of the God-man she brought about the abolition of slavery and gradually ameliorated the lot of the serf, until the day of his complete emancipation dawned. But long before that period she had been active in inspiring and directing social legislation in favor of the working man.

The laborer, as viewed by the Church, is an integral part of the living organism of society. He has therefore social rights that must be protected and defended by the State. Numerically, he represents by far the greatest element within the commonwealth. Industrially the prosperity of the entire community is inseparably connected with his daily toil. "It may be truly said that it is only by the labor of the working man that States grow rich," wrote Pope Leo XIII. Hence the public administration is under an obligation not merely of charity, but of strict justice to provide for the welfare of its laboring classes, and it is the duty of every government to see that "They who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may share in the benefits they create." (*The Condition of Labor*.)

But the obligation of the State is based upon even higher considerations. Transcending the purely material order, this duty of safeguarding all the just interests of the working population is founded upon the end of society itself, which, in the words of the Holy Father, is "to make men better." Economic conditions, as we need hardly repeat here, can exercise the most vital and far-reaching influence upon the moral and religious life of the people.

"In all well-constituted States," says the great Pope of the working men, "it is a matter of no slight