Historical lectures

I — ROMANI, ROMANIA.

The inhabitants of Rome have always called themselves Romani in their own language. This word is formed from the name Roma and the suffix -ano, one of those by which the Latin language derived the name of a country or city from the name of its inhabitants. Long after the subjugation of Italy and the other provinces that made up their empire, the Romani distinguished themselves from the peoples who lived under their domination. The latter retained their original names: they were Sabines, Gauls, Hellenes, Iberians, and did not have the right to call themselves Romans, a name reserved for those who held the right of citizenship by birth or who had received it by special favor. This distinction gradually faded, especially after the famous edict of Caracalla had made Roman citizens of all the inhabitants of the empire: In orbe Romano qui sunt, says Ulpian, ex constitutione imperatoris Antonini cives Romani effecti sunt. The threatening proximity of the Barbarians, who pressed the empire from several sides, soon made the use of the word Romani more general to designate the inhabitants of the empire as opposed to the thousand foreign peoples who bordered it and who were already beginning to cross its borders. The writers of the 4th and 5th centuries speak with pride of this new Roman nationality, of this fusion of races in a single homeland. Quis jam cognoscit, says Saint Augustine, gentes in imperio Romano quæ quid erant, quando omnes Romani facti sunt et omnes Romani dicuntur? It was when speaking of the empire that Apollinaris Sidonius wrote: In qua unica totius orbis civitate soli Barbari et servi peregrinantur. The poets did not fail to celebrate this great work. The verses of Rutilius Namatianus are famous:

Fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam;
Urbem fecisti quæ prius orbis erat.

Those of Claudien, no less enthusiastic, seem to place particular emphasis on the name, which has become common, of Romani:

Hæc est (Roma) in gremium victos quæ sola recepit,
Humanumque genus communi nomine fecit.

Prudence also exclaims:

Deus undique gentes
Inclinare caput docuit sub legibus iisdem,
Romanosque omnes fieri, quos Rhenus et Ister,
Quos Tagus aurifluus, quos magnus inundat Iberus...
Jus fecit commune pares et nomine eodem
Nexuit et domitos fraterna in vincla redegit.

How exaggerated these praises were, how far the entire human race had come from having entered the orbis Romanus, is what the authors of these verses themselves witnessed: the universal city was destroyed at the very moment when its completion was being celebrated, and the distinction between Romans and Barbarians, instead of expressing a relationship of superiority of the former over the latter, soon took on the opposite meaning. This distinction, which predates the establishment of the Germans in the Roman provinces of the West, persisted after this establishment; it was the same in all the countries where it took place. The foreign invaders were designated by the generic name of Barbari; they accepted it themselves[11], and did not find it wrong that the Romans, whom they charged with writing their laws and ordinances in Latin, attributed it to them. However, this name only appears in an exceptional way, and usually when it is a question of designating the whole of the Germanic tribes. These tribes had no common name at that time by which they could express their collective nationality; the word Germani, naturally, is completely unknown at that time; as for the word theodisc, diustisc (formerly French tiedeis, Italian tedesco), it does not appear in the Latin form theotiscus theudiscus until the 9th century; The word Teuto, which seems to be etymologically linked to it, is nowhere to be seen, and the derivative Teutonicus, used by certain Latin writers, is a classical memory which certainly did not rest, at that time, on any real denomination. It is permissible to doubt that the Germans had, at that time, a very clear awareness of their racial unity; in the texts they usually qualify themselves by the special name of their tribe, and we see the Romani successively opposed to the Franci, the Burgundiones, the Gothi, the Langobardi, etc. On the contrary, nowhere do we see the inhabitants of the provinces of the empire having special denominations which connect them to a nationality prior to the Roman conquest. In the whole of the laws and histories of that time there are neither Galli, nor Rhæti, nor Itali, nor Iberi, nor Afri: there are only Romani facing the conquerors spread throughout all the provinces. The Romanus is therefore, at the time of the Germanic invasions and

establishments, the inhabitant, speaking Latin, of any part of the empire. This is how he calls himself, not without retaining for a long time some pride in this great name[12]; but his conquerors do not call him thus: the name Romanus does not seem to have penetrated any of their dialects. The name that they give him and that they gave him probably well before the conquest, it is that of walah, later welch, ags. vealh, anc. nor. vali (Swedish mod. val), to which are attached the derivatives walahisc, later waelsch (welche) and wallon. The use of this word and that of Romanus is precisely inverse: the first is never used except by the Barbarians, the second only by the Romans[13]; both persisted face to face, as we will see below, well after the period in question here, in countries where the two races, Germanic and Latin, were in intimate and daily contact and had not managed to merge into a new nationality. The word welche has in French a contemptuous nuance which it certainly had, at that time, in the minds of the Germans who pronounced it. The conquerors had a high opinion of themselves and regarded themselves as very superior to the peoples among whom they came to settle. Purely Germanic monuments are unfortunately lacking for these remote periods; but a few Latin texts have preserved the memory of the feelings that the conquering race, still several centuries after the fall of the empire, entertained for the Walahen, the sole custodians of Western civilization. The most curious of these texts, because of its naivety, is this sentence which is found in the famous Roman-German glossary of Cassel and which is certainly by a Bavarian of the time of Pepin: Stulti sunt Romani, sapienti Paioari; modica sapientia est in Romanis; plus habent stultitia quam sapientia. Here, by a rare piece of luck, we have preserved, alongside the Latin translation, the thought of this excellent Peigir in the very form in which it smiled on his mind: Tole sint Walha, spahe sint Peigira; luzic ist spahi in Walhum; mera hapent tolaheiti denne spahi. At the same time, we encountered, on the banks of the Rhine, Germans like the one painted by Wandelbert in his account of the miracles of Saint Goar: Omnes Romanæ nationis ac linguæ homines ita quodam gentilicio odio exsecrabatur ut ne videre quidem eorum aliquem æquanmite vellet... Tanta enim ejus animum innata ex feritate barbarica stoliditas apprehenderat ut ne in transitu quidem Romanæ linguæ vel gentis homines et ipsos quoque bonos viros ac nobiles libenter adspicere posset. These feelings were not limited to men without culture: even in the 10th century, Luitprand was indignant at the thought that he could be honored by calling him Romanus, and said to the Greeks: Quos (Romanos) nos, Langobardi scilicet, Saxones, Franci, Lotharingi, Bagoarii, Sueri, Burgundiones, tanto dedignamur, ut inimico nostro commoti nil aliud contumeliarum nisi: Romane! dicamus, hoc solo nomine quidquid ignobilitatis, quidquid timiditatis, quidquid avaritiæ, quidquid luxuriæ, quidquid mendacii, imo quidquid vitiorum est comprehendentes. How can we fail to notice that, after ten centuries, almost similar assessments of "wælschen Lug und Trug," "wælsche Sittenlosigkeit," and "the deep moral understanding of the Romanischen Voelker" are still heard in German? The name Romani did not persist beyond Carolingian times. The fusion of the Germanic conquerors with the Romans, their adoption of the language of the vanquished in Spain, France, and Italy, caused such a general distinction to disappear from the former Western Empire, replaced by the special names of the nations that arose from the debris of Charlemagne's empire. Soon there were no longer Romans in opposition to a certain number of conquering tribes, but on the contrary a German nation enclosed within the enlarged limits of ancient Germany, and which, while remaining divided into tribes, became aware of itself under the name of Tiedesc, and was called by its neighbors by various names, but also collective ones,—and, alongside it, Lombards, French, Provençals, Flemings, etc. The name Romani was maintained, however, in two cases, where the peoples who had shared it with the inhabitants of the entire empire did not find themselves included in any new nationality and retained, to distinguish themselves from the Barbarians who surrounded them, the old appellation of which they were proud. The Germans, faithful for their part to the previous tradition, called these peoples by the name of Walahen, Welches, and this name has remained with them to this day. These two cases occur in countries where the Romani population, due to special circumstances, lives in a sort of island among other races. Everyone now knows of the existence of the very interesting language spoken in the canton of Grisons, and which is distinct from the Italian with which it is in contact to the south. This language is the only vestige that has persisted to the present day of the language formerly spoken by the Romani of Rhaetia. It was long believed that the Roman inhabitants of this country had all emigrated to Italy, as Eugippius relates in the life of Saint Severin, and had left the place free for the Barbarians. But numerous and interesting documents prove that long after the definitive conquest of the country by the Alemanni and the Bavarians, a Roman population remained in the country in more or less numerous and substantial groups... There is therefore nothing

surprising in the fact that the non-Germanized inhabitants of the Chur region, the only ones who have resisted the progress of Teutonicism to this day, have kept, at least in part, their name as well as their language. It is true that they currently call themselves not Romaun, which among them means "Roman," but Romaunsch, like their idiom itself; but this derived form necessarily relies on the other, older one.—Just as they called themselves Romaunsch, the Germans now designate them by the derivative of Walah, namely Wælschen, Churwælschen. The other example of the persistence of the name Romani is found in countries that were part of the Eastern Empire. The peoples who, today, in the Danubian provinces, Hungary and European Turkey, speak a Latin idiom designate themselves by the name Romans (Rumën, Rumen, Român), which we have recently also given them (Romanians). The designation of Vlachs is applied to them only by the foreigners who surround them... —Like the Romani of the West, those of the East received the name Walahen from the Germans. It is true that at present they are not in contact with the Germans, but we know that these countries were those through which the first Germanic invasions rushed upon the empire: they had moreover been preceded by numerous colonizations. There, as everywhere, the Germans called those who called themselves Romani Walahen, and they transmitted this designation to the various peoples who replaced them in these regions; the Greeks themselves subsequently adopted it (Βλάχοι). Both names, the first in the mouths of foreigners, the second in that of the Romani, designate to this day the singularly scattered descendants of the ancient Romanized populations of these provinces. We know that they have also retained their language, and that, however altered and impregnated with foreign elements it may be, it deserves its place among the modern dialects where the Latin language still lives.

The name Romani, it is understood, did not designate the inhabitants of the empire who spoke Latin solely in opposition to the Germanic barbarians. They also used it to distinguish themselves from their other neighbors: only the corresponding appellation of Walahen is naturally lacking here. In Africa, for example, the Romani, whom we find called by this name at the approach of the Vandals, previously called themselves this in contrast to the natives who remained foreign to Roman domination or the Roman language. Similarly, when Armorica was occupied by Celtic-speaking tribes, the newcomers, no doubt continuing the custom they already had in Great Britain, called their neighbors, the inhabitants of the Romanized Gallic provinces, Romani.

It follows from all that has just been said that the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, whatever their original nationality, designated themselves, particularly in contrast to foreigners and especially to the Germans, by the name of Romani. This name remained with them in the various countries where the invaders settled, as long as a distinction remained between the conquerors and the vanquished. In the West, it generally disappeared around the 9th century to make way for the names of the various nationalities that emerged from the dislocation of the empire by the Germanic tribes; It persisted, however, for a longer time, and still exists at least through its derivative in the small country of Chur. In the East, it continued to designate the Romanized inhabitants of the provinces south of the Danube who did not merge with the Illyrian, Greek, Germanic, Slavic, or Mongol populations, and it still designates them to this day. The word Romanus was translated into German as Walah, but the Romani never took this name themselves; it was maintained in German (where Romanus is unknown) to designate the Roman peoples during the Middle Ages, and has not yet completely disappeared: it is particularly attached to the two peoples who have kept the name Romani, the Churwælschen and the Walachen.

From the name of the inhabitants of the empire, a name for the empire itself was made. It was in the popular spirit to substitute a short and concrete designation for the terms imperium Romanum, orbis Romanus. From Romanus came the name Romania, formed by analogy from Gallia, Græcia, Britannia, etc. The advent of this name indicates in a striking way the moment when the fusion was complete between the very diverse peoples subjugated by Rome, and when all, recognizing themselves as members of a single nation, opposed themselves as a whole to the infinite variety of the Barbarians who surrounded them. This name was popular and had no right of entry in the classical style; thus the period in which it appears to us for the first time is obviously much later than that in which it must have been formed; the texts that give it use it solely in opposition to the barbarian world which had become the object of all fears, the threat constantly present in the mind.

Romania had barely become aware of itself that it was going to be ruined, at least in its material existence. This melancholy reflection is naturally suggested by the following passage, where we find the oldest example of the word. It was at the beginning of the 5th century that the following conversation took place, in the cave of Bethlehem where Saint Jerome lived, which focused on the Gothic king Ataulf, who

had become an ally of the empire after having thought of destroying it completely: "Ego ipse, says Paul Orose, virum quemdam Narbonnensem, illustris sub Theodosio militiæ, etiam religiosum prudentemque et gravem, apud Bethlehem oppidum Palæstinæ beatissimo Hieronymo presbytero referentem audivi se familiarissimum Ataulpho apud Narbonam Fuisse, ac de eo sæpe sub testificatione didicisse quod ille, cum esset animo viribus ingenioque nimius, referre solitus esset se in primis ardenter inhiasse ut, obliterato Romano nomine, Romanum omne solum Gothorum imperium and faceret et vocaret, essetque, ut vulgariter loquar, Gothia quod Romania fuisset."—At about the same time, we find this word in even sadder circumstances. The other great Christian doctor of this time, Saint Augustine, besieged in Hippo by the Vandals, receives letters from the bishops of the province asking him for advice on what they should do in the face of common peril and disaster, and he answers them on the conduct to adopt in the face of those whom his biographer Possidius, then imprisoned with him, calls illos Romaniæ eversores. Romania does not only mean here, as the Bollandists want, ditio romana in Africa; it no longer even simply has the sense of Romanum imperium that Du Cange gives it; it has taken on a more general meaning, that of the Roman world, of Roman civilization opposed to the Barbarism that will destroy it. By a singular chance, the examples of the word Romania are older and more numerous in Greek than in Latin. When the capital of the empire was moved to Byzantium, it nevertheless remained the Roman Empire; Constantinople was called New Rome or simply Rome, and the Latin language remained the official language for a long time[14]. Greek writers seem to have adopted at this time the name Romania to designate the whole empire... Saint Athanasius says expressly: Μητοπόλις ἡ 'Ρώμη τής 'Ρωμανίας... Later, when the Eastern Empire was destroyed, the name 'Ρωμανία designated, in Greek writers, the empire of Byzantium, and reappeared under the form Romania (with the accent on the i), Romania, in Western writers, with this special meaning. It is from there that it came to designate the possessions of the Greeks in Asia, then the provinces which today form European Turkey and Greece, and where it must be recognized under the form Rumelia. I need not dwell here on the history of the Greek word 'Psymnaia'; it suffices to show that it comes from Latin and that its widespread use in the East in the fourth century proves that it was popular in the West before that time.

In the West, the word Romania, as we have seen, was primarily used to characterize the Roman Empire in opposition to the Barbarians, and later to express the entirety of Roman civilization and society. In this broad sense, it naturally includes language, and this secondary idea is clearly indicated in the verses in which Fortunatus, addressing the Frank Charibert, says to him:

Hinc cui Barbaries, illinc Romania plaudit.
Diversis linguis laus sonat una viro.

Romania here means the entirety of the Romani, Roman society, the Roman world in opposition to the German or barbarian world.

The expression Romania remained in use until the Carolingian times and even probably took on a new vogue when Charlemagne had restored the Roman Empire. In a capitulary of Louis the Pious and Lothair, we read: "Præcipimus de his fratribus qui in nostris et Romaniæ finibus paternæ seu maternæ succedunt hereditati," and it seems to me probable that Romania here signifies the extent of the empire rather than Italy or that Italian province to which the name ended up being restricted. But when the empire had passed to the kings of Germany, the word Romania seems to have designated specifically that part of their States which was not Germanic, namely Italy... Finally the name Romania ended up no longer designating anything but the province which still bears the name of Romagna and which corresponds to the ancient exarchate of Ravenna; It comes, according to some, from the famous donation made by Pepin to the Ecclesia Romana, according to others, from the name of the Greek empire, of [Greek: Rhômania 'Phányía], of which this province was the last possession in the West.

In summary, the word Romania, made to embrace under a common name the whole of the possessions of the Romans, served particularly to designate the Western Empire, when it was detached from that of Constantinople (which, for its part, took the name of [Greek: Rhômania 'Ρωμανία]). Since the successive destruction of all the remains of Roman domination, it has expressed the whole of the countries which were inhabited by the Romani, as well as the group of men still speaking the language of Rome, and consequently Roman civilization itself. In this sense, Romania is a well-chosen word to describe the domain of Romance languages and literatures. Romania, from this point of view of civilization and language, formerly included, at its greatest extent, the Roman Empire up to the limits where the Hellenic and Oriental world began, that is to

say, present-day Italy, the part of Germany situated south of the Danube, the provinces between this river and Greece, and, on the left bank, Dacia; Gaul up to the Rhine, England up to the wall of Septimius Severus; the whole of Spain, less the Basque provinces, and the northern coast of Africa. Large parts of this vast territory were taken from it, especially by the Germans. It is true that several of the formerly Roman countries where German is now spoken were never completely Romanized. For England, the fact is certain: when the Roman legions had withdrawn, the native Celtic element soon regained the preponderance, and the Romani who, despite everything, were still there in large numbers, were probably absorbed as much by the Bretons as by the Saxons.—The countries situated on the left bank of the Rhine which were Germanized were not all at the same time; they owe their Germanization either to the depopulation caused by the threatening proximity of the Barbarians (Rhine provinces, Alsace-Lorraine), or to the extermination of the Roman inhabitants by the invaders (Flanders). But it is certain, particularly for Alsace, that the Germanic establishment had been preceded by an almost complete Romanization.—The countries on the right bank of the Danube (Rhaetia, Noricum, Pannonia) had received early Germanic colonies established by the emperors themselves; In the face of the invasions, part of the Roman population went to Italy, the rest was absorbed more or less slowly into the conquering people; a small nucleus persisted in some valleys of the Alps.—In the more eastern provinces, the indigenous element had maintained itself as in England; but the Roman population had taken on more consistency there, so that in the midst of the old inhabitants (Albanians) and the masses of successive invaders (Germans, Slavs, Hungarians, Turks), the Romanians succeeded in maintaining themselves, on the one hand as a considerable body of population, on the other hand in small, very numerous scattered groups, and even managed to reoccupy Trajan's Dacia, which Aurelian had evacuated all the Romani from the 3rd century.—In Africa, it was not the Vandals who put an end to Romanism; On the contrary, it seems probable that, there as in Spain and Gaul, the Germans ended up merging with the vanquished, and a particular Romance language would doubtless have formed in the kingdom of Genseric, if the Vandal establishment had not been destroyed by the Greeks, and especially if the disastrous invasion of the Muslims had not torn these beautiful regions from the Christian world. It is likely that when the Arabs arrived, there were still many Romans in the country; However, the indigenous element had never disappeared, even during the time of Roman domination and in the heart of the provinces which it surrounded on all sides: it allied itself closely with the Arabs, and the last vestiges of Romanism disappeared very quickly from Africa. - Spain, on the contrary, where the fusion of the Goths with the Romans was complete, preserved its character, even under Arab domination, and finally succeeded in freeing itself from it entirely. - It was the same in Sicily: there, Romanism not only completely drove out the Arab element, but also caused the disappearance of the Greek element which, without doubt, was still quite abundant there at the beginning of the Middle Ages. - This Greek element also disappeared from the south of Italy, where it had remained since the Hellenic colonization; in the south of Gaul, it had been absorbed very early into Roman civilization. Romania, however, lost in Gaul a province that had certainly belonged to it, the peninsula to which the colonists coming from the other side of the Channel gave the name of Brittany; but there can be no doubt that this province, at the time of their landing, was almost completely depopulated. The losses that Romania suffered fourteen centuries ago are not without compensation. Not only did it absorb all the Germanic tribes that penetrated into the heart of its territory, but it also fell back from either side of the borders that the era of invasions had given it. At almost all the points where it found itself in contact with the German element, in Flanders, Lorraine, Switzerland, Tyrol, Friuli, it made a forward movement which gave it back a more or less large part of its former territory. In England, the Romanized Normans reconquered the country for centuries for the Romance world, and their language only yielded to that of the Saxons by mixing with it in such a proportion that the study of the English language and literature is inseparable from that of the Romance languages and literatures. I have already spoken of the suppression of Greek in Italy, of Dacia reconquered by the Romanians. In the new world, Romania annexed immense territories; it is beginning to regain possession of a part of North Africa. Latin, in its various popular dialects—which are the Romance languages—is spoken today by a much greater number of people than at the time of the empire's greatest splendor...

G. Paris, in Romania, Vol. I (1872), passim.

II — THE GALLO-ROMAN VILLA.

It is plausible to conjecture that, in Gaul, before Caesar's conquest, the dominant system was that of large landownership. The Romans did not have to introduce into

this country either the right of property or the system of large estates cultivated by a servile population.

In any case, we find in Gaul during the time of the Empire the same rural customs as in Italy. Tacitus speaks of an estate belonging to the Gaul Cruptorix, and he calls it a villa. Perhaps the most novel thing was that each villa took its own name, following Roman custom. In accordance with this same custom, the names of estates were most often taken from men's names. Ausonius mentions the Villa Pauliacus and the Villa Lucaniacus. Sidonius Apollinaris, in his letters, often has occasion to mention his properties or those of his friends. He owns one called Avitacus. An estate of the Syagria family is called Taionnacus; that of Consentius, a friend of Sidonius, is called ager Octavianus. Later, charters written in Gaul will show us a series of estates which all have a proper name; they are called, for example, Albiniacus, Solemniacensis, Floriacus, Bertiniacus, Latiniacus, Victoriacus, Pauliacus, Juliacus, Atiniacus, Cassiacus, Gaviniacus, Clipiacus; there are several hundred of this kind[15]. These names, which we find in charters of the 7th century, certainly come from an earlier period. It was under Roman domination that the estates received them. They are Latin, and come, for the most part, from family names which are Roman. This does not mean that Italian families came to seize the land. The Gauls, upon becoming Romans, took Latin names for themselves and applied their new names to their lands. Some retained a Gallic name by Latinizing it; thus, we find a few domain names that have a Gallic root in a Latin form. Subsequently, all these property names became the names of our villages in France. The lineage is easily seen. The original owners were called Albinus, Solemnis, Florus, Bertinus, Latinus or Latinius, Victorius, Paulus, Julius, Atinius, Cassius, Gabinius, Clipius; and this is why our villages are called Aubigny, Solignac, Fleury, Bertignole, Lagny, Vitry, Pouilly, Juilly, Attigny, Chancy, Gagny, Clichy.

It is difficult to say what the usual extent of a rural domain was in Gaul. We must first set aside Narbonne, which had been covered with Roman colonies and where the land had been distributed in small lots. We must also set aside some territories in the northeast, close to the frontier and where military colonies of veterans or colonies of Germans were founded; here again it was the small or medium property that was constituted, and there is no appearance that it changed much. It was different in the rest of Gaul. Here there was no colony, no artificial constitution of property. Either the domains remained in the hands of the old aristocracy that had become Roman, or they passed into the hands of enriched men. In either case, we do not see that the land could have been much divided up. It is very likely that there were a certain number of very small properties; but what prevailed was the large domain. The small property was spread here and there on Gallic soil, but occupied only a small part of it; The average and large covered almost everything.

Some examples are provided by literature from the 4th and 5th centuries. The poet Ausonius describes a patrimonial property he owns in the region of Bazas. In his eyes, it is very small; he calls it a villula, a herediolum, and it requires "all the modesty of his tastes" for him to be content with it. We also see that he counts 200 acres of arable land, 100 acres of vineyard, 50 acres of meadows, and 700 acres of woods. This is therefore an estate that is reputed to be small and that comprises 1,050 acres; and if it is reputed to be small, it is because it is so in comparison with many others. One would readily believe that a property of a thousand acres was, in the eyes of these men, only a small property. The estates that Sidonius Apollinaris describes, without giving their extent, appear to be larger. Taionnacus includes "meadows, vineyards, and plowed land." Octavianus contains "fields, vineyards, olive groves, a plain, and a hill." Avitacus "extends into woods and meadows, and its pastures support many herds." A few years later, we see the Villa Sparnacus being sold for 5,000 pounds of silver; this enormous sum, especially in a time of crisis and in the circumstances in which we see it sold, implies that this land was very vast.

However, we must beware of exaggeration. Imagining immense latifundia would be a great error. That an entire region or canton belongs to a single owner is something of which we find no example neither in Gaul, nor in Italy, nor in Spain. Nothing similar is reported by Sidonius, nor by Salvian, nor by our charters. Our general impression, in the absence of affirmation, is that the large estates of the Roman era hardly exceeded the extent that the territory of a village occupies today. Many have only that of our small hamlets. And below these there are still a good number of smaller properties. There is also a remark that must be made. We know from writers of the 4th century that a class of very rich landowners was formed at this time. This is one of the most important and best-established facts of this part of history. Now, these great fortunes, about which we have some information, were not formed by the

infinite extension of the same domain. They were formed through the acquisition of numerous estates far removed from one another. The most opulent families of this period did not own an entire canton or a province; but they possessed twenty, thirty, or forty estates scattered across several provinces, sometimes throughout all the provinces of the empire. These are the patrimonia sparsa per orbem of which Ammianus Marcellinus speaks. Such is the nature of the landed fortunes of the Anicius, Symmachus, Tertullus, and Gregorius in Italy; of the Syagrius, Paulinus, Ecdicius, and Ferreolus in Gaul.

The villa, the rural estate, was a fairly complex organism. It contained, as much as possible, land of every kind: fields, vineyards, meadows, forests. It also included men of all social classes: untenured slaves, tenant slaves, freedmen, colonists, and freemen. The work was done by two very distinct bodies, one being the servile group or familia, the other the series of small tenants. The land was also divided into two parts, one which was in the hands of the tenants, the other which the owner kept in his hand. He had this cultivated, either by the servile group, or by the corvées of the tenants, or finally by a combination of the one and the other system. There was, in the latter case, a small servile group, to which were added the hands of the tenants at times of the year when a lot of hands were needed. The owner thus drew from his domain a double income, on the one hand the harvests and fruits of the reserved portion, on the other the rents and rents of the tenants. His manager or his steward, procurator, actor or villicus, administered and supervised the two portions equally; from the tenures, he received the rents; On the reserved portion, he directed everyone's work.

This domain... was also covered with as many buildings as were necessary for the population and the various needs of a village. It is understandable that no precise description is possible. We see only that three very different types of buildings were distinguished: 1st, the owner's residence; 2nd, the slaves' dwellings, with everything that served the general needs of cultivation; 3rd, the dwellings of the small tenants.

We know very little about the latter; ancient writers never described them. Sometimes these dwellings were isolated from one another, each of them being placed on the plot of land that the man cultivated... Sometimes they were grouped together and formed a small hamlet that the language called a vicus. On the largest domains, one could see, as Julius Frontinus says, a series of these vici that formed a sort of belt around the master's villa. This villa was always divided into two clearly separated parts, which were distinguished by the expressions villa urbana and villa rustica. The villa urbana, on a rural estate, was the set of buildings that the master reserved for himself, his family, his friends, and all his personal servants. As for the villa rustica, it was the set of buildings intended to house the slave farmers; here were also kept the animals and all the objects useful for cultivation.

Varro, Columella, and Vitruvius described this rustic villa. It had to contain a sufficient number of small rooms, cellae, for the use of the slaves; and these rooms had to be, as much as possible, "open to the south." For lazy or unruly slaves, there was the ergastulum; this was the basement. It had to be lit by enough windows "so that the dwelling was healthy," but narrow enough and high enough above the ground so that the men could not escape. A few steps away were the stables, which, as far as possible, were to be double-glazed, for summer and winter.

Next to the stables were the small bedrooms.

The herdsmen and shepherds' quarters. Then there were the barns for wheat and hay, the wine cellars, the oil cellars, and the granaries for fruit. A kitchen occupied a special building; it had to be high-ceilinged and large enough "to serve as a meeting place at all times for the domestic staff." Not far away was the slave bath, which, moreover, only bathed there on holidays. The estate naturally had its mill, its oven, its wine press, its oil press, and its dovecote. Add to this, if the estate was complete, a forge and a wheelwright's workshop. In the middle of all these buildings stretched a large courtyard; the Latins called it chors; we find it again in the Middle Ages with the same, slightly altered name, curtis.

Some distance away is the master's villa. This owner is usually wealthy and took pleasure in building. Varro already noted, not without chagrin, that his contemporaries "gave more attention to the urban villa than to the rustic villa." Columella gives a description of this villa. It contains summer apartments and winter apartments; for the master lives there or can live there in all seasons. It therefore has a double dining room and a double series of bedrooms. It contains large bathrooms, where an entire party can bathe at once. There are also long galleries, larger than our living rooms, where friends can walk and chat. Pliny the Younger, who owns about ten beautiful estates, describes two of these dwellings. Everything

imaginable in terms of comfort and luxury is found there. We will probably not assume that all country houses were similar to those of Pliny; but there were some even more magnificent than his; and, from top to bottom of the scale, all country houses tended to resemble the type he describes. He imitated and he was imitated. The luxury of villas was, in this society of the Roman Empire, the best way to enjoy wealth and also the most laudable way to display it. Since there were no longer free elections, the money no longer spent on buying votes was spent on building and decorating houses. What can also mitigate the disadvantages of a system of large estates is that the owner enjoys his domain and repays it in improvements or embellishments what he receives in profits.

If we move from Italy to Gaul, and from the time of Trajan to the 5th century, we still find vast and magnificent villas there. Sidonius Apollinaris paints a fairly clear picture, despite the usual vagueness of his style, of the Villa Octaviana, which belonged to his friend Consentius. "It offers high walls built according to all the rules of the art." There are "porticoes and baths of admirable grandeur."

Sidonius also describes the Villa Avitacus. It is reached by a wide and long avenue which is its "vestibule." We first encounter the balneum, that is to say, a group of buildings which includes baths, a swimming pool, a frigidarium, a perfume room; it is a whole large building. Leaving there, we enter the house. The women's apartment presents itself first; it includes a workroom where the cloth is woven. Sidonius then leads us through long porticoes supported by columns and from where the view extends over a beautiful lake. Then comes an enclosed gallery where many friends can stroll. It leads to three dining rooms. From these, one passes into a large relaxation room, the diversorium, where one can, as one chooses, sleep, chat, or play. The writer does not bother to describe the bedrooms, nor even to indicate their number. What he says about the villas of his friends suggests that several were more magnificent than his own. These beautiful residences, which once covered Gaul, did not perish without leaving many traces. Remains of them are found in all parts of the country, from the Mediterranean to the Rhine and as far as the bottom of the British peninsula.

In the description of the Villa Octaviana, we must note a chapel. Indeed, a law of 398 states as "a custom" that large landowners have a church on their property.

The common language of the empire designated the master's house by the word prætorium. This term is already found, with this meaning, in Suetonius and Statius; it is found several times in Ulpian and the jurists of the Digest; it becomes especially frequent among authors of the 4th century, like Palladius and Symmachus. Now this word, by its very root, indicated the idea of command, precedence, authority. It had been applied, in a Roman camp, to the general's tent; in the provinces, to the governor's palace. The history of a word marks the course of ideas. There is no doubt that, in the thoughts of men, this dwelling of the master was, in comparison to all the other buildings scattered across the estate, the house that commanded the most. Calling it a praetorium was like calling it a manor house.

A writer of the time, Palladius, recommended building it halfway up the hill and always higher than the villa rustica. This rustic villa, with its population, its series of stables and barns, its mill, its press, its workshops, and all its numerous staff, was more than what we call a farm: it formed a sort of village, owned by the master and staffed by his servants. The villa rustica at the bottom of the hill and the villa urbana halfway up the hill were already the village and castle of later periods.

It is true that this 4th-century castle did not have the appearance of the 10th-century castle. The turres sometimes mentioned were not feudal towers. There were no moats, no enclosure, no portcullis, no battlements, but rather avenues and porticoes inviting entry. This was because people lived in an age of peace and believed themselves safe. Only around the middle of the 5th century do we see a few men like Pontius Leontius fortifying their villa and surrounding it with a thick wall "that no battering ram could break down." It was only then, to resist invading looters, that the idea of transforming the villa into a fortified castle arose. Until then, the villa had been a castle, but a castle of peaceful and happy times, an elegant, sumptuous, and open castle.

These great landowners spent most of their lives there, surrounded by their families and a large retinue of slaves, freedmen, and clients. These men clearly loved castle life; There can be no doubt about this when one has read the letters of Symmachus or those of Sidonius Apollinaris. They built, they managed the cultivation, they carried out irrigation, they lived among their peasants. A Syagrius, in his beautiful estate of Taionnac, "cut his hay and did his grape harvest." A Consentius, son and grandson of the highest dignitaries of the empire, is represented by Sidonius "putting his hand to the plow," as the old legend had represented Cincinnatus. The friends of

Ausonius, those of Symmachus, are for the most part large landowners and they enjoy rural life. Modern historians have said that Roman or Gallo-Roman society only loved city life, and that it was the Germans who taught people to love the countryside... All the writings we have from the 4th and 5th centuries, on the contrary, depict the Roman aristocracy as a rural class as much as an urban one: it is urban in the sense that it exercises magistracies and administers the cities; it is rural in its interests, in the greater part of its existence, in its tastes.

This is because, in these beautiful residences, people led the life of a great lord. Paulinus of Pella, recalling in his verses the time of his youth, describes "the large residence where all the delights of life were gathered" and where "the crowd of servants and clients" crowded. This was on the eve of the invasions. "The table was elegantly served, the furniture brilliant, the silverware precious, the stables well-stocked, the carriages comfortable." The pleasures of castle life included conversation, horseback riding or carriage rides, tennis, dice, and above all, hunting. Hunting was always a Roman favorite. Varro already speaks of the vast warrens, filled with deer and roe deer, which the owners reserved for their pleasures. The friends to whom Pliny wrote divided their time "between study and hunting." He himself, a mediocre hunter who carried a book and tablets, nevertheless boasted of having once killed three wild boars. The jurists of the Digest mention, among the objects that are ordinarily an integral part of the estate, the hunting equipage, the huntsmen, and the pack. Later, Symmachus wrote to his friend Protadius and mocked him for his endless hunts and "the genealogy of his dogs." The Gauls were also great hunters. They had been so before Caesar, and they were still so after him. One only has to look at the mosaics which, like that of Lillebonne, represent hunting scenes. Look at the friends of Sidonius: Ecdicius "pursues the beast through the woods, swims across rivers, loves only dogs, horses and bows." It is true that the same man just now, at the head of a few horsemen raised on his lands, will rout a troop of Visigoths. Here is another friend of Sidonius, Potentinus: "he excels at three things, cultivating, building, hunting." Vectius, a great personage and high official, "is second to no one in raising horses, training dogs, carrying falcons." Hunting was one of the rights of the landowner on his land, and he used it willingly. Thus, many things that the Middle Ages will offer to our eyes are older than the Middle Ages.

Fustel de Coulanges, L'Alleu and the Rural Estate during the Merovingian Period, Paris: Hachette, 1889, octavo. Passim.

III — CHRISTIANITY.

PROGRESS OF ORGANIZATION.—THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE.

...The organization of the Church was being completed with surprising rapidity. The great danger of Gnosticism, which was to divide Christianity into countless sects, was averted by the end of the second century. The term Catholic Church burst forth from all sides, like the name of this great body that would henceforth endure through the centuries without breaking up. And we can already clearly see the character of this catholicity. The Montanists were considered sectarians; the Marcionists were convicted of distorting apostolic doctrine; the various Gnostic schools were increasingly rejected from the bosom of the general Church. There is therefore something that is neither Montanism, nor Marcionism, nor Gnosticism, which is non-sectarian Christianity, the Christianity of the majority of bishops, resisting heresies and using them all up, having, if you will, only negative characteristics, but preserved, by these negative characteristics, from pietistic aberrations and the rationalist solvent. Christianity, like all parties that want to live, disciplines itself, cuts off its own excesses... The golden mean triumphs. The pietistic aristocracy of the Phrygian sects and the speculative aristocracy of the Gnostics are equally dismissed from their claims...

It was the episcopate which, without any intervention from the civil power, without any support from the police or the courts, thus established order above liberty in a society founded primarily on individual inspiration. This is why the Ebionites of Syria, who do not have the episcopate, also do not have the idea of catholicity. At first glance, the work of Jesus was not born viable; it was chaos. Founded on a belief in the end of the world, which the passing years would convince of error, the Galilean congregation seemed capable of nothing but dissolving into anarchy... Individual inspiration creates, but immediately destroys what it has created. After freedom, there must be rule. The work of Jesus could be considered saved the day it was admitted that the Church has a direct power, a power representing that of Jesus. The Church from then on dominates the individual, driving him from its midst if necessary. Soon the Church, an unstable and changing body, is personified in the elders; the powers of the Church become the powers of a clergy dispenser of all

graces, intermediary between God and the faithful. Inspiration passes from the individual to the community. The Church has become everything in Christianity; one step further, the bishop becomes everything in the Church. Obedience to the Church, then to the bishop, is considered the first duty; innovation is the mark of falsehood; schism will henceforth be the worst crime for the Christian...
Correspondence between the Churches was early a custom. The circular letters from the heads of the great Churches, read on Sundays at the gathering of the faithful, were a continuation of apostolic literature. The church, like the synagogue and the mosque, is an essentially urban thing. Christianity (the same can be said of Judaism and Islam) will be a religion of cities, not a religion of peasants. The peasant, the pagan, will be the last resistance Christianity will encounter. Rural Christians, very few in number, came to the church in the neighboring town.
The Roman municipality thus became the cradle of the Church. As the countryside and small towns received the Gospel from the large cities, they also received their clergy, always subject to the bishop of the large city. Among cities, the civitas alone has a true church, with an episcopus; the small town is ecclesiastical dependent on the large one. This primacy of large cities was a crucial fact. Once the large city was converted, the small town and the countryside followed suit. The diocese was thus the original unit of the Christian conglomerate.
As for the ecclesiastical province, implying the precedence of the large Churches over the small ones, it generally corresponded to the Roman province. The founder of the framework of Christianity was Augustus. The divisions of the cult of Rome and Augustus were the secret law that regulated everything. The cities that had a flamen or archiereus were those that later had an archbishop; the flamen civitatis became the bishop. From the 3rd century onwards, the flamen duumvir occupied in his city the rank which, a hundred or a hundred and fifty years later, was that of the bishop in the diocese. Julian later tried to oppose the flamens to the Christian bishops and to make parish priests out of the Augustales. Thus the ecclesiastical geography of a country is, with very little difference, the geography of this same country in the Roman period. The table of bishoprics and archbishoprics is that of the ancient civitates, according to their links of subordination. The empire was like the mold where religion as a new system coagulated. The internal framework, the hierarchical divisions, were those of the empire. The ancient roles of the Roman administration and the registers of the Church in the Middle Ages and even today are almost identical.
Rome was the point where this great idea of catholicity was developed. Its Church had an undisputed primacy. It owed this in part to its holiness and its excellent reputation. Everyone recognized that this Church had been founded by the apostles Peter and Paul, that these two apostles had suffered martyrdom in Rome, and that John himself had been plunged into boiling oil there. The places sanctified by these Apostolic Acts, partly true, partly false, were shown. All this surrounded the Church of Rome with an unparalleled aura. Doubtful questions were brought to Rome for arbitration, if not resolution. It was reasoned that since Christ had made Cephas the cornerstone of his Church, this privilege should extend to his successors. The Bishop of Rome became the bishop of bishops, the one who warns others... The work of which the fragment known as the Canon of Muratori was part, written in Rome around 180, already shows us Rome regulating the Canon of the churches, giving the Passion of Peter as the basis for catholicity... The attempts at a symbol of faith also began in the Roman Church around this time. Irenaeus refutes all heresies by the faith of this Church, "the greatest, the most ancient, the most illustrious; which possesses, by continuous succession, the true tradition of the apostles Peter and Paul, to which, because of its primacy, propter potiorem principalitatem, the rest of the Church must have recourse." Every Church supposedly founded by an apostle had a privilege; What can be said of the Church believed to have been founded by the two greatest apostles simultaneously?
... We can say that the organization of the Churches has undergone five degrees of advancement. First, the primitive ecclesia, where all members are equally inspired by the Spirit. Then the elders or presbyteri assume, within the ecclesia, considerable police power and absorb the ecclesia. Then the president of the elders, the episcopos, absorbs more or less the powers of the elders and consequently those of the ecclesia. Then the episcopi of the different Churches, corresponding with each other, form the Catholic Church. Among the episcopi, there is one, that of Rome, which is evidently destined for a great future. The Pope, the Church of Jesus transformed into a monarchy, are seen in the obscure distance... Let us add that this transformation did not have, like the others, a universal character. The Latin Church alone lent itself to this, and even within this Church, the papacy's attempt

ultimately led to revolt and protest.
The Church, in the third century, by monopolizing life, exhausted civil society, bled it dry, and emptied it. Small societies killed the great society. Ancient life, a purely external and virile life, a life of glory, heroism, civic duty, the life of the forum, the theater, the gymnasium, was vanquished by Jewish life, an anti-military life, the life of pale, cloistered people. Politics does not require people too detached from the earth. When man decides to aspire only to heaven, he no longer has a country here below... Christianity improved the morals of the ancient world, but, from a military and patriotic point of view, it destroyed the ancient world. The City and the State would later accommodate Christianity only by subjecting it to the most profound modifications.
"They dwell on earth," says the author of the Epistle to Diognetus, "but, in reality, they have their homeland in heaven." Indeed, when the martyr is asked about his homeland, "I am a Christian," he replies. The homeland and civil laws—this is the mother, this is the father, that the true Gnostic, according to Clement of Alexandria, must despise in order to sit at the right hand of God. The Christian is embarrassed, incapable, when it comes to worldly affairs; the Gospel forms the faithful, not citizens. It was the same for Islamism and Buddhism. The advent of these great universal religions put an end to the old idea of homeland; one was no longer Roman, Athenian: one was Christian, Muslim, Buddhist. From now on, men will be divided according to their religion, not according to their homeland; they will be divided over heresies, not over questions of nationality. This is what Marcus Aurelius saw perfectly, and what made him so unfavorable to Christianity. The Church seemed to him a state within a state. "The camp of piety," this new "system of piety founded on the divine Logos," has nothing to do with the Roman camp, which in no way claims to form subjects for heaven. The Church, in fact, admits to being a complete society, far superior to civil society; the pastor is worth more than the magistrate... The Christian owes nothing to the empire, and the empire owes him everything, for it is the presence of the faithful, scattered throughout the world Roman Empire, which stops the wrath of heaven and saves the State from ruin. The Christian does not rejoice in the victories of the empire; public disasters seem to him a confirmation of the prophecies that condemn the world to perish by barbarians and by fire...
[However] ancient and profound reasons required, despite appearances to the contrary, that the empire should become Christian. The Christian doctrine on the origin of power seemed expressly designed to become the doctrine of the Roman State. Authority loves authority. Men as conservative as the bishops must have been terribly tempted to reconcile themselves with public force. Jesus had laid down the rule. The effigy of the currency was for him the supreme criterion of legitimacy, beyond which there was nothing to seek. In the midst of Nero's reign, Saint Paul wrote: "Let everyone be subject to the ruling powers, for there is no power except from God." The powers that exist are ordained by God, so that whoever opposes the powers resists the order of God." A few years later, Peter, or whoever wrote in his name the epistle known as Prima Petri, expressed himself in an almost identical way. Clement was also a most devoted subject of the Roman Empire. Finally, one of the traits of Saint Luke is his respect for imperial authority and the precautions he took not to offend it.
Certainly, there were exalted Christians who entirely shared Jewish anger and dreamed only of the destruction of the idolatrous city, identified by them with Babylon. Such were the authors of apocalypses and the writers of Sibylline writings. For them, Christ and Caesar were two irreconcilable terms. But the faithful of the great Churches had quite different ideas. In 70, the Church of Jerusalem, with a sentiment more Christian than patriotic, abandoned the revolutionary city and sought peace beyond the Jordan. Saint Justin, in his Apologies, never combats the principle of empire; he wants the empire to examine Christian doctrine, approve it, countersign it in some way, and condemn those who slander it. The leading doctor of the time of Marcus Aurelius, Melito, Bishop of Sardis, was seen to make even more characteristic offers of service and present Christianity as the basis of a hereditary empire by divine right... All apologists flatter the emperors' favorite idea, that of heredity in a direct line, and assure them that the effect of Christian prayers will be that their son will reign after them...
The hatred between Christianity and the empire was the hatred of people who must one day love each other. Under the Severans, the language of the Church remained what it had been under the Antonines: plaintive and tender. Apologists displayed a kind of legitimacy, the claim that the Church had always saluted the emperor first. Saint Paul's principle bore fruit: "All power comes from God; he who holds the sword holds it from God for good." This correct attitude toward power was due to external

necessities as much as to the very principles the Church had received from its founders. The Church was already a large association; it was essentially conservative; it needed order and legal guarantees. This is admirably seen in the actions of Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch under Aurelian. The Bishop of Antioch could already be considered, at this time, a high-ranking personage; the Church's assets were in his hands; a multitude of people lived off his favors. Paul was a brilliant man, hardly mystical, worldly, a great secular lord, seeking to make Christianity acceptable to the world and to those in authority. The Pietists, as was to be expected, found him a heretic and had him deposed. Paul resisted and refused to abandon the episcopal house. This is the problem with the most haughty sects: they possess; and who can settle a question of property or enjoyment, if not the civil authority? The question was referred to the emperor, who was at the moment in Antioch, and we saw this unusual spectacle of an unfaithful and persecuting sovereign charged with deciding who was the true bishop. Aurelian... had the correspondence of the two bishops brought to him, noted the one who had relations with Rome and Italy, and concluded that this one was the bishop of Antioch. ...One fact was becoming evident: Christianity could no longer survive without the empire, and the empire, on the other hand, had nothing better to do than adopt Christianity as its religion. The world wanted a religion of congregations, of churches or synagogues, of chapels, a religion where the essence of worship was assembly, association, and brotherhood. Christianity fulfilled all these conditions. Its admirable worship, its pure morality, its skillfully organized clergy, assured its future.

Several times in the third century, this historical necessity almost came true. This was especially true during the time of the Syrian emperors, whose status as foreigners and the baseness of their origins protected them from prejudice, and who, despite their vices, inaugurated a breadth of ideas and tolerance previously unknown. The same thing happened again under Philip the Arab, in the East under Zenobia, and, in general, under the emperors whose origins placed them outside Roman patriotism. The struggle redoubled in fury when the great reformers, Diocletian and Maximian, believed they could give the empire new life. The Church triumphed through its martyrs; Roman pride gave way; Constantine saw the inner strength of the Church, the populations of Asia Minor, Syria, Thrace, Macedonia—in a word, the eastern part of the empire—already more than half-Christian. His mother, who had been an innkeeper in Nicomedia, dangled before his eyes an Eastern empire centered around Nicaea, the heart of which would be the favor of the bishops and the multitudes of poor people registered with the Church, who, in the large cities, formed public opinion. Constantine inaugurated what is called "the peace of the Church," and what was in reality the domination of the Church...

Julian's reaction was a meaningless whim. After the struggle came intimate union and love. Theodosius inaugurated the Christian empire, that is, the thing the Church, in its long life, had loved most, a theocratic empire, of which the Church is the essential framework, and which, even after being destroyed by the barbarians, remains the eternal dream of the Christian conscience, at least in the Romance countries. Many believed, in fact, that with Theodosius the goal of Christianity had been achieved. The empire and Christianity became so closely identified with each other that many scholars conceived the end of the empire as the end of the world, and applied to this event the apocalyptic images of the supreme catastrophe. The Eastern Church, whose development was not hindered by the barbarians, never detached itself from this ideal; Constantine and Theodosius remain the two poles; it still clings to them, at least in Russia... As for the Western Christian empire, although it soon perished, it was only destroyed in appearance...; its secrets were perpetuated in the high Roman clergy... A holy empire, with a barbarian Theodosius, holding the sword to protect the Church of Christ, such was the ideal of the Latin papacy in the Middle Ages...

E. Renan, Marc-Aurèle, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1882, octavo. Passim.

IV — ROMAN SOCIETY

ACCORDING TO AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, SAINT JEROME, AND SYMMACHOS.

People have often wondered what to think of public morality in the fourth century, especially among the upper classes of the empire. Generally, we are tempted to judge it harshly. When we consider that this society was in decline, and that it had only a few years left to live, we are tempted to explain its misfortunes by its faults and to believe that it deserved the fate it was about to suffer. This is why we so easily believe those who speak ill of it. There were two contemporaries in particular, Ammianus Marcellinus and Saint Jerome, who took pleasure in mistreating it; and, since they belonged to two opposing factions, it seems natural to us to think that, since they agreed, they spoke the truth. I admit, however, that their testimony is

suspect to me. Ammianus devoted two long chapters of his history to the senators of Rome; but these chapters have, in his work, a particular character: one realizes, when one reads them carefully, that he wanted to compose pieces with effect, which would strike the reader, and that, in these passages, which do not entirely resemble the rest, he is more satirist and rhetorician than historian... What does he tell us, moreover, that we do not know in advance? He teaches us, which does not surprise us at all, that there are in this great world many very small minds: fools who believe themselves great men because their flatterers have erected statues to them; vain people, who walk on magnificent chariots, wearing silk garments whose thousand colors are stirred in the wind; glorious people, who talk incessantly of their fortune; effeminate people, whom the slightest heat overwhelms, "who, when a fly lands on their golden robes or a small ray of sunshine slips through some crack in their parasol, are sorry they were not born in the Cimmerian Bosphorus"; atheists, who only leave their homes after consulting their astrologers; prodigals, caressing and base when they want to borrow money, insolent when it is necessary to return it, and other characters of this sort, who are found everywhere. Besides these failings, which seem to us on the whole rather minor, he points out more serious vices. Some of them belong more particularly to the Roman race, and the moralists of past centuries have already revealed them; others are from all countries and all times, and since unfortunately no human society escapes them, it is natural that we also find them among the people of the 4th century. But what seems to him more odious than all the rest, what most often excites his bad humor, is that the great Roman lords lack consideration for the learned and the wise. They reserve their favors for those who flatter them basely or who amuse them; as for honest and learned people, they are considered boring and useless, and the head waiter has them unceremoniously shown the door of the dining room. We know these complaints; they are not new to us. One of the serious reasons Juvenal has for scolding his era is that the Roman customer, "who saw the light of day on the Aventine and who was nourished from his childhood on the Sabine olive," does not have as good a place as the Greek parasite at the master's table, that he is not served the same dishes and that he does not drink the same wine. Ammianus no doubt had to suffer some humiliation of this kind. It is likely that when he returned from the army, where he had fought well, and at the time when he was beginning to write the history of his campaigns, he was not received by everyone as he thought he should be. He naturally concluded that a society which did not always give him his place took no account of merit. "Today," he says, "the musician has driven the philosopher from everywhere; the orator is replaced by the one who teaches histrions their trade; libraries are closed and resemble sepulchres." It is difficult to believe that these severe words apply to people like Symmachus and his friends, who loved books so much and held scholars in such great honor. But Ammian seems to recognize elsewhere that one should not give too much importance to his reproaches and make them fall on everyone; He tells us, at the beginning of his violent invectives, that Rome is still great and glorious, but that its splendor is compromised by the criminal frivolity of a few people (levitate paucorum incondita) who do not sufficiently consider of which city they have the honor to be citizens. Thus, by his own admission, the guilty are only the exception.

The anger of Saint Jerome inspires no more confidence in me than the epigrams of Ammianus. He was a very hot-tempered saint; his best friends, like Rufinus and Saint Augustine, have experienced this. People of this temperament suddenly go from one extreme to the other, and usually hate most what they loved most. This is precisely what made Saint Jerome so hard on Roman society: he had been too charmed by it and could never forgive it for the attraction it had had for him. The delicate pleasures of his literary vanity, his frequent conversations with women of wit, the pleasure they found in listening to him, the applause they gave to his works, all this was part of those "delights of Rome," the poignant memory of which followed him into the desert and troubled his penance. He made them pay with his invectives for the trouble he felt in detaching himself from it. Rome is for him another Babylon, "the courtesan in purple clothes." He generally reproaches it for all sorts of excesses; but it is remarkable that, when he comes to specific accusations, he finds little to criticize in it except the trivialities of worldly life. How do we spend our time in the big city? Seeing and being seen, receiving visits and making them, praising people and speaking ill of them. "Conversation begins, we gossip never stops. We tear apart those who are absent, we tell stories about our neighbors, we bite others and, in turn, we are bitten by them." This picture is pleasant; but what does it prove, if not that society at all times is similar? Let us note that Saint Jerome attacks everyone here, without distinction of religion. It has been sought to use his testimony to establish that pagan society was by far the most corrupt: this is a

wrong, it is even harder for Christians than for it. He shows us that the vices of the old society had passed into the new, almost without changing form, that one could not always distinguish the virgin and the widow who had received the teachings of the Church from those who had remained faithful to the old cult, that there were clerics who were petty masters, monks who were chasing inheritances, and above all parasitic priests who went every day to greet the beautiful ladies: "He gets up in all haste, as soon as the sun begins to show, regulates the order of his visits, chooses the shortest routes, and seizes the ladies he goes to see almost still in bed. If he sees a cushion, an elegant tablecloth or some object of that kind, he praises it, he feels it, he admires it, he complains of having nothing as good at home, and does so well that it is given to him. Wherever you go, he is always the first person you meet; he knows all the news; he runs to tell them before everyone else; if necessary, he invents them, or, in any case, he embellishes them each time with new incidents." Is this not like a first appearance of the 18th-century abbot?

There are therefore reasons to only half-believe Saint Jerome and Ammian; and even if we were to believe them completely, their testimony seems less damning for their century than has been claimed. In any case, the letters of Symmachus[16] give a better opinion of them, and I trust them all the more willingly because he did not claim to judge his time and write a moral treatise, which always leads to adopting a certain attitude. He naively says what he thinks, shows himself to us as he is, and describes people without knowing it. His letters are those of an honest man, who gives everyone the best advice. To those who govern provinces exhausted by taxes and war, he preaches humanity; he recommends charity to the rich, in terms that recall Christian charity. Sometimes he enters resolutely into the private lives of his friends; for example, he dares to ask one of them to renounce the profits of an unjust inheritance. As for him, he is everywhere occupied in doing good; he comes to the aid of his unfortunate friends, takes care of their affairs, implores the help of powerful men for them, marries their daughters, and, after their death, redoubles his care for the children they leave without protection and often without fortune. His correspondence does not make him alone; it sometimes allows us to judge those with whom he was in contact. His children form united households, his friends, for the most part, resemble him, and when one has finished reading his letters, it seems that one has just passed through a society of honest people. I know well that he is inclined to judge with a little too much indulgence; He readily attributes his qualities to others and does not perceive the harm he would not be capable of committing; but, despite this fault, it is impossible not to take great account of his testimony. The impression that remains of this great world of Rome, as we glimpse it in his letters, is, on the whole, favorable to him and recalls the society of Trajan and the Antonines as shown to us in the letters of Pliny.

Here is another piece of information that we owe to the correspondence of Symmachus, and which somewhat contradicts the opinion we have of this period. It seems to us that the people of that generation, which was the last of the empire, must have had some sense of the perils that threatened them, and that it is impossible that by listening a little one could not hear the creaking of this machine that was so close to breaking down. The letters of Symmachus show us that we are mistaken. We see there that the most distinguished people, the statesmen, the politicians, hardly suspected that the end was approaching. On the eve of the catastrophe, everything went on as usual, people were buying, selling, repairing monuments and building houses for eternity. Symmachus is a Roman of ancient times, who believes that the empire is eternal and does not imagine that the world can continue to exist without it. Despite the warnings he has received, his optimism is imperturbable. He would certainly have many reasons to be discontented: the Senate, of which he is so proud to be a member, is almost nothing anymore, and the religion he professes is persecuted. However, he never ceases to praise his teachers and is satisfied with his time. He was one of those candid souls who regard as incontestable truths that civilization always triumphs over barbarism, that the most educated people are inevitably the most honest and the strongest, that letters flourish whenever they are encouraged, etc. Now he sees precisely that schools have never been more numerous, education more widespread, science more honored, that letters lead to everything, that personal merit opens all careers; so he exclaims, in his enthusiasm: "We truly live in a century that is friendly to virtue, where people of talent can only blame themselves if they do not obtain the positions of which they are worthy." And it does not seem possible to him that such an enlightened society, which so highly values literature and places such great value on learning, could be swept away in a day by barbarians!

Yet he does occasionally see and note in passing a few unfortunate incidents, which revealed the evil from which the empire was suffering, and which should have given

him pause for thought. For example, he tells someone who is waiting for him that he cannot leave Rome because the countryside is infested with brigands: so the Roman peace, so vaunted in inscriptions and medals, is over, since, even at the gates of the capital, one is no longer safe! Another time he complains that the emperor, who is short of soldiers, is asking rich people for their slaves to enlist, and this measure does not reveal to him the extremes to which the empire is reduced! But what is even more significant, what indicates more clearly a profound disorder and announces the approaching ruin, is the sad state of public wealth. The evidence of this is everywhere in Symmachus. He shows us that the tax authorities have exhausted everything, that the rich are at the end of their resources, that farmers no longer have money to pay their landlords, and that land, which was a source of income, is now only an occasion for expenditure. These are serious symptoms; and yet Symmachus, who sees them, who points them out, does not seem alarmed by them. This is because the evil was old, that it had increased little by little, and that, since the time that people had suffered from it, they had become accustomed to it. Since Rome persisted in living, despite the reasons it had to die, people had ended up believing that it would always live. Until the last moment, people had entertained this illusion, and the final catastrophe, although it should have been expected, was a surprise. This is what the letters of Symmachus bring to light; They show us to what extent politicians, nourished by the lessons of history and thoroughly familiar with ancient times, can be mistaken about the era in which they live; they show us the spectacle, full of serious lessons, of a society proud of its civilization, glorious of its past, preoccupied with the future, which advances step by step to the edge of the abyss, without realizing that it is about to fall into it.
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