

men with their families was called for, he refused his assent.

We can only conjecture the cause of the popular resistance to this act of cruelty ; but as such a law could not have been viewed by the majority of the senate as a valuable relic of antiquity, unless it had at some time been enforced without causing any public demonstration of displeasure, so we may perhaps be justified in assuming that the humane feelings which it is the object of Christianity to awaken and to strengthen, were beginning to influence many. As these feelings showed themselves in the form of insurrection against the orders of the constituted authorities, it is not unlikely that this out-break, whether really caused by the doctrine of the brotherhood of all mankind, or not, would be reckoned among the ill consequences of its promulgation ; and might incline the tyrant to snatch at the first occasion for repressing a sect which seemed likely to be troublesome. The earnest exhortations of the apostles to avoid "all appearance of evil" — to submit themselves to the ruling powers — "to be peaceable, and to mind their own business," show that they had either seen, or at least apprehended a tendency in their converts to resist the iniquitous proceedings of the government.

Nero had already been upon the throne some years, and the first fair promise of his youth had been stifled in the most infamous debaucheries. The wide spread of the Christian doctrines, which gained a more ready audience probably, in consequence of the very excesses of the sovereign, disgusting even to his heathen subjects ; seems to have given umbrage to the licentious emperor : — Christians were not tools to be used for the purposes of cruelty