

Euphrates, or with the rude tribes in the German forests on the north, but the vast Roman world enjoyed the peace and security of a great organic whole. The merchant and the traveller might alike pass freely from land to land; trading vessels might bear their ventures to any port, for all lands and all coasts were under the same laws, and all mankind for the time were citizens of a common State." "The religions of antiquity had lost their vitality, and become effete forms without influence on the heart. 63 B. C. Julius Cæsar, at that time the chief Pontiff of Rome, and as such the highest functionary of the State religion, and the official authority in religious questions, openly proclaimed in his speech in the Senate that there was no such thing as a future life, no immortality of the soul." We may anticipate the next sentence: "Morality was entirely divorced from religion," for, indeed, morality in its highest sense was almost unknown. At this time both east and west were "agitated by presentiments of an impending change." God, who is never far from any of his poor, misguided children, deigned to teach men even through their superstitious errors. The Egyptian priests announced that the bird Phœnix had been seen again, and therefore a great period of time had expired and a new historic era was to commence. History tells us how troubled the Emperor Tiberius was when informed by an Egyptian helmsman named Thamnus, that when his vessel was off the coast of Cosu, it was strangely becalmed, and a loud voice called him by name and bid him announce at Palodes that the great God, Pan, was dead. "We are informed by Tacitus, by Suetonius, and by Josephus, that there prevailed throughout the entire East at this time an intense conviction derived from ancient prophecies, that ere long a powerful monarch would arise in Judea, and gain dominion over the whole world. It has, indeed, been conjectured that

the Roman historians may simply be echoing an assertion for which Josephus was, in reality, the sole authority; but even if we accept this uncertain supposition, there is still complete proof both in Jewish and Pagan writings that a guilty and weary world was dimly expecting the advent of its deliverer." "It was in such a unique era that Jesus Christ was born. The whole earth lay hushed in profound peace. All lands lay freely open to the message of mercy and love which he came to announce."

About this time let us glance at the road which leads from Palestine eastward. Beneath the hot rays of an eastern sun three travellers are patiently making their way. That they are men of distinction can be seen by a glance at their escort. At length one of them speaks, "I am convinced now by our starry guide that we are directed rightly. I doubted at first whether our journey would not be in vain." "Ah, Casper," answered Balthasar, "do we not know from what has occurred in the constellation Pisces that the son of the Gods we expect is to come forth from Judea? And the star, as you see, leads ever in that direction." Then Melchior, he with the long white hair and beard, spake slowly in a low, clear voice, and the stalwart Balthasar and the youthful Casper listened reverently as he said: "Yea, my children, your words are true, but more, far more to me than those outward signs is the voice I hear deep within my breast, which tells me I shall see him whom my soul longs for. Were my eyes blinded, methinks the love in my heart would lead me to him. For many years my soul has yearned for one who could make known to me the truth, and the voice which has been my guide now tells me I am about to see him." "But," said Casper, "I thought we were seeking a new-born king." "Aye, a king, indeed, although a babe," replied Melchior, "but, having seen him, I shall die content, and you will live to see my