

Herod Agrippa built an amphitheatre, and exhibited gladiatorial shows, with no other difference from those of Rome than that the chief of the persons who thus fought were criminals, "to the number of seven hundred of a side;" says Josephus; "thus improving the punishment of the criminals to the pleasure of the spectators; for they were all destroyed to the last man."* Such were some of the *pleasures* of the civilized world at that time!

I shall not here repeat what all can find elsewhere, — namely the state of Rome itself under the first Cæsars; yet still, notwithstanding the general dissolution of manners, almost the only opposition offered to the spread of the gospel appears to have been that of the unbelieving Jews settled in the different cities of the empire. It would seem that this was the case even in Rome itself; for, according to Suetonius, such tumults took place there among the Jews, "incited by one Chrestus," † that the Emperor Claudius commanded all of that nation to quit the city: but the progress of the gospel was not arrested by this, for the epistle of Paul to the Romans, written before he had ever visited that city, ‡ shows that the number of converts was considerable, and those not altogether of the meaner sort: and in the epistle to the Philippians, written a few years after, we find greetings from "the saints of Cæsar's household" — to the Church at Philippi; moreover in the beginning of that epistle the Apostle observes that his bonds, — for he was then a prisoner, — had turned out for the furtherance of the gospel; for that the cause of his imprisonment, etc., the enmity of the Jews, — was

* Antiq. lib. xix.

† Suet. in loc. This was a name not unfrequently given to Christ and the Christians by the heathens. v. Tertull. Apol.

‡ Probably about A. D. 58.