§iy.] TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING. [iyrropvction.   
   
 ambition and self-exaltation on the part of the presbyters (v. 2, 3),—that   
 to evil thoughts and evil words towards one another (ii. 1s   
 iv. 9).   
   
   
   
 SECTION IV.   
 TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING.   
   
   
 1. The former of these enquiries is very closely connected with that of   
 the last section. Many Commentators have fancied that the state of the   
 readers implied in the Epistle points at the persecution under Nero as the   
 time when it was written: others, that the persecution under Trajan is   
 rather indicated. But to both of these it has been sufficiently replied, that   
 the passages relied on do not warrant either inference: that the defence   
 (apology) to be rendered (ch. iii, is not necessarily, nor indeed well   
 can be at all, a public defence in court, seeing that they are to be ready   
 to make it “to every one that asketh,” &c.: that the suffering as evil   
 doers cannot be well connected with the expression malefactors in Tacitus,   
 because in the Epistle the readers are exhorted to live down the ill repute,   
 which, had it consisted in the mere name of Christian, they could not   
 have been. Again it is answered that we have no proof of the Neronian   
 persecution having extended itself into the Asiatic provinces.   
 2. On the whole it seems to me that we are not justified in connecting   
 the Epistle with cither of these persecutions, but are rather to take its   
 notices as pointing toa time when a general dislike of the Christians was   
 beginning to pass into active tyranny, and in some cases into infliction   
 of capital punishment, As Davidson remarks, “ The trials were not yet   
 excessive. They were alarming in the future. A severe time was   
 approaching. Judgment was soon to begin at the house of God. The   
 terrible persecutions and sufferings which the Christians were about to   
 endure, were impending.”   
 8. These remarks are favoured by the tone in which snffering is   
 spoken of, as by no means a matter of course: not sure, nor even likely,   
 to follow upon a harmless Christian life: compare ch. iii. 13, 14, where,   
 by “who shall harm you if ye be imitators of that which is good?” it seems   
 as if the good liver was in general likely to be let alone; and by what   
 follows, “but even if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye,” it is   
 implied that in some exceptional cases, Christians might be hunted out   
 by zealous enemies and made to suffer quoad Christians.   
 4. So that I should be disposed, judging from tho internal notices   
 given of the state of the readers, to place the writing of the Epistle   
 during the later years of Nero, but before the persecution related by   
 Tacitus broke out. The “hatred of all mankind” whieh justified   
 that victimizing of the Christians, was gathering and producing its   
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