for pretending to take offence at the ugliness  
of the old buildings, with the narrowness and winding  
of the streets, he set the city on fire so openly that  
many men of Consular rank catched those of his bedchamber with tow, and torches for lighting in their  
houses, but durst not meddle with them. There  
being near his Golden House some granaries, the ground-plot of which he was extremely desirous to come at,  
they were battered with rams, because the walls were  
all of stone; and then set on fire, with the view of  
spreading the flames. During six days and seven  
nights this terrible devastation continued, the people  
being obliged to fly to the tombs and monuments for  
lodging and shelter. Upon this occasion, a prodigious  
number of stately buildings, the houses of generals  
celebrated in former times, and even then still beautified with the spoils of war, were all laid in ashes; as  
also the temples of the gods, which had been vowed  
and dedicated by the kings of Rome, and afterwards  
in the wars with the Carthaginians and Gauls; in  
short, everything of antiquity that was remarkable and  
was worthy to be seen. This fire he beheld from a  
tower in the top of Mecaenas’s house, and ‘being prodigiously diverted,’ as he said, ‘with the beauty of  
the flame,’ he sang the ditty of the destruction of Troy,  
in the dress used by him upon the stage.” *Life of Nero  
Claudius Coesar*, § xxxviii.  
 Did Nero burn Rome, when he was emperor in his  
days of flesh? How surely would he burn her with  
these strong reasons prompting him, should he rise  
from the dead! Out of his first burning of Rome  
sprang his persecution of the Christians whom he  
burnt alive in his gardens. He would be but carrying  
out his former actions, if he burnt nominally Christian  
Rome.  
 After these three blows, on her wealth, on her inhabitants,