

Chapter 28. A Sick Call

1 {305} ARISTO was not a fellow to have very long distresses; he never would have died
2 of love or of envy, for honour or for loss of property; but his present calamity was one of
3 the greatest he could ever have, and weighed upon him as long as ever any one could.
4 His love for his sister was real, but it would not do to look too closely into the grounds of
5 it; if we are obliged to do so, we must confess to a suspicion that it lay rather in certain
6 outward, nay, accidental attributes of Callista, than in Callista herself. Did she lose her
7 good looks, or her amiable unresisting submission to his wishes, whatever they were,
8 she would also lose her hold upon his affections. This is not to make any severe charge
9 against him, considering how it is with the common run of brothers and sisters,
10 husbands and wives; at the same time, most people certainly are haunted by the
11 memory of the past, and love for "Auld lang syne," and this Aristo might indeed have
12 had, and perhaps had not. He loved chiefly for the present, and by the hour.

13 However, at the present time he was in a state of acute suffering, and, under its
14 paroxysm, he bethought {306} him again of Cornelius's advice, which he had rejected,
15 to betake himself to Polemo. He had a distant acquaintance with him, sufficient for his
16 purpose, and he called on him at the Mercury after the latter's lecture. Polemo was no
17 fool, though steeped in affectation and self-conceit, and Aristo fancied that his sister
18 might be more moved by a philosophical compatriot than any one else. Polemo's
19 astonishment, however, when the matter was proposed to him surpassed words, and it
20 showed how utterly Aristo was absorbed in his own misery, that the possibility of such a
21 reception should not have occurred to him. What, he, the friend of Plotinus, of Rogatian,
22 and the other noble men and women who were his fellow-disciples at Rome; he, a
23 member of the intellectual aristocracy of the metropolis of the world; what, he to visit a
24 felon in prison! and when he found the felon was a Christian, he fully thought that Aristo
25 had come to insult him, and was on the point of bidding him leave him to himself. Aristo,
26 however, persisted; and his evident anguish, and some particulars which came out,
27 softened him. Callista was a Greek; a literate, or blue stocking. She had never indeed
28 worn the philosophic pallium (as some Christian martyrs afterwards, if not before, have
29 done—St. Catherine and St. Euphemia), but there was no reason why she should not
30 do so. Polemo recollected having heard of her at the Capitol, and in the triclinium of one
31 of the Decurions, as a lady of singular genius and attainments; and he lately had made
32 an attempt to form a female {307} class of hearers, and it would be a feather in his cap
33 to make a convert of her. So, not many days after, one evening, accompanied by Aristo,
34 he set out in his litter to the lodging where she was in custody; not, however, without
35 much misgiving when it came to the point, some shame, and a consequent visible
36 awkwardness and stiffness in his manner. All the perfumes he had about him could not
37 hinder the disgust of such a visit rising up into his nostrils.

38 Callista's room was very well for a prison; it was on the ground-floor of a house of many
39 stories, close to the *Officium* of the Triumvirate. Though not any longer under their strict
40 jurisdiction, she was allowed to remain where she had first been lodged. She was in one
41 of the rooms belonging to an apparitor of that *Officium*, and, as he had a wife, or at least
42 a partner, to take care of her, she might consider herself very well off. However, the

43 reader must recollect that we are in Africa, in the month of July, and our young Greek
44 was little used to heats, which made the whole city nothing less than one vast oven
45 through the greater part of the twenty-four hours. In lofty spacious apartments the
46 resource adopted is to exclude the external air, and to live as Greenlanders, with closed
47 windows and doors; this was both impossible, and would have been unsuccessful, if
48 attempted in the small apartment of Callista. But fever of mind is even worse than the
49 heat of the sky; and it is undeniable that her health, and her strength, and her
50 appearance are affected by both the physical and the {308} moral enemy. The beauty,
51 which was her brother's delight, is waning away; and the shadows, if not the rudiments
52 of a diviner loveliness, which is of expression, not of feature, which inspires not human
53 passion, but diffuses chaste thoughts and aspirations, are taking its place. Aristo sees
54 the change with no kind of satisfaction. The room has a bench, two or three stools, and
55 a bed of rushes in one corner. A staple is firmly fixed in the wall; and an iron chain, light,
56 however, and long, if the two ideas can be reconciled, reaches to her slender arm, and
57 is joined to it by an iron ring.

58 On Polemo's entering the room, his first exclamation was to complain of its closeness;
59 but he had to do a work, so he began it without delay. Callista, on her part, started; she
60 had no wish for his presence. She was reclining on her couch, and she sat up. She was
61 not equal to a controversy, nor did she mean to have one, whatever might be the case
62 with *him*.

63 "Callista, my life and joy, dear Callista," said her brother, "I have brought the greatest
64 man in Sicca to see you."

65 Callista cast upon him an earnest look, which soon subsided into indifference. He had a
66 rose of Cyrene in his hand, whose perfume he diffused about the small room.

67 "It is Polemo," continued Aristo, "the friend of the great Plotinus, who knows all
68 philosophies and all philosophers. He has come out of kindness to you." {309}

69 Callista acknowledged his presence; it was certainly, she said, a great kindness for any
70 one to visit her, and there.

71 Polemo replied by a compliment; he said it was Socrates visiting Aspasia. There had
72 always been women above the standard of their sex, and they had ever held an
73 intellectual converse with men of mind. He saw one such before him.

74 Callista felt it would be plunging her soul still deeper into shadows, when she sought
75 realities, if she must take part in such an argument. She remained silent.

76 "Your sister has not the fit upon her?" asked Polemo of Aristo aside, neither liking her
77 reception of him, nor knowing what to say. "Not at all, dear thing," answered Aristo; "she
78 is all attention for you to begin."

79 "Natives of Greece," at length said he, "natives of Greece should know each other; they
80 deserve to know each other; there is a secret sympathy between them. Like that
81 mysterious influence which unites magnet to magnet; or like the echo which is a
82 repercussion of the original voice. So, in like manner, Greeks are what none but they
83 can be," and he smelt at his rose and bowed.

84 She smiled faintly when he mentioned Greece. "Yes," she said, "I am fonder of Greece
85 than of Africa."

86 "Each has its advantages," said Polemo; "there is a pleasure in imparting knowledge, in
87 lighting flame {310} from flame. It would be selfish did we not leave Greece to
88 communicate what they have not here. But you," he added, "lady, neither can learn in
89 Greece nor teach in Africa, while you are in this vestibule of Orcus. I understand,
90 however, it is your own choice; can that be possible?"

91 "Well, I wish to get out, if I could, most learned Polemo," said Callista sadly.

92 "May Polemo of Rhodes speak frankly to Callista of Proconnesus?" asked Polemo. "I
93 would not speak to every one. If so, let me ask, what keeps you here?"

94 "The magistrates of Sicca and this iron chain," answered Callista. "I would I could be
95 elsewhere; I would I were not what I am."

96 "What could you wish to be more than you are?" answered Polemo; "more gifted,
97 accomplished, beautiful than any daughter of Africa."

98 "Go to the point, Polemo," said Aristo, nervously, though respectfully; "she wants home-
99 thrusts."

100 "I see my brother wants you to ask how far it depends on me that I am here," said
101 Callista, wishing to hasten his movements; "it is because I will not burn incense upon
102 the altar of Jupiter."

103 "A most insufficient reason, lady," said Polemo.

104 Callista was silent.

105 "What does that action mean?" said Polemo; "it proposes to mean nothing else than
106 that you are loyal to the Roman power. You are not of those Greeks, I presume, who
107 dream of a national insurrection at {311} this time? then you are loyal to Rome. Did I
108 believe a Leonidas could now arise, an Harmodius, a Miltiades, a Themistocles, a
109 Pericles, an Epaminondas, I should be as ready to take the sword as another; but it is
110 hopeless. Greece, then, makes no claim on you just now. Nor will I believe, though you
111 were to tell me so yourself, that you are leagued with any obscure, fanatic sect who
112 desire Rome's downfall. Consider what Rome is;" and now he had got into the
113 magnificent commonplace, out of his last panegyric oration with which he had primed

114 himself before he set out. "I am a Greek," he said, "I love Greece, but I love truth better;
115 and I look at facts. I grasp them, and I confess to them. The wide earth, through untold
116 centuries, has at length grown into the imperial dominion of One. It has converged and
117 coalesced in all its various parts into one Rome. This, which we see, is the last, the
118 perfect state of human society. The course of things, the force of natural powers, as is
119 well understood by all great lawyers and philosophers, cannot go further. Unity has
120 come at length, and unity is eternity. It will be for ever, because it is a whole. The
121 principle of dissolution is eliminated. We have reached the *apotelesma* of the world.
122 Greece, Egypt, Assyria, Libya, Etruria, Lydia, have all had their share in the result. Each
123 of them, in its own day, has striven in vain to stop the course of fate, and has been
124 hurried onwards at its wheels as its victim or its instrument. And shall Judæa do what
125 profound Egypt and subtle Greece have tried in vain? {312} If even the freedom of
126 thought, the liberal scepticism, nay, the revolutionary theories of Hellas have proved
127 unequal to the task of splitting up the Roman power, if the pomp and luxury of the East
128 have failed, shall the mysticism of Syria succeed?"

129 "Well, dear Callista, are you listening?" cried Aristo, not over-confident of the fact,
130 though Polemo looked round at him with astonishment.

131 "Ten centuries," he continued, "ten centuries have just been completed since Rome
132 began her victorious career. For ten centuries she has been fulfilling her high mission in
133 the dispositions of Destiny, and perfecting her maxims of policy and rules of
134 government. For ten centuries she has pursued one track with an ever-growing intensity
135 of zeal, and an ever-widening extent of territory. What can she not do? just one thing;
136 and that one thing which she has not presumed to do, you are attempting. She has
137 maintained her own religion, as was fitting; but she has never thrown contempt on the
138 religion of others. This you are doing. Observe, Callista, Rome herself, in spite of her
139 great power, has yielded to that necessity which is greater. She does not meddle with
140 the religions of the peoples. She has opened no war against their diversities of rite. The
141 conquering power found, especially in the East, innumerable traditions, customs,
142 prejudices, principles, superstitions, matted together in one hopeless mass; she left
143 them as they were; she recognised them; it would have been the worse for her if she
144 had done otherwise. {313} All she said to the peoples, all she dared say to them, was,
145 'You bear with me, and I will bear with you.' Yet this you will not do; you Christians, who
146 have no pretence to any territory, who are not even the smallest of the peoples, who are
147 not even a people at all, you have the fanaticism to denounce all other rites but your
148 own, nay, the religion of great Rome. Who are you? upstarts and vagabonds of
149 yesterday. Older religions than yours, more intellectual, more beautiful religions, which
150 have had a position, and a history, and a political influence, have come to nought; and
151 shall you prevail, you, a congeries, a hotch-potch of the leavings, and scraps, and
152 broken meat of the great peoples of the East and West? Blush, blush, Grecian Callista,
153 you with a glorious nationality of your own to go shares with some hundred peasants,
154 slaves, thieves, beggars, hucksters, tinkers, cobblers, and fishermen! A lady of high
155 character, of brilliant accomplishments, to be the associate of the outcasts of society!"

156 Polemo's speech, though cumbrous, did execution, at least the termination of it, upon
157 minds constituted like the Grecian. Aristo jumped up, swore an oath, and looked round
158 triumphantly at Callista, who felt its force also. After all, what did she know of
159 Christians?—at best she was leaving the known for the unknown: she was sure to be
160 embracing certain evil for contingent good. She said to herself, "No, I never can be a
161 Christian." Then she said aloud, "My Lord Polemo, I am not a Christian;—I never said I
162 was." {314}

163 "That is her absurdity!" cried Aristo. "She is neither one thing nor the other. She won't
164 say she's a Christian, and she won't sacrifice!"

165 "It is my misfortune," she said, "I know. I am losing both what I see, and what I don't
166 see. It is most inconsistent: yet what can I do?"

167 Polemo had said what he considered enough. He was one of those who sold his words.
168 He had already been over-generous, and was disposed to give away no more.

169 After a time, Callista said, "Polemo, do you believe in one God?"

170 "Certainly," he answered; "I believe in one eternal, self-existing something."

171 "Well," she said, "I feel that God within my heart. I feel myself in His presence. He says
172 to me, 'Do this: don't do that.' You may tell me that this dictate is a mere law of my
173 nature, as is to joy or to grieve. I cannot understand this. No, it is the echo of a person
174 speaking to me. Nothing shall persuade me that it does not ultimately proceed from a
175 person external to me. It carries with it its proof of its divine origin. My nature feels
176 towards it as towards a person. When I obey it, I feel a satisfaction; when I disobey, a
177 soreness—just like that which I feel in pleasing or offending some revered friend. So
178 you see, Polemo, I believe in what is more than a mere 'something.' I believe in what is
179 more real to me than sun, moon, stars, and the fair earth, and the {315} voice of friends.
180 You will say, Who is He? Has He ever told you anything about Himself? Alas! no!—the
181 more's the pity! But I will not give up what I have, because I have not more. An echo
182 implies a voice; a voice a speaker. That speaker I love and I fear."

183 Here she was exhausted, and overcome too, poor Callista! with her own emotions.

184 "O that I could find Him!" she exclaimed, passionately. "On the right hand and on the left
185 I grope, but touch Him not. Why dost Thou fight against me?—why dost Thou scare and
186 perplex me, O First and Only Fair? I have Thee not, and I need Thee." She added, "I
187 am no Christian, you see, or I should have found Him; or at least I should say I had
188 found Him."

189 "It is hopeless," said Polemo to Aristo, in much disgust, and with some hauteur of
190 manner: "she is too far gone. You should not have brought me to this place."

191 Aristo groaned.

192 "Shall I," she continued, "worship any but Him? Shall I say that He whom I see not,
193 whom I seek, is our Jupiter, or Cæsar, or the goddess Rome? They are none of them
194 images of this inward guide of mine. I sacrifice to Him alone."

195 The two men looked at each other in amazement: one of them in anger.

196 "It's like the demon of Socrates," said Aristo, timidly. {316}

197 "I will acknowledge Cæsar in every fitting way," she repeated; "but I will not make him
198 my God."

199 Presently she added, "Polemo, will not that invisible Monitor have something to say to
200 all of us,—to you,—at some future day?"

201 "Spare me! spare me, Callista!" cried Polemo, starting up with a violence unsuited to his
202 station and profession. "Spare my ears, unhappy woman!—such words have never
203 hitherto entered them. I did not come to be insulted. Poor, blind, hapless, perverse
204 spirit—I separate myself from you for ever! Desert, if you will, the majestic, bright,
205 beneficent traditions of your forefathers, and live in this frightful superstition! Farewell!"

206 He did not seem better pleased with Aristo than with Callista, though Aristo helped him
207 into his litter, walked by his side, and did what he could to propitiate him.

Chapter 29. Conversion

208 {317} IF there is a state of mind utterly forlorn, it is that in which we left the poor prisoner
209 after Polemo had departed. She was neither a Christian, nor was she not. She was in
210 the midway region of inquiry, which as surely takes time to pass over, except there be
211 some almost miraculous interference, as it takes time to walk from place to place. You
212 see a person coming towards you, and you say, impatiently, "Why don't you come
213 faster?—why are you not here already?" Why?—because it takes time. To see that
214 heathenism is false,—to see that Christianity is true,—are two acts, and involve two
215 processes. They may indeed be united, and the truth may supplant the error; but they
216 may not. Callista obeyed, as far as truth was brought home to her. She saw the vanity
217 of idols before she had faith in Him who came to destroy them. She could safely say, "I
218 discard Jupiter:" she could not say, "I am a Christian." Besides, what did she know of
219 Christians? How did she know that they would admit her, if she wished it? They were a
220 secret society, with an election, an initiation, and oaths;—not a mere philosophical {318}
221 school, or a profession of opinion, open to any individual. If they were the good people
222 that she fancied them to be,—and if they were not, she would not think of them at all,—
223 they were not likely to accept of her.

224 Still, though we may account for her conduct, its issue was not, on that account, the less
225 painful. She had neither the promise of this world, nor of the next, and was losing earth
226 without gaining heaven. Our Lord is reported to have said, "Be ye good money-
227 changers." Poor Callista did not know how to turn herself to account. It had been so all

228 through her short life. She had ardent affections, and keen sensibilities, and high
229 aspirations; but she was not fortunate in the application of them. She had put herself
230 into her brother's hands, and had let him direct her course. It could not be expected that
231 he would be very different from the world. We are cautioned against "rejoicing in our
232 youth." Aristo rejoiced in his without restraint; and he made his sister rejoice in hers, if
233 enjoyment it was. He himself found in the pleasures he pointed out a banquet of
234 fruits:—she dust and ashes. And so she went on; not changing her life, from habit, from
235 the captivity of nature, but weary, disappointed, fastidious, hungry, yet not knowing what
236 she would have; yearning after something, she did not well know what. And as
237 heretofore she had cast her lot with the world, yet had received no price for her
238 adhesion, so now she had bid it farewell; yet had nothing to take in its place. {319}

239 As to her brother, after the visit of Polemo, he got more and more annoyed—angry
240 rather than distressed, and angry with her. One more opportunity occurred of her
241 release, and it was the last effort he made to move her. Cornelius, in spite of his
242 pomposity, had acted the part of a real friend. He wrote from Carthage, that he had
243 happily succeeded in his application to government, and, difficult and unusual as was
244 the grace, had obtained her release. He sent the formal documents for carrying it
245 through the court, and gained the eager benediction of the excitable Aristo. He rushed
246 with the parchments to the magistrates, who recognised them as sufficient, and got an
247 order for admission to her room.

248 "Joy, my dearest," he cried; "you are free! We will leave this loathsome country by the
249 first vessel. I have seen the magistrates already."

250 The colour came into her wan face, she clasped her hands together, and looked
251 earnestly at Aristo. He proceeded to explain the process of liberation. She would not be
252 called on to sacrifice, but must sign a writing to the effect that she had done so, and
253 there would be an end of the whole matter. On the first statement she saw no difficulty
254 in the proposal, and started up in animation. Presently her countenance fell; how could
255 she say that she had done what it was treason to her inward Guide to do? What was the
256 difference between acknowledging a blasphemy by a signature or by incense? She
257 smiled sorrowfully at him, shook her head, and lay down again upon her {320} rushes.
258 She had anticipated the Church's judgment on the case of the *Libellatici*.

259 Aristo could not at first believe he heard aright, that she refused to be saved by what
260 seemed to him a matter of legal form; and his anger grew so high as to eclipse and to
261 shake his affection. "Lost girl," he cried, "I abandon you to the Furies!" and he shook his
262 clenched hand at her. He turned away, and said he would never see her again, and he
263 kept his word. He never came again. He took refuge, with less restraint than was usual
264 to him, in such pleasures as the city could supply, and strove to drive his sister from his
265 mind by dissipation. He mixed in the games of the Campus Martius under the shadow of
266 the mountain; took part with the revellers in the Forum, and ended the evening at the
267 Thermæ. Sometimes the image of dear Callista, as once she looked, would rush into his
268 mind with a force which would not be denied, and he would weep for a whole night.

269 At length he determined to destroy himself, after the example of so many great men. He
270 gave a sumptuous entertainment, expending his means upon it, and invited his friends
271 to partake of it. It passed off with great gaiety; nothing was wanting to make it equal to
272 an occasion so special and singular. He disclosed to his guests his purpose, and they
273 applauded; the last libations were made—the revellers departed—the lights were
274 extinguished. Aristo disappeared that night: Sicca never saw him again. {321} After
275 some time it was found that he was at Carthage, and he had been provident enough to
276 take with him some of his best working tools, and some specimens of his own and poor
277 Callista's skill.

278 Strange to say, Jucundus proved a truer friend to the poor girl than her brother. In spite
279 of his selfishness and hatred of Christians, he was considerably affected as her case
280 got more and more serious, and it became evident that only one answer could be
281 returned to the magistrates from Carthage. He was quite easy about Agellius, who had,
282 as he considered, successfully made off with himself, and he was reconciled to the
283 thought of never seeing him again. Had it not been for this, one might have fancied that
284 some lurking anxiety about the fate of his nephew might have kept alive the fidget which
285 Callista's dismal situation gave him, for the philosopher tells us, that pity always has
286 something in it of self; but, under the circumstances, it would be rash judgment to have
287 any such suspicion of his motives. He was not a cruel man: even the "hoary-headed
288 Fabian," or Cyprian, or others whom he so roundly abused, would have found, when it
289 came to the point, that his bluster was his worst weapon against them; at any rate he
290 had enough of the "milk of human kindness" to feel considerable distress about that
291 idiotic Callista.

292 Yet what could he do? He might as well stop the passage of the sun, as the movements
293 of mighty Rome, and a rescript would be coming to a certainty {322} in due time from
294 Carthage, and would just say one thing, which would forthwith be passing into the
295 region of fact. He had no one to consult, and to tell the truth, Callista's fate was more
296 than acquiesced in by the public of Sicca. Her death seemed a solution of various
297 perplexities and troubles into which the edict had brought them; it would be purchasing
298 the praise of loyalty cheaply. Moreover, there were sets of men actually hostile to her
299 and her brother; the companies of statuaries, lapidaries, and goldsmiths, were jealous
300 of foreign artists like them, who showed contempt for Africa, and who were acquainted,
301 or rather intimate, with many of the higher classes, and even high personages in the
302 place. Well, but could not some of those great people help her now? His mind glanced
303 towards Calphurnius, whom he had heard of as in some way or other protecting her on
304 the evening of the riot, and to him he determined to betake himself.

305 Calphurnius and the soldiery were still in high dudgeon with the populace of Sicca,
306 displeased with the magistrates, and full of sympathy for Callista. Jucundus opened his
307 mind fully to the tribune, and persuaded him to take him to Septimius, his military
308 superior, and in the presence of the latter many good words were uttered both by
309 Calphurnius and Jucundus. Jucundus gave it as his opinion that it was a very great
310 mistake to strike at any but the leaders of the Christian sect; he quoted the story of King
311 Tarquin and the poppies, and assured the great {323} man that it was what he had

312 always said and always prophesied, and that, depend upon it, it was a great mistake not
313 to catch Cyprianus.

314 "The strong arm of the law," he said, "should not, on the other hand, be put forth against
315 such butterflies as this Callista, a girl who, he knew from her brother, had not yet seen
316 eighteen summers. What harm could such a poor helpless thing possibly do? She could
317 not even defend herself, much less attack anybody else. No," he continued, "your
318 proper policy with these absurd people is a smiling face and an open hand. Recollect
319 the fable of the sun and the wind; which made the traveller lay aside his cloak? Do you
320 fall in with some sour-visaged, stiff-backed worshipper of the Furies? fill his cup for him,
321 crown his head with flowers, bring in the flute-women. Observe him—he relaxes; a
322 smile spreads on his countenance; he laughs at a jest; 'captus est; habet:' he pours a
323 libation. Great Jove has conquered! he is loyal to Rome; what can you desire more? But
324 beat him, kick him, starve him, turn him out of doors; and you have a natural enemy to
325 do you a mischief whenever he can."

326 Calphurnius took his own line, and a simple one. "If it was some vile slave or scoundrel
327 African," he said, "no harm would have been done; but, by Jupiter Tonans, it's a Greek
328 girl, who sings like a Muse, dances like a Grace, and spouts verses like Minerva.
329 'Twould be sacrilege to touch a hair of her head; and we forsooth are to let these
330 cowardly dogs {324} of magistrates entrap Fortunianus at Carthage into this solecism."

331 Septimius said nothing, as became a man in office; but he came to an understanding
332 with his visitors. It was plain that the Duumvirs of Sicca had no legal custody of Callista;
333 in a criminal matter she might seem to fall under the jurisdiction of the military; and
334 Calphurnius gained leave to claim his right at the proper moment. The rest of his plan
335 the tribune kept to himself, nor did Septimius wish to know it. He intended to march a
336 guard into the prison shortly before Callista was brought out for execution, and then to
337 make it believed that she had died under the horrors of the Barathrum. The corpse of
338 another woman could without difficulty be found to be her representative, and she
339 herself would be carried off to the camp.

340 Meanwhile, to return to the prisoner herself, what was the consolation, what the
341 occupation of Callista in this waiting time, ere the Proconsul had sent his answer?
342 Strange to say, and, we suppose, from a sinful waywardness in her, she had, up to this
343 moment, neglected to avail herself of a treasure, which by a rare favour had been put
344 into her possession. A small parchment, carefully written, elaborately adorned, lay in her
345 bosom, which might already have been the remedy of many a perplexity, many a woe. It
346 is difficult to say under what feelings she had been reluctant to open the Holy Gospel,
347 which Cæcilius had intrusted to her care. Whether she was so low {325} and
348 despondent that she could not make the effort, or whether she feared to convince
349 herself further, or whether she professed to be waiting for some calmer time, as if that
350 were possible, or whether her unwillingness was that which makes sick people so
351 averse to eating, or to remedies which they know would be useful to them, cannot well
352 be determined; but there are many of us who may be able, from parallel instances of
353 infirmity, to enter into that state of mind, which led her at least to procrastinate what she

354 might do any minute. However, now left absolutely to herself, Aristo gone, and the
355 answer of the government to the magistracy not having yet come, she recurred to the
356 parchment, and to the Bishop's words, which ran, "Here you will see who it is we love,"
357 or language to that effect. It was tightly lodged under her girdle, and so had escaped in
358 the confusion of that terrible evening. She opened it at length and read.

359 It was the writing of a provincial Greek; elegant, however, and marked with that
360 simplicity which was to her taste the elementary idea of a classic author. It was
361 addressed to one Theophilus, and professed to be a carefully digested and verified
362 account of events which had been already attempted by others. She read a few
363 paragraphs, and became interested, and in no long time she was absorbed in the
364 volume. When she had once taken it up, she did not lay it down. Even at other times
365 she would have prized it, but now, when she was so desolate and lonely, it was {326}
366 simply a gift from an unseen world. It opened a view of a new state and community of
367 beings, which only seemed too beautiful to be possible. But not into a new state of
368 things alone, but into the presence of One who was simply distinct and removed from
369 anything that she had, in her most imaginative moments, ever depicted to her mind as
370 ideal perfection. Here was that to which her intellect tended, though that intellect could
371 not frame it. It could approve and acknowledge, when set before it, what it could not
372 originate. Here was He who spoke to her in her conscience; whose Voice she heard,
373 whose Person she was seeking for. Here was He who kindled a warmth on the cheek of
374 both Chione and Agellius. That image sank deep into her; she felt it to be a reality. She
375 said to herself, "This is no poet's dream; it is the delineation of a real individual. There is
376 too much truth and nature, and life and exactness about it, to be anything else." Yet she
377 shrank from it; it made her feel her own difference from it, and a feeling of humiliation
378 came upon her mind, such as she never had had before. She began to despise herself
379 more thoroughly day by day; yet she recollected various passages in the history which
380 reassured her amid her self-abasement, especially that of His tenderness and love for
381 the poor girl at the feast, who would anoint His feet; and the full tears stood in her eyes,
382 and she fancied she was that sinful child, and that He did not repel her.

383 O what a new world of thought she had entered! it {327} occupied her mind from its very
384 novelty. Everything looked dull and dim by the side of it; her brother had ever been
385 dinning into her ears that maxim of the heathen, "Enjoy the present, trust nothing to the
386 future." She indeed could not enjoy the present with that relish which he wished, and
387 she had not any trust in the future either; but this volume spoke a different doctrine.
388 There she learned the very opposite to what Aristo taught—viz., that the present must
389 be sacrificed for the future; that what is seen must give way to what is believed. Nay,
390 more, she drank in the teaching which at first seemed so paradoxical, that even present
391 happiness and present greatness lie in relinquishing what at first sight seems to promise
392 them; that the way to true pleasure is, not through self-indulgence, but through
393 mortification; that the way to power is weakness, the way to success failure, the way to
394 wisdom foolishness, the way to glory dishonour. She saw that there was a higher
395 beauty than that which the order and harmony of the natural world revealed, and a
396 deeper peace and calm than that which the exercise, whether of the intellect or of the
397 purest human affection, can supply. She now began to understand that strange,

398 unearthly composure, which had struck her in Chione, Agellius, and Cæcilius; she
399 understood that they were detached from the world, not because they had not the
400 possession, nor the natural love of its gifts, but because they possessed a higher
401 blessing already, which they loved above everything else. Thus, by degrees, {328}
402 Callista came to walk by a new philosophy; and had ideas, and principles, and a sense
403 of relations and aims, and a susceptibility of arguments, to which before she was an
404 utter stranger. Life and death, action and suffering, fortunes and abilities, all had now a
405 new meaning and application. As the skies speak differently to the philosopher and the
406 peasant, as a book of poems to the imaginative and to the cold and narrow intellect, so
407 now she saw her being, her history, her present condition, her future, in a new light,
408 which no one else could share with her. But the ruling sovereign thought of the whole
409 was He, who exemplified all this wonderful philosophy in Himself.