

Chapter 20. He shall not Lose his Reward

1 {226} THERE was no room for doubt or for delay. "What is to become of you, Callista?"
2 he said; "they will tear you to pieces."

3 "Fear nothing for me, father," she answered; "I am one of them. They know me.
4 Alas, I am no Christian! I have not abjured their rites! but you, lose not a moment."

5 "They are still at some distance," he said, "though the wind gives us merciful warning of
6 their coming." He looked about the room, and took up the books of Holy Scripture which
7 were on the shelf. "There is nothing else," he said, "of special value here. Agellius could
8 not take them. Here, my child, I am going to show you a great confidence. To few
9 persons not Christians would I show it. Take this blessed parchment; it contains the
10 earthly history of our Divine Master. Here you will see whom we Christians love. Read it;
11 keep it safely; surrender it, when you have the opportunity, into Christian keeping. My
12 mind tells me I am not wrong in lending it to you." He handed to her the Gospel of St.
13 Luke, {227} while he put the two other volumes into the folds of his own tunic.

14 "One word more," she said; "your name, should I want you."

15 He took up a piece of chalk from the shelf, and wrote upon the wall in distinct
16 characters,

17 "Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus, Bishop of Carthage."

18 Hardly had she read the inscription when the voices of several men were heard in the
19 very neighbourhood of the cottage; and hoping to effect a diversion in favour of
20 Cæcilius, and being at once unsuspecting of danger to herself, and careless of her life,
21 she ran quickly forward to meet them. Cæcilius ought to have taken to flight without a
22 moment's delay, but a last sacred duty detained him. He knelt down and took the pyx
23 from his bosom. He had eaten nothing that day; but even if otherwise, it was a crisis,
24 which allowed him to consume the sacred species without fasting. He hastily opened
25 the golden case, adored the blessed sacrament, and consumed it, purifying its
26 receptacle, and restoring it to its hiding-place. Then he rose at once and left the cottage.

27 He looked about; Callista was nowhere to be seen. She was gone; so much was
28 certain, no enemy was in sight; it only remained for him to make off too. In the confusion
29 he turned in the wrong direction; instead of making off at the back of the cottage from
30 which the voices had scared him, he ran across the garden {228} into the hollow way. It
31 was all over with him in an instant; he fell at once into the hands of the vanguard of the
32 mob.

33 Many mouths were opened upon him all at once. "The sorcerer!" cried one; "tear him to
34 shreds; we'll teach him to brew his spells against the city." "Give us back our grapes
35 and corn," said a second. "Have a guard," said a third; "he can turn you into swine or
36 asses while there is breath in him." "Then be the quicker with him," said a fourth, who

37 was lifting up a crowbar to discharge upon his head. "Hold!" said a tall swarthy youth,
38 who had already warded off several blows from him, "hold, will you? don't you see, if
39 you kill him he can't undo the spell. Make him first reverse it all; make him take the
40 curse off us. Bring him along; take him to Astarte, Hercules, or old Saturn. We'll broil
41 him on a gridiron till he turns all these canes into vines, and makes olive berries of the
42 pebbles, and turns the dust of the earth into fine flour for our eating. When he has done
43 all this he shall dance a jig with a wild cow, and sit down to supper with an hyena."

44 A loud scream of exultation broke forth from the drunken and frantic multitude. "Along
45 with him!" continued the same speaker in a jeering tone. "Here, put him on the ass and
46 tie his hands behind his back. He shall go back in triumph to the city which he loves.
47 Mind, and don't touch him before the time. If you kill him, you'll never get the curse off.
48 Come here, you priests of Cybele," he added, "and be his {229} body-guard." And he
49 continued to keep a vigilant eye and hand over the old man, in spite of them.

50 The ass, though naturally a good-tempered beast, had been most sadly tried through
51 the day. He had been fed, indeed, out of mockery, as being the Christians' god; but he
52 did not understand the shouts and caprices of the crowd, and he only waited for an
53 opportunity to show that he by no means acquiesced in the proceedings of the day. And
54 now the difficulty was to move at all. The people kept crowding up the hollow road, and
55 blocked the passage, and though the greater part of the rioters had either been left
56 behind exhausted in Sicca itself, or had poured over the fields on each side of Agellius's
57 cottage, or gone right over the hill down into the valley beyond, yet still it was some time
58 before the ass could move a step, and a time of nervous suspense it was both to
59 Cæcilius and the youth who befriended him. At length what remained of the procession
60 was persuaded to turn about and make for Sicca, but in a reversed order. It could not be
61 brought round in so confined a space, so its rear went first and the ass and its burden
62 came last. As they descended the hill back again, Cæcilius, who was mounted upon the
63 linen and silk which had adorned the Dea Syra before the Tertullianist had destroyed
64 the idol, saw before him the whole line of march. In front were flaunted the dreadful
65 emblems of idolatry, so far as their bearers were able still to raise them.

66 Drunken women, ragged boys mounted on men's shoulders, ruffians and bullies,
67 savage-looking Getulians, {230} half-human monsters from the Atlas, monkeys and curs
68 jabbering and howling, mummers, bacchanals, satyrs, and gesticulators, formed the
69 staple of the procession. Midway between the hill which he was descending and the city
70 lay the ravine, of which we have several times spoken, widening out into the plain or
71 Campus Martius, which reached round to the steep cliffs on the north. The bridle-path,
72 along which he was moving, crossed it just where it was opening and became level, so
73 as to present no abrupt descent and ascent at the place where the path was lowest. On
74 the left every vestige of the ravine soon ceased, and a free passage extended to the
75 plain.

76 The youth who had placed Cæcilius on the ass still kept close to him and sung at the
77 pitch of his voice, in imitation of the rest—

78 "Sporting and snorting in shades of the night,
79 His ears pricking up, and his hoofs striking light,
80 And his tail whisking round in the speed of his flight."

81 "Old man," he continued to Cæcilius in a low voice, and in Latin, "your curse has not
82 worked on me yet."

83 "My son," answered the priest, "you are granted one day more for repentance."

84 "Lucky for you as well as for me," was the reply: and he continued his song:—

85 "Gurta, the witch, was out with the rest;
86 Though as lame as a gull, by his highness possessed,
87 She shouldered her crutch, and danced with the best. {231}

88 "She stamped and she twirled in the shade of the yew,
89 Till her gossips and chums of the city danced too;
90 They never are slack when there's mischief to do.

91 "She danced and she coaxed, but he was no fool;
92 He'd be his own master, he'd not be her tool:
93 Not the little black moor should send him to school."

94 He then turned to Cæcilius and whispered, "You see, old father, that others, besides
95 Christians, can forgive and forget. Henceforth call me generous Juba." And he tossed
96 his head.

97 By this time they had got to the bottom of the hill, and the deep shadows which filled the
98 hollow showed that the sun was rapidly sinking in the west. Suddenly, as they were
99 crossing the bottom as it opened into the plain, Juba seized and broke the thong which
100 bound Cæcilius's arms, and bestowing a tremendous cut with it upon the side of the
101 ass, sent him forward upon the plain at his greatest speed. The youth's manœuvre was
102 successful to the full. The asses of Africa can do more on an occasion of this kind than
103 our own. Cæcilius for the moment lost his seat; but, instantly recovering it, took care to
104 keep the animal from flagging; and the cries of the mob, and the howlings of the priests
105 of Cybele cooperated in the task. At length the gloom, increasing every minute, hid him
106 from their view; and even in daylight his recapture would have been a difficult matter for
107 a wearied-out, famished, and intoxicated rabble. Before Cæcilius well had time to return
108 thanks for this unexpected turn of events, he was out of pursuit, and was ambling at a
109 pace more suitable to the habits of the beast of {232} burden that carried him, over an
110 expanse of plain which would have been a formidable night-march to a fasting man.

111 We must not conclude the day without relating what was its issue to the persecutors, as
112 well as to their intended victim. It is almost a proverb that punishment is slow in
113 overtaking crime; but the present instance was an exception to the rule. While the exiled
114 Bishop of Carthage escaped, the crowd, on the other hand, were caught in the trap

115 which had been laid for them. We have already said it was a *ruse* on the part of the
116 governing authorities of the place to get the rioters out of the city, that they might at
117 once be relieved of them, and then deal with them just as they might think fit. When the
118 mob was once outside the walls, they might be refused re-admittance, and put down
119 with a strong hand. The Roman garrison, who, powerless to quell the tumult in the
120 narrow and winding streets and multiplied alleys of the city, had been the authors of the
121 manœuvre, now took on themselves the stern completion of it, and determined to do so
122 in the sternest way. Not a single head of all those who poured out in the afternoon
123 should return at night. It was not to be supposed that the soldiers had any tenderness
124 for the Christians, but they abominated and despised the rabble of the town. They were
125 indignant at their rising, thought it a personal insult to themselves, and resolved they
126 should never do so again. {233} The gates were commonly in the custody of the city
127 guard, but the Porta Septimiana, by which the mob passed out, was on this occasion
128 claimed by the Romans. It was most suitably circumstanced for the use they intended to
129 make of it. Immediately outside of it was a large court of the same level as the ground
130 inside, bordered on the right and left by substantial walls, which after a time were drawn
131 to meet each other, and contracted the space to the usual breadth of a road. The walls
132 continued to run along this road for some distance, till they joined the way which led to
133 the Campus Martius, and from this point the ground was open till it reached the head of
134 the ravine. The soldiers drew up at the gate, and as the worn-out and disappointed,
135 brutalized and half-idiotic multitudes returned towards it from the country, those who
136 were behind pushed on between the border walls those who were in front, and, while
137 they jammed together their ranks, also made escape impossible. It was now that the
138 Roman soldiers began their barbarous, not to say cowardly, assault upon them. With
139 heavy maces, with the pike, with iron gauntlets, with stones and bricks, with clubs, with
140 scourge, with the sword, with the helmet, with whatever came to hand, they commenced
141 the massacre of that large concourse of human beings, who did not offer one blow in
142 return. They slaughtered them like sheep; they trampled them down; they threw the
143 bodies of the wounded over the walls. Attempting to run back, numbers of the poor
144 {234} wretches came into conflict with the ranks behind them, and an additional scene
145 of confusion and overthrow took place; many of them straggled over to the open country
146 or woods, and perished, either from the weather, or from hunger, or even from the wild
147 beasts. Others, weakened by excess and famine, fell a prey to the pestilence that was
148 raging. After some days a remnant of them was allowed silently and timidly to steal back
149 into the city as best they could. It was a long day before the Plebs Siccensis ventured to
150 have any opinion of its own upon the subject of Christianity, or any other political, social,
151 or ecclesiastical topic whatever.

Chapter 21. Startling Rumours

152 {235} WHEN Jucundus rose next morning, and heard the news, he considered it to be
153 more satisfactory than he could have supposed possible. He was a zealous imperialist,
154 and a lover of tranquillity, a despiser of the natives and a hater of the Christians. The
155 Christians had suffered enough to vindicate the Roman name, to deter those who were
156 playing at Christianity, and to show that the people of Sicca had their eyes about them.
157 And the mob had received a severe lesson too; and the cause of public order had

158 triumphed, and civic peace was re-established. His anxiety, too, about Agellius had
159 terminated, or was terminating. He had privately denounced him to the government,
160 come to an understanding with the military authorities, and obtained the custody of him.
161 He had met him at the very door to which the boy Firmian brought him, with an apparitor
162 of the military staff (or what answered to it), and had clapped him into prison in an
163 underground cellar in which he kept damaged images, and those which had gone out of
164 fashion, and were otherwise unsaleable. He was not at all sorry, by some suffering, and
165 by some {236} fright, to aid the more potent incantation which Callista was singing in his
166 ears. He did not, however, at all forget Juba's hint, and was careful not to overdo the
167 rack-and-gridiron dodge, if we may so designate it; yet he thought just a flavour or a
168 thought of the inconveniences which the profession of Christianity involved might be a
169 salutary reflection in the midst of the persuasives which the voice and eyes of Callista
170 would kindle in his heart. There was nothing glorious or heroic in being confined in a
171 lumber cellar, no one knowing anything about it; and he did not mean to keep him there
172 for ever.

173 As the next day wore on towards evening, rumour brought a piece of news which he
174 was at first utterly unable to credit, and which for the moment seemed likely to spoil the
175 appetite which promised so well for his evening repast. He could hardly believe his ears
176 when he was told that Callista was in arrest on a charge of Christianity, and at first it
177 made him look as black as some of those Egyptian gods which he had on one shelf of
178 his shop. However, he rallied, and was very much amused at the report. The
179 imprisonment indeed was a fact, account for it as one could; but who *could* account for
180 it? "Varium et mutabile:" who could answer for the whims and fancies of womankind? If
181 she had fallen in love with the owl of Minerva, or cut off her auburn tresses, or turned
182 rope-dancer, there might have been some shrugging of shoulders, but no one would
183 have tried to analyze {237} the motive; but so much his profound sagacity enabled him
184 to see, that, if there was one thing more than another likely to sicken Agellius of
185 Christianity, it was to find one who was so precious to him suffering from the suspicion
186 of it. It was bad enough to have suffered one's self in such a cause; still he could
187 conceive, he was large-minded enough to grant, that Agellius might have some secret
188 satisfaction in the antagonist feeling of resentment and obstinacy which that suffering
189 might engender: but it was carrying matters too far, and no comfort in any point of view,
190 to find Callista, his beloved, the object of a similar punishment. It was all very well to
191 profess Christianity as a matter of sentiment, mystery, and singularity; but when it was
192 found to compromise the life or limbs of another, and that other Callista, why it was plain
193 that Agellius would be the very first to try and entreat the wayward girl to keep her good
194 looks for him, and to be loyal to the gods of her country; and he chuckled over the
195 thought, as others have done in other states of society, of a love-scene or a marriage
196 being the termination of so much high romance and fine acting.

197 However, the next day Aristo came down to him himself, and gave him an account at
198 once more authentic and more extended on the matter which interested him. Callista
199 had been called up before the tribunal, and had not been discharged, but remanded.
200 The meaning of it was as obscure as ever; Aristo could give no account of it; it almost
201 led him to believe {238} in the evil eye; some unholy practices, some spells such as only

202 potent wizards know, some deplorable delusion or hallucination, had for the time got the
203 mastery of his sister's mind. No one seemed quite to know how she had found her way
204 into the hands of the officers; but there she was, and the problem was how to get her
205 out of them.

206 However, whatever mystery, whatever anxiety, attached to the case, it was only still
207 more urgent to bring the matter home to Agellius without delay. If time went on before
208 the parties were brought together, she might grow more obstinate, and kindle a like
209 spirit in him. Oh that boys and girls *would* be giving old people, who wish them well, so
210 much trouble! However, it was no good thinking of that just then. He considered that, at
211 the present moment, they would not be able to bear the sight of each other in suffering
212 and peril; that mutual tenderness would make them plead with each other in each
213 other's behalf, and that each would be obliged to set the example to each of a
214 concession, to which each exhorted each; and on this fine philosophical view he
215 proceeded to act.

Chapter 22. Jucundus Propounds his View of the Situation

216 {239} FOR thirty-six hours Agellius had been confined in his underground receptacle,
217 light being almost excluded, a bench and a rug being his means of repose, and a full
218 measure of bread, wine, and olives being his dole. The shrieks and yells of the rioters
219 could be distinctly heard in his prison, as the day of his seizure went on, and they
220 passed by the temple of Astarte; but what happened at his farm, and how it fared with
221 Cæcilius, he had no means of conjecturing; nor indeed how it was to fare with himself,
222 for on the face of the transaction, as was in form the fact, he was in the hands of the
223 law, and only indulged with the house of a relative for his prison. On the second night he
224 was released by his uncle's confidential slave, who brought him up to a small back
225 closet on the ground floor, which was lighted from the roof, and next morning, being the
226 second day after the riot, Jucundus came in to have his confidential conversation with
227 him.

228 His uncle began by telling him that he was a government prisoner, but that he hoped by
229 his influence in high places to get him off and out of {240} Sicca without any prejudice to
230 his honour. He told him that he had managed it privately, and if he had treated him with
231 apparent harshness up to the evening before, it was in order to save appearances with
232 the apparitors who had attended him. He then went on to inform him that the mob had
233 visited his cottage, and had caught some man there; he supposed some accomplice or
234 ally of his nephew's. They had seized him, and were bringing him off, but the fellow had
235 been clever enough to effect his escape. He did not know more than this, but it had
236 happened very fortunately, for the general belief in the place was, that it was Agellius
237 who had been taken, and who had managed to give them the slip. Since it could not any
238 longer be safely denied that he was a Christian, though he (Jucundus) did not think so
239 himself, he had encouraged or rather had given his confirmation to the report; and when
240 some persons who had means of knowing had asserted that the culprit was double the
241 age of his nephew and more, and not at all of his make or description, but a sort of
242 slave, or rather that he was the slave of Agellius who had belonged to his father Strabo,

243 Jucundus had boldly asserted that Agellius, in the emergency, had availed himself of
244 some of the remarkably powerful charms which Christians were known to possess, and
245 had made himself seem what he really was not, in order to escape detection. It had not
246 indeed answered the purpose entirely, for he had actually been taken; but no blame in
247 the charm, which {241} perhaps, after all, had enabled him to escape. However,
248 Agellius was gone, he told people, and a good riddance, and he hoped never to see him
249 again. "But you see, my dear boy," he concluded, "this was all talk for the occasion, for I
250 hope you will live here many years in respectability and credit. I intend you should close
251 my eyes when my time comes, and inherit whatever I have to leave you; for as to that
252 fellow Juba, he inspires me with no confidence in him at all."

253 Agellius thanked his uncle with all his heart for his kind and successful efforts on his
254 behalf; he did not think there was a word he had said, in the future he had sketched for
255 him, which he could have wished altered. But he thought Jucundus over-sanguine;
256 much as he should like to live with him and tend him in his old age, he did not think he
257 should ever be permitted to return to Sicca. He was a Christian, and must seek some
258 remote corner of the world, or at least some city where he was unknown. Every one in
259 Sicca would point at him as the Christian; he would experience a thousand rubs and
260 collisions, even if the mob did not rise against him, without corresponding advantage; on
261 the other hand, he would have no influence. But were he in the midst of a powerful and
262 widely-extended community of Christians, he might in his place do work, and might
263 extend the faith as one of a number, unknown himself, and strong in his brethren. He
264 therefore proposed as soon as {242} possible to sell his effects and stock, and retire
265 from the sight of men, at least for a time.

266 "You think this persecution, then, will be soon at an end?" asked Jucundus.

267 "I judge by the past," answered Agellius; "there have been times of trial and of rest
268 hitherto, and I suppose it will be so again. And one place has hitherto been exempt from
269 the violence of our enemies, when another has been the scene of it."

270 "A new time is coming, trust me," said Jucundus, gravely. "Those popular commotions
271 are all over. What happened two days ago is a sample of what will come of them; they
272 have received their *coup-de-grâce*. The State is taking up the matter, Rome itself, thank
273 the gods! a tougher sort of customer than these villain ratcatchers and offal-eaters,
274 whom you had to do with two days since. Great Rome is now at length in earnest, my
275 boy, which she ought to have been a long time back, before you were born; and then
276 you know," and he nodded, "you would have had no choice; you wouldn't have had the
277 temptation to make a fool of yourself."

278 "Well, then," answered Agellius, "if a new time is really coming, there is less chance
279 than ever of my continuing here."

280 "Now be a sensible fellow, as you are when you choose," said his uncle; "look the
281 matter in the face, do. You cannot wrestle with impossibilities, you cannot make facts to
282 pattern. There are lawful religions, there are illicit. Christianity is illicit; it {243} is not

283 tolerated; that's not your fault; you cannot help it; you would, if you could; you can't.
284 Now you have observed your point of honour; you have shown you can stand up like a
285 man, and suffer for your own fancy. Still Rome does not give way; and you must make
286 the best of it. You must give in, and you are far too good (I don't compliment, I speak my
287 mind), far too amiable, excellent, sweet a boy for so rascally a superstition."

288 "There is something stronger than Rome," said the nephew almost sternly.

289 Jucundus cut him short. "Agellius!" he said, "you must not say that in this house. You
290 shall not use that language under my roof. I'll not put up with it, I tell you. Take your
291 treason elsewhere ... This accursed obstinacy!" he said to himself; "but I must take care
292 what I am doing;" then aloud, "Well, we both of us have been railing; no good comes of
293 railing; railing is not argument. But now, I say, do be sensible, if you can. Is not the
294 imperial government in earnest now? better late than never, but it is now in earnest. And
295 now mark my words, by this day five years, five years at the utmost,—I say by this day
296 five years there will not be a single ragamuffin Christian in the whole Roman world." And
297 he looked fierce. "Ye gods! Rome, Rome has swept from the earth by her very breath
298 conspiracies, confederacies, plots against her, without ever failing; she will do so now
299 with this contemptible, Jew-begotten foe." {244}

300 "In what are we enemies to Rome, Jucundus?" said Agellius; "why will you always take
301 it for granted?"

302 "Take it for granted!" answered he, "is it not on the face of the matter? I
303 suppose *they* are enemies to a state, whom the state *calls* its enemies. Besides, why a
304 pothor of words? Swear by the genius of the emperor, invoke the Dea Roma, sacrifice
305 to Jove; no, not a bit of it, not a whisper, not a sign, not a grain of incense. You go out of
306 your way to insult us; and then you come with a grave face, and say you are loyal. You
307 kick our shins, and you wish us to kiss you on both cheeks for it. A few harmless
308 ceremonies; we are not entrapping you; we are not using your words against
309 yourselves; we tell you the meaning beforehand, the whole meaning of them. It is not as
310 if we tied you to the belief of the nursery: we don't say, 'If you burn incense, you profess
311 to believe that old Jupiter is shivering atop of Olympus;' we don't say, 'You swear by the
312 genius of Cæsar, therefore he *has* a genius, black, or white, or piebald.' No, we give you
313 the meaning of the act; it is a mere expression of loyalty to the empire. If then you won't
314 do it, you confess yourself *ipso facto* disloyal. It is incomprehensible." And he had
315 become quite red.

316 "My dear uncle," said Agellius, "I give you my solemn word, that the people whom you
317 so detest do pray for the welfare of the imperial power continually, as a matter of duty
318 and as a matter of interest." {245}

319 "Pray! pray! fudge and nonsense!" cried Jucundus, almost mimicking him in his
320 indignation; "pray! who thanks you for your prayers? what's the good of prayers?
321 Prayers, indeed! ha, ha! A little loyalty is worth all the praying in the world. I'll tell you
322 what, Agellius; you are, I am sorry to say it, but you are hand and glove with a set of

323 traitors, who shall and will be smoked out like a nest of wasps. *You* don't know; *you* are
324 not in the secret, nor the wretched slave, poor beast, who was pulled to pieces
325 yesterday (ah! you don't know of him) at the Flamen's, nor a multitude of other idiots.
326 But, d'ye see," and he chuckled up his head significantly, "there are puppets, and there
327 are wires. Few know what is going on. They won't have done (unless we put them
328 down; but we will) till they have toppled down the state. But Rome will put them down.
329 Come, be sensible, listen to reason; now I am going to put facts before my poor, dear,
330 well-meaning boy. Oh that you saw things as I do! What a trouble you are to me! Here
331 am I"—

332 "My dearest uncle, Jucundus," cried Agellius, "I assure you, it is the most intense pain to
333 me"—

334 "Very well, very well," interrupted the uncle in turn, "I believe it, of course I believe it; but
335 listen, listen. Every now and then," he continued in a more measured and lower tone,
336 "every now and then the secret is blabbed—blabbed. There was that Tertullianus of
337 Carthage, some fifty years since. He wrote books; books have done a great deal of
338 harm before {246} now; but *read* his books—read and ponder. The fellow has the
339 insolence to tell the proconsul that he and the whole government, the whole city and
340 province, the whole Roman world, the emperors, all but the pitiful *clique* to which he
341 belongs, are destined, after death, to flames for ever and ever. There's loyalty! but the
342 absurdity is greater than the malevolence. Rightly are the fellows called atheists and
343 men-haters. Our soldiers, our statesmen, our magistrates, and judges, and senators,
344 and the whole community, all worshippers of the gods, every one who crowns his head,
345 every one who loves a joke, and all our great historic names, heroes, and worthies,—
346 the Scipios, the Decii, Brutus, Cæsar, Cato, Titus, Trajan, Antoninus,—are inmates, not
347 of the Elysian fields, if Elysian fields there be, but of Tartarus, and will never find a way
348 out of it."

349 "That man, Tertullianus, is nothing to us, uncle," answered Agellius; "a man of great
350 ability, but he quarrelled with us, and left us."

351 "I can't draw nice distinctions," said Jucundus. "Your people have quarrelled among
352 themselves perhaps on an understanding; we can't split hairs. It's the same with your
353 present hierophant at Carthage, Cyprianus. Nothing can exaggerate, I am told, the
354 foulness of his attack upon the gods of Rome, upon Romulus, the Augurs, the Ancilia,
355 the consuls, and whatever a Roman is proud of. As to the imperial city itself, there's
356 hardly one of their high priests that has not died under the hands of the executioner, as
357 a {247} convict. The precious fellows take the title of Pontifex Maximus; bless their
358 impudence! Well, my boy, this is what I say; be, if you will, so preternaturally sour and
359 morose as to misconceive and dislike the innocent, graceful, humanising, time-
360 honoured usages of society; be so, for what I care, if this is all; but it isn't all. Such
361 misanthropy is wisdom, absolute wisdom, compared with the Titanic presumption and
362 audacity of challenging to single combat the sovereign of the world. Go and kick down
363 Mount Atlas first."

364 "You have it all your own way, Jucundus," answered his nephew, "and so you must
365 move in your own circle, round and round. There is no touching you, if you first assume
366 your premisses, and then prove them by means of your conclusion."

367 "My dear Agellius," said his uncle, giving his head a very solemn shake, "take the
368 advice of an old man. When you are older than you are, you will see better who is right
369 and who is wrong. You'll be sorry you despised me, a true, a prudent, an experienced
370 friend; you will. Shake yourself, come do. Why should you link your fortunes, in the
371 morning of life, with desperate men, only because your father, in his last feeble days,
372 was entrapped into doing so? I really will not believe that you are going to throw away
373 hope and life on so bad a bargain. Can't you speak a word? Here you've let me speak,
374 and won't say one syllable for yourself. I don't think it kind of you."

375 Thus adjured, Agellius began. "Well," he said, {248} "it's a long history; you see, we
376 start, my dear uncle, from different points. How am I possibly to join issue with you? I
377 can only tell you my conclusion. Hope and life, you say. Why, my only hope, my only
378 life, my only joy, desire, consolation, and treasure is that I am a Christian."

379 "Hope and life!" interrupted Jucundus, "immortal gods! life and hope in being a
380 Christian! do I hear aright? Why, man, a prison brings despair, not hope; and the sword
381 brings death, not life. By Esculapius! life and hope! you choke me, Agellius. Life and
382 hope! you are beyond three Anticyras. Life and hope! if you were old, if you were
383 diseased, if you were given over, and had but one puff of life left in you, then you might
384 be what you would, for me; but your hair is black, your cheek is round, your limbs are
385 strong, your voice is full; and you are going to make all these a sacrifice to Hecate! has
386 your good genius fed that plump frame, ripened those goods looks, nerved your arm,
387 bestowed that breadth of chest, that strength of loins, that straightness of spine, that
388 vigour of step, only that you may feed the crows? or to be torn on the rack, scorched in
389 the flame, or hung on the gibbet? is this your gratitude to nature? What has been your
390 price? for what have you sold yourself? Speak, man, speak. Are you dumb as well as
391 dement? Are you dumb, I say, are you dumb?"

392 "O Jucundus," cried Agellius, irritated at his own inability to express himself or hold an
393 argument, "if you did but know what it was to have the Truth! The {249} Christian has
394 found the Truth, the eternal Truth, in a world of error. That is his bargain, that is his hire;
395 can there be a greater? Can I give up the Truth? But all this is Punic or Barbar to you."

396 It certainly did pose Jucundus for half a minute, as if he was trying to take in, not so
397 much the sense, as the words of his nephew's speech. He looked bewildered, and
398 though he began to answer him at once, it took several sentences to bring him into his
399 usual flow of language. After one or two exclamations, "The truth!" he cried, "*this* is what
400 I understand you to say,—the truth. The *truth* is your bargain; I think I'm right, the truth;
401 Hm; what is truth? What in heaven and earth do you mean by truth? where did you get
402 that cant? What oriental tomfoolery is bamboozling you? The truth!" he cried, staring at
403 him with eyes, half of triumph, half of impatience, "the truth! Jove help the boy—the
404 truth! can truth pour me out a cup of melilotus? can truth crown me with flowers? can it

405 sing to me? can it bring Glyceris to me? drop gold into my girdle? or cool my brows
406 when fever visits me? Can truth give me a handsome suburban with some five hundred
407 slaves, or raise me to the duumvirate? Let it do this, and I will worship it; it shall be my
408 god; it shall be more to me than Fortune, Fate, Rome, or any other goddess on the list.
409 But I like to see, and touch, and feel, and handle, and weigh, and measure what is
410 promised me. I wish to have a sample and an instalment. I am too old for chaff. Eat,
411 drink, and be merry, that's my philosophy, {250} that's my religion; and I know no better.
412 Today is ours, tomorrow is our children's."

413 After a pause, he added, bitterly, "If truth could get Callista out of prison, instead of
414 getting her into it, I should have something to say to truth."

415 "Callista in prison!" cried Agellius with surprise and distress, "what do you mean,
416 Jucundus?"

417 "Yes, it's a fact; Callista *is* in prison," answered he, "and on suspicion of Christianity."

418 "Callista! Christianity!" said Agellius, bewildered, "do I hear aright? She a Christian! oh,
419 impossible, uncle! you don't mean to say that she is in prison. Tell me, tell me, my dear,
420 dear Jucundus, what this wonderful news means."

421 "You ought to know more about it than I," answered he, "if there is any meaning in it.
422 But if you want my opinion, here it is. I don't believe she is more a Christian than I am;
423 but I think she is over head and ears in love with you, and she has some notion that she
424 is paying you a compliment, or interesting you in her, or sharing your fate—(*I can't*
425 *pretend to unravel the vagaries and tantarums of the female mind*)—by saying that
426 she *is* what she is *not*. If not, perhaps she has done it out of spite and contradiction. You
427 can never answer for a woman."

428 "Whom should she spite? whom contradict?" cried Agellius, thrown for the moment off
429 his balance. "O Callista! Callista in prison for Christianity! Oh if it's true that she is a
430 Christian! but what if she is not?" he added with great terror, "what if she's not, and yet
431 {251} in prison, as if she were? How are we to get her out, uncle? Impossible! no, she's
432 not a Christian—she is not at all. She ought not to be there! Yet how wonderful!"

433 "Well, I am sure of it, too," said Jucundus; "I'd stake the best image in my shop that
434 she's not a Christian; but what if she is perverse enough to say she *is*? and such things
435 are not uncommon. Then, I say, what in the world is to be done? If she says she is, why
436 she is. There you are; and what can you do?"

437 "You don't mean to say," exclaimed Agellius, "that that sweet delicate child is in that
438 horrible hole; impossible!" and he nearly shrieked at the thought. "What is the meaning
439 of it all? dear, dear uncle, do tell me something more about it. Why did you not tell me
440 before? What *can* be done?"

441 Jucundus thought he now had him in his hand. "Why, it's plain," he answered, "what can
442 be *done*. She's no Christian, we both agree. It's certain, too, that she chooses to say
443 she is, or something like it. There's just one person who has influence with her, to make
444 her tell the truth."

445 "Ha!" cried Agellius, starting as if an asp had bitten him.

446 Jucundus kept silence, and let the poison of the said asp work awhile in his nephew's
447 blood.

448 Agellius put his hands before his eyes; and with his elbows on his knees, began moving
449 to and fro, as if in intense pain. {252}

450 "I repeat what I have said," Jucundus observed at length; "I do really think that she
451 imagines a certain young gentleman is likely to be in trouble, and that she is determined
452 to share the trouble with him."

453 "But it isn't true," cried Agellius with great vehemence; "it's not true ... If she really is not
454 a Christian, O my dear Lord, surely they won't put her to death as if she was?"

455 "But if she has made up her mind to be in the same boat with you, and *will* be a
456 Christian while you are a Christian, what on earth can we do, Agellius?" asked
457 Jucundus. "You have the whole matter in a nutshell."

458 "She does not love me," cried Agellius; "no, she has given me no reason to think so. I
459 am sure she does not. She's nothing to me. That cannot be the reason of her
460 conduct. *I* have no power over her; *I* could not persuade her. What, what *does* all this
461 mean? and I shut up here?" and he began walking about the little room, as if such
462 locomotion tended to bring him out of it.

463 "Well," answered Jucundus, "it is easy to ascertain. I suppose you *could* be let out to
464 see her."

465 But he was going on too fast; Agellius did not attend to him. "Poor, sweet Callista," he
466 exclaimed, "she's innocent, she's innocent; I mean she's not a Christian. Ah!" he
467 screamed out in great agony, as the whole state of the case unrolled itself to his
468 apprehension, "she will die though not a Christian; she will die without faith, without
469 love; she will die {253} in her sins. She will die, done to death by false report of
470 accepting that, by which alone she could be carried safely through death unto life. O my
471 Lord, spare me!" and he sank upon the ground in a collapse of misery.

472 Jucundus was touched, and still more alarmed. "Come, come, my boy," he said, "you
473 will rouse the whole neighbourhood. Give over; be a man; all will be right. If she's not a
474 Christian (and she's not), she shall not die a Christian's death; something will turn up.
475 She's not in any hole at all, but in a decent lodging. And you shall see her, and console
476 her, and all will be right."

477 "Yes, I will see her," said Agellius, in a sort of musing manner; "she is either a Christian,
478 or she is not. If she is a Christian ..." and his voice faltered; "but if she is not, she shall
479 live till she is."

480 "Well said!" answered Jucundus, "*till* she is. She shall live *till* she is. Yes, I can get you
481 to see her. You shall bring her out of prison; a smile, a whisper from you, and all her
482 fretfulness and ill-humour will vanish, like a mist before the powerful burning sun. And
483 we shall all be as happy as the immortal gods."

484 "O my uncle!" said Agellius, gravely. The language of Jucundus had shocked him, and
485 brought him to a better mind. He turned away from Jucundus, and leant his face against
486 the wall. Then he turned round again, and said, "If she *is* a Christian, I ought to rejoice,
487 and I do rejoice; God be praised. If she is not a Christian, I ought at once to {254} make
488 her one. If she has already the penalty of a Christian, she is surely destined for the
489 privilege. And how should I go," he said, half speaking to himself, "how should I go to
490 tell her that she is not yet a Christian, and bid her swear by Jupiter, because that is her
491 god, in order that she may escape imprisonment and death? Am I to do the part of a
492 heathen priest or infidel sophist? O Cæcilius, how am I forgetting your lessons! No; I will
493 go on no such errand. Go, I will, if I may, Jucundus, but I will go on no conditions of
494 yours. I go on no promise to try to get her out of prison anyhow, poor child. I will not go
495 to make her sacrifice to a false god; I go to persuade her to stay in prison, by deserving
496 to stay. Perhaps I am not the best person to go; but if I go, I go free. I go willing to die
497 myself for my Lord; glad to make her die for Him."

498 Agellius said this in so determined a way, so calmly, with such a grasp of the existing
499 posture of affairs, and of the whole circumstances of the case, that it was now
500 Jucundus's turn to feel surprise and annoyance. For a time he did not take in what
501 Agellius meant, nor could he to the last follow his train of feeling. When he saw what
502 may be called the upshot of the matter, he became very angry, and spoke with great
503 violence. By degrees he calmed; and then the strong feeling came on him again that it
504 was impossible, if a meeting took place between the two, that it could end in any way
505 but one. He defied {255} any two young people who loved each other, to come to any
506 but one conclusion. Agellius's mood was too excited, too tragic to last. The sight of
507 Callista in that dreadful prison, perhaps in chains, waiting, in order to be free, for ability
508 to say the words, "I am not a Christian;" and that ability waiting for the same words from
509 himself, would bring the affair to a very speedy issue. As if he could love a fancy better
510 than he loved Callista! Agellius, too, had already expressed a misgiving himself on that
511 head; so far they were agreed. And, to tell the truth, it was a very difficult transaction for
512 a young man; and giving our poor Agellius all credit for pure intention and firm resolve,
513 we really should have been very sorry to see him involved in a trial, which would have
514 demanded of him a most heroic faith and the detachment of a saint. We, therefore, are
515 not sorry that in matter of fact he gained the merit of so virtuous a determination, without
516 being called on to execute it. For it so happened, that a most unexpected event
517 occurred to him not many hours afterwards, which will oblige us to take up here rather
518 abruptly the history of one of our other personages.