

Chapter 26. What can it all Mean?

1 {281} WERE the origin of Juba's madness (or whatever the world would call it) of a
2 character which admitted of light writing about it, much might be said on the surprise of
3 the clear-headed, narrow-minded, positive, and easy-going Jucundus, when he found
4 one nephew substituted for another, and had to give over his wonder at Agellius, in
5 order to commence a series of acts of amazement and consternation at Juba. He
6 summoned Jupiter and Juno, Bacchus, Ceres, Pomona, Neptune, Mercury, Minerva,
7 and great Rome, to witness the marvellous occurrence; and then he had recourse to the
8 infernal gods, Pluto and Proserpine, down to Cerberus, if he be one of them; but, after
9 all, there the portent was, in spite of all the deities which Olympus, or Arcadia, or Latium
10 ever bred; and at length it had a nervous effect upon the old gentleman's system, and,
11 for the first evening after it, he put all his good things from him, and went to bed
12 supperless and songless. What had been Juba's motive in the exploit which so
13 unpleasantly affected his uncle, it is of course quite impossible to say. Whether his
14 mention of Callista's name was intended to be for the {282} benefit of her soul, or the
15 ruin of Agellius's, must be left in the obscurity in which the above narrative presents it to
16 us; so far alone is certain, though it does not seem to throw light on the question, that,
17 on his leaving his uncle's house in the course of the forenoon, which he did, without
18 being pressed to stay, he was discovered prancing and gesticulating in the
19 neighbourhood of Callista's prison, so as to excite the attention of the *apparitor*, or
20 constable, who guarded the entrance, and who, alarmed at his wildness, sent for some
21 of his fellows, and, with their assistance, repelled the intruder, who, thereupon, scudding
22 out at the eastern gate, was soon lost in the passes of the mountain.

23 To one thing, however, we may pledge ourselves, that Juba had no intention of shaking,
24 even for one evening, the nerves of Jucundus; yet shaken they were till about the same
25 time twenty-four hours afterwards. And when in that depressed state, he saw nothing
26 but misery on all sides of him. Juba was lost; Agellius worse. Of course, he had joined
27 himself to his sect, and he should never see him again; and how should he ever hold up
28 his head? Well, he only hoped Agellius would not be boiled in a caldron, or roasted at a
29 slow fire. If this were done, he positively must leave Sicca, and the most thriving trade
30 which any man had in the whole of the Proconsulate. And then that little Callista! Ah!—
31 what a real calamity was there! Anyhow he had lost her, and what should he do for a
32 finisher of his fine work in marble, or metal? {283} She was a treasure in herself.
33 Altogether the heavens were very dark; and it was scarcely possible for any one who
34 knew well his jovial cast of countenance, to keep from laughing, whatever his real
35 sympathy, at the unusual length and blankness which were suddenly imposed upon it.

36 While he sat thus at his shop window, which, as it were, framed him for the
37 contemplation of passers-by, on the day of the escape of Agellius, and the day before
38 Callista's public examination, Aristo rushed in upon him in a state of far more passionate
39 and more reasonable grief. He had called, indeed, the day before, but he found a
40 pleasure in expending his distress upon others, and he came again to get rid of its
41 insupportable weight by discharging it in a torrent of tears and exclamations. However,

42 at first the words of both "moved slow," as the poet says, and went off in a sort of
43 dropping fire.

44 "Well," said Jucundus, in a depressed tone; "he's not come to *you*, of course?"

45 "Who?"

46 "Agellius."

47 "Oh! Agellius! No, he's not with me." Then, after a pause, Aristo added, "Why should he
48 be?"

49 "Oh, I don't know. I thought he might be. He's been gone since early morning."

50 "Indeed! No, I don't know where he is. How came he with you?"

51 "I told you yesterday; but you have forgotten. I was sheltering him; but he's gone for
52 ever." {284}

53 "Indeed!"

54 "And his brother's mad!—horribly mad!" and he slapped his hand against his thigh.

55 "I always thought it," answered Aristo.

56 "Did you? Yes, so it is; but it's very different from what it ever was. The furies have got
57 hold of him with a vengeance! He's frantic! Oh, if you had seen him! Two boys, both
58 mad! It's all the father!"

59 "I thought you'd like to hear something about dear, sweet Callista," said her brother.

60 "Yes, I should indeed!" answered Jucundus. "By Esculapius! they're all mad together!"

61 "Well, it *is* like madness!" cried Aristo, with great vehemence.

62 "The world's going mad!" answered Jucundus, who was picking up, since he began to
63 talk, an exercise which was decidedly good for him. "We are *all* going mad! I shall get
64 crazed. The townspeople are crazed already. What an abominable, brutal piece of
65 business was that three days ago! I put up my shutters. Did it come near you?—all on
66 account of one or two beggarly Christians, and my poor boy. What harm could two or
67 three, toads and vipers though they be, do here? They might have been trodden down
68 easily. It's another thing at Carthage. Catch the ringleaders, I say; make examples. The
69 foxes escape, and our poor ganders suffer!"

70 Aristo, pierced with his own misery, had no heart or head to enter into the semi-political
71 ideas of Jucundus, who continued,— {285}

72 "Yes, it's no good. The empire's coming to pieces, mark my words! I told you so, if those
73 beasts were let alone. They *have* been let alone. Remedies are too late. Decius will do
74 no good. No one's safe! Farewell, my friends! I am going. Like poor dear Callista, I shall
75 be in prison, and, like her, find myself dumb! ... Ah! yes, Callista; how did you find her?"

76 "O dear, sweet, suffering girl!" cried her brother.

77 "Yes, indeed!" answered Jucundus; "yes!" meditatively. "She *is* a dear, sweet, suffering
78 girl! I thought he might perhaps have taken her off—that was my hope. He was so set
79 upon hearing where she was, whether she could be got out. It struck me he had made
80 the best of his way to *her*. She could do anything with him. And she loved him, she
81 did!—I'm convinced of it!—nothing shall convince me otherwise! 'Bring them together,' I
82 said, 'and they will rush into each other's arms.' But they're bewitched!—The whole
83 world's bewitched! Mark my words,—I have an idea who is at the bottom of this."

84 "Oh!" groaned out Aristo; "I care not for top or bottom!—I care not for the whole world,
85 or for anything at all but Callista! If you could have seen the dear, patient sufferer!" and
86 the poor fellow burst into a flood of tears.

87 "Bear up! bear up!" said Jucundus, who by this time was considerably better; "show
88 yourself a man, my dear Aristo. These things must be;—they are {286} the lot of human
89 nature. You remember what the tragedian says: stay! no!—it's the comedian,—it's
90 Menander"—

91 "To Orcus and Erebus with all the tragedy and comedy that ever was spouted!"
92 exclaimed Aristo. "Can you do nothing for me? Can't you give me a crumb of
93 consolation or sympathy, encouragement or suggestion? I am a stranger in the country,
94 and so is this dear sister of mine, whom I was so proud of; and who has been so good,
95 and kind, and gentle, and sweet. She loved me so much, she never grudged me
96 anything; she let me do just what I would with her. Come here, go there,—it was just as
97 I would. There we were, two orphans together, ten years since, when I was double her
98 age. She wished to stay in Greece; but she came to this detestable Africa all for me.
99 She would be gay and bright when I would have her so. She had no will of her own; and
100 she set her heart upon nothing, and was pleased anywhere. She had not an enemy in
101 the world. I protest she is worth all the gods and goddesses that ever were hatched!
102 And here, in this ill-omened Africa, the evil eye has looked at her, and she thinks herself
103 a Christian, when she is just as much a hippogriff, or a chimæra."

104 "Well, but, Aristo," said Jucundus, "I was going to tell you who is at the bottom of it all.
105 Callista's mad; Agellius is mad; Juba is mad; and Strabo was mad;—but it was his wife,
106 old Gurta, that drove him mad;—and there, I think, is the beginning of our {287}
107 troubles.—Come in! come in, Cornelius!" he cried, seeing his Roman friend outside, and
108 relapsing for the moment into his lugubrious tone; "Come in, Cornelius, and give us
109 some comfort, if you can. Well, this is like a friend! I know if you can help me, you will."

110 Cornelius answered that he was going back to Carthage in a day or two, and came to
111 embrace him, and had hoped to have a parting supper before he went.

112 "That's kind!" answered Jucundus: "but first tell me all about this dreadful affair; for you
113 are in the secrets of the Capitol. Have they any clue what has become of my poor
114 Agellius?"

115 Cornelius had not heard of the young man's troubles, and was full of consternation at
116 the news.

117 "What! Agellius really a Christian?" he said, "and at such a moment? Why, I thought you
118 talked of some young lady who was to keep him in order?"

119 "She's a Christian too," replied Jucundus; and a silence ensued. "It's a bad world!" he
120 continued. "She's imprisoned by the Triumviri. What will be the end of it?"

121 Cornelius shook his head, and looked mysterious.

122 "You don't mean it?" said Jucundus. "Not anything so dreadful, I do trust, Cornelius. Not
123 the stake?"

124 Cornelius still looked gloomy and pompous. {288}

125 "Nothing in the way of torture?" he went on; "not the rack, or the pitchfork?"

126 "It's a bad business, on your own showing," said Cornelius: "it's a bad business!"

127 "Can you do nothing for us, Cornelius?" cried Aristo. "The great people in Carthage are
128 your friends. O Cornelius! I'd do anything for you!—I'd be your slave! She's no more a
129 Christian than great Jove. She has nothing about her of the cut;— not a shred of her
130 garment, or a turn of her hair. She's a Greek from head to foot—within and without.
131 She's as bright as the day! Ah! we have no friends here. Dear Callista! you will be lost
132 because you are a foreigner!" and the passionate youth began to tear his hair. "O
133 Cornelius!" he continued, "if you can do anything for us! Oh! she shall sing and dance to
134 you; she shall come and kneel down to you, and embrace your knees, and kiss your
135 feet, as I do, Cornelius!" and he knelt down, and would have taken hold of Cornelius's
136 beard.

137 Cornelius had never been addressed with so poetical a ceremonial, which nevertheless
138 he received with awkwardness indeed, but with satisfaction. "I hear from you," he said
139 with pomposity, "that your sister is in prison on suspicion of Christianity. The case is a
140 simple one. Let her swear by the genius of the Emperor, and she is free; let her refuse
141 it, and the law must take its course," and he made a slight bow.

142 "Well, but she is under a delusion," persisted Aristo, "which cannot last long. She says
143 distinctly {289} that she is *not* a Christian, is not that decisive? but then she won't burn

144 incense; she won't swear by Rome. She tells me she does not *believe* in Jupiter, nor I;
145 can anything be more senseless? It is the act of a mad woman. I say, 'My girl, the
146 question is, Are you to be brought to shame? are you to die by the public sword? die in
147 torments?' Oh, I shall go mad as well as she!" he screamed out. "She was so clever, so
148 witty, so sprightly, so imaginative, so versatile! why, there's nothing she couldn't do. She
149 could model, paint, play on the lyre, sing, act. She could work with the needle, she could
150 embroider. She made this girdle for me. It's all that Agellius, it's Agellius. I beg your
151 pardon, Jucundus; but it is;" and he threw himself on the ground, and rolled in the dust.

152 "I have been telling our young friend," said Jucundus to Cornelius, "to exert self-control,
153 and to recollect Menander, 'Ne quid nimis.' Grieving does no good; but these young
154 fellows, it's no use at all speaking to them. Do you think you could do anything for us,
155 Cornelius?"

156 "Why," answered Cornelius, "since I have been here, I have fallen in with a very
157 sensible man, and a man of remarkably sound political opinions. He has a great
158 reputation, he is called Polemo, and is one of the professors at the Mercury. He seems
159 to me to go to the root of these subjects, and I'm surprised how well we agreed. He's a
160 Greek, as well as this young gentleman's sister. I should recommend him {290} to go to
161 Polemo; if any one could disabuse her mind, it is he."

162 "True, true," cried Aristo, starting up, "but, no, *you* can do it better; you have power with
163 the government. The Proconsul will listen to you. The magistrates here are afraid
164 of *him*; *they* don't wish to touch the poor girl, not they. But there's such a noise
165 everywhere, and so much ill blood, and so many spies and informers, and so much
166 mistrust—but why should it come upon *Callista*? Why should *she* be a sacrifice? But
167 you'd oblige the Duumvirs as much as me in getting her out of the scrape. But what
168 good would it do, if they *took* her dear life? Only get us the respite of a month; the
169 delusion would vanish in a month. Get two months, if you can; or as long as you can,
170 you know. Perhaps they would let us steal out of the country, and no one the wiser; and
171 no harm to any one. It was a bad job our coming here."

172 "We know nothing at Rome of feelings and intentions, and motives and distinctions,"
173 said Cornelius; "and we know nothing of understandings, connivances, and evasions.
174 We go by facts; Rome goes by facts. The question is, What is the fact? Does she burn
175 incense, or does she not? Does she worship the ass, or does she not? However, we'll
176 see what can be done." And so he went on, informing the pair of mourners that, as far
177 as his influence extended, he would do something in behalf both of Agellius and
178 Callista.

Chapter 27. Am I a Christian?

179 {291} THE sun had now descended for the last time before the solemn day which was
180 charged with the fate of Callista, and what was the state of mind of one who excited
181 such keen interest in the narrow circle within which she was known? And how does it
182 differ from what it was some weeks before, when Agellius last saw her? She would have

183 been unable to say herself. "So is the kingdom of God: as if a man should cast seed into
184 the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and
185 grow up, whilst he knoweth not." She might, indeed, have been able afterwards, on
186 looking back, to say many things of herself; and she would have recognised that while
187 she was continually differing from herself, in that she was changing, yet it was not a
188 change which involved contrariety, but one which expanded itself in (as it were)
189 concentric circles, and only fulfilled, as time went on, the promise of its beginning. Every
190 day, as it came, was, so to say, the child of the preceding, the parent of that which
191 followed; and the end to which she tended could not get beyond the aim with which she
192 set out. Yet, had she been asked, {292} at the time of which we speak, where was her
193 principle and her consistency, what was her logic, or whether she acted on reason, or
194 on impulse, or on feeling, or in fancy, or in passion, she would have been reduced to
195 silence. What did she know about herself, but that, to her surprise, the more she
196 thought over what she heard of Christianity, the more she was drawn to it, and the more
197 it approved itself to her whole soul, and the more it seemed to respond to all her needs
198 and aspirations, and the more intimate was her presentiment that it was true? The
199 longer it remained on her mind as an object, the more it seemed (unlike the mythology
200 or the philosophy of her country, or the political religion of Rome) to have an external
201 reality and substance, which deprived objections to it of their power, and showed them
202 to be at best but difficulties and perplexities.

203 But then again, if she had been asked, what was Christianity, she would have been
204 puzzled to give an answer. She would have been able to mention some particular truths
205 which it taught, but neither to give them their definite and distinct shape, nor to describe
206 the mode in which they were realised. She would have said, "I believe what has been
207 told me, as from heaven, by Chione, Agellius, and Cæcilius:" and it was clear she could
208 say nothing else. What the three told her in common and in concord was at once the
209 measure of her creed and the ground of her acceptance of it. It was that wonderful unity
210 of sentiment and belief in persons so dissimilar from each other, so {293} distinct in their
211 circumstances, so independent in their testimony, which recommended to her the
212 doctrine which they were so unanimous in teaching. She had long given up any belief in
213 the religion of her country. As to philosophy, it dwelt only in conjecture and opinion;
214 whereas the very essence of religion was, as she felt, a recognition of the worshippers
215 on the part of the Object of it. Religion could not be without hope. To worship a being
216 who did not speak to us, recognise us, love us, was not religion. It might be a duty, it
217 might be a merit; but her instinctive notion of religion was the soul's response to a God
218 who had taken notice of the soul. It was loving intercourse, or it was a name. Now the
219 three witnesses who had addressed her about Christianity had each of them made it to
220 consist in the intimate Divine Presence in the heart. It was the friendship or mutual love
221 of person with person. Here was the very teaching which already was so urgently
222 demanded both by her reason and her heart, which she found nowhere else; which she
223 found existing one and the same in a female slave, in a country youth, in a learned
224 priest.

225 This was the broad impression which they made upon her mind. When she turned to
226 consider more in detail what it was they taught, or what was implied in that idea of

227 religion which so much approved itself to her, she understood them to say that the
228 Creator of heaven and earth, Almighty, All-good, clothed in all the attributes which
229 philosophy gives Him, the Infinite, had loved the soul of man so much, and her {294}
230 soul in particular, that He had come upon earth in the form of a man, and in that form
231 had gone through sufferings, in order to unite all souls to Him; that He desired to love,
232 and to be loved; that He had said so; that He had called on man to love Him, and did
233 actually bring to pass this loving intercourse of Him and man in those souls who
234 surrendered themselves to Him. She did not go much further than this; but as much as
235 this was before her mind morning, noon, and night. It pleaded in her; it importuned her;
236 it would not be rebuffed. It did not mind her moods, or disgusts, or doubts, or denials, or
237 dismissals, but came again and again. It rose before her, in spite of the contempt,
238 reproach, and persecution which the profession of it involved. It smiled upon her; it
239 made promises to her; it opened eternal views to her; and it grew upon her convictions
240 in clearness of perception, in congruity, and in persuasiveness.

241 Moreover, the more she thought of Chione, of Agellius, and of Cæcilius the more surely
242 did she discern that this teaching wrought in them a something which she had not. They
243 had about them a simplicity, a truthfulness, a decision, an elevation, a calmness, and a
244 sanctity to which she was a stranger, which spoke to her heart and absolutely overcame
245 her. The image of Cæcilius, in particular, came out prominently and eloquently in her
246 memory,—not in his words so much as in his manner. In spite of what she had
247 injuriously said to him, she really felt drawn to worship him, as if he were the shrine and
248 the {295} home of that Presence to which he bore such solemn witness.

249 O the change, when, as if in punishment for her wild words against him, she found
250 herself actually in the hands of lawless men, who were as far below her in sentiment as
251 he was above her! O the change, when she was dizzyed by their brutal vociferations and
252 rapid motion, and that breath and atmosphere of evil which steamed up from the
253 rankness of their impiety! O the thankfulness which rose up in her heart, though but
254 vaguely directed to an object, when she found the repose and quiet, though it was that
255 of a prison! for young as she was, she had become tired of all things that were seen,
256 and had no strong desire, except for meditation on the great truths which she did not
257 know.

258 One day passes and then another; and now the morning and the hour is come when
259 she must appear before the magistrates of Sicca. With dread, with agitation, she looks
260 forward to the moment. She has not yet a peace within her. Her peace is the stillness of
261 the room in which she is imprisoned. She knows it will pass away when she leaves it;
262 she knows that again she must be in the hands of cruel, godless men, with whom she
263 has no sympathy; but she has no stay whereon to lean in the terrible trial. Her brother
264 comes to her: he affects to forget her perverseness or delusion. He comes to her with a
265 smile, and throws his arms around her; and Callista repels, from some indescribable
266 feeling, his ardent caress, as {296} if she were no longer his. He has come to
267 accompany her to court, by an indulgence which he had obtained; to support her
268 there,—to carry her through, and to take her back in triumph home. My sister,—why that
269 strange, piteous look upon thy countenance?—why that paleness of thy cheek?—why

270 that whisper of thy lips?—why those wistful, gentle pleadings of thine eyes? Sweet
271 eyes, and brow, and cheek, in which I have ever prided myself! Why so backward?—
272 why so distant and unfriendly? Am I not come to rescue thee from a place where thou
273 never shouldst have been?—where thou ne'er shalt be again? Callista, what is this
274 mystery?—speak!

275 Such as this was the mute expostulation conveyed in Aristo's look, and in the fond
276 grasp of his hand; while treading down forcibly within him his memory and his fears of
277 her great change, he determined she should be to him still all that she had ever been.
278 But how altered was that look, and how relaxed that grasp, when at length her misery
279 found words, and she said to him in agitation, "My time is short: I want some Christian, a
280 Christian priest!"

281 It was as though she had never shown any tendency before to the proscribed religion.
282 The words came to him with the intensity of something new and unimagined hitherto.
283 He clasped his hands in emotion, turned white, and could but say, "Callista!" If she had
284 made confession of the most heinous of crimes,—if she had spoken of murder, or some
285 black treachery against {297} himself,—of some enormity too great for words, it might
286 have been; but his sister!—his pride and delight, after all and certainly a Christian!
287 Better far had she said she was leaving him for ever, to abandon herself to the
288 degrading service of the temples; better had she said she had taken hemlock, or had an
289 asp in her bosom, than that she should choose to go out of the world with the tortures,
290 the ignominy, the malediction of the religion of slaves.

291 Time waits for no man, nor does the court of justice, nor the *subsellia* of the magistrate.
292 The examination is to be held in the Basilica at the Forum, and it requires from us a few
293 words of explanation beforehand. The local magistrates then could only try the lesser
294 offences, and decide civil suits; cases of suspected Christianity were reserved for the
295 Roman authorities. Still, preliminary examinations were not unfrequently conducted by
296 the city Duumvirs, or even in what may be called the police courts. And this may have
297 especially been the case in the Proconsulates. Proprætors and Presidents were in the
298 appointment of the Emperor, and joined in their persons the supreme civil and military
299 authority. Such provinces, perhaps, were better administered; but there would be more
300 of arbitrariness in their rule, and it would not be so acceptable to the ruled. The
301 Proconsuls, on the other hand, were representatives of the Senate, and had not the
302 military force directly in their hands. The natural tendency of this arrangement was to
303 create, on the {298} one hand, a rivalry between the civil and military establishments;
304 and, on the other, to create a friendly feeling between the Proconsul and the local
305 magistracy. Thus, not long before the date of this history, we read of Gordian, the
306 Proconsul, enjoying a remarkable popularity in his African province; and when the
307 people rose against the exactions of the imperial Procurator, as referred to in a former
308 page, they chose and supported Gordian against him. But however this might be in
309 general, so it was at this time at Sicca, that the Proconsular *Officium* and the city
310 magistrates were on a good understanding with each other, whereas there was some
311 collision between the latter and the military. Not much depends in the conduct of our
312 story upon this circumstance; but it must be taken to account for the examination of

313 Callista in the Forum, and for some other details which may follow before we come to
314 the end of it.

315 The populace was collected about the gates and within the ample space of the Basilica,
316 but they gave expression to no strong feeling on the subject of a Christian delinquent.
317 The famine, the sickness, and, above all, the lesson which they had received so lately
318 from the soldiers, had both diminished their numbers and cowed their spirit. They were
319 sullen, too, and resentful; and, with the changeableness proverbial in a multitude, had
320 rather have witnessed the beheading of a magistrate, or the burning of a tribune, than
321 the torture and death of a dozen of wretched Christians. {299} Besides, they had had a
322 glut of Christian blood; a reaction of feeling had taken place, and, in spite of the
323 suspicion of witchcraft, the youth and the beauty of Callista recommended her to their
324 compassion.

325 The magistrates were seated on the *subsellia*, one of the Duumvirs presiding, in his
326 white robe bordered with purple; his lictors, with staves, not fasces, standing behind
327 him. In the vestibule of the court, to confront the prisoner on her first entrance, were the
328 usual instruments of torture. The charge was one which can only be compared, in the
329 estimation of both state and people in that day, to that of witchcraft, poisoning, parricide,
330 or other monstrous iniquity in Christian times. There were the heavy *boiæ*, a yoke for
331 the neck, of iron, or of wood; the fetters; the *nervi*, or stocks, in which hands and feet
332 were inserted, at distances from each other which strained or dislocated the joints.
333 There, too, were the *virgæ*, or rods with thorns in them; the *flagra*, *lori*, and *plumbati*,
334 whips and thongs, cutting with iron or bruising with lead; the heavy clubs; the hook for
335 digging into the flesh; the *ungula*, said to have been a pair of scissors; the *scorpio*,
336 and *pecten*, iron combs or rakes for tearing. And there was the wheel, fringed with
337 spikes, on which the culprit was stretched; and there was the fire ready lighted, with the
338 water hissing and groaning in the large caldrons which were placed upon it. Callista had
339 lost for ever that noble intellectual composure of which we have several times spoken;
340 she shuddered at what she saw, and almost fainted, and, while waiting {300} for her
341 summons, leaned heavily against the merciless *cornicularius* at her side.

342 At length the judge began—"Let the servant from the *Officium* stand forth."
343 The *officialis* answered that he had brought a prisoner charged with Christianity; she
344 had been brought to him by the military on the night of the riot.

345 The *scriba* then read out the deposition of one of the *stationarii*, to the effect that he and
346 his fellow-soldiers had received her from the hands of the civic force on the night in
347 question, and had brought her to the office of the Triumvirs.

348 "Bring forward the prisoner," said the judge; she was brought forward.

349 "Here she is," answered the *officialis*, according to the prescribed form.

350 "What is your name?" said the judge.

351 She answered, "Callista."

352 The judge then asked if she was a freewoman or a slave.

353 She answered, "Free; the daughter of Orsilochnus, lapidary, of Proconnesus."

354 Some conversation then went on among the magistrates as to her advocate
355 or *defensor*. Aristo presented himself, but the question arose whether he was *togatus*.
356 He was known, however, to several magistrates, and was admitted to stand by his
357 sister.

358 Then the *scriba* read the charge—viz., that Callista was a Christian, and refused to
359 sacrifice to the gods. {301}

360 It was a plain question of fact, which required neither witnesses nor speeches. At a sign
361 from the Duumvir in came two priests, bringing in between them the small altar of
362 Jupiter; the charcoal was ready lighted, the incense at the side, and the judge called to
363 the prisoner to sprinkle it upon the flame for the good fortune of Decius and his son. All
364 eyes were turned upon her.

365 "I am not a Christian," she said; "I told you so before. I have never been to a Christian
366 place of worship, nor taken any Christian oath, nor joined in any Christian sacrifice. And
367 I should lie did I say that I was in any sense a Christian."

368 There was a silence; then the judge said, "Prove your words; there is the altar, the
369 flame, and the incense; sacrifice to the genius of the Emperor."

370 She said, "What can I do? I am not a Christian." The judges looked at each other, as
371 much as to say, "It is the old story; it is that inexplicable, hateful obstinacy, which will
372 neither yield to reason, common sense, expediency, or fear."

373 The Duumvir only repeated the single word, "Sacrifice."

374 She stopped awhile; then she came forward with a hurried step. "O my fate!" she cried,
375 "why was I born? why am I in this strait? I have no god. What can I do? I am
376 abandoned; why should I not do it?" She stopped; then she went right on to the altar;
377 she took the incense: suddenly she looked up to heaven and started, and threw it away.
378 "I cannot! {302} I dare not!" she cried out. There was a great sensation in court.
379 "Evidently insane," said some of the more merciful of the Decurions; "poor thing, poor
380 thing!" Her brother ran up to her; talked to her, conjured her, fell down on his knees to
381 her; took her hand violently, and would have forced her to offer. In vain; all he could get
382 from her was, "I am not a Christian; indeed, I am not a Christian. I have nothing to do
383 with them. O the misery!"

384 "She is mad!" cried Aristo; "my lord judges, listen to me. She was seized by brutal
385 ruffians during the riot, and the fright and shock have overcome her. Give her time, oh!

386 give her time, and she will get right. She's a good religious girl; she has done more work
387 for the temples than any girl in Sicca; half the statues in the city are her finishing. Many
388 of you, my lords, have her handiwork. She works with me. Do not add to my anguish in
389 seeing her deranged, by punishing her as a criminal, a Christian: do not take her from
390 me. Sentence her, and you end the whole matter; give her a chance, and she will
391 certainly be restored to the gods and to me. Will you put her to death because she is
392 mad?"

393 What was to be done? The court was obsequious to the Proconsul, afraid of Rome;
394 jealous that the mob should have been more forward than the magistracy. Had the city
395 moved sooner, as soon as the edict came, there would have been no rising, no riot.
396 Already they had been called on for a report about that riot and an explanation; if ever
397 they had need {303} to look sharp what they were doing, it was now. On the other hand,
398 Callista and her brother had friends among the judges, as we have said, and their plea
399 was at once obvious and reasonable. "If she persists, she persists, and nothing can be
400 said; we don't wish to be disloyal, or careless of the emperor's commands. If she is
401 obstinate, she must die; but she dies quite as usefully to us, with quite as much effect, a
402 month hence as now. Not that we ask you to define a time on your own authority; simply
403 do this, write to Carthage for advice. The government can answer within an hour, if it
404 chooses. Merely say, 'Here is a young woman, who has ever been religious and well
405 conducted, of great accomplishments, and known especially for her taste and skill in
406 religious art, who since the day of the riot has suddenly refused to take the test. She
407 can give no reason for her refusal, and protests she is not a Christian. Her friends say
408 that the fright has turned her brain, but that if kindly treated and kept quiet, she will
409 come round, and do all that is required of her. What are we to do?'"

410 At last Callista's friends prevailed. It was decided that the judges should pass over this
411 examination altogether, as if it had been rendered informal by Callista's conduct. Had
412 they recognised it as a proper legal process, they must have sentenced and executed
413 her. Such a decision was of this further advantage to her, that nothing was altered as to
414 her place of confinement. Instead of being handed over to the state {304} prison, she
415 remained in her former lodging, though in custody, and was allowed to see her friends.
416 There had been very little chance of her recovery, supposing she was mad, or of ever
417 coming out, if she had once gone into the formidable *Carcer*. Meanwhile the magistrates
418 sent to Carthage for instructions.