

1 Chapter 8. The New Generation

2 {80} JUCUNDUS, then, set out to see how the land lay with his nephew, and to do what
3 he could to prosper the tillage. His way led him by the temple of Mercury, which at that
4 time subserved the purpose of a boy's school, and was connected with some
5 academical buildings, the property of the city, which lay beyond it. It cannot be said that
6 our friend was any warm patron of literature or education, though he had not neglected
7 the schooling of his nephews. Letters seemed to him in fact to unsettle the mind; and he
8 had never known much good come of them. Rhetoricians and philosophers did not
9 know where they stood, or what were their bearings. They did not know what they held,
10 and what they did not. He knew his own position perfectly well, and, though the words
11 "belief" or "knowledge" did not come into his religious vocabulary, he could at once,
12 without hesitation, state what he professed and maintained. He stood upon the
13 established order of things, on the traditions of Rome, and the laws of the empire; but
14 as to Greek sophists and declaimers, he thought very much as old Cato did about them.
15 The Greeks were {81} a very clever people, unrivalled in the fine arts; let them keep to
16 their strong point; they were inimitable with the chisel, the brush, the trowel, and the
17 fingers; but he was not prepared to think much of their *calamus* or *stylus*, poetry
18 excepted. What did they ever do but subvert received principles without substituting any
19 others? And then they were so likely to take some odd turn themselves; you never could
20 be sure of them. Socrates, their patriarch, what was he after all but a culprit, a convict,
21 who had been obliged to drink hemlock, dying under the hands of justice? Was this a
22 reputable end, a respectable commencement of the philosophic family? It was very well
23 for Plato or Xenophon to throw a veil of romance over the transaction, but this was the
24 plain matter of fact. Then Anaxagoras had been driven out of Athens for his
25 revolutionary notions; and Diogenes had been accused, like the Christians, of atheism.
26 The case had been the same in more recent times. There had been that madman,
27 Apollonius, roaming about the world; Apuleius, too, their neighbour, fifty years before, a
28 man of respectable station, a gentleman, but a follower of the Greek philosophy, a
29 dabbler in magic, and a pretender to miracles. And so, in fact, of letters generally; as in
30 their own country Minucius, a contemporary of Apuleius, became a Christian. Such, too,
31 had been his friend Octavius; such Cæcilius, who even became one of the priests of the
32 sect, and seduced others from the religion he had left. One of them had been the public
33 talk for several years, and he {82} too originally a rhetorician, Thascius Cyprianus of
34 Carthage. It was the one thing which gave him some misgiving about that little Callista,
35 that she was a Greek.

36 As he passed the temple, the metal plate was sounding as a signal for the termination
37 of the school, and on looking towards the portico with an ill-natured curiosity, he saw a
38 young acquaintance of his, a youth of about twenty, coming out of it, leading a boy of
39 about half that age, with his satchel thrown over his shoulder.

40 "Well, Arnobius," [Note] he cried, "how does rhetoric proceed? are we to take the law
41 line, or turn professor? Who's the boy? some younger brother?"

42 "I've taken pity on the little fool," answered Arnobius; "these schoolmasters are a
43 savage lot. I suffered enough from them myself, and 'miseris succurrere disco.' So I
44 took him from under the roof of friend Rupilius, and he's under my tutelage. How did he
45 treat thee, boy?"

46 "He treated me like a slave or a Christian." answered he.

47 "He deserved it, I'll warrant," said Jucundus; "a pert, forward imp. 'Twas Gete against
48 Briton. Much good comes of schooling! He's a wicked one already. Ah, the new
49 generation! I don't know where the world's going."

50 "Tell the gentleman," said Arnobius, "what he did first to you, my boy." {83}

51 "As the good gentleman says," answered the boy, "first I did something to him, and then
52 he did something to me."

53 "I told you so," said Jucundus; "a sensible boy, after all; but the schoolmaster had the
54 best of it, I'll wager."

55 "First," answered he, "I grinned in his face, and he took off his wooden shoe, and
56 knocked out one of my teeth."

57 "Good," said Jucundus, "the justice of Pythagoras. Zaleuchus could not have done
58 better. The mouth sins, and the mouth suffers."

59 "Next," continued he, "I talked in school-time to my chum; and Rupilius put a gag in my
60 jaws, and kept them open for an hour."

61 "The very Rhadamanthus of schoolmasters!" cried Jucundus: "and thereupon you struck
62 up a chant, divine though inarticulate, like the statue of Memnon."

63 "Then," said the boy, "I could not say my Virgil, and he tore the shirt from off my back,
64 and gave it me with the leather."

65 "Ay," answered Jucundus, "'arma virumque' branded on your hide."

66 "Afterwards I ate his dinner for him," continued the boy, "and then he screwed my head,
67 and kept me without food for two days."

68 "Your throat, you mean," said Jucundus; "a cautious man! lest you should steal a
69 draught or two of good strong air."

70 "And lastly," said he, "I did not bring my pence, {84}and then he tied my hands to a
71 gibbet, and hung me up *in terrorem*."

72 "There I came in," said Arnobius; "he seemed a pretty boy, so I cut him down, paid
73 his *æra*, and took him home."

74 "And now he is your pupil?" asked Jucundus.

75 "Not yet," answered Arnobius; "he is still a day-scholar of the old wolf's; one is like
76 another; he could not change for the better: but I am his bully, and shall tutorize him
77 some day. He's a sharp lad, isn't he, Firmian?" turning to the boy; "a great hand at
78 composition for his years; better than I am, who never shall write Latin decently. Yet
79 what can I do? I must profess and teach, for Rome is the only place for the law, and
80 these city professorships are not to be despised."

81 "Whom are you attending here?" asked Jucundus, drily.

82 "You are the only man in Sicca who needs to ask the question. What! not know the
83 great Polemo of Rhodes, the friend of Plotinus, the pupil of Theagenes, the disciple of
84 Thrasyllus, the hearer of Nicomachus, who was of the school of Secundus, the doctor of
85 the new Pythagoreans? Not feel the presence in Sicca of Polemo, the most celebrated,
86 the most intolerable of men? That, however, is not his title, but the 'godlike,' or the
87 'oracular,' or the 'portentous,' or something else as impressive. Every one goes to him.
88 He is the rage. I should not have a chance of success if I could not say that I had
89 attended his {85} lectures; though I'd be bound our little Firmian here would deliver as
90 good. He's the very cariophyllus of human nature. He comes to the schools in a litter of
91 cedar, ornamented with silver and covered with a lion's skin, slaves carrying him, and a
92 crowd of friends attending, with the state of a proconsul. He is dressed in the most exact
93 style; his pallium is of the finest wool, white, picked out with purple; his tresses flow with
94 unguent, his fingers glitter with rings, and he smells like Idalium. As soon as he puts foot
95 on earth, a great hubbub of congratulation and homage breaks forth. He takes no
96 notice; his favourite pupils form a circle round him, and conduct him into one of
97 the *exedræ*, till the dial shows the time for lecture. Here he sits in silence, looking at
98 nothing, or at the wall opposite him, talking to himself, a hum of admiration filling the
99 room. Presently one of his pupils, as if he were præco to the duumvir, cries out, 'Hush,
100 gentlemen, hush! the godlike'—no, it is not that. I've not got it. What is his title? 'the
101 Bottomless,' that's it—'the Bottomless speaks.' A dead silence ensues; a clear voice
102 and a measured elocution are the sure token that it is the outpouring of the oracle.
103 'Pray,' says the little man, 'pray, which existed first, the egg or the chick? Did the chick
104 lay the egg, or the egg hatch the chick?' Then there ensues a whispering, a disputing,
105 and after a while a dead silence. At the end of a quarter of an hour or so, our præco
106 speaks again, and this time to the oracle. 'Bottomless man,' he says, 'I have to
107 represent to you that no one of {86} the present company finds himself equal to answer
108 the question, which your condescension has proposed to our consideration!' On this
109 there is a fresh silence, and at length a fresh *effatum* from the hierophant: 'Which comes
110 first, the egg or the chick? The egg comes first in relation to the causativity of the chick,
111 and the chick comes first in relation to the causativity of the egg,' on which there is a
112 burst of applause; the ring of adorers is broken through, and the shrinking professor is

113 carried in the arms or on the shoulders of the literary crowd to his chair in the lecture-
114 room."

115 Much as there was in Arnobius's description which gratified Jucundus's prejudices, he
116 had suspicions of his young acquaintance, and was not in the humour to be pleased
117 unreservedly with those who satirized anything whatever that was established, or was
118 appointed by government, even affectation and pretence. He said something about the
119 wisdom of ages, the reverence due to authority, the institutions of Rome, and the
120 magistrates of Sicca. "Do not go after novelties," he said to Arnobius; "make a daily
121 libation to Jove, the preserver, and to the genius of the emperor, and then let other
122 things take their course."

123 "But you don't mean I must believe all this man says, because the decurions have put
124 him here?" cried Arnobius. "Here is this Polemo saying that Proteus is matter, and that
125 minerals and vegetables are his flock; that Proserpine is the vital influence, and Ceres
126 the efficacy of the heavenly bodies; that there are mundane spirits, and supramundane;
127 and then his {87} doctrine about triads, monads, and progressions of the celestial
128 gods?"

129 "Hm!" said Jucundus; "they did not say so when I went to school; but keep to my rule,
130 my boy, and swear by the genius of Rome and the emperor."

131 "I don't believe in god or goddess, emperor or Rome, or in any philosophy, or in any
132 religion at all," said Arnobius.

133 "What!" cried Jucundus, "you're not going to desert the gods of your ancestors?"

134 "Ancestors?" said Arnobius; "I've no ancestors. I'm not African certainly, not Punic, not
135 Libophœnician, not Canaanite, not Numidian, not Gætulian. I'm half Greek, but what the
136 other half is I don't know. My good old gaffer, you're one of the old world. I believe
137 nothing. Who can? There is such a racket and whirl of religions on all sides of me that I
138 am sick of the subject."

139 "Ah, the rising generation!" groaned Jucundus; "you young men! I cannot prophesy what
140 you will become, when we old fellows are removed from the scene. Perhaps you're a
141 Christian?"

142 Arnobius laughed. "At least I can give you comfort on that head, old grandfather. A
143 pretty Christian I should make, indeed! seeing visions, to be sure, and rejoicing in the
144 rack and dungeon! I wish to enjoy life; I see wealth, power, rank, and pleasure to be
145 worth living for, and I see nothing else."

146 "Well said, my lad," cried Jucundus, "well said; stick to that. I declare you frightened me.
147 Give up {88} all visions, speculations, conjectures, fancies, novelties, discoveries;
148 nothing comes of them but confusion."

149 "No, no," answered the youth; "I'm not so wild as you seem to think, Jucundus. It is true
150 I don't believe one single word about the gods; but in their worship was I born, and in
151 their worship I will die."

152 "Admirable!" cried Jucundus in a transport; "well, I'm surprised; you have taken me by
153 surprise. You're a fine fellow; you are a boy after my heart. I've a good mind to adopt
154 you."

155 "You see I can't believe one syllable of all the priests' trash," said Arnobius; "who does?
156 not they. I don't believe in Jupiter or Juno, or in Astarte or in Isis; but where shall I go for
157 anything better? or why need I seek anything good or bad in that line? Nothing's known
158 anywhere, and life would go while I attempted what is impossible. No, better stay where
159 I am; I may go further, and gain a loss for my pains. So you see I am for myself, and for
160 the genius of Rome."

161 "That's the true principle," answered the delighted Jucundus. "Why, really, for so young
162 a man, surprising! Where *did* you get so much good sense, my dear fellow? I've seen
163 very little of you. Well, this I'll say, you are a youth of most mature mind. To be sure!
164 Well! Such youths are rare now-a-days. I congratulate you with all my heart on your
165 strong sense and your admirable wisdom. Who'd have thought it? I've always, to tell the
166 truth, had a little suspicion of you; but you've come out nobly. {89} Capital! I don't wish
167 you to believe in the gods if you can't; but it's your duty, dear boy, your duty to Rome to
168 maintain them, and to rally round them when attacked." Then with a changed voice, he
169 added, "Ah, that a young friend of mine had your view of the matter!" and then, fearing
170 he had said too much, he stopped abruptly.

171 "You mean Agellius," said Arnobius. "You've heard, by-the-bye," he continued in a lower
172 tone, "what's the talk in the Capitol, that at Rome they are proceeding on a new plan
173 against the Christians with great success. They don't put to death, at least at once; they
174 keep in prison, and threaten the torture. It's surprising how many come over."

175 "The Furies seize them!" exclaimed Jucundus: "they deserve everything bad, always
176 excepting my poor boy. So they are cheating the hangman by giving up their atheism,
177 the vile reptiles, giving in to a threat. However," he added gravely, "I wish threats would
178 answer with Agellius; but I greatly fear that menace would only make him stubborn. That
179 stubbornness of a Christian! O Arnobius!" he said, shaking his head and looking
180 solemn, "it's a visitation from the gods, a sort of *nympholepsia*."

181 "It's going out," said Arnobius, "mark my words; the frenzy is dying. It's only wonderful it
182 should have lasted for three centuries. The report runs that in some places, when the
183 edict was published, the Christians did not wait for a summons, but swept up to the
184 temples to sacrifice, like a shoal of tunnies. The {90} magistrates were obliged to take
185 so many a day; and, as the days went on, none so eager to bring over the rest as those
186 who have already become honest men. Nay, not a few of their mystic or esoteric class
187 have conformed."

188 "If so, unless Agellius looks sharp," said Jucundus, "his sect will give him up before he
189 gives up his sect. Christianity will be converted before him."

190 "Oh, don't fear for him!" said Arnobius; "I knew him at school. Boys differ; some are bold
191 and open. They like to be men, and to dare the deeds of men; they talk freely, and take
192 their swing in broad day. Others are shy, reserved, bashful, and are afraid to do what
193 they love quite as much as the others. Agellius never could rub off this shame, and it
194 has taken this turn. He's sure to outgrow it in a year or two. I should not wonder if, when
195 once he had got over it, he went into the opposite fault. You'll find him a drinker and a
196 swaggerer and a spendthrift before many years are over."

197 "Well, that's good news," said Jucundus; "I mean, I am glad you think he will shake off
198 these fancies. I don't believe they sit very close to him myself."

199 He walked on for a while in silence; then he said, "That seems a sharp child, Arnobius.
200 Could he do me a service if I wanted it? Does he know Agellius?"

201 "Know him?" answered the other; "yes, and his farm too. He has rambled round Sicca,
202 many is the mile. And he knows the short cuts, and the blind ways, and safe
203 circuits."{91}

204 "What's the boy's name?" asked Jucundus. "Firmian," answered Arnobius. "Firmian
205 Lactantius."

206 "I say, Firmian," said Jucundus to him, "where are you to be found of a day, my boy?"

207 "At class morning and afternoon," answered Firmian, "sleeping in the porticoes in
208 midday, nowhere in the evening, and roosting with Arnobius at night."

209 "And you can keep a secret, should it so happen?" asked Jucundus, "and do an errand,
210 if I gave you one?"

211 "I'll give him the stick worse than Rupilius, if he does not," said Arnobius.

212 "A bargain," cried Jucundus; and, waving his hand to them, he stepped through the city
213 gate, and they returned to their afternoon amusements.

214 Here is an anachronism, as regards Arnobius and Lactantius, of some twenty or thirty
215 years.

216 Chapter 9. Jucundus Baits his Trap

217 {92} AGELLIUS is busily employed upon his farm. While the enemies of his faith are
218 laying their toils for him and his brethren in the imperial city, in the proconsular *officium*,
219 and in the municipal curia,—while Jucundus is scheming against him personally in
220 another way and with other intentions,—the unconscious object of these machinations

221 is busy about his master's crops, housing the corn in caves or pits, distilling the roses,
222 irrigating the *khennah*, and training and sheltering the vines. And he does so, not only
223 from a sense of duty, but the more assiduously, because he finds in constant
224 employment a protection against himself, against idle thoughts, wayward wishes,
225 discontent, and despondency. It is doubtless very strange to the reader how any one
226 who professed himself a Christian in good earnest should be open to the imputation of
227 resting his hopes and his heart in the tents of paganism; but we do not see why Agellius
228 has not quite as much right to be inconsistent in one way as Christians of the present
229 time in another, and perhaps he has more to say for himself than they. They have not
230 had the trial of solitude, {93} nor the consequent temptation to which he has been
231 exposed, of seeking relief from his own thoughts in the company of unbelievers. When a
232 boy he had received his education at that school in the Temple of Mercury of which we
233 heard in the foregoing chapter; and though happily he had preserved himself from the
234 contagion of idolatry and sin, he had on that very account formed no friendships with his
235 schoolfellows. Whether there were any Christians there besides himself he did not
236 know; but while the worst of his schoolfellows were what heathen boys may be
237 supposed to be, the lightest censure which could be passed on any was that they were
238 greedy, or quarrelsome, or otherwise unamiable. He had learned there enough to open
239 his mind, and to give him materials for thinking, and instruments for reflecting on his
240 own religion, and for drawing out into shape his own reflections. He had received just
241 that discipline which makes solitude most pleasant to the old, and most insupportable to
242 the young. He had got a thousand questions which needed answers, a thousand
243 feelings which needed sympathy. He wanted to know whether his guesses, his
244 perplexities, his trials of mind, were peculiar to himself, or how far they were shared by
245 others, and what they were worth. He had capabilities for intellectual enjoyment
246 unexercised, and a thirst after knowledge unsatisfied. And the channels of supernatural
247 assistance were removed from him at a time when nature was most impetuous and
248 most clamorous. {94}

249 It was under circumstances such as these that two young Greeks, brother and sister,
250 the brother older, the sister younger, than Agellius, came to Sicca at the invitation of
251 Jucundus, who wanted them for his trade. His nephew in time got acquainted with them,
252 and found in them what he had sought in vain elsewhere. It is not that they were oracles
253 of wisdom or repositories of philosophical learning; their age and their calling forbade it,
254 nor did he require it. For an oracle, of course, he would have looked in another
255 direction; but he desiderated something more on a level with himself, and that they
256 abundantly supplied. He found, from his conversations with them, that a great number
257 of the questions which had been a difficulty to him had already been agitated in the
258 schools of Greece. He found what solutions were possible, what the hinge was on
259 which questions turned, what the issue to which they led, and what the principle which
260 lay at the bottom of them. He began better to understand the position of Christianity in
261 the world of thought, and the view which was taken of it by the advocates of other
262 religions or philosophies. He gained some insight into its logic, and advanced, without
263 knowing it, in the investigation of its evidences.

264 Nor was this all; he acquired by means of his new friends a great deal also of secular
265 knowledge as well as philosophical. He learned much of the history of foreign countries,
266 especially of Greece, of its heroes and sages, its poets and its statesmen, of {95}
267 Alexander, of the Syro-Macedonic empire, of the Jews, and of the series of conquests
268 through which Rome advanced to universal dominion.

269 To impart knowledge is as interesting as to acquire it; and Agellius was called upon to
270 give as well as to take. The brother and sister, without showing any great religious
271 earnestness, were curious to know about Christianity, and listened with the more
272 patience that they had no special attachment to any other worship. In the debates which
273 ensued, though there was no agreement, there was the pleasure of mental exercise and
274 excitement; he found enough to tell them without touching upon the more sacred
275 mysteries; and while he never felt his personal faith at all endangered by their free
276 conversation, his charity, or at least his good-will and his gratitude, led him to hope, or
277 even to think, that they were in the way of conversion themselves. In this thought he
278 was aided by his own innocence and simplicity; and though, on looking back afterwards
279 to this eventful season, he recognized many trivial occurrences which ought to have put
280 him on his guard, yet he had no suspicion at the time that those who conversed so
281 winningly, and sustained so gracefully and happily the commerce of thought and
282 sentiment, might in their actual state, nay, in their governing principles, be in utter
283 contrariety to himself when the veil was removed from off their hearts.

284 Nor was it in serious matters alone, but still more on lighter occasions of intercourse,
285 that Aristo and {96} Callista were attractive to the solitary Agellius. She had a sweet
286 thrilling voice, and accompanied herself on the lyre. She could act the *improvisatrice*,
287 and her expressive features were a running commentary on the varied meaning, the
288 sunshine and the shade, of her ode or her epic. She could relate how the profane
289 Pentheus and the self-glorious Hippolytus gave a lesson to the world of the feebleness
290 of human virtue when it placed itself in opposition to divine power. She could teach how
291 the chaste Diana manifests herself to the simple shepherd Endymion, not to the great or
292 learned; and how Tithonus, the spouse of the Morn, adumbrates the fate of those who
293 revel in their youth, as if it were to last for ever; and who, when old, do nothing but talk
294 of the days when they were young, wearying others with tales of "their amours or their
295 exploits, like grasshoppers that show their vigour only by their chirping." [Note] The very
296 allegories which sickened and irritated Arnobius when spouted out by Polemo, touched
297 the very chords of poor Agellius's heart when breathed forth from the lips of the beautiful
298 Greek.

299 She could act also; and suddenly, when conversation flagged or suggested it, she could
300 throw herself into the part of Medea or Antigone, with a force and truth which far
301 surpassed the effect produced by the male and masked representations of those
302 characters at the theatre. Brother and sister were Œdipus and Antigone, Electra and
303 Orestes, Cassandra and the {97} Chorus. Once or twice they attempted a scene in
304 Menander; but there was something which made Agellius shrink from the comedy,
305 beautiful as it was, and clever as was the representation. Callista could act Thais as
306 truly as Iphigenia, but Agellius could not listen as composedly. There are certain most

307 delicate instincts and perceptions in us which act as first principles, and which, once
308 effaced, can never, except from some supernatural source, be restored to the mind.
309 When men are in a state of nature, these are sinned against, and vanish very soon, at
310 so early a date in the history of the individual that perhaps he does not recollect that he
311 ever possessed them; and since, like other first principles, they are but very partially
312 capable of proof, a general scepticism prevails both as to their existence and their truth.
313 The Greeks, partly from the vivacity of their intellect, partly from their passion for the
314 beautiful, lost these celestial adumbrations sooner than other nations. When a collision
315 arose on such matters between Agellius and his friends, Callista kept silence; but Aristo
316 was not slow to express his wonder that the young Christian should think customs or
317 practices wrong which, in his view of the matter, were as unblamable and natural as
318 eating, drinking, or sleeping. His own face became almost satirical as Agellius's became
319 grave; however, he was too companionable and good-natured to force another to be
320 happy in his own way; he imputed to the extravagance of his friend's religion what in
321 any but a Christian he would {98} have called moroseness and misanthropy; and he
322 bade his sister give over representations which, instead of enlivening the passing hour,
323 did but inflict pain.

324 This friendly intercourse had now gone on for some months, as the leisure of both
325 parties admitted. Once or twice brother and sister had come to the suburban farm; but
326 for the most part, in spite of his intense dislike of the city, he had for their sake threaded
327 its crowded and narrow thoroughfares, crossed its open places, and presented himself
328 at their apartments. And was it very strange that a youth so utterly ignorant of the world,
329 and unsuspecting of evil, should not have heard the warning voice which called him to
330 separate himself from heathenism, even in its most specious form? Was it very strange,
331 under these circumstances, that a sanguine hope, the hope of the youthful, should have
332 led Agellius to overlook obstacles, and beguile himself into the notion that Callista might
333 be converted, and make a good Christian wife? Well, we have nothing more to say for
334 him; if we have not already succeeded in extenuating his offence, we must leave him to
335 the mercy, or rather to the justice, of his severely virtuous censors.

336 But all this while Jucundus had been conversing with him; and, unless we are quick
337 about it, we shall lose several particulars which are necessary for those who wish to
338 pursue without a break the thread of his history. His uncle had brought the conversation
339 round to the delicate point which had occasioned his {99} visit, and had just broken the
340 ice. With greater tact, and more ample poetical resources than we should have given
341 him credit for, he had been led from the scene before him to those prospects of a moral
342 and social character which ought soon to employ the thoughts of his dear Agellius. He
343 had spoken of vines and of their culture, *apropos* of the dwarf vines around him, which
344 stood about the height of a currant-bush. Thence he had proceeded to the subject of the
345 more common vine of Africa, which crept and crawled along the ground, the extremity of
346 each plant resting in succession on the stock of that which immediately preceded it. And
347 now, being well into his subject, he called to mind the high vine of Italy, which mounts
348 by the support of the slim tree to which it clings. Then he quoted Horace on the subject
349 of the marriage of the elm and the vine. This lodged him in *medias res*; and Agellius's
350 heart beat when he found his uncle proposing to him, as a thought of his own, the very

351 step which he had fancied was almost a secret of his own breast, though Juba had
352 seemed to have some suspicion of it.

353 "My dear Agellius," said Jucundus, "it would be a most suitable proceeding. I have
354 never taken to marrying myself; it has not lain in my way, or been to my taste. Your
355 father did not set me an encouraging example, but here you are living by yourself, in
356 this odd fashion, unlike any one else. Perhaps you may come in time and live in Sicca.
357 We shall find some way of employing you, and it will be {100} pleasant to have you near
358 me as I get old. However, I mean it to be some time yet before Charon makes a prize of
359 me; not that I believe all that rubbish more than you, Agellius, I assure you."

360 "It strikes me," Agellius began, "that perhaps you may think it inconsistent in me taking
361 such a step, but,—"

362 "Ay, ay, that's the rub," thought Jucundus; then aloud, "Inconsistent, my boy! who talks
363 of inconsistency? what superfine jackanapes dares to call it inconsistent? You seem
364 made for each other, Agellius—she town, you country; she so clever and attractive, and
365 up to the world, you so fresh and Arcadian. You'll be quite the talk of the place."

366 "That's just what I don't want to be," said Agellius. "I mean to say," he continued, "that if
367 I thought it inconsistent with my religion to think of Callista—"

368 "Of course, of course," interrupted his uncle, who took his cue from Juba, and was
369 afraid of the workings of Agellius's human respect; "but who knows you have been a
370 Christian? no one knows anything about it. I'll be bound they all think you an honest
371 fellow like themselves, a worshipper of the gods, without crotchets or hobbies of any
372 kind. I never told them to the contrary. My opinion is, that if you were to make your
373 libation to Jove, and throw incense upon the imperial altar tomorrow, no one would think
374 it extraordinary. They would say for certain that they {101} had seen you do it again and
375 again. Don't fancy for an instant, my dear Agellius, that you have anything whatever to
376 get over."

377 Agellius was getting awkward and mortified, as may be easily conceived, and Jucundus
378 saw it, but could not make out why. "My dear uncle," said the youth, "you are
379 reproaching me."

380 "Not a bit of it," said Jucundus, confidently, "not a shadow of reproach; why should I
381 reproach you? We can't be wise all at once; / had my follies once, as you may have had
382 yours. It's natural you should grow more attached to things as they are,—things as they
383 are, you know,—as time goes on. Marriage, and the preparation for marriage, sobers a
384 man. You've been a little headstrong, I can't deny, and had your fling in your own way;
385 but 'nuces pueris,' as you will soon be saying yourself on a certain occasion. Your next
386 business is to consider what kind of a marriage you propose. I suppose the Roman, but
387 there is great room for choice even there."

388 It is a proverb how different things are in theory and when reduced to practice. Agellius
389 had thought of the end more than of the means, and had had a vision of Callista as a
390 Christian, when the question of rites and forms would have been answered by the
391 decision of the Church without his trouble. He was somewhat sobered by the question,
392 though in a different way from what his uncle wished and intended. Jucundus
393 proceeded—"First, there is *matrimonum confarreationis*. You have nothing to do with
394 that: {102} strictly speaking, it is obsolete; it went out with the exclusiveness of the old
395 patricians. I say 'strictly speaking'; for the ceremonies remain, waiving the formal
396 religious rite. Well, my dear Agellius, I don't recommend this ceremonial to you. You'd
397 have to kill a porker, to take out the entrails, to put away the gall, and to present it to
398 Juno Pronuba. And there's fire, too, and water, and frankincense, and a great deal of
399 the same kind, which I think undesirable, and you would too; for there, I am sure, we are
400 agreed. We put this aside then, the religious marriage. Next comes the marriage *ex*
401 *coemptione*, a sort of mercantile transaction. In this case the parties buy each other,
402 and become each other's property. Well, every man to his taste; but for me, I don't like
403 to be bought and sold. I like to be my own master, and am suspicious of anything
404 irrevocable. Why should you commit yourself (do you see?) for ever, *for ever*, to a girl
405 you know so little of? Don't look surprised: it's common sense. It's very well to buy *her*;
406 but to be bought, that's quite another matter. And I don't know that you can. Being a
407 Roman citizen yourself, you can only make a marriage with a citizen; now the question
408 is whether Callista is a citizen at all. I know perfectly well the sweeping measure some
409 years back of Caracalla, which made all freemen citizens of Rome, whatever might be
410 their country; but that measure has never been carried out in fact. You'd have very great
411 difficulty with the law and the customs of the country; and {103} then, after all, if the
412 world were willing to gratify you, where's your proof she is a freewoman? My dear boy, I
413 must speak out for your good, though you're offended with me. I wish you to have her, I
414 do; but you can't do impossibilities—you can't alter facts. The laws of the empire allow
415 you to have her in a certain definite way, and no other; and you cannot help the law
416 being what it is. I say all this, even on the supposition of her being a freewoman; but it is
417 just possible she may be in law a slave. Don't start in that way; the pretty thing is neither
418 better nor worse for what she cannot help. I say it for your good. Well, now I'm coming
419 to my point. There is a third kind of marriage, and that is what I should recommend for
420 you. It's the *matrimonium ex usu*, or *consuetudine*; the great advantage here is, that you
421 have no ceremonies whatever, nothing which can in any way startle your sensitive
422 mind. In that case, a couple are at length man and wife *præscriptione*. You are afraid of
423 making a stir in Sicca; in this case you would make none. You would simply take her
424 home here; if, as time went on, you got on well together, it would be a marriage; if
425 not,"—and he shrugged his shoulders—"no harm's done; you are both free."

426 Agellius had been sitting on a gate of one of the vineyards; he started on his feet, threw
427 up his arms, and made an exclamation.

428 "Listen, listen, my dear boy!" cried Jucundus, hastening to explain what he considered
429 the cause of {104} his sudden annoyance; "listen, just one moment, Agellius, if you can.
430 Dear, dear, how I wish I knew where to find you! What *is* the matter? I'm not treating her
431 ill, I'm not indeed. I have not had any notion at all even of hinting that you should leave

432 her, unless you both wished the bargain rescinded. No, but it is a great rise for her; you
433 are a Roman, with property, with position in the place; she's a stranger, and without a
434 dower: nobody knows whence she came, or anything about her. She ought to have no
435 difficulty about it, and I am confident will have none."

436 "O my good, dear uncle! O Jucundus, Jucundus!" cried Agellius, "is it possible? do my
437 ears hear right? What is it you ask me to do?" and he burst into tears. "Is it
438 conceivable," he said, with energy, "that you are in earnest in recommending me—I say
439 in recommending me—a marriage which really would be no marriage at all?"

440 "Here is some very great mistake," said Jucundus, angrily; "it arises, Agellius, from your
441 ignorance of the world. You must be thinking I recommend you mere *contubernium*, as
442 the lawyers call it. Well, I confess I did think of that for a moment, it occurred to me; I
443 should have liked to have mentioned it, but knowing how preposterously touchy and
444 skittish you are on supposed points of honour, or sentiment, or romance, or of
445 something or other indescribable, I said not one word about that. I have only wished to
446 consult for your comfort, present and future. You don't do me justice, Agellius. I have
447 been attempting {105} to smooth your way. You *must* act according to the received
448 usages of society! you cannot make a world for yourself. Here have I proposed three or
449 four ways for your proceeding: you will have none of them. What *will* you have? I
450 thought you didn't like ceremonies; I thought you did not like the established ways. Go,
451 then, do it in the old fashion; kill your sheep, knead your meal, light your torches, sing
452 your song, summon your flamen, if he'll come. Any how, take your choice; do it either
453 with religion or without."

454 "O Jucundus!" said the poor fellow, "am I then come to this?" and he could say no more.

455 His distress was not greater than his uncle's disappointment, perplexity, and
456 annoyance. The latter had been making everything easy for Agellius, and he was
457 striking, do what he would, on hidden, inexplicable impediments, whichever way he
458 moved. He got more and more angry the more he thought about it. An unreasonable,
459 irrational coxcomb! He had heard a great deal of the portentous stubbornness of a
460 Christian, and now he understood what it was. It was in his blood, he saw; an offensive,
461 sour humour, tainting him from head to foot. A very different recompense had he
462 deserved. There had he come all the way from his home from purely disinterested
463 feelings. He had no motive whatever, but a simple desire of his nephew's welfare; what
464 other motive could he have? "Let Agellius go to the crows," he thought, "if he will; what
465 is it to me if he is seized {106} for a Christian, hung up like a dog, or thrown like a dead
466 rat into the *cloaca* of the prison? What care I if he is made a *hyæna's* breakfast in the
467 amphitheatre, all Sicca looking on, or if he is nailed on a cross for the birds to peck at
468 before my door? Ungrateful puppy! it is no earthly concern of mine what becomes of
469 him. I shall be neither better nor worse. No one will say a word against Jucundus; he will
470 not lose a single customer, or be shunned by a single jolly companion, for the exposure
471 of his nephew. But a man can't be saved against his will. Here am I, full of expedients
472 and resources for his good; there is he, throwing cold water on everything, and making
473 difficulties as if he loved them. It's his abominable pride, that's the pith of the matter. He

474 could not have behaved worse though I had played the bully with him, and had
475 reproached him with his Christianity. But I have studiously avoided every subject which
476 could put his back up. He's a very Typhon or Enceladus for pride. Here he'd give his
477 ears to have done with Christianity; he wants to have this Callista; he wants to buy her
478 at the price of his religion; but he'd rather be burned than say, I've changed! Let him
479 reap as he has sown; why should I coax him further to be merciful to himself? Well
480 Agellius," he said aloud, "I'm going back."

481 Agellius, on the other hand, had his own thoughts; and the most urgent of them at the
482 moment was sorrow that he had hurt his uncle. He was sincerely attached to him, in
483 consequence of his faithful guardianship, {107} his many acts of kindness, the
484 reminiscences of childhood, nay, the love he bore to the good points of his character.
485 To him he owed his education and his respectable position. He could not bear his
486 anger, and he had a fear of his authority; but what was to be done? Jucundus, in utter
487 insensibility to certain instincts and rules which in Christianity are first principles, had,
488 without intending it, been greatly dishonouring Agellius, and his passion, and the object
489 of it. Uncle and nephew had been treading on each other's toes, and each was wincing
490 under the mischance. It was Agellius's place, as the younger, to make advances, if he
491 could, to an adjustment of the misunderstanding; and he wished to find some middle
492 way. And, also, it is evident he had another inducement besides his tenderness to
493 Jucundus to urge him to do so. In truth, Callista exerted a tremendous sway over him.
494 The conversation which had just passed ought to have opened his eyes, and made him
495 understand that the very first step in any negotiations between them was her *bonâ*
496 *fide* conversion. It was evident he could not, he literally had not the power of marrying
497 her as a heathen. Roman might marry a Roman; but a degradation of each party in the
498 transaction was the only way by which a Roman could make any sort of marriage with a
499 Greek. If she were converted, they would be both of them under the rules of the
500 Catholic Church. But what prospect was there of so happy an event? What had ever
501 fallen from her lips which looked that way? {108} Could not a clever girl throw herself
502 into the part of Alcestis, or chant the majestic verses of Cleanthes, or extemporize a
503 hymn upon the spring, or hold an argument on the *pulchrum* and *utile*, without having
504 any leaning towards Christianity? A calm, sweet voice, a noble air, an expressive
505 countenance, refined and decorous manners, were these specific indications of
506 heavenly grace? Ah, poor Agellius! a fascination is upon you; and so you are thinking of
507 some middle term, which is to reconcile your uncle and you; and therefore you begin as
508 follows:—

509 "I see by your silence, Jucundus, that you are displeased with me, you who are always
510 so kind. Well, it comes from my ignorance of things; it does indeed. I ask your
511 forgiveness for anything which seemed ungrateful in my behaviour, though there is not
512 ingratitude in my heart. I am too much of a boy to see things beforehand, and to see
513 them in all their bearings. You took me by surprise by talking on the subject which led to
514 our misunderstanding. I will not conceal for an instant that I like Callista very much; and
515 that the more I see her, I like her the more. It strikes me that, if you break the matter to
516 Aristo, he and I might have some talk together, and understand each other."

517 Jucundus was hot-tempered, but easily pacified; and he really did wish to be on
518 confidential terms with his nephew at the present crisis; so he caught at his apology.
519 "Now you speak like a reasonable fellow, Agellius," he answered. "Certainly, I will speak
520 to {109} Aristo, as you wish; and on this question of *consuetudo* or prescription. Well,
521 don't begin looking queer again. I mean I will speak to him on the whole question and its
522 details. He and I will talk together for our respective principals. We shall soon come to
523 terms, I warrant you; and then you shall talk with him. Come, show me round your
524 fields," he continued, "and let me see how you will be able to present things to your
525 bride. A very pretty property it is. I it was who was the means of your father thinking of it.
526 You have heard me say so before now, and all the circumstances.

527 "He was at Carthage at this time, undecided what to do with himself. It so happened that
528 Julia Clara's estates were just then in the market. An enormous windfall her estates
529 were. Old Didius was emperor just before my time; he gave all his estates to his
530 daughter as soon as he assumed the purple. Poor lady! she did not enjoy them long;
531 Severus confiscated the whole, not, however, for the benefit of the state, but of the *res*
532 *privata*. They are so large in Africa alone, that, as you know, you are under a special
533 procurator. Well, they did not come into the market at once; the existing farmers were
534 retained. Marcus Juventius farmed a very considerable portion of them; they were
535 contiguous, and dovetailed into his own lands, and accordingly, when he got into
536 trouble, and had to sell his leases, there were certain odds and ends about Sicca which
537 it was proposed to lease piecemeal. Your employer, Varius, would have {110} given any
538 money for them, but I was beforehand with him. Nothing like being on the spot; he was
539 on business of the proconsul at Adrumetum. I sent off Hispa instantly to Strabo; not an
540 hour's delay after I heard of it. The sale was at Carthage; he went to his old
541 commander, who used his influence, and the thing was done.

542 "I venture to say there's not such a snug little farm in all Africa; and I am sanguine we
543 shall get a renewal, though Varius will do his utmost to outbid us. Ah, my dear Agellius,
544 if there is but a suspicion you are not a thorough-going Roman! Well, well,—here! ease
545 me through this gate, Agellius; I don't know what's come to the gate since I was here.
546 Indeed!— yes! you have improved this very much. That small arbour is delicious; but
547 you want an image, an Apollo or a Diana. Ah! do now stop for a moment; why are you
548 going forward at such a pace? I'll give you an image: it shall be one that you will really
549 like. Well, you won't have it? I beg you ten thousand pardons. Ha, ha! I mean nothing.
550 Ha, ha, ha! Oh, what an odd world it is! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, I am keeping you from
551 your labourers. Ha, ha, ha!"

552 And having thus smoothed his own ruffled temper, and set things right, as he
553 considered, with Agellius, the old pagan took his journey homewards, assuring Agellius
554 that he would make all things clear for him in a very short time, and telling him to be
555 sure to make a call upon Aristo before the ensuing calends.

556 Note
557 Bacon.