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AURELIA;
OR,
THE JEWS OF CAPENA GATE.
PART SECOND.—THE SLAVE.
CHAPTER I.—HYMENÆAL DISAPPOINTMENTS OF A VESPILLO.

We must ask the reader to throw a retrospective glance on certain events which transpired in the tenuous establishment of the barber Eutrapius, a few months previous to the incidents related in the second chapter of this book. Eutrapius' shop was one of the most elegant and fashionable establishments of the kind in Rome, where they were quite numerous and generally well patronized. This shop, situated in the centre of the Forum, not far from the Græcostasis, had formerly belonged to Augustus' barber, Sicinius, whom Horace mentions in his Poetical Art. Eutrapius who had inherited it from his father—himself a tonsor of merit—left nothing undone to make his shop worthy of the fame of its founder. He entertained probably the secret hope that Domitian might confer upon him the dignity Sicinius had received at the hands of Augustus, who made a senator of his barber. Sicinius owed that distinguished honor less to personal merit than to the rare accomplishments of a magpie which he had taught to recite verses in praise of the Emperor. Eutrapius' great ambition was to possess a bird whose talents would obliterate the memory of his predecessor's magpie. He succeeded, after several years of patient teaching, in training one whose incontestable superiority would have thrown Sicinius into a fit of jealous despair. The magpie of this ambitious barber imitated with rare perfection, the human voice, the cries of animals, and even the sounds of instruments. Upon a sign from his master, it recited, with great accuracy, a pompous eulogy on Domitian. As a matter of course, Eutrapius never failed to give the signal to his bird whenever a senator, a pontiff or some distinguished patrician came to entrust their heads into his skilful hands. The 'Trassuli,' or dandies of that time, crowded the lucky barber's shop; and the matrons, the queens of beauty and fashion, never passed by without stopping their litter, their 'carpentum'—the four wheel carriage exclusively used by matrons of high rank—or their light chariots, lined with silk and inlaid with ivory, which they drove themselves, with skill and daring. Eutrapius' magpie was a great success. It must be admitted that the barber was an artist of uncommon merit. The 'beau' proclaimed him the first tonsor in Rome. When a Trossulus came out of his hands, he could show himself safely at the porticos or on the Appian way; his head bore the seal of that supreme elegance which, at all times has attracted the eyes and claimed the admiration of the crowd. The women found in Eutrapius' shop those thousand articles for their secret toilet which they would have sought in vain in the shops of Minucius portico, of the 'Villa-Publica,' the 'Via Sacra' or the 'Septa Julia,' with their varied and rich assortments. No other tonsor could show such an abundant supply of false tresses and glossy curls, of every variety of shade, from the flaming red to the deepest black; nowhere else could such perfect teeth be found, whether of bone, or ivory, or extracted from the human jaw; nowhere those pliable straps of leather, those aromatic pomades of bean-paste, destined to repair the ruts caused by time—the wrinkles, the angular form, the toothless gums, or the head prematurely bald. When a matron, struggling against the inroads of age, applied to Eutrapius to simulate with a sooty ointment of his own invention, her absent eye brows, and, to give new brilliancy to her eyes, she looked as if Venus herself had traced the delicate black lines which added their favorable shadow to the rosy and fresh complexion drawn from the soft alabaster and pewter pots, which the estimable tradesman sold for their weight in gold. Eutrapius seemed to possess all the secrets of the 'Fortuna virilis,' the goddess dear to the Roman ladies, because she concealed the defects of their beauty from the indiscreet eyes of the men. His shop was better attended than the two temples of this kind goddess, situated on the Palatine bridge and the Carmentales gate. But, amidst all these perfections, Eutrapius had some slight faults: he was impertinent, vain and loquacious in the extreme. For these defects as well as for his qualities, he was without equal in the tonsorial fraternity. There was no news, political or private, no wedding or funeral, no

scandalous story or kitchen gossip, but Eutrapius did not know in all their particulars and was not always ready to repeat to every new comer. Wittal, there was a mystery in the life of this man, so jovial in appearance, so familiar and talkative. Almost every night, when Eutrapius had sent away his numerous attendants and the robust Syrian girl—the only servant in this bachelor's home; when he was quite alone behind his closed shutters, he gave a preconcerted signal, and, immediately, a man slipped in through a door which he discreetly held ajar. Eutrapius had long conversations with this man. Who was he, and what was said in these frequent interviews? The neighbors had tried to find out, but their curiosity had been invariably baffled. On the evening of the fifth day preceding the calends of January, 842 (28th of December, 841, for the Romans counted the days backward,) and some time after the Saturnalia, which commenced on the 16th, previous to said calends, (17th of December), and lasted one week, Eutrapius and his nightly visitor were sitting in the furthest end of the shop, according to their custom, and conversing in a subdued tone of voice, when a noise was heard at the door of the shop. The countenances of the two men expressed singular alarm and anxiety, but the familiar sound of a voice calling from outside, 'Eutrapius! Eutrapius!' soon quieted their fears. 'It is Gurgus, the Vespillo,' said the barber; 'he brings me certain articles of my trade, which I shall need for the gifts of the January calends. My lord Regulus, have the goodness to step into this tepidarium (bath-room); this little affair will soon be settled.' Regulus disappeared behind the closet door, and Eutrapius went to let Gurgus in. He was struck with the wild expression of the Vespillo's features and the disorder of his dress. 'Have you failed to bring the hair and the teeth I ordered?' exclaimed the barber, whose first thought, like a good tradesman's, was for the evil consequence likely to result from the Vespillo's want of punctuality. The latter made no answer, but he threw at Eutrapius' feet six magnificent, long suits of hair, and a handful of freshly extracted teeth. 'Gurgus, you are a great man!' cried the admiring barber. 'By Venus! you are the king of Vespillos. Ah! Philæas, Gellia, Lesbia, Marcella, Lydia, and Pexillus, how charming you will look when these tresses, plaited by my skilful hands, will adorn your heads. And you, Vetustilla, what an admirable set of teeth I will put between your rosy lips. But what is the matter with you, my poor Gurgus?' 'Eutrapius, I must speak to you,' said Gurgus gloomily, but in a firm voice. 'Impossible, my dear Gurgus, impossible at this hour,' replied Eutrapius, remembering Regulus' presence. 'I said I wanted to speak to you, and I shall speak,' repeated the vespillo almost in anger. 'The time is favorable; I selected it purposely.' 'Speak, then, Gurgus, but be quick, for it is late, and I have but little time to give you,' replied the barber, who saw that the only way to get rid of the vespillo was to listen to him, and who hoped besides that the conversation would not be long. Caius-Tongilianus-Vespertinus-Gurgus belonged to the worthy class of the agents of Libitina, the goddess of funerals, and his title of vespillo could be rendered in our language by that of undertaker's aid. He was the son of Tongilianus, the master of ceremonies of the inexorable divinity. This dignity for nearly a century had been transmitted from father to son, in the Tonglianus family, and gave its chief the right of marching at the head of funeral processions, preceded by hectors clad in mourning. Caius was only a vespillo; but he would succeed his father, and when we have the prospect of a high rank, we are looked upon as somebody in this world, whatever be our present condition. Caius Tongilianus had taken the surname of 'Vespertinus' as indicating his profession, exercised in the dark hours of the evening. 'Gurgus' was a glorious surname, the reward of his great deeds; it meant a bold drinker who feared neither the number of the cyathi nor the depth of the amphora. The business connections of Gurgus and Eutrapius will be easily understood. Eutrapius was in constant need of hair for the head dresses of the matrons, his customers, and of teeth for the repair of the dismantled jaws confided to his care. Gurgus alone could supply him with these indispensable articles of trade. His expert assistants could strip a head of its hair as quickly as an Indian takes his fallen enemy's scalp, and rob

a jawbone of its masticating ornaments with the skill of a modern dentist. This industry was of course illegal; and it was no easy matter to avoid the vigilance of the patrols appointed by the capital Trumvir to watch over the inviolability of the tombs. But Gurgus managed things so skilfully, that he owed his surname of Vespertinus to the ability with which he baffled the watchfulness of the police. Were the Roman ladies aware of the origin of those soft tresses, arranged so gracefully over their brow by the skilful hands of their maids? We incline to a negative answer, for Eutrapius was too gallant a tonsor, his delicacy of feeling was too exquisite, that he should frighten his charming customers with such revelations. Albeit, Gurgus, who had not remarked the embarrassment and hesitation with which Eutrapius had consented to listen to his confidences, took a seat and made himself as comfortable as possible, preparing, evidently, for a long conversation. 'Eutrapius,' he began, in a solemn tone, 'you were aware of my project of a marriage with Cecilia, the young girl who lives with her father, not far from the Maximus Circus, and in the vicinity of the temple of Venus-Libitina, my favorite divinity! Well, by the Fates, the match is broken!' 'Impossible, my dear Gurgus, impossible!' exclaimed the barber, who was remarkably fond of using this adjective. 'And what may be the reason? Has old Cecilius refused his consent?' 'Old Cecilius cannot oppose my marriage; he owes me ten thousand sesterterii; but it's the little one who will no longer consent...' 'Had she ever consented?' Gurgus seemed to think the question impertinent. 'Let us not quarrel about words,' he remarked, 'since whether she had consented or no longer consents, amounts to the same thing.' 'Well, my dear Gurgus, how can you help that?' remarked Eutrapius, who was anxious to end the conversation. 'How can I help that? Is this the answer to be expected from a friend? But, you careless tonsor, don't you see that my ten thousand sesterterii are lost, since Cecilius does not possess a 'stips'? And this is not it! The little one loves another man! Look you!' he cried, striking with his fist the table near which they were seated; 'I can't stand that, Eutrapius! Yes, by Aropos, Lachesis, Pluto and Proserpina, I shall have revenge for this refusal!' Gurgus was getting excited. The barber was growing impatient. 'Ah! you are a Christian, a Jewess, and you do not want me for your husband! I...' 'A noise like that of a person starting involuntarily, interrupted the angry Gurgus. It came from the adjoining closet. 'Eutrapius, are we alone?' asked the vespillo with alarm. 'Quite alone, friend Gurgus,' replied the barber, hastily. 'It is probably water falling in the bath-tub of the tepidarium. But, my amiable vespillo,' he continued, drawing his seat nearer, and evincing a sudden interest in his visitor's story, 'you must try not to get into a passion, and not to go so fast. Come, Gurgus, tell me the beginning of this love affair of yours, if you wish me to understand the case fully.' 'It is a long story Eutrapius, and you are in such a hurry. But I shall abbreviate.' 'I can always find time to listen to my friends when they are in trouble. Go on, my dear Gurgus.' The vespillo commenced his story: 'It is about a year since Cecilius who was a mere scribe in Saturn's Treasury, was appointed collector of the taxes levied on those cursed Jews of the Capena gate—may the Hades receive them! Cecilius removed to the neighborhood, and my father rented to him the small house we own near the Maximus Circus. You must know that Cecilius is poorer than Thersites, has never paid us a single sesterterium. On the contrary, it is my money which... but I must not anticipate. Cecilius had been a widower for several years; he had but one daughter, the ungrateful Cecilia! Here the vespillo relieved his feelings by several long drawn sighs, and resumed: 'Every morning, on my way to the temple of Venus Libitina, I saw her at her door, or at the window of her little "cubiculum." I would then make her a friendly sign, to which she would reply with a pleasant nod. Cecilia, my dear Eutrapius, has seen three lustra and a half (seventeen years and a half.) She is so beautiful that none of your fashionable matrons can compare with her. But, you have seen her, and you know that I do not exaggerate.' Eutrapius nodded assent, and Gurgus resumed: 'I resolved to push things briskly and to marry Cecilia. My father raised some objec-

tion because she had nothing; but I convinced him that all the troubles of married life come from the dowry ('veniatur a dote sagittæ); and besides, he yielded to this great consideration, that a vespillo—I don't know why—seldom finds a woman willing to marry him.' Gurgus heaved four great sighs; two of regret for the past; two of sadness for the gloomy future. 'Having obtained my father's consent,' he continued, 'I called on Cecilius. You see, Eutrapius, I was acting honorably. I spoke of marriage by "confarreatio," which gives the wife the title of matron, for I could not think of the "coemptio" which looks so much like buying a woman, or of the marriage by "usus," which is hardly any better than concubinage. My future prospects are good enough, our fortune is known, I made these legitimate advantages appear, and to be brief, Cecilius was delighted; and he accepted me for his son-in-law.' 'And what did Cecilia say?' queried Eutrapius. 'Cecilia said nothing; acknowledged the vespillo.' 'This was not giving you great hope,' remarked Eutrapius. 'My good tonsor,' quoth Gurgus with a knowing air, 'in such cases, women never reply anything.' 'That may be,' replied the barber simply. 'Proceed.' 'Time is a great master, and in time I trusted to soften that rebellious heart. We came now to the period when Cecilius commenced borrowing money from me and seemed to forget that he was my father's tenant. Yes, through the fallacious hope I entertained that Cecilia was getting better disposed in my favor, and that Cecilius would soon be my father-in-law, I allowed myself to be coaxed out of several important sums! Eutrapius, let it be an infamy, a downright robbery!' cried Gurgus in whom the remembrance of his ten thousand sesterterii seemed invariably to rouse a violent storm. 'My good friend,' remarked Eutrapius who had some literary pretension; 'Juvencus, whom you know, has precisely addressed a fine epistle to Corvinus to console him for losing a like amount. You must read it, Gurgus, those poets understand better than we do, how to pour balm on wounds.' 'Finally,' resumed the vespillo, 'I was under the charm, although I must admit that matters were not progressing much; this did not prevent me from circulating the report of my approaching marriage; for it seemed to me impossible that Cecilius should not make the promise so often announced by her father. You remember, Eutrapius, that I confided to you my hopes.' 'Certainly, Gurgus, I cannot have forgotten it, but amidst all these details, it seems to me you have forgotten something very essential.' 'What is that, my dear tonsor?' 'You should have questioned Cecilia herself.' 'I failed not to do so, Eutrapius, but I obtained this answer, that my name—Gurgus—did not suit her, and my trade of vespillo still less.' 'Then, my friend, the game was lost.' 'Young girls are so capricious, Eutrapius. They desire to-morrow what they refused to-day.' 'Agreed. But out of prudence, you should have held on to your sesterterii until the matter was settled.' 'I had already given them away, Eutrapius.' 'Was Cecilia aware of this?' 'Not at all. When Cecilius borrowed money from me, he always said: "do not mention it to my daughter." And Cecilia, when I wished to make her some slight presents, sent them back, saying she could not accept anything from me.' 'But,' said Eutrapius, who wished to bring back the conversation to the essential point from which it was diverging; 'you said something just now about Jews and Christians. What does it mean? Are these people in any way connected with the disappointment you have suffered?' 'Undoubtedly,' replied Gurgus; 'that's the crowning piece! The wretches! This is the way the thing happened. Cecilius was in earnest; at least, I think so, for he was singularly flattered by the prospect of his daughter's marriage; it secured quiet comfort for his old age. He does not spare Cecilia, whom he calls rebellious and impious, and whose new superstition he says is infamous, and he wants to crush it. Cecilius is quite as angry as I am. The more so, as he would lose his place if it should be discovered... You understand?' 'Perfectly.' But to the point, Gurgus, to the point! 'Semper ad eventum festina,' hasten towards the event.' 'I am coming to it, Eutrapius. But, in order to make things clear, I have to go into so many particulars. But I shall be brief. Here is the conversation I had yesterday—it is recent, as you see—with Cecilius; the catastrophe was not long following it. Tired with all those de-

lays, I went, yesterday morning, to see Cecilius: 'Is your daughter here?' I asked. 'No Gurgus, she has gone to the "Forum piscarium," (the bread market.) 'Cecilius, are you aware that your daughter never remains at home during your absence? Where does she go?' 'My dear Gurgus, she goes most of the time to the Palatine, to see a matron of high rank, who protects her, and whose name is Flavia Domitilla.' 'Look you, Eutrapius, we are not alone here!' exclaimed Gurgus, who had heard again a noise in the tepidarium. 'I must see...' The vespillo was rising to ascertain the cause of the noise, but Eutrapius persuaded him once more that it was only the water flowing into the bath-tub. Gurgus appeared satisfied with the explanation, and resumed: 'You are sure of this?' I asked Cecilius. 'Perfectly sure, Gurgus. My daughter goes there with an old woman named Peteronilla, who lives there, near the Capena gate. What will you? My duties keep me away all day, and Cecilia must take some recreation. She has no mother to stay with her.' 'Certainly,' I replied, somewhat soothed. Then I added: 'Well, Cecilius, has she made up her mind yet?' 'No, Gurgus, I am sorry to say that she seems to give little thought to what is the object of my daily entreaties.' 'It is evident she has not reflected enough upon marriage. Cecilius, an idea has suggested itself to my mind. What if we were to place your daughter under the influence of the little god Jugatinus?' 'It is a marvelous good thought, dear Gurgus! We shall fix a sacellum (a little chapel) in her cubiculum.' 'Have you a little god Jugatinus?' 'I bought one, yesterday, in the Triumphal way! And I showed to Cecilius a small statue of the little god, which I had brought concealed in my tunic. It was gilded, crowned with flowers, ornamented with small bands of yellow—the color of Hymen. "Suppose we carry out our project immediately," I added. "When Cecilia returns, she will see the sacellum, and perhaps the little god will begin to operate, for she will naturally think that I alone could have had the idea of this delicate attention." 'Nothing easier, my dear Gurgus! But let us make haste, for Cecilia will soon return for the jentaculum (breakfast).' 'We went up to Cecilia's cubiculum,' continued Gurgus, 'and penetrated into that sanctuary, until then forbidden to me.' Here the vespillo would have willingly expatiated on all his impressions, and had in fact commenced describing his tender emotion at the sight of Cecilia's virginal retreat, when Eutrapius, who was anxiously expecting the conclusion, interrupted him: 'Gurgus! Gurgus!' he said affectionately, 'it is getting late, my good friend. I understand your feelings—but let us make haste; what happened next?' 'We had just done arranging the sacellum, when we heard Cecilia's voice—as sweet as Philomela's! She was coming up to her cubiculum. We withdrew quickly, for we wished to enjoy, unseen, her surprise and to observe her countenance. Ah! Eutrapius, how shall I relate what followed?' 'Courage, Gurgus, courage, my friend!' said the tonsor who saw the catastrophe coming. 'Cecilia, as soon as she came in, discovered Jugatinus, and seizing it—I remember those incredible words—"An idol in my room!" she cried, and the little god, buried through the window, was broken to pieces on the street pavement!' 'Daughter, daughter! What are you doing?' exclaimed Cecilius, who sprang forward, but too late, to prevent the rash act. 'Wretched girl, it is a sacrilege!' 'Ah, father, you were there! and you also, Gurgus!' said she, recognizing me. 'I understand now. Well, so be it. The time has come when the truth must be known... Father, I am a Christian; and as a Christian, it was my duty to act as I have done. Gurgus, she added, turning to me, "cease to persecute me with your love. I can never be your wife." 'I was overwhelmed,' the vespillo continued; 'I would live to be as old as Nestor, that this imposing, solemn scene, would remain green in my memory. Cecilia was calm, serene, so majestic, and, at the same time, so inflexible in her resolve, that I could not find a single word of entreaty. As for Cecilius, his anger was fearful to behold. He cursed his daughter, and I was compelled to hold him back, or he would have killed her. But he swore that Cecilia would renounce this infamous superstition, or that he should invoke the law, and use all the authority of an offended father. The poor man saw mis-