

AURELIA; OR, THE JEWS OF CAPEA GATE.

PART THIRD—THE VESTAL.

CHAPTER IX—Continued.

Cecilia, still sustained by her two companions, approached to deposit also her...

The same had ceased. The pontiff sprinkled the body once more, and threw upon it a little earth. The women put...

When, at last, they arose to go, Olintus found himself face to face with Gerges. The designator's eyes were wet...

"Thank you, my son," said the priest, with a smile. "But you see we have our rites."

"Where are better than ours?" replied Gerges, moved by Clement's address and this name of "son" which the venerable man had applied to him...

"But, my lord, I have called to see you upon a grave matter," he added. "Will you permit me to speak to you privately?"

Olintus left them. The designator then hastened to hand Metellus Celer's letter to the pontiff, saying:

"Read, my lord, this writing which has been in the emperor's hand."

When the pontiff finished reading, Flavian and his sons were still in sight. Clements saw them ready to step into their litter. He made a motion as if to call them back, but withheld the cry...

"No," he said, thoughtfully. "I must not recall them! It is better that they should obey Domitian. If they showed the least hesitancy, if they attempted to justify themselves, they would be lost!"

"Let them approach the emperor, ignorant of this occasion. Their surprise and indignation will only have a truer and more convincing accent!"

He turned to Gerges. "You say, my son," he added, "that the emperor has read this letter?"

"How do you know?" Gerges narrated briefly what had happened to him.

"You have acted right, my son," said Clements; "you may rest assured that this letter will be handed to the Grand Vestal. But be silent concerning these matters."

Gerges promised to obey. "My son," resumed the pontiff, in a solemn tone, and as if answering a secret thought, "God has given me for mission to help all who are in danger, to save alike the gentile and the Christian, the priestess of false divinites as well as the virgin consecrated to Christ. It may happen that I shall come to you, one day, as you have come to me. Will you do then what I shall ask you?"

"I swear it!" exclaimed Gerges, with enthusiasm, "at any time, in any place, and for anything, I devote myself to the pontiff of the Christians!"

Gerges could not resist when one appealed to his heart.

"Farewell, my son," said Clements, with an affectionate smile. "We shall doubtless meet again. For the present my flock require my care."

Gerges bid farewell to the pontiff, and having joined his vesperals, returned with them to Rome.

CHAPTER X.

WEALTHY, BEAUTIFUL, GREAT, AND URBANITY.

Whilst Domitian is marching against Lucius Antonius, he shall go back to Cecilia's home, to find the divine Aurelia, of whom we had lost sight.

It was a few days after Cecilia's emancipation. Aurelia, alone in her cabinet, was reclining on rich cushions, playing listlessly with some flowers, which she took from a beautiful nurseries vase and picked to pieces. The young girl was sad and pensive. Some bitter sorrow seemed to weigh on her heart. She had sent for her old tutor and was waiting with impatience for his arrival.

From the time she had thrown herself, weeping into the Grand Vestal's arms, exclaiming: "Vespasian is a Christian! all my hopes of happiness have fled!" this thought had not left her mind, and none could have guessed what despair had filled her heart when, before the Emperor's tribunal she had seen Flavian Clements and his two sons surrounded by the Christians, receiving their honours, and, in return, showering marks of sympathy upon these despised people.

Aurelia abandoned herself to the bitterness of her thoughts in the midst of the solitary life led by the Roman women, and which is little known in our days. Such a thing as a family circle or the pleasures of home were unknown. The advice of Muller families sue at caput et finis est, had necessarily passed from the laws into the customs, or rather custom had introduced it into the law, and this habit of looking upon woman as a being left to its own resources, commencing and ending in the same person, had destroyed even the meaning of natural family ties.

The words which, in the Roman law or in the ancient writers, expressed the relations established by constanginity between individuals designated ties very different from those known in the present time. With a little attention we discover in the writings of the old authors the absolute void of a Roman woman's life, and the forced isolation which surrounded her. We realize all the frivolity and idleness of that existence so forcibly styled mundus mulieribus. So, we might give the list of her numerous garments; we might say which she wore in the morning, which at mid-day when visiting the portico, and which she reserved for evening wear; we might name the perfumes and cosmetics prepared to enhance the brilliancy of her complexion, the essences in which she bathed, the jewels with which she loaded her fingers, her wrists and ankles. All these things have been minutely described.

We see her plunged in indolence, in the midst of numerous slaves always ready to spare her the least exertion; we follow her in her shopping and visiting excursions in the city, she gazes with admiration upon the extravagant splendour of her corteges, when she repairs to places of public amusement.

But it is seldom that we see her surrounded by her family; seldom that she is shown to us enjoying the pure happiness of the home circle; scarcely seems to know the sainted affection which unites beings in whose veins the same blood courses.

Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, so proud of her two sons whom she called her most precious jewels, presents a pure picture seldom reproduced in Roman history.

The matron, having a husband and children, felt necessarily some movement around her, but the motherless young girl, the orphan, still young, was lost in the immensity of that city of Rome with its three millions inhabitants. Wherever she turned, she saw a moral wilderness; from the uproar of the thousand noises which filled the city, not a voice spoke to her soul.

It is in Christianity which has created the intimacy of modern relations; it is religion which peopled the wilderness of the ancient world; it is through the emancipation of woman restored to her primitive equality with man that the politeness of customs was founded; to religion we owe the charm—unknown to ancient civilization—of the pure and respectful friendship which transformed society.

This thought is not new, but it is so true, that it cannot be proclaimed too often.

Woman, raised in her own eyes, returned to the joys of the family, delivered from the cares of loneliness, and now honored and loved, is no longer the implacable and blood-thirsty being, the monster of cruelty revealed to us by the ancient writers. In her house, every one trembled around her. Neither her husband nor her children were shielded from her fury. As for her slaves, the atrocities perpetrated by the matrons upon those wretched creatures surpassed the most cruel inventions of the masters.

Aurelia was far from resembling these matrons; not only youth, but the secret tendencies of her heart, the peculiar circumstances which had surrounded her infancy, made her an exception to the common rule. The Grand Vestal's friendship had developed the child's affectionate nature; and, later, the pressing lessons of Flavia Domitilla, the example of her gentle virtues had implanted in the young maiden's soul the germ of noble thoughts.

When she related to her father from after Cecilia's emancipation, all her relations hastened to thank her for her generosity toward an obscure young girl she had returned to a father's embrace. She heard the touching expression of Cecilia's gratitude, and promised her the same praise which she had bestowed on Cecilia's relatives and mingled his loving praises with those of her relations; she conversed with him at length . . .

and lost all hope!

"Always in tears! my dear and august ward," said Vibius Crispus, entering the room suddenly.

"Yes, Vibius, always in tears! . . . and they will not soon cease to flow," replied Aurelia, sorrowfully, and she made signs to her guardian to take a seat near her. "This is the first time that I have been kind to this little Cecilia . . . but how poorly they reward me!"

"Come my dear ward," Vibius asked affectionately, "what has happened?"

"Strange and incredible things, dear guardian. You respected . . . relations and my other relations of being Christians . . . But you would not have thought that Vespasian belongs to that sect!"

"Vibius Crispus bounded with surprise from his seat, and repeated to me as if he had not heard the right or does not understand what he has heard."

"Vespasian! . . . Your affianced husband . . . the heir of the empire . . . is a Christian?"

"Yes, guardian, it is not a dream . . . it is no doubt a lie. Vespasian himself told me so, here sitting near me as you do now . . . Besides, I knew it already . . . Did you not notice, the other day, that he accompanied the pontiff of the Christians?"

And Aurelia, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed bitterly.

Vibius Crispus walked about the room, plunged in deep thought, and uttering only incoherent words. He foresaw important events and fearful dangers.

"He must abandon that impious crew!" he said at last.

"He will not abandon it, dear guardian."

"But he can have the empire only at that price!"

"He will renounce the empire . . . he will give me up, if needs be!" he said to himself. "Yes, he said so!"

exclaimed the young girl, no longer weeping, no longer crushed under the weight of her sorrow, but standing erect, with flashing eyes, and speaking with all the bitterness of wounded pride.

"Here is what took place between Vespasian and me," resumed Aurelia, when she had recovered a little calm. As I have told you, I had surmised, from certain words of his, that Vespasian shared the ideas of Flavia Domitilla, and I had not what happened in the Forum, where all the Christians saluted Flavian and his two sons as people salute only those who share their reflections and sentiments, could have left no doubt, I returned home anxious, uneasy, not knowing what to hope or fear."

"I reflected, I felt more tranquil; I said to myself that I would speak to Vespasian, and ask of him the sacrifice of an unreasonable opinion, dangerous to him, threatening to the high dignities which awaits us . . . It seemed to me im-

possible that my cousin should refuse . . . He would, doubtless, renounce with joy, all other affections for mine. In a word, I still hoped!

"Yesterday, my cousin came here. I had seen him several times since that eventful day in the Forum, but I had not been able to converse freely with him . . . He was overjoyed . . . he showed me the most tender affection . . . He pressed my hands in his, saying again that I had been good, generous, and that he thanked me for."

"Dear Vespasian," said I to him, seizing this opportunity, "what I did for this little Cecilia, is very simple. What reason have you for being so grateful to me?"

"At this question, Vespasian looked at me with an air of great surprise.

"Dear Aurelia," said he without hesitation, "do you not know with what courage she glorified our God for the salvation of our brethren?"

"Yes, dear Vespasian, what means this language? Have you a God other than mine?"

"Dear cousin," replied Vespasian, "are you not aware that I am a Christian?"

"So, you confess it, dear Vespasian," I remarked with an involuntary shudder. "You are a Christian!"

"Yes, my dear Aurelia, I am a Christian. Flavia Domitilla who instructed my father and mother in this holy law, could not overlook their children."

"Oh! Flavia Domitilla did not forget me either," said I, ironically. ". . . By Jupiter! it is not her fault if I am not a Jewess also!"

"Aurelia, Aurelia," said Vespasian sadly, "why defend yourself by invoking Jupiter? I, unfortunately, you are not a Christian, but you are worthy of becoming one, and if I believe the voice of my heart, you will be a Christian."

"Enough of this, dear Vespasian. . . I do not suppose you have lost your mind altogether, and if I believe the voice of my heart, what I am going to ask you?"

"Yes, dear cousin, provided it is not contrary to my religion."

"Can you stifle that strange worship a religion?"

"It is the only true religion, dear Aurelia."

"How! you say this! cousin. . . But never mind, you must give it up for my sake!"

Aurelia here interrupted her narrative to address herself to Vibius Crispus who, according to his prudent custom, was listening attentively without expressing his opinion.

"You see, guardian," said she, "that I put the question in the most direct form possible, and you have refused to answer me. Shall I remain in this contumacious mood?"

"What!" he exclaimed, "is it my dear Aurelia who makes such a request?"

"Vespasian," said I tenderly, "are you not a Caesar? And am I not your betrothed?"

"Aurelia," he replied impetuously, "do you love me as I love you?"

"Oh!" I exclaimed, in a tone of reproach, "can you doubt it, dear Vespasian?"

"Well! dear cousin, instead of asking me to sacrifice my faith, seek to learn the truth, and trample under your feet that Jupiter of which you spoke just now!"

"Vespasian," I remarked, much amazed at his words, "it seems to me you are exchanging one part. . . It is you, not I, who should change. Come, give me an answer."

"Ah! what answer can I give you?"

"But, dear Vespasian, think of what will happen . . . Flavia Domitilla has caused our marriage to be broken off. . . I cannot be a Christian and remain a Caesar. . . But what does it matter! . . . How what does it matter! . . . In fact, you must be one or the other."

"Indeed! Vespasian," I exclaimed in a tone of doubt, "do you speak seriously?"

"Quite seriously, and with joy, dear cousin."

"And would you feel that joy also, if you knew that your betrothed cannot become your wife?"

"You are cruel, my dear Aurelia."

"The young girl panted again to interrogate her guardian's face. Vibius remained impassible. She suppressed a sigh and resumed:

"I had spoken so excitedly that I felt alarmed at the cold resolution which marked Vespasian's answers. But there was so much feeling in the manner in which he accused me of cruelty, and so much tenderness in the glance he gave me, that I felt sure of victory. I approached nearer to him; he took my hands and pressed them, calling me by the most endearing names."

"Vespasian," I whispered, "it is not I who have abandoned you. . . Believe this, at least."

"I know it, dear Aurelia. . . I have never doubted your heart."

"He said this again with great tenderness, with caressing words, continued the young girl, and tears suffused her eyes."

"But, Vespasian," I added timidly, "we may separate."

"It would be a dreadful sacrifice!" I cried.

"You said a sacrifice!" I cried, trembling, "who then would you sacrifice?"

"Why this question? dear cousin?"

"Vespasian, you do not love me!"

"It needs but one word. . . a single word! . . . And you will not speak it!"

"Oh! guardian, I wept bitterly, far from that time I saw that all was over. But I did not think that my betrothed would have the courage to still further."

"He was there before me . . . kissing sadly at me . . . his eyes filled with tears. . . He scarcely dared to speak, and yet I reflected on his face a secret calm, the same air of firm resolve that had caused me so much anxiety."

"Dear Aurelia," said he at last, "if I were asked to give up my life it would be easier."

"Your life, Vespasian. . . I am then marrying you?"

"You are everything to me!" he exclaimed in the same loving accent; "for he loves me, I cannot doubt! But," he added solemnly, "I cannot prefer you to my God."

"Oh! guardian," continued the divine Aurelia, "when I heard these words, I do not know what took place in me. . . I felt faint and giddy, and I fell. . . I saw Vespasian spring forward and catch me in his arms. . . He called loudly to my women . . . Then I saw nothing more. . . I heard nothing. . . I was senseless. . . When I recovered my senses, I was lying on this couch, surrounded by my slaves."

"I looked around me. . . Vespasian had disappeared!"

The young girl's voice grew faint as she concluded the narrative of this bitter trial; she struggled against the sorrow that crushed her. Her eye was no longer proud, but veiled by her tears. She looked anxiously at Vibius Crispus, who, feeling that she must say something, murmured in a low voice:

"These Christians are all alike. . . Nothing can conquer them. . . They trample upon everything."

"Is there no more hope, then, dear guardian?" asked Aurelia in beseeching accents.

Vibius Crispus scarcely knew what to say. The selfish old courier could find no balm for this wounded young heart. Besides, other thoughts filled his mind. What events would result from these facts which he had suspected, and of which he was now certain? The emperor must soon become aware of them. . .

"Dear ward, allow me time to reflect," said he in the most caressing and affectionate tone he could assume. "No, all hope is not lost. . . Time will doubtless conquer the young Caesar. Your love must certainly triumph. But I am so much surprised that I do not know what to advise. Besides, nothing can be done at present. We shall see. Above all, take care that the emperor hears nothing of this! . . . My dear ward, you may rely on your old guardian. . . he is entirely devoted to you!"

Vibius Crispus continued for some time to offer similar vague consolations to that poor wounded soul. But the emptiness of his words wearied Aurelia, who felt herself abandoned by the awkward and cowardly old egotist, her last resource in her loneliness. She made no effort to detain him when he rose to go. . . She listened to the noise of his footsteps on the marble pavement of the atrium. It grew fainter, then ceased and silence reigned in the vast mansion. . . "Oh! how lonely! how lonely!" exclaimed Aurelia, groaning with anguish. . . She closed her eyes and remained thus for some time, rapt in thought. When at last she looked up, a young girl stood near her, contemplating her with tenderness, and afraid to disturb her rest. Aurelia uttered almost joyfully, cry, it was she who thus appeared to Vespasian's betrothed as merciful divinity.

"Cecilia, what is the meaning of this passage? This is why the man will leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife?"

"This is said to show that the husband and wife must mutually prefer each other to all that they hold dearest in the world."

"And, consequently, that they must never abandon each other," said Aurelia, continuing the interpretation. "It seems to me I do not mistake?"

"No, madam, you say truly. Marriage among the Christians admits of no division in our affection, and it remains thus until ended by death."

"So you would never consent to leave Olintus?"

Cecilia paused before she answered this singular question, and gazed with surprise at Aurelia. The tremulous voice and anxious face of the young patrician left no doubt as to the great interest she felt in this inquiry.

Cecilia reflected that her kind young benefactress had perhaps conceived some project concerning her establishment, and was about to ask her to renounce Olintus and to take another great firmness:

"Olintus and I are only betrothed, madam, and these rules do not as yet apply entirely to us. . . But we have chosen each other. . . I have given him my heart. . . I looked upon him already as my husband . . . and for no motive would I sacrifice an affection in which I have placed my happiness."

"You said for no motive, did you not, my little Cecilia?" repeated Aurelia, evidently delighted by this answer.

"Yes, madam," replied Cecilia in the same calm and solemn tone. "Even to save my life I would not renounce Olintus!"

Aurelia felt like kissing the artless young girl again, for the pleasure this clearly expressed resolve gave her; but she was impeded to come to the question which interested her personally.

"Suppose," she resumed, "that you had to choose between Olintus and your religion—what would you do?"

"Ah! this is a different thing," replied Cecilia quickly. "I married Aurelia. . . Does not your law forbid the husband to abandon his wife, and the wife her husband?"

"Suppose you were already married, would you give up Olintus?"

"Certainly, madam, if to keep Olintus I had to renounce God. God is above Olintus, and our law teaches us to sacrifice everything for Him."

"Cecilia, what you say is impossible! . . . You would not do it. . ."

"I have done it, my dear mistress," said the young girl, with touching simplicity, "if she could not understand the object of all these questions, she saw the opportunity of giving the questioner a great lesson in Christianity."

"You have done it! . . . When?"

"When I was in Parmenton's hands. With one word I could have obtained my freedom, and, with it, Olintus. I did not speak that word, for it would have been betraying my God and my brethren."

"It is true," murmured Aurelia, "yes, it is true! . . . Vespasian would have the same strength! . . . Oh! I must lose all hope!"

Her sobs choked further utterance. Cecilia had shown her the greatness of a Christian soul often struggling with the dearest sentiments and conquering them by the holy austerity of duty. Cecilia, like her, was young, and loved with a pure and fervent affection, and yet she had sacrificed everything, her happiness, her love, and even her life, for the sake of her God. Aurelia remembered the bleeding scars left on the poor girl's delicate shoulders by the torturer's lash—touching proofs of her constancy.

Here was a great example for the young patrician; but it overwhelmed her, for she felt now that Vespasian must also prefer his God to her love; she had read in his eyes the sad firmness and calm resolve of a Christian who will not compromise himself to understand the law of duty.

Cecilia had seen the tears of the noble young girl, and she understood at once why she flowed. She clasped in her arms the daughter of the Caesars, and wept silently with her. It was a touching picture . . . Cecilia sobbed the young patrician, "this sorrow will kill me!"

"My beloved mistress, can the Caesar Vespasian perjure himself?"

"So, Vespasian would renounce the empire? . . . Even I would be nothing to him!"

"But why suppose that the Caesar will have to undergo this trial. . . Does any one threaten him?"

"No, but this may happen sooner or later. . . In it is this which frightens me since I know that he is a Christian. And then?"

Cecilia lavished her tender caresses upon the all-acted young girl, but hesitated to answer those pressing questions.

"Tell me," resumed Aurelia, "would Olintus have such contempt for your love?"

"Madam," replied Cecilia with much feeling, "I would, if it need be, soften the pain of Olintus's sacrifice, by encouraging him myself."

"Oh!" exclaimed Aurelia, "and you say that you love your betrothed?"

"It is because I love him that I would prefer his happiness to mine."

"What do you mean?" His happiness?"

"Oh! God, my dear mistress, may sometimes impose upon us painful duties, but He rewards us a hundred-fold for what we suffer in His name! This is what makes our strength."

"My cousin, Flavia Domitilla, told me this already. . . She added that the inflictions of God were necessary to purify the soul."

"Nor life, even, my dear mistress," said Cecilia, interrupting her with affectionate respect.

Aurelia hung down her head, and remained silent. The bright example of Cecilia for a guide presented by Cecilia could not fail to make a deep impression upon the young patrician's mind. Aurelia abandoned herself involuntarily to the charm of this grateful affection which gradually opened her heart to resignation and hope.

At that period, moreover, Christianity, like unto the morning flower still wet with the dew of the night, and impregnated with its fragrance, filled the soul with its penetrating perfume; it often happened that from a single word, an example, a thought, sown in that soil already prepared by mysterious aspirations, faith sprang forth, to grow and blossom suddenly under a divine breath.

And who more than the young patrician had felt the genial warmth of this Christian atmosphere with which she was, so to speak, surrounded? Nevertheless, a single day was not sufficient to conquer these vacillations of a rebellious heart, or to temper this great sorrow, breaking forth in loud groans.

The two young girls remained a long while together. When Cecilia took leave of Aurelia, the latter no longer felt the bitter despondency which had followed her guardian's departure. She had now a loving heart to sympathize with and console her.

Cecilia's marriage did not make her renounce the work of love and gratitude she had undertaken. She pursued it with indefatigable devotion, and her gentle words, her modest virtues and great faith, had a blissful influence on the mind and heart of the young pagan whose soul she wished to save.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THOUGHTS ON THE SACRED HEART.

The love of the Cross was the crowning perfection of the Sacred Heart. The Heart of Jesus wills that the hearts that are His should be detached from everything and from themselves. —Blessed Margaret Mary.

Resignation in suffering is the way to be pleasing and united to the Heart of Jesus.

Ye who love truth will come to the Heart of Jesus, because it is truth; ye who seek glory, because it is also who fly to the battle, because heart has never conquered as the Heart of Jesus has done. —Mgr. Parq. Bishop of Algiers.

In that Temple, in that Holy of Holies, in that Ark of the Covenant, I will adore and praise the name of the Lord, saying with David: "I have found my heart to pray to my God." And for me, I have found the Heart of my King, my Brother, my kind Friend Jesus. Shall I not then adore It?—St. Bernard.

You will enter into the Heart of Jesus as into a school in which you are one of His disciples. In this school is learned the science of pure love, which makes us forget all worldly sciences. You will listen attentively to the teaching of your Master, who says to you: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls."—Blessed Margaret Mary.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist is His Prisoner. The Tabernacle is His prison and love is His chain.

My blood, my sufferings—love makes these goods common to us both, but generosity should be reciprocal; and I also desire to possess thee entirely, without reserve or division. On this day you will perform all your actions in the spirit of love.

THE LESSON OF SPAIN'S DECADENCE.

In reply to the statement that the decaying condition of Spain is due to the influence of the Catholic Hierarchy, and that all the present trouble came from that, Cardinal Moran, of Sydney, said: "As a matter of fact, the decay of that wonderful power of Spain dates from the decline of its religious spirit."

The height of Spain's glory was in the days of Charles V., when it was the most Catholic power in the world, but from the year 1700 up to the present, internal dissension and warring against the Church may be said to have been the distinctive feature of Spanish government. Whatever decay there is in Spain must be assigned to these political dissensions, and to constant combat against the Catholic Church. For instance, all the Church property throughout Spain has been confiscated by different political parties about half a dozen times since the year 1700.

About the middle of last century a special war was directed against the religious bodies, when the Jesuits were all thrown into prison and their property seized by the government. As late as the year 1834 all the Catholic schools and seminaries were suppressed, and out of a Hierarchy of sixty Bishops about fifty were expelled from their sees and sent into banishment, while every penny of property belonging to the Church throughout Spain was appropriated for Government purposes. That does not seem to indicate that the Government of Spain is controlled by the Catholic Hierarchy. To account for that spirit of hostility to the Church in the Government of Spain one has only to look to the Bourbon dynasty which occupied the Spanish throne in 1700. With this French influence in Spain the religious principles of the French Court gained a mastery. The teachings of Voltaire guided for fifty years the policy of the Spanish Government. Hence, though the people were intensely Catholic, and most fervent and devout in their Catholic exercises the Government was in open hostility to the Church." Spain has been undergoing a systematic robbery for years. Whenever appropriations which would be for the betterment of the people have been made, the money, instead of being used for the purposes intended, has been pocketed by the unscrupulous God-denying politicians. With such men at the head of a Government, is it any wonder that the throne would totter?

It is a Liver Pill. . . Many of the ailments that man has to contend with have their origin in a disordered liver, which is a delicate organ, peculiarly susceptible to the disturbances that come from irregular habits or lack of care in eating or drinking. This accounts for the great many liver regulators now pressed on the attention of sufferers. Of these there is none superior to Farneley's Vegetable Pills. Their operation though gentle is effective, and the most delicate case will be cured.

HOW DOLAN SAVED THE TR.

BY EDWARD J. JEIDELL.