



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE

VOL. XX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, SEPT. 24, 1869.

No. 6

(From the Catholic Mirror.)

AURELIA;

OR,

THE JEWS OF CAPENA GATE.

Freely Translated from the French of M. A. Quinton

PART SECOND.—THE SLAVE.

CHAPTER IV.—PARMENON'S REGISTER.

On the morning following the nocturnal conversation between Eutrapelus and Gurgus and the short consultation which had afterwards taken place between the former and Marcus Regulus, a stranger presented himself in the barber's shop soon after it had been opened. This stranger was no other than Parmenon, the slave trader; but he no longer wore the gaudy toga we have seen him wearing whilst attending his calling: his dark-colored tunic was almost concealed under the folds of a wide 'pallium' or mantle. 'I am sent,' said Parmenon to the tonsor whom he found alone in his shop, 'by the lord Marcus Regulus, for the business you know of.' 'Ah very well,' said Eutrapelus; 'I see that the lord Marcus Regulus loses no time. You are welcome.' 'Here,' resumed Parmenon, 'are the ten thousand sestertii which it has been agreed to pay Gurgus, and here is the register which will prove the transfer to me of that amount.' Parmenon unrolled the connected leaves of a roll of papyrus of a common kind, and proceeded to explain the writing to the barber. 'You see,' said he, 'here is the 'acceptum' on this side, and the 'expensum' on that, which is sufficient to show that I have paid in order to receive. The vesipillo must sign at the bottom of these two columns during the day.' 'Gurgus cannot come before night,' remarked Eutrapelus. 'Very well,' said Parmenon, 'I shall call for my register at the hour you generally see the lord Marcus Regulus. He will not come tonight. See that the register be properly signed.' And Parmenon went out after nodding to Eutrapelus in a rather discourteous manner. 'I don't like this fellow,' mused the tonsor. 'He looks like a real 'parricide's sack!' (the sack in which parricides were drowned contained a dog, a cock, a viper, and a monkey. The proverbial designation 'parricide's sack' was used to designate the assemblage, in one person, of all kinds of wickedness). After all Regulus has his own reasons for employing him; it is none of my business.' At the hour appointed Parmenon called for his register. He found it duly signed by Gurgus. The vesipillo had readily consented to the transfer by which he got back the ten thousand sestertii he had considered lost. He could not understand, however, why any one should exchange those pretty gold pieces for a claim against an insolvent debtor like Cecilius. On the following day, Parmenon, still wearing his dark tunic and his 'pallium' and carrying his register under his arm, could be seen awaiting the opening of the court of Publius Aufidius Namusa, one of the seventeen pretors who administered justice in Rome. When this magistrate had taken his seat, and his crier (accensus) had asked aloud whether any citizen had a case for trial, Parmenon unrolled his register before the pretor, and requested him to see that his claim against Cecilius was legal, certain and demandable. Aufidius Namusa ordered an action to be entered against the fiscal agent, and Parmenon went away rejoicing. During the day, an 'executor litum' or 'viator,' that is to say a constable, called on Cecilius. 'I summon you in Parmenon's name; follow me to the court,' said the 'viator,' putting a written citation in the hands of the astonished Cecilius. 'I do not know this Parmenon, and I owe him nothing,' remarked Cecilius. 'This, the Pretor Publius Aufidius Namusa will decide,' replied the 'viator.' 'If you should refuse, I would touch this witness' ear,' he added, pointing to a man who had accompanied him, 'and I would take you by the neck, in conformity with the law of the Twelve Tables. However, you have until to-morrow to make up your mind, for this is an uncertain day ('Interdies dies').' Cecilius after due reflection, came to the conclusion that he could not do otherwise than appear before the pretor. He there found Parmenon, who had taken care not to forget his register. The pretor requested Parmenon to swear, ac-

ording to the provisions of the law, that in bringing this suit he had not been actuated by a feeling of chicanery or revenge, and that he did not claim more than was due to him. Parmenon hesitated to take the required oath. Aufidius Namusa then told him to state his claim and to show Cecilius his register. These two formalities having been complied with, the pretor invited Cecilius to declare whether he acknowledged the debt, or if he denied it, to state upon what grounds. Cecilius admitted that he owed ten thousand sestertii to Gurgus; but remarked that he could not understand why Gurgus should have transferred his claim to Parmenon, unless it were through motives of revenge because Cecilia had refused to marry him. This argument had little weight in law; 'Dico,' said the pretor, which was affirming Parmenon's right. 'Consequently,' he continued, 'I adjudge the body of Cecilius to the said Parmenon.' And he ordered the crier to call the next case. 'I don't understand,' faltered Cecilius, rolling his ear between his fingers—a way embarrassed people have had from times immemorial. 'You don't understand!' quote Parmenon brutally as he retired. 'It means that if by to-morrow you have not paid me ten thousand sestertii, I shall put my hand on your tunic, and you will belong to me.' Cecilius began to comprehend, but ten thousand sestertii are no small sum for a poor man to find, and the wretched tax-gatherer saw no issue to his dilemma. 'This Parmenon has gained his suit very easily,' remarked a stranger who had followed the case with interest, and who was walking by the side of Cecilius. 'Marcus Regulus shrugged his shoulders when he heard the judgment.' Cecilius heard the remark and conceived a hope! 'Who is this Marcus Regulus, and what did he say?' asked the unfortunate suitor, approaching the stranger. 'Marcus Regulus is the first lawyer of Rome,' replied the latter; 'and he was saying that he would have compelled this Parmenon to carry away his register without obtaining anything.' 'Indeed!' exclaimed Cecilius; 'Marcus Regulus said this! Is he still in the Forum?' 'Yes, there he is, amidst that group of pleaders. I would advise to speak to him; he will give you some means of escaping from Parmenon's clutches,' said the stranger, pointing out the lawyer who, on his side, had lost nothing of this by-play unnoticed by others. Cecilius went straight up to Marcus Regulus, to whom he explained his case in a few words, asking him whether there was any means of obtaining a reversion of the judgment. 'We shall see about it,' replied Marcus Regulus, 'I think we may find some remedy. But, at present, as you see, I am detained here by other engagements. Come to see me to-morrow morning, early; my house is beyond the Tiber.' Cecilius turned his steps homeward, feeling a little easier in mind. But the poor fellow had not seen the end of his troubles. When he arrived home he found a communication from the City Prefect, enjoining him to explain his suspected affiliation with the Jews or Christians of Capena Gate; then a summons from the Council of the Pontiffs, to answer an accusation of sacrilege based on the fact that the little god Jugatinus had been found lying broken on the public highway, in front of his house. Could it be that some officious neighbor, having collected those mutilated fragments, had really carried them to the Pontiffs, and in his indignation, had brought this accusation against Cecilius? or did the blow come from a hand more directly interested in his ruin? The unfortunate man did not even think of propounding to himself these questions, overcome as he was by the triple calamity with which he was threatened: to be in Parmenon's clutches, to lose his situation, and, what was still more serious, to be accused of sacrilege before the Pontiff's court! 'Cecilia!' he cried, in a voice of thunder; 'come here, unworthy child!' The young girl hastened to her father's presence. Since the scene witnessed by Gurgus, she had not left the house. Her father had forbidden it. Cecilius had ascertained without difficulty that, as alleged, his daughter was a Christian, that she was about to marry a Jew, and that old Petronilla had been the cause of all this trouble. He was furious! Whatever religious convictions he had, revolted at the idea that his daughter had embraced the odious superstitions of those miserable Jews, the most despised of men; and he foresaw the misfortunes likely to happen to him, the agent of the law, and commissioned to enforce it in all its rigor

towards a detested class, when it should be known that his own daughter had been initiated to their sacrilegious and impious creed. He had therefore signified to his daughter that she must give up her new faith, or he would compel her even if he had to use the extraordinary power conferred by the law to its fullest extent. Meanwhile he placed her under the closest surveillance, to prevent any communication between her and those who, in his judgment, had caused her ruin. When Cecilia came down she found her father in a state of terrible excitement. 'Wretched child!' he cried, 'here then are the fruits of your infamous conduct!' And he showed her the writ in Parmenon's name, the citation to appear before the Pontiff's and the Prefect's letter. 'So,' he continued, 'I am ruined, my freedom is in the hands of a wretch, my life is in danger, because my daughter has betrayed her father and her gods!... Come, Cecilia, have you reflected? For you must speak now!—Will you renounce that abominable creed?' 'How, my dear father, could the sacrifice of my faith save you? would your misfortunes if they exist, be remedied?' 'If they exist! Great Gods! Have I invented them?' 'No, father! but it is not you they threaten, it is me!' 'How is that?' 'The City Prefect will not displace you when you will have told him that your daughter alone is a Christian. The Pontiffs will not punish you, but me, when they learn that I broke the idol.' 'And Parmenon?' 'Parmenon will have no power when his claim is satisfied.' 'By Hercules! the girl has a charming, easy way of arranging this!' cried Cecilius with bitter irony. 'Indeed, it is foolish in me to feel alarmed! Oh! how like the way of those perfidious Jews this is! They have a ready answer for the most difficult questions! Unfortunate child!' added the father, addressing his daughter with a certain tenderness, 'can you not understand that all is lost if you persist in proclaiming yourself a Christian! and that all is saved if you will abjure at the feet of the Pontiffs!' 'Father, said Cecilia, in a firm and respectful tone; 'do not expect that I shall ever renounce the religion of Christ. Better die than.....' 'What! you would persist in this infamous creed, at the risk of destroying your own prospects, and, what you do not seem to care much about, at the risk of consuming your father's ruin, and perhaps of imperilling his liberty and his life!' 'It would be a dreadful thing, O my father! it would be for me a source of everlasting sorrow, if I should be the cause of your misfortune! but, I repeat it, you are unnecessarily alarmed, and.....' 'And?' asked Cecilius, trembling with fear and rage, 'And?..... Proceed, unnatural child!' 'O father, take my life..... it belongs to you..... and I would be happy to lay it down for you..... but do not ask of me a sacrifice which I cannot make.' Cecilius, pale with rage, was fearful to behold. He raised his hand, as if to strike or curse his daughter! But a sudden thought made him withhold the blow. 'You are no longer my daughter!' he exclaimed vehemently; 'no, by all the gods; I disown you! But I shall crush you, as I crush this vase which, like you, is mine!' And seizing an amphora upon the table he dashed it on the floor. 'Father, father!' said Cecilia imploringly. 'What is it you wish to say? that you repent? that you will renounce this cursed superstition?' asked Cecilius looking at her with a madman's gaze. 'Never!' said the young girl making a supreme effort; and, overcome by her emotion, she fell, sobbing bitterly, on a seat. Her father cast on her a glance full of sadness and bitter sorrow, and left her without speaking another word; but as he went out he muttered to himself: 'This consultation with Marcus Regulus is more necessary than ever.'

CHAPTER V.—A LEGAL CONSULTATION.

Marcus Atilius Regulus possessed more wealth than many illustrious patricians. In his youth, he once offered a sacrifice to the gods, for the purpose of learning whether he would ever possess sixty millions sestertii; and he often related, himself, how, on that occasion, the entrails of the victims happening to be double, he had understood this omen to mean that this immense sum was twice promised to him. He had, in fact, accumulated this incredible amount, but by the most abject and infamous

means. His career may be divided into three distinct periods. During the first, which extends from Nero's reign to those of Vespasian and Titus, he served his apprenticeship in those crimes which subsequently won him such untimely fame. His father, banished by Claudius or by Nero, having left him no patrimony, he had felt at an early age the thirst for blood and the insatiable craving for gold—'Libidine sanguinis et huius præmiorum,' says Tacitus with inimitable force of style—and he had inaugurated his entrance into the bar, by becoming instrumental in three odious murders perpetrated by Nero upon his accusers. These murders were those of Marcus Licinius Crassus, great-grand-son of the famous orator, who was also one of the wealthiest citizens of Rome during the last years of the republic; and of Camerinus and Salvadius Orphitus about whose rank and quality little is said by the historians. The accusation against Crassus brought in Regulus seven million sestertii; those against Camerinus and Salvadius Orphitus were paid with the questorship and the sacerdotal dignity. During the second period, which comprises the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, informers were looked upon with disfavor. Regulus endeavored to retain his seat in the Senate, but he was crushed under the burning words of Curtius Moutanus, and ignominiously expelled from that illustrious body. He returned to the bar where shone such men as Satrius Rufus, Pompeius Saturninus. Sætonius the author of the life of the 'Twelve Cæsars,' Satrius Liberalis, Cornelius Tacitus, the great historian, Caius Fronto, Tuscilius Nominatus, Claudius Restitutus, and Pliny the Younger, the greatest orator among them. We need not say that Regulus was despised by his colleagues. During the third period—Domitian's reign—Marcus Regulus resumed his trade of informer and spy. It was not, however, by acting openly as he had done in former times, but by secret denunciations and dark undertakings that he endeavored to win Domitian's favor. He vied in infamous zeal with Metius Carus, a vile informer, but less dangerous than Regulus, and who could scarcely brook the latter's competition. Herennius Senecionus having been condemned and put to death through the accusations of Metius Carus, simply because he had eulogized Helvidius Priscus, the son in law of Thraseus, and one of Nero's victims, Regulus, jealous of having had no share in so meritorious a denunciation, attempted to connect himself with it by pursuing with his insults the memory of Herennius. But his rival could not bear this interference, and checked him in the midst of his facile triumph, with this terrible apostrophe: 'What have you to do with my dead? Have you seen me torment Crassus and Camerinus?' Marcus Regulus was certainly, as one of his victims wrote to Domitian: the most wicked of two-legged animals—'omniur bipedum nequissimus.' He was also the most skilful of plotters. We have already seen how he had woven a web around Flavius Clemens, the Grand-Vestal and Metellus Celer. He had found a most useful tool in the loquacious Eutrapelus, in whose shop he picked up, almost every night, some valuable information. The conversation between Gurgus and Eutrapelus, overheard by Regulus from his hiding place in the barber's 'tepadarium,' had admirably served his purpose, for he had acquired the certainty that Flavia Domitilla was a Christian, entertaining relations with the Jews of Capena Gate; and, at the same time, he had learned the name of the young girl through whom it would be easy—so he thought, at least—to penetrate the mysteries he was so anxious to discover. But before all, he must have the girl in his power. If this might have seemed difficult to others, it was nothing for a tactician like Marcus Regulus. His plan was promptly conceived, and he made the most of every circumstance mentioned by the vesipillo. He imagined, first, to bring forward Parmenon, in order that he might have a hold on Cecilius, who being without resources must fear for his liberty. Then he completed his plan of campaign against the poor tax-gatherer by the Prefect's letter and the citation before the Pontiff's court, for, the reader must have surmised it, these documents found by Cecilius on his return home, had been sent at this arch-plotter's suggestion. He it was who had sent the officious stranger to the Forum to lend the defeated pleader into the snare, by showing him Marcus Regulus as the only man who could save him from Parmenon. Marcus Regulus now felt sure that Cecilius would come, and he was confidently expecting him, when his nomenclator introduced Cecilia's

unhappy father in his exedra or consultation room. A single window admitted the light in this vast room, around which were placed purple covered seats or beds for the visitors. The four angles were occupied by the brazen statues of Apollo, the god of eloquence and wisdom; of Minerva, the goddess of science and poetry; of Hercules, the emblem of strength; and of Cupid, the god of love and the emblem of literary grace. Above the seats and running up as high as the hand could reach, could be seen a number of little balls, some gilded and the others simply made of wood, of bone, or of horn. These were the bosses or 'umbilici' of the books placed in their 'scrinia' or 'foruli,' cylindrical cases, with round holes in the top into which the volumes, carefully rolled, were slipped. Generally, these 'scrinia' were placed on their end, around the room, but Regulus had adopted the system introduced by the booksellers in their shops, and which consisted in the cutting small square compartments or pigeon-holes, in the thickness of the wall, into which the 'scrinia' were placed horizontally. The number of books contained in these nests was quite considerable and had been collected at great cost, for Regulus aspired to the triple fame of the juriconsult, the eloquent lawyer, and the writer; and the choice of his books corresponded with this ambition. The table placed in the centre of the exedra was covered with briefs and documents, with wax tablets and styles for taking notes; with pergamins and immaculate sheets of papyrus for writing petitions and pleadings. There could also be seen the long calami which served as pens; the small cylindrical vases containing a gummy preparation for connecting together the papyrus sheets. The rollers or sticks were piled there, ready to receive the completed manuscripts and their umbilici. When Cecilius entered the exedra, the lawyer seemed to be busily engaged in examining some manuscripts; but an oblique glance thrown on his visitor was sufficient to identify the latter. An imperceptible smile lighted his features. 'What is it? What do you want?' he asked feigning at first not to recognize Cecilius; then he resumed 'Ah! very well; it is you who spoke to me yesterday, concerning one Parmenon....' 'Yes, sir,' replied Cecilius; 'but since yesterday, my position has undergone a strange complication.' 'How is that?' asked the lawyer. 'What new incident has occurred?' Cecilius handed him the Prefect's letter and the citation of the Pontiffs. Regulus feigned to read the two documents with the greatest attention. 'This is nothing,' he remarked to Cecilius after a pause, and he crumpled the Prefect's letter; 'I am particularly acquainted with Honoratus Messio, and with a word of explanation from me, the matter will be dropped. But this is much more serious,' he added, putting his forefinger on the Pontiff's citation. 'Is this charge true?' 'Unfortunately, it is,' faltered Cecilius.—'However, it was not I, but my daughter who broke the statue of the little god Jugatinus.' 'Your daughter lives with you, and under your paternal authority?' asked the lawyer with peculiar emphasis. 'Of course she does,' replied Cecilius. 'Then, it amounts to the same thing. It is the same as if you had committed the sacrilege yourself: 'Quia vox tua tanquam filii, sicuti filii vox tanquam tua intelligitur, say the juriconsults in their figurative style.' 'By Jupiter! Is it possible?' exclaimed the poor man. 'Did you not understand the quotation? Well, let us put 'manus' in the place of 'vox,' and the meaning will be: 'that thy hand is like the hand of thy son, and the hand of thy son like thine.' Is this clear?' 'And what is the penalty?' asked the wretched Cecilius, with evident anxiety. 'But, Marcus Regulus, thinking probably that the time had not come to satisfy his client on this point, replied by putting this other question: 'And what was the motive for this sacrilege?' 'My daughter is a Christian!' 'Your daughter is a Christian?' exclaimed Regulus with well assumed astonishment. 'Oh! this is serious! very serious! I understand now Honoratus Messio's letter.... and I don't know if he can show himself as leniently disposed as I hoped. No, it is scarcely probable. Let us see, however,' he resumed, 'the case may not be so bad after all. If your daughter would renounce this infamous superstition, I am sure the Pontiffs could pronounce themselves satisfied. Have you tried to persuade her?' 'Alas! yes,' replied the unhappy father dejectedly; 'but I have not succeeded.