Book 3

Sidonius Apollinaris (c. AD 430–490)

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I.

To his friend Avitus c. A. D. 472

[1] FROM our earliest boyhood and through our youth you and I have been linked by many bonds of mutual affection. To begin with, our mothers were very near relations. Then we were born about the same time and were contemporaries at school; we were together initiated into the study of the arts and employed our leisure in the same amusements; we were promoted by the same imperial favour; we were colleagues in the service of the state. Lastly, in personal likings and antipathies our judgement has always agreed----perhaps a stronger and more efficient factor this, in widening the scope of friendship than all the rest together. [2] The outward resemblance of our careers drew us together by the bond of similar occupation; inwardly we were less alike, for yours was by far the higher and more excellent nature. And now I gladly recognize that yours is the hand to crown the edifice of our long mutual regard by this most timely endowment of the church in our poor town of Clermont, whose unworthy bishop I am. In this estate of Cutiacum, lying almost at its gates, you have indeed made an important addition to its property; to the members of our sacred profession whom your generosity has thus enriched, the convenience of access counts for almost as much as the revenue which the place yields. [3] Under your late sister's will, you were only a co-heir, but the example of your piety has already moved your surviving sister to emulate your good works.

And heaven has already repaid you as you deserve for your own deed and its effect upon her; God has chosen you out to be exalted by unusual good fortune in inheritances. He did not long delay to reward your devotion a hundredfold, and it is our sure belief that these earthly gifts will be followed by heavenly gifts hereafter. I may tell you, if you are really unaware of it, that the Nicetian succession is heaven's repayment for Cutiacum surrendered. [4] We pray you in the future to extend to the city itself the interest you have already shown its church; henceforward it should be more than ever the object of your protection since you have inherited a property there. You may conclude from the attitude of the Goths how valuable the place might become if you would only make it frequent visits; they are always depreciating their own Septimania,1 and even talking of returning it to the empire, all because they covet this land of yours, which they would like to annex even if everything

upon it were laid waste. [5] But by God's grace and your mediation a more tranquil outlook lies before us.

For though the Goths have broken their old bounds, though their valour and the impetus of a vague greed have pushed their frontiers to the Rhône and Loire, yet the esteem in which you are held and the weight your opinion carries, should so influence both sides that we shall learn to refuse when we ought, and they to refrain from further demands when met with a firm denial. Farewell.

II.

To his friend Constantius A. D. 474

[1] THE people of Clermont salute you, a great guest in their lowly homes,1 coming without ambitious retinue and simply environed by their love. Merciful God, what joy they felt amid their tribulation when you set your venerated foot within their half-ruined walls. How dense was the crowd of both sexes, and of every rank and age about you; how impartially you gave a cheering word to one and all; how kind the small boys found you, how considerate the young men, how helpful in advice the older among us. What tears you shed over our buildings ruined by the flames and our homes half burned to the ground, as if you had been the father of us all. What grief you showed at the sight of fields buried under the bones of the unburied dead. And afterwards what a power of encouragement you were, with what spirit you urged the people to repair their loss. [2] Over and above this, you found the city no less desolated by internal dissension than by the barbarian onslaught; but you conciliated all; you renewed their harmony; you gave the country back her sons. The walls are re-manned, the people restored to them at unity, all thanks to you; your counsel it was which brought them back into one mind as into one city. They all regard you as their father and themselves as your children; they perceive with an infallible eye wherein lies your greatest title to praise.

[3] For day by day it is borne in upon their minds what a magnificent thing this is that you have done at so advanced an age and in so delicate and infirm a state of health. Despite your noble birth and the veneration with which you are regarded, you broke down every barrier by sheer force of love; all the difficulties of the journey were nothing to you, long ways and short days, thick snows and thin fare, wide wastes and narrow lodging,1 roads full of holes, now sodden with rain, now ribbed with frost, highways covered with rough stones, rivers slippery with ice; you had steep hills to climb, valleys choked with continual landslides to pass; through every discomfort you came triumphant with the love of a whole people for your reward because your own comfort was the last thing of which you thought. [4] And now we beseech the Lord that he may hear our prayer and set far the term of your life; that the friendship of all good men may be yours to have and hold; that our affection which you seem to be leaving behind may ever be about your path; and finally, that the fair structure

of our concord which you began to restore, may be regarded from foundation to summit as your peculiar work. Farewell.

III.

To his brother-in-law Ecdicius A. D. 474

[1] THERE never was a time when my people of Clermont needed you so much as now; their affection for you is a ruling passion for more than one reason. First, because a man's native soil may rightly claim the chief place in his affection; secondly, because you were not only your countrymen's joy at birth, but the desire of their hearts while yet unborn. Perhaps of no other man in this age can the same be said; but the proof of the statement is that as your mother's time advanced, the citizens with one accord fell to checking every day as it went by. [2] I will not dwell on those common things which yet so deeply stir a man's heart, as that here was the grass on which as an infant you crawled, or that here were the first fields you trod, the first rivers you swam, the first woods through which you broke your way in the chase. I will not remind you that here you first played ball and cast the dice, here you first knew sport with hawk and hound, with horse and bow. I will forget that your schooldays brought us a veritable confluence of learners and the learned from all quarters, and that if our nobles were imbued with the love of eloquence and poetry, if they resolved to forsake the barbarous Celtic dialect, it was to your personality that they owed all.

[3] Nothing so kindled their universal regard for you as this, that you first made Romans of them and never allowed them to relapse again.1 And how should the vision of you ever fade from any patriot's memory as we saw you in your glory upon that famous day, when a crowd of both sexes and every rank and age lined our half-ruined walls to watch you cross the space between us and the enemy? At midday, and right across the middle of the plain, you brought your little company of eighteen 2 safe through some thousands of the Goths, a feat which posterity will surely deem incredible. [4] At the sight of you, nay, at the very rumour of your name, those seasoned troops were smitten with stupefaction; their captains were so amazed that they never stopped to note how great their own numbers were and yours how small. They drew off their whole force to the brow of a steep hill; they had been besiegers before, but when you appeared they dared not even deploy for action. You cut down some of their bravest, whom gallantry alone had led to defend the rear. You never lost a man in that sharp engagement, and found yourself sole master of an absolutely exposed plain with no more soldiers to back you than you often have guests at your own table.

[5] Imagination may better conceive than words describe the procession that streamed out to you as you made your leisurely way towards the city, the greetings, the shouts of applause, the tears of heartfelt joy. One saw you receiving in the press a veritable ovation on this glad return; the courts of your spacious house were crammed with people. Some kissed away the dust of battle from your person, some took from the horses the bridles slimed with foam and blood, some inverted and ranged the sweat-drenched saddles; others undid the flexible cheek-pieces of the helmet you longed to remove, others set about unlacing your greaves. One saw folk counting the notches in swords blunted by much slaughter, or measuring with trembling fingers the holes made in cuirasses by cut or thrust. [6] Crowds danced with joy and hung upon your comrades; but naturally the full brunt of popular delight was borne by you. You were among unarmed men at last; but not all your arms would have availed to extricate you from them. There you stood, with a fine grace suffering the silliest congratulations; half torn to pieces by people madly rushing to salute you, but so loyally responsive to this popular devotion that those who took the greatest liberties seemed surest of your most generous acknowledgements. [7] And finally I shall say nothing of the service you performed in raising what was practically a public force from your private resources, and with little help from our magnates.

I shall not tell of the chastisement you inflicted on the barbaric raiders, and the curb imposed upon an audacity which had begun to exceed all bounds; or of those surprise attacks which annihilated whole squadrons with the loss of only two or three men on your side. Such disasters did you inflict upon the enemy by these unexpected onsets, that they resorted to a most unworthy device to conceal their heavy losses. They decapitated all whom they could not bury in the short night-hours, and let the headless lie, forgetting in their desire to avoid the identification of their dead, that a trunk would betray their ruin just as well as a whole body. [8] When, with morning light, they saw their miserable artifice revealed in all its savagery, they turned at last to open obsequies; but their precipitation disguised the ruse no better than the ruse itself had concealed the slaughter. They did not even raise a temporary mound of earth over the remains; the dead were neither washed, shrouded, nor interred; but the imperfect rites they received befitted the manner of their death. Bodies were brought in from everywhere, piled on dripping wains; and since you never paused a moment in following up the rout, they had to be taken into houses which were then hurriedly set alight, till the fragments of blazing roofs, falling in upon them, formed their funeral pyres. [9] But I run on beyond my proper limits;

my aim in writing was not to reconstruct the whole story of your achievements, but to remind you of a few among them, to convince you how eagerly your friends here long to see you again; there is only one remedy, at once quick and efficacious, for such fevered expectancy as theirs, and that is your prompt return. If, then, the entreaties of our people can persuade you, sound the retreat and start homeward at once. The intimacy of kings is dangerous; 1 court it no more; the most distinguished of mankind have well compared it to a flame, which illuminates things at a short distance but consumes them if they come within its range. Farewell.

IV.

To his friend Magnus Felix A.D. 473 [1] THE bearer of this is Gozolas, a Jew, and a client of your excellency, a man I should like if I could only overcome my contempt for his sect. I write in great anxiety. Our town lives in terror of a sea of tribes which find in it an obstacle to their expansion and surge in arms all round it. We are exposed as a pitiful prey at the mercy of rival peoples, suspected by the Burgundians, almost in contact with the Goths; we have to face at once the fury of our assailants and the envy of our defenders.2 [2] But of this more later. Only let me know that all goes well with you, and I shall be content. For though we may be punished in the sight of all men for some obscure offence, we are still generous enough of heart to desire for others all prosperity. If a man cannot wish others well in evil times he is no better than a captive; the enemy that takes him is his own unworthy nature. Farewell.

V.

To his friend Hypatius A.D. 473

[1] THE excellent Donidius admires and respects your character; and had he no other aim than his own family advantage, he might safely confide in your acknowledged reputation, and feel no need of another's advocacy. But he thinks so well of me, that he would have me ask for him what he could certainly obtain alone. Consequently, you will acquire a crowning title of distinction in making both of us your debtors, though one alone will reap the material benefit. [2] He seeks to acquire the other moiety of the estate of Eborolacum,1 abandoned even before the barbarian came, but now in possession of a patrician family; his rights are clear, but the added weight of your support would be very welcome. Respect for the memory of his ancestors, and no mere greed, inclines him to this purchase, for down to the recent death of his stepfather the whole property belonged to his family. He is of an economical turn of mind, but not the man to covet his neighbour's goods; the loss of a former possession in itself troubles him little; the point of honour decides him; it is not avarice which prompts his action, but the shame of inactivity. [3] Deign therefore to consider what you owe to your own credit, to his honourable desire, to my friendly intercession; help to secure for him this chance of rounding off the estate. These paternal acres are not just casually known to him; he crawled upon them as an infant hardly weaned. He will make little profit by their recovery; but he feels that it would have been too contemptible not to make the effort. Whatever favour you may be able to accord to one whom I regard as a brother in years, a son by profession, a fellow citizen by origin, and a friend by loyalty, I shall be as much beholden as if the matter turned to my own particular advantage. Farewell.

VI.

To his friend Eutropius A. D. 470 (?) [1] IF kind memories still remain to you of our old comradeship and of an intimacy ever and again renewed, you will readily understand that our soaring wishes will follow your ascent to each new height of office. We rejoice with you over your insignia, believing that thereby your house and our friendship are alike promoted. In proof whereof I remind you of my letter of exhortations 1, which I think had no small share in this result. [2] But what trouble I had in persuading you that a man might be a philosopher and a prefect at the same time! You were deep in the tenets of Plotinus, and the Platonic school had seduced you into a quietism unsuited to your age. I maintained that only a man without family obligations was free to profess a philosophy of that nature. Most people ascribed your scorn for public service to simple indolence; malignant tongues added that our nobles fail to rise in the state less from disinclination than incapacity. [3] Now, therefore, as a Christian should, I begin by rendering unstinted thanks to Our Lord who has raised you to an official rank befitting your exalted birth; our hopes are also raised, so that we may fairly look for even better things to come. It is a common saying with provincials that a good year really depends less on ample crops than on a good administration;1 it must be yours, honoured lord, to crown all our expectations by such measures as the present occasion demands. Our nobles do not forget the stock from which you spring; they are sure that so long as the family of Sabinus controls their destinies, they have nothing to fear from the house of Sabinianus.2 Farewell.

VII.

To his friend [Magnus] Felix A.D. 474

[1] You are very sparing in your correspondence. Each of us obeys his own temperament: I gossip, you hold your peace. And since in other obligations of friendship you are beyond reproach, I am driven to the conclusion that this indefatigable love of ease must itself be a kind of virtue. But, seriously, will no thought of old acquaintance ever lift you from the rut of this interminable silence? Or are you really unaware that it is nothing short of insult to refuse a talkative man an answer? You bury yourself in the depths of a library or office and give no sign of life, yet all the while expect the attention of a line now and then from me; and this though you know quite well that mine is rather a ready than a gifted pen. [2] The apprehensions among which we live ought alone to furnish you with subject enough for letters; write then, and do not fail to entrust a good bulky missive to some one coming our way, to relieve your friends' anxieties and especially to let them know whether the new quaestor Licinianus 1 is likely to open a door of safety out of these mutual alarms. He is described as one who has more than fulfilled the expectations formed of him, proving greater on acquaintance than his great repute; in fine, a man conspicuously endowed with the best gifts of nature and good fortune.

[3] A model of judgement, adorned with equal discretion and personal charm, this trusty envoy is worthy of the power which he represents. He is quite free from affectation or pretence; there is nothing feigned in the gravity which lends weight to his words. He does not follow the example of most envoys who seek a reputation as safe men, and are over-timid in diplomacy; on the other hand, he is not to be numbered among those ambassadors to barbarian courts, who sell their master's secrets, and work for their own advantage rather than that of their mission. [4] Such is the character of the man as favourable rumour carries it to us. But let us know at once if the description squares with fact. Then perhaps we may snatch some breathing-space from our unceasing vigils; at present neither a snowy day nor a cloudy moonless night will tempt our people from their watch upon the walls. Even were the barbarian to draw off to winter quarters, their fears are too deep to be eradicated; at the most, they can only be deferred. Encourage us with hope of better times; you may regard our country as remote, but the cause we stand for is as near to your own heart as to ours. Farewell.

VIII.

To his friend Eucherius (No indication of date) [1] I HAVE the highest respect for the men of antiquity, but mere priority in time shall never lead me to place the virtues and the merits of our contemporaries upon a lower plane of excellence. It may be true that the Roman state has sunk to such extreme misery that it has ceased to reward its loyal sons; but I will not therefore admit that a Brutus or a Torquatus is never born into our age. You ask the purport of this declaration? You yourself shall point my moral, most capable of men; the state owes you the rewards which history applauds when granted to the great men of the past. [2] Men ignorant of the facts had best refrain from carelessly conceived opinions; they had best abandon the obstinate habit of looking up to the men of old time and down on those of our own day. It is abundantly clear that the recognition which the state owes you is now long overdue. Yet what is there to wonder at in this, when a race of uncivilized allies directs the Roman power, yes, and bids fair to bring it crashing to the ground? We have men of rank and valour who excel anything we ourselves could hope, or our enemies believe. Aye, and they do the old deeds; but the reward is not forthcoming. Farewell.

IX.

To his friend Riothamus c. A. D. 472 [1] I WILL write once more in my usual strain, mingling compliment with grievance. Not that I at all desire to follow up the first words of greeting with disagreeable subjects, but things seem to be always happening which a man of my order and in my position can neither mention without unpleasantness, nor pass over without neglect of duty. Yet I do my best to remember the burdensome and delicate sense of honour which makes you so ready to blush for others' faults. [2] The bearer of this is an obscure and humble person, so harmless, insignificant, and helpless that he seems to invite his own discomfiture; his grievance is that the Bretons are secretly enticing his slaves away. Whether his indictment is a true one, I cannot say; but if you can only confront the parties and decide the matter on its merits, I think the unfortunate man may be able to make good his charge, if indeed a stranger from the country unarmed, abject and impecunious to boot, has ever a chance of a fair or kindly hearing against adversaries with all the advantages he lacks, arms, astuteness, turbulences, and the aggressive spirit of men backed by numerous friends. Farewell.

X.

To his friend Tetradius A. D. 461-7 [1] IT is a most laudable trait in the character of younger men when they resort to more experienced heads in questions of perplexity; as the honourable Theodoras now does. He is a man of good family, but quite as much ennobled by his admirable modesty as by his high descent. My letter introduces him to the source of humane letters, I mean the pure fount of your erudition, to which he is setting out with the most commendable ardour, hoping to learn much himself and perhaps bring away as much to impart to others. [2] Should even an experience like yours fail to give him all the help he needs against such factious and powerful opponents, at all events your skill and advice will stand him in good stead. Unless you wish me to conclude that you regard our joint petition as troublesome and importunate, justify his hopes of you and this testimonial of mine by a favourable reply, so that the cause and wavering fortunes of this suppliant may be fortified by your salutary counsel. Farewell.

XI.

To his friend Simplicius (No indication of date) [1] A KIND of fatality attends my hopes, and you still grudge us a sight of you. But, most excellent of men, we need not therefore regard you as one whose memorable actions must necessarily escape our notice. For all our people, the notables included, hail you with one accord as the model of all that a father should be, even in the select and critical society in which you move. [2] The manner in which you have brought up your daughter, and chosen a husband for her, confirms the opinion of our friends; and the accomplishment of your desires in this union must have raised in your mind an agreeable uncertainty whether you have most excelled in the choice of the one or the education of the other. On that score, venerable parents, you may wholly set your minds at rest; you surpass every one because your children surpass even you. Please, therefore, excuse my earlier letter; it was negligent of me not to have sent it before I did, but the dispatch of it, I fear, betrayed the chatterer. My officiousness will lose its blemish of loquacity if you condone the impertinence of this greeting by sending me an answer. Farewell.

XII.

To his nephew Secundus c. A. D. 467

[1] I HAVE dreadful news. Yesterday profane hands all but desecrated the grave where my grandsire and your great-grandsire lies,1 but God's intervening arm stayed the accomplishment of an impious act. The cemetery had for years been overcrowded with burned and unburned burials,2 and interment there had long ceased. But snows and constant rains had caused the mounds to settle; the raised earth had been dispersed, and the ground had resumed its former even surface. This explained how it was that some undertaker's men presumed to profane the spot with their grave-digging tools just as if it were unoccupied by human bodies. [2] Must I relate what happened? They had already unturfed the ground, so that the soil showed black, and were piling the fresh sods upon the old grave. By a mere chance I happened to be passing on my way to Clermont, and saw this public outrage from the top of a neighbouring hill. I gave my horse his head, and dashed at full speed over the intervening ground, flat or steep was all the same to me; I grudged even those brief moments, and sending a shout before me, stopped the infamy even before I myself reached the scene. The villains, caught in the act, were still hesitating whether to make off or hold their ground, when I was upon them. It was wrong, no doubt, but I could not allow them an instant's impunity;

on the very grave of our beloved ancestor I gave them such a trouncing1 as should in future secure the dead from molestation, and safeguard the pious care of the survivors. [3] I did not reserve the case for the judgement of our good bishop,2 considering it best for the common advantage not to do so; I knew too well the strength of my own case, and his gentle nature; he was certain to judge me with too much severity, and these fellows with too great a lenience. To satisfy his right to be informed I did explain the whole affair after I had resumed my journey, and this upright and holy man gave me far more than the mere absolution I expected; he extolled my righteous indignation, declaring that in his opinion men who perpetrated so audacious a deed deserved the death our forefathers would have inflicted. [4] The incident should help to prevent any similar mischance in future, and I beg you to see that the disturbed earth is at once raised to a mound again, and to have a smooth flat slab placed upon it at my expense. I have deposited a sum of money with the venerable Gaudentius to cover the cost of the stone and of the mason's labour. The verses

which I enclose were composed the night of the occurrence; of course they are not finished to perfection; I was too busy with preparations for the road.

[5] Such as they are, please have them carved on the tomb with the smallest possible delay, and be specially careful that the stonemason makes no errors either by negligence or with intention; for whatever the cause, the captious reader will put it all down to me. If you carry out this pious obligation I shall thank you no less heartily than if you were not certain to receive part of the praise and credit. For were I, your uncle, no longer with you, the whole responsibility of this duty would have devolved on you as the next descendant after myself.

'A grandson not all unworthy of such a grandsire, I dedicate to him, though all too late, this epitaph, my father and my paternal uncles being dead, that you, O passer by, may never tread on unmounded earth, unwitting of the reverence due to him who is buried in this grave. Here lies Apollinaris, who, having ruled all Gaul, was gathered to the bosom of a mourning country. He was learned in the law and helpful to his kind above all other men. He laboured for the land, and for the State, and in the cause of eloquence; and, example perilous to others, he dared be free under the rule of tyrants. But this stands as his chief title to fame, that of all his race he was the first to purify his brow with the sign of the cross and his limbs with baptismal water; he first abandoned the old sacrilegious rites. This is the highest glory, this the transcendent virtue, if a man outstrip in hope those whom he equals in honours, and is placed by his desert above his fathers though on earth his titles were the same as theirs.'

[6] I know well that this epitaph is unworthy of our accomplished ancestor; yet methinks the souls of the lettered do not refuse a poetic tribute. And neither of us need regard as too belated the pious duty which we have now fulfilled in our quality as heirs in the third and fourth degree. How many revolving years rolled by before Alexander celebrated funeral rites for Achilles' shade, or Julius Caesar for the shade of that Hector whom he treated as an ancestor of his own? Farewell.

XIII.

To [his son] Apollinaris c. A. D. 469

[1] THE love of purity which leads you to shun the company of the immodest has my whole approval; I rejoice at it and respect it, especially when the men you shun are those whose aptitude for scenting and retailing scandals leaves nothing privileged or sacred, wretches who think themselves enormously facetious when they violate the public sense of shame by shameless language. Hear now from my lips that the standard-bearer of the vile troop is the very Gnatho of our country.1 [2] Imagine an arch-stringer of tales, arch-fabricator of false charges, arch-retailer of insinuations. A fellow whose talk is at once without end and without point; a buffoon without charm in gaiety; a bully who dares not stand his ground. Inquisitive without insight, and three-times more the boor for his brazen affectation of fine manners. A creature of the present hour, with ever a carping word ready for the past and a sneer for the future. When he is after some advantage, no beggar so importunate as he; when refused, none so bitter in depreciation. Grant his request and he grumbles, using every artifice to get better terms; he moans and groans when called on to refund a debt, and if he pays, you never hear the end of it. But when any one wants a loan of him he lies about his means and pretends he has not the wherewithal; if he does lend, he makes capital out of the loan, and bruits the secret abroad; if debtors delay repayment he resorts to calumny;

when they have absolved the debt he tries to deny receipt. [3] Abstinence is his abomination, he loves the table; but a man who lives well wins no praise from him unless he treats well too. Personally, he is avarice itself; the best of bread is not for his digestion unless it is also the bread of others. He only eats at home if he can pilfer his viands, and send them off amid a storm of buffets. He cannot indeed be wholly denied the virtue of frugality; he fasts when he cannot get himself invited. Yet with the light perversity of the parasite, he will often excuse himself when asked; on the other hand, if he sees that men avoid him, he will fish for invitations. [4] If left out he grows abusive; if admitted, unbearably elate: no blow descends on him unexpected. If dinner is served late, he falls like a bandit upon the dishes; if appetite is stilled too soon, he falls to lamentation. Thirst unquenched makes him quarrelsome; drunkenness makes him sick. If he banters others, he grows scurrilous; if others banter him, ungovernable; take him for all in all, he is like the filth in sewers,

the fouler the more you stir it. His life brings pleasure to few, love to none, contemptuous mockery to all. He is one to burst bladders or break canes upon,1 one whose thirst for drink is only excelled by his thirst for scandal;

exhaling loathsomeness, frothing wine, uttering venom, he makes one doubt for what to hate him most, his unsavouriness, his drunken habits, or his villany. [5] 'But', you may say, 'perhaps a fair complexion lends a colour to a vile nature; perhaps his charm of person redeems ineptitude of mind; the man may have elegance or exquisite taste; he may create a good impression on those who meet him.' In point of fact, his person is fouler and more unsightly than a corpse rolled half-burnt from the pyre when the brands have settled---- such a thing as a very undertaker's slave 2 could not bring himself to put back. He hardly sees out of his; eyes, which, like the Stygian lake, roll waters down through darkness. [6] His ears are elephantine; an ulcered skin surrounds each aperture with indurated waste, either helix is bossed with suppurating tumours. His nose is broad at the nostril and narrow at the bridge, strait for his own olfactory ends, but for the spectator a cavernous vision of horror. He obtrudes a face with leaden lips and a bestial rictus, with purulent gums and brown teeth; a foul mephitic odour breathes from his decayed and hollow teeth, enhanced by eructations from the feasts of yesterday and the bilge of his excesses at the board. [7] A forehead too he flaunts hideous with creases and distension of the brows. He grows a beard which age vainly whitens, since Sylla's malady 1 keeps it black.

His whole face is as pale as if it were ever dolorous with infesting shades. I spare you the hulking residue, gout-ridden, fat and flabby. I spare you his weal-furrowed skull, covered with almost as many scars as hairs. I spare you the description of a nape so short that when his head is thrown back it seems to merge into his shoulder-blades. [8] The sunken carriage, the lost grace and vigour of his arms, the gouty hands bound cestus-like with greasy poultices; all these I spare you, so too the acrid hircine armpits that entrench his sides, and pollute the air for every nostril near him with a reek three times more pestilent than that from Ampsanctus' cave.2 And breasts collapsed with adiposity horrible on a man's body even in mere protuberance, but now hanging like a mother's. And the pendulous folds of the abdomen about genitals thrice shameful in their debility, a foul creased covering worse than what it hides. [9] Why should I tell of his back and spine? True, the ribs do sweep round from the vertebral joints and cover the chest, but the whole branching structure of bones is drowned under a billowing main of belly. I pass over the fat reins and buttocks which make even his paunch look insignificant in comparison. I pass the bent and withered thigh, the swollen knees, the slender hams, the horny shanks, the weak ankles, the small toes and enormous feet.

As I have drawn him, he is horrible enough in his deformity, a monster from whom his infinite noisomeness drains half the blood and life, who cannot sit a litter or walk a yard, however much they prop him. But his tongue is more detestable still than his other members. [10] He keeps it busy in the service of the vilest prurience; but it is most dangerous of all to patrons with anything to hide. For those in luck he belauds, but those who are

unfortunate he betrays; let a tempting moment but urge to disclosure of a friend's secret, and instantly this Spartacus will break all bars and open every seal. He will mine with the unseen tunnels of his treachery the houses which the rams of open war have failed to breach. This is the fashion in which our Daedalus crowns the edifice of his friendships, sticking as close as Theseus in prosperity; but when adversity comes, more elusive than any Proteus. [11] The more you avoid even a first introduction to such company the better you will please me; especially to those so shameless that they talk like degraded players at the booths, and know neither bar nor bridle. For when a man exults in leaving all seemliness and decency behind, and fouls a loose tongue with the dirt of all lawless licence, be sure his heart is no less filthy than his language. You may find an evil liver with a serious tongue; the foul tongue and virtuous life are very rarely allied. Farewell.

XIV.

To his friend Placidus After A. D. 477 [1] THOUGH your loved Grenoble1 holds you far from me, I learn from a sure channel----your former hosts---- that you are kind enough to prefer my trifles in prose or verse to all the other volumes on your shelves. It goes without saying that it gave me pleasure to hear how my writings occupy your leisure; but I understand well enough that it is really affection for the author and not the quality of his work which procures you this delight. My debt is all the greater; friendship wins me the honour which you could not honestly give the composition. [2] For the rest, I have not yet considered what definitive reply I shall make to the detractors of my work. The self-appointed critic absorbs a sound or unsound style with equal appetite; he cares no more that the world should exalt his favourite than that it should despise the object of his mockery. And so we see the fine construction, the comeliness and grandeur of our Latin tongue exposed to contemptuous criticism of idle quidnuncs; minds careless and so flippant as this want books only to carp at; their use for literature is a mere abuse. Farewell.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.