Book 4

Sidonius Apollinaris (c. AD 430–490)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

I. **1**

II. **3**

III. **4**

IV. **7**

V. **8**

VI. **9**

VII. **10**

VIII. **11**

IX. **13**

X. **15**

XI. **16**

XII. **18**

XIII. **19**

XIV. **20**

XV. **21**

XVI. **22**

XVII. **23**

XVIII. **24**

XIX. **26**

XX. **27**

XXI. **28**

XXII. **30**

XXIII. **32**

XXIV. **33**

XXV. **35**

I.

To his friend Probus A.D. 461-7

[1] You married my cousin 1, whence the first and principal tie between us; the cousinly relationship often leads to a stronger, purer, and more unmixed affection than that between two brothers. For when brothers' quarrels over property are once appeased, their children have no longer cause for disagreement, and so it often happens that cousins are the more deeply attached; the enmities arising from the partition of estates are over, the tie of blood relationship remains. The second link between us is intellectual, and formed by a similarity of studies; our literary taste is identical; we praise and blame the same things; a style approved or disapproved by one produces the same impression on the other. [2] But I am presumptuous in venturing a comparison between my judgement and yours. It is common knowledge among young and old that you were my real master, though we were nominally both pupils of another. You were everybody's teacher in every branch of literature. All of us learned from you, except those who had not the brains, or could not do themselves proper justice: our epic poets derived from you their lofty vein, our comic poets their humour, our lyric poets their musical art; from you the orator drew his rhetoric, the historian his respect for truth, the satirist his pictorial gift, the grammarian his fidelity to rule, the panegyrist his plausibility, the sophist his gravity of style, the writer of epigram his petulance and point, the commentator his lucid method, the lawyer his obscurity. Heavens!

how proud our respective fathers used to be when they saw that Christ had given you grace to teach and me to learn, that you not only did what lay within your power but also enjoyed the doing of it, and so deserved a name for goodness no less than a learned reputation. [3] And indeed in your case Eusebius' house1 proved a veritable mint of the sciences and arts; you were there struck on a philosophical die, and to the delight of your own instructor were able to impart to the rest of us every phase of knowledge and of eloquent expression. Just as Plato the pupil was more expert than Socrates, so did you excel our good Eusebius. While he was maturing our tender, unformed and plastic youth with ruthless floggings, or trying to ground it on wholesome principles, there you were, a dialectician born, moving with Attic ease through all the categories of Aristotle.

[4] Yet how admirable his principles were after all, how precious in possession! If only some migratory philosopher could export them to the Sigambri on their marshes, or the

Alans of the Caucasus, or the mare-milking Geloni, the horny hearts of all these stark and brutal folks, yes and all their frozen fibres, were surely thawed and softened, while we should cease to sneer and scoff, and tremble by turns at their stolidity and their ferocious natures, which now brood in bestial dullness, now burst into swift flame. [5] Since, then, our family connexion and our studies thus unite us, preserve the laws of friendship unshaken, wherever your abode may be; though my home is far from yours, let our hearts draw nearer by virtue of this affection, which I for my part will keep inviolate as long as breath remains in my body. Farewell.

II.

Claudianus [Mamertus1] to the Lord Bishop Sidonius A. D. 472 [1] IF I could only meet you now and again, my dear lord, were it only for a short time, I should not have to look about on all sides for any kind of messenger whose goodwill or necessities might help me pay the debt of correspondence owed you. Numerous causes, all sad ones, prevent me from seeing you again; even an opportunity of writing comes rarely or not at all. Whether all this excuses me or not, you yourself must judge. [2] But in often favouring with your letters persons who either do not expect them, or deserve to get them less than I, you on your side are guilty of an offence against the laws of friendship which may not be committed with impunity. Though I have said little, I confess that it has wounded me never to have received from you any acknowledgement of the book 2 which you have deigned to allow me to publish under the auspices of your illustrious name. But perhaps you cannot spare even a few short moments for a friendship of such long standing as ours?

[3] I wonder if you will ever involve yourself in any interest which does not turn to other folks' advantage. When you propitiate God by prayer, you entreat Him not only for your friends but for men you have never seen; when you search out the mysteries of Holy Writ, the more deeply your own mind is imbued with doctrine, the fuller the stream which you impart to others. When you lavish your goods upon the poor, there is a sense in which you may be said to serve yourself, but your aim is the service of others. Not a single action of yours is so barren as to yield abundant fruit to your sole self and not to a host of other people as well. [4] No possible pretext, then, can be alleged by any stretch of fancy on which an intimate friend like myself should be deprived of his own especial fruit, while strangers in scores are allowed to eat of it in plenty. I suppose you follow the precedent of the giver in the Gospel, and accord to the unworthy but importunate what you deny to a hungering friend. But if you allow yourself to grow hardened in this habit, I shall take measures to assure your repentance. For if your taciturnity exceeds all reason, my communications shall do the same. It is quite evident that you will have to be punished by my letters, as I myself am punished by your silence. Farewell.

III.

To Claudianus [Mamertus] A.D. 472

[1] You declare, most honoured master, that I have offended against the laws of friendship: you allege that though it is my turn to give you epistolary greeting, I have let my tablets and stylus lie, and no traveller's hand has been burdened with papyrus of mine inscribed with my assiduous wishes for your welfare. The suggestion is unfair; you cannot really suppose that any man on earth, with the least devotion to Latin letters, would lightly submit his compositions to the ordeal of being read to you; you, with whose accomplishments, but for the overwhelming privilege of antiquity, I should never rank either Fronto's gravity, or the fulminating force of Apuleius; for compared with you the Varros, both he of the Atax and he of Reate, and the Plinies, uncle and nephew, will always seem provincial. [2] In support of this opinion I have only to mention your new volume on the nature of the Soul, with all its wealth of evidence and mastery of diction. The dedication to me I regarded as an inestimable gift: the fame which my own books would never keep alive, would now be immortalized by yours. Great God! what a wonderful book it is, and of what authority! abstruse in subject, in exposition clear as day; in statement serried, expansive in discussion, and though barbed with many a point of syllogism, yet soft with vernal flowers of eloquence! [3] You have found ancient words which by their very age regain the charm of novelty; compared with these even a classic vocabulary seems obsolete.

And what is more, the style, so succinct in its short clauses, has yet an even flow; loaded with facts, concise in comment, these pages do not merely propound----they inform. It was once, and rightly, held the highest part of eloquence to condense much matter into a small space and aim at exhausting the subject before the paper. [4] And what a charming feature it is in your books, when you allow some relaxation in the sustained display of mastery and interpose most welcome graces amid the severities of argument; by this means the reader's attention, strained by following that exhaustive analysis of doctrine and philosophy, is suddenly relieved by the most delightful of digressions, comforting as harbours after open seas. O work of endless excellences! O worthy expression of a genius subtle without tenuity, which neither freshets of hyperbole swell, nor mean terms minish and abase! [5] And then the unrivalled, the unique learning conspicuous in so many fields, and used to hold its own with the great masters in the discussion of every art. It does not hesitate, if need be, to

wield the plectrum with Orpheus himself, or the staff with Aesculapius, or the rule with Archimedes, the horoscope with Euphrates, the compasses with Perdix, the plummet with Vitruvius; it never ceases to explore the ages with Thales, or the stars with Atlas;

to study weight with Zetus, number with Chrysippus, or measure with Euclid.1 [6] I can only say that no man of our times produces his knowledge with more effect, in the stress of conflict with the adversary can point with more justice to his own share in maintaining the spirit and the letters of Greece and Rome. Here is a writer who has the perception of Pythagoras, the clear logic of Socrates; he can unfold a theme with Plato or involve it with Aristotle; the charm of Aeschines is his, and the indignation of Demosthenes; he is as fresh and vivid as Hortensius; he storms like a Cethegus; he is impetuous as Curio, cautious as Fabius; in finesse the equal of Crassus, in reserve of Caesar, in suasion of Cato, in dissuasion of Appius, in persuasion of Tully himself. [7] Compare him now with the holy Fathers; you find him instructive as Jerome, destructive as Lactantius, constructive as Augustine; soaring in flight like Hilary, in humility meek as John; a Basil in rebuke, in consolation a Gregory. He is fluent as Orosius, terse as Rufinus; he has Eusebius' gift of narrative and Eucherius' power to stir, Paulinus' rousing voice, the perseverance of an Ambrose. [8] And now for my opinion on your hymn.1 I find it at once admirable in brevity and richness of content, at once tender and exalted, in poetic charm and truth to history superior to any lyrics or dithyrambs that I know.

It is your peculiar merit that you observe each foot in the metre, each syllable in the foot, and each emphasis in the syllable; and in a restricted measure none too rich in opportunity, you contrive to include great opulence of words; the compressed, terse metre does not exclude long-drawn beauty of ornate diction. It seems mere play to you, with your tiny trochees and tinier pyrrhics, to surpass in effect not merely the Molossian and anapaestic ternary, but even the quaternary, the epitrite and Paeonian rhythms.

[9] Your grand exordium overflows the customary strait limits, as a great gem is hardly confined in a poor setting; as the mettle of a strong steed flashes out, and he chafes on the bit if he is held in over rough and broken ground; so it is with you; you are conscious of a speed to which a proper field is denied. What more shall I say? I will assert that neither Athens was ever so Attic, nor the Muses so musical as Claudian, if indeed a long period of inaction has not robbed me even of my critical capacity. For in deference to the profession which has been thrust upon me,1 I am endeavouring step by step to acquire a new style of writing, while I unlearn my old one by leaps and bounds; little remains now of a good speaker, except that I am more than ever the indifferent poet.2 I must therefore beg your indulgence if, remembering who and what I am, I seldom blend my thin and parching rivulet with your mighty river. The whole world shall honour the music of your silver trumpet, music thrice blessed in finding neither rival nor equal, though it has sounded all these years over the earth, charming the ears and lips of peoples, while I, too, strove to spread its fame. But all that your servant now dares in public speech is to raise his voice among town-councillors and teachers or even among market-quacks; these are the majority now, and

(with all apologies to the best among them), even in their ambitious efforts, but illiterately lettered. But as for you, who can ring the changes on verse and prose and write in metre or without it exactly when you please, your emulators will be few, and those only whom Apollo loves.3 Farewell.

IV.

To [his kinsmen] Simplicius and Apollinaris c. A.D. 472

[1] AT last I send the promised Faustinus,1 for whom you have been waiting; he is the father of a family, a noble by birth, and a man to be accounted one of the chief ornaments of our common country. In years he is a brother to me, in community of sentiment a friend. How often have he and I together blended grave and gay! how often, in the far-off days of our youth, played ball and dice together, and vied in leaping, running, hunting, or swimming, always honourable rivals because firmest friends! He was my elder, but only by a little; the difference did not so much bind me to defer to him, as make it a delight to follow; he too was more deeply charmed not to be given deference, but simply affection. Only with advancing years, and with his entry into the Church, has my old love for him insensibly passed into veneration. [2] This is the man through whom I greet you, in the ardent desire that I may see you very soon, if God will, and the state of the country permit. Unless, then, my wish is irksome to you, inform me, by return of this good messenger, in what places you expect to be, and when. I am firmly determined to shake myself free from all obstacles and hindrances of personal affairs, and allow myself the privilege of long and intimate hours in your society, if only some major force does not upset my plans, as I am half afraid it may. [3] You too might find it worth while to talk them over with Brother Faustinas in the light of probable events. I made him my envoy because I love him and know that he returns my feelings. If he justifies my good opinion, I shall be very thankful. All men set him high in their esteem; and perhaps he is none the worse for not being a perfect paragon. Farewell.

V.

To his friend [Magnus] Felix A.D. 474 [1] I SALUTE you a second time by the same messenger as before. Your Gozolas1 (may I soon call him mine too!) acts once more as the carrier of my letter. Spare us both, therefore, the indignity of an open slight; for if you persist in silence, every one will think that you look down on me and on the destined bearer of your reply. [2] As on the last occasion, I ask nothing as to the state of public affairs, fearing it may be painful to you to announce unfavourable events at a time when fortune fails us. It would not be like you to send false news; and as there is nothing pleasant to record, I would rather learn of disaster from any one but my friends. Farewell.

VI.

To [his kinsman] Apollinaris A. D. 472

[1] I SENT you a verbal warning lately by the priest Faustinus, my old comrade and new brother in the ministry, and glad I am that you have listened to it. It is the root-principle of practical wisdom to avoid unnecessary risks; if a man takes them, and a rash course ends in trouble, it is futile to break out into lamentations and abuse Fate for the consequences of one's own bad management. [2] You ask the trend of these remarks. I confess I was much afraid that, at a time when all men felt anxiety, you might feel none; and that the house which stood solid as a rock through all these years might be shaken at last through a misplaced devotion. I feared that the solemnity to which the ladies of your family so looked forward might be spoiled for their gentle souls by these alarms, though I well know that true religion is so deeply implanted in their breasts that they would have rejoiced to suffer a sort of martyrdom in honour of the Martyr1 had anything untoward befallen upon the way. But I have less innocence, and therefore more distrust of events; amid such uncertainties I prefer the safer side; it takes little to make me join those who discover danger in the very heart of safety. [3] I therefore approve your action in putting off so perilous an expedition, and refusing to expose the fortunes of a family like yours to such a hazard. The journey, once undertaken, might possibly have prospered;

but I for one will never vote for the reckless kind of measure which only luck can justify. Providence, I doubt not, will grant a happy issue to our prayers, and under new blessings of peace we shall look back upon these tenors as mere memories; but those who wish to enjoy security in future must learn caution from the present hour. [4] Meanwhile, I draw your attention to the bearer's complaint of some wrong done him by one of your people, by name Genesius. If you find that facts bear out the grievance, I beg of you to do the plaintiff justice and grant him a quick return to his distant home. But if he has fanned up a flame of calumny out of culpable spite, the defendant can enjoy the foretaste of his discomfiture, when he thinks of his wanton accuser, wayworn and impoverished, bearing all for nothing the hard consequences of a rash accusation, and that at the very height of winter, when the ice is thick and the snow lies piled in drifts. The litigious are apt to find this a season when hearings are generally short, but there is plenty of time for suffering damage. Farewell.

VII.

To his kinsman Simplicius (Date not indicated)

[1] 'You spur the willing,' 1 is the usual comment of the man who meant to do unasked the thing you ask of him. You ask how the quotation applies? The bearer of these lines insists on a letter of introduction from me, whereas, the moment I knew where he was going I should myself have begged the privilege of giving it before he opened his mouth, obliging him not so much from consideration for him as from my warm feeling towards yourself. For the rest, my messenger calculates that by doing me a service he will have deserved a good turn; he has obtained what he wanted, but without ever dreaming how close the bond is which unites you and me. [2] Miles away though I remain, I shall be able to picture his stupefaction on his arrival, when the mere fact that he comes from me secures him respectful welcome, and he finds no effectual use for a letter which it was really superfluous to solicit. I can see it all as if I were there; the novelty of everything to one whose wits are not of the sharpest; his confusion as a stranger invited to make himself at home, or as a nervous guest drawn into conversation, or as a countrified fellow called on to take his part in polite gaiety, or as a poor man set down at a sumptuous board.

It will be strange indeed to a man from these parts, where ill-cooked viands and too much onion afford the only fare, to find himself as nobly regaled as if he had eaten his fill all his days at Apician banquets, served by the rhythmic carvers of Byzantium.1 3. Anyhow, whatever his merit or importance, he could not have better helped me to pay my debt of friendship. Men of his type are often almost beneath our notice; at the same time friends who, like ourselves, are thrown back on letters for their intercourse would lose many a chance of writing were they too particular about the person of their messengers. Farewell.

VIII.

To his friend Evodius * A.D. 467 (?)

[1] I WAS just setting out for a remote country district when your messenger handed me your letter, and told his acquaintances in confidence that you were on the point of visiting Toulouse in obedience to a summons from the King. This gave me an excuse to shake off the embarrassing crowd which delayed my early start, and allowed me to give you such reply as a traveller booted and spurred could attempt. [2] My servants had gone ahead at dawn to pitch my tent eighteen miles away at a spot with many conveniences for camping, a cold spring issuing from a wooded hill with a meadow of rich grass at the foot; a river in the foreground stocked with waterfowl and fish; and in addition to these advantages, almost on the bank, the new home of an old friend whose boundless hospitality is the same, whether you try to refuse it or not. [3] After stopping behind to do what you required, that I might send the messenger back at once from the end of the town, I found it was already more than four hours after dawn; the sun was well up, and his gathering heat had absorbed the heavy dews of night. The torrid air and our parched throats got worse and worse, and so cloudless was the sky that the only protection from the blazing heat was the dust we made ourselves. The long way was a weariness, stretching in full view for miles in front of us across the grassy plain;

before it had time to tire us, it already terrified by its prospect; it meant that our lunch would be late. [4] All this introduction is to convince you, honoured lord and brother, that when I obeyed your behests I had small time to spare and little leisure of mind or body. I return now to the substance of your letter. After the usual salutations, you asked a poem of twelve verses suitable for engraving on a large two-handled cup, the sides of which from foot to rim were fluted with six channels. [5] The verses you design, I suppose, for the hollows of the flutings, or, better still, if that seems more suitable, for the ridges between, and, as I gather, you intend to assure yourself an invincible protection for all your plans, actual or prospective, by offering the cup, enriched with this embellishment, to Ragnahild, the queen.1 I did your bidding then, not as I could have wished, but as best circumstances allowed. You must blame yourself for giving the silversmith time but the poet none; though you know perfectly well that in the literary smithy the verses forged upon the metric anvil want polishing no less severely than any metal. But all this is beside the mark; here is

your poem: * 'The shell which bears Cythera behind the fish-tailed Triton, compared with this must yield its pride of place. Bend thy queenly head, exalted patroness, to our prayer; accept this humble gift; graciously look down upon Evodius who seeks thy favour;

make him great, and thine own glory shall grow greater. Thy sire and thy lord's sire were kings; royal too is thy lord, may thy son also reign a king, both by his father's side and after him. Happy water enclosed in this gleaming metal, reflecting a royal face yet brighter! For when the queen shall deign to touch it with her lips, the silver shall draw new splendour from her countenance.' If you love me well enough to make use of such idle stuff, conceal my authorship and properly rely for success on your own part of the offering. For in such a mart or such a school as this barbaric court, your silver page will get all the notice, and not my poor inscription. Farewell.

* The first part translated by Hodgkin, ii. 330-2. * Translated into German verse by Fertig, Part i, p. 32; and into prose by Chaix, i. 353.

IX.

To his friend Industrius + c. A.D. 472

[1] I RECENTLY visited the illustrious Vectius, and was able to study his way of life at close quarters as leisurely as if I had nothing else to do. I found it well worth knowing, and therefore not unworthy of description. In the first place, and this may rightly be regarded as the highest praise of all, the whole household emulates the master's flawless purity of life. His servants are efficient, those in the country obliging, those at his town house friendly, obedient and contented with their lord. His table is open to the stranger no less than to his own clients; there reigns a large hospitality, and an even larger moderation. [2] It is of less moment that the man of whom we speak is without a rival in training a horse, judging a dog, or in bearing hawk afield; that his dress is always exquisite and his girdle to match, that all his accoutrements are splendid. The majesty of his gait accords with his gravity of mind, and as the first secures him consideration abroad, so the last maintains his dignity at home. His is an indulgence which does not spoil, a punishment without brutality, a tempered severity, stern but never dreadful. [3] With all this he is a regular reader of the Scriptures; even at meal times he enjoys this nutriment of the soul.

He studies the Psalms, and yet more frequently chants them, setting a new precedent by living after this fashion in martial dress, the complete monk in all but the monastic habit.1 Though he abstains from eating game, he indulges in the chase; to have the sport without the spoil accords with the secret delicacy of his religious feeling. [4] The comfort of his widower's life is his little daughter, sole pledge of his lost wife's love; he brings her up with the tenderness of a grandfather, a mother's sedulous care, a father's kindness. In addressing his servants he does not give way to violence, and he is not above taking their advice upon occasion; in investigating an offence he is never inquisitorial, he rules those under him by reason and not mere authority: you might take him for the steward in his own house. [5] All this virtue and moderation seemed to me to deserve recording for the benefit of others; the outlines of it at least should be common knowledge. It would be well for our age if every member of our sacred profession were stirred to emulation by the story irrespective of a garb which in these days often deceives the world. For be it said without offence to my own order, if only the good men among us manifest their individual qualities, I shall prefer the layman of priestly instincts to the priest. Farewell.

+ Translated by Hodgkin, ii. 340-2.

X.

To his friend [Magnus] Felix A.D. 477 [1] IT is many years since I have written to you, my good lord, and this greeting breaks a long silence; I had not the heart to keep up the old frequent correspondence while I was living in banishment from my country, and my spirit was broken by the hard lot of an exile. You ought to have compassion on one who admits his delinquency as I do; for whosoever is brought low should go humbly and not attempt to preserve the same familiar footing as before with those towards whom affection may be less in place than reverence. That is why I have said nothing so long, and why, after the arrival of my son Heliodorus,1 I could at least acquiesce in your silence, though I could hardly be expected to regard it with satisfaction. [2] You used to say, in jest, that you stood in positive awe of my eloquence. Even were it seriously meant, the ground for that excuse is gone; for as soon as I had finished my volume of Letters, which, though I say it, was a careful piece of work, I reverted to the every-day style in everything else. And indeed my fine style itself is much on the same level; for what is the use of giving finish to phrases which will never see the light? If, however, you are faithful to an old friendship and allow our correspondence once more to follow its former course, I too will return to the old track and be as communicative as ever. Nay more, if Christ will guide my steps and my patron 1 on his return will only sanction my departure, how eagerly will I fly to meet you wherever you may be, and revive by my presence a friendship which my negligent pen has left to languish. Farewell.

XI.

To his friend Petreius * c. A.D. 473

[1] I MOURN the loss of your great uncle Claudianus, snatched from us only the other day; it is the loss of our age; perhaps we shall never see his. like again. He was a man of wisdom, prudence and learning; eloquent, and of an active and ingenious mind above all his compatriots and contemporaries. He was a philosopher all his days without prejudice to his faith. It was only by his faith, and by his adoption of ordinary dress, that he dissociated himself from his friends of the Platonic school; for he never let his hair and beard grow long and would make fun of the philosopher's mantle and staff, sometimes with much bitterness. [2] How delightful it used to be when a party of us would visit him just for the pleasure of hearing his opinion! With what freedom from diffidence or pretence would he at once open his whole mind for our common benefit, delighted if some insoluble and thorny point arose to prove the vast resources of his knowledge! If there were many of us, he expected us all, of course, to listen, but nominated a single spokesman, probably the one whom we ourselves should have chosen; then in his methodical way, now addressing one, now another, and giving each his turn, he would bring forth all the treasures of his learning, not without the accompaniment of trained and appropriate gesture. [3] When he had finished, we would put our adverse criticisms in syllogistic form; but nothing was admitted which was not well considered and susceptible of proof, for rash objections he would at once demolish. Most of all we respected him for his tolerance of some men's persistent dullness of apprehension. It amounted almost to an amiable weakness; we could admire his patience, but it was beyond our imitation. Who could shrink from consulting on any recondite point a man who would gladly suffer in argument the stupid questions of the ignorant and the simple?

[4] So far as to his intellectual interests. It is beyond my power adequately to extol him in other relations of life. Mindful in all things of our weak mortal nature, he was always ready with consolation, helping the clergy by his deeds, the people by his words, mourners with exhortation, the destitute with words of comfort. He gave the prisoner money; he fed the hungry, he clothed the naked. To enlarge upon these things were indeed vanity of repetition. He was poor in this world's goods, but the good deeds with which he richly endowed his soul he concealed from notice in the hope of a better reward hereafter. . . . [5] For his elder brother the bishop 1 he had the most affectionate regard; he reverenced

him as a father, he loved him as a son. And the brother in his turn looked up to him with boundless admiration, knowing that he had in him a counsellor in every disputed question, a representative in his churches, an agent in business matters, a steward on his farms, a registrar of all ecclesiastical dues, an associate in his reading, an interpreter in difficulties of exposition, a travelling companion upon his visitations. They were the very exemplars of brotherly affection, with an absolute confidence in each other. [6] But why do I add fuel to the flame of a sorrow which it was my purpose to assuage? I meant to have begun by saying that I have written an elegy to this ungrateful shade----the phrase is Virgil's, as you know, and applied to the dead, who can render no man thanks. They are sad lines full of sorrow; the writing of them was no light task to one who has lost the habit of composing; but grief heavy with rising tears moved me from my natural indolence. This is the elegy:

'Beneath this sod lies Claudianus, at once the glory and grief of his brother Mamertus, the wonder and supreme pride of the bishops. In three fields of learning he was a master and a shining light, the Roman, the Greek, and the Christian; all of them as a monk in his prime he made his own by secret discipline; he was orator, logician, poet, commentator, geometer, musician; skilled also to loose the bonds of disputation, and with the sword of the word dissect the sects1 that harass the Catholic faith. Well was he skilled to chant psalms and lead a choir; for his grateful brother he taught the trained groups of singers to chant before the altar. His was the choice that at the yearly conclave appointed the passages to be read in season. A priest of the second order,2 he eased his brother's shoulder of the bishop's burden; for while the other bore the insignia of pontifical rank, it was he who undertook the labour. But thou whoe'er thou art that grievest, O kindly reader, over the thought that of such a man nothing now survives, wet not this marble with thy tears: the mind and its renown come not down into this grave.'

[7] Such are the lines that I composed over the remains of this brother of my soul, as soon as I reached the spot. For when they buried him I was away, though absence did not wholly rob me of the longed opportunity for tears. For while I was pondering what to write, my heart swelled to overflowing; I gave it rein, and over my epitaph I wept as others had wept above the tomb. I write this to you for fear you should imagine that my devotion is only to living friends, and censure me as one who thinks less tenderly of those who are gone than of those who are yet alive. And indeed, in days when hardly a trace of loyalty remains among survivors, you might well be pardoned for counting as a small company those who are faithful to the departed. Farewell. * Most of this letter is translated by Guizot, Histoire de la civilisation en France, ed. 1846, i. 167-8. See also Fertig, Part iii, p. 10.

XII.

To [his kinsmen] Simplicius and Apollinaris* c. A.D. 472

[1] THE excitable mind of man is like nothing so much as a wrecking sea; it is lashed to confusion by contrary tidings as if it bred its own rough weather. A few days ago, I and the son whom we both regard as ours were together enjoying the admirable Hecyra of Terence. Seated at his side as he studied, I forgot the cleric in the father; to increase his ardour and incite my docile scholar to a more perfect appreciation of the comic rhythms, I had in my own hands a play with a similar plot, the Epitrepontes 1 of Menander. [2] We were reading, and jesting, and applauding the fine passages ---- the play charmed him, and he me, we were both equally absorbed, ---- when all of a sudden a household slave appears, pulling a long face. 'I have just seen outside', he said, 'the reader Constans, back from his errand to the lords Simplicius and Apollinaris. He says that he delivered your letters, but has lost the answers given him to bring back.' [3] No sooner did I hear this, than a storm-cloud of annoyance rose upon the clear sky of my enjoyment; the mischance made me so angry that for several days I was inexorable and forbade the blockhead my presence; I meant to make him sorry for himself unless he restored me the letters all and sundry, to say nothing of yours, which as long as I am a reasonable being I shall always want most because they come least often.

[4] However, after a time my anger gradually abated; I sent for him and asked whether, besides the letters, he had been entrusted with a verbal message. He was all a-tremble and ready to grovel at my feet; he stammered in conscious guilt, and could not look me in the face, but he managed to answer: 'Nothing.' The message from which I was to have received so much instruction and delight, had been all consigned to the pages which had been lost. So there is nothing else for it; you must resort to your tablets once more, unfold your parchment, and write it all out anew. I shall bear with such philosophy as I may this unfortunate obstacle to my desires until the hour when these lines reach you, and you learn that yours have never yet reached me. Farewell.

* Translated by Hodgkin, ii. 340-2.

XIII.

To his friend Vectius c. A.D. 472

[1] NOT long ago I went to see the church of Chantelle1 at the request of the excellent Germanicus, who is clearly the personage of the place. Though he now has sixty years behind him, he cultivates such bravery of fashion that not content with growing younger, he gets more boyish every day. His clothes fit close, his boots are tight, his hair is cut wheel-fashion; the tweezers have searched the depths of all his wrinkles to get every single hair out of his face. [2] Heaven has given him strong and well-knit limbs, an unimpaired sight, an easy and rapid gait; his teeth are complete and his mouth wholesome. He has a perfect digestion, an even circulation, a sound heart and lungs, his loins are free from stiffness, his liver from congestion. His hand is firm, his back straight, endowed with the health of youth, all he asks for age is its proper privilege of respect. [3] God has indeed shown him peculiar mercies. But on that very account I beg, nay, I enjoin you, as a neighbour and intimate friend, to give him a piece of that advice which a character like yours invests with such authority: tell him not to put his trust too much in such unstable things, or fancy himself immune from all decay; tell him it is high time for him to embrace religion, to gather strength from innocence reborn, and by good deeds to become a new man in his old age.

[4] Tell him that few of us are free from secret faults, and it were well for him to pour forth full and open satisfaction for all the hidden offences which memory can recall. A man who is a priest's son and has a son of his own a bishop, must sanctify his own life, or he will be even as a rosebush. Of roses born, and bearing the same, he comes between the old bloom and the new; and the briery thorns about him may be likened to his wounding sins. Farewell.

XIV.

To his friend Polemius A.D. 477 [1] CORNELIUS TACITUS your ancestor, consular in the reigns of the Ulpians,1 in his history introduces a German Commander2 as saying, 'My acquaintance with Vespasian goes back to old days, and while he was a private person we were called friends.' You ask the object of this preface. To remind you that your position as a public man ought not to involve neglect of private friendships. Almost two years ago, our old regard for you rather than our satisfaction at your new dignity, led us to rejoice over your elevation to the post of praetorian prefect in Gaul. But for the misfortunes of the Empire, nothing would satisfy us but the enrichment of everybody and every province by the various benefits of your administration. [2] And now that proper feeling prevents us from asking what it is beyond your power to grant, I should like to know what generosity you would have shown us in deed, when in word you have proved so obstinately avaricious. For if I compare you with your ancestors, I must consider you more than the equal of Tacitus in eloquence, and in poetry above Ausonius. If this new prefecture has turned a philosopher's head, remember the line:

We too have served for name and fame.1 [3] But if you scorn the lowliness of our profession because we priests voluntarily lay bare before Christ, the Healer of human lives and fortunes, the ugly sores of the sick heart, which in us are at least unswollen by pride, however much they may have hitherto offended for want of proper tending, I would have you know this, that it is one thing for a man to stand before the magistrate in the forum, another thing for him to stand before the Judge of all the world. The offender who avows his crime to you is condemned; but among us the same confession made to God is absolved.2 It is therefore abundantly clear that you judges of this world are wrong in fastening guilt on him who is amenable to another jurisdiction than yours. [4] You cannot therefore any longer ignore the force of my complaint; whether your prosperity makes you forget old friendship, or only neglect it, the result in either case is almost equally bitter to me. If, then, you have any serious thoughts of the future, write to me as to a priest; if of the present, as to a colleague. There is a virtue which never disdains an old friend for a new one; if it was born in you, develop it; if not, at once implant it in your heart. Otherwise you will appear to treat your friends as one does flowers, which are only cherished as long as they are fresh. Farewell.

XV.

To his friend Elaphius After A.D. 472

[1] MAKE ready a great feast, and couches to receive a great company. By numerous roads parties yet more numerous converge upon you, for since the date of your coming dedication is now universally known, all our good friends are bent upon invasion. Your letter tells us that the baptistery so long in the builder's hands is now ready for consecration. We must all keep festival in honour of the faith that we own, and some of us for other causes too; you to celebrate the accomplishment of your vow; I to do my part as bishop; and many others to show their recognition of your enterprise. For indeed you set a great precedent, erecting a new fabric in an epoch when other men have hardly courage to repair an old one.1 [2] For the future I pray that as your present vow is paid, you may make new vows to the glory of God to be redeemed in coming prosperous years; and that, too, not as the expression of a concealed faith, but of manifest conversion. I further pray that in happier times than these Christ may grant my own desire and the hope of the people of Rouergue, and that you who now offer an altar for your own soul's weal, may then offer the holy Sacrifice for theirs. [3] Though the days draw in with the late autumn, and leaves from every tree rustle in the anxious traveller's ear; though your castle of the mountain crags is hard to reach when winter is so near, yet with Christ to guide my steps I shall traverse your rugged mountain flanks; I shall not shrink from rocks beneath or overhanging snows; no, not even if the way winds in spirals up the long slopes and returns continually upon itself. For should there be no festivities after all, yet you are one of those for whom, to use the words of Tully,1 a man would even tramp to Thespiae. Farewell.

XVI.

To his friend Ruricius (No indication of date) [1] PATERNINUS has given me your letter; I can hardly say whether it pleases most by wit or charm. It presents such eloquence, such fragrant flowers of diction, that your progress is clearly due to something more than an acknowledged study: you must be working in secret as well. The abstraction of a book of mine to copy, for which you so apologize, I regard as an act redounding to your credit, and requiring no excuse. What can you do really wrong, when even your faults are laudable? [2] I am not the least vexed at being played this little trick in my absence; it is no loss at all, but really a signal privilege. The volume you appropriated to your use has not therefore ceased to be my property; your knowledge has not been increased at the cost of other people's. On the contrary, you shall have full credit for your action, and rightly; for your nature has the quality of flame, which communicates itself entirely and yet remains entire; it is proper that you should act like your own element. Be no more uneasy, then; that were to betray a little too much uncertainty of your friend, who would only deserve the wound of blame were he vulnerable by the dart of envy. Farewell.

XVII.

To his friend Arbogast c. A.D. 477

[1] YOUR friend Eminentius, honoured lord, has delivered a letter dictated by yourself, admirable in style, and bearing in every line the evidence of three shining virtues. The first is the friendliness which leads you to esteem the lowly talents of one so far away,1 and so anxious to avoid publicity. The second is the modesty which makes you over-sensitive to blame, but deservedly wins you praise. The third is the gentle humour which makes you in the wittiest way accuse yourself of writing wretched stuff, whereas you have drunk at the well-spring of Roman eloquence, and no draughts from the Moselle can take the taste of Tiber from your mouth. You have your conversation among barbarians, yet you permit no barbarism to pass your lips; in eloquence and valour you equal those ancient generals whose hands could wield the stylus no less skilfully than the sword. [2] The Roman tongue is long banished from Belgium and the Rhine; but if its splendour has anywhere survived, it is surely with you; our jurisdiction is fallen into decay along the frontier, but while you live and preserve your eloquence, the Latin language stands unshaken. As I return your greeting, my heart is glad within me that our vanishing culture has left such traces with you; continue your assiduous studies, and you will feel more surely every day that the man of education is as much above the boor as the boor in his turn above the beast.

[3] Were I to obey your wish and send you a commentary on some part of the Scriptures, it would be sorry verbiage; you would do far better to direct your request to the clergy of your own district. They are venerable in years, approved in faith, known by works; they are ready in speech and tenacious in memory, my superiors in all sublimer gifts. Even if we leave out of the account the bishop of your city, a character of supreme perfection, blessed in the possession and repute of all the virtues, you may far more appropriately consult on any kind of problem the celebrated fathers of the Church in Gaul; Lupus and Auspicius are both within your reach, and however inquisitive you may be, you will not get to the bottom of a learning such as theirs. In any case, you must pardon me for disobeying you in this matter, and that not only out of kindliness, but from simple justice; for if it is fair that you should escape from incompetence, it is equally right that I should avoid conceit. Farewell.

XVIII.

To his friend Lucontius c. A.D. 470 [1] I FEAR you have a memory defective in the matter of others' requests but infallible in the matter of your own. It would be tedious to repeat all the promises of swift return which you and your family made to me and mine; not the smallest of them have you kept. Far from it, your flight was cunningly planned to make us think you were coming back for Easter; you took no heavy baggage out of town, neither carriage nor cart for luggage appeared in your train.

[2] It is too late to complain of the trick you made the ladies play us, causing them to travel with only the lightest of effects, while you and our brother Volusianus were hardly escorted by a single client or attendant. By this device you cheated the friends who came to see you off with the delusive hope that they were soon to see you back. Certainly our good brother Volusianus deceived us by the pretence of a short trip, when in fact he was probably bound, not merely for his own estate at Baiocassium, but the whole second province of Lyons into the bargain.1 [3] As for yourself, though you have broken faith by idling all this time away down there, you yet have the face to ask me for any poetical trifles I may have recently composed. I obey; but simply because you deserve the rubbish you will get; the verses I am sending are so rustic and unfinished that no one would believe they came from town and not from the depths of the country. [4] You must know that Bishop Perpetuus,1 a worthy successor of his great predecessor, has just rebuilt on a greater scale than before the basilica of the saintly pontiff and confessor Martin. It is said to be a great and memorable work, and all that we should expect when one such man does honour to another.

For the walls of this church he has demanded of me the inscription you are now to criticize, and sure as he is of his place in my affection, he takes no denial in matters of this kind. [5] Would I could think this offering of mine would prove no blot upon the magnificence of that pile and its wealth of gifts; but I fear it must be so, unless some happy chance should lend its very defects a charm where all is of such perfection, just as a dark spot on a fair body is mocked at first, and then compels approval. But why should I dilate upon all this? Put down your shepherd's pipe, and give a supporting hand to this hobbling elegy of mine:

*'Over the body of Martin, venerated in every land, the body in which renown survives the life departed, there rose a structure meet for poor men's worship, and unworthy of its famous Confessor. Always a sense of shame weighed heavy on the citizens when they thought of the

saint's great glory, and the small attraction of his shrine. But Perpetuus the bishop, sixth in line after him,2 has now taken away the disgrace; he has removed the inner shrine from the modest chapel and reared this great building over it. By the favour of so powerful a patron the founder's fame has risen together with the church, which is such as to rival the temple of Solomon, the seventh wonder of the world. That shone resplendent with gems and gold and silver; but this fane shines with a light of faith beyond the brilliance of all metals. Avaunt, Envy of the venomous tooth! be our forefathers absolved; may our posterity, however fond of its own voice, presume to add or alter nothing. And till the second coming of Christ to raise all people from the dead, may the fane of Perpetuus perpetually endure.'1

[6] I send you, as you see, the most recent verses I can find. But if you persist in spinning vain delays, the concession will not stop me from shaking the stars with my complaints; nor, if the case requires it, shall I shrink from a resort to satire, and you will be very much mistaken if you imagine that I shall be as suave as in the verses you have had to-day. For it is a law of human nature that man is more telling, more fiery, and quicker on the mark in his censure than in his praise. Farewell. * Translated by Fertig, Part ii, pp. 37-8; and by Chaix, i. 329.

XIX.

To his friend Florentinus (No indication of date) [1] You blame me for my delay and my silence. I can purge myself of both charges, for I am not only on my way, but as you see, I write as well. Farewell.

XX.

To his friend Domnicius * c. A. D. 470

[1] You take such pleasure in the sight of arms and those who wear them, that I can imagine your delight if you could have seen the young prince Sigismer 1 on his way to the palace of his father-in-law in the guise of a bridegroom or suitor in all the pomp and bravery of the tribal fashion. His own steed with its caparisons, other steeds laden with flashing gems, paced before and after; but the conspicuous interest in the procession centred in the prince himself, as with a charming modesty he went afoot amid his bodyguard and footmen, in flame-red mantle, with much glint of ruddy gold, and gleam of snowy silken tunic, his fair hair, red cheeks and white skin according with the three hues of his equipment. [2] But the chiefs and allies who bore him company were dread of aspect, even thus on peace intent. Their feet were laced in boots of bristly hide reaching to the heels; ankles and legs were exposed. They wore high tight tunics of varied colour hardly descending to their bare knees, the sleeves covering only the upper arm. Green mantles they had with crimson borders; baldrics supported swords hung from their shoulders, and pressed on sides covered with cloaks of skin secured by brooches. [3] No small part of their adornment consisted of their arms; in their hands they grasped barbed spears and missile axes; their left sides were guarded by shields, which flashed with tawny golden bosses and snowy silver borders, betraying at once their wealth and their good taste. Though the business in hand was wedlock, Mars was no whit less prominent in all this pomp than Venus. Why need I say more? Only your presence was wanting to the full enjoyment of so fine a spectacle. For when I saw that you had missed the things you love to see, I longed to have you with me in all the impatience of your longing soul. Farewell.

* Translated by Hodgkin, ii. 364.

XXI.

To his friend Aper c. A.D. 472

[1] IN every genealogy the father's line must take precedence, yet we owe not a little to our mothers. For it hardly befits us to accord a lesser honour to her who bore, than to him who begot us. I leave the biologist the care of defining what we are or how we came into the world, passing on to the subject introduced by these reflections. [2] Your father is an Aeduan,1 your mother comes from Auvergne. Aeduan, then, you are first and foremost, but yet not altogether. For remember the passage in Virgil2 to the effect that Pallas is Arcadian, but at the same time Samnite. He might have qualified, as a foreigner, to lead the Etruscans against Mezentius, save only for the fact that through his Samnite mother he traced his descent in part to her country of Etruria. Here you have evidence of great moment from the greatest of authorities (unless, indeed, you believe poets false to facts even when they deal with history), that the mother's country must count no less than that of the father. [3] Now if the Arvernians in their turn rightly claim at any rate a half-share in you, pray give a patient hearing to the complaint of men who yearn for your presence, and now unburden the bosom-secret of a whole population through the lips of a single spokesman.

Imagine them as standing before you and addressing you face to face. 'What is our offence, ungrateful fellow citizen, that all these years you shun the soil which nourished you as if it were an enemy's country? Here we tended your cradle, here we heard your infant cries and formed your tender limbs; it was our people who carried you in their arms. [4] This was the country of your grandsire Fronto, whose indulgence to you was equalled only by his own self-discipline, which our models of to-day might take as a model for themselves. This was the country of your grandmother Auspicia, who from a single heart after her daughter's death gave to the helpless orphan a devotion great enough for two. Your aunt was also of our land, and so was Frontina, the virgin holier than a nun, held by your mother in respect, by your father in veneration, and so ascetic and austere in her life, so perfect in God's faith and fear, that she inspired an awe in all men. It was here that our schools vied one with the other to perfect you in grammar and in rhetoric, when the time came for your initiation in the liberal arts, with such results that even by virtue of your education alone you cannot but think of Clermont with affection. [5] I shall not recall to you the unique charm of our

land;1 the broad main of tillage, where the profitable waters flow harmless through the crops, bringing rich increase;

where the more the industrious man traffics, the less he need fear shipwreck; the land which is easy to the traveller, fertile to the cultivator, to the hunter a perpetual joy; where pastures crown the hill-tops and vineyards clothe the slopes, where villas rise on the lowlands and castles on the rocks, forests here and clearings there, valleys with springs, headlands washed by rivers; the land, in short, of which a single glimpse suffices to make many a stranger forget his own country. [6] Need I remind you of the town which was always so devoted to you that you ought to find no society more agreeable than that of its nobility? You were received with open arms, and all were so delighted to have you with them that no one could ever see enough of you. Need I speak of your own property? the more you visit it the better it will make good your outlay. For the very expenses of a proprietor cultivating his own land contribute to the increase of his income. I unburden myself thus in the name of all our citizens, and certainly of the best among them. Such is the affection which they show, so high the compliment implied in their desire, that you may imagine the greater joy which will be yours if you assent to their request. Farewell.

XXII.

To his friend Leo A.D. 477

[1] THE magnificent Hesperius, pearl of friends and glory of letters, informed me on his return from Toulouse not long ago that you wished me to begin writing history as soon as my volume of Letters is completed. I need not tell you with what respect and gratitude I receive an opinion of such weight, and moreover so flattering to myself; for if you hold that I ought to abandon the work of smaller compass for the greater, it must be because you think me competent. But frankly, I find it easier to respect your judgement than to follow your advice. [2] The task indeed is one which is worthy of your recommendation, but it is no less worthy of your own practice. Tacitus long ago gave similar advice to Pliny and then anticipated his friend by following his own counsel. The precedent bears perfectly on your suggestion; for I am a mere disciple of Pliny,1 whereas in the old historical style you excel Tacitus. Could he return to earth, could he witness your literary eminence and reputation, he would soon follow the hint conveyed by his own name. [3] You, therefore, are the man to shoulder the burden of your own proposal; you have an excellent gift of eloquence and to vast erudition you join unrivalled opportunities. For as adviser of a most potent sovereign, whose policy is concerned with all the world, you are admitted to the secrets of his business and his laws, his wars and treaties, you understand their local significance, their extent and their importance. Who, then, more fit to gird him for the task than he who is behind the great scene of public affairs, who knows the movements of the peoples, the embassies that pass between them, the generals' feats of arms, the treaties of the princes, who stands himself at such an altitude that he need neither suppress the truth nor broider the fabric of a lie?

[4] How different is my own condition, afflicted with the griefs of exile, deprived of the old facilities for study; a cleric, sworn to renounce ambition, and keep the middle path of his obscurity. My trust is no longer in the gifts of this present world, but in the hope of a world to come. My failing strength plays me false, and makes me delight in idleness; I care no more for the praise of my own generation, and as little for that of men who shall come after me. [5] History is the last field in which I should now pursue fame; we churchmen are ill-advised to publish our own affairs and rash to meddle with those of others; we record the past without advantage to ourselves, and the present from imperfect knowledge; we write

what is untrue to our disgrace, and what is true at our peril. It is a work or subject in which the mention even of the virtuous wins a man scant credit, and of the great, unbounded enmity. Forthwith some hue and flavour of satire invades the historian's style, and this is wholly incongruous with our vows. Historical writing begins in spite, proceeds in weariness, and ends in ill repute. [6] Let a cleric once dabble in it, and all these woes will fall upon him; forthwith the viper's tooth of envy is into us; if our style be straightforward, we are called mad; if polished, we are presuming beyond our place.1 But you can enter upon this province with a light heart;

your fame allows you to spring from strength to strength. You will tread the neck of the detractor or lightly leap above it. None will have written in a more exalted vein than you, none so near the antique manner, even though your theme be the story of our own times. For as you were trained long since in the art of letters, and now are no less versed in that of affairs, you have left the venomed fang no hold whatever on you. Therefore it is that in years to come your works will be consulted with advantage, heard with delight, and read with assurance of their authority. Farewell.

XXIII.

To his friend Proculus c. A.D. 472

[1] YOUR son, whom I may almost call mine also, has taken refuge with me, full of sorrow for having left you, overwhelmed with shame and repentance of his desertion. When I heard what he had done, I rebuked him for this truancy with sharp words and threatening looks. The voice was mine, but I spoke in your place; I denounced him as one whose proper meed was disinheritance,1 the cross, the sack, and the other penalties of parricides. He flushed red in his confusion, but made no brazen excuses for his fault; and when I convicted him on every point, such floods of streaming tears accompanied his contrition that it was impossible to doubt his future amendment. [2] I entreat you, therefore, to show mercy on one who now shows none to himself; imitate Christ and do not condemn him who admits that he deserves to be condemned. You may prove inexorable; you may subject him to unheard-of punishments; but no torture you can inflict will hurt him like his own remorse. Free him from his despairing fears; justify my confidence in you; relieve yourself from the secret anguish you must feel (if I know aught of a father's feelings) at the spectacle of a son crushed by undisguised affliction. I shall only have done him harm if you lift a finger against him, which I trust you will not do unless you mean to remain as hard as rock and rigid as impenetrable adamant.

[3] If I am right in expecting something better from your known character and warm heart, be indulgent and forgive; I pledge myself that, once reconciled, he will henceforward be a loyal son. To absolve him promptly of his fault is to bind me by a new obligation. I earnestly beg you to do more, and grant him instant pardon; I want you, when he returns, not to open him your door alone, but your heart as well. Great God! what a bright day will dawn for you, what joyous news it will be to me, what gladness will fill his soul, when he casts himself at his father's feet and receives from those injured lips, those lips of terrible aspect, not reproaches but a kiss! Farewell.

XXIV.

To his friend Turnus * A.D. 461-7 [1] THE Mantuan's lines suit perfectly your name and your affair: Turnus, what never God would dare To promise to his suppliant's prayer, Lo, here, the lapse of time has brought E'en to your hands, unasked, unsought.1 You remember that a long time ago your father Turpio (he was then of tribune's rank) sought and obtained a loan of Maximus, an official of the Palatine Service; he assigned nothing as security or guarantee, either in money or land; there is only a document ensuring the creditor his twelve per cent.1 This interest had been accumulating ten years, and had doubled the capital sum. [2] When your father was grievously ill and near his death, the public authority put serious pressure on him for the payment of the debt; the bailiffs too behaved in an intolerably brutal manner. I was then setting out for Toulouse, and the sick man, in despair, wrote entreating me to intercede with his creditor for at least a short delay. Of course I at once promised to do what I could, for Maximus and I are something more than acquaintances, and linked by old ties of hospitality. I therefore diverged from my route to pay him a visit, though his estate lies some miles distant from the highway.

[3] On my arrival, he came out himself to meet me. But how changed his walk from the old erect and rapid gait; how changed the old frank regard and hearty voice! His dress, his walk, his humility, his pallor, his mode of speech----all declared the churchman. And then his hair was short and his beard long; he had simple tripod seats; coarse Cilician hangings covered his doors 2; the beds were featherless, the tables unadorned. His entertainment was as plain as it was kindly, with more vegetable than meat; if any richer dish appeared, it was brought not to him but to his guests. [4] When we rose from table, I asked my neighbours quietly to which of the three orders he belonged; was he monk, clerk, or penitent? They told me he was so popular that his fellow citizens had thrust priestly office upon him against his inclination.1 When morning came, and the servants and clients were busy catching the animals, I begged a private interview, which he at once granted. I began by congratulations on his new dignity which he had not expected, but my petition followed close upon them. [5] I preferred the prayer of our common friend Turpio; I urged his straits and his extremity; I told how much harder it seemed to the sick man's afflicted friends that his soul should be released from a body still held in the bond of debt. I implored him to remember his new calling and our ancient fellowship;

I entreated him at least to accord delay, and so to moderate the barbarous importunities of the collectors, who were barking like dogs about a death-bed; I asked that if Turpio died, the heirs should be granted the respite of the mourner's year, and that if, as I hoped, he recovered health, he should be left in peace during the time of convalescence from so exhausting a sickness. [6] I had got thus far with my petition when this charitable soul began to weep copious tears, not for the delay in recovering his debt but for the peril of the debtor, and restraining his sobs, cried: 'Far be it from me, a cleric, to demand from a sick man what as an official I should hardly have brought myself to ask from a sound one. But I am so attached to my friend's children also, that, even should he die, I shall require of them not a penny more than the law of our friendship sanctions. You shall write to them in their anxiety, enclosing a letter from me to confirm the authority of yours. Assure them that whatever be the issue of our brother's illness, (and may it prove a happy one! I give them a whole year's respite; I will also remit that half of the debt represented by the accumulated interest, and content myself with the simple return of the loan.' On this, I rendered thanks to God first, and then to my host, who so respected his good name and conscience;

I assured this good friend that he laid up as a treasure in advance for himself what I was empowered to remit to you, and purchased a heavenly kingdom by refusing to drive a hard bargain here on earth. It now remains for you to use every effort for the repayment of the principal, and to return him heartfelt thanks in the name of your young brother and sister, who by reason of their tender age can know nothing of their own good fortune. There is no excuse for you to say, 'I am only a co-heir; the estate has not yet been divided; it is common knowledge that I have come off worse than the other two; my brother and sister are still minors; a husband has yet to be found for her, a guardian for him, and a surety for the guardian when appointed.' Such things are sometimes said with fairness to creditors, but only to the bad ones. You are fortunate in having to deal with a person ready to remit half your debt when he might exact the whole. Do not keep him waiting; he would be within his right if he demanded once more in his resentment all that his lenience had excused. Farewell.

* Translated by Hodgkin, ii. 345.

XXV.

To his friend Domnulus* c. A.D. 470

[1] I CANNOT delay an hour in letting you know of an event which must cause you the greatest pleasure, anxious as you were to learn what success attended the piety and firmness of our metropolitan and father in Christ, Patiens, upon the occasion of his visit to Châlon. He went to ordain a bishop for that town, where discipline had been imperilled after the retirement and subsequent death of the young bishop Paulus. Some of the provincial bishops formed his escort; others had preceded him. When the Episcopal Council met, it found that the opinion of the citizens was not unanimous,1 and that there existed private factions of the kind so ruinous to the public welfare. [2] The presence of three candidates aggravated these evils. The first had no moral qualification whatever, but only the privilege of ancient lineage, of which he made the most. The second was brought in on the applause of parasites,2 bribed to support him by the free run of a gourmand's table. The third had a tacit understanding with his supporters, that if he attained the object of his ambition, the plundering of the Church estates should be theirs. [3] Seeing this, the holy Patiens and the holy Euphronius determined that no thought of odium or popularity should move them from the firmness and severity of the saner judgement. They communicated their intention to their fellow bishops1 in secret conclave assembled, before they made it public.

Then, with a complete disregard of the unruly crowd, they suddenly joined their hands upon the holy John, a man conspicuous for an honourable, humane and gentle life, and without the faintest suspicion of what they proposed, or the slightest desire for preferment. [4] This John was first a Reader, and had been a server at the altar from his tender years. In course of time and strenuous duty he became archdeacon, in which office or rank his efficiency kept him back; they would not give him promotion because they did not wish to relieve him of functions he performed so well. Such was the man, a member only of the second order, on whom they laid their hands, to the perplexity of the factions, which had no acclamations ready for one never even put forward for the office, but dared not at the same time say anything against a man whom his own career acclaimed. So, to the stupefaction of the intriguers, the rage of bad citizens, and the delight of good, without one dissentient voice, they two consecrated their new colleague. [5] And now, unless the monasteries of the Jura 2 keep you, where you love to ascend as if in foretaste of a celestial habitation, this

letter ought to reach you, bringing the happy news, how these our fathers and protectors opined in accord, or accorded in opinion----whichever you will.

Rejoice too in his name whom Euphronius and Patiens consecrated, the one by testimony, the other by laying on of hands, the two together by their concurring judgement; in all which events Euphronius acted as beseemed his age and the long tenure of his high office, Patiens, for whom no praise could ever be too high, as befitted one who by his ecclesiastical dignity is the first person in our city, and by the priority of the city, the first citizen in all the province. Farewell.

* Partly translated by Guizot, Hist, de la civilisation en France, ed. 1846, i. 81-2.

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.