Book 5

Sidonius Apollinaris (c. AD 430–490)

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I.

To his friend Petronius A.D. 478 [1] THEY tell me you devote patient but not unpleasant hours to the perusal of my Letters; you who have achieved mastery in studies of widest scope, can yet notice the most insignificant writings of another. This is great, and well becomes the enthusiast for letters. But you are repaid for it by the most perfect kind of fame; for he who is generous enough to praise other men's talent will not fail to find his own conspicuously acknowledged. [2] I commend to you my friend Vindicius, a man of piety, and admirably suited for the dignity of deacon which he has recently attained. I had no time to copy what you wanted from my tablets, as it was incumbent on me to do, so I have entrusted him with these trifling lines just to have something to send; but such is your kindness that you accept any letter of mine as if it were an exceeding great reward. [3] Meanwhile I commend to your notice the affair of this same bearer who is taken to your neighbourhood by a troublesome business in which he finds himself involved. Two possibilities lie before him: he may either enter peacefully upon an inheritance, or he may be entangled in legal proceedings. His paternal uncle has died a bachelor and intestate, and he is taking steps to inherit as next of kin; but factious opposition may bar his way. Against each and every difficulty which may be raised, you, after Christ, are the suppliant's best hope; I am confident that if he finds favour in your sight, his cause will prove victorious. Farewell.

II.

To his friend Nymphidius c. A.D. 472 [1] CLAUDIANUS MAMERTUS, the most accomplished of our Christian philosophers and the most learned man in the world, wrote not long ago a notable work in three volumes on the Nature of the Soul; in its embellishment and final elaboration he employed the method of the disposition and logical arrangement of profane philosophy, demonstrating that the nine Muses are not maidens at all, but Liberal Arts. The attentive reader discovers in his pages the real personified titles of the Nine, who of themselves and for themselves create their proper appellations. For in this book Grammar divides,1 and Rhetoric declaims; Arithmetic reckons, Geometry metes; Music balances, Logic disputes; Astrology predicts, Architecture constructs; Poetry attunes her measures. [2] Pleased with the novelty of a theory like this, and kindled to enthusiasm by so much ripe wisdom, you had hardly seen the book before you asked to have it for a short time to examine and copy it and to make extracts; you promised to return it quickly, and your request was granted as soon as made. Now, it is far from fitting that I should be deceived in this little matter, and that you should be the deceiver. It is high time for you to send the book back; if you liked it, you must have had enough of it by now; if you dislike it, more than enough. Whichever it be, you have now to clear your reputation. If you mean to delay the return of a volume for which I have to ask you, I shall think that you care more for the parchment than for the work. Farewell.

III.

To [his kinsman] Apollinaris A.D. 472 [1] IT was perhaps only fair that you should retaliate on my loquacious habits by applying the curb of taciturnity. But since in the exchange of kind offices a perfect friendship should dwell less on what it pays than on what it may still be held to owe, I shall loosen the rein of scruple and render you the impudent homage of another letter: of course the impropriety of this is proved by the fact of your continued silence. Do I not deserve to be informed of a brother's fortunes in time of war? Are you really afraid of revealing your hopes or apprehensions to a friend who is anxious on your account? [2] Your motive in keeping your doings from me can only be that you are not quite sure of me, and fear that I might not rejoice as I ought at news of your good luck, or properly lament your adverse fortunes. May such disloyalty find no place in gentle hearts; may so miserable a suspicion be no longer a blot on the candour of a true affection! For, as your Crispus says, ' to desire and reject the same things, that is the making of firm friends.'1

[3] I shall be content if I can hear that you are in good case. My own mind has been depressed by the weight of a troubled conscience; a violent fever brought me almost to death's door. As you know, the cares of an august profession have been imposed on me, unworthy though I am of such an honour. And it has been misery to me to have to teach what I have never myself learned, and to preach goodness before practising it; like a barren tree, I bear no fruit of good works, but scatter idle words like leaves. [4] And now pray for me that my future life may prove it to have been worth while to come back almost from the underworld; for now a continuance in past errors would make this renewal of life the beginning of my soul's destruction. You see that I hide nothing from you, and I may fairly ask in return how things fare with you. I have done the part of friendship; it remains for you to act as you think right. But remember that by God's grace we recognize no end to a comradeship which we gave our hearts to begin; it must be like laws of Attica, graven eternally on brass. Farewell.

IV.

To [his kinsman] Simplicius (No indication of date) [1] YOUR failure to answer my letter I impute to a friendship not beyond reproach, but in a greater degree, to an uneasy conscience. For unless I do you an injustice, your answer is withheld less from perversity than from a sense of shame. But if you continue to close and bolt your door against my communications, I shall not be sorry to oblige you with the peace which you desire. At the same time I must tell you plainly that the instigators of the wrong thus done me are to be found among those nearest to you. [2] For it is no injustice to attribute all that is hateful in your silence to the spoiled humours of your sons, who, secure in your affection, submit with impatience to my assiduity.1 It is incumbent on you to admonish them by your parental authority to be more amiable henceforward in their behaviour, and so sweeten to me the bitterness of their past offence. Farewell.

V.

To his friend Syagrius (No indication of date) [1] THOUGH you descend in the male line from an ancestor who was not only consul----that is immaterial----but also (and here is the real point) a poet, from one whose literary achievement would certainly have gained him the honour of a statue, had it not been secured for him already by his official honours,----witness the finished verse that he has left us; and though on this side of his activity his descendants have proved themselves no wise degenerate, yet here we find you picking up a knowledge of the German tongue with the greatest of ease; the feat fills me with indescribable amazement. [2] I can recall the thoroughness of your education in liberal studies; I know with what a fervid eloquence you used to declaim before the rhetor. With such a training, how have you so quickly mastered the accent of a foreign speech, that after having your Virgil caned into you, and absorbing into your very system the opulent and flowing style of the varicose orator of Arpinum,1 you soar out like a young falcon from the ancient eyrie 2?

[3] You can hardly conceive how amused we all are to hear that, when you are by, not a barbarian but fears to perpetrate a barbarism in his own language. Old Germans bowed with age are said to stand astounded when they see you interpreting their German letters; they actually choose you for arbiter and mediator in their disputes. You are a new Solon in the elucidation of Burgundian law; like a new Amphion you attune a new lyre, an instrument of but three strings. You are popular on all sides; you are sought after; your society gives universal pleasure. You are chosen as adviser and judge; as soon as you utter a decision it is received with respect. In body and mind alike these people are as stiff as stocks and very hard to form; yet they delight to find in you, and equally delight to learn, a Burgundian eloquence and a Roman spirit.

[4] Let me end with a single caution to the cleverest of men. Do not allow these talents of yours to prevent you from devoting whatever time you can spare to reading. Let your critical taste determine you to preserve a balance between the two languages, holding fast to the one to prevent us making fun of you, and practising the other that you may have the laugh of us. Farewell.

VI.

To [his kinsman] Apollinaris A.D. 474-5 [1] As soon as summer began to yield to autumn and the fears of my Arvernians were in some degree moderated by the approach of winter, I was able to make a journey to Vienne. There I found, in great tribulation, your brother Thaumastus, who alike by virtue of his age and his descent inspires me with feelings of affection and respect. Afflicted already by the recent loss of his wife, he was no less troubled on your account, fearing that the gang of barbarians and officers about the court might trump up some malicious charge against you.1 [2] According to his report, venomous tongues have been secretly at work, whispering in the ear of the ever-victorious Chilperic, our Master of the Soldiery,2 that your machinations are chiefly responsible for the attempt to win the town of Vaison for the new Emperor.3 If you are exposed to any suspicion on this score, inform me at once by return, that we may not lose any possible advantage which might accrue from my presence or the exertion of my interest. If in your opinion a real danger exists, I shall make it my special business either by conciliating the royal favour, to ensure your safety, or by discovering the extent of the king's anger to make you see the need for greater caution in future. Farewell.

VII.

To his [kinsman] Thaumastus A.D. 474-5 [1] AT last we have discovered who the villains are who have accused your brother before our tetrarch for siding with the partisans of the new Emperor----unless, indeed, the stealthy steps of the informers have deceived the proved sagacity of our friends. They are the wretches, as you yourself have heard me say upon the spot, whom Gaul endures with groans these many years, and who make the barbarians themselves seem merciful by comparison. They are the scoundrels whom even the formidable fear. These are the men whose peculiar province it seems to be to calumniate, to denounce, to intimidate, and to plunder. [2] These are they who in quiet times make parade of their affairs, in peace of their ample spoils, in war of their evasions, over their cups of their victories. These are the creatures who will spin out a case if they are called in, and block its progress if they are kept out; who grow offensive if reminded of their duty, and if they once pocket your fee, forget their obligation. These are the fellows who buy themselves a lawsuit to sell their mediation; who control the appointment of arbitrators, dictate their sentence, and tear it up whenever it suits them to do so; who incite litigants to sue, and hold the hearing in suspense; who hale off the convicted, and force back into the court those who would fain escape by settlement. These are the men who, asked a favour opposed by none, will promise with reluctance what shame forbids them to refuse, and moan if they have to keep their word.

[3] These are they at whose appearance the world's great scoundrels would confess themselves surpassed, Narcissus, Asiaticus, Massa, Marcellus, Carus, Parthenius, Licinus, Pallas, and all their peers.1 These are they who grudge quiet folks their peace, the soldier his pay, the courier his fare, the merchant his market, the ambassador his gifts, the farmer of tolls his dues, the provincial his farm, the municipality its flamen's dignity, the controllers of revenue their weights, the receivers their measures, the registrars their salary, the accountants their fees, the bodyguards their presents,2 towns their truces, taxgatherers their taxes, the clergy the respect men pay them, the nobles their lineage, superiors their seats in council, equals equality, the official his jurisdiction, the ex-official his distinctions, scholars their schools, masters their stipends, and finished pupils their accomplishments. [4] These are the upstarts drunken with new wealth 4 (I spare you no sordid detail), who by their intemperate use betray their unfamiliarity with riches. They like to march under arms to a banquet, they will attend a funeral in white, and wear mourning at a marriage festival;

they go to church in furs,3 and hear a litany in beaver. No race of men, no rank, no epoch is ever to their liking. In the market they behave like Scyths; in the chamber they are vipers, at feasts buffoons. While they are harpies in exaction, in conversation you might as well talk to statues, or address a question to brute beasts. In negotiation slow as snails, they are sharp as money-lenders at a contract. In comprehension they are stones, in judgement stocks; swift as flame in anger, hard as iron in forgiveness, pards in friendship, bears in humour, foxes in deceit, overbearing as bulls, fierce as Minotaurs in destruction.

[5] They believe in the unsettlement of affairs; the more troubled the time the firmer their faith in its advantage. Cowardice and a bad conscience destroy their nerves; they are lions in the palace and hares in camp; they dread treaties for fear of having to disgorge, and war for fear of having to fight. Let them but scent from afar a rusty purse, and you will see them fix on it the eyes of Argus, Briareus' hands, the Sphinx's claws; they will bring into play the perjuries of Laomedon, the subtleties of Ulysses, Sinon's wiles; they will stick to it with the staunchness of Polymestor and the loyalty of a Pygmalion. [6] Such are the morals with which they hope to crush a man both powerful and good. And what can one man do, encompassed on every side by slanderers whose venomous lips distort each word he says? What should he do when nature meant him for honest company, but fortune cast him among thieves whose evil communications would make Phalaris more bloodthirsty, Midas more covetous, Ancus vainer, Tarquin haughtier, Tiberius craftier, Gaius more dangerous, Claudius more slothful, Nero more corrupt, Galba more avaricious, Otho more reckless, Vitellius more prodigal, Domitian more ferocious?

[7] But we have one consolation in our trouble; fair Tanaquil restrains our Lucumon:1 she waits her chance, and rids his ears by a few coaxing words of all the poison with which the whisperers have filled them. You ought to know that we owe it to her interest if up till now the mind of our common patron has not been poisoned against our brothers by these younger Cibyrates1; God willing, it never will be, while the present power holds Lyons for the German race, and our present Agrippina exerts her moderating influence on her Germanicus2. Farewell.

VIII.

To his friend Secundinus c. A.D. 477 [1] WHAT a long time it is since we used to read your masterly hexameters with outspoken admiration! Your verse was equally full of life, whether you were celebrating a wedding, or the fall of great beasts before the prowess of kings. But even you yourself would admit that you have never done anything better than your last poem in triple trochaics constructed in hendecasyllabic metre. [2] What fine malice I found in it; what style, what pungent eloquence! it was impossible for me to keep my enthusiasm to myself. As for your subjects, you were fearless; only the necessity for respecting persons seemed to check somewhat the lightning of your genius and the free course of your irony. I think the Consul Ablabius3 never thrust more brilliantly at the family life of Constantine with a couplet, or gave more stinging point to the famous distich secretly appended to the palace gates:

'Who wants back Saturn and his golden age? We have the diamond age----Neronian.' You remember that, when this was written, Constantine had done to death his consort Fausta 1 in a hot bath and his son Crispus with cold poison. [3] I would not have you deterred by anything from your bold and vivid use of satire. You will find the flourishing vices of our tyrant-ridden citizens 2 a rich mine to exploit. For the folk whom we set down as fortunate according to the lights of our age or our locality comport themselves with such an arrogance that the future will not readily forget their names. The infamy of vice and the praise of virtue are both alike eternal. Farewell.

IX.

To his friend Aquilinus c. A.D. 477 [1] I FIND it certainly to my advantage, friend capable of every virtue, and I trust you will feel the same, that we should have as many ties to bind us as we have reasons for being united. Such ties are hereditary in our families; I do but recall the experience of the past. Let me summon as my witnesses our grandfathers Rusticus and Apollinaris,3 whom like fortunes and aversions united in a noble friendship. They had a similar taste in letters, their characters were alike; they had enjoyed similar dignities and undergone the same dangers. They were equally agreed in detesting the inconstancy of Constantine, the irresolution of Jovinus, the perfidy of Gerontius; both singling out the fault proper to each person, and both finding in Dardanus the sum of all existing vices.4

[2] If we come down to the years between their time and our own, we find our fathers brought up together from their tender youth until they came to manhood. In Honorius' reign,1 as tribunes and secretaries, they served abroad together in such close comradeship that among all the grounds of their agreement the fact that their own fathers had been friends appeared to be the least. Under Valentinian, one of the two ruled all Gaul, the other only a region of it; even so they managed to balance their dignities with a fraternal equilibrium; the one who held the lower rank had seniority in office. [3] And now the old tradition comes down to us grandsons, whose dearest care it should be to prevent the affection of our parents and our forefathers from suffering any diminution in our persons. But there are ties of all kinds, over and above that of this hereditary friendship, which needs must bring us close together; we are linked by equality of years no less than by identity of birthplace; we played and learned together, shared the same discipline and relaxation, and were trained by the same rule. [4] So then, for what remains of life now that our years touch upon the threshold of age, let us under the providence of God be two persons with but a single mind; and let us instil into our sons the same mutual regard: let us see that the objects which they desire and refuse, pursue or shun, are the same. It would indeed crown our vows if the boys who bear the honoured names of Rusticus and Apollinaris renewed within their breasts the hearts of those illustrious ancestors. Farewell.

X.

To his friend Sapaudus (No indication of date)

[1] AMONG all the virtues of the illustrious Pragmatius, I place this first, that his enthusiasm for letters inspires him with an ardent admiration for you. He finds in you the last traces of the antique industry and accomplishment; and it is only right that he should show you favour, since few men owe a greater debt to literature than he. [2] When he was a young man his persuasive eloquence won such applause in the schools of rhetoric, that Priscus Valerianus, himself reputed for his oratorical skill, made him his son-in-law, and adopted him into his patrician family. Besides his youth, his birth and means, Pragmatius had good looks, and an engaging modesty which enlisted people's sympathy. Even at that age he was of a serious disposition and felt the shame of making his way by a handsome face when he would have been better content to attract by his qualities of mind and character. And indeed a beautiful nature is the best key to men's hearts; bodily charm is transient; as years advance and life wanes, it falls away. When Priscus Valerianus was made Prefect of the Gauls, his opinion of his adopted son remained unaltered, indeed he clung to it with pertinacity. He associated him with himself in council-chamber and court, resolved that the accomplishments which had been admitted to share his family life should also share in the enhancement of his dignity.

[3] Your own style is so admirable and lucid, that far from surpassing it, the great orators, with all their qualities, can hardly attain its level----not the logical Palaemon, the austere Gallic, the opulent Delphidius, the methodical Agroecius, the virile Alcimus, the charming Adelphius, the rigid Magnus, the agreeable Victorius.1 It is far from my desire to cajole or flatter you with this hyperbolic list of rhetors, but in my opinion only Quintilian in his force and his intensity, or Palladius with his splendid manner, can fairly be compared with you; and even that comparison I should not urge----I should merely yield it acquiescence. [4] If after you there shall be any other adept of Roman eloquence, he will be deeply grateful to that friendship with Valerianus, and if he is half a man, will long to be admitted as a third to your society. Such a wish could never prove a source of annoyance to you, since there are now, alas! so few who have any respect for polite studies. And it is a defect rooted and fixed in human nature, to think little of the artist when you know nothing of the art. Farewell.

XI.

To his friend Potentinus c. A. D. 467 [1] I AM your devoted friend, and my devotion was born neither of caprice nor error. Before I linked myself to you in close friendship, I pondered well; it is my habit to choose first, and give my heart afterwards. 'But what on earth ', you will say, 'did you see to like in me?' [2] I will answer gladly and in two words: gladly, for you are my friend; briefly, because my space is small. What I respect in your career is this; you do so many things that every reasonable man would like to imitate. You cultivate your estates as an expert; you build with the utmost method, you are an unerring hunter, your hospitality is perfection, your wit is of the first order, your judgements are absolutely fair; you are sincere in persuasion, very slow to wrath, very quickly appeased, very loyal after reconciliation. [3] I shall rejoice if when he grows up my young Apollinaris copies these several qualities; it shall not be for want of urging on my part if he fails. Let Christ but grant me success in my plans for his training and instruction, and it will not be my least satisfaction to have borrowed from your character the chief ensample of life which I set before him. Farewell.

XII.

To his friend Calminius A. D. 474 [1] It is no foolish pride of mine, but this alien dominance which makes my letters so few and far between; do not expect me to speak out; your own fears, similar to mine, explain the need for silence. One thing, however, I may freely lament, that sundered as we are by this whirlwind of warring forces, we have practically no chance of meeting one another. Alas! your harassed country never sees you except when the alien's formidable command bids you hide yourself in armour, while we on our side are covered by our ramparts. At such time you are led against your native land, an unwilling captive,1 to empty your quiver against us while your eyes fill with tears. We bear you no ill will; we know that your prayers are otherwise directed than your missiles. [2] But as from time to time, without ratification of any treaty some semblance of a truce opens for us a casement on our darkness, bright with hope of liberation, I entreat you to let us hear from you as often as you can; for be sure that our besieged citizens preserve the kindliest thoughts of you and manage to forget the hateful part you play as their besieger. Farewell.

XIII.

To his friend Pannychius * A. D. 469

[1] HAVE you heard that Seronatus 1 is coming back from Toulouse? If you have not (and I hardly think you have), learn it from these presents. Evanthius is hurrying to Clausetia, making passable the parts of the road in the contractor's hands, and clearing it wherever it is choked with fallen leaves. When he finds any part of the surface full of holes, he rushes in a panic with spadefuls of soil and fills them with his own hands; his business is to conduct his monster from the valley of the Tarn, like the pilot-fish 2 that leads the bulky whale through shoals and rocky waters. [2] But lo! the monster, swift to wrath and slow to move by reason of his bulk, no sooner appears like a dragon uncoiling from his cave, than he makes immediate descent upon the pallid folk of Javols, whose cheeks are pale with fear. They had scattered on all sides, abandoning their townships; and now he drains them dry by new and unparalleled imposts, or takes them in the mesh of calumny; even when they have paid their annual tribute more than once, he refuses to let these unhappy victims return to their homes. [3] The sure sign of his impending arrival in any district is the appearance of prisoners in troops, dragging their chains along. The anguish of these men is joy to him; their hunger is his food; and he finds his peculiar pleasure in subjecting them to ignominy before their sentence.

He compels the men to grow long hair, and off cuts the hair of the women. If here and there a prisoner receives a pardon, it is through his vanity or his corruption, and never through his mercy. Not even the prince of orators or the prince of poets could describe so dire a creature: Marcus of Arpinum and Publius of Mantua would be impotent alike. This pest (whose treasons God confound! is said to be now on his way; anticipate his onset by salutary precautions; if there is talk of suits, compound with the litigious enemy; provide yourself with guarantees against new imposts, and prevent this worst of men from compromising the affairs of worthy people by his favour or ruining them by his enmity. I will sum up in these words my opinion of Seronatus: others fear some crushing blow at the brigand's hands; to me his very benefits are suspicious. Farewell.

* Translated by Hodgkin, ii. 338; and Fertig, i. p. 20.

XIV.

To his friend Aper A.D. 472-3 [1] ARE you taking your ease in your sunny Baiae,1 where the sulphurous water rushes from hollows of the porous rock, and the baths are so beneficial to those who suffer either in the lungs or liver? Or are you 'camped among the mountain castles',2 looking for a place of refuge, and perhaps embarrassed by the number of strongholds you find to choose from? Whatever the cause of your delay, whether you are making holiday or going about your business, I feel sure that the thought of the forthcoming Rogations 3 will bring you back to town. [2] It was Mamertus our father in God and bishop who first designed, arranged, and introduced the ceremonial of these prayers, setting a precedent we should all revere, and making an experiment which has proved of the utmost value. We had public prayers of a sort before, but (be it said without offence to the faithful) they were lukewarm, irregular, perfunctory, and their fervour was destroyed by frequent interruption for refreshment; and as they were chiefly for rain or for fine weather, to say the least of it, the potter and the market-gardener could never decently attend together! 4 [3] But in the Rogations which our holy father has instituted and conferred upon us, we fast, we pray with tears, we chant the psalms. To such a feast, where penitential sighs are heard from all the congregation, where heads are humbly bowed, and forms fall prostrate, I invite you; and if I rightly gauge your spirit, you will only respond the quicker because you are called in place of banquets to a festival of tears. Farewell.

XV.

To his friend Ruricius (No indication of date) [1] THE usual salutations over, I at once urge upon your notice the claims of our bookseller, because I have made discriminating and unbiased trial of the man, proving him to my complete satisfaction at once loyal in sentiment and alert in service to our common master----yourself. He brings in person the manuscript of the Heptateuch all written out by his own hand with the utmost neatness and rapidity, though I read it through myself, and made corrections. He also brings a volume of the Prophets; this was edited by him in my absence, and with his own hand purged of corrupt additions.1 The scholar who had promised him assistance in reading out from another text, was only able to perform his task in part; I fancy illness prevented him from carrying out his undertaking. [2] It remains for you by encouragement or promise of your influence to show appropriate recognition of a servant who has done his best to satisfy, and deserves to succeed; and if this is in proportion to his arduous task, he will soon begin to look for his reward. All that I ask for the moment is your benevolence towards him; it is for you to decide what he deserves, though indeed I think the good opinion of his master is far nearer to his heart than any recompense. Farewell.

XVI.

To [his wife] Papianilla* A. D. 474

[1] THE moment the Quaestor Licinianus, coming from Ravenna, had crossed the Alps and set foot on Gaulish soil, he sent a message in advance to make it known that he was bearer of imperial letters patent conferring the title of Patrician on Ecdicius.1 I know that your brother's honours delight you no less than my own; considering his years, he has attained this one very early; considering his deserts, very late. For he earned the dignity he is now to receive long ago, by service in the field and not by purchase; and though only a private citizen, poured into the treasury no mere contribution, but sums like spoils of war. [2] Julius Nepos, true Emperor in character no less than prowess, has done nobly in keeping the pledged word of his predecessor Anthemius that the labours of your brother should be recognized; his action is all the more laudable for the promptitude with which he has fulfilled a promise reiterated so often by another. In future the best men in the State will feel able, nay, rather, will feel bound, to spend their strength with the utmost ardour for the commonweal, assured that even should the prince who promised die, the Empire itself will be responsible, and pay the debt due to their devotion and self-sacrifice.

[3] Knowing your affectionate nature, I am convinced that even in the very midst of our adversities this news will bring great consolation, and that not even the imminent dread of siege will divert your mind from the path of a joy common to us all. For I am sure you were never quite so gratified by any of my own honours, in which you legally shared; good wife as you have always been, you are the best sister that man ever had. That is why I have not lost an instant in sending my letter of congratulation on this enhancement of dignity which Christ has permitted to your family. I satisfy alike your solicitude and your brother's modesty. He will be sure to say nothing of this promotion; but even if you did not know his unassuming nature, you would not blame him for lack of brotherly feeling. [4] As far as I am concerned, I derive great satisfaction from these new distinctions which you have awaited with unconcealed impatience; but I derive a greater yet from the brotherly union which exists between Ecdicius and myself. It is my ardent wish that our children and his may live in equal harmony; and I pray in our common name that just as we of this generation were born into prefectorian families, and have been enabled by divine favour to elevate them to

patrician rank, so they in their turn may exalt the patrician to the consular dignity. [5] Little Roscia, our joint care,1 sends you her love;

she has the rare advantage of being brought up by her grandmother and her aunts, who temper their great indulgence with strictness, forming her character, yet not asking too much of her tender years. Farewell.

* Translated by Hodgkin, ii. 346-8.

XVII.

To his friend Eriphius * A. D. 461-7

[1] You are the same man still, my dear Eriphius; the pleasures of the chase, the amenities of town or country are never allowed to lure you so far that in your hour the charm of letters will not win you back. That devotion it is which bids you tolerate even me, whom you are good enough to describe as redolent of the Muses. If you were in a frivolous mood when you wrote so, you jest at my expense; if in sober earnest, your regard for me has blinded your eyes, for it needs no demonstration to prove your judgement at fault. Really, you go much too far when you use of me expressions hardly appropriate to a Homer or a Virgil. [2] I leave these kindly exaggerations, and pass to the proper subject of my letter. You bid me send you the verses which I was weak enough to compose at the request of your most distinguished father-in-law, who understands the art of so living with his fellows as to command or obey with equal ease. Blame yourself if words run away with me, and I relate an insignificant event at greater length than it deserves; you insist on a picture of the scene and all that occurred, since your illness prevented you from being with us. [3] We had assembled at the tomb of S. Justus 1; the annual procession before daylight was over, attended by a vast crowd of both sexes which even that great church could not hold with all its cincture of galleries.

After Vigils were ended, chanted alternately by the monks and clerics, the congregation separated; we could not go far off, as we had to be at hand for the next service at Tierce, when the priests were to celebrate the Mass. [4] We felt oppressed by the crowding in a confined space, and by the great number of lights which had been brought in. It was still almost summer, and the night was so sultry that it suffocated us, imprisoned as we were in that steaming atmosphere; only the first freshness of the autumn dawn brought some welcome relief. Groups of the different classes dispersed in various directions, the principal citizens assembling at the monument of Syagrius, which is hardly a bowshot from the church. Some of us sat down under an old vine, the stems of which were trained trellis-wise and covered with leaves and drooping fronds; others sat on the grass odorous with the scent of flowers. [5] The talk was enlivened with amusing jests and pleasantries; above all (and what a blessed thing it was!), there was not a word about officials or taxes, not an informer among us to betray, not a syllable worth betrayal. Every one was free to tell any story worth relating and of a proper tenor; it was a most appreciative audience; the vein of gaiety was not allowed

to spoil the distinct relation of each tale. After a time, we felt a certain slackness through keeping still so long, and we voted for some more active amusement.

[6] We soon split into two groups, according to our ages: one shouted for the ball, the other for the board-game, both of which were to be had. I was the leader of the ball-players; you know that book and ball are my twin companions. In the other group, the chief figure was our brother Domnicius, that most engaging and attractive of men: there he was, rattling some dice which he had got hold of, as if he sounded a trumpet-call to play. The rest of us had a great game with a party of students, doing our best at the healthful exercise with limbs which sedentary occupations made much too stiff for running. [7] And now the illustrious Filimatius sturdily flung himself into the squadrons of the players, like Virgil's hero 'daring to set his hand to the task of youth' 1; he had been a splendid player himself in his younger years. But over and over again he was forced from his position among the stationary players by the shock of some runner from the middle, and driven into the midfield where the ball flew past him, or was thrown over his head; and he failed to intercept or parry it.2 More than once he fell prone, and had to pick himself up from such collapses as best he could; naturally he was the first to withdraw from the stress of the game in a state of internal inflammation, out of breath from exercise and suffering sharp pains in the side from the swollen fibres of his liver.

[8] Thereupon I left off too. It was done from delicacy; if I stopped at the same time, my brother would be spared a feeling of mortification at being so soon exhausted. Well, while we were sitting down, he found himself in such a perspiration that he called for water to bathe his face. They brought it, with a shaggy towel which had been washed after yesterday's use, and had been swinging on a line worked by a pulley near the doors of the porter's lodge. [9] As Filimatius was leisurely drying his cheeks, he said: 'I wish you would dictate a pair of couplets in honour of a cloth which has done me such a noble turn.' 'Very well,' I replied. 'But you must get my name in,' he rejoined. I said that there would be no difficulty in that. 'Dictate away, then.' I smiled; 'I would have you know', I said, 'that the Muses are upset if I frequent their company before witnesses.' At this he burst out in his explosive but delightful way (you know his ardent nature, and what an inexhaustible flow of wit he has): 'Beware, my lord Sollius! Apollo may be still more upset if you tempt his pupils to secret interviews all alone.' You can imagine the applause aroused by a retort as neat as it was instantaneous. [10] I wasted no more time, but called up his secretary, who was at hand with his tablets, and dictated the following epigram:

'At dawn, or when the seething bath invites, or when the hot chase beads the brow, may goodly Filimatius with this cloth cherish his face till all the perspiration flows into the thirsty fleece.' Our good friend Epiphanius the secretary had hardly taken down the lines, when they came to tell us that our time was up, and that the bishop was leaving his retreat; we therefore rose to go. [11] You must not be too critical of verses written thus to order. It is another matter with the longer poem which some time ago you two asked me to write in a hyperbolical and figured style on the man who bore good fortune ill.1 I shall send it off

to-morrow for your private revision. If you both approve of it, you can then publish it under your auspices; if you condemn, you can tear it up and forgive me as best you can. Farewell.

* The greater part translated by Guizot, Hist, de la civilisation en France, ed. 1846, i. 95-7; and by Fertig, Part ii, pp. 39-40.

XVIII.

To his friend Attalus (No indication of date) [1] I WAS delighted to hear that you have consented to preside over the destinies of Autun.1 I am glad for several reasons; first, you are my friend; second, you are a just man; third, you are not to be trifled with; fourth, you will be quite near us. You will now have not only the inclination to help our people and further their affairs, but the duty and the power of doing so. In my satisfaction at seeing an old acquaintance invested with new authority, I am already looking round for objects on which you may exercise your benevolence. For understand, I feel so sure of it, that if I fail to find anything to ask for, I shall expect you to make me a suggestion yourself. Farewell.

XIX.

To his friend Pudens c. A. D. 472 [1] THE son of your nurse has eloped with the daughter of mine. It is a shameful action, and one which would have destroyed our friendly relations, had I not learned at once that you knew nothing of the man's intention. But though you are thus acquitted in advance, you yet do not scruple to ask that this crying offence should be allowed to go unpunished. I can only agree on one condition: that you promote the ravisher from his original servile state, by changing your relation to him from that of master to that of patron. [2] The woman is already free; but she will only be regarded as a lawful wife instead of a mere concubine if our criminal, whose cause you espouse, ceases to be your dependant and becomes your client, assuming the status of a freeman in place of that of a colonus.1 Nothing short of these terms or these amends will in the least condone the affront. I only yield to your request and your protestation of friendship on condition that, if as ravisher he is not to be bond to Justice, Liberty shall make him a free bridegroom. Farewell.

XX.

To his friend Pastor A. D. 461-7

[1] YOUR absence from yesterday's business of the Municipal Council 2 is thought by most to have been intentional; they suspect that you wished to avoid the burden of an embassy which might be laid upon your shoulders. I congratulate you on being so eligible a person as to live in constant fear of being elected. Your efficiency commands my applause, your prudence my admiration, your happy fortune my congratulations; [2] in fine, I wish no better lot than yours to every friend I love as well. Many men are possessed by a detestable thirst for popularity; you see them take the chief citizens by the hand, lead them aside from a meeting, and embrace them in a corner, promising good offices for which no one asked; you see them, in the hope of nomination as public envoys, refusing the usual travelling-allowance,1 and insisting on going at their own charges; secretly canvassing every member in turn, so that when the council meets, they may be sure of a unanimous and public invitation. [3] The consequence is that though people are pleased enough to be served for nothing, they find it in the long run pleasanter to choose a more modest representative, even at the cost of paying all expenses; the self-assertion of the volunteer becomes too irksome, even though his tenure of office throws no burden on the town. Since, then, the intentions of our best citizens are now no secret to you, acquiesce, and meet their wishes; you have given proof enough of modesty;

test the warm feelings of those who invite you. Your failure to appear was put down to your discretion; a repetition of such conduct would expose you to the charge of indifference. [4] Remember, too, that if you do go to Arles, you will be able to greet your venerable mother and your affectionate brothers on the way; you will greet the natal soil that returns love for love, and is doubly delightful when unexpectedly revisited. Then think how convenient it will be to see your agent, and to get even a passing glimpse of your own home, your vines, your olives, your cornfields, and the house itself. Though our envoy, you will yet be travelling for your own pleasure; altogether, this journey on city business should suit you admirably, and you will be able to thank the community for an excellent chance of getting a sight of your own people. Farewell.

XXI.

To his friends Sacerdos and Justinus (No indication of date) YOUR uncle Victorius, whose varied learning and eminence we so revered, always wrote with power, especially when he wrote verse. As you know, I too have been the servant of the Muses from my youth up. You are your uncle's heirs no less in merit than in law. But by right of poetry I am as much his kin as you by right of blood; we ought all of us, therefore, to share in the succession according to our several affinities. So keep the property for yourselves, but hand the poems over to me. 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.