Book 7

Sidonius Apollinaris (c. AD 430–490)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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I.

To the Lord Bishop Mamertus A.D. 474

[1] RUMOUR has it that the Goths have occupied Roman soil; our unhappy Auvergne is always their gateway on every such incursion. It is our fate to furnish fuel to the fire of a peculiar hatred, for, by Christ's aid, we are the sole obstacle to the fulfilment of their ambition to extend their frontiers to the Rhone, and so hold all the country between that river, the Atlantic, and the Loire. Their menacing power has long pressed us hard; it has already swallowed up whole tracts of territory round us, and threatens to swallow more. [2] We mean to resist with spirit, though we know our peril and the risks which we incur. But our trust is not in our poor walls impaired by fire, or in our rotting palisades, or in our ramparts worn by the breasts of the sentries, as they lean on them in continual watch. Our only present help we find in those Rogations1 which you introduced; and this is the reason why the people of Clermont refuse to recede, though terrors surge about them on every side. By inauguration and institution of these prayers we are already new initiates; and if so far we have effected less than you have, our hearts are affected equally with yours. [3] For it is not unknown to us by what portents and alarms the city entrusted to you by God was laid desolate at the time when first you ordained this form of prayer. Now it was earthquake, shattering the outer palace walls with frequent shocks;

now fire, piling mounds of glowing ash upon proud houses fallen in ruin; now, amazing spectacle! wild deer grown ominously tame, making their lairs in the very forum. You saw the city being emptied of its inhabitants, rich and poor taking to flight. But you resorted in our latter day to the example shown of old in Nineveh, that you at least might not discredit the divine warning by the spectacle of your despair. [4] And, indeed, you of all men had been least justified in distrusting the providence of God, after the proof of it vouchsafed to your own virtues. Once, in a sudden conflagration, your faith burned stronger than the flames. In full sight of the trembling crowd, you stood forth all alone to stay them, and lo! the fire leapt back before you, a sinuous beaten fugitive. It was miracle, a formidable thing, unseen before and unexampled; the element which naturally shrinks from nothing, retired in awe at your approach. [5] You therefore first enjoined a fast upon a few members of our sacred order, denouncing gross offences, announcing punishment, promising relief. You made it clear that if the penalty of sin was nigh, so also was the pardon; you proclaimed that by

frequent prayer the menace of coming desolation might be removed. You taught that it was by water of tears rather than water of rivers that the obstinate and raging fire could best be extinguished, and by firm faith the threatening shock of earthquake stayed.

[6] The multitude of the lowly forthwith followed your counsel, and this influenced persons of higher rank, who had not scrupled to abandon the town, and now were not ashamed to return to it. By this devotion God was appeased, who sees into all hearts; your fervent prayers were counted to you for salvation; they became an ensample for your fellow citizens, and a defence about you all, for after those days there were neither portents to alarm, nor visitations to bring disaster.

We of Clermont know that all these ills befell your people of Vienne before the Rogations, and have not befallen them since; and therefore it is that we are eager to follow the lead of so holy a guide, beseeching your Beatitude from your own pious lips to give us the advocacy of those prayers now known to us by the examples which you have transmitted. [7] Since the Confessor Ambrose discovered the remains of Gervasius and Protasius, it has been granted to you alone in the West to translate the relics of two martyrs----all the holy body of Ferreolus, and the head of our martyr Julian„ which once the executioner's gory hand brought to the raging persecutor from the place of testimony.1 It is only fair, then, in compensation for the loss of this hallowed relic, that some part of your patronage should come to us from Vienne, since a part of our patronal saint has migrated thither. Deign to hold us in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

II.

To the Lord Bishop Graecus* c. A. D. 472 [1] You overwhelm me, most consummate of all bishops, by the praises showered on any unpolished lines which I happen to write. Short though my first letter was, I wish I could acquit myself of blame for having told you a whole string of things irreconcilable with fact; the truth is that a crafty traveller imposed upon my innocence.1 Ostensibly a trader, he persuaded me to give him a canonical letter 2 as Reader; and this ought certainly to have contained some statement of his indebtedness to others. For it appeared, on subsequent inquiry, that by the generosity of the people of Marseilles, he set out better equipped than one so moderately favoured in birth and fortune had reason to expect. [2] It makes quite a good story, if I only wielded a pen able to do justice to its humours. But as you have asked me for a long and diverting letter, permit me to relate the manner in which this messenger of ours exploited the hospitality of your city. It shall be told in a light vein, but I shall be careful to say nothing to offend the severity of your ears. You will see that on this occasion I really do know the man whom I introduce to your notice for the second time. Usage permits a writer to find his subject-matter wherever he can; why, then, should I go far afield, when the man who is to bear my letter can himself provide the theme of it?

[3] The bearer, then, is a native of Clermont, born of humble but free parents, people who made no pretence of social standing, but were above all fear of degradation to the servile state, and satisfied with means, moderate indeed, but unencumbered and amply sufficient for their needs; it was a family which had chiefly held offices under the Church, and had not entered the public service. The father was a most estimable man, but not free-handed with his children; he preferred to serve his son's advantage, instead of ensuring him pleasant times in his youth. The result was, that the prisoner escaped to you a little too lightly equipped; and this was no small impediment at the outset of his adventure, for a light purse is the heaviest encumbrance on a journey. [4] Nevertheless he made his first entry into your city under the most favourable auspices. Your predecessor St.Eustachius received him with a twofold blessing in word and deed. He wanted a lodging; one was forthcoming without difficulty on the prelate's commendation. He rented the rooms in due form, entering on his tenancy without delay, and at once set about making the acquaintance of his neighbours by saluting them as often as possible and being civilly greeted in return. He treated all as befitted their several ages; respectful to the old, he was always obliging those of his own

years. [5] He was consistently temperate and moral, showing qualities as admirable as they are rare at his time of life.

He was assiduous in paying court to your chief personages, and even to the Count of the city himself; alive to every chance, he began by receiving nods, went on to acquaintance, and ended in intimacy. By this systematic cultivation of important friendships, he rapidly got on in the world; the best people competed for his company. Every one wished him well; there were plenty to offer him good advice. Private individuals made him presents, officials helped him by their influence. In short, his prospects and his resources rose by leaps and bounds. [6] It chanced that near the house where he lodged there resided a lady whose disposition and income were all that he could have desired; she had a daughter, not quite marriageable, but no longer a child. He began to attract the girl by pleasant greetings, and by giving her (as, at her age, he quite properly could) the various trifles and trinkets which delight a maiden's fancy; by such light links he succeeded in closely attaching her heart to his own. [7] Time passed; she reached the age of marriage. You already guess what happened. This young man, without visible relations or substance, a foreigner, a minor who had left home without his father's leave or knowledge, demands the hand of a girl equal to himself in birth, and superior in fortune. He demands, and, what is more, he obtains; he is recognized as suitor. For the bishop actively supported his Reader, and the Count encouraged his client;

the future mother-in-law did not trouble to investigate his means; the bride approved his person. The marriage contract was executed, and some little suburban plot or other at Clermont was put into settlement and read out with much theatrical parade. [8] This legal trick and solemn swindle once over, the pauper lover carried off the wealthy bride. He promptly went into all his wife's father's affairs, and got together some nice little pickings for himself, aided all through the imposture by the credulity of his easy-going and free-handed mother-in-law; then, and not till then, this incomparable charlatan sounds the retreat and vanishes into Auvergne. After he had gone, the mother thought of bringing an action against him for the absurd exaggerations in the contract. But it was rather late for her to begin lamenting the exiguity of his settlement, when she was already rejoicing at the prospect of a wealth of little grandchildren. It was with the object of appeasing her that our Hippolytus went to Marseilles when he brought you my first letter of introduction.

[9] That is the story of this accomplished young man, as good in its way as any out of Attic Comedy or Milesian fable. Excuse the excessive length of my letter; I have dwelt upon every detail that you might be fully informed in regard to the person whom your generosity has made a citizen of your town; and besides, one naturally has a kindly feeling for those in whom one has taken active interest. You will prove yourself in everything the worthy successor of Eustachius if you expend upon his clients the personal interest he would like to have been able to bequeath them, as you have already paid his relations the legacies mentioned in his will. [10] And now I have obeyed your commands to the full, and talked to the limit of my obligation; remember that one who imposes on a man of small descriptive

powers a subject calling for great detail, must not complain if the response betrays the gossip rather than the skilled narrator. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

* The greater part translated by Hodgkin, ii. 328-30. Cf. VI, viii above,

III.

To the Lord Bishop Megethius After A.D. 472 [1] I HAVE considered long and carefully whether I ought to send you those short treatises of mine,1 for which you ask. It required thought, though my affectionate desire to please you strongly prompted me at once to comply; but at last I have decided in your favour, and forward what you want. Is not this a great proof of docility? great indeed; but of impudence a yet greater. It is almost as bad as bringing water to a river, or wood to a forest; as audacious as offering a pencil to Apelles, a chisel to Phidias, or a mallet to Polyclitus. [2] I beg you, therefore, venerable friend, you whose sanctity is only equalled by your eloquence, to pardon the presumption which submits to your critical judgement these products of an irrepressible pen. I am always writing, though I publish very little; much as a dog will keep on snarling, though he may never break into an open bark. Deign to keep me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

IV.

To the Lord Bishop Fonteius After A.D. 472

[1] I AM getting quite afraid of introducing people to you, for whereas I only give them words, you give them presents, as if it were not already the height of privilege for a man to leave my sinful company for a conversation so holy as yours. I cite in evidence my friend Vindicius, who is so laden with your generous gifts that he has returned by slower stages than he went, proclaiming everywhere that high as your repute may be, supreme as your position, your true title to praise lies less in your high office than in the voluntary respect of men. [2] He dilates upon your piety, upon the sweetness and affable charm of a familiarity never too familiar; he declares that your episcopal dignity in no way suffers, and that in you the priestly character, like a tall tree, may bend but is never broken. After hearing all these eulogies I shall never be quite happy until God suffers me to clasp in my close presumptuous embrace a heart so wholly stayed upon Him. [3] For I will make you a small confession. I can admire a man of an austere nature, and because I am very conscious of my own weakness can even tolerate harsh treatment from him; but I feel that one only submits to people of such temperament, one cannot really like them. In my opinion, the ml a who is always stern to those about him had best be very sure that his conscience is good enough to justify his pride;

and for myself, I prefer to take as my model one who knows how to attract the devotion even of those who live leagues away. [4] Great as your other good deeds have been, nothing that I have heard delights me more than the news that the stream of your episcopal favour flows, with your unceasing prayers, towards the true lords of my heart, Simplicius and Apollinaris. If this be true, I pray that your kind deeds may never have an end; if false, that they may have immediate beginning. I commend the bearer to your notice. A troublesome business has arisen for him at Vaison,1 which the weight of your revered authority can doubtless bring to a favourable issue. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

V.

To the Lord Bishop Agroeclus A. D. 472

[1] A PUBLIC resolution of the citizens has called me to Bourges. The reason for the summons is the tottering condition of the Church, which has just been widowed of her bishop; members of both orders have been intriguing for the vacant see, just as if some bugle had sounded for the fray. The people are excited, and divided into factions; while only a few are ready to propose others, there are many who do not so much propose as impose themselves. To a man determined, as far as in him lies, to obey God and keep fast the truth, everything here seems frivolous, unstable, and sophisticated; one might say that the only genuine thing left is impudence. [2] You may think these laments exaggerated; but I scarcely hesitate to affirm that there are many here who harbour thoughts so rash and ruinous that they are ready to offer ready money for this holy see and all its dignity; the sale might before now have been effected in open market if the greed of the would-be purchasers had found response in vendors equal in audacity. I entreat you, therefore, to crown my hopes by giving me the honour of your presence under the same roof, and lending my diffidence, my embarrassment, and my inexperience the shelter of your high protection. [3] At a time of such perplexity, do not refuse your help in healing the dissensions of the people of Aquitaine; it is true that you are at the head of the Sénonais, but that is of small consequence;

though we live in different provinces, we are bound by a single religious bond. Besides, Clermont is the last of all the cities in Aquitanica Prima 1 which the fortune of war has left to Rome; the number of provincial bishops is therefore inadequate to the election of a new prelate at Bourges, unless we have the support of the metropolitans. [4] Rest assured that I have in no way encroached on your prerogatives. As yet I have neither nominated, summoned, nor preferred a candidate; I have left the matter absolutely intact for your decision. All that I take upon myself is to invite you hither, to await your good pleasure, to acquiesce in your opinion, and when the throne is filled, to render the proper deference to your commands. 5. I do not for a moment suspect that any bad adviser will dissuade you from acceding to this request; but should that prove to be the case, you will hardly acquit yourself of blame, though it is easy to find reasonable excuses for not undertaking so long a journey. On the other hand, your coming will prove that though there may be limits to your

diocese, your brotherly love is without bounds. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

VI.

To the Lord Bishop Basilius A.D. 472-3

[1] GOD has permitted us to give this generation a new example of what old friendship means; ours indeed is an attachment of long duration, and equal strength upon both sides. But our respective positions are by no means equal: you are the patron and I the client; perhaps, indeed, I presume too far in saying even so much. For so great is my unworthiness, that even the proven efficacy of your intercession can hardly make good my backsliding. [2] Because you are doubly my lord and master, firstly as my protector, secondly as my friend; because I so well remember (was I not by? the flow of your eloquence, springing from that fervent zeal of yours, when you pierced with the point of your spiritual testimonies Modaharius the Goth as he brandished the darts of Arian heresy against you; because of all this, I need fear no charge of disrespect towards other pontiffs when I pour into your ears my grief at the ravages of the great wolf of our times, who ranges about the ecclesiastical fold battening upon lost souls, and biting right and left by stealth and undetected. [3] For that old enemy begins by threatening the shepherds' throats, knowing it the best way to ensure his triumph over the bleating and abandoned sheep. I am not so far oblivious of my own career as to ignore that I am one whose conscience has yet to be washed clean by many tears;

but by God's grace my foulness shall at last be cleared away with the mystic rake of your intercession. But since consideration for the public safety must come before everything, even a man's sense of his own unworthiness, I shall not hesitate to proclaim the cause of truth, disregarding all insinuations about my vanity, or doubts as to the sincerity of my faith. [4] Neither a saint like you can fitly here discuss, nor a sinner like myself indict, the action of Euric 1 the Gothic king in breaking and bearing down an ancient treaty to defend, or rather extend by armed force the frontiers of his kingdom. It is the rule here below, for Dives to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and for Lazarus to bear the lash of sores and poverty. So long as we walk in this allegoric land of Egypt, it is the rule that Pharaoh shall go with a diadem on his head, and the Israelite with the carrier's basket. It is the rule that while we are burned in the furnace of this symbolic Babylon we must sigh and groan like Jeremiah for the spiritual Jerusalem, while Assur thunders in his royal pomp and treads the Holy of Holies beneath his feet. [5] Yet when I compare the transient joys of this world

with those which are to come, I find it easier to endure calamities which no mortal may escape. For, firstly, when I consider my own demerits, all possible troubles seem lighter than those which I deserve;

and then know well that the best of cures for the inward man is for the outward man to be threshed by the flails of suffering. [6] I must confess that formidable as the mighty Goth may be, I dread him less as the assailant of our walls than as the subverter of our Christian laws. They say that the mere mention of the name of Catholic so embitters his countenance and heart that one might take him for the chief priest of his Arian sect rather than for the monarch of his nation. Omnipotent in arms, keen-witted, and in the full vigour of life, he yet makes this single mistake----he attributes his success in his designs and enterprises to the orthodoxy of his belief, whereas the real cause lies in mere earthly fortune. [7] For these reasons I would have you consider the secret malady of the Catholic Church that you may hasten to apply an open remedy. Bordeaux, Périgueux, Rodez, Limoges, Javols, Eauze, Bazas, Comminges, Auch, and many another city are all like bodies which have lost their heads through the death of their respective bishops. No successors have been appointed to fill their places, and maintain the ministry in the lower orders of the Church; the boundaries of spiritual desolation are extended far and wide. Every day the ruin spreads by the death of more fathers in God;

so pitiful is her state, that the very heresiarchs of former times, to say nothing of contemporary heretics, might well have looked with pity on peoples orphaned of their pontiffs and oppressed by desperation at this catastrophe of their faith. [8] Diocese and parish lie waste without ministers. You may see the rotten roofs of churches fallen in, the doors unhinged and blocked by growing brambles.1 More grievous still, you may see the cattle not only lying in the half-ruined porticoes, but grazing beside altars green with weeds. And this desolation is not found in country parishes alone; even the congregations of urban churches begin to fall away. [9] What comfort remains to the faithful, when not only the teaching of the clergy perishes, but their very memory is lost out of mind? When a priest departs this life, not merely the holder of the sacred office dies, but the office itself dies with him, unless with his failing breath he gives his blessing to a successor.1 What hope remains when the term of a man's life implies the end of religion in his parish? If you examine more closely the ills of the body spiritual, you will soon perceive that for every bishop snatched from our midst, the faith of a population is imperilled. I need not mention your colleagues Crocus and Simplicius, removed alike from their thrones and suffering a common exile, if different punishments. For one of them laments that he cannot see whither he is to return;

the other that he sees only too clearly where he is to return no more. [10] You for your part have about you the most holy bishops Faustus, Leontius, and Graecus, environed by the city, your order and their fraternal love. To you these miserable treaties are submitted, the pacts and agreements of two kingdoms pass through your hands.2 Do your best, as far as the royal condescension suffers you, to obtain for our bishops the right of ordination in those parts of Gaul now included within the Gothic boundaries, that if we cannot keep them by

treaty for the Roman State, we may at least hold them by religion for the Roman Church. Deign to bear me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

VII.

To the Lord Bishop Graecus* A.D. 474-5

[1] HERE is Amantius 1, the usual bearer of my trifles; off once more to his Marseilles, to bring home a little profit out of the city, if he is fortunate in his business at the port. I could use the opportunity of his journey to gossip gaily on, if a mind that bears a load of sorrow could at the same time think of cheerful things. For the state of our unhappy region is miserable indeed. Every one declares that things were better in war-time than they are now after peace has been concluded. [2] Our enslavement was made the price of security for a third party; the enslavement, ah! the shame of it! of those Arvernians who by old tradition claimed brotherhood with Latium and descent from the sons of Troy;2 who in our own time stood forth alone to stay the advance of the common enemy; who even when closely beset so little feared the Goth that they sallied out against his leaguer, and put the fear of their valour into his heart.3 These are the men whose common soldiers were as good as captains, but who never reaped the benefit of their victories: that was handed over for your consolation, while all the crushing burden of defeat they had to bear themselves. These are the patriots who did not fear to bring to justice the infamous Seronatus4, betrayer of imperial provinces to the barbarian, while the State for which they risked so much had hardly the courage on his conviction to carry out the capital sentence.

[3] And this is to be our reward for braving destitution, fire, sword, and pestilence, for fleshing our swords in the enemy's blood and going ourselves starved into battle. This, then, is the famous peace1 we dreamed of, when we tore the grass from the crannies in the walls to eat; when in our ignorance we often by mistake ate poisonous weeds, indiscriminately plucking them with livid hands of starvation, hardly less green than they. For all these proofs of our devotion, it would seem that we are to be made a sacrifice. [4] If it be so, may you live to blush for a peace without either honour or advantage. For you are the channel through which negotiations are conducted. When the king is absent, you not only see the terms of peace, but new proposals are brought before you. I ask your pardon for telling you hard truths; my distress must take all colour of abuse from what I say. You think too little of the general good; when you meet in council, you are less concerned to relieve public perils than to advance private fortunes. By the long repetition of such acts you begin to be regarded as the last instead of the first among your fellow provincials.2 [5] But how long

are these feats of yours to last? Our ancestors will cease to glory in the name of Rome if they have no longer descendants to bear their memory. Oh, break this infamous peace at any cost; there are pretexts enough to your hand.

We are ready, if needs must, to continue the struggle and to undergo more sieges and starvations. But if we are to be betrayed, we whom force failed to conquer, we shall know beyond a doubt that a barbarous and cowardly transaction was inspired by you.

[6] But it little avails to give the rein to passionate sorrow; you must make allowance for us in our affliction, nor too nicely weigh the language of despair. The other conquered regions have only servitude to expect; Auvergne must prepare for punishment. If you can hold out no help in our extremity, seek to obtain of Heaven by your unceasing prayers that though our liberty be doomed, our race at least may live. Provide land for the exile, prepare a ransom for the captive, make provision for the emigrant. If our own walls must offer an open breach to the enemy, let yours be never shut against your friends. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop. * Partly translated by Fertig, Part ii, p. 16.

VIII.

To the Lord Bishop Euphronius A. D. 472

[1] I AM now held in the bonds of my clerical duty, but I should regard my undistinguished position as a veritable blessing if only the walls of our cities were as near as the borders of their territories. If that might only be, I should consult your holiness 1 on all things small and great; my activities would flow like a placid and untroubled stream, could they but rise from your converse as from a life-giving spring. They should never know the froth of vain conceit, or the turbid course of pride, or the muddiness of a bad conscience, or the falls of headstrong youth; if defilement and corruption were found in them, they should be washed clean by the clear vein of your counsel. [2] But alas! the distance that divides us prevents the fulfilment of these desires; I therefore beg you to send a representative to advise on a perplexing question which has arisen here. The inhabitants of Bourges demand the consecration of the admirable Simplicius as their bishop; I want your decision in the matter. Your consideration for me, and your authority over others, are such that you need never press your views; you have simply to indicate your will, which is sure to coincide with justice. [3] I must tell you that of Simplicius all good is spoken, and by the best men in the city. At first I was inclined to view this testimony with little favour; it seemed to me to suggest favouritism.

But when I observed that his rivals could find nothing better to do than to hold their tongues, especially those of the Arian persuasion; when I saw that no irregularity could be alleged to his discredit, though he is only a candidate and not yet in orders, I came to the conclusion that a man against whom the bad citizen could say nothing and on whose behalf the good could never say enough must be regarded as almost a perfect character. [4] But how foolish I am to make these comments, as if I were giving advice in place of asking it! The clergy will act in accordance with the decision contained in your letter; the people will acclaim it in the same spirit. We are not altogether irrational; we should not have decided to secure, if possible, your present aid, or if not, your advice, unless we had made up our minds to follow your counsel in all things. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

IX.

To the Lord Bishop Perpetuus* A. D. 472 [1] YOUR ardour for religious books has given you a most intimate acquaintance with everything written for the Catholic faith, whether by the Canonical authors or by the controversialists. You are even curious about productions unworthy the honour of your attention; for instance, you now wish me to send a copy of my public address delivered in the church at Bourges, an oration without the orthodox rhetorical divisions, or emphasis, or figures of speech to lend it a proper style and dignity. [2] It has none of the qualities of a finished eloquence; the weight of historical allusion, the enrichment of poetical quotation, the sparkling points of dialectic had all to be abandoned. I was distracted by the rancorous intrigues of the various factions; my mission occupied all my time; the abuses before my eyes were the one and only subject for my pen. So great was the company of the competitors, that two benches would not have held the candidates for the single vacant throne. And every one of these was as pleased with himself as he was critical of all his rivals. [3] If the people had not grown reasonable, and subordinated their judgement to that of the bishops, there would have been little chance of effecting anything. As it was, one saw small groups of priests whispering together in corners, though not a word was uttered openly, most of them being just as afraid of their own order as of every other. The result was that every one was suspicious of his neighbour; all were induced to hear our proposals without too much difficulty, and afterwards to explain them in their turn to others.

[4] Here, then, I append the address. It was written in two vigils of a single summer night, under no eyes but those of Christ; my haste is, I fear, too obvious from internal evidence for you to need my assurance that it existed. ADDRESS.*

[5] Secular history relates, beloved brethren, that a certain philosopher 1 used to teach new pupils the discipline of keeping silence before the art of speaking. They had to sit through five mute years listening to the disputations of their fellow students echoing all round them, and not even the quickest brains were allowed to anticipate the proper hour of recognition. When, after that long repression these pupils spoke at last, the audience could not repress applause; for until the mind is steeped with knowledge there is less credit in displaying what you know than in holding your peace on things of which you are ignorant. [6] Far other is the position of the indifferent orator who now addresses you. While he yet walked among

lamentable pitfalls and wallowing-places of sin, the heavy charge of the sacred calling was laid upon him; and without ever having himself rendered a disciple's duty to a master of repute, he has himself to play the teacher of other men. That task is in itself impossible enough; it is made heavier by the diffidence which I feel at having been selected by your decretal letter1 to choose you a bishop, while all the time I see before me a saintly prelate 2 worthy of the highest of pontifical thrones, one who stands at the head of his province, and is my superior in everything, in experience, in training, in eloquence, in prestige, in seniority, and in years.

Speaking thus as a junior and provincial bishop, before one metropolitan on the election of another, I am doubly embarrassed by my lack of qualification, and by the odium of presumption which I may well incur. [7] The responsibility, however, rests on you, since you have been rash enough to impose upon one deficient in wisdom the task of finding you, with God's aid, a bishop wiser than himself, and combining in a single person a host of different virtues: you must be well aware that honourable though the task may be, it is yet more clearly onerous. I would have you in the first instance reflect to what a crushing burden of criticism you subject me, requiring a perfected judgement from a beginner, and right guidance from one who hitherto has shown you nothing but his fallibility. Since, however, this has been your will, I entreat your prayers, that I may really become all that you now suppose me to be, and that if I am to be exalted to the skies, it may be not by your plaudits but by your supplications.

[8] But first you ought to know on what Scylla-rocks 3 of slander, on what barking mouths (alas! that they should be human) I have been driven by the tempestuous fury of those who seek to bring you into discredit. Evil manners have this power: they allow the offences of the few to disfigure the innocence of the multitude, whereas the good are too rare to communicate their virtues to the many, and so to palliate their crimes.

[9] If I name a monk to you, were his austerities to rival those of a Paul, an Antony, a Hilarion, or a Macarius, my ears will at once be deafened by the confused outcries of ignoble pygmies who will object in these terms: 'The man you nominate is trained not for a bishop's but for an abbot's work, and better fitted to intercede for souls before the celestial Judge than for their bodies before the judges of this world.' Now who could keep his patience, hearing singleness of heart besmirched by such imputation of imaginary defects? [10] If we choose one distinguished for humility, he will be called an abject; if, on the other hand, we propose a man with self-respect, he will be set down as arrogant; if our choice be one of small learning, his ignorance will make him fair game; if he be erudite, he will be declared conceited. If he is austere, all will shrink from an inhuman creature; if indulgent, they will blame his lenience. If he is simple, he will be an oaf; if clever, a sly fellow. Is he diligent? he must be superstitious. Is he easy-going? he stands convicted of negligence. Does he love a quiet life? he is a coward. If our candidate is abstemious, he becomes a skinflint; if charitable with hospitality, a glutton; if with fasting, one vain of his austerities. [11] A free manner will argue vice; a modest one contemptible rusticity. They mislike the stern man for

his severity, and depreciate the affable for making himself cheap. And so, whichever of two virtues may adorn his life, he will be caught on the two-barbed hook of the malicious tongues whose points pierce all good qualities. Besides all this, the people in their perversity, and the clergy in their love of licence, are equally averse from the idea of monastic discipline.

[12] If, instead of a monk, I take a member of the secular clergy, his juniors will be consumed with a jealousy which his seniors will openly express. For among the clergy there are not a few----I may say this without offence to the rest----in whose eyes seniority counts before merit; they would like us to consider age alone and disregard efficiency, as if mere length of life were the one qualification for the highest office in the priesthood, and the prerogative, the amenity and charm of personal accomplishments were to count for nothing. On this principle a few individuals strive to direct the Church, though they are so old that they will soon need direction themselves----persons remiss in ministration, prompt in obloquy, indolent in affairs, busy in faction, weak in charity, sturdy in intrigue, steady in feud, vacillating in judgement. [13] Enough: I will not stigmatize the many for the machinations of a few; I only add this, that I shall mention no names. Whoever looks aggrieved proclaims his own discomfiture. I may freely admit that the multitude surrounding me to-day includes many of episcopal ability. But then, all cannot be bishops. Every man of them may be satisfied with his own particular gifts, but none has gifts to satisfy us all.

[14] Suppose I were to nominate one who had followed an administrative career, I can imagine the storm of disapproval: 'Sidonius was transferred to the Church out of the great world, and because of this is reluctant to accept a cleric as metropolitan; he looks down on every one from the height of his distinguished birth and the great offices he has held; he despises Christ's poor.' [15] Now therefore, in fulfilment of the trust imposed upon me, not so much through the esteem of the well disposed as through the suspicions of the slanderous (Almighty God liveth, the Holy Spirit, who by the voice of Peter condemned Simon Magus 1 for thinking to buy for gold the glory of the blessing), I testify that in the man whom I have chosen as suited for your needs I have considered neither money nor influence; I have weighed to the last scruple every circumstance affecting his own person; the times in which we live, the respective needs of city and province, and I decide that the man most fitted for this office is he whose career I shall now briefly relate.

[16] He is Simplicius, on whom a blessing already rests. Hitherto a member of your order, but henceforth of ours, if God approve him through your voices, he answers by conduct and profession, so well satisfying the claims of both, that the State will find in him one to admire and the Church one to love. [17] If birth is still to command respect, as the Evangelist teaches (for St. Luke, beginning his eulogy of St. John,2 considers it of the highest moment that he sprang from a line of priestly tradition, and exalts the importance of his family before celebrating the nobility of his life), I will recall the fact that his relatives have presided alike over the Church and the tribunal. His family has been distinguished in either career by many bishops and prefects; it had become almost their hereditary privilege to administer the divine and human laws. [18] If we scrutinize rather more narrowly his

personal qualifications, we shall find him conspicuous among the most respected. You may say that the illustrious Eucherius and Pannychius stand higher; they may have been so regarded, but on the present occasion they are excluded by the canon, because each of them has married again. Turning to his age, we find that he has at once the vigour of youth and the caution of maturity; comparing his talents with his acquirements, we see nature and learning rivalling each other.

[19] If we ask whether he is given to hospitality, we find him generous to a fault, lavishing his substance on all men small and great, whether they are clerics, laymen, or strangers, and entertaining those most of all who are least likely to return his kindness. When an embassy had to be undertaken, more than once he has represented his city before barbaric kings in furs, or Roman emperors in purple. If you ask from what master he learned the rudiments of the faith, I will make the proverbial response: 'the source of knowledge flowed for him at home.'1 [20] Lastly, let us not forget, beloved brethren, that this is he whom the barbarians held in darkness and duresse, and for whom God flung wide the prison gates with all their bolts and bars. This is the man whom, if report be true, you yourselves once with a single voice called to the priesthood before his father-in-law or father; but he returned home covered with glory because he preferred to be honoured in his parents' dignity rather than in his own. [21] I had almost overlooked a point which should under no circumstances have been omitted. In the days of old time, as the Psalmist tells,2 all Israel heaped offerings at the feet of Bezaleel in the desert for the erection of the Tabernacle of the Covenant.

Afterwards Solomon, to build his temple in Jerusalem, exhausted the whole strength of his people, though he had not merely the riches of Palestine and the tribute of surrounding kingdoms, but in addition the treasures of the Queen of Sheba at his command. But Simplicius built a church alone out of his own slender resources, when he was still a young official under paternal control, and already burdened with the expenses of a family. Neither consideration of his young children nor the steady opposition of his parents could divert him from the fulfilment of his vow; it was his way to do good works, and hold his peace about them. [22] For unless I misread his character, he is one to whom all popularity is abhorrent; he does not court every man's good opinion, only that of the worthiest; it is not his custom to make himself common by undiscriminating familiarity, but rather to enhance his value by according his friendship only after the most careful thought. His is a manly nature which would rather help than please a rival, comparable in this to that of the stern father, who thinks more of his children's real advantage than of their present comfort. He is a man constant in adversity, loyal in danger, unassuming in prosperity; of simple tastes in dress, affable in conversation, never putting himself forward among his friends, but in discussion easily the first. A friendship of which he knows the worth he will pursue with ardour, hold with constancy, and never abandon;

on the other hand, a declared hostility he pursues with honourable frankness, not believing in it till the last moment, and laying it down at the earliest. Extremely accessible just because he seeks nothing for himself, he desired not so much to assume the priest-hood as

to prove himself worthy to hold it. [23] But some one will say: 'How did you learn so much about him in so short a time?' My answer is that I made acquaintance with men of Bourges long before I knew their city. I have travelled with some and served with others; many I have met in affairs of business or in debate; many when either they or I were away from our several countries. Moreover, a short cut to knowledge of a man is given by the general opinion about him, since nature does not confine our reputations within such narrow limits as our abodes. If, then, a city is to be judged less by the circumference of its walls than by the merit of its inhabitants, I could not fail to discover, before your town was known to me, not only what manner of men you are, but where you stand in the world as well.

[24] The wife of Simplicius belongs to the Palladian family, which alike in the schools and in the Church has occupied the chief seats with the approbation of its own order. To speak of a woman's life demands both delicacy and reticence; I will only say here that this lady has shown herself worthy of the ecclesiastical dignity enjoyed by her two families, both that in which she was born, and that into which she married. She is associated with her husband in the education of their sons on sound and careful principles; so that the father, comparing them with himself, is all the happier for the discovery that he is already being surpassed. [25] You have sworn to abide by my humble advice in this election; the spoken binds no less fast than the written word. I pronounce, then, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that Simplicius is the man whom you are to choose as the head of the Church in your city, and as Metropolitan of our province. If you agree with this my new pronouncement, give it the applause which your old promise demands.

* Partly translated by Guizot, Histoire de la civilisation en France, ed. 1846, pp. 84 ff. * Translated by Chaix, ii. 26 ff.

X. (XI)

To the Lord Bishop Graecus A.D. 474 [1] I ENVY the fortune of my habitual messenger who has the chance of seeing you so often. Nor do I confine my envy to Amantius; 1 I am jealous of the very letters opened by the hands, and perused by the eyes which I so much revere. Alas! penned as I am within the narrow enclosure of half-burned and ruinous walls, with the terror of war at the gates, I am never allowed to satisfy my longing to greet you again. Would that the state and prospects of Clermont were such as to make our excuses for not meeting less excusable! [2] It is the hardest stroke of all that the very punishment of our old lapses from justice should become our justification. My salutations rendered, I now earnestly beg you to release me from my duty of paying you a visit; I must discharge the debt as well as I can by letter. If peace ever makes the roads secure again, your only fear need be that I shall present myself so often as to become in future a mere nuisance. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

XI. (X)

To the Lord Bishop Auspicius A.D. 473 [1] IF the state of our country and our times allowed me freedom, I should not keep up my friendships by the poor expedient of correspondence. But since the storms aroused by the shock of kingdoms confound all hopes of fraternal peace and quiet, let us retain in separation that constant exchange of letters so long ago devised for the solace of absent friends, and approved by the example of antiquity. You must forgive one who so reveres you the rarity of his visits; but the unbroken enjoyment of your sainted converse is denied him by the menace of formidable neighbours and by the delicacy of his relations with his own protectors.1 On these points I need say no more: I have already said too much. [2] This letter introduces to you the bearer Peter, a man of tribunician rank; he personally pressed for the introduction, and will be better able to explain his business orally. I beg that the sight of this page from me may secure him your support, in so far as may be consistent with justice; it is not my custom to urge even my friends' claims unfairly. Deign to hold me in remembrance, my Lord Bishop.

XII.

To his friend [Tonantius] Ferreolus c. A.D. 479

[1] IF, disregarding our friendship and relations, I had considered only your rank and position, your name would have taken its proper place at the beginning of this small work, and the dedication would have been yours. My pen should have recounted the curule chairs of your ancestors and the infulae of their patrician dignity; it should not have omitted the twice repeated prefecture, or refused to herald with due praise your great Syagrius for three times changing the heralds of his office. It should have proceeded to celebrate your father and your uncles, whom it were impossible, indeed, to pass in silence; [2] and however worn by transcribing the long roll of your ancestral triumphs, it should not have been so spent by the unfolding of your genealogy as to grow too blunt for the record of your own achievements. Why even if the recital of your ancestral glories had dulled it, that of your great personal qualities would lend it a new point. In place of all this, it is determined to pay you here conspicuous homage and, leaving your past career to speak for itself, to consider rather what you are to-day. [3] It has passed over your administration of the Gauls when they were still at their greatest extent. It has been silent on the efficacy of your measures against Attila the enemy on the Rhine and Thorismond the guest of the Rhone, and on your support of Aetius the Liberator of the Loire.

It has not related the dragging of your chariot by cheering provincials, whose fervent applause proclaimed their gratitude for the prudence and the foresight with which you handled the reins of power; since you ruled the Gauls with such wisdom that the exhausted proprietor was relieved from the unbearable yoke of taxes. It passed over the address with which you influenced the savage Gothic king by a language blending grace with gravity and astuteness, a language unfamiliar in his ears, causing him to withdraw from the gates of Arles by a banquet, where Aetius could not have succeeded by force of arms. [4] All this it forbore to dwell upon because it was my hope that you might more fitly find a place among the bishops than the senators; I deemed it more appropriate that your name should be found among the perfect of the Lord than among the prefects of Valentinian. Malice need not misconstrue your insertion among the priests; only great ignorance can hold that a man could lose rank thereby. Just as at a public banquet the last guest at the first table takes precedence of the first guest at the second, so in the opinion of all reasonable men the least

of the religious is beyond dispute above the holder of the highest office. I ask your prayers on my behalf.

XIII.

To his friend Sulpicius c. A. D. 470

[1] YOUR son Himerius the priest,1 of whom I had hitherto seen little but heard much, his reputation being wide, came to Lyons not long ago from Troyes, and there I had a hurried opportunity of forming an opinion of him. In character he reminds me of the sainted Lupus, the foremost of our Gallic bishops, master of his sacred profession, and author of his rank within it. [2] Just God! how charming is his way of enouncing his views, whether he is urging or debating any given course of action! With what point he speaks when asked his advice, with what sweetness when he has resort to that of others! He is an enthusiast for letters, above all for sacred literature, in which he ever avoids the froth of verbiage and chooses the substantial marrow. The end of his every action is Christ's service; if he accelerates or delays, it is for that. It is a thing at once wonderful and admirable, that although he is always tranquil he does nothing idle. [3] Fasts are a joy to him, yet he does not abjure the social board; the way of the cross keeps him faithful to the first, love of his kind inclines him sometimes to the last. In either case he uses the utmost moderation; when he dines, he mortifies his appetite; when he fasts, it is without vainglory. On others he showers favours, but is reluctant to accept theirs; and when his turn to receive an equivalent comes, prefers that the debt should remain unpaid.

[4] It is his way to give his inferiors precedence at table, or in council, or when travelling; this makes his superiors in rank delight to follow his example, and place themselves below him when they can. In intercourse with others he shows the utmost tact. The stranger is put at his ease; the feelings of a friend are never hurt. The over-credulous are not placed in false positions, nor are the curious rebuffed. Suspicion he meets without malice; he does not say hard things of knowledge, or treat ignorance with contempt. In the Church he has the simplicity of the dove, in the world the wisdom of the serpent. In his dealings with the good he has a name for prudence, with the bad for caution; but with neither does he resort to guile. [5] Enough: he seemed to me your second self, reproducing in the most charming manner all your moderation, your piety, your frankness, your modesty, the supreme purity of a sensitive and delicate mind. So that in future you can enjoy your privacy, and retire from the world as much as ever you like, since my brother Himerius with his grandsire's name, his father's looks, and the sage qualities of both will always be at my disposal. Farewell.

XIV.

To his friend Philagrius c. A. D. 470

[1] A SHORT while since at a large gathering of the principal persons here, some one mentioned your name. All were unanimous in sounding your praises, though one esteemed you for one quality and a second for another. Then certain individuals took on themselves to claim a more intimate acquaintance, on the ground that they saw you frequently. That made me flare up; I could not for a moment allow it to be said that one distinguished in all kinds of letters is better known by his countrified neighbours than by men of culture living a great distance away. [2] The discussion was carried further; some present argued the point with obstinacy, for it is characteristic of stupid people that they are easily proved wrong, but very hard to silence. I stood my ground, and maintained that it might indeed be trying for such a man's cultured friends to be deprived of his society, but that all the same it was endurable; their brains and their pens gave them access to the remotest province where the need of Culture was felt, while the unlettered fellow citizen was always a stranger within the gates. It was matter of frequent experience, I said, for men of education, separated by wide distances, to conceive for each other an esteem as great as any which can be produced by the most assiduous of personal relations. That being so, they had better leave off exaggerating the effect of unavoidable separations, for they only showed that they thought more of face than character.

[3] People may argue, if they like, that matter, not mind, makes the man,1 but I am at a loss to find anything to wonder at in the human race, viewed corporeally, for its limits are so narrow, however wide its range of action; by the conditions of its birth, it is the most miserable and helpless of all that sees the light. The ox has his hairy coat, the boar his bristles, the bird its feathers; and in addition, these creatures have arms for offence and for defence in their horns and tusks and claws. But man's limbs are such poor things that they seem to have been flung at random into the world, not brought into it by intelligible laws. For other animals broad-bosomed Nature, like a true mother, provides all manner of protection; the human body she just casts forth, to give it thenceforward the stepmother's indifferent usage. [4] To me, who hold that your mind is greater than your body, the contrary supposition is untenable; it would be ridiculous, on that hypothesis, that man should be differentiated by possession of a reasoning mind from beasts unable to distinguish the true

from the false. I should like to ask those who so absurdly judge friends by appearances instead of investigation, what remains when they have even in the slightest degree impaired the dignity of the human soul, what after that they find so eminent and admirable in man? [5] Is it height? that, is often a quality more appropriate in a beam. Is it strength?

that reigns more mightily in the lion's sinewy neck. Grace of feature? the clay of the statue and the wax of the portrait 1 hold its impress better. Is it speed? for that, dogs are more justly famed than we. Vigilance? for that prize the owl competes. Is it strength of voice? the ass's bray is loudest. Industry? therein, on its tiny scale, the ant fears no comparison. [6] Do they allege keenness of sight? how absurd! as if the eagle's vision were not far above that of man. Keenness of hearing? as if the coarse-skinned swine were not his rival. Keenness of scent? as if in that the vulture were not supreme. Discernment of taste? as if there we were not far behind the monkey. I need hardly trouble to speak of touch, our fifth sense; the philosopher shares it with the worm. Why speak of the carnal appetites? the man's lust is satisfied in the same way as that of the brute. [7] And this poor thing is the humanity, paraded and tricked out by fools who give themselves airs and flout me because they know you more or less by sight! But I have always before my eyes a Philagrius other than theirs, a Philagrius who would not be himself if I saw him and he did not speak.

The whole argument recalls to me a certain well-known remark, made on a different kind of occasion, it is true, but nevertheless to our point: 'The son of Marcus Cicero was speaking, and Rome did not even know who he was.' 2 For accomplishments of mind bring with them dignity, worth, and the pre-eminence recognized by universal consent, and by their means alone man gradually attains the heights of merit. [8] First you have the animal frame, which by virtue of its form excels formless matter. Above that comes the body, possessing intelligence. And above the intelligence of beasts rises the mind of man. For as mere flesh is below life, so mere life is below reason, of which the Creator has made our substance alone capable, and not the substance of animals. Yet how variously conditioned is the human mind! There are souls which are rational indeed, but by reason of slowness and dull wits are spurned by others which see further and more clearly. In like manner, there are souls which, having only a natural understanding, accept the superiority of those more enlightened than themselves. [9] When I consider these gradations I always have before my mind's eye the Philagrius whom a similarity of tastes has made, potentially at least, my friend. However popular you may be, with the worthiest among us, no man has a clearer insight into your inner nature than he who strives outwardly to imitate you.

And how closely I for my own part try to follow you in your inclinations, the rest of this letter shall reveal. [10] They say you like quiet people; I go further, and like the idle. You shun barbarians because of the bad name they bear; I avoid them even when they bear a good one.1 You are ardent in study; I do not suffer a natural indolence to hold me back. You act up to your religion; I only seem to do so. You do not covet your neighbour's goods; I hold it sufficient gain not to lose my own. [11] You love the society of the learned; to me the bigger the crowd of the unlettered, the vaster is the solitude. You are said to be of a

cheerful countenance; I hold that every tear shed on earth except in prayer is vain. You are reported to be given to hospitality; my poor table, like the cave of Polyphemus, rejects no possible guest. You are indulgent with your servants; it is no torture to me that mine are not tortured for each trivial fault committed. [12] Is it your view that a man should fast on alternate days? I am with you. That he should dine? I am not ashamed to anticipate you there. If Providence would grant me a sight of you, I should be as delighted as only he can be to whom even your smaller traits are familiar; with your greater qualities I am of course thoroughly acquainted.

So that if I ever do manage to see you face to face, I shall hardly know you any better than I do now, though I may gain a new pleasure in existence. Farewell.

XV.

To his friend Salonius c. A. D. 470 [1] EVERY time I go to Vienne, I would give a great deal if you and your brother stayed more frequently in the town, for we three are all united not only by the ties of friendship but by those of a common literary interest.1 But your brother eludes my reproaches by pretending the visits he has constantly to make to his suburban property, so that he is never present to stand on his own defence; you in your turn find a similar excuse, as one possessed by a newly-acquired possession. [2] Be all this as it may, come this time, and I will let you go on condition that you both promise to come again, either in turn, or [together?] at some later time. You may live in the country and be model cultivators; but not till you give more labour yet to the Church which you love, will you bring increase to the true land of your souls. Farewell.

XVI.

To Abbot Chariobaudus A.D. 477 [1] IN alleviating by a letter of condolence the trouble of an absent friend, O my one patron in Christ, you have acted like your benevolent self. May your thoughts ever turn to me thus; may this interminable chain of anxieties which your exhortations have worn down be finally broken by your prayers. [2] I think your freedmen have concluded the business on which you sent them, and are on their way home; they have done everything with such energy that they never required any assistance. I send you by them a cowl for nightwear, though I admit that the end of winter, with summer in sight, is not quite the right time to send you woollens. When you are exhausted by long fasting, it shall give you proper protection as you pass from your bed to Vigils and back again. Farewell.

XVII.

To his brother Volusianus A.D. 477 [1] You ask me, my lord brother, by the law of friendship which none may infringe, to set my long inactive fingers to the old forge. I am to write a sad funeral dirge for the sainted Abraham,1 newly departed this life. I shall not fail to obey, moved alike by your authority, and even more by the devotion of the noble Count Victorius, my patron according to the world, my son according to the Church, whom I honour as a client, and love as a father. He gave abundant proof of his ardent solicitude for the servants of Christ, when by the sick priest's couch he humbled his dignity and bent his body low above the dying, his own face sympathetically paling with that already colourless by the approach of death; while his tears betrayed his deep feeling for the friend he was to lose. [2] He has insisted on taking the funeral almost entirely upon himself and defraying all the expenses required for the due obsequies of a priest; to complete the honour due to the memory of the departed, I can only contribute these few words, confining my pen to a plain testimony of a mutual affection.

*'Abraham, worthy to stand beside the celestial patrons whom I shall not fear to call thy colleagues, since they are gone before on the path which thou shalt follow; a share in the martyr's glory gives a share in the kingdom of heaven. Born by Euphrates, for Christ thou didst endure the prison, chains, and hunger for five long years. From the cruel King of Susa2 thou didst fly, escaping alone to the distant land of the West. Marvels born of his holiness followed the steps of the confessor; thyself a fugitive, thou didst put to flight the spirits of evil. Wherever thy footsteps passed, the throng of Lemures cried surrender; the exile's voice bade the demons go forth into banishment. All sought thee, yet didst thou yield to no vain ambition; the honours acceptable in thy sight were those that brought the heaviest burdens. Thou didst shun the tumult of Rome and of Byzantium, and the walls of the city that warlike Titus breached.1 Not Alexandria held thee, not Antioch; thou spurnedst Byrsa, the famed home of Dido.2 Thou didst contemn the populous lands of Ravenna by the marshes, and the city named from the woolly swine.3 But this corner of earth was pleasing to thee, this poor retreat, this hut roofed with reeds. Here didst thou rear a sacred house to God, thou whose own frame was already itself His temple. Here ended thy wanderings, here thy life's course; now thy labours are rewarded by a twofold crown. Now dost thou stand in Paradise amid the thousands of the Saints, with Abraham for thy fellow wanderer. Now art thou

entered into thine own land, from which Adam fell; now lies thy way clear to the sources of thy native stream.'4

[3] With these lines I have paid, as you desired, the last observance due to him who is now laid to rest. But if it is the duty of those who yet live, of brothers, friends and comrades, to obey the commands of brotherly affection, I shall make you a request in my turn: I would beg you to use the principles with which you are so eminently endowed for the consolation of the dead man's followers, confirm by the discipline of Lerins or of Grigny5 the shaken rule of a brotherhood now cast adrift without a leader. If you find any insubordinate, see to it in person that they are punished; if any obedient, give them praise from your own lips. The holy Auxanius is presumed to be their head; but he, as you well know, is too infirm of body and of too diffident a character, and more fitted to obey than to command. He himself insists that you should be called in, that in succeeding to the headship of the house, he may have the support of your overheadship; for if any of the younger monks should treat him with disrespect, as one lacking alike in courage and experience, thanks to you, a joint rule would not be slighted with impunity. I say no more. If you would have my wishes in a few words, they are these; I desire brother Auxanius to be abbot over the rest, and you yourself to be above the abbot. Farewell.

* The verses are translated by Fertig, Part ii, p. 45.

XVIII.

To his friend Constantius c. A. D. 479 [1] 'WITH you my work began, with you it shall end.'1 I send the volume for which you asked, but the choice of letters has been rather hurried. I could only find comparatively few; I had not preserved any number, never having contemplated their appearance in this form. Few and trivial as they are, I was soon done with them; though when I had once started, I found the love of scribbling by no means dead within me, and that I was keen to balance any deficiency in their number by an addition to their length. [2] At the same time, I thought that if it was to attract so fine a critic, the book would be handier and need less apology if you had a smaller weight of parchment to deal with, since in parts there was a certain lightness of style and subject which might give you cause of offence. I therefore submit to your judgement these manifold emotions of my heart, well aware that a book as surely reflects a man's mind as a mirror his face. A few of the letters preach, a number congratulate; some offer advice, others consolation; not a few are humorous.

[3] If here and there you find that I show unexpected heat, I would have you know that while Christ is my defender I will never suffer my judgement to be enslaved; I know as well as any one that with regard to this side of my character there are two opinions: the timid call me rash, the resolute a lover of freedom; I myself strongly feel that the man who has to hide his real opinions cuts a very abject figure. [4] To return to my original subject. If you ever allow yourself a rest from your unending studies in religious literature, these trivialities should afford you innocent distraction. There is here no interminable theme to weary you; each subject ends with its containing letter; you can see where you are at a glance, and have done before the inclination to read has died within you. 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.