PLINY THE YOUNGER

THE LETTERS OF THE YOUNGER PLINY, FIRST SERIES – VOLUME 1

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

Some slight memoir and critical estimate of the author of this collection of Letters may perhaps be acceptable to those who are unfamiliar with the circumstances of the times in which he lived. Moreover, few have studied the Letters themselves without feeling a warm affection for the writer of them. He discloses his character therein so completely, and, in spite of his glaring fault of vanity and his endless love of adulation, that character is in the main so charming, that one can easily understand the high esteem in which Pliny was held by the wide circle of his friends, by the Emperor Trajan, and by the public at large. The correspondence of Pliny the Younger depicts for us the everyday life of a Roman gentleman in the best sense of the term. We see him practising at the Bar; we see him engaged in the civil magistracies at Rome, and in the governorship of the important province of Bithynia; we see him consulted by the Emperor on affairs of state, and occupying a definite place among the "Amici Caesaris." Best of all, perhaps, we see him in his daily life, a devoted scholar,

never so happy as when he is in his study, laboriously seeking to perfect his style, whether in verse or prose, by the models of the great writers of the past and the criticisms of the friends whom he has summoned, in a friendly way, to hear his compositions read or recited. Or again we find him at one of his country villas, enjoying a well-earned leisure after the courts have risen at Rome and all the best society has betaken itself into the country to escape the heats and fevers of the capital. We see him managing his estates, listening to the complaints of his tenants, making abatements of rent, and grumbling at the agricultural depression and the havoc that the bad seasons have made with his crops. Or he spends a day in the open air hunting, yet never omits to take with him a book to read or tablets on which to write, in case the scent is cold and game is not plentiful. In short, the Letters of Pliny the Younger give us a picture of social life as it was in the closing years of the first, and the opening years of the second century of the Christian era, which is as fascinating as it is absolutely unique.

Pliny was born either in 61 or 62 A.D. at Comum on Lake Larius. His father, Lucius Caecilius Cilo, had been aedile of the colony, and, dying young, left a widow, who with her two sons, sought protection with her brother, Caius Plinius Secundus, the famous author of the Natural History. The elder Pliny in his will adopted the younger of the two boys, and so Publius Caecilius Secundus—as he was originally called— took thenceforth the name of Caius Plinius, L.F. Caecilius Secundus. Though later

usage has assigned him the name of Pliny the Younger, he was known to his contemporaries and usually addressed as Secundus. But in his early years Pliny was placed under the guardianship of Virginius Rufus, one of the most distinguished Romans of his day, a successful and brilliant general who had twice refused the purple, when offered to him by his legionaries, and who lived to a ripe old age—the Wellington of his generation. So it was at Comum that he spent his early boyhood, and his affection for his birthplace led him in later years to provide for the educational needs of the youth of the district, who had previously been obliged to go to Mediolanum (Milan) to obtain their schooling. What can be better, he asks, than for children to be educated where they are born, so that they may grow to love their native place by residing in it? Pliny was fortunate in having so distinguished an uncle. On the accession of Vespasian, the elder Pliny was called to Rome by the Emperor, and when his nephew—vixdum adolescentus—joined him in the capital, he took charge of his studies. At the age of fourteen the young student had composed a Greek tragedy, to which he playfully refers in one of his letters, and in Rome he had the benefit of attending the lectures of the great Quintilian and Nicetes Sacerdos, and of making literary friendships which were to prove of the utmost value to him in after years. Pliny tells us that his uncle looked to him for assistance in his literary work, and he was thus engaged when his uncle lost his life in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79, so graphically described in the two famous

letters to Tacitus. That Pliny deeply felt the loss of his relative and patron is shown by the eloquent tribute he paid to his memory, and doubtless, as his death occurred just at his own entry into public life, he was deprived of an influence which might have helped him greatly in his career. Domitian was on the throne, when, in 82, Pliny joined the 3rd Gallic legion, stationed in Syria, as military tribune. Service in the field, however, was not to his liking, and, as soon as his period of soldiering was over, he hurried back to Rome to win his spurs at the Bar and climb the ladder of civic distinction. He became Quaestor in 89 on the recommendation of the Emperor, Tribune in 91, and Praetor in 93.

So far his advancement had been rapid, but evil times succeeded. Domitian went from bad to worse. Always moody, suspicious, and revengeful, he began to imitate the worst vices of his predecessors of the line of Augustus. His hand fell heavily upon the Senatorial order, and another era of proscription began, in which the dreaded delatores again became the "terror" of Rome. It was a time of spoliation and murder, and Pliny writes of it with a shudder. Contrasting with the happy regime of Trajan that which prevailed in his youth and early manhood, he declares that virtue was regarded with suspicion and a premium set upon idleness, that in the camps the generals lacked authority and the soldiers had no sense of obedience, while, when he entered the Senate, he found it a craven and tongueless assembly (Curiam trepidam et elinguem), only convened to perpetrate some piece

of villainy for the Emperor, or to humiliate the Senators by the sense of their own impotence. Pliny was not the man to make a bold stand against tyranny, and, during those perilous years, one can well believe that he did his best to avoid compromising himself, though his sympathies were wholly on the side of his proscribed friends. He was a typical official, suave and polished in manner, yet without that perilous enthusiasm which would simply have marked him for destruction. For two years he was Prefect of the Military Treasury, an office directly in the gift of the Emperor, and it would seem, therefore, that his character for uprightness stood him in good stead with the tyrant even in his worst years. He did not, like so many of the Roman nobles, retire from public life and enter into the sullen opposition which enraged the Emperors even more than active and declared antagonism.

In one passage, indeed, Pliny declares that he, too, was on the black list of the Emperor, but the words must not be taken too literally. He was given to boasting, and he may easily have represented, when the danger was past, that the peril in which he had stood was greater than it really was. No doubt he felt keenly the judicial murder of his friends Senecio, Rusticus, and Helvidius, and the banishment of Mauricus, Gratilla, Arria, and Fannia—for women were not spared in the general proscription; but, after all, the fact that he held office during the closing years of Domitian's life is ample proof that he knew how to walk circumspectly, and did not allow his detestation of the informers

to compromise his safety. When at length, in 96, the Emperor was assassinated in the palace, and the Senate raised Nerva to the purple, Pliny stepped forward as the champion of the oppressed, and impeached Publicius Certus for compassing the death of Helvidius Priscus, though he was only so far successful that he prevented Certus from enjoying the consulship which had been promised him. Pliny revised the speech and published it in book form, and Certus died a few days after it appeared, haunted, so Pliny tells us, by the vision of his prosecutor pursuing him, sword in hand. Nerva's reign was short, but he was succeeded by one of the best of the Roman Emperors, Trajan, a prince under whose just, impartial and strong rule, a man of Pliny's character was bound to thrive and pass from office to office. In 98 he had been appointed by Nerva Prefect of the Treasury of Saturn, and in 100 he held the Consulship for two months, while still retaining his post at the Treasury, and delivered his well-known Panegyric on the 1st of September in that year. Either in 103 or 104 he was advanced to the Augurate, and two years later was appointed Curator of the Tiber. Then in 111 or 112—according to Mommsen's Chronology—Trajan bestowed upon him a signal mark of his esteem by selecting him for the Governorship of the province of Pontus and Bithynia, which he had transferred from the list of senatorial to that of imperial provinces. Pliny was given the special title of Legate Propraetor with full Consular powers, and he remained in his province for at least fifteen months. After that the curtain falls. Whether he died in Bithynia, or shortly

after his return to Rome, or whether he lived on to enjoy the ripe old age of which he writes so pleasantly in his letters, we do not know. Certainly the probabilities are that, if he had lived, he would have continued to correspond with his friends, and the absence of further letters makes for the probability that he died in about his fiftieth year.

In judging these letters for their literary value, the first thing which strikes the reader is that Pliny did not write for his friends alone. Whatever the subject of the epistle, whether it was an invitation to dinner, a description of the charms of the country, an account of a visit to a friend, or an expression of condolence with some one in his or her bereavement, he never allowed his pen to run on carelessly. He scarcely ever prattles in his letters or lets himself go. One always sees in the writer the literary man, who knows that his correspondence is being passed round from hand to hand, and who hopes that it will find readers among posterity. Consequently there is an air of studied artificiality about many of the letters, which was more to the taste of the eighteenth than the nineteenth century. They remind one in many ways of Richardson and Mackenzie, and Pliny would have been recognised by those two writers, and by the latter in particular, as a thorough "man of sentiment." Herein they differ greatly from the other important collection which has come down to us from classical times, the Letters of Cicero. Pliny, indeed,—and in this he was a true disciple of his old teacher Quintilian,—took the great Roman orator as his model. Nothing pleased

him more than for his friends to tell him that he was the Cicero of his time. Like Marcus Tullius, he was the foremost pleader of his day; like him again he dabbled in poetry, and his verses, so far as we know them, were sorry stuff. Yet again like his master, he fondly believed that he enjoyed the special inspiration of the Muses. Pliny, unfortunately for his reputation, gives us a few samples, which are quite as lame and jingling as the famous "O fortunatam natam, me Consule, Romam!" which had made generations of Romans smile. And so, as Cicero was in all things his master, Pliny too wrote letters, excellent in their way, but lacking the vivacity and directness of his model, and, of course, wholly deficient in the political interest which makes Cicero's correspondence one of the most important authorities for the history of his troublous time. Pliny's Letters cover the period from the accession of Nerva down to 113 A.D. None precede the death of Domitian in September 96. That is to say, they were written in an era of profound political peace, and most of them in the reign of Trajan, whose rule Pliny accepted with enthusiastic admiration. One certainly could have wished that he had written freely to his friends during the last years of Domitian's tyranny, for the value of such contemporary documents would have been enormous. But he would only have risked his life by so doing, and that he had no desire to do. It was not until the tyrant had fallen under the sword of Stephanus that he felt it safe to trust his thoughts to paper. The new era which was inaugurated loosened his tongue and made him breathe more freely. He exulted that at

last an honest man could venture to hold his head high without drawing down upon himself the vengeance of the vile informers who throve upon the misfortunes of the State.

Two of Pliny's correspondents and friends were Cornelius Tacitus and Suetonius Tranquillus. Yet no one can read either the Histories and Annals of Tacitus or the Lives of the Caesars and then pass to a reading of Pliny's Letters without being struck by the enormous difference in their tone and spirit. It is almost impossible to believe that their respective authors were contemporaries. When turning over the pages of Tacitus one feels that the vices and despotism of the Emperors and the Empire had crushed all spirit out of the world, had made quiet family life impossible, and had stamped out every trace of justice and clean living. It is a remarkable fact that the great writers of the first century, as soon as the Augustan era had closed, should have been masters of a merciless satire, which has rarely been equaled in the history of the world, and never excelled. When we think of Roman society, as it was in the early Empire, our thoughts recur to the lurid canvases which have been painted for us by Juvenal, by Tacitus, by Lucan, by Seneca, and by Petronius—pictures which have made the world shudder, and have led even careful historians astray. Pliny supplies the needful corrective and gives us the reverse side of the medal. Like the authors we have mentioned, he too writes of the evil days which he himself has passed through, as of a horrid nightmare from which he has just awakened; but from his letters, artificial and

stilted as they are in some respects, we learn that there were still to be found those who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

And so, with this volume in our hands, we obtain a personal introduction to a number of distinguished Romans and Roman matrons, whose names have been preserved for all time by the Younger Pliny. His circle of friends was a large one. Let us mention a few of them. We have already spoken of Virginius Rufus, the grand old soldier and patriot, who, dying at the age of eighty-four, was awarded a public funeral, while Cornelius Tacitus, then Consul, delivered the panegyric in his honour. Vestricius Spurinna was another distinguished general of the old school, and Pliny relates with enthusiasm how he paid a visit to him in his country-house when Spurinna was seventy-seven years of age and had retired from public office. He tells us how his friend spent his day, how he drove and walked and played tennis to keep himself in health, wrote Greek and Latin lyrics, and maintained a keen interest in all that went on in the capital. Corellius Rufus is another of the older men of whom Pliny writes with sincere affection, and he helped to pay the debt of gratitude he owed him by numerous acts of kindness to his daughter Crellia. Voconius Romanus is another of his closest friends, and Pliny tells us that he wrote such admirable letters that you would think the Muses themselves must speak in Latin. His literary associates numbered among them Caius Cornelius Tacitus, Silius Italicus the poet—whose veneration for Virgil was so great that he kept his master's birthday with more solemnity

than his own, and visited his tomb on the Bay of Naples with as much respect as worshippers pay to a temple,—Martial the epigrammatist, Suetonius Tranquillus the historian, and others such as Passennus Paullus, Caninius Rufus, Virgilius Romanus, and Caius Fannius, whose works have not survived the wreck of time, though Pliny showers upon all of them enthusiastic and indiscriminate praise. Again, he enjoyed the friendship of a number of distinguished foreigners, professional rhetoricians and philosophers, who came back to Rome after their sentence of banishment, passed by Domitian, had been revoked by Nerva and Trajan. Euphrates, Artemidorus, and Isaeus were the three most famous, and their respective styles are carefully described by Pliny. Even more interesting perhaps is the gallery of Roman ladies, whose portraits are limned with so fine and discriminating a touch. Juvenal again is responsible for much misconception as to the part the women of Rome played in Roman society. The appalling Sixth Satire, in which he unhesitatingly declares that most women—if not all—are bad, and that virtue and chastity are so rare as to be almost unknown, in which he roundly accuses them of all the vices known to human depravity, reads like a monstrous and disgraceful libel on the sex when one turns to Pliny and makes the acquaintance of Arria, Fannia, Corellia, and Calpurnia. The characters of Arria and Fannia are well known; they are among the heroines of history. But in Pliny there are numerous references to women whose names are not even known to us, but the terms in which they are referred to prove

what sweet, womanly lives they led. For example, he writes to Geminus: "Our friend Macrinus has suffered a grievous wound. He has lost his wife, who would have been regarded as a model of all the virtues even if she had lived in the good old days. He lived with her for thirty-nine years, without so much as a single quarrel or disagreement." "Vixit cum hac triginta novem annis sine jurgio, sine offensa. One is reminded of the fine line of Propertius, in which Cornelia boasts of the blameless union of herself and her husband, Paullus—

"Viximus insignes inter utramque facem."

This is no isolated example. One of the most pathetic letters is that in which Pliny writes of the death of the younger daughter of his friend Fundanus, a girl in her fifteenth year, who had already "the prudence of age, the gravity of a matron, and all the maidenly modesty and sweetness of a girl." Pliny tells us how it cut him to the quick to hear her father give directions that the money he had meant to lay out on dresses and pearls and jewels for her betrothal should be spent on incense, unguents, and spices for her bier. What a different picture from anything we find in Juvenal, who would fain have us believe that Messalina was the type of the average Roman matron of his day!

Such were some of Pliny's friends. His distinguished position at the Bar drew him a host of clients; his official status and his friendship with Trajan gave him the entree into any society he liked. He was, moreover, a man of considerable wealth, generous, even lavish, with his money, and his disposition was

one of the kindest. He was always ready to believe the best of any one, always prepared to do a friend a service, devoted to his wife and her relations, and anxious to deal justly and honourably with all men. We have called him vain, and vain he undoubtedly was to an extraordinary degree. But Pliny's vanity is never offensive. The very naivete with which he acknowledges his failing disarms all criticism and merely renders it amusing. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he would have admitted that it was a failing at all, inasmuch as it was his love of praise which spurred him on to literary endeavour. The Romans, in their grand manner, affected a certain magniloquence which is alien to the Anglo-Saxon cast of thought, and if Horace could declare of his own odes that he had erected a monument more durable than brass, Pliny, who always had the great masters before him, naturally fell into the same rather vainglorious train of thought. His frankest confession is to be found in a letter to Titinius Capito, who had urged him to write history, when he says: "Me autem nihil aeque ac diuturnitatis amor et cupido sollicitat, res homine dignissima, eo presertime qui nullius sibi conscius culpae posteritatis memoriam non reformidet." Or again, he admits that he is not Stoic enough to be merely content with the consciousness of having done his duty. He craves for a public testimony thereto, a little applause from the bystanders, a vote of thanks from those whom he has benefited. Most of us desire the same—the difference is that Pliny does not mind owning up to it. But this vanity of his peeps out in curious places. When

we find him speaking of a young Roman of fashion standing for hours in a crowd to listen to his pleading in the courts, or of his audience pressing him not to omit a single line of his poems, or of the deferential way in which certain young barristers of promise hang on his lips, copy his gestures and bow to his judgment, one cannot resist a smile. When he tells us that he went on calmly reading and taking notes during the eruption of Vesuvius, though the hot ashes were threatening to overwhelm the villa in which he was staying, or when he quotes the really execrable verses which some scribbler of the day composed in his honour, with the most exquisite self-complacency, one is tempted to show a little impatience at such extravagant self-satisfaction. Tacitus again—that supreme master of irony—must have occasionally curled his thin lip on reading some of the epistles which were addressed to him by his friend Pliny. It is a tribute to Pliny's powers of literary discernment that he appreciated the marvellous ability of Tacitus, though had he failed to do so, we should have rated him for his blindness. No cultured Roman could fail to see that Tacitus had brought a new literary style to a pitch of the highest perfection, and his fame throughout his lifetime was enormous. So apparently was Pliny's, and the latter boasts that their names are mentioned together in everyday conversation, and in the last wills and testaments of people with literary taste. Tacitus one day was sitting at the games, and got into conversation with a stranger sitting in the next seat. It took a literary turn, and the stranger was delighted with the learning that Tacitus displayed. "Are you

a Roman, or from the country" said he. "You know me quite well," answered Tacitus, "from the books you have studied." "Then," rejoined the stranger, "you must be either Tacitus or Pliny." It was Tacitus himself who told Pliny the story, and one can imagine how it would delight him. He promptly sits down and tells it to his friend Maximus, and adds another story of a similar character. But the most extraordinary passage of all occurs in a letter (vii. 20) to Tacitus himself. In it Pliny says that when he was a young man and Tacitus was already famous, he determined to make him his model. There were, he said, many brilliant geniuses, but you—such was the affinity of our natures—seemed to me to be the most easy to imitate, and the most worthy of imitation. Maxime imitabilis, maxime imitandus videbaris. Unconscious conceit could go no farther!

And yet one can pardon this egregious vanity when one thinks of Pliny's other qualities. Who else is there in Roman literature who so thoroughly corresponds with our modern ideal of a rich, generous, cultured public servant? In one place we find him providing for the educational needs of his birthplace, Comum. In another he renounces his share of an inheritance, and bestows it upon his old township. Or he buys a statue for a temple, finds the money for a new shrine, pays the debts of an acquaintance, gives a friend's daughter a handsome dowry, opens his purse and enables another deserving friend to acquire the status of a senator, or finds Martial his travelling expenses. All the rising young authors and barristers in Rome looked to him for encouragement and

support; he was ready to attend their public readings, to rise when the reading was over and say a few words of encouragement, to canvass for them if they were standing for office, and enlist on their behalf all the influence at his command. And he only asked in return a little deference and acknowledgment of his kindness! Most interesting of all, we find him giving a farm to his old nurse, and asking a friend to look after it for her. He sends a slave of his, who was troubled with consumption, to Egypt for a change of air, and afterwards to the colony of Forum Julii, the modern Frejus on the Riviera. Pliny writes of the slaves of his household just as any kind- hearted Jamaican planter would have written before the Emancipation Act, and it is to be noted that the head slaves of a Roman gentleman's establishment were often Greeks of high literary attainments, and treated by their masters as intimate and affectionate friends. Pliny narrates with a shock of uneasiness and horror the story of a Roman knight who was beaten to death by the servants of his household, and, though he admits that the knight had been cruel and overbearing, such an untimely fate brought home to him the insecurity of all masters—that insecurity which led the Romans to punish with such merciless severity any attack by a slave upon his owner. Not that Pliny had any cause for self-reproach! He tells us in a charming letter his rule of conduct with his dependants, and the theory on which he conducted his household. According to his view, "Servis respublica quaedam et quasi civitas domus est." Consequently, he allowed them to make wills and leave their

property as they desired, provided only that the recipients were also members of the household, and, what was better still, he speaks of his "facilitas manumittendi"—his readiness to give them their freedom for faithful service. One can well imagine that Pliny's was a model family, that it was his pride to be in every sense of the word a just paterfamilias, and that he showed his slaves great consideration for their welfare. He complains, indeed, jocularly in one place that too much kindness is not good for servants, as it leads them to presume upon the easy-going temperament of their master, but that is only a good- natured grumble on the perennial servant problem.

Pliny was thrice married, twice under Domitian, but his second wife died in 97, and the lady who figures in the letters is his third wife Calpurnia, grand-daughter of Calpurnius Fabatus, and niece of a lady named Hispulla. We get a charming picture of their mutual happiness in a letter written by Pliny to Hispulla, who had had charge of his wife's education when she was a girl. He praises her intelligence, her economy, her love for him, and the interest she takes in his career. When he is pleading in the courts she has messengers to bring her word of the success of the speech and the result of the trial; when he is giving a reading to his friends, Calpurnia sits behind a curtain and greedily drinks in the praises they bestow. She sets his verses to music, and Hispulla, who made the match, is neatly rewarded at the conclusion of the letter by Pliny saying that both he and his wife vie with one another in seeing who can thank her the more. When

Calpurnia was obliged to leave her husband and go to Campania for her health, we find Pliny writing her tender love-letters, describing his anxiety on her behalf, telling her how he conjures up the very things he most dreads, how he reads and re-reads her letters, which are his only comfort, and begging her to write him certainly once, and if possible, twice a day. Then in the prettiest passage of all, he tells her how, at the hours when he used to visit her, he finds his feet carrying him to the door of her chamber and turns away from the threshold of the empty room, sad as a lover who finds the door closed against him. The glimpses which Roman literature affords us of the conjugal happiness of man and wife are comparatively few. Cicero, indeed, wrote in a similar strain to his wife Terentia, and used even tenderer diminutives than Pliny, but the sequel was that he soon afterwards divorced her and married a rich ward. We do not know the sequel in the case of Pliny. All we know is that he nearly lost his wife in a dangerous illness brought on by a miscarriage, and that she accompanied him to Bithynia during his governorship. Whether she bore him the child which he so ardently desired is not stated, but the probabilities are against it, as there is no mention of such an event in the letters. His correspondence clearly proves that for all his ambition he was essentially a family man. Nothing could be finer than his description of the heroic devotion of Arria to her husband, and the pathos with which he describes the conduct of Fannia, who concealed the death of her dearly loved son from her sick husband Paetus, telling him the boy was well and resting

quietly, and controlling her motherly tears until she could keep them back no longer, and rushed from the room to give them free course. Then, "Satiata siccis oculis composito vultu redibat, tanquam orbitatem foris reliquisset." No one could have written that beautiful sentence but a man of tender heart and sympathies.

Pliny's tastes were catholic. He writes with delight, but without pretending to be a connoisseur, of an antique statuette which he had purchased out of a legacy. Some rich men in Rome had the mania for antiques—Corinthian bronzes were the rage in Pliny's day—as badly as those who haunt our modern sale-rooms. Pliny's hobby, if he had been living in our time, would probably have been books. He is one of the most bookish men of antiquity. Wherever he went his books went with him; in his carriage, in his gardens they never left his side. He betrays, moreover, a taste for the beauties of nature which is distinctly un-Roman. Even the Roman poets were almost utterly oblivious to the charms of scenery. When Horace points out of the window to the snow lying deep on Soracte, it is not to emphasise the beauty of the scene, but a preliminary to telling the boy to pile the logs of Algidus upon the fire. Even Virgil, who occasionally paints a bit of landscape or seascape in the Aeneid, does so in a half-hearted fashion, as a mere preface to the incident which is to follow, not from a poet's love of beauty. In Pliny, on the other hand, we find the modern love for a beautiful view. Me nihil aeque ac natura opera delectant. When he describes his Tuscan villa he uses language with which we feel in complete

harmony. He specifies the places from which the best views may be obtained; and if the garden seems to our taste to have been laid out in rather a formal way, with its box-trees cut into different shapes of animals and birds, he was in that respect only following the fashion of his day, and his delight in the unadorned beauties of the surrounding country has a genuine ring in it. In another curious respect Pliny was ahead of his times. He had no taste for the Circensian games and the brutalities of the gladiatorial shows. Writing to Sempronius Rufus (iv. 22), he bluntly declares that he wishes they could be abolished in Rome, inasmuch as they degrade the character and morals of the whole world. In another passage (ix. 6) he says that the Circensian games have not the smallest attraction for him—ne levissime quidem teneor. He cannot understand why so many thousands of grown-up people take such a childish pleasure in watching horses running races. It is not the speed of the horses or the skill of the drivers which is the attraction,—if it were, there might be some reason for their enthusiasm,—what they go to see is the victory of their pet racing colours, the triumph of the reds, blues, or greens. Favent panno, pannum amant.

We find him writing on all manner of subjects. He asks his scientific friends to explain to him the mystery of a spring whose waters ebb and flow, of a lake which contained floating islands, and in one letter he tells a fascinating ghost story of quite the conventional type, about a haunted house, which drove any unwary tenant crazy, and the ghost of a murdered

man which walked with clanking chains. Pliny was no cut and dried philosopher. Like his master Cicero he was an eclectic, and pinned his faith to no single creed. Whatever was human interested him, and on whatever interested him he put pen to paper. It need scarcely be said how valuable these letters are in filling up the gaps of Roman history. We have to thank Pliny for our knowledge of the great eruption of Vesuvius which overwhelmed Pompeii and Herculaneum, and it was probably only due to the accident that the elder Pliny was one of the victims that we possess the two striking letters in which the disaster is described. In another letter our author describes how the Emperor Trajan sent for him and others to his country seat at Centum Cellae, to help him to try certain important cases, and then he tells us of the modest, simple living of Trajan—Suavitas simplicitasque convictus—and the presents he gave them on their departure. The debates in the Senate, the trials in the Court of the Hundred, the public readings in the city, which—first introduced by Asinius Pollio in the time of Augustus—were then the fashion, —of all these Pliny gives us a clear presentment. His charity is hardly ever at fault. Only when he writes of Regulus and Pallas does he dip his pen in gall. But Regulus had been his bitter enemy and an informer, and the memory of Pallas was justly execrated.

A few words may be added respecting the letters which form the Tenth Book of his correspondence, and which show us Pliny acting as Governor of the province of Pontus and Bithynia. He had been sent there because the finances of many of the cities

had been allowed to fall into a shocking state, and because the Emperor wanted a man whom he could thoroughly trust to put them straight. No doubt Pliny, while flattered at this proof of Trajan's regard, felt the severance from his friends and ordinary pursuits which this term of absence necessitated. But compare his attitude with that of Cicero as Governor of Cilicia! Cicero crawled on the outward journey, and when he reached his destination he counted the days to his return like a bullied school-boy counts the days to the end of the term. He writes to his friends in the capital, begging and praying of them that they will prevent his being obliged to stay for a second year. All his thoughts are of Rome and how to return there. The wretched provincials bore him to distraction; he yearns for the wider arena of the capital in which to play the swelling part to which he aspires. There is, in short, not a trace in Cicero's letters from his province to show that he took the slightest interest in his new surroundings. Pliny displays a far different spirit. He reminds us more of the Colonial Governor of our own day. He is interested in the past history and traditions of the country, he is anxious that the cities shall have good water supplies, good baths, good theatres, good gymnasia. He is for ever suggesting to the Emperor that he should send architects to consult with him on some important public work. And these letters disclose to us what a wonderful system of organised government the Roman Empire possessed. Pliny even writes to Trajan to ask permission that an evil-smelling sewer may be covered over in a

town called Amastria. If all the governors of the provinces wrote home for orders on such points, the Emperor must indeed have been busy, and some of his replies to Pliny show that Trajan hinted very plainly that a governor ought to have some initiative of his own. None the less, the tenour of this correspondence proves that Trajan held the threads of government very jealously in his own hands. When Pliny suggested the establishment of a small fire-brigade in Nicomedia, where the citizens had stood enjoying the aesthetic beauty of a disastrous fire which destroyed whole streets, instead of putting it out, Trajan sharply vetoed the suggestion, on the ground that the Greeks were factious people and would turn even a fire-brigade to illicit and seditious purposes.

There is, of course, one letter to Trajan which has achieved world-wide fame, that in which he asks the Emperor how he wishes him to deal with the Christians who were brought before him and refused to worship the statues of the Emperor and the gods. So much has been written upon this subject that it is almost superfluous to add more. Yet it may be pointed out that the letter only confirms our estimate of the kindliness and scrupulous justice of Pliny. He acquits the Christians of all criminal practices; he bears testimony to the purity of their lives and their principles. What baffles and vexes him is their "pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy"—Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod fateretur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. He could not

understand, in other words, why, when the theory of the Roman religion was so tolerant, the Christians should be so intolerantly narrow-minded and bigoted. As we have said, Pliny was an eclectic, and an eclectic is the last person to understand the frame of mind which glories in martyrdom. Such was Pliny's attitude towards the purely religious side of the question, but that, after all, was not the main issue. With him, as the representative of the Roman Emperor, the crime of the Christians lay not so much in their refusal to worship the statues of Jupiter and the heavenly host of the Pagan mythology, as in their refusal to worship the statue of the Emperor. Church and State have never been so closely identified in any form of government as in that of the early Roman Empire. The genius of the Emperor was the genius of the Empire; to refuse to sprinkle a few grains of incense on the ara of Trajan was an act of gross political treason to the best of rulers. No wonder, therefore, that Pliny felt constrained to punish these harmless members of a sect which he could not understand. Trajan's reply is equally clear and distinct. He discountenanced all inquisition and persecution. The Christians are not to be hunted down, no notice is to be taken of anonymous accusations, and if any suspected person renounces his error and offers prayers publicly to the gods of Rome, no further action is to be taken against him. On the other hand, if the case is proved and the accused still remains obstinate, punishment must follow and the law be maintained. Pliny evidently thought that if the Christians were given a chance of renouncing their past folly

the growth of the new religion would be checked. He speaks of a certain revival of the old religion, of the temples once more being thronged by worshippers, and the sacrificial victims again finding buyers, though almost in the same sentence he describes "the contagion of the Christian superstition" as having spread not only in the towns but into the villages and rural districts. He did not foresee that in process of time a Roman Emperor would himself embrace the new faith and persecute the upholders of the old with the same vigour as was in his day applied to the repression of the new.

J. B. FIRTH.

BOOK I

1.I.—TO SEPTICIUS

You have constantly urged me to collect and publish the more highly finished of the letters that I may have written. I have made such a collection, but without preserving the order in which they were composed, as I was not writing a historical narrative. So I have taken them as they happened to come to hand. I can only hope that you will not have cause to regret the advice you gave, and that I shall not repent having followed it; for I shall set to work to recover such letters as have up to now been tossed on one side, and I shall not keep back any that I may write in the future. Farewell.

1.II.—TO ARRIANUS

As I see that your arrival is likely to be later than I expected, I forward you the speech which I promised in an earlier letter. I beg that you will read and revise it as you have done with other compositions of mine, because I think none of my previous works is written in quite the same style. I have tried to imitate, at least in manner and turns of phrase, your old favourite, Demosthenes, and Calvus, to whom I have recently taken a great fancy; for to catch the fire and power of such acknowledged stylists is only given to the heaven-inspired few. I hope you will not think me conceited if I say that the subject- matter was not unworthy of such imitation, for throughout the whole argument I found something that kept rousing me from my sleepy and confirmed indolence, that is to say, as far as a person of my temperament can be roused. Not that I abjured altogether the pigments of our master Cicero; when an opportunity arose for a pleasant little excursion from the main path of my argument I availed myself of it, as my object was to be terse without being unnecessarily dry. Nor must you think that I am apologising for these few passages. For just to make your eye for faults the keener, I will confess that both my friends here and myself have no fear of publishing the speech, if you will but set your mark of approval against the passages that possibly show my folly. I must publish something, and I only hope that the best thing for

the purpose may be this volume which is ready finished. That is the prayer of a lazy man, is it not? but there are several reasons why I must publish, and the strongest is that the various copies I have lent out are said to still find readers, though by this time they have lost the charm of novelty. Of course, it may be that the booksellers say this to flatter me. Well, let them flatter, so long as fibs of this kind encourage me to study the harder. Farewell.

1.III.—TO CANINIUS RUFUS

How is Comum looking, your darling spot and mine? And that most charming villa of yours, what of it, and its portico where it is always spring, its shady clumps of plane trees, its fresh crystal canal, and the lake below that gives such a charming view? How is the exercise ground, so soft yet firm to the foot; how goes the bath that gets the sun's rays so plentifully as he journeys round it? What too of the big banqueting halls and the little rooms just for a few, and the retiring rooms for night and day? Have they full possession of you, and do they share your company in turn? or are you, as usual, continually being called away to attend to private family business? You are indeed a lucky man if you can spend all your leisure there; if you cannot, your case is that of most of us. But really it is time that you passed on your unimportant and petty duties for others to look after, and buried yourself among your books in that secluded yet beautiful retreat. Make this at once the business and the leisure of your life, your occupation and your rest; let your waking hours be spent among your books, and your hours of sleep as well. Mould something, hammer out something that shall be known as yours for all time. Your other property will find a succession of heirs when you are gone; what I speak of will continue yours for ever—if once it begins to be. I know the capacity and inventive wit that I am spurring on. You have only to think of yourself as the able man others will think

you when you have realised your ability. Farewell.

1.IV.—TO POMPEIA CELERINA

What treasures you have in your villas at Ocriculum, at Narnia, at Carsola and Perusia! Even a bathing place at Narnia! My letters—for now there is no need for you to write—will have shown you how pleased I am, or rather the short letter will which I wrote long ago. The fact is, that some of my own property is scarcely so completely mine as is some of yours; the only difference being that I get more thoroughly and attentively looked after by your servants than I do by my own. You will very likely find the same thing yourself when you come to stay in one of my villas. I hope you will, in the first place that you may get as much pleasure out of what belongs to me as I have from what belongs to you, and in the second that my people may be roused a little to a sense of their duties. I find them rather remiss in their behaviour and almost careless. But that is their way; if they have a considerate master, their fear of him grows less and less as they get to know him, while a new face sharpens their attention and they study to gain their master's good opinion, not by looking after his wants but those of his guests. Farewell.

1.V.—TO VOCONIUS ROMANUS

Did you ever see a man more abject and fawning than Marcus Regulus has been since the death of Domitian? His misdeeds were better concealed during that prince's reign, but they were every bit as bad as they were in the time of Nero. He began to be afraid that I was angry with him and he was not mistaken, for I certainly was annoyed. After doing what he could to help those who were compassing the ruin of Rusticus Arulenus, he had openly exulted at his death, and went so far as to publicly read and then publish a pamphlet in which he violently attacks Rusticus and even calls him "the Stoics' ape," adding that "he is marked with the brand of Vitellius." You recognise, of course, the Regulian style! He tears to pieces Herennius Senecio so savagely that Metius Carus said to him, "What have you to do with my dead men? Did I ever worry your Crassus or Camerinus?"—these being some of Regulus's victims in the days of Nero. Regulus thought I bore him malice for this, and so he did not invite me when he read his pamphlet. Besides, he remembered that he once mortally attacked me in the Court of the Centumviri.

I was a witness on behalf of Arionilla, the wife of Timon, at the request of Rusticus Arulenus, and Regulus was conducting the prosecution. We on our side were relying for part of the defence on a decision of Metius Modestus, an excellent man who had been banished by Domitian and was at that moment in exile.

This was Regulus's opportunity. "Tell me, Secundus," said he, "what you think of Modestus." You see in what peril I should have placed myself if I had answered that I thought highly of him, and how disgraceful it would have been if I had said that I thought ill of him. I fancy it must have been the gods who came to my rescue. "I will tell you what I think of him," I said, "when the Court has to give a decision on the point." He returned to the charge: "My question is, what do you think of Modestus?" Again I replied: "Witnesses used to be interrogated about persons in the dock, not about those who are already convicted." A third time he asked: "Well, I won't ask you now what you think of Modestus, but what you think of his loyalty." "You ask me," said I, "for my opinion. But I do not think it is in order for you to ask an opinion on what the Court has already passed judgment." He was silenced, while I was congratulated and praised for not having smirched my reputation by giving an answer that might have been discreet but would certainly have been dishonest, and for not having entangled myself in the meshes of such a crafty question.

Well, now the fellow is conscience-stricken, and buttonholes first Caecilius Celer and then implores Fabius Justsus to reconcile me to him. Not content with that, he makes his way in to see Spurinna, and begs and prays of him—you know what an abject coward he is when he is frightened—as follows. "Do go," says he, "and call on Pliny in the morning—early in the morning, for my suspense is unbearable—and do what you can to

remove his anger against me." I was early awake that day, when a message came from Spurinna, "I am coming to see you." I sent back word, "I will come and see you." We met at the portico of Livia, just as we were each of us on the way to see the other. He explained his commission from Regulus and added his own entreaties, but did not press the point too strongly, as became a worthy gentleman asking a favour for a worthless acquaintance. This was my answer: "Well, you must see for yourself what message you think best to take back to Regulus; I should not like you to be under any misapprehension. I am waiting till Mauricus returns"—he had not yet returned from exile- -"and so I cannot give you an answer either way, for I shall do just what he thinks best. It is he who is principally interested in this matter, I am only secondarily concerned." A few days afterwards Regulus himself met me when I was paying my respects to the new praetor. He followed me thither and asked for a private conversation. He said he was afraid that something he once said in the Court of the Centumviri rankled in my memory, when, in replying to Satrius Rufus and myself, he remarked, "Satrius Rufus, who is quite content with the eloquence of our days, and does not seek to rival Cicero." I told him that as I had his own confession for it I could now see that the remark was a spiteful one, but that it was quite possible to put a complimentary construction upon it. "For," said I, "I do try to rival Cicero, and I am not content with the eloquence of our own time. I think it is very stupid not to take as models the very best masters. But how is it that you remember

this case and forget the other one in which you asked me what I thought of the loyalty of Metius Modestus?" As you know, he is always pale, but he grew perceptibly paler at this thrust. Then he stammered out, "I put the question not to damage you but Modestus." Observe the man's malignant nature who does not mind acknowledging that he wished to do an injury to an exile. Then he went on to make this fine excuse; "He wrote in a letter which was read aloud in Domitian's presence, 'Regulus is the vilest creature that walks on two legs.'" Modestus never wrote a truer word.

That practically closed the conversation. I did not wish it to go any further, so that I might not commit myself until Mauricus arrived. Moreover, I am quite aware that Regulus is a difficult bird to net. He is rich, he is a shrewd intriguer, he has no inconsiderable body of followers and a still larger circle of those who fear him, and fear is often a more powerful factor than affection. But, after all, these are bonds that may be shattered and weakened, for a bad man's influence is as little to be relied upon as is the man himself. Moreover, let me repeat that I am waiting for Mauricus. He is a man of sound judgment and sagacity, which he has learned by experience, and he can gauge what is likely to happen in the future from what has occurred in the past. I shall be guided by him, and either strike a blow or put by my weapons just as he thinks best. I have written you this letter because it is only right, considering our regard for one another, that you should be acquainted not only with what I have said and done,

but also with my plans for the future. Farewell.

1.VI.—TO CORNELIUS TACITUS

You will laugh, and I give you leave to. You know what sort of sportsman I am, but I, even I, have bagged three boars, each one of them a perfect beauty. "What!" you will say, "YOU!" Yes, I, and that too without any violent departure from my usual lazy ways. I was sitting by the nets; I had by my side not a hunting spear and a dart, but my pen and writing tablets. I was engaged in some composition and jotting down notes, so that I might have full tablets to take home with me, even though my hands were empty. You need not shrug your shoulders at study under such conditions. It is really surprising how the mind is stimulated by bodily movement and exercise. I find the most powerful incentive to thought in having the woods all about me, in the solitude and the silence which is observed in hunting. So when next you go hunting, take my advice and carry your writing tablets with you as well as your luncheon basket and your flask. You will find that Minerva loves to wander on the mountains quite as much as Diana. Farewell.

1.VII.—TO OCTAVIUS RUFUS

See on what a pinnacle you have placed me by giving me the same power and royal will that Homer attributed to Jupiter, Best and Greatest:– "One half his prayer the Father granted, the other half he refused." For I too can answer your request by just nodding a yes or no. It is open to me, especially as you press me to do so, to decline to act on behalf of the Barbici against a single individual; but I should be violating the good faith and constancy that you admire in me, if I were to accept a brief against a province to which I am bound by many friendly ties, and by the work and dangers I have often undertaken in its behalf. So I will take a middle course, and of the alternative favours you ask I will choose the one which will commend itself both to your interest and your judgment. For what I have to consider is not so much what will meet your wishes of the moment, but how to do that which will win the steady approval of a man of your high character. I hope to be in Rome about the Ides of October and then join my credit with yours, and convince Gallus in person of the wisdom of my resolve, though even now you may assure him of my good intentions. "He spake, and Kronios nodded his dark brows." Homer again, but why should I not go on plying you with Homeric lines? You will not let me ply you with verses of your own, though I love them so well that I think your permission to quote them would be the one bribe that would

induce me to appear against the Barbici. I have almost made a shocking omission, and forgotten to thank you for the dates you sent me. They are very fine, and are likely to prove strong rivals of my figs and mushrooms. Farewell.

1.VIII.—TO POMPEIUS SATURNINUS

Your letter, asking me to send you one of my compositions, came at an opportune moment, for I had just made up my mind to do so. So you were spurring a willing horse, and you have not only spoiled your only chance of making excuses for declining, but have enabled me to press work upon you without feeling ashamed at asking the favour. For it would be equally unbecoming for me to hesitate about accepting your offer as for you who made it to look upon it as a bore. However, you must not expect anything of an original kind from a lazy man like me. I shall only ask you to find time to again look through the speech which I made to my townsfolk at the dedication of the public library. I remember that you have already criticised a few points therein, but merely in a general way, and I now beg that you will not only criticise it as a whole, but will ply your pencil on particular passages as well, in your severest manner. For even after a thorough revision it will still be open to us to publish or suppress it as we think fit. Very likely the revision will help us out of our hesitation and enable us to decide one way or the other. By looking through it again and again we shall either find that it is not worth publication or we shall render it worthy by the way we revise it.

What makes me doubtful is rather the subject-matter than the actual composition. It is perhaps a shade too laudatory and ostentatious. And this will be more than our modesty can carry,

however plain and unassuming the style in which it is written, especially as I have to enlarge on the munificence of my relatives as well as on my own. It is a ticklish and dangerous subject, even when one can flatter one's self that there was no way of avoiding it. For if people grow impatient at hearing the praises of others, how much more difficult must it be to prevent a speech becoming tedious when we sing our own praises or those of our family? We look askance even at unpretentious honesty, and do so all the more when its fame is trumpeted abroad. In short, it is only the good action that is done by stealth and passes unapplauded which protects the doer from the carping criticism of the world. For this reason I have often debated whether I ought to have composed the speech, such as it is, simply to suit my own feelings, or whether I should have looked beyond myself to the public. I am inclined to the former alternative by the thought that many actions which are necessary to the performance of an object lose their point and appositeness when that object is attained. I will not weary you with examples further than to ask whether anything could have been more appropriate than my gracing in writing the reasons which prompted my generosity. By so doing, the result was that I grew familiar with generous sentiments; the more I discussed the virtue the more I saw its beauties, and above all I saved myself from the reaction that often follows a sudden fit of open- handedness. From all this there gradually grew up within me the habit of despising money, and whereas nature seems to have tied men down to their money bags

to guard them, I was enabled to throw off the prevailing shackles of avarice by my long and carefully reasoned love of generosity. Consequently my munificence appeared to me to be all the more worthy of praise, inasmuch as I was drawn to it by reason and not by any sudden impulse.

Again, I also felt that I was promising not mere games or gladiatorial shows, but an annual subscription for the upbringing of freeborn youths. The pleasures of the eye and ear never lack eulogists; on the contrary, they need rather to be put in the background than in the foreground by speakers: but to obtain volunteers who will undertake the fatigue and hard work of self-culture, we have not only to offer rewards but to encourage them with the choicest addresses. For if doctors have to coax their patients into adopting an insipid but yet wholesome diet, how much the more ought the man who is giving his fellows good advice to use all the allurements of oratory to make his hearers adopt a course which, though most useful, is not generally popular? Especially is this the case when we have to try and convince men who have no children of the value of the boon which is bestowed on those who have, and to induce all the rest to wait patiently till their turn comes to receive the benefit now given to a few, and in the meantime show themselves fit recipients for it. But just as then, when we wished to explain the meaning and bearing of our bounty, we were studying the common good and not seeking an opportunity for self-boasting, so now in the matter of publication we are afraid lest people

should think that we have had an eye not so much to the benefit of others as to our own glorification. Besides, we do not forget how much better it is to seek the reward of a good action in the testimony of one's conscience than in fame. For glory ought to follow of its own accord, and not to be consciously sought for; nor, again, is a good deed any the less beautiful because owing to some chance or other no glory attends it. Those who boast of their own good deeds are credited not so much with boasting for having done them, but with having done them in order to be able to boast of them. Consequently what would have been considered a noble action if told of by a stranger, loses its striking qualities when recounted by the actual doer. For when men find that the deed itself is inassailable they attack the boastfulness of the doer, and hence if you commit anything to be ashamed of, the deed itself is blamed, while if you perform anything deserving of praise, you are blamed for not having kept silence upon it.

Beyond all this, however, there is a special obstacle in the way of publishing the speech. I delivered it not before the people but before the municipal corporation, not in public but in the Council Chamber. So I am afraid that it may look inconsistent if, after avoiding the applause and cheers of the crowd when I delivered the speech, I now seek for that applause by publishing it, and if, after getting the common people, whose interests I was seeking, removed from the threshold and the walls of the Chamber—to prevent the appearance of courting popularity—I should now seem to deliberately seek the acclamations of those

who are only interested in my munificence to the extent of having a good example shown them. Well, I have told you the grounds of my hesitation, but I shall follow the advice you give me, for its weight will be reason sufficient for me. Farewell.

1.IX.—TO MINUTIUS FUNDANUS

It is surprising how if you take each day singly here in the city you pass or seem to pass your time reasonably enough when you take stock thereof, but how, when you put the days together, you are dissatisfied with yourself. If you ask any one, "What have you been doing to-day?" he will say, "Oh, I have been attending a coming-of-age function; I was at a betrothal or a wedding; so-and-so asked me to witness the signing of a will; I have been acting as witness to A, or I have been in consultation with B." All these occupations appear of paramount importance on the day in question, but if you remember that you repeat the round day after day, they seem a sheer waste of time, especially when you have got away from them into the country; for then the thought occurs to you, "What a number of days I have frittered away in these chilly formalities!" That is how I feel when I am at my Laurentine Villa and busy reading or writing, or even when I am giving my body a thorough rest and so repairing the pillars of my mind. I hear nothing and say nothing to give me vexation; no one comes backbiting a third party, and I myself have no fault to find with any one except it be with myself when my pen does not run to my liking. I have no hopes and fears to worry me, no rumours to disturb my rest. I hold converse with myself and with my books. 'Tis a genuine and honest life; such leisure is delicious and honourable, and one might say that it is much more

attractive than any business. The sea, the shore, these are the true secret haunts of the Muses, and how many inspirations they give me, how they prompt my musings! Do, I beg of you, as soon as ever you can, turn your back on the din, the idle chatter, and the frivolous occupations of Rome, and give yourself up to study or recreation. It is better, as our friend Attilius once very wittily and very truly said, to have no occupation than to be occupied with nothingness. Farewell.

1.X.—TO ATTIUS CLEMENS

If ever there was a time when this Rome of ours was devoted to learning, it is now. There are many shining lights, of whom it will be enough to mention but one. I refer to Euphrates the philosopher. I saw a great deal of him, even in the privacy of his home life, during my young soldiering days in Syria, and I did my best to win his affection, though that was not a hard task, for he is ever easy of access, frank, and full of the humanities that he teaches. I only wish that I had been as successful in fulfilling the hopes he then formed of me as he has been increasing his large stock of virtues, though possibly it is I who now admire them the more because I can appreciate them the better. Even now my appreciation is not as complete as it might be. It is only an artist who can thoroughly judge another painter, sculptor, or image-maker, and so too it needs a philosopher to estimate another philosopher at his full merit. But so far as I can judge, Euphrates has many qualities so conspicuously brilliant that they arrest the eyes and attention even of those who have but modest pretensions to learning. His reasoning is acute, weighty, and elegant, often attaining to the breadth and loftiness that we find in Plato. His conversation flows in a copious yet varied stream, strikingly pleasant to the ear, and with a charm that seizes and carries away even the reluctant hearer. Add to this a tall, commanding presence, a handsome

face, long flowing hair, a streaming white beard—all of which may be thought accidental adjuncts and without significance, but they do wonderfully increase the veneration he inspires. There is no studied negligence in his dress, it is severely plain but not austere; when you meet him you revere him without shrinking away in awe. His life is purity itself, but he is just as genial; his lash is not for men but for their vices; for the erring he has gentle words of correction rather than sharp rebuke. When he gives advice you cannot help listening in rapt attention, and you hope he will go on persuading you even when the persuasion is complete. He has three children, two of them sons, whom he has brought up with the strictest care. His father-in-law is Pompeius Julianus, a man of great distinction, but whose chief title to fame is that though, as ruler of a province, he might have chosen a son-in-law of the highest social rank, he preferred one who was distinguished not for social dignities but for wisdom.

Yet why describe at greater length a man whose society I can no longer enjoy? Is it to make myself feel my loss the more? For my time is all taken up by the duties of an office—important, no doubt, but tedious in the extreme. I sit at my magisterial desk; I countersign petitions, I make out the public accounts; I write hosts of letters, but what illiterary productions they are! Sometimes—but how seldom I get the opportunity—I complain to Euphrates about these uncongenial duties. He consoles me and even assures me that there is no more noble part in the whole of philosophy than to be a public official, to hear cases,

pass judgment, explain the laws and administer justice, and so practise in short what the philosophers do but teach. But he never can persuade me of this, that it is better to be busy as I am than to spend whole days in listening to and acquiring knowledge from him. That makes me the readier to urge you, whose time is your own, to let him put a finish and polish upon you when you come to town, and I hope you will come all the sooner on that account. I am not one of those—and there are many of them—who grudge to others the happiness they are debarred from themselves; on the contrary, I feel a very lively sense of pleasure in seeing my friends abounding in joys that are denied to me. Farewell.

1.XI.—TO FABIUS JUSTUS

It is quite a long time since I had a letter from you. "Oh," you say, "there has been nothing to write about." But at least you might write and say just that, or you might send me the line with which our grandfathers used to begin their letters: "All is well if you are well, for I am well." I should be quite satisfied with so much; for, after all, it is the heart of a letter. Do you think I am joking? I am perfectly serious. Pray, let me know of your doings. It makes me feel downright uneasy to be kept in ignorance. Farewell.

1.XII.—TO CALESTRIUS TIRO

I have suffered a most grievous loss, if loss is a word that can be applied to my being bereft of so distinguished a man. Corellius Rufus is dead, and what makes my grief the more poignant is that he died by his own act. Such a death is always most lamentable, since neither natural causes nor Fate can be held responsible for it. When people die of disease there is a great consolation in the thought that no one could have prevented it; when they lay violent hands on themselves we feel a pang which nothing can assuage in the thought that they might have lived longer. Corellius, it is true, felt driven to take his own life by Reason—and Reason is always tantamount to Necessity with philosophers— and yet there were abundant inducements for him to live. His conscience was stainless, his reputation beyond reproach; he stood high in men's esteem. Moreover, he had a daughter, a wife, a grandson, and sisters, and, besides all these relations, many genuine friends. But his battle against ill-health had been so long and hopeless that all these splendid rewards of living were outweighed by the reasons that urged him to die.

I have heard him say that he was first attacked by gout in the feet when he was thirty-three years of age. He had inherited the complaint, for it often happens that a tendency to disease is handed down like other qualities in a sort of succession. While he was in the prime of life he overcame his malady and kept it well in

check by abstemious and pure living, and when it became sharper in its attacks as he grew old he bore up against it with great fortitude of mind. Even when he suffered incredible torture and the most horrible agony—for the pain was no longer confined, as before, to the feet, but had begun to spread over all his limbs —I went to see him in the time of Domitian when he was staying at his country house. His attendants withdrew from his chamber, as they always did whenever one of his more intimate friends entered the room. Even his wife, a lady who might have been trusted to keep any secret, also used to retire. Looking round the room, he said: "Why do you think I endure pain like this so long? It is that I may outlive that tyrant, even if only by a single day." Could you but have given him a frame fit to support his resolution, he would have achieved the object of his desire. However, some god heard his prayer and granted it, and then feeling that he could die without anxiety and as a free man ought, he snapped the bonds that bound him to life. Though they were many, he preferred death.

His malady had become worse, though he tried to moderate it by his careful diet, and then, as it still continued to grow, he escaped from it by a fixed resolve. Two, three, four days passed and he refused all food. Then his wife Hispulla sent our mutual friend Caius Geminius to tell me the sad news that Corellius had determined to die, that he was not moved by the entreaties of his wife and daughter, and that I was the only one left who might possibly recall him to life. I flew to see him, and had almost

reached the house when Hispulla sent me another message by Julius Atticus, saying that now even I could do nothing, for his resolve had become more and more fixed. When the doctor offered him nourishment he said, "My mind is made up," and the word has awakened within me not only a sense of loss, but of admiration. I keep thinking what a friend, what a manly friend is now lost to me. He was at the end of his seventy-sixth year, an age long enough even for the stoutest of us. True. He has escaped a lifelong illness; he has died leaving children to survive him, and knowing that the State, which was dearer to him than everything else beside, was prospering well. Yes, yes, I know all this. And yet I grieve at his death as I should at the death of a young man in the full vigour of life; I grieve—you may think me weak for so doing—on my own account too. For I have lost, lost for ever, the guide, philosopher, and friend of my life. In short, I will say again what I said to my friend Calvisius, when my grief was fresh: "I am afraid I shall not live so well ordered a life now." Send me a word of sympathy, but do not say, "He was an old man, or he was infirm." These are hackneyed words; send me some that are new, that are potent to ease my trouble, that I cannot find in books or hear from my friends. For all that I have heard and read occur to me naturally, but they are powerless in the presence of my excessive sorrow. Farewell.

1.XIII.—TO SOSIUS SENECIO

This year has brought us a fine crop of poets: right through April hardly a day passed without some recital or other. I am delighted that literature is so flourishing and that men are giving such open proofs of brains, even though audiences are found so slow in coming together. People as a rule lounge in the squares and waste the time in gossip when they should be listening to the recital. They get some one to come and tell them whether the reciter has entered the hall yet, whether he has got through his introduction, or whether he has nearly reached the end of his reading. Not until then do they enter the room, and even then they come in slowly and languidly. Nor do they sit it out; no, before the close of the recital they slip away, some sidling out so as not to attract attention, others rising openly and walking out boldly. And yet, by Hercules, our fathers tell a story of how Claudius Caesar one day, while walking up and down in the palace, happened to hear some clapping of hands, and on inquiring the cause and being told that Nonianus was giving a reading, he suddenly joined the company to every one's surprise. But nowadays even those who have most time on their hands, after receiving early notices and frequent reminders, either fail to put in an appearance, or if they do come they complain that they have wasted a day just because they have not wasted it. All the more praise and credit, therefore, is due to those who do

not allow their love of writing and reciting to be damped either by the laziness or the fastidiousness of their audiences. For my own part, I have hardly ever failed to attend. True, the authors are mostly my friends, for almost all the literary people are also friends of mine, and for this reason I have spent more time in Rome than I had intended. But now I can betake myself to my country retreat and compose something, though not for a public recital, lest those whose readings I attended should think I went not so much to hear their works as to get a claim on them to come and hear mine. As in everything else, if you lend a man your ears, all the grace of the act vanishes if you ask for his in return. Farewell.

1.XIV.—TO JUNIUS MAURICUS

You ask me to look out for a husband for your brother's daughter, and you do well to select me for such a commission. For you know how I looked up to him, and what an affection I had for his splendid qualities; you know, too, what good advice he gave me in my salad days, and how by his warm praises he actually made it appear that I deserved them. You could not have given me a more important commission or one that I should be better pleased to undertake, and there is no charge that I could possibly accept as a greater compliment to myself than that of being set to choose a young man worthy of being the father of grandchildren to Arulenus Rusticus. I should have had to look carefully and long, had it not been that Minucius Acilianus was ready to hand,– one might almost say that Providence had prepared him for the purpose. He has for me the close and affectionate regard of one young man for another—for he is only a few years younger than myself—yet at the same time he pays me the deference due to a man of years, for he is as anxious that I should mould and form his character as I used to be that you and your son should mould mine. His native place is Brixia, a part of that Italy of ours which still retains and preserves much of the old- fashioned courtesy, frugality and even rusticity. His father, Minucius Macrinus, was one of the leaders of the Equestrian order, because he did not wish to attain higher rank; he was admitted by the divine

Vespasian to Praetorian rank, and to the end of his days preferred this modest and honourable distinction to the—what shall I say? —ambitions or dignities for which we strive. His grandmother on his mother's side was Serrana Procula, who belonged to the township of Patavia. You know the character of that place—well, Serrana was a model of austere living even to the people of Patavia. His uncle was Publius Acilius, a man of almost unique weight, judgment, and honour. In short, you will find nothing in the whole of his family which will fail to please you as much as if the family were your own.

As for Acilianus himself, he is an energetic and untiring worker, and the very pink of courtesy. He has already acquitted himself with great credit in the quaestorship, tribunate, and praetorship, and so he has thus spared you the trouble of having to canvass in his behalf. He has a frank, open countenance, fresh-coloured and blooming; a handsome, well-made figure, and an air that would become a senator. These are points which, in my opinion, are not to be neglected, for I regard them as meet rewards to a girl for her chastity. I don't know whether I should add that his father is a well-to-do man, for when I think of you and your brother for whom we are looking out for a son-in-law, I feel disinclined to speak of money. On the other hand, when I consider the prevailing tendencies of the day and the laws of the state which lay such prominent stress upon the matter of income, I think it right not to overlook the point. Moreover, when I remember the possible issue of the marriage, I feel that in

choosing a bridegroom one must take his income into account. Perhaps you will imagine that I have let my affection run away with me, and that I have exaggerated my friend's merits beyond their due. But I pledge you my word of honour that you will find his virtues to be far in excess of my description of them. I have the most intense affection for the young man, and he deserves my love, but it is one of the proofs of a lover that you do not overburden the object of your regard with praise. Farewell.

1.XV.—TO SEPTICIUS CLARUS

What a fellow you are! You promise to come to dinner and then fail to turn up! Well, here is my magisterial sentence upon you. You must pay the money I am out of pocket to the last farthing, and you will find the sum no small one. I had provided for each guest one lettuce, three snails, two eggs, spelt mixed with honey and snow (you will please reckon up the cost of the latter as among the costly of all, since it melts away in the dish), olives from Baetica, cucumbers, onions, and a thousand other equally expensive dainties. You would have listened to a comedian, or a reciter, or a harp-player, or perhaps to all, as I am such a lavish host. But you preferred to dine elsewhere,—where I know not —off oysters, sow's matrices, sea-urchins, and to watch Spanish dancing girls! You will be paid out for it, though how I decline to say. You have done violence to yourself. You have grudged, possibly yourself, but certainly me, a fine treat. Yes, yourself! For how we should have enjoyed ourselves, how we should have laughed together, how we should have applied ourselves! You can dine at many houses in better style than at mine, but nowhere will you have a better time, or such a simple and free and easy entertainment. In short, give me a trial, and if afterwards you do not prefer to excuse yourself to others rather than to me, why then I give you leave to decline my invitations always. Farewell.

1.XVI.—TO ERUCIUS

I used to be very fond of Pompeius Saturninus—our Saturninus, as I may call him—and to admire his intellectual powers, even before I knew him; they were so varied, so supple, so many-sided; but now I am devoted to him body and soul. I have heard him pleading in the Courts, always keen and empassioned, and his addresses are as polished and graceful when they are impromptu as when they have been carefully prepared. He has a never-failing flow of apt sentiment; his style is weighty and dignified, his language is of the sonorous, classical school. All these qualities charm me immensely when they come pouring forth in a streaming rush of eloquence, and they charm me too when I read them in book form. You will experience the same pleasure as I do when you take them up, and you will at once compare them with some one of the old masters whose rival indeed he is. You will find even greater charm in the style of his historical compositions, in its terseness, its lucidity, smoothness, brilliancy and stateliness, for there is the same vigour in the historical harangues as there is in his own orations, only rather more compressed, restricted, and epigrammatic.

Moreover, he writes verses that Catullus or Calvus might have composed. They are positively brimming over with grace, sweetness, irony and love. He occasionally, and of set design, interpolates among these smooth and easy-flowing verses others

cast in a more rugged mould, and here again he is like Catullus and Calvus. A little while ago he read me some letters which he declared had been written by his wife. I thought, on hearing them, that they were either Plautus or Terence in prose, and whether they were composed, as he said, by his wife or by himself, as he denies, his credit is the same. It belongs to him either as the actual author of the letters or as the teacher who has made such a polished and learned lady of his wife—whom he married when she was a girl. So I pass the whole day in the company of Saturninus. I read him before I set pen to paper; I read him again after finishing my writing, and again when I am at leisure. He is always the same but never seems the same. Let me urge and beg of you to do likewise, for the fact that the author is still alive ought not to be of any detriment to his works. If he had been a contemporary of those on whom we have never set eyes, we should not only be seeking to procure copies of his books but also asking for busts of him. Why then, as he is still amongst us, should his credit and popularity dwindle, as though we were tired of him? Surely it is discreditable and scandalous that we should not give a man the due he richly deserves, simply because we can see him with our own eyes, speak to him, hear him, embrace him, and not only praise but love him. Farewell.

1.XVII.—TO CORNELIUS TITIANUS

Faith and loyalty are not yet extinct among men: there are still those to be found who keep friendly remembrances even of the dead. Titinius Capito has obtained permission from our Emperor to erect a statue of Lucius Silanus in the Forum. It is a graceful and entirely praiseworthy act to turn one's friendship with a sovereign to such a purpose, and to use all the influence one possesses to obtain honours for others. But Capito is a devoted hero-worshipper; it is remarkable how religiously and enthusiastically he regards the busts of the Bruti, the Cassii, and the Catos in his own house, where he may do as he pleases in this matter. He even composes splendid lyrics on the lives of all the most famous men of the past. Surely a man who is such an intense admirer of the virtue of others must know how to exemplify a crowd of virtues in his own person. Lucius Silanus quite deserved the honour that has been paid to him, and Capito in seeking to immortalise his memory has immortalised his own quite as much. For it is not more honourable and distinguished to have a statue of one's own in the Forum of the Roman People than to be the author of some one else's statue being placed there. Farewell.

1.XVIII.—TO SUETONIUS TRANQUILLUS

You say in your letter that you have been troubled by a dream, and are afraid lest your suit should go against you. So you ask me to try and get it postponed, and that I will have to put it off for a few days, or at least for one day. It is not an easy matter, but I will do my best, for, as Homer says, "A dream comes from Zeus." However, it makes all the difference whether your dreams usually signify the course of future events or their opposite. When I think over a certain dream I once had, what causes you fear seems to me to promise a splendid termination to your case. I had undertaken a brief for Julius Pastor, when there appeared to me in my sleep a vision of my mother-in-law, who threw herself on her knees before me and begged that I would not plead. I was quite a young man at the time of the action, which was to be heard in the Fourfold Court, and I was appearing against the most powerful men of the State, including some of the Friends of Caesar. All these things or any one of them might well have shattered my resolution after such an ominous dream. Nevertheless, I went on with the case, remembering the well-known line of Homer: "But one omen is best, to fight on behalf of one's country." For in my case the keeping of my word seemed to me as important as fighting on behalf of my country or as any other still more pressing consideration—if any

consideration more pressing can be imagined. Well, the action went off successfully, and it was the way that I conducted that case which got me a hearing with men and opened the door to fame. So I advise you to see whether you too cannot turn your dream, as I did mine, to a prosperous issue, or if you think that it is safer to follow the well-known proverb: "Never do anything if you feel the least hesitation," write and tell me so. I will invent some excuse or other, and will so arrange matters that you can have your suit brought on when you like. For, after all, your position is not the same as mine was; a trial before the Centumvir's Court cannot be postponed on any consideration, but an action like yours can be, although it is rather difficult to arrange. Farewell.

1.XIX.—TO ROMANUS FIRMUS

You and I were born in the same township, we went to school together, and shared quarters from an early age; your father was on terms of friendship with my mother and my uncle, and with me—as far as the disparity in our years allowed. These are overwhelming reasons why I ought to advance you as far as I can along the path of dignities. The fact of your being a decurio in our town shows that you have an income of a hundred thousand sesterces, and so, that we may have the pleasure of enjoying your society not only as a decurio, but as a Roman knight, I offer you 300,000 numm., to make up the equestrian qualification. The length of our friendship is sufficient guarantee that you will not forget this favour, and I do not even urge you to enjoy with modesty the dignity which I thus enable you to attain, as perhaps I ought, just because I know you will do so without any urging from without. People ought to guard an honour all the more carefully, when, in so doing, they are taking care of a gift bestowed by the kindness of a friend. Farewell.

1.XX.—TO CORNELIUS TACITUS

I am constantly having arguments with a friend of mine who is a learned and practised speaker, but who admires in pleading nothing so much as brevity. I allow that brevity ought to be observed, if the case permits of it; but sometimes it is an act of collusion to pass over matters that ought to be mentioned, and it is even an act of collusion to run briefly and rapidly over points which ought to be dwelt upon, to be thoroughly driven home, and to be taken up and dealt with more than once. For very often an argument acquires strength and weight by being handled at some length, and a speech ought to be impressed on the mind, not by a short, sharp shock, but by measured blows, just as a sword should be used in dealing with the body of an opponent. Thereupon he plies me with authorities, and flourishes before me the speeches of Lysias among the Greeks, and those of the Gracchi and Cato from among Roman orators. The majority of these are certainly characterised by conciseness and brevity, but I quote against Lysias the examples of Demosthenes, Aeschines, Hyperides, and a multitude of others, while against the Gracchi and Cato I set Pollio, Caesar, Caelius, and, above all, Marcus Tullius, whose longest speech is generally considered to be his best. And upon my word, as with all other good things, the more there is of a good book, the better it is. You know how it is with statues, images, pictures, and the outlines of many animals and

even trees, that if they are at all graceful nothing gives them a greater charm than size. It is just the same with speeches,—even the mere volumes themselves acquire a certain additional dignity and beauty from mere bulk.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.