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PLINY

LETTERS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
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REVISED BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES

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MCMXXXI

THE LETTERS OF PLINY

V

C. PLINIUS BAEBIO MACRO SUO S.

PERGRATUM est mihi, quod tam diligenter libros avunculi mei lectitas, ut habere omnes velis quaerasque, qui sint omnes. Fungar indicis partibus atque etiam, quo sint ordine scripti, notum tibi faciam; est enim haec quoque studiosis non iniucunda cognitio.

‘De iaculatione equestri unus’; hunc, cum praefectus alae militaret, pari ingenio curaque composuit. ‘De vita Pomponii Secundi duo’; a quo singulariter amatus hoc memoriae amici quasi debitum munus exsolvit. ‘Bellorum Germaniae viginti’; quibus omnia, quae cum Germanis gessimus bella, collegit. Inchoavit, cum in Germania militaret, somnio monitus. Adstitit ei quiescenti Drusi Neronis effigies, qui Germaniae latissime victor ibi periit, commendabat memoriam suam orabatque, ut se ab iniuria oblivionis adsereret. ‘Studiosi tres,’ in sex volumina propter amplitudinem divisi, quibus oratorem(ab incunabulis instituit et perfecit.¹ ‘Dubii sermonis octo’ scripsit sub Nerone novissimis

¹ perfecit *Ricc. Fra, Müller, perfecit vulg.*

^a Consul 44 A.D. Wrote tragedies praised by Quintilian.

^b Brother of Tiberius. Died, aged 30, from the effects of a fall from his horse.

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V

TO BAEBIUS MACER

IT is with much pleasure I find you are so constant a reader of my uncle's works, as to wish to have a complete collection of them; and for that purpose desire me to send you an account of all the treatises he wrote. I will fill the place of an index and even acquaint you with the order in which they were composed: for that, too, is a sort of information not at all unacceptable to men of letters.

The first book he published was a treatise concerning the *Art of using a javelin on horseback*: this he wrote when he commanded a troop of horse, and it is drawn up with equal accuracy and judgement. *The life of Pomponius Secundus*,^a in two volumes: Pomponius had a very great affection for him, and he thought he owed this tribute to his memory. *The history of the wars in Germany*, in twenty books, in which he gave an account of all the campaigns we were engaged in against that nation. A dream which he had when he served in the army in Germany, first suggested to him the design of this work. The phantom of Drusus Nero^b (who extended his conquests very far into that country, and there lost his life) appeared to him in his sleep, and conjured him not to suffer his memory to be buried in oblivion. He has left us likewise *The Students*, in three books, divided into six volumes, owing to their length. In this work he takes the orator from his cradle, and leads him on till he has carried him up to the highest point of perfection in this art. In the last years of Nero's reign, when

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annis, cum omne studiorum genus paulo liberius et erectius periculosum servitus fecisset. 'A fine Aufidi Bassi triginta annus.' 'Naturae historiarum triginta septem,' opus diffusum, eruditum nec minus varium quam ipsa natura.

Miraris, quod tot volumina multaue in his tam scrupulosa homo occupatus absolverit, magis miraberis, si scieris illum aliquandiu causas actitasse, decessisse anno sexto et quinquagensimo, medium tempus distentum impeditumque qua officiis maximis qua amicitia principum egisse. Sed erat acre ingenium, incredibile studium, summa vigilantia. Lucubrare Vulcanalibus incipiebat non auspicandi causa, sed studendi, statim a nocte multa, hieme vero hora septima vel, cum tardissime, octava, saepe sexta. Erat sane somni paratissimi, non nunquam etiam inter studia instantis et deserentis.

Ante lucem ibat ad Vespasianum imperatorem (nam ille quoque noctibus utebatur) inde ad delegatum sibi officium. Reversus domum, quod reliquum temporis, studiis reddebat. Post cibum saepe, quem interdum levem et facilem veterum more sumebat,

^a Died probably *circa* 60 A.D.

^b This encyclopaedic work is extant.

^c See iv. 24, n.

the tyránný of the times made it dangerous to engage in studies of a more free and elevated spirit, he published *Linguistic Queries*, in eight books; *A Continuation*, in one book, of the thirty books of Aufidius Bassus'^a history; and thirty-seven books of a *Natural History*^b: this is a work of great compass and learning, and as full of variety as nature herself.

You will wonder how a man so engaged as he was, could find time to compose such a number of books; and some of them too upon abstruse subjects. But your surprise will rise still higher, when you hear, that for some time he engaged in the profession of an advocate, that he died in his fifty-sixth year, that from the time of his quitting the bar to his death he was engaged and trammelled by the execution of the highest posts, and by the friendship of his sovereigns.^c But he had a quick apprehension, incredible zeal, and a wakefulness beyond compare. He always began to work at midnight when the August festival of Vulcan came round; not for the good omen's sake, but for the sake of study; in winter generally at one in the morning, but never later than two, and often at midnight. No man ever slept more readily, insomuch that he would sometimes, without retiring from his book, take a short sleep, and then pursue his studies.

Before day-break he used to wait upon Vespasian; who likewise chose that season to transact business. When he had finished the affairs which that emperor committed to his charge, he returned home again to his studies. After a short and light repast at noon (agreeably to the good old custom of our ancestors) he would frequently in the summer, if he was

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aestate, si quid otii, iacebat in sole, liber legebatur, adnotabat excerpebatque. Nihil enim legit, quod non excerperet; dicere etiam solebat nullum esse librum tam malum, ut non aliqua parte prodesset. Post solem plerumque frigida lavabatur, deinde gustabat dormiebatque minimum; mox quasi alio die studebat in cenae tempus. Super hanc liber legebatur, adnotabatur et quidem cursim. Memini quendam ex amicis, cum lector quaedam perperam pronuntiasset, revocasse et repeti coëgissee; huic avunculum meum dixisse, ‘Intellexeras nempe.’ Cum ille adnuisset: ‘Cur ergo revocabas? decem amplius versus hac tua interpellatione perdidimus.’ Tanta erat parsimonia temporis. Surgebat aestate a cena luce, hieme intra primam noctis et tamquam aliqua lege cogente.

Haec inter medios labores urbisque fremitum; in secessu solum balinei tempus studiis eximebatur. Cum dico balinei, de interioribus loquor; nam, dum destringitur tergiturque, audiebat aliquid aut dictabat. In itinere quasi solutus ceteris curis huic uni vacabat; ad latus notarius cum libro et

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disengaged from business, repose himself in the sun ; during which time some author was read to him, from whence he made extracts and observations, as indeed this was his constant method whatever book he read : for it was a maxim of his, that "no book was so bad but some profit might be gleaned from it." When this basking was over, he generally went into the cold bath, and as soon as he came out of it, just took a slight refreshment, and then reposed himself for a little while. Then, as if it had been a new day, he immediately resumed his studies till dinner-time, when a book was again read to him, upon which he would make some running notes. I remember once, his reader having pronounced a word wrong, somebody at the table made him repeat it again ; upon which my uncle asked his friend if he understood it ? Who acknowledging that he did ; "why then," said he, "would you make him go back again ? We have lost by this interruption of yours above ten lines : " so chary was this great man of time ! In summer he always rose from supper by day-light ; and in winter as soon as it was dark : and this was a sort of binding law with him.

Such was his manner of life amidst the noise and hurry of the town ; but in the country his whole time was devoted to study without intermission, excepting only while he bathed. But in this exception I include no more than the time he was actually in the bath ; for all the while he was rubbed and wiped, he was employed either in hearing some book read to him, or in dictating himself. In his journeys, as though released from all other cares, he found leisure for this sole pursuit. A shorthand writer, with book and tablets, constantly attended

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pugillaribus, cuius manus hieme manicis muniebantur, ut ne caeli quidem asperitas ullum studii tempus eriperet; qua ex causa Romae quoque sella vehebatur. Repeto me correptum ab eo, cur ambulare. 'Poteras,' inquit 'has horas non perdere'; nam perire omne tempus arbitrabatur, quod studiis non impertiretur. Hac intentione tot ista volumina peregit, electorumque commentarios centum sexaginta mihi reliquit, opisthographos quidem et minutissime scriptos; qua ratione multiplicatur hic numerus. Referebat ipse potuisse se, cum procuraret in Hispania, vendere hos commentarios Larcio¹ Licino quadringentis milibus nummum, et tunc aliquanto pauciores erant.

Nonne videtur tibi recordanti, quantum legerit, quantum scripserit, nec in officiis ullis nec in amicitia principum fuisse, rursus, cum audis, quid studii laboris impenderit, nec scripsisse satis nec legisse? Quid est enim, quod non aut illae occupationes impedire aut haec instantia non possit efficere? Itaque soleo ridere, cum me quidam studiosum vocant, qui, si comparer illi, sum desidiosissimus.[†] Ego autem tantum, quem partim publica, partim amicorum officia distringunt? quis ex istis, qui tota vita litteris adsident,

¹ Larcio *Ricc. p.* Müller, Largio *M V D, K.*

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him in his chariot, who, in the winter, wore a particular sort of warm gloves, that the sharpness of the weather might not occasion any interruption to his studies; and for the same reason my uncle always used a sedan chair in Rome. I remember he once reproved me for walking; "You might," said he, "not have lost those hours:" for he thought all was time lost that was not given to study. By this extraordinary application he found time to write so many volumes, besides one hundred and sixty which he left me, consisting of a kind of common-place, written on both sides, in a very small character; so that one might fairly reckon the number considerably more. I have heard him say that when he was comptroller of the revenue in Spain, Larcus Licinus offered him four hundred thousand sesterces for these manuscripts: and yet they were not then quite so numerous.

When you reflect upon the books he has read, and the volumes he has written, are you not inclined to suppose that he never was an official or a courtier? On the other hand, when you are informed how pains-taking he was in his studies, are you not disposed to think that he read and wrote too little? For, on one side, what obstacles would not the business of a court throw in his way? And on the other, what is it that such intense application might not perform? I cannot but smile therefore when I hear myself called a studious man, who in comparison to him am a mere loiterer. But why do I mention myself, who am diverted from these pursuits by numberless duties both public and private? Where is he, among those whose whole lives are spent in study, who must not blush under the consciousness of being but a

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collatus illi non quasi somno et inertiae deditus crubescat?

Extendi epistulam, quamvis hoc solum, quod requirebas, scribere destinassem, quos libros reliquisset; confido tamen haec quoque tibi non minus grata quam ipsos libros futura, quae te non tantum ad legendos eos, verum etiam ad simile aliquid elaborandum possunt aemulationis stimulis excitare. Vale.

C. PLINIUS ANNIO SEVERO SUO S.

Ex hereditate, quae mihi obvenit, cmi proxime Corinthium signum modicum quidem, sed festivum et expressum, quantum ego sapio, qui fortasse in omni re, in hac certe perquam exiguum sapio; hoc tamen signum ego quoque intellego. Est enim nudum nec aut vitia, si qua sunt, celat aut laudes parum ostentat. Effingit senem stantem; ossa, muscoli, nervi, venae, rugae etiam ut spirantis apparent, rari et cedentes capilli, lata frons, contracta facies, exile collum, pendent lacerti, papillae iacent, recessit venter; a tergo quoque eadem aetas ut ante. Aerugo aes ipsum,¹ quantum verus color, indicat vêtus et antiquum; talia denique omnia, ut

¹ ante. Aerugo aes ipsum *Stahl, Mus. Rhen. xxix. 365*, ut a tergo. Aes ipsum *codd., edd.*

^a The making of the "Corinthian bronze," so much prized by Roman connoisseurs, had apparently long been a lost art. The story went that the alloy was produced by the fusing of gold, silver and bronze, when Mummius burnt Corinth, 146 B.C. It seems this bronze had a peculiar colour, and took a peculiar patina (*aerugo*).

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sluggard and a dreamer, compared with this great scholar?

I have run out my letter, I perceive, beyond the extent I at first designed, which was only to inform you, as you desired, what treatises he has left behind him. But I trust this will not be less acceptable to you than the books themselves, as it may possibly not only raise your curiosity to read his works, but your emulation to copy his example by some attempts of the same nature. Farewell.

VI

TO ANNIUS SEVERUS

I HAVE lately purchased with a legacy that was left me, a statue of Corinthian bronze. It is small, but pleasing, and finely executed, at least, if I have any taste; which most certainly in matters of this sort, as perhaps in all others, is extremely defective. However, I think even I have enough to discover the beauties of this figure; as it is naked, the faults, if there be any, as well as the perfections, are more observable. It represents an old man in a standing posture. The bones, the muscles, the veins, and wrinkles are so strongly expressed, that you would imagine the figure to be animated. The hair is thin and failing, the forehead broad, the face shrivelled, the throat lank, the arms languid, the breast fallen, and the belly sunk; and the back view gives the same impression of old age. It appears to be a genuine antique, alike from its tarnish and from what remains of the original colour of the bronze.^a In short, it is a performance so highly finished as to fix