

PLINII NATURALIS HISTORIA

PREFATIO

PLINIUS SECUNDUS VESPASIANO SUO S

LIBROS Naturalis Historiae, novicium Camenis Quiritium tuorum opus, natos apud me proxima fetura licentiore epistula narrare¹ constitui tibi, iucundissime imperator—sit enim haec tui praefatio, verissima, dum maximi consenescit in patre—

namque tu solebas
nugas esse aliquid meas putare²

ut obiter emolliam Catullum concerraneum³ meum—agnoscis et hoc castrense verbum—(ille enim, ut scis, permutatis prioribus syllabis duriusculum se⁴ fecit quam volebat existimari a Veraniolis suis et
2 Fabullis), simul ut hac mea petulantia fiat quod proxime non fieri questus es in alia procaci epistula

¹ nuncupare *edd.*

² *Haupt*: esse aliquid meas putare nugas *codd.*

³ *v.l.* conterraneum. ⁴ [se]? *Rackham.*

^a The Emperor Titus.

^b *Edd. cj.* *nuncupare*, 'dedicate,' 'assign to your name.'

^c Catullus i 3 f.

^d *Concerraneum* = *conceronem* or *congerronem* 'boon-companion' (one who *congerit*, contributes to a feast).

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PREFACE

PLINIUS SECUNDUS TO HIS DEAR VESPASIAN^a GREETING

MOST Gracious Highness (let this title, a supremely true one, be yours, while that of 'Most Eminent' grows to old age with your sire)—I have resolved to recount^b to you, in a somewhat presumptuous letter, the offspring of my latest travail, my volumes of Natural History (a novel task for the native Muses of your Roman citizens)—

For 'twas e'er your way
To deem my trifles something worth^c

—to give a passing touch of polish to my 'opposite number'^d—you recognize even this service slang—Catullus (for he, as you know, by interchanging the first syllables^e made himself a trifle harsher^f than he wished to be considered by his 'darling Veraniuses and Fabulluses')^g and at the same time that my present sauciness may effect what in the case of another impudent letter of mine lately you complained

^e Catullus wrote *meas esse aliquid putare nugas*.

^f Perhaps alter Latin to give 'made it a little harsher than he wished it to be thought.'

^g Catullus xii. 16, *ut Veraniolum meum et Fabullum*.

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nostra, ut in quaedam acta exeat, sciantque omnes
3 quam ex aequo tecum vivat imperium, triumphalis
et censorius tu sexiesque consul ac tribuniciae
potestatis particeps et (quod his nobilius fecisti dum
illud patri pariter et equestri ordini praestas) praefec-
tus praetorii eius, omniaque haec rei publicae—et
nobis quidem qualis in castrensi contubernio! nec
4 quicquam in te mutavit fortunae amplitudo nisi
ut prodesse tantundem posses ut velles. itaque
cum ceteris in venerationem tui pateant omnia
illa, nobis ad colendum te familiaris audacia sola
superest. hanc igitur tibi imputabis, et in nostra
culpa tibi ignosces. perfricui faciem, nec tamen
profeci, quoniam alia via occurris ingens et longius
5 etiam submoves ingenii fascibus: fulgurat in nullo
umquam verius dictatoria vis eloquentiae, tribunicia
potestas facundiae. quanto tu ore patris laudes
tonas! quanto fratris famam¹! quantus in poetica
es! o magna fecunditas animi—quemadmodum
fratrem quoque imitareris excogitasti!
6 Sed haec quis possit intrepidus aestimare subiturus
ingenii tui iudicium, praesertim laccessitum? neque
enim similis est condicio publicantium et nominatim

¹ famam *Rackham*, famas *Detlefsen*: *amas codd.*

PREFACE, 2-6

of as not coming off—that it may result in something getting done, and everyone may know on what equal terms the empire lives with you—you with a triumph to your name and censorial rank, six times consul, colleague in tribune's authority, and (a service that you have made more illustrious than these in rendering it equally to your father and to the equestrian order) commander of his bodyguard; and all this in your public life—and then what a good comrade to us in the companionship of the camp! Nor has fortune's grandeur made any change in you save in enabling you to bestow all the benefit you desire. Consequently as all those methods of paying you reverence are open to everybody else, to me is left only the presumption of treating you with more intimate respect. For that presumption therefore you will debit the responsibility to yourself, and will grant yourself pardon on the score of my offence. I have tried to put on a bold face, and yet have not succeeded, as your grandeur meets me by another route and the rods of office that your genius bears make me move on yet further: in no other person ever radiate more genuinely the dictatorial power of oratory and the tribunician authority of wit! How eloquently you thunder forth your father's praises and your brother's fame! How great you are in the poet's art! O mighty fertility of genius—you have contrived a way to imitate your brother also!

But who could judge the value of these compositions with confidence when about to submit to the verdict of your talent, especially when that verdict has been invited? for formal dedication of the work to you puts one in a different position from

tibi dicantium. tum possem dicere: Quid ista legis, imperator? humili vulgo scripta sunt, agricolarum, opificum turbae, denique studiorum¹ otiosis: quid te iudicem facis? quom hanc operam condicerem, non eras in hoc albo: maiorem te sciebam quam ut
 7 descensurum huc putarem! praeterea est quaedam publica etiam eruditorum reiectio: utitur illa et M. Tullius extra omnem ingenii aleam positus, et (quod miremur) per advocatum defenditur:

nec doctissimis.

Manium Persium haec legere nolo, Iunium Congum volo.

quod si hoc Lucilius, qui primus condidit stili nasum, dicendum sibi putavit, Cicero mutuandum, praesertim cum de re publica scriberet, quanto nos causatius ab
 8 aliquo iudice defendimus? sed haec ego mihi nunc patrocina ademi nuncupatione, quoniam plurimum refert sortiatur aliquis iudicem an eligat, multumque apparatus interest apud invitatum hospitem et
 9 oblatum. cum apud Catonem, illum ambitus hostem et repulsis tanquam honoribus inemptis gaudentem, flagrantibus comitiis pecunias deponerent candidati, hoc se facere pro innocentia quod in rebus humanis

¹ *v.l.* studiosorum.

^a Cic. *De Or.* II. 25. Nam ut C. Lucilius . . . dicere solebat ea quae scriberet neque ab indoctissimis se neque a doctissimis legi uelle, quod alteri nihil intelligerent, alteri plus fortasse quam ipse; quo etiam scripsit *Persium non curo legere* (hic enim fuit, ut noramus, omnium fere nostrorum hominum doctissimus), *Laelium Decimum volo* (quem cognouimus uirum bonum et non illiteratum, sed nihil at Persium): sic ego—Brotier thinks that Pliny refers to Cicero's preface (now lost) to *De Republica* (as implied below) and that there the quotation differed from that in *De Oratore*; but Wilkins (*de Or.* I. 256) suggests that Cicero here merely substitutes the name of a friend of his own.

mere publication. In the latter case I could have said: 'Why does your Highness read *that*? It was written for the common herd, the mob of farmers and of artizans, and after them for students who have nothing else to occupy their time: why do *you* put yourself on the jury? You were not on this panel when I took the contract for this undertaking: I knew you to be too great for me to think you likely to descend to this! Moreover even in the court of learning there is an official procedure for challenging the jury: it is employed even by Marcus Cicero, who where genius is in question stands outside all hazard. It may surprise us, but Cicero calls in the aid of council—

. . . nor yet for the very learned;

Manius Persius I don't want to read this, I want Junius Congus.

But if Lucilius, the originator of critical sniffing, thought fit to say this, and Cicero to quote it, especially when writing his *Theory of the Constitution*, how much more reason have we to stand on the defensive against a particular jurymen?^a But for my part at the present I have deprived myself of these defences by my nomination, as it matters a great deal whether one obtains a judge by lot or by one's own selection, and one's style of entertainment ranks quite differently with a guest one has invited and one who has offered himself. The candidates in a hotly contested election deposited sums of money with Cato, that resolute foe of corruption, who enjoyed a defeat at the polls as an honour obtained free of charge; and they gave out that they did this in the defence of the highest among human possessions, their inno-

summum esset profitebantur. inde illa nobilis M. Ciceronis suspiratio: 'O te felicem, M. Porci, a quo rem inprobam petere nemo audet!' cum tribunus appellaret L. Scipio Asiaticus, inter quos erat Gracchus, hoc adtestabatur vel inimico iudici se probari posse: adeo summum quisque causae suae iudicem facit quemcumque eligit—unde pro-
 11 vocatio appellatur. te quidem in excelsissimo generis humani fastigio positum, summa eloquentia, summa eruditione praeditum, religiose adiri etiam a salutantibus scio, et ideo curari,¹ ut quae tibi dicantur tui digna sint. verum dis lacte rustici multaeque gentes et mola tantum salsa litant qui non habent tura, nec ulli fuit vitio deos colere quoquo modo posset.

12 Meae quidem temeritati accessit hoc quoque, quod levioris operae hos tibi dedicavi libellos: nam nec ingenii sunt capaces, quod alioqui in nobis perquam mediocre erat, neque admittunt excessus aut orationes sermonesve aut casus mirabiles vel eventus varios,

13 iucunda dictu aut legentibus blanda. sterilis materia, rerum natura, hoc est vita, narratur, et haec sordidissima sui parte, ac plurimarum rerum aut rusticis vocabulis aut externis, immo barbaris, etiam cum

14 honoris praefatione ponendis. praeterea iter est non trita auctoribus via nec qua peregrinari animus expetat: nemo apud nos qui idem temptaverit

¹ curari *Rackham*: curavi aut cura *codd.*

cence. This was the occasion of that famous sigh of Cicero—'O happy Marcus Porcius whom no one dares to ask for something underhand!' Lucius Scipio Asiaticus by appealing to the tribunes, one of them being Gracchus, testified that his case could be made good even to an unfriendly judge: in fact a judge whom one chooses oneself one makes the supreme arbiter of one's case—this is the source of the term 'appeal.' You yourself indeed, I know, being placed on the loftiest pinnacle of all mankind, and being endowed with supreme eloquence and learning, are approached with reverential awe even by persons paying a visit of ceremony, and consequently care is taken that what is dedicated to you may be worthy of you. However, country folk, and many natives, not having incense, make offerings of milk and salted meal, and no man was ever charged with irregularity for worshipping the gods in whatever manner was within his power.

My own presumption has indeed gone further, in dedicating to you the present volumes—a work of a lighter nature, as it does not admit of talent, of which in any case I possessed only quite a moderate amount, nor does it allow of digressions, nor of speeches or dialogues, nor marvellous accidents or unusual occurrences—matters interesting to relate or entertaining to read. My subject is a barren one—the world of nature, or in other words life; and that subject in its least elevated department, and employing either rustic terms or foreign, nay barbarian, words that actually have to be introduced with an apology. Moreover, the path is not a beaten highway of authorship, nor one in which the mind is eager to range: there is not one person to be found among

invenitur, nemo apud Graecos qui unus omnia ea tractaverit. magna pars studiorum amoenitates quaerimus, quae vero tractata ab aliis dicuntur immensae subtilitatis obscuris rerum in tenebris premuntur. ante omnia attingenda quae Graeci τῆς ἐγκυκλίου παιδείας vocant; et tamen ignota aut incerta ingeniis facta, alia vero ita¹ multis prodita
 15 ut in fastidium sint adducta. res ardua vetustis novitatem dare, novis auctoritatem, obsoletis nitorem, obscuris lucem, fastiditis gratiam, dubiis fidem, omnibus vero naturam et naturae sua² omnia. itaque nobis etiam non assecutis voluisse abunde pulchrum atque magnificum est.

16 Equidem ita sentio, peculiarem in studiis causam eorum esse qui difficultatibus victis utilitatem iuvandi praetulerunt gratiae placendi; idque iam et in aliis operibus ipse feci, et profiteor mirari T. Livium, auctorem celeberrimum, in historiarum suarum quas repetit ab origine urbis quodam volumine sic orsum: satis iam sibi gloriae quaesitum, et potuisse se desidere, ni animus inquires³ pasceretur opere. profecto enim populi gentium victoris et Romani nominis gloriae, non suae, composuisse illa decuit; maius meritum esset operis amore, non animi causa, per-

¹ ita a? *Rackham*. ² *Durand*: suae. ³ *v.l.* in quiete.

^a Now lost.

^b A variant gives 'my mind in a period of rest.'

us who has made the same venture, nor yet one among the Greeks who has tackled single-handed all departments of the subject. A large part of us seek agreeable fields of study, while topics of immeasurable abstruseness treated by others are drowned in the shadowy darkness of the theme. Deserving of treatment before all things are the subjects included by the Greeks under the name of 'Encyclic Culture'; and nevertheless they are unknown, or have been obscured by subtleties, whereas other subjects have been published so widely that they have become stale. It is a difficult task to give novelty to what is old, authority to what is new, brilliance to the common-place, light to the obscure, attraction to the stale, credibility to the doubtful, but nature to all things and all her properties to nature. Accordingly, even if we have not succeeded, it is honourable and glorious in the fullest measure to have resolved on the attempt.

For my own part I am of opinion that a special place in learning belongs to those who have preferred the useful service of overcoming difficulties to the popularity of giving pleasure; and I have myself already done this in other works also, and I declare that I admire the famous writer Livy when he begins one volume^a of his *History of Rome from the Foundation of the City* with the words 'I have already achieved enough of fame, and I might have retired to leisure, did not my restless mind^b find its sustenance in work.' For assuredly he ought to have composed his history for the glory of the world-conquering nation and of the Roman name, not for his own; it would have been a greater merit to have persevered from love of the work, not for the sake of his own

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- severasse, et hoc populo Romano praestitisse, non sibi.
- 17 viginti milia rerum dignarum cura—quoniam, ut ait Domitius Piso, thesauros oportet esse, non libros—lectione voluminum circiter duorum milium, quorum pauca admodum studiosi attingunt propter secretum materiae, ex exquisitis auctoribus centum inclusimus triginta sex voluminibus, adiectis rebus plurimis quas aut ignoraverant priores aut postea invenerat vita.
- 18 nec dubitamus multa esse quae et nos praeterierint; homines enim sumus et occupati officiis, subsicivisque temporibus ista curamus, id est nocturnis, ne quis vestrum putet his cessatum horis. dies vobis inpendimus, cum somno valetudinem computamus, vel hoc solo praemio contenti quod, dum ista (ut ait M. Varro) muginamur,¹ pluribus horis vivimus:
- 19 profecto enim vita vigilia est. quibus de causis atque difficultatibus nihil auso promittere hoc ipsum tu praestas quod ad te scribimus. haec fiducia operis, haec est indicatura: multa valde pretiosa ideo videntur quia sunt templis dicata.
- 20 Vos quidem omnes, patrem, te fratremque, diximus opere iusto, temporum nostrorum historiam orsi a fine Aufidii.² ubi sit ea quaeres? iam pridem peracta sancitur; et alioqui statutum erat heredi

¹ *v.l.* musinamur.

² *Mayhoff* (Aufidii Bassi *codd. det.*): aut fidei aut aut fide *codd.*

PREFACE, 16-20

peace of mind, and to have rendered this service to the Roman nation and not to himself. As Domitus Piso says, it is not books but store-houses that are needed; consequently by perusing about 2000 volumes, very few of which, owing to the abstruseness of their contents, are ever handled by students, we have collected in 36 volumes 20,000 noteworthy facts obtained from one hundred authors that we have explored, with a great number of other facts in addition that were either ignored by our predecessors or have been discovered by subsequent experience. Nor do we doubt that there are many things that have escaped us also; for we are but human, and beset with duties, and we pursue this sort of interest in our spare moments, that is at night—lest any of your house should think that the night hours have been given to idleness. The days we devote to you, and we keep our account with sleep in terms of health, content even with this reward alone, that, while we are dallying (in Varro's phrase) with these trifles, we are adding hours to our life—since of a certainty to be alive means to be awake. Because of these reasons and these difficulties I dare make no promise; the very words I am writing to you are supplied by yourself. This guarantees my work, and this rates its value; many objects are deemed extremely precious just because of the fact that they are votive offerings.

As for your sire, your brother and yourself, we have dealt with you all in a regular book, the *History of our own Times*, that begins where Aufidius's history leaves off. Where is this work? you will enquire. The draft has long been finished and in safe keeping; and in any case it was my resolve to entrust it to my

- mandare, ne quid ambitioni dedisse vita iudicaretur: proinde occupantibus locum faveo, ego vero et posteris quos scio nobiscum decertaturos
- 21 sicut ipsi fecimus cum prioribus. argumentum huius stomachi mei habebis quod his¹ voluminibus auctorum nomina praetexui. est enim benignum (ut arbitror) et plenum ingenui pudoris fateri per quos profeceris, non ut plerique ex his quos attigi fecerunt.
- 22 scito enim conferentem auctores me deprehendisse a iuratissimis et proximis veteres transcriptos ad verbum neque nominatos, non illa Vergiliana virtute, ut certarent, non Tulliana simplicitate, qui de re publica Platonis se comitem profitetur, in consolatione filiae 'Crantorem,' inquit, 'sequor,' item Panaetium de officiis, quae volumina ediscenda, non modo in
- 23 manibus cotidie habenda nosti. obnoxii profecto animi et infelicis ingenii est deprehendi in furto malle quam mutuum reddere, cum praesertim sors fiat ex usura.
- 24 Inscriptionis apud Graecos mira felicitas: κηρίον inscribere, quod volebant intellegi favom, alii κέρασ 'Αμαλθείας, quod copiae cornu (ut vel lactis gallinacei sperare possis in volumine haustum), iam ἴα, Μοῦσαι, πανδέκται, ἐγχειρίδια, λειμών, πίναξ, σχέδιον—inscriptiones propter quas vadimonium de-

¹ Rackham: in his codd.

^a In Book I: cf. xviii. 212, auctores quos praetexuimus volumini huic.

^b 'Ορνίθων γάλα, a proverbial rarity like pigeon's milk.

heir, to prevent its being thought that my lifetime bestowed anything on ambition: accordingly I do a good turn to those who seize the vacant position, and indeed also to future generations, who I know will challenge us to battle as we ourselves have challenged our predecessors. You will deem it a proof of this pride of mine that I have prefaced^a these volumes with the names of my authorities. I have done so because it is, in my opinion, a pleasant thing and one that shows an honourable modesty, to own up to those who were the means of one's achievements, not to do as most of the authors to whom I have referred did. For you must know that when collating authorities I have found that the most professedly reliable and modern writers have copied the old authors word for word, without acknowledgement, not in that valorous spirit of Virgil, for the purpose of rivalry, nor with the candour of Cicero who in his *Republic* declares himself a companion of Plato, and in his *Consolation* to his daughter says 'I follow Crantor,' and similarly as to Panaetius in his *De Officiis*—volumes that you know to be worth having in one's hands every day, nay even learning by heart. Surely it marks a mean spirit and an unfortunate disposition to prefer being detected in a theft to repaying a loan—especially as interest creates capital.

There is a marvellous neatness in the titles given to books among the Greeks. One they entitled Κηρίον, meaning *Honeycomb*; others called their work Κέρασ 'Αμαλθείας, i.e. *Horn of Plenty* (so that you can hope to find a draught of hen's milk^b in the volume), and again *Violets, Muses, Hold-alls, Hand-books, Meadow, Tablet, Impromptu*—titles that might

seri possit. at cum intraveris, di deaeque, quam nihil in medio invenies! nostri graviores¹ Antiquitatum, Exemplorum Artiumque, facetissimi Lucubrationum, puto quia Bibaculus erat et vocabatur. paulo minus adserit Varro in satiris suis Sesculixe et Flextabula. apud Graecos desiit nugari Diodorus et βιβλιοθήκης historiam suam inscripsit. Apion quidem grammaticus (hic quem Tiberius Caesar cymbalum mundi vocabat, quom propriae famae tympanum potius videri posset) immortalitate do-
 26 nari a se scripsit ad quos aliqua componebat. me non paenitet nullum festivorem excogitasse titulum. et ne in totum videar Graecos insectari, ex illis nos velim intellegi pingendi fingendique conditoribus quos in libellis his invenies absoluta opera, et illa quoque quae mirando non satiamur, pendenti titulo inscripsisse, ut *Apelles faciebat* aut *Polyclitus*, tamquam inchoata semper arte et imperfecta, ut contra iudiciorum varietates superesset artificii regressus ad veniam, velut emendaturo quicquid de-
 27 sideraretur si non esset interceptus. quare plenum verecundiae illud est quod omnia opera tamquam novissima inscribere et tamquam singulis fato ademti. tria non amplius, ut opinor, absolute

¹ *v.l.* crassiores.

* I.e. forget an important engagement in order to read the book.

^b We should say 'to blow his own trumpet.' Diodorus Siculus in the time of Augustus, wrote a universal history, part of which is still extant.

tempt a man to forfeit his bail.^a But when you get inside them, good heavens, what a void you will find between the covers! Our authors being more serious use the titles *Antiquities*, *Instances and Systems*, the wittiest, *Talks by Lamplight*, I suppose because the author was a toper—indeed Tippler was his name. Varro makes a rather smaller claim in his *Satires A Ulysses-and-a-half* and *Folding-tablet*. Diodorus among the Greeks stopped playing with words and gave his history the title of *Library*. Indeed the philologist Apion (the person whom Tiberius Caesar used to call 'the world's cymbal,' though he might rather have been thought to be a drum,^b advertising his own renown) wrote that persons to whom he dedicated his compositions received from him the gift of immortality. For myself, I am not ashamed of not having invented any livelier title. And so as not to seem a downright adversary of the Greeks, I should like to be accepted on the lines of those founders of painting and sculpture who, as you will find in these volumes, used to inscribe their finished works, even the masterpieces which we can never be tired of admiring, with a provisional title such as *Worked on by Apelles* or *Polyclitus*, as though art was always a thing in process and not completed, so that when faced by the vagaries of criticism the artist might have left him a line of retreat to indulgence, by implying that he intended, if not interrupted, to correct any defect noted. Hence it is exceedingly modest of them to have inscribed all their works in a manner suggesting that they were their latest, and as though they had been snatched away from each of them by fate. Not more than three, I fancy, are recorded as having an inscription denoting

traduntur inscripta; *Ille fecit* (quae suis locis reddam); quo apparuit summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse, et ob id magna invidia fuere omnia ea.

28 Ego plane meis adici posse multa confiteor, nec his solis, sed et omnibus quos edidi, ut obiter caveam istos Homeromastigas (ita enim verius dixerim), quoniam audio et Stoicos et dialecticos, Epicureos quoque (nam de grammaticis semper expectavi) parturire adversus libellos quos de grammatica edidi, et subinde abortus facere iam decem annis, cum
29 celerius etiam elephanti pariant. ceu vero nesciam adversus Theophrastum, hominem in eloquentia tantum ut nomen divinum inde invenerit, scripsisse etiam feminam, et proverbium inde natum suspendio
30 arborem eligendi! non queo mihi temperare quo minus ad hoc pertinentia ipsa censorii Catonis verba ponam, ut appareat etiam Catoni de militari disciplina commentanti, qui sub Africano, immo vero et sub Hannibale didicisset militare et ne Africanum quidem ferre potuisset, qui imperator triumphum reportasset, paratos fuisse istos qui obtrectatione alienae scientiae famam sibi aucupantur. 'Quid enim?' ait in eo volumine, 'scio ego, quae scripta sunt si palam proferantur, multos fore qui vitiligent, sed ii potissimum qui verae laudis expertes sunt.

completion—*Made by* so-and-so (these I will bring in at their proper places); this made the artist appear to have assumed a supreme confidence in his art, and consequently all these works were very unpopular.

For my own part I frankly confess that my works would admit of a great deal of amplification, and not only those now in question but also all my publications, so that in passing I may insure myself against your 'Scourges of Homer' (that would be the more correct term), as I am informed that both the Stoics and the Academy, and also the Epicureans,—as for the philologists, I always expected it from them—are in travail with a reply to my publications on Philology, and for the last ten years have been having a series of miscarriages—for not even elephants take so long to bring their offspring to birth! But as if I didn't know that Theophrastus, a mortal whose eminence as an orator won him the title of 'the divine,' actually had a book written against him by a woman—which was the origin of the proverb about 'choosing your tree to hang from'! I am unable to refrain from quoting the actual words of Cato the Censor applying to this, to show that even the treatise on military discipline of Cato, who had learnt his soldiering under Africanus, or rather under him and Hannibal as well, and had been unable to endure even Africanus, who when commander-in-chief had won a triumph, found critics ready for it of the sort that try to get glory for themselves by running down another man's knowledge. 'What then?' he says in the book in question, 'I myself know that if certain writings are published there will be plenty of people to quibble and quarrel, but mostly people quite devoid of true distinction. For

31 eorum ego orationes sivi praeterfluere.' nec Plancus inlepidè, cum diceretur Asinius Pollio orationes in eum parare quae ab ipso aut liberis post mortem Planci ederentur, ne respondere posset, 'cum mortuis non nisi larvas luctari.' quo dicto sic repercutit illas,
 32 ut apud eruditos nihil impudentius iudicetur. ergo securi etiam contra vitiligatores (quos Cato eleganter ex vitis et litigatoribus composuit, quid enim illi aliud quam litigant aut litem quaerunt?) exequemur
 33 reliqua propositi. quia occupationibus tuis publico bono parcendum erat, quid singulis contineretur libris huic epistolae subiunxi, summaque cura ne legendos eos haberes operam dedi. tu per hoc et aliis praestabis ne perlegant, sed ut quisque desiderabit aliquid id tantum quaerat, et sciat quo loco inveniatur. hoc ante me fecit in litteris nostris Valerius Soranus in libris quos ἐποπτιδων inscripsit.

^a Perhaps this title for a work of scholarship denoted the inner secrets of learning into which it admitted the Muses. Soranus fl. 100 B.C.

my part I have let these persons' eloquence run its course.' Plancus also put it neatly, when told that Asinius Pollio was composing declamations against him, to be published by himself or his children after Plancus's death, so that he might be unable to reply: 'Only phantoms fight with the dead!' This remark dealt those declamations such a nasty blow that in cultivated circles they are thought the most shameless things extant. Accordingly, being safeguarded even against quibble-quarrellers (Cato's nickname for them—a neat compound word, for what else do these people do but quarrel or seek a quarrel?) we will follow out the remainder of our intended plan. As it was my duty in the public interest to have consideration for the claims upon your time, I have appended to this letter a table of contents of the several books, and have taken very careful precautions to prevent your having to read them. You by these means will secure for others that they will not need to read right through them either, but only look for the particular point that each of them wants, and will know where to find it. This plan has been adopted previously in Roman literature, by Valerius Soranus in his books entitled *Lady Initiates*.^a

C. Plinius Secundus.

PLINY

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