A Letter from Augustus to Tiberius

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TO TIBERIUS

By R. SHAW-SMITH

SUETONIUS quotes some attractive specimens of Augustus' domestic correspondence. They include several sentences from letters to Tiberius by which Suetonius seeks to show that Augustus had a high regard for his adopted son as a military man and valued campaigner. One quotation (Suet. *Tib.* 21) is as follows:

Vale, iucundissime Tiberi, et feliciter rem gere, ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς †μουισασαιστ στρατηγῶν. Iucundissime et ita sim felix, vir fortissime et dux νομιμώτατε, vale.

νομιμώτατε has been corrected to the more dux-like word μονιμώτατε, but the other Greek phrase remains baffling. Suggestions recorded by Ihm are either implausible or untranslatable, for example:

ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς Μούσαις στρατηγῶν   (Vulg. 1490)
'as you war for me and the Muses'   (Loeb);

ἐμοὶ καὶ ταῖς μου ἴσα σαῖς τε στρατηγῶν   (Roth),

a desperate and, as far as I can see, meaningless attempt to accommodate the manuscript lettering.
  My suggestion is:

. . . feliciter rem gere ἐμοῖς αἰσίοις οἰωνοῖς στρατηγῶν.

The phrase ἐμοῖς αἰσίοις οἰωνοῖς occurs in the Greek text of the *Monumentum Ancyranum* as a translation of *meis auspiciis*:

26 meo iussu et auspicio
    ἐμῆι ἐπιταγῆι καὶ οἰωνοῖς αἰσίοις
30 meis auspiciis
    ἐμοῖς αἰσίοις οἰωνοῖς

Augustus wishes Tiberius well while campaigning (? A.D. 4–6) under the emperor's auspices. All generals, of course, campaigned at this time on these terms: for example, Cossus Lentulus against the Gaetuli (A.D. 6), according to an inscription from Leptis Magna:

. . . auspiciis Imp Caesaris Aug, ductu Cossi
Lentuli provincia Africa liberata.
    (Ehrenberg and Jones, *Documents*, 43)

In the closing sentences of his letter to Tiberius Augustus recalls the fact, not as something that might have slipped the poor man's memory in central or northern Europe, but as a nervous reminder of the responsibility resting on their shoulders. On the other hand, he tactfully, even humorously, softens the truth that Tiberius is not his own master by expressing it in Greek, just as in the letters to Livia (Suet. *Claud.* 4) he uses Greek to refer to the disabilities of her grandson Claudius; it was gentler than blunt Latin.

VERSION

'O HAPPY living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware . . .'

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

From COLERIDGE, *The Ancient Mariner*

Felix progenies, quis celebrans sciat
uestrum aequare decus? Qui nouus ille amor,
aut qui prosiluit fons pietatis, ut
    'Macti sorte!' ego dixerim?

Non ingrata Deo uota ferent, quibus
dilectum genus est omne animalium;
res nostras etenim qui bonus ordinat,
    communis fouet haec Pater.

G. M. LEE