

HORACE EPISTLES

Book I

I

The very first subject of my poetry,
The last, too, I surmise, you pester me,
Though proven and discharged, with that old game,
Maecenas. My resolve is not the same,
Nor is my age, as it was heretofore.
Veianus upon Hercules' door
Has hung his arms and hides himself away
Upcountry lest he must day after day
Beg for his life while someone constantly
Breathes in my compliant ear: "Summarily 10
Let loose your aging horse lest he should slip
And be a laughing-stock, breaking his hip."
For I'm now placing all my verse apart
And all my other trifles, since my heart
Is set on truth – it is my only mission;
I'm storing notes that will enjoy fruition
Quite soon. You ask who's teaching me and where?
There's no compunction that will make me swear
To anyone's precepts. When I am pressed
By raging tempests, there I'll be a guest; 20
Action I seek, by civic tides immersed,
True virtue's guardian and servant, first
And foremost, though relapsing privately
At other times to the philosophy
Of Aristippus as I try to sway

The world to me and not the other way
Around. As one who finds his girl untrue
Thinks the night's long, just as the daytime, too,
Proves long to those who toil relentlessly,
And just as orphans in the custody 30
Of harsh mistress find themselves oppressed
By the whole year, so I too am distressed
When slow and tedious time prohibits me
From all my hopes and plans to zealously
Do what will benefit poor and rich alike
But, when neglected, equally will strike
At young and old. I must consequently
Restrain and calm myself. You may not be
As eagle-eyed as Lynceus, but wherefore
Would you not salve your eyes if they were sore? 40
And just because you never could compete
For build with Glycon, whom no-one can beat,
You'd not want knotty gout. I must proceed
If I am able. You are hot with greed
And shameful lust – well, spells are remedies
And drain the greater part of the disease
If read three times. No-one who's envious,
Angry, inert, lustful or bibulous
Can mellow if he lends a patient ear
To discipline; your vice will disappear 50
If you are virtuous; sagacity
Begins when you eject stupidity.
You see the troubles that you take to shun
What you think is the worst that can be done

To you, a post refused or else a loss
Of funds. Say you're a merchant and you cross
The seas for gain to India's furthest shore,
At risk of hidden rocks and fires: wherefore?
To sidestep poverty. Why don't you heed
One who knows better what you really need, 60
To quit competing for what foolishly
You crave and marvel at? Listen to me.
What Olympic fighter is there who'd turn down
At village sports and crossroad fairs the crown
Without the dust? Silver costs less than gold,
Gold less than virtue. We are always told
By money men, "O citizens, pursue
Cash first and foremost: when you have it, you
May seek out virtue." That's what all men chant,
Both young and old. Say that you're free of cant, 70
Clever and eloquent, while you your pack
Of books and tablet swing upon your back,
Yet if of those four hundred you must pay
To be a knight you're light but few, you'll stay
A *plebs*, and yet young lads say, "You'll be king,"
When playing a game, "if you do the right thing."
Let this be our brass wall – 'praise honesty
And don't turn pale with culpability.'
So tell me which of these two is preferred,
The Roscian Law or that which can be heard 80
Chanted by boys – that kingship may be gained
By virtue – a conviction once maintained
By manly Currii and Camilli.

Are you prevailed upon more forcefully
 By him who says, "By foul means or by fair
 Acquire a fortune", just to get a chair
 At Pupius' maudlin plays close to the stage,
 Or him who urges you to stand and rage
 At Fortune's frown? What if I'm questioned why
 I don't share these opinions, though I 90
 Enjoy Rome's columns, and don't take delight
 In what they take delight in and take flight
 From what they hate. What to the sick lion was said
 By the wary fox I'll answer: "I feel dread
 At all the footprints leading to your den
 While none of them is leading out again.
 You've many heads! You're a monstrosity!
 What should I follow? Or *who* should it be?"
 Some love to gain contracts, while others woo
 Covetous widows with a scrap or two 100
 Of sweetmeats, others lure old men as though
 They were zoo animals; folks' fortunes grow
 By stealth. A legion of activities
 Attracts humanity, and yet can these
 Last but an hour with one? "No bay's as fair
 As is the Bay of Baiae anywhere."
 Thus speaks a wealthy man, and yet this bay
 Will find his love moves fast, and the next day
 He'll tell his men to take their tools elsewhere
 And build a house in Teanum. Is there 110
 Within a person's house a marriage-bed?
 A bachelor's life is best, he'll have it said.

If there is not, he'll swear that only they
 Who wed are happy. Is there any way
 To pin this Proteus down? The poor man? He
 Is just as silly, changing constantly
 His garret, bed, baths, barber. Rents a boat
 And finds he's just as nauseous afloat
 As is the rich man on his private yacht.
 If from an unskilled barber I have got 120
 A haircut, you guffaw; it tickles you
 If you can see my toga is askew
 Or else a grubby undershirt's below
 My natty tunic; when my feelings, though,
 Are muddled and I spurn what gladdened me
 Before and seek again what recently
 I scorned, pulled down, built up, cubic one day
 And round the next, and all in disarray,
 You do not think that I'm insane at all
 And feel a praetor has no need to call 130
 Upon a doctor or a guardian who
 Must take good care of me, although it's you
 Who handle my affairs; indeed a nail
 That's been ineptly pared will make you rail
 When he who owns the nail's a devotee
 Of yours and in your set. In summary,
 A man of wisdom must be estimated
 As next to Jupiter – he's adulated,
 Free, fair, a king of kings, right-minded, too,
 Especially – unless he has the 'flu! 140

While you're a lawyer in the Roman court,
 Lollius, in Praeneste I resort
 To reading Homer, who can clearly show
 What's good, what's bad, expedient to know
 Or not (Chrysippus and Cantor are not
 As clear). I'll tell you why, unless you've got
 Some pressing business. Greece, so goes the story,
 Contended in a war both long and gory,
 And in it we read of the lust for war
 Of foolish kings and people. Antenor 10
 Was anxious to eradicate the call
 For war, while Paris would not budge at all
 From his desire to live at peace and reign
 In safety; Nestor tried hard to contain
 The feud between Achilles and the king,
 The one aflame with love and both the sting
 Of rage. Thus anything that causes gall
 In the kings the Greeks pay for. Within Troy's wall,
 And outside, all the sins of trickery
 And lust and anger and insurgency 20
 Are on display. Homer has shown to us
 A reason to be wise and virtuous
 In Ulysses, a clever man who made
 The folk of Troy surrender and surveyed
 Legions of men and cities, and when he
 Was with his men upon the wide, wide sea
 Returning home, many adversities

Is like the hayseed waiting patently

Until the river passes: but it's clear
 That it will glide on by year after year.
 A man seeks cash and a wife who's fit to bear
 His children; wilderness with a ploughshare 60
 Is cultivated. Let a man who's got
 Ample not yearn for more: no farm, no plot,
 No heap of bronze or gold has driven out
 The owner's fever or expelled a doubt
 That plagued his mind. He must be strong so he
 May have enjoyment of his property.
 The man who craves more or feels dread will find
 He likes his holdings as the semi-blind
 Like art, the gouty dressings or an ear
 That's dirty when its owner wants to hear 70
 A lyre. Contents of a filthy urn
 Will have a bitter taste. All pleasures spurn!
 When bought with grief they pain you. Greedy men
 Are always needy: seek a limit, then,
 To what you crave. One man grows lean with greed,
 Another is well-fed with wealth. Indeed
 The vilest autocrat of Sicily
 Could not have dreamed up greater agony
 Than envy. For he who won't moderate
 His anger will regret what grief and hate 80
 Forced him to take revenge too hastily.
 Rage is a burst of irritability.
 Restrain your passions, for if they decline
 To yield to you, they'll rule you. So confine
 Them all in chains. A man who trains a horse

When it is young school it to hold the course
The rider wants. A dog, once it has bayed,
When yet a pup, at a deerskin that's been laid
Out in the yard, goes hunting, when mature,
In woodlands. So now, while your heart is pure, 90
Drink in my wisdom, lad, and listen to
Your betters. A potsherd, when it is new,
Long keeps its odour. If you loiter, though,
Or keenly press ahead, then you must know
That I won't slow down for the sluggardly
Nor chase them if they're way in front of me.

III

Florus, I long to know in what far place
You're fighting for the Roman empire. Thrace,
Perhaps? Ice-bound Hebrus? Or possibly
The straits that form the Hellespontine sea
Between the towers? Or do you abide
Somewhere in Asia's fertile countryside?
What do the smart scribes write? For that as well
I'd like to hear. Who's trying now to swell
Augustus' chronicles in amnesty
And war for readers in posterity? 10
What, too, of Titius, soon to be praised
On Roman tongues, for he was never fazed
To drink at Pindar's fountain and to shun
The common waters? How well has he done?
Does he remember me, still trying to con

The way to fix the Theban modes upon
 The Latin lyre? Or does he yet rage
 In bombast as upon the tragic stage?
 And what of Celsius? He's well urged to look
 Within himself while readying a book 20
 And steer clear of Apollo's library
 Upon the Palatine, lest he should see
 A flock of birds someday who, in their lack
 Of colourful plumes, will now ask for them back,
 As is their due – thus, stripped of every one,
 The wee crow would become a figure of fun.
 So what have *you* committed yourself to?
 What thyme-fields are you buzzing over? You
 Are talented, your wit not unrefined
 Nor overgrown. Whether you turn your mind 30
 To pleading cases in a Roman court
 Or arguing a statute of some sort
 Or writing charming verse, you win the crown
 Of ivy. But if you could just stare down
 Chill angst, you'd reach the very highest peak
 Of wisdom: this is what we all should seek,
 Lowly or wealthy, if we wish to dwell
 As citizens who serve their land as well
 As they esteem themselves. Now, when you pen
 A letter back you'll have to tell me then 40
 Whether Munatius is still your own
 Dear friend or if your friendship, badly sewn,
 Won't knit back up but tear apart and gnaw
 At you two steeds whose spirits are yet raw.

Be it hot blood or immaturity,
Wherever you are you act unworthily
To break your brotherly bond. A calf will burn
To greet the two of you on your return.

IV

Albius, who critiqued so honestly
My satires, tell me what activity
Keeps you in Pedum. Writing something new
To top what Parma's Cassius can do?
Or strolling quietly to clear the air?
Or thinking thoughts deserving of a fair
And decent man? You've always had a heart,
Good looks, a pile of money and the art
Of relishing them all. What more is there
A nurse can give a baby in her care 10
Than that he can both know and say what he
Senses, with favour, health, celebrity,
A pleasant life and affluence. Between
The hopes, the cares, the terrors and the spleen,
Think that this very day will specify
Your last on earth, and so, once it's gone by,
The next day, quite unhoped-for, you will greet
With pleasure. If you want a merry treat,
From Epicurus' sty you will find me,
A fat, sleek porker cared for admirably. 20

V

If on a bench that's made by Archias
You don't mind dining and won't take a pass
At tiny, meatless dishes, at twilight
I'll look for you, Torquatus, for a bite
Chez moi. You'll drink wine that has bottled been
In Taurus' second consulship, between
Petrinum and the marsh of Minturnae.
If you have better, have it brought, or I
Will rule the roost. The furniture has been
Set out for you and the hearthstone is clean. 10
Dismiss your chancy prospects and the race
For profits and your work on Moschus' case.
Tomorrow's Caesar's birthday, so we may
Sleep late and talk the summer night away
Agreeably. What's money for unless
It's put to use? He who with great excess
Hoards up his cash so that his heir may be
A wealthy man is close to idiocy.
I'll drink and scatter flowers all about,
Not caring if I'm called a reckless lout. 20
Wine shows what's hidden and emboldens us
To trust our hopes and thrusts the timorous
Into the fray and teaches us new skills
And takes away our minds' distressing ills;
The gift of wine creates eloquency
And frees a man oppressed by poverty.
I vow no dirty couch will nauseate
You here, no grubby napkin, while your plate

And cup will shine and, like a glass, display
Your face in them; nobody will betray 30
What you may say – my friends are scrupulous.
Our company will be harmonious.
Sulpicius and Butra will be there,
Sabinus, too, unless he's off somewhere
For better food or has a rendezvous
With someone prettier than me or you!
There's room for uninvited guests as well,
But in large groups beware a goatish smell.
Say whom you'd like, quit work and promptly leave
By the back door, your clients to deceive. 40

VI

Numicius, if you're never overly
Impressed, you'll always live delightedly.
There are some men who fearlessly will gaze
Upon the seasons that mark out the days,
The sun, the stars: but what have you in mind
About the earth's gifts and the wealth you'll find
In India and Arabia far from here,
The shows and spectacles that give great cheer
To Roman crowds? How should we think or view
These things? As for their opposites, he who 10
Has fear of them is spellbound equally
As him who craves them; the anxiety
Is caused by dread. If something startling
Should greet them, they all find it dazzling.

Happy or hurt, eager or terrified,
It's all the same, for once a man has spied
Something that's either better or worse than he
Had thought it would have been, amazedly
He gapes. Call wise men mad, call good men base
If they go overboard while seeking grace. 20

Go, then, and all the works of art appraise,
Bronze, silver, ancient marble, too, and gaze
At Tyrian gems and hues. A thousand eyes
Observe you speaking, so be glad. What lies
Beneath the earth one day will see the light;
It hides and buries what's now shining bright.
Although Agrippa's columns know you well,
As does the Appian Way, you're doomed to dwell
With Numa and Ancus. Should pain reside
Within your belly or upon your side, 30

Find out a cure. You wish to be upright?
(Who doesn't?). Kick your flaws, then, out of sight
For it's the only way. D'you think that good
Is merely words, a forest merely wood?
Make sure, then, that another ship won't sail
Before you into port so that you fail
In trade abroad. Imagine you've amassed
A thousand talents, then stored up, at last,
A thousand more, a third, a fourth – maybe
A dowried wife, esteem, a family, 40

Acquaintances and good looks the goddess
Pecunia will give and, nothing less,
Both Venus and Persuasion well may bring

A rich man blessings. Cappadocia's king
 Had servants but no cash: don't be the same
 As him. If someone to Lucullus came
 To ask for a hundred cloaks that they be used
 In some dramatic theatre scene, he mused:
 "Have I that many? Well, I will explore
 And send to you the ones I have in store." 50
 A little later he wrote back to say
 He had five thousand and to take away
 A few – or all. That house is in distress
 Indeed that does not have a large excess
 To fog the owner and be opportune
 To thieves. If plenitude's the only boon
 You crave, be first at work and last to leave.
 Be early at the Forum, then at eve
 Go home, so that Mutus won't reap more corn
 In dowry-gained fields and, because he was born 60
 Of much more humble folk, unworthily
 Be more admired by you than you should be
 By him. If popular favour and display
 Bring wealth to you, let's buy a slave to say
 The names of others: then will he command
 Us with an urgent nudge to stretch our hand
 Out to another on the thoroughfare:
 "That man has clout, and that man over there
 Has too, the one among the Fabian clan,
 The other the Velini, while *that* man 70
 Could give the rods to anyone he chose
 Or pull the ivory chair from under those

He hates." Then add, according to how old
 He is, 'Father' or 'Brother' and enfold
 Him happily into the family.
 If eating well is living well, then we
 Must let our gullets be our constant guide
 And learn the craft of angling and ride
 To hounds, as did Gargilius years before,
 Who called his slaves at daybreak who then bore 80
 His spears and hunting-nets as they went through
 The crowded Forum, and the Campus, too,
 And then one of his many burros brought
 Back home, as people watched, a boar he'd bought.
 Our stomachs full with undigested fare,
 Let's seek the public baths with not a care
 For decency, just like the second-rate
 People of Caere or the reprobate
 Soldiers of Ulysses to whom their isle
 Meant less than luxury acquired by guile. 90
 Mimnermus said that without sex and fun
 Nothing is pleasing, so let everyone
 Indulge himself. To you a fond farewell!
 And take good care! If you have more to tell
 Of how we ought to live, please tell it me,
 But if you don't, follow my formulae.

VII

One week I vowed here in the countryside
 To lodge at your request: alas, I lied.

I'll stay all August. If you'd have me hale
And fit, however, since you never fail
To attend me while I'm ill, I hope you will
Do so when I'm in fear of being ill,
Maecenas. When the early figs progress
And mature with sun's fieriness,
Gracing the undertaker with his band
Of black attendants, while the father and 10
The doting mother pale and all the stress
Of business and the Forum's pettiness
Bring fevers causing wills to be unsealed
And winters snows on every Alban field,
I'll go down to the seashore and unbend,
All curled up with a book. If you, dear friend,
Allow it me, I'll come in early spring,
The leading swallow then resurfacing.
You've made me wealthy, not, though, in the way
That fellow from Calabria gave away 20
Pears to his guests ("Eat." "Thanks, I'm satisfied."
"Take all you want." "No thanks." "But they'll provide
Treats for your kids." "I couldn't thank you more
Than if you'd given me fruit-trees galore,
But no." "Alright. The pigs will scoff today
What's left.") A foolish wastrel gives away
What he should value. Such a crop of grain
Has shown up thankless folk and will again
Forever. Good, wise men will always aid
The worthy but know cash that can be paid 40
From counterfeit; I am prepared to show

Myself as worthy of your praise. Although,
 If you want me always to have your back,
 Give me my old strong lungs, hair thick and black,
 Charm in my words, fine laughter and lament,
 When drunk, about how wanton Cynara went
 From my embrace. A thin crow slithered through
 A corn-bin's narrow crack to get him to
 The corn, then he tried to get out again,
 But since his gut was full, all was in vain. 50
 A weasel said, "If you wish to get free,
 When you're as thin as you were formerly
 Try it again." Now, if this tale applies
 To me, I quit it all: for I despise
 A poor man's sleep when full of chicken, nor
 Would I choose riches from the Arabian shore
 Above my leisure and my liberty;
 Many a time you've praised my modesty,
 While to your face I've called you 'father', 'king'
 And in your absence said a similar thing: 60
 See if I can't give back quite cheerfully
 Your gifts. Telemachus, the progeny
 Of patient Ulysses, was apt indeed:
 "Our Ithaca's not fitting for a steed –
 It has no plains and lacks much pasture, too.
 I'll leave your gifts as fitting more for you,
 Atrides." Small things are fit for the small.
 Rome now does not delight me after all –
 In quiet Tibur I prefer to stay,
 And calm Tarentum. Philippus one day 70

(A famous lawyer full of energy),
While leaving work and grouching fussily
That the Forum from his home was quite a way –
He was no longer young – saw, so they say,
A fresh-shaved man in an empty barber's stand
Quietly paring the nails upon his hand.
He said to his slave-boy, who was never slow
To do his master's bidding, "Demetrius, go,
Ask that man's name, his home, what property
He owns, his patron or his family." 80

The lad went on his mission; back he came
And said Volteius Mena was his name,
An auctioneer with a modest salary,
An honest man who worked untiringly
When he had need, knew how to buy and spend,
Enjoyed the public contests at the end
Of the day, had his own home and a coterie
Of humble friends. "I'd like him to tell me
Himself all you have said. Therefore invite
The man to dinner." Mena, puzzled quite 90
At this, mused silently. Well, finally
He said, "No, thank you." "He said 'No' to *me*?"
"He did. The fellow's cheeky or afraid."
Philippus at dawn chanced on him at his trade,
Peddling trinkets to the tunicked mob.
He hailed him first. Then Mena blamed his job
For his refusal and expressed regret
That he'd not seen him first. "I'll pardon you yet
If you will dine with me today." "Thank you,

I will." "A little after four will do. 100

Go, make your living." When Volteius went,
They talked together, sometimes provident,
But sometimes not, till he eventually
Was sent back home, and since then frequently
He acted like a fish lured to the hook,
A regular guest whom Philppus now took
To be a client who would come to make
Obeisance to his patron at daybreak,
And when the Latin holidays in Rome
Were near, he called him to his rural home. 110

Sat in the carriage, again and again
He praised the Sabine climate and the plain.
Philippus laughed at this and, since he sought
Amusing pleasure anywhere he thought
He might discover it, he on a whim
Gave seven thousand sesterces to him
And loaned him seven thousand more to buy
A farm. He bought one. So that I won't try
Your patience, this proficient man was turned
Into a rustic who, when talking, churned 120

Out 'furrows', 'vines' and 'elms' which he'd provide
For them. Now ageing soon, he almost died
Through lust and passion for prosperity.
But when thieves stole his flock and malady
Took off his herd of goats and when his yield
Of crops deceived his hopes, and in the field
The ox that pulled his plough collapsed with stress,
At dead of night, consumed with wretchedness,

He saddled his horse and rode off angrily
To Philippus who, seeing this slovenly 130
And unkempt man, declared, "I think that you
Have worked yourself too hard! You're anxious, too!
"The word is 'wretched', sir, " Mena replied.
"I beg you by the spirits that reside
With you, your right hand and your Deity,
Return me to the life I previously
Had lived." It's right that when a man has seen
That his past life excels the one he's been
Living more recently he should restore
That life as soon as possible once more. 140
For it should be the rule that every man
Should estimate himself by his foot-span.

VIII

Muse, to Celsus Albinovanus send
My greetings – he's Tiberius' scribe and friend.
Say I'm not well, if he asks about me,
Although I have a multiplicity
Of hopes; my vines have not been devastated
By hail, my olive-trees not desiccated
By heat, nor in some meadows far away
Are my cows sick. My mind, though, I should say,
And not my body, is the problem here.
Nor do I want to hear of what will clear 10
This sickness; to my faithful doctors I
Am rude, berating friends, asking them why

They rush to cure me of this malady;
I follow what is bad for me but flee
What I believe might help. When I'm in Rome
I long for Tibur, but my Tibur home
I crave when in the city. Ask how *he*
Is then; is he a happy employee?
And does he get on with Tiberius
And his cohort? If he should answer thus: 20
"Oh, fine", congratulate him, but instil
Into his shell-like ear this little pill
Of wisdom: "Celsus, our response to you
Will govern our response to how you do."

IX

The view you have of me, Tiberius,
Is known by just one man – Septimius.
For when he asks – indeed insists – of me
To vouch for him and his society
To you who are known for your discrimination
(Although he thinks that my association
With you is closer than the one that he
Now holds). He knows my capability
Much better than I do. I have indeed
Given to him more reasons than I need 10
To be excused. But I feared he would feel
That I'd used fabrication to conceal
My influence that I alone might be
The target of your generosity.

Therefore, in order to avoid the blame
Of being guilty of a greater shame,
I've had recourse to suave effrontery.
So if you would excuse the liberty
Of pleading for a pal, you may depend
On him: for he's a perspicacious friend. 20

X

Dear Fuscus, country-lover, Horace greets
His friend, though he's a lover of the streets
Of Rome. In this one thing we clash, it's true.
But there's no difference between us two
In all things else, like twins, so brotherly.
We nod and shake our heads consistently
Together, two familiar doves. You stay
Within your nest, while I can praise all day
The country's lovely rocks with mosses strewn
And brooks and groves. What can I say? As soon 10
As I leave Rome which you all eulogize,
You city folk, praising it to the skies,
I govern in my realm and blithely live,
For I'm just like the holy man's fugitive
Servant who hated cakes: it's bread I need,
Not honey. If we are supposed to heed
Nature and choose a dwelling, do you know
A more enchanting place where you may go
And settle than the countryside? For where

Are winters ever milder, or the air 20

More pleasing as it blows and wafts around

The blazing Lion and the raging Hound

And calms them both? Or is there anywhere

That sleep is less harassed by nagging care?

Is grass less shiny or less redolent

Than Libyan gems? Is water, as it's sent

To break apart the city pipes, more clear

Than that which hurries down the river here?

Through your elaborate columns there are trees

You've planted and a slew of eulogies 30

Is given to that house that has a view

Afforded of far-distant fields. If you

Oust Nature with a pitchfork, instantly

She'll come back and subdue clandestinely

Your foolish pride. He who has not the skill

To tell Aquinum's dye that fleeces swill

From Sidon's purple feels a lesser toll,

One far from piercing through his very soul,

Than he who cannot differentiate

Falsehood from truth. A beneficial fate 40

Makes men ecstatic, but with alteration

It crushes them. If you have admiration

For something, losing it's a dreadful thing.

You may, in your poor house, outrace a king

And all his friends. A stag drove off a horse

From where he grazed, since he possessed more force

In battle, till the horse in a long contest

Sought human succour but then acquiesced

'To wear the bit; thus, when the battleground
Was left, the enemy overwhelmed, he found 50
He could not ditch his rider, nor could he
Cast off the bit; thus, fearing poverty,
He who doffs liberty, which has a cost
Greater than precious metals, once it's lost
His master's on his back eternally
And he is chained to endless slavery
Since thriftiness has never been his way.
When one's financial means don't fit him, they
Are just like shoes - you stumble in them when
They're too big, when too small, they pinch. So then, 60
Aristius, if you're content with what
You've been assigned, live wisely with your lot,
And castigate me if you see that I
Aim for the money than should satisfy
And will not stop. The money that you save
Can be either your master or your slave.
So hold the rope to which your money's bound
Behind you, not the other way around.
Behind Vacuna's ancient shrine I write –
Except that you're not here, I'm feeling bright. 70

XI

What did you think of elegant Samos,
Bullatius, and eminent Lesbos,
Colophon, Chios, Sardis's monarchy
Or Zmyrna? Is their popularity

Deserved or not? Do they seem tedious
In contrast with the Campus Martius
And Tiber? Or have you a strong desire
To see an Attalid city? Or do you tire
Of seas and roads, turning your eulogy
To Lebedus? You know it, yes? You'll see 10
More wasteland out there than in Fidenae,
Its neighbour, or in Gabii. But I
Would like to dwell in that vicinity,
Forgetting all my friends and equally
Forgotten by them too, where far away
I'll gaze upon Neptune's destructive spray.
But when a man from Capua comes to Rome,
Spattered with mud and rain, he'll not call home
The inn he finds, and he who's freezing cold
Won't praise the stoves and baths as if they hold 20
The key to happy life, nor would you sell
Your ship when you've survived the ocean swell
When you must still return. It is a fact
That Rhodes and beautiful Mytilene act
Like overcoats in heat, shorts when it snows,
A Tiber swim when winter nips your nose,
A stove in August. As long as you may
And Fortune smiles upon you, you should stay
In Rome, and while you're welcome to acclaim
Samos, Chios and Rhodes, yet all the same 30
Don't visit them. Be grateful for whatever
Blessings the gods have given you, and never
Postpone those blessings for another day:

Wherever you happen to be, then, you may say
You've had a happy life. A house that shows
A wide view of the sea won't crush your woes,
But sense and reason will. Those people who
Sail overseas don't change their point of view,
We're tired, though doing nothing; we'd possess
Chariots and yachts and thus gain happiness. 40
But what you seek's in Ulubrae, you'll find,
As long as you retain a balanced mind.

XII

What you draw from Agrippa's property
In Sicily, if you use it properly,
Could not bring you more cash than you'd obtain
From Jupiter, and therefore don't complain!
That man's not indigent who uses what
He has a need of. So if you have got
A healthy gut and chest and active feet,
Then regal wealth can't make you more replete.
If, though hemmed in by superfluity,
You lived on greens and nettles, still you'd be 10
The same if Fortune showered you with gold.
Does money, then, not know how to remould
Your nature? Is virtue the only thing
You value? That tale has us wondering
That says the cattle of Democritus
Ate up his crops (he was oblivious -
His mind had wandered off). Amid the itch

And captivating longing to be rich,
 You have no lowly thoughts but still adhere
 To higher things: what balances the year?
 What are the causes that hold back the sea?
 Do constellations wander by decree
 Or of their own accord? What hides the ring
 Around the moon? What shows it? What's that thing
 Called 'jarring discord' and what does it mean?
 Can we say that Empedocles has been
 Spouting nonsense or shrewd Stertinius?
 But whether you're killing fishes, Iccius,
 Or merely leeks and onions, you must greet
 Pompeius Grosphus and be sure to treat 30
 Him with whatever he wants, because the cost
 Of friendship's small when decent men are lost
 And want for succour. How's Rome faring? Well,
 Under Agrippa's leadership Spain fell,
 And Claudius Nero made Tigranes king
 In Armenia once again, and, prostrating
 Himself before Augustus Phraates
 Accepted Roman rule. Such gifts as these
 The golden horn of great prosperity
 Has poured upon the Roman citizenry. 40

XIII

I've often told you, Vinnius, as you
 Set out to give these unsealed volumes to
 Augustus just as long as he is hale

And hearty and asks for them. Please don't fail,
Making my books unloved through excess zeal.
Perhaps the weight of them will make you feel
Weary. Throw them away, though, rather than fling
Them down before him like some feral thing.
And do not turn your patronymic 'Ass'
Into a joke, compelling you to pass 10
Into amusing legend. Struggle through
The mountains, rivers, bogs and then, when you
Get there, don't bear the bundle awkwardly
Beneath your arm, just like a hick when he
Carries a lamb or Pirria in that play
Who took her stolen ball of wool away
When drunk, or as a workman takes his hat
And sandals when he's called to dinner at
His wealthy cousin's house. And don't reveal
How fagged you were hearing what may appeal 20
To Caesar. Pass on! Do not stumble! Mind
You don't foul up the task you were assigned!

XIV

Manager of my woods and small estate,
Which makes me very proud and which you hate,
Though it supports five households and can send
Five senators to Varia, let's contend
Together: you clear brambles from the land,
I from the mind – I wish to understand
Who's better. Am I or my farm more sound?

Dear Lamia's sad, so I must stick around
In Rome – he's weeping inconsolably
For his brother's death, but I so long to free 10
Myself from these constraints. I deem content
The country-dweller – you are different
And say that of the townsman. He will hate
His life who's fond of someone else's state.
To hate each other's choice is idiocy –
Neither deserves it – for the quandary
Lies in the mind, which cannot get away
From its own self. For you would mutely pray,
While labouring in Rome, that you might be
Out in the country, but your litany, 20
While you were steward here, would be to go
And see the games and baths. For you well know
I'm resolute in this, for when I leave
For hateful work in Rome, I give a heave
Of sadness. Clearly we think differently,
Preferring different things. What you decree
As wilderness the folks like me who hate
What you yourself call beautiful would rate
As lovely. It is brothels, then, I see,
And greasy cook-shops that urge you to be 30
In Rome. This little spot offers no booze,
Just spice and pepper, and you cannot choose
An inn to drink in, and there's no call-girl
To play the flute, inviting you to whirl
About. But you must work the fields, untilled
For years, unyoke the ox that must be filled

With leaves stripped from the boughs, and, should it rain,
 Though weary you should save your sunny plain
 With many a dam. Why are we different?
 Well, I was once considered elegant, 40
 With spiffy clothes and shining hair, and though
 I didn't have a sou, I, as you know,
 Could keep my Cynara happy, although she
 Was avaricious, and could regularly
 Enjoy a midday glass of Falernian booze,
 But now a simple meal and then a snooze
 Beside a grass-lined stream gives me such peace.
 One's folly brings no shame, but never to cease
 From folly *does*. Here no-one looks askance
 In my direction or, with a sidelong glance, 50
 Purloin my pleasures or in enmity
 Subtly poisons them. Folks laugh at me
 Out here to see me moving clods around
 And shifting stones. But *you'd* rather be found
 Eating in Rome with all your retinue
 Of slaves, whose company entices you:
 The clever peasant stripling whom we hire
 Covets your flock, the kindling for our fire
 And garden. While the ox would like to wear
 The horse's saddle; too fagged-out to bear 60
 A rider now, the horse desires to till
 The earth. Let man and beast keep to their skill.

Vala, what's Velia's winter like? Tell me.
What might the climate in Salerno be?
Its folk? Its roads? Musa Antonius,
You see, says Baiae is gratuitous
For me – through him I'm out of favour there
By being forced, while chill is in the air,
To take ice baths; the myrtle-trees, they moan,
And all the sulphur-baths are left alone,
For they once cured all ills, and they're upset
That sick folk make their heads and shoulders wet 10
In Clusium's fountains and seek Gabii
And its cold baths. There's no recourse for me
But to change my route and make my horse pass by
Familiar spots. "Where are you going? I
Don't aim for Cumae or Baiae." I tug
The left rein angrily: the horse's lug,
However, heeds the bit. What do they eat?
And, of the two, who has the better meat?
Do they collect rainwater or are there
Perennial wells to catch it? (I don't care 20
About the wines: I can bear any sort
At home, but when I'm at a coastal port
I much prefer a better one to quaff,
A wine that's smooth and mellow and casts off
My cares and causes hopefulness to stream
Into my heart and veins and makes me seem
More youthful by my verbal fluency
To a local lady. Which vicinity
Produces better rabbits, better boar

And which of those two is known better for 30

Its fish, in order that I may return

As fat as a Phaeacian? I would learn

Of you, so write me. Maenius, when he

Had squandered his inheritance vigorously,

Seemed then a city-slicker and a clown

Who wandered with no place to settle down,

Who could not tell a friend from an enemy

When uninvited to a feast, for he

Would slander someone with a counterfeit

Indignity and then would dine on it; 40

A hurricane, the market's gulf, a blight,

He'd willy-nilly, like a hungry kite.

Fill up his gut. When he'd filched not a thing,

Or very little, from those favouring

His immorality, he then would stuff

Himself with trip and lamb's entrails, enough

To feed three bears, and he'd asseverate

That gluttons' guts should with a red-hot plate

Be burned, as the reformed Bestius would say,

And then, with all this booty put away, 50

Consumed in smoke and ash, "I'm not," he'd state,

"Surprised that people squander their estate,

Since there is nothing better to consume

Than is a fat thrush or a large sow's womb."

That's me! When things are scarce, all moderation

I praise and show my staunch determination

But when some richer thing appears, I say

That only those who can afford to pay

For those expensive homes in which they dwell
Have true perceptiveness while living well.

XVI

You do not need to ask about my spread,
Dear Quintus, whether by its crops I'm fed
Or olives make me rich or apple-trees
Or vineyards, for I'll speak of all of these
Non-stop: even its shape and site I'll share
With you. First, there are uplands everywhere
Around a shady valley, though sunlight
At daybreak shows itself upon the right,
While on the left, when the chariot leaves the sky,
It arms us. You would praise the climate. I 10
Must tell you of the fertile shrubs which grow
Plums and red berries; you should also know
About the oaks and ilex-trees which shed
Their fruits so that the cattle may be fed
And offer shade to me. Indeed you'd say
Verdant Tarentum had been brought this way.
There is a spring you'd almost call a river
That can cure headaches, good, too, for the liver:
It's just as cold as the as the Hebrus down in Thrace,
And just as pure. It is a lovely place, 20
A refuge, honestly, that's keeping me
Safe from late summer heat's intensity.
You live a decent life, too, if it's true
That everyone in Rome says this of you;

I fear, though, that what other folk conceive
Of you you measure more than *you* believe,
Or think that someone else's happiness
Comes not from wisdom or highmindedness
Or, although people say repeatedly
That you are healthy, your infirmity 30
You hide till shaky hands show your deceit
When you, with those scrubbed hands, sit down to eat.
To hide one's ulcers is false modesty.
For if your battles both by land and sea
Are spoken of and someone soothes you thus:
"Let Jove decide whether the populus
Loves you, or you it, better, for it's he
Who cares for both", you'd rate such eulogy
Meant for Augustus: if you should permit
Someone to praise your purity and wit, 40
Do you reply with thanks and say, "I do
Love to be called prudent and good, like you."
He who says this may, on the following day,
Thinking that you're unworthy, take away
Your badge of office: "Off with it," says he,
"It's mine." I take it off and gloomily
Depart. If he should say that I'm a thief,
An outright villain, holding the belief
That I have hanged my father, should I turn
Scarlet and at these bogus charges burn? 50
False praise delights and lying calumny
Scares only those who deal in falsity
Themselves and need a shrink. Who is, in fact,

A good man? He who knows each legal act,
Observing all, he whose sagacity
Solves many great cases and whose surety
And testimony count. His family, though,
And the surrounding neighbourhood all know
That under his becoming outside hide
There lurks a diabolic man inside. 60

"I'm not a thief, I've never run away,"
My slave tells me. "Alright, here is your pay –
No lashings," I tell him. "I never slew
A man." "The crows will never feed on you
Upon a cross." "I'm good." Someone down here
Would shake his head. For cautious wolves feel fear
Of hidden pits, kites hooks and hawks the gin.
Through love of virtue honest folk hate sin.
You never sin, fearing some penalty,
But if you hold out hope that you may see 70

A way out, sacred and profane you'd feel
Were just the same. You see, if you should steal
From my one thousand bushels just one bean,
My loss is less, your crime, though, always seen
As crime. He whom the courts admire,
Whenever upon the sacrificial fire
He offers an ox or pig, he ringingly
Shouts "Janus" or "Apollo": secretly,
However, he will mutter, "Let me cheat,
O fair Laverna: cast a misty sheet 80

About my faults and let an honest man
Appear. Is a greedy fellow better than

A slave when in the streets he bends down low
 To snatch a penny stuck in mud? Not so!
 Greed's paired with fear. Who feels anxiety
 Throughout his life will not be wholly free.
 The man who's conquered by his hankering
 For gain has lost his arms, abandoning
 The ranks of Virtue. When you have to choose
 To kill or sell a captive, you'll not lose 90
 By selling him – if brawny, he could be
 Your shepherd, ploughman or serve you at sea
 As merchant driving through the wintry straits
 Or help you in the market, bearing crates
 Of grains. A wise and honest men will dare
 To say, "Pentheus, why do you make me bear
 Unworthy woes?" "Your goods I'll take away."
 "My herd, farm, bed and cutlery, you say?
 Take them and welcome." "I will shackle you
 And jail you piteously." "Well, if you do, 100
 My god will free me." I think, speaking thus,
 He means he'll die. Death waits for all of us.

XVII

Scaeva, you deal in business splendidly
 And handle eminent men efficiently,
 But still – though I've a lot to learn, I know
 (Indeed, as if a blind man tried to show
 The way) – attend your friend and see if he
 Can't tell you something of utility.

If you like peace and sleeping till daybreak
 And hate the din that dusty coach-wheels make
 And noisy pubs, to Ferentinum go!
 For it's not only wealthy folks who know 10
 Delight, and there are people who live well
 Yet all their lives in unimportance dwell.
 If you should wish to help your friends and treat
 Yourself a little better, then retreat,
 Though poor, to a rich man's house. Someone once said,
 "If Aristippus patiently had fed
 On cabbages, he never would abide
 With kings." Said Aristippus: "Since you chide,
 You'd never dine on cabbages again
 If you could learn how to abide with men 20
 Who rule." Which of what those two do and say
 Is better, in your opinion? Fire away!
 Or, since you are my junior, listen to me
 And hear why Aristippus' theory
 Is preferable – he baffled, so they say,
 The snarling Cynic. "The buffoon I play
 Is for myself, yours for the populus.
 My way is better and more decorous.
 I serve the king so that I might possess
 A horse and eat, you beg and thus are less 30
 Than him who gives, though always boasting you
 Depend on no-one." Every single hue,
 Each rank, each circumstance would gratify
 Aristippus, although he was aiming high,
 Content, though, with his lot. On the other hand,

I wonder if that Cynic could withstand
A better life, a man whose sole attire
Was two-fold rags. His opposite wouldn't require
A purple robe, for through the busy throng,
Dressed in what came to hand, he'd walk along 40
The streets, each role portrayed with courtliness.
The Cynic, though, would never think to dress
In a Miletian cloak - with it he'd make
Comparison to a mangy dog or snake.
Without his rags, the man would freeze to death,
And therefore give that foolish Cynic breath
And hand them back. Great warriors who have fought
Bravely and to the citizens have brought
Captives on show have risen to the sky
And touched the throne of Jove. To gratify 50
One's emperor won't win the greatest praise.
Not all may go to Corinth. That man stays
Put who's afraid that he will not succeed.
But was he brave who finalized his deed?
Our quest is here if it is anywhere.
One man's afraid his load's too heavy to bear,
Another carries it successfully.
He who takes up a task deservedly
Claims approbation and a worthy prize –
The name of virtue's empty otherwise. 60
Those who stay mum about their poverty
When face-to-face with monarchs, soon will see
More gain than those who play the suppliant.
Receiving in a shy and reticent

Manner differs from snatching. That's the spring,
The fountainhead, the source of everything
I've said. "My sister's dowerless," one hears,
"My poor old mother's badly in arrears,
I can't unload my farm, the little wheat
I have won't feed us." The one hears him bleat,
"Give me some food." "Me, too," another cries.
The gift, divided, is reduced in size.