

On Old Age

Cato Maior de Senectute

Cicero

translated by E. S. Shuckburgh

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On Old Age (Cato Maior de Senectute)

Translated by E. S. Shuckburgh, 1900. Cato the Elder, aged eighty-four, answers the four charges laid against old age, and closes with the soul's hope of immortality.

Introduction by James S. Reid

(i.) ORIGIN AND SCOPE.

1. Date and Circumstances of Composition.

The date at which the *Cato Maior* was written can be determined with almost perfect exactness. A mention in Cicero's work entitled *De Divinatione* shows that the *Cato Maior* preceded that work by a short time. The *De Divinatione* was written after the assassination of Caesar, that is, after the 15th of March in the year 44. Again, the *Cato Maior* is mentioned as a recent work in three letters addressed by Cicero to Atticus. The earliest of these letters was written on or about the 12th of May, 44. We shall hardly err, therefore, if we assume that Cicero composed the *Cato Maior* in April of the year 44. This agrees also with slight indications in the work itself. In the dedicatory introduction Cicero speaks of troubles weighing heavily on himself and Atticus. Any one who reads the letters to Atticus despatched in April, 44, will have little doubt that the troubles hinted at are the apprehensions as to the course of Antonius, from whom Cicero had personally something to fear. Atticus was using all the influence he could bring to bear on Antonius in order to secure Cicero's safety; hence Cicero's care to avoid in the dedication all but the vaguest possible allusions to politics. Had that introduction been written before Caesar's death, we should have had plain allusions (as in the prooemia of the *Academica*, the *De Finibus*, the *Tusculan Disputations*, and the *De Natura Deorum*) to Caesar's dictatorship.

The time was one of desperate gloom for Cicero. The downfall of the old constitution had overwhelmed him with sorrow, and his brief outburst of joy over Caesar's death had been quickly succeeded by disgust and alarm at the proceedings of Antonius. The deep wound caused by his daughter's death was

still unhealed. It is easy to catch in the *Cato Maior* some echoes of his grief for her. When it is said that of all Cato's titles to admiration none is higher than the fortitude he showed in bearing the death of his son, the writer is thinking of the struggle he himself had been waging against a like sorrow for more than a year past; and when Cato expresses his firm conviction that he will meet his child beyond the grave, we can see Cicero's own yearning for reunion with his deeply loved Tullia.

2. Greek Sources.

All Cicero's philosophical and rhetorical writings were confessedly founded more or less on Greek originals. The stores from which he principally drew in writing the *Cato Maior* are clearly indicated in several parts of the work. Passages from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* are translated in Chapters 17 and 22. In Chapters 2 and 3 there is a close imitation of the conversation between Socrates and Cephalus at the beginning of Plato's *Republic*, while in Chapter 21 is reproduced one of the most striking portions of the *Phaedo*, 72 E-73 B, 78-80. The view of the divine origin and destiny of the human soul contained in the passage from the *Phaedo* is rendered by Cicero in many of his works, and was held by him with quite a religious fervor and sincerity.

Besides these instances of special indebtedness Cicero, in composing the *Cato Maior*, was no doubt under obligations of a more general kind to the Greeks. The form of the dialogue is Greek, and Aristotelian rather than Platonic. But further, it is highly probable that Cicero owed to some particular Greek dialogue on Old Age the general outline of the arguments he there brings forward. Many of the Greek illustrative allusions may have had the same origin, though in many cases Roman illustrations must have been substituted for Greek. Whether the dialogue by Aristo Cius, cursorily mentioned in the *Cato Maior*, was at all used by Cicero or not it is impossible to determine.

3. Purpose.

The *Cato Maior* is a popular essay in Ethics, applying the principles of philosophy to the alleviation of one of life's chief burdens, old age. In ancient times, when philosophy formed the real and only religion of the educated class, themes like this were deemed to afford a worthy employment for the pens even of the greatest philosophers. Such essays formed the only substitute

the ancients had for our Sermons. There can be no doubt of Cicero's sincerity when he says that the arguments he sets forth in the treatise had given him real comfort, and the opening words of the dedication show that he meant and hoped to administer the same comfort to his friend Atticus, who indeed acknowledged the benefit he derived from the work. When Cicero wrote the treatise he was himself sixty-two years of age, while his friend was three years older. He speaks, therefore, rather euphemistically when he says that his purpose is to lighten the trouble of an old age which is already close at hand, or at all events approaching.

But in addition to the main ethical purpose, there was, as in many of Cicero's works, a distinct political purpose. He desired to stimulate in his readers an admiration for what he regarded as the golden age of Roman politics, the era of the Punic wars, and to do this by making the contrast between that age and his own appear as striking as possible. A like double purpose is apparent throughout the *De Re Publica*, where Africanus the younger is the chief personage, and in the treatise on Friendship, where Laelius is the central figure. For the dialogue on Old Age M. Porcius Cato the Censor is selected as the principal speaker for two reasons: first, because he was renowned for the vigor of mind and body he displayed in advanced life; and secondly, because in him were conspicuously exhibited the serious simplicity, the unswerving adherence to principle, and the self-sacrificing patriotism which were the ideal Roman virtues, and which Cicero could not find among the politicians of his time.

4. Form and Language.

The *Cato Maior*, like most of Cicero's philosophical writings, is cast in the form of a dialogue. Among the ancients the dialogue was a common rhetorical device, especially in the presentation of abstruse subjects. The introduction of characters to conduct the discussion gave vividness and clearness to the unfolding of the argument, as well as a kind of dramatic interest to the production. In the *Cato Maior* and the *Laelius*, as generally, Cicero followed the plan of Aristotle's dialogues (now lost) rather than that of the dialogues of Plato. In the former there was more of exposition and less of discussion than in the latter; one person stated his views on some question, and the company

in attendance only made occasional remarks without attempting to debate the question. In the latter, although one person, Socrates, is everywhere prominent, others are continually drawn into the discussions, and there is a quick interchange of question and answer. The Aristotelian form was better adapted to Cicero's purposes than the Platonic; the progress of the argument was less interrupted, and thus better opportunity for a symmetrical development of the theme was afforded. Then, too, the former was more popular. The style of Aristotle had been imitated by Theophrastus and many other writers down to Cicero's time, while that of Plato had found hardly any imitators.

The editors of the *Cato Maior* have generally assumed that Cicero attempted to give an antique coloring to the diction of the dialogue in order to remind readers of Cato's own style. It is only necessary to read a page or two of Cato's *De Re Rustica* to have this illusion dispelled. The only things actually alleged to be archaisms are (1) the use of deponent participles as passives in §§ 4, 59, 74, a thing common enough in Cicero; (2) the occurrence of *quasi* = *quem ad modum* in § 71; (3) of *audaciter* = *audacter* in § 72; (4) of *tuerentur* for *intuerentur* in § 77; (5) of *neutiquam* in § 42; (6) of the nominative of the gerundive governing an accusative case in § 6. In every instance the notes will supply a refutation of the allegation. That Cicero should attempt to write in any style but his own is exceedingly improbable.

5. Personages.

The conversation is supposed to take place between Cato, Scipio Africanus the younger, and Laelius, in the year before Cato's death, i.e. 150 B.C., when he was in his eighty-fourth year, Scipio being about 35 and Laelius a few years older.

(1.) Cato. M. Porcius Cato was born in 234 B.C. at the ancient Latin town of Tusculum. Little is known of his family except that it was plebeian, and possessed a small patrimony in the territory of the Sabines, close to the farm of M'. Curius Dentatus, one of Cato's great heroes and models. The heads of the family, so far as memory extended, had distinguished themselves as tough warriors and hardy farmers. Among the Sabines, who even down to the times of the Empire were famed for simplicity of manners and the practice of all the

sterner virtues, Cato passed those portions of his life which were not occupied with business of state. From his earliest days he toiled in his own fields, and contented himself with the hardest rustic life. Yet even in his boyhood Cato must have passed intervals at Rome, and seen something of the great statesmen and generals of the time. He seems to have received when young as thorough an education as was possible without learning Greek, such an education as was to be obtained only in the capital. He grew up to manhood in the comparatively quiet period between the first and the second Punic wars; the most exciting event of his younger years must have been the destruction at Clastidium of the vast hordes of Celts who had swept over the northern half of Italy, almost within reach of Rome.

Cato was of the age for military service about the time of the battle of Lake Trasimenus, and entered the army then as a common soldier. The first expedition in which he is definitely said to have taken part is that of Q. Fabius Maximus Cunctator against Hannibal in Campania, in 214. This Roman commander was a man entirely after Cato's heart, and became one of his models in public life.

Before and during the early years of his soldier's life, Cato succeeded in winning some reputation as an orator, having practised first in the provincial courts near his home, and afterwards at Rome. This reputation as well as his great force of character procured for him a powerful life-long friend and patron, M. Valerius Flaccus, a statesman of the old Roman conservative-democratic school of politics, the leader of which was Fabius Cunctator. Through the influence of Flaccus, possibly with the aid of Fabius, Cato became military tribune, and served with that rank under Marcellus in Sicily, under Fabius again at the capture of Tarentum in 209, and under C. Claudius Nero at the battle of the Metaurus, where he contributed materially to that great victory.

In 204 Cato began his political career with the quaestorship. As he was a novus homo and a man of small private means, it was no small distinction that he had forced his way to office in his thirtieth year. The lot assigned him as quaestor to Scipio, then in Sicily and about to cross over into Africa. The chance was most unfortunate, if for no other reason, because Cato was

intimately connected with the party in the senate opposed to Scipio, which had been attempting to bring him to trial for the atrocities committed by the Roman army in southern Italy. But in addition the two men were so utterly different that there was no possibility of the quaestor standing in that filial relation to his consul, which old Roman custom required. As financial officer, Cato complained of the luxury and extravagance which Scipio allowed not only to himself but to his army. Yet the complaint was made not so much on economic as on moral grounds; it seemed to Cato that the old Roman discipline and power to endure hardships were being swept away. The dispute was ended by Scipio allowing Cato to return to Rome, some authorities say from Sicily, others from Africa. According to one writer, he came home by way of Sardinia and brought thence with him Ennius the poet.

In 199 Cato was plebeian aedile, and exercised with severity the police jurisdiction pertaining to that office, yet so as to win popular approval, since he was chosen praetor for 198 without the usual interval. The province of Sardinia was entrusted to him, and he strained every nerve to make his government present as strong a contrast as possible with the lax and corrupt administration of the nobles who took Scipio for their pattern. The troops were sternly disciplined, and law-breakers of every kind severely dealt with; in money matters the strictest economy prevailed; all gifts from provincials to Roman officers were forbidden. The praetor, the great representative of Roman power, passed from town to town attended by a single servant.

In 196 Cato was occupied with his canvass for the consulship of the year 195, to which he was elected in company with his friend Flaccus. Cato was the first *novus homo* elected since C. Flaminius, the consul of 217. It is probable, though not certain, that he paved the way to his election by carrying the first of the *leges Porciae*, restricting the right of punishing Roman citizens. During the whole of his career Cato showed a high sense of the importance of the individual *civis Romanus*.

One of the first official acts of the new consul was to deliver a set speech to the people against a proposal to repeal the Oppian law, passed twenty years before, the object of which was to prevent lavish expenditure on dress and adornments, particularly by women. We have a lively report of Cato's speech

from Livy's pen, partly founded on the speech as published by Cato himself. The earnest pleading in favor of simple manners and economy failed, after having almost caused an open insurrection on the part of the women.

The two new provinces in Spain, Hispania Citerior and Ulterior, were still in a very unsettled state. The nearer province was made a consular province and assigned to Cato; the praetor who governed the farther province was also placed under Cato's jurisdiction. Before leaving Rome Cato carried a law for protecting the provincials from extortion. During the whole of his year of office he practised with the utmost exactness his principles of purity, simplicity, and economy in public affairs. He is said to have started from his house on the journey to Spain with only three servants, but when he got as far as the forum, it struck him that such an attendance was scarcely worthy of a Roman consul; so he purchased two more slaves on the spot! In the same spirit, before returning he sold his horse that the state might not be at the expense of transporting it to Italy. Cato was no less careful of the revenue than of the expenditure. He largely increased the productiveness of the mines and other property belonging to the state, and all goods captured from the enemy were sold for the benefit of the exchequer. On leaving the province Cato made an unusually large gift to each soldier, saying that it was better for all to bring home silver than for a few to bring home gold. The provincials were thoroughly content with their ruler and ever after looked on him as their best friend. The army was kept in the strictest discipline. Some disorderly conduct of the equites was rebuked by Cato in a bitter harangue which he afterwards published. Partly by craft, partly by good leadership in the field, Cato broke the strength of the turbulent natives and returned to enjoy a well-earned triumph. In the same year (194) a brilliant triumph was celebrated by Flamininus.

Scipio, probably uneasy at the great reputations quickly won by Flamininus and Cato, secured his second consulship for the year 194, but failed to achieve anything remarkable. Cato probably spent the three years after his return for the most part at his Sabine farm. When the war against Antiochus broke out, he took service along with his friend Flaccus on the staff of the consul Glabrio, and by a difficult march over the mountains broke in on the king's rear, and so was chiefly instrumental in winning the great battle of Thermopylae, by

which Antiochus was driven out of Greece. Immediately after the battle Cato returned home with despatches. We have dim and uncertain information that he took the field once or twice again, but his career as a soldier was practically ended.

From this time to his death, forty years later, Cato was the leading figure on the stage of Roman politics. In season and out of season he attacked abuses or innovations in speeches addressed to the senate, the people, or the courts. Soon after his return from Thessaly he struck a heavy blow at the unrepblican honor-hunting among the magistrates, of which the example had been set by P. Scipio Africanus. Most provincial governors drove their subjects into war, sent lying despatches home about their victories, and claimed a triumph. In 190 Cato attacked with success the proposal to grant a triumph to Q. Minucius Thermus, who had already triumphed over the Spaniards as praetor, and after his consulship in 193 had fought against the Ligurians. Cato's next victim was his former commander M'. Acilius Glabrio, who came forward at the same time with Cato, Marcellus (a son of the captor of Syracuse), L. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, T. Quinctius Flaminius (the conqueror of Macedonia) and Cato's friend L. Valerius Flaccus, as candidate for the censorship of 189. Cato by his violent speeches procured the trial of Glabrio for appropriating the plunder captured in Thessaly, and himself gave evidence concerning some property which had disappeared. Glabrio denounced Cato as a perjurer, but yet retired from his candidature. On this occasion Cato and Flaccus failed, Marcellus being elected as plebeian and Flaminius as patrician censor.

In the next year (188) Cato acted in the senate with the party which tried unsuccessfully to refuse the triumph to the two consuls of 189, M. Fulvius Nobilior and Cn. Manlius Vulso, the former of whom had gained none but trifling advantages over the Aetolians, while the latter had disgraced the Roman name by making war without authorization upon the Gauls of Asia Minor, and had also suffered a humiliating defeat from some Thracian robber bands on his homeward march. Not disheartened by ill success, Cato and his friends determined to strike at higher game. L. Scipio Asiaticus (or Asiagenus), the brother of Africanus, was asserted in the senate to have appropriated 3000 talents of public money when in command against Antiochus. Legal

proceedings were taken not only against Asiaticus, but against Africanus, who behaved with great violence and arrogance. In the end Africanus withdrew to his country estate, while his brother was condemned to pay a heavy fine. A death-stroke had been given to the almost kingly authority of Africanus, who never again showed his face in Rome. The proceedings against the Scipios seem to have begun in 187 and not to have been completed before 185.

Nearly twenty years had passed since the conflict between Cato and Scipio began, and now it had ended in a complete triumph for Cato. But the new modes of which Scipio was the chief patron were too strong to be conquered, and Cato spent the rest of his life in fighting a hopeless battle against them, though he fought for a time with the strongest weapons that the constitution supplied. In 184 he was censor along with Flaccus, who seems to have allowed his colleague full liberty of action. Every portion of the censor's duty was carried out on the most severe and 'old Roman' principles. Seven senators were degraded, among them L. Flamininus, an ex-consul and brother of the 'liberator of the Hellenes,' for serious misconduct, also Manilius, an ex-praetor, for no worse offence than that of having kissed his wife in presence of his daughter. M. Furius Purpurio, who had actually competed with Cato for the censorship, was punished for diverting a public aqueduct for his private advantage. Flaccus was named leader of the senate in the place of Scipio Africanus, now dead.

On reviewing the equites, Cato removed from that body L. Scipio and many others on various charges: this one had allowed himself to grow too fat for horsemanship; that had failed to groom his horse properly; another had neglected his farm; another again had made an untimely jest on the occasion of the review itself. With the ordinary citizens Cato dealt just as harshly. In his censorian edict he sharply reproved the extravagance prevalent at private feasts. All articles of luxury, such as slaves purchased at fancy prices, luxurious clothing, carriages, statues, and pictures were rendered liable to heavy taxation. In this way Cato revenged himself for the repeal of the Oppian law.

In looking after the property and income of the state Cato followed the same principles he had acted on in Spain. He reduced the expenditure on public works as far as possible, and took care to sell at the full price the right to collect

the revenue. Encroachments on the property of the nation were severely punished.

Not by acts only, but by constant speeches, full at once of grimness and humor, did Cato struggle against the degeneracy of his time. He concluded his period of office with a self-laudatory harangue, and assumed the title Censorius, while his statue was placed in the temple of the goddess Salus with an inscription affirming that he had reformed the Roman nation.

But in a very brief time all trace of Cato's activity as censor was swept away, except that afforded by the numerous life-long quarrels in which he had involved himself. In less than two years one of his victims, Purpurio, was employed by the senate on a high political mission, while another, L. Flamininus, sat among the senators at the games in defiance of Cato's sentence. Yet Cato remained by far the most powerful member of the senate. Titus Flamininus, his only important rival, quickly passed out of notice. So far as there was any democratic opposition to the senatorial oligarchy, Cato was the leader of that opposition for the remainder of his life. But at that period no great political movements agitated the state within; nearly the whole interest of the time was centred in the foreign relations of Rome. On matters of foreign policy Cato offered but little opposition to the prevailing tendencies of the age, though on particular occasions he exercised great influence. But his voice was at all times loudly heard on all questions of morality and public order. He supported the *lex Furia* and the *lex Voconia*, the object of which was to prevent the dissipation of family property, and the *lex Orchia*, directed against extravagant expenditure on feasts, also the *lex Baebia de ambitu*, the first serious attempt to check bribery. We hear also that Cato bitterly attacked Lepidus, censor in 180, for erecting a permanent theatre in place of the movable booths before used. The building was actually pulled down. We are told that from time to time he denounced the misdoings of provincial governors. In 171 he was one of a commission of five for bringing to justice three ex-praetors who had practised all manner of corruption in Spain. Almost the last act of his life was to prosecute Galba for cruel misgovernment of the Lusitanians. The titles of Cato's speeches show that he played a great part in the deliberations of the senate concerning foreign affairs, but as his fighting days were over and he was unfitted for diplomacy, we have little explicit

evidence of his activity in this direction. At the end of the third Macedonian war he successfully opposed the annexation of Macedonia. He also saved from destruction the Rhodians, who during the war had plainly desired the victory of Perseus, and in the early days, when the Roman commanders had ill success, had deeply wounded the whole Roman nation by an offer to mediate between them and the king of Macedon.

Cato had all his life retained his feeling of enmity to the Carthaginians, whom Scipio, he thought, had treated too tenderly. In 150 he was one of an embassy sent to Carthage, and came back filled with alarm at the prosperity of the city. It is said that whatever was the subject on which he was asked for his opinion in the senate, he always ended his speech with 'ceterum censeo delendam esse Carthaginem'. P. Scipio Nasica, the son-in-law of Africanus, and the representative of his policy, always shouted out the opposite opinion, thinking that the fear of Carthage had a salutary effect on the Roman populace at large. But the ideas of Cato prevailed, and a cruel policy, carried out with needless brutality, led to the extinction of Rome's greatest rival. Cato did not live to see the conclusion of the war; he died in 149, at the age of 84 or 85 years, having retained his mental and physical vigor to the last. He had two sons, one by his first wife, and one by his second wife, born when Cato was 80 years of age. The elder son, to whom many of Cato's works were addressed, died as praetor-elect, before his father. The other was grandfather of Cato Uticensis.

The literary activity of the old censor was great, though his leisure was small. In Cicero's time a collection of 150 speeches was still extant. The titles of about 90 are still known to us, and of some we possess a few fragments. Cato's greatest work, however, was his *Origines*, the first real historical work written in Latin. His predecessors had been merely compilers of chronicles. The work was founded on laborious investigations, and comprised the history of Rome from the earliest times perhaps down to 150 B.C., as well as notices of the history of other important Italian states. Further, Cato wrote of Agriculture, to which he was enthusiastically devoted. We still have his *De Re Rustica*, a collection of maxims loosely strung together. He also composed works on law; a sort of educational encyclopaedia for his son; and a collection of witty sayings, *Αποφθεγματα*, drawn from Greek as well as from Roman sources.

Plutarch seems to have known a collected edition of the pungent and proverbial utterances for which the censor was famous, and for which (not for any knowledge of philosophy) he received the title of sapiens ('shrewd') which he bore at the end of his life. This edition, however, was not compiled by Cato himself.

In view of Cicero's treatise, the *Cato Maior*, it is necessary to say something of Cato's relations with the Greeks and Greek literature. The ancients give us merely vague statements that he only began to learn Greek 'in his old age.' The expression must be liberally interpreted if, as seems clear, the whole of his writings showed the influence of Greek literature. It is certain, however, that he thoroughly detested the Greek nation. This hatred was shown in acts more than once. No doubt Cato was at least a consenting party to the expulsion from Rome of Greek teachers in 161 B.C. When in 155 the famous embassy came from Athens consisting of Carneades the Academic, Critolaus the Peripatetic and Diogenes the Stoic, Cato was a prime mover of the decree by which they were removed from the city. Socrates was one of Cato's favorite marks for jests. And this is the man into whose mouth Cicero puts the utterances, but slightly veiled, of Greek wisdom!

(2.) Scipio. P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the younger, was no blood relation of the conqueror of Hannibal, but the adopted son of his son. It must be remembered, however, that adoption was much more formal and binding, and produced much closer ties in ancient than in modern times. The elder Africanus was unfortunate in his sons. The younger of these attained to the praetorship in 174, but was immediately driven from the senate by the censors of that year on account of his disreputable life. The elder was an invalid, who never held any office except that of augur, and died at an early age. He adopted the son of L. Aemilius Paulus, the victor of Pydna; the adopted son bore the name Aemilianus in memory of his origin. Cato's son married a daughter of Paulus, so that the censor was brought into relationship with the Corneli, whose most illustrious representative he had hated and attacked.

The young Scipio was born about 185, and when scarce 17 years old fought with daring bravery at Pydna. While still very young he showed a great devotion to study, which he retained through life. He was a thorough partisan

of the new Greek learning, and grouped around him in friendship all the leaders of the Hellenistic movement. Among his dearest friends were Polybius, the Greek statesman and historian, and later Panaetius, the Stoic. In 151 B.C. when the consuls found it difficult to enlist officers and men for service in Spain, where great defeats had been suffered, Scipio volunteered, and served with great distinction as military tribune. When the war with Carthage broke out he held the same rank, and shone by comparison with his blundering superior officers. Coming to Rome in 148 he stood for the aedileship, but was elected consul for the year 147, and again for 146, when he finished the war. He is said to have grieved over the fate of Carthage, and to have dreaded any further increase of the Roman territory. In 142 Scipio was censor, and acted with almost Catonian severity. In 134, though not a candidate, he was elected to the consulship and put in command of the Roman army then besieging the city of Numantia in Spain. The war, of which this siege formed a part, had been going on for some years most disastrously for the Romans, but Scipio speedily brought it to a conclusion in 133. While before Numantia he received news of the murder of Ti. Gracchus, whose sister he had married and whose cousin he had become by adoption, but whose policy he had on the whole opposed, though he had occasionally coquetted with the democrats. This course cost him the favor of the people, and when in 131 he desired to conduct the war against Aristonicus, only two of the thirty-five tribes voted for his appointment. In 129, after a violent scene in the senate, where he had opposed the carrying out of Ti. Gracchus' agrarian law, he was triumphantly escorted home by a crowd, composed chiefly of Italians whose interests had been threatened by the law. Next morning he was found dead in his bed. Opinion as to the cause of his death was divided at the time and so remained. In the Laelius the death is assumed to have been from natural causes. Elsewhere, however, Cicero adopts the view of many of Scipio's friends that he was murdered by Carbo. Carbo afterwards lent color to the suspicions by putting himself to death, in order, as was supposed, to avoid a direct prosecution. In ancient times even C. Gracchus was suspected of having thus avenged his brother's death, but no modern scholar of any rank has countenanced the suspicion.

Whether the degree of intimacy between Cato and Scipio, which Cicero assumes, ever existed or not, cannot be determined. There was much in Scipio that would attract Cato. Unlike the elder Africanus, he was severe and simple in his outward life, and though a lover of Greek and Greeks, yet attached to all that was best in the old Roman character and polity. Though an opponent of revolution, he was far from being a partisan of the oligarchy. Altogether, of all Romans, he most nearly deserved the description, ‘*ἄνθρωπος τετραγώνος ἀνεψόγου*,’ ‘a man four-square without reproach.’ In his *De Re Publica*, Cicero points to Scipio as the ideal statesman, and often elsewhere eulogizes him as an almost perfect Roman.

(3.) Laelius. Gaius Laelius, born about 186, was Scipio’s most distinguished officer before Carthage, and his most intimate friend throughout life. The friendship of the two was one of the most famous in antiquity, and is celebrated in the *Laelius*. Laelius was an able speaker, writer and soldier, and devoted to Greek learning, particularly to the Stoic philosophy. He is with Cicero the type of a man of culture. He, too, is one of the interlocutors in the *De Re Publica*.

(ii.) SUBJECT-MATTER.

1. General View.

The *Cato Maior* falls naturally into three parts: —

Preliminary, dedication to Atticus, §§ 1-3;

Introductory Conversation, 4-9;

Cato’s Defence of Old Age, 10-85.

After § 9 Cato continues to express his views on old age without interruption to the end, and the dialogue thus becomes really a monologue.

2. Analysis.

Preliminary ... 1-3.

Cicero, addressing Atticus, states his purpose in writing the book and the effect of the work on himself (1, 2), the reasons for putting the sentiments on old age into the mouth of Cato, and the circumstances of the supposed conversation (3).

Introductory Conversation ... 4-9.

Scipio declares his admiration of Cato's vigorous and happy old age. Cato replies that the secret lies in following the guidance of Nature (4, 5). Laelius then asks Cato to point out the road to such an old age as his own (6). This the old man promises to do, but first remarks that the faults charged against old age are generally due to defects of character (7). Laelius suggests that prosperity makes Cato's declining years pleasant. Cato admits that there may be some truth in this, but maintains that right character alone can make old age tolerable (8, 9).

Cato's Defence of Old Age ... 10-85.

A. Introductory argument from fact. Account of celebrated old men whose lives till death were useful and happy ... 10-14

(a). Fabius Maximus ... 10-12 (b). Plato; (c). Isocrates; (d). Gorgias ... 13 (e). Ennius ... 14

B. Refutation of charges made against old age ... 15-85

Statement of the four charges commonly made against old age: it withdraws men from active life, it weakens the physical powers, it takes away capacity for enjoyment, and it involves the anticipation of death ... 15

A. Refutation of the first charge, that old age withdraws from active life.

(a). There are employments suited to old age which are as necessary to the well-being of society as those which require greater physical powers ... 15-20

(b). The special objection that old men have weak memories is answered by showing that this is due either to an original defect or to insufficient exercise ... 21-22

(c). Argument from fact: instances of old men in public and in private life who till death were actively at work ... 23-26

B. Rebuttal of the second charge, that old age weakens the physical powers.

(a). Old age does not desire nor require the strength of youth, because it may exert influence through other means. Instances cited to show this ... 27-32

(b). Temperate habits will retain a good measure of strength till old age (33, 34); many instances of weakness in old age may be attributed to ill-health, which is common to all periods of life (35); proper care will greatly retard decay ... 33-38

C. Refutation of the third charge, that old age takes away the capacity for enjoyment

(a). The pleasures in which youth finds its keenest enjoyment are in themselves bad, and old age is beneficent in freeing from their allurements ... 39-44

(b). Old age has pleasures far more refined and satisfying than those of sense ... 45-64 Such as, those of conversation and literature (45-50); especially those of agriculture (51-61); and lastly, the exercise of influence, which old age will always possess if a rightly spent youth has preceded ... (62-64).

(c). The special objection that old men's tempers spoil their enjoyments is met by the statement that this is the fault of character, not of age ... 65

D. Refutation of the fourth charge, that old age is unhappy because it involves the anticipation of death.

(a). Since the right aim of life is to live not long but well, death ought not to be dreaded at any age ... 66-69

(b). Old men, especially those of learning and culture, ought not to fear death ... 70-76 Because, that which is according to nature is good, and it is natural for old men to die (70-73); the process of dying is brief and almost painless (74); even young men and those without learning often set the example of despising death (75); and old age, just as the other periods of life, has finally its season of ripeness and satiety (76).

(c). Death is probably the gateway to a happy immortality ... 77-85 Tending towards proof of this are the arguments stated in Plato; viz. the rapidity of the mind's action, its powers of memory and invention, its self-activity, indivisible nature and pre-existence (78); also the arguments, attributed to Cyrus, based upon the soul's immateriality, the posthumous fame of great men and the likeness of death to sleep (79-81); the instinctive belief in immortality, so strong as even to form an incentive for action (82); and, finally, the speaker's own longing after immortality and hope of union with those whom he once

knew and loved (83-85).

On Old Age

And should my service, Titus, ease the weight
Of care that wrings your heart, and draw the sting
Which rankles there, what guerdon shall there be?

1. FOR I may address you, Atticus, in the lines in which Flamininus was addressed by the man,

who, poor in wealth, was rich in honour's gold,
though I am well assured that you are not, as Flamininus was,
kept on the rack of care by night and day.

For I know how well ordered and equable your mind is, and am fully aware that it was not a surname alone which you brought home with you from Athens, but its culture and good sense. And yet I have an idea that you are at times stirred to the heart by the same circumstances as myself. To console you for these is a more serious matter, and must be put off to another time. For the present I have resolved to dedicate to you an essay on Old Age. For from the burden of impending or at least advancing age, common to us both, I would do something to relieve us both though as to yourself I am fully aware that you support and will support it, as you do everything else, with calmness and philosophy. But directly I resolved to write on old age, you at once occurred to me as deserving a gift of which both of us might take advantage. To myself, indeed, the composition of this book has been so delightful, that it has not only wiped away all the disagreeables of old age, but has even made it luxurious and delightful too. Never, therefore, can philosophy be praised as highly as it deserves considering that its faithful disciple is able to spend every period of his life with unruffled feelings. However, on other subjects I have spoken at large, and shall often speak again: this hook which I herewith send you is on Old Age. I have put the whole discourse not, as Alisto of Cos did, in the mouth of Tithonus — for a mere fable would have lacked conviction — but in that of Marcus Cato when he was an old man, to give my essay greater

weight. I represent Laelius and Scipio at his house expressing surprise at his carrying his years so lightly, and Cato answering them. If he shall seem to shew somewhat more learning in this discourse than he generally did in his own books, put it down to the Greek literature of which it is known that he became an eager student in his old age. But what need of more? Cato's own words will at once explain all I feel about old age.

M. Cato. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (the younger). Gaius Laelius.

2. Scipio. Many a time have I in conversation with my friend Gaius Laelius here expressed my admiration, Marcus Cato, of the eminent, nay perfect, wisdom displayed by you indeed at all points, but above everything because I have noticed that old age never seemed a burden to you, while to most old men it is so hateful that they declare themselves under a weight heavier than Aetna.

Cato. Your admiration is easily excited, it seems, my dear Scipio and Laelius. Men, of course, who have no resources in themselves for securing a good and happy life find every age burdensome. But those who look for all happiness from within can never think anything bad which nature makes inevitable. In that category before anything else comes old age, to which all wish to attain, and at which all grumble when attained. Such is Folly's inconsistency and unreasonableness! They say that it is stealing upon them faster than they expected. In the first place, who compelled them to hug an illusion? For in what respect did old age steal upon manhood faster than manhood upon childhood? In the next place, in what way would old age have been less disagreeable to them if they were in their eight-hundredth year than in their eightieth? For their past, however long, when once it was past, would have no consolation for a stupid old age. Wherefore, if it is your wont to admire my wisdom — and I would that it were worthy of your good opinion and of my own surname of Sapiens — it really consists in the fact that I follow Nature, the best of guides, as I would a god, and am loyal to her commands. It is not likely, if she has written the rest of the play well, that she has been careless about the last act like some idle poet. But after all some "last" was inevitable, just as to the berries of a tree and the fruits of the earth there comes in the fulness of time a period of decay and fall. A wise man will not make a

grievance of this. To rebel against nature — is not that to fight like the giants with the gods?

Laelius. And yet, Cato, you will do us a very great favour (I venture to speak for Scipio as for myself) if — since we all hope, or at least wish, to become old men — you would allow us to learn from you in good time before it arrives, by what methods we may most easily acquire the strength to support the burden of advancing age.

Cato. I will do so without doubt, Laelius, especially if, as you say, it will be agreeable to you both.

Laelius We do wish very much, Cato, if it is no trouble to you, to be allowed to see the nature of the bourne which you have reached after completing a long journey, as it were, upon which we too are bound to embark.

3. Cato. I will do the best I can, Laelius. It has often been my fortune to bear the complaints of my contemporaries — like will to like, you know, according to the old proverb — complaints to which men like C. Salinator and Sp. Albinus, who were of consular rank and about my time, used to give vent. They were, first, that they had lost the pleasures of the senses, without which they did not regard life as life at all; and, secondly, that they were neglected by those from whom they had been used to receive attentions. Such men appear to me to lay the blame on the wrong thing. For if it had been the fault of old age, then these same misfortunes would have befallen me and all other men of advanced years. But I have known many of them who never said a word of complaint against old age; for they were only too glad to be freed from the bondage of passion, and were not at all looked down upon by their friends. The fact is that the blame for all complaints of that kind is to be charged to character, not to a particular time of life. For old men who are reasonable and neither cross-grained nor churlish find old age tolerable enough: whereas unreason and churlishness cause uneasiness at every time of life.

Laelius It is as you say, Cato. But perhaps some one may suggest that it is your large means, wealth, and high position that make you think old age tolerable: whereas such good fortune only falls to few.

Cato. There is something in that, Laelius, but by no means all. For instance, the story is told of the answer of Themistocles in a wrangle with a certain Seriphian, who asserted that he owed his brilliant position to the reputation of his country, not to his own. "If I had been a Seriphian," said he, "even I should never have been famous, nor would you if you had been an Athenian." Something like this may be said of old age. For the philosopher himself could not find old age easy to bear in the depths of poverty, nor the fool feel it anything but a burden though he were a millionaire. You may be sure, my dear Scipio and Laelius, that the arms best adapted to old age are culture and the active exercise of the virtues. For if they have been maintained at every period — if one has lived much as well as long — the harvest they produce is wonderful, not only because they never fail us even in our last days (though that in itself is supremely important), but also because the consciousness of a well-spent life and the recollection of many virtuous actions are exceedingly delightful.

4. Take the case of Q. Fabius Maximus, the man, I mean, who recovered Tarentum. When I was a young man and he an old one, I was as much attached to him as if he had been my contemporary. For that great man's serious dignity was tempered by courteous manners, nor had old age made any change in his character. True, he was not exactly an old man when my devotion to him began, yet he was nevertheless well on in life; for his first consulship fell in the year after my birth. When quite a stripling I went with him in his fourth consulship as a soldier in the ranks, on the expedition against Capua, and in the fifth year after that against Tarentum. Four years after that I was elected Quaestor, holding office in the consulship of Tuditanus and Cethegus, in which year, indeed, he as a very old man spoke in favour of the Cincian law "on gifts and fees."

Now this man conducted wars with all the spirit of youth when he was far advanced in life, and by his persistence gradually wearied out Hannibal, when rioting in all the confidence of youth. How brilliant are those lines of my friend Ennius on him!

For us, down beaten by the storms of fate,

One man by wise delays restored the State.

Praise or dispraise moved not his constant mood,
True to his purpose, to his country's good!
Down ever-lengthening avenues of fame
Thus shines and shall shine still his glorious name.

Again what vigilance, what profound skill did he show in the capture of Tarentum! It was indeed in my hearing that he made the famous retort to Salinator, who had retreated into the citadel after losing the town: "It was owing to me, Quintus Fabius, that you retook Tarentum." "Quite so," he replied with a laugh; "for had you not lost it, I should never have recovered it." Nor was he less eminent in civil life than in war. In his second consulship, though his colleague would not move in the matter, he resisted as long as he could the proposal of the tribune C. Flaminius to divide the territory of the Picenians and Gauls in free allotments in defiance of a resolution of the Senate. Again, though he was an augur, he ventured to say that whatever was done in the interests of the State was done with the best possible auspices, that any laws proposed against its interest were proposed against the auspices. I was cognisant of much that was admirable in that great man, but nothing struck me with greater astonishment than the way in which he bore the death of his son — a man of brilliant character and who had been consul. His funeral speech over him is in wide circulation, and when we read it, is there any philosopher of whom we do not think meanly? Nor in truth was he only great in the light of day and in the sight of his fellow-citizens; he was still more eminent in private and at home. What a wealth of conversation! What weighty maxims! What a wide acquaintance with ancient history! What an accurate knowledge of the science of augury! For a Roman, too, he had a great tincture of letters. He had a tenacious memory for military history of every sort, whether of Roman or foreign wars. And I used at that time to enjoy his conversation with a passionate eagerness, as though I already divined, what actually turned out to be the case, that when he died there would be no one to teach me anything.

5. What then is the purpose of such a long disquisition on Maximus? It is because you now see that an old age like his cannot conscientiously be called unhappy. Yet it is after all true that everybody cannot be a Scipio or a

Maximus, with stormings of cities, with battles by land and sea, with wars in which they themselves commanded, and with triumphs to recall. Besides this there is a quiet, pure, and cultivated life which produces a calm and gentle old age, such as we have been told Plato's was, who died at his writing-desk in his eighty-first year; or like that of Isocrates, who says that he wrote the book called *The Panegyric* in his ninety-fourth year, and who lived for five years afterwards; while his master Gorgias of Leontini completed a hundred and seven years without ever relaxing his diligence or giving up work. When some one asked him why he consented to remain so long alive—"I have no fault," said he, "to find with old age." That was a noble answer, and worthy of a scholar. For fools impute their own frailties and guilt to old age, contrary to the practice of *Ennui*, whom I mentioned just now. In the lines —

Like some brave steed that oft before
The Olympic wreath of victory bore,
Now by the weight of years oppressed,
Forgets the race, and takes his rest —

he compares his own old age to that of a high-spirited and successful race-horse. And him indeed you may very well remember. For the present consuls Titus Flamininus and Manius Acilius were elected in the nineteenth year after his death; and his death occurred in the consulship of Caepio and Philippus, the latter consul for the second time: in which year I, then sixty-six years old, spoke in favour of the Voconian law in a voice that was still strong and with lungs still sound; while he, though seventy years old, supported two burdens considered the heaviest of all — poverty and old age — in such a way as to be all but fond of them.

The fact is that when I come to think it over, I find that there are four reasons for old age being thought unhappy: First, that it withdraws us from active employments; second, that it enfeebles the body; third, that it deprives us of nearly all physical pleasures; fourth, that it is the next step to death. Of each of these reasons, if you will allow me, let us examine the force and justice separately.

6. OLD AGE WITHDRAWS US FROM ACTIVE EMPLOYMENTS.

From which of them? Do you mean from those carried on by youth and bodily strength? Are there then no old men's employments to be after all conducted by the intellect, even when bodies are weak? So then Q. Maximus did nothing; nor L. Aemilius — our father, Scipio, and my excellent son's father-in-law! So with other old men — the Fabricii, the Guru and Coruncanii — when they were supporting the State by their advice and influence, they were doing nothing! To old age Appius Claudius had the additional disadvantage of being blind; yet it was he who, when the Senate was inclining towards a peace with Pyrrhus and was for making a treaty, did not hesitate to say what Ennius has embalmed in the verses:

Whither have swerved the souls so firm of yore?

Is sense grown senseless? Can feet stand no more?

And so on in a tone of the most passionate vehemence. You know the poem, and the speech of Appius himself is extant. Now, he delivered it seventeen years after his second consulship, there having been an interval of ten years between the two consulships, and he having been censor before his previous consulship. This will show you that at the time of the war with Pyrrhus he was a very old man. Yet this is the story handed down to us.

There is therefore nothing in the arguments of those who say that old age takes no part in public business. They are like men who would say that a steersman does nothing in sailing a ship, because, while some of the crew are climbing the masts, others hurrying up and down the gangways, others pumping out the bilge water, he sits quietly in the stern holding the tiller. He does not do what young men do; nevertheless he does what is much more important and better. The great affairs of life are not performed by physical strength, or activity, or nimbleness of body, but by deliberation, character, expression of opinion. Of these old age is not only not deprived, but, as a rule, has them in a greater degree. Unless by any chance I, who as a soldier in the ranks, as military tribune, as legate, and as consul have been employed in various kinds of war, now appear to you to be idle because not actively engaged in war. But I enjoy upon the Senate what is to be done, and how. Carthage has long been harbouring evil designs, and I accordingly proclaim war against her in good

time. I shall never cease to entertain fears about her till I bear of her having been levelled with the ground. The glory of doing that I pray that the immortal gods may reserve for you, Scipio, so that you may complete the task begun by your grand-father, now dead more than thirty-two years ago; though all years to come will keep that great man's memory green. He died in the year before my censorship, nine years after my consulship, having been returned consul for the second time in my own consulship. If then he had lived to his hundredth year, would he have regretted having lived to be old? For he would of course not have been practising rapid marches, nor dashing on a foe, nor hurling spears from a distance, nor using swords at close quarters — but only counsel, reason, and senatorial eloquence. And if those qualities had not resided in us seniors, our ancestors would never have called their supreme council a Senate. At Sparta, indeed, those who hold the highest magistracies are in accordance with the fact actually called “elders.” But if you will take the trouble to read or listen to foreign history, you will find that the mightiest States have been brought into peril by young men, have been supported and restored by old. The question occurs in the poet Naevius's *Sport*:

Pray, who are those who brought your State

With such despatch to meet its fate?

There is a long answer, but this is the chief point:

A crop of brand-new orators we grew,

And foolish, paltry lads who thought they knew.

For of course rashness is the note of youth, prudence of old age.

7. But, it is said, memory dwindles. No doubt, unless you keep it in practice, or if you happen to be somewhat dull by nature. Themistocles had the names of all his fellow-citizens by heart. Do you imagine that in his old age he used to address Aristides as Lysimachus? For my part, I know not only the present generation, but their fathers also, and their grandfathers. Nor have I any fear of losing my memory by reading tombstones, according to the vulgar superstition. On the contrary, by reading them I renew my memory of those who are dead and gone. Nor, in point of fact, have I ever heard of any old man forgetting where he had hidden his money. They remember everything that

interests them: when to answer to their bail, business appointments, who owes them money, and to whom they owe it. What about lawyers, pontiffs, augurs, philosophers, when old? What a multitude of things they remember! Old men retain their intellects well enough, if only they keep their minds active and fully employed. Nor is that the case only with men of high position and great office: it applies equally to private life and peaceful pursuits. Sophocles composed tragedies to extreme old age; and being believed to neglect the care of his property owing to his devotion to his art, his sons brought him into court to get a judicial decision depriving him of the management of his property on the ground of weak intellect — just as in our law it is customary to deprive a paterfamilias of the management of his property if he is squandering it. There — upon the old poet is said to have read to the judges the play he had on hand and had just composed — the *Oedipus Coloneus* — and to have asked them whether they thought that the work of a man of weak intellect. After the reading he was acquitted by the jury. Did old age then compel this man to become silent in his particular art, or Homer, Hesiod, Simonides, or Isocrates and Gorgias whom I mentioned before, or the founders of schools of philosophy, Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, Xenocrates, or later Zeno and Cleanthus, or Diogenes the Stoic, whom you too saw at Rome? Is it not rather the case with all these that the active pursuit of study only ended with life?

But, to pass over these sublime studies, I can name some rustic Romans from the Sabine district, neighbours and friends of my own, without whose presence farm work of importance is scarcely ever performed — whether sowing, or harvesting or storing crops. And yet in other things this is less surprising; for no one is so old as to think that he may not live a year. But they bestow their labour on what they know does not affect them in any case:

He plants his trees to serve a race to come,

as our poet Statius says in his *Comrades*. Nor indeed would a farmer, however old, hesitate to answer any one who asked him for whom he was planting: “For the immortal gods, whose will it was that I should not merely receive these things from my ancestors, but should also hand them on to the next generation.”

8. That remark about the old man is better than the following:

If age brought nothing worse than this,

It were enough to mar our bliss,

That he who bides for many years

Sees much to shun and much for tears.

Yes, and perhaps much that gives him pleasure too. Besides, as to subjects for tears, he often comes upon them in youth as well.

A still more questionable sentiment in the same Caecilius is:

No greater misery can of age be told

Than this: be sure, the young dislike the old.

Delight in them is nearer the mark than dislike. For just as old men, if they are wise, take pleasure in the society of young men of good parts, and as old age is rendered less dreary for those who are courted and liked by the youth, so also do young men find pleasure in the maxims of the old, by which they are drawn to the pursuit of excellence. Nor do I perceive that you find my society less pleasant than I do yours. But this is enough to show you how, so far from being listless and sluggish, old age is even a busy time, always doing and attempting something, of course of the same nature as each man's taste had been in the previous part of his life. Nay, do not some even add to their stock of learning? We see Solon, for instance, boasting in his poems that he grows old "daily learning something new." Or again in my own case, it was only when an old man that I became acquainted with Greek literature, which in fact I absorbed with such avidity — in my yearning to quench, as it were, a long-continued thirst — that I became acquainted with the very facts which you see me now using as precedents. When I heard what Socrates had done about the lyre I should have liked for my part to have done that too, for the ancients used to learn the lyre but, at any rate, I worked hard at literature.

9. Nor, again, do I now MISS THE BODILY STRENGTH OF A YOUNG MAN (for that was the second point as to the disadvantages of old age) any more than as a young man I missed the strength of a bull or an elephant. You should use what you have, and whatever you may chance to be doing, do it

with all your might. What could be weaker than Milo of Croton's exclamation? When in his old age he was watching some athletes practising in the course, he is said to have looked at his arms and to have exclaimed with tears in his eyes: "Ah well! these are now as good as dead." Not a bit more so than yourself, you trifler! For at no time were you made famous by your real self, but by chest and biceps. Sext. Aelius never gave vent to such a remark, nor, many years before him, Titus Coruncanius, nor, more recently, P. Crassus — all of them learned juris-consults in active practice, whose knowledge of their profession was maintained to their last breath. I am afraid an orator does lose vigour by old age, for his art is not a matter of the intellect alone, but of lungs and bodily strength. Though as a rule that musical ring in the voice even gains in brilliance in a certain way as one grows old — certainly I have not yet lost it, and you see my years. Yet after all the style of speech suitable to an old man is the quiet and unemotional, and it often happens that the chastened and calm delivery of an old man eloquent secures a hearing. If you cannot attain to that yourself, you might still instruct a Scipio and a Laelius. For what is more charming than old age surrounded by the enthusiasm of youth? Shall we not allow old age even the strength to teach the young, to train and equip them for all the duties of life? And what can be a nobler employment? For my part, I used to think Publius and Gnaeus Scipio and your two grandfathers, L. Aemilius and P. Africanus, fortunate men when I saw them with a company of young nobles about them. Nor should we think any teachers of the fine arts otherwise than happy, however much their bodily forces may have decayed and failed. And yet that same failure of the bodily forces is more often brought about by the vices of youth than of old age; for a dissolute and intemperate youth hands down the body to old age in a worn-out state. Xenophon's Cyrus, for instance, in his discourse delivered on his death-bed and at a very advanced age, says that he never perceived his old age to have become weaker than his youth had been. I remember as a boy Lucius Metellus, who having been created Pontifex Maximus four years after his second consulship, held that office twenty-two years, enjoying such excellent strength of body in the very last hours of his life as not to miss his youth. I need not speak of myself; though that indeed is an old man's way and is generally allowed to my time of life. Don't you see in Homer how

frequently Nestor talks of his own good qualities? For he was living through a third generation; nor had he any reason to fear that upon saying what was true about himself he should appear either over vain or talkative. For, as Homer says, “from his lips flowed discourse sweeter than honey,” for which sweet breath he wanted no bodily strength. And yet, after all, the famous leader of the Greeks nowhere wishes to have ten men like Ajax, but like Nestor: if he could get them, he feels no doubt of Troy shortly falling.

10. But to return to my own case: I am in my eighty-fourth year. I could wish that I had been able to make the same boast as Cyrus; but, after all, I can say this: I am not indeed as vigorous as I was as a private soldier in the Punic war, or as quaestor in the same war, or as consul in Spain, and four years later when as a military tribune I took part in the engagement at Thermopylae under the consul Manius Acilius Glabrio; but yet, as you see, old age has not entirely destroyed my muscles, has not quite brought me to the ground. The Senate-house does not find all my vigour gone, nor the rostra, nor my friends, nor my clients, nor my foreign guests. For I have never given in to that ancient and much-praised proverb:

Old when young

Is old for long.

For myself, I had rather be an old man a somewhat shorter time than an old man before my time. Accordingly, no one up to the present has wished to see me, to whom I have been denied as engaged. But, it may be said, I have less strength than either of you. Neither have you the strength of the centurion T. Pontius: is he the more eminent man on that account? Let there be only a proper husbanding of strength, and let each man proportion his efforts to his powers. Such an one will assuredly not be possessed with any great regret for his loss of strength. At Olympia Milo is said to have stepped into the course carrying a live ox on his shoulders. Which then of the two would you prefer to have given to you — bodily strength like that, or intellectual strength like that of Pythagoras? In fine, enjoy that blessing when you have it; when it is gone, don't wish it back — unless we are to think that young men should wish their childhood back, and those somewhat older their youth! The course of life is fixed, and nature admits of its being run but in one way, and only once; and to

each part of our life there is something specially seasonable; so that the feebleness of children, as well as the high spirit of youth, the soberness of maturer years, and the ripe wisdom of old age — all have a certain natural advantage which should be secured in its proper season. I think you are informed, Scipio, what your grandfather's foreign friend Masinissa does to this day, though ninety years old. When he has once begun a journey on foot he does not mount his horse at all; when on horseback he never gets off his horse. By no rain or cold can he be induced to cover his head. His body is absolutely free from unhealthy humours, and so he still performs all the duties and functions of a king. Active exercise, therefore, and temperance can preserve some part of one's former strength even in old age.

11. Bodily strength is wanting to old age; but neither is bodily strength demanded from old men. Therefore, both by law and custom, men of my time of life are exempt from those duties which cannot be supported without bodily strength. Accordingly not only are we not forced to do what we cannot do; we are not even obliged to do as much as we can. But, it will be said, many old men are so feeble that they cannot perform any duty in life of any sort or kind. That is not a weakness to be set down as peculiar to old age: it is one shared by ill health. How feeble was the son of P. Africanus, who adopted you! What weak health he had, or rather no health at all! If that had not been the case, we should have had in him a second brilliant light in the political horizon; for he had added a wider cultivation to his father's greatness of spirit. What wonder, then, that old men are eventually feeble, when even young men cannot escape it? My dear Laelius and Scipio, we must stand up against old age and make up for its drawbacks by taking pains. We must fight it as we should an illness. We must look after our health, use moderate exercise, take just enough food and drink to recruit, but not to overload, our strength. Nor is it the body alone that must be supported, but the intellect and soul much more. For they are like lamps: unless you feed them with oil, they too go out from old age. Again, the body is apt to get gross from exercise; but the intellect becomes nimbler by exercising itself. For what Caecilius means by "old dotards of the comic stage" are the credulous, the forgetful, and the slipshod. These are faults that do not attach to old age as such, but to a sluggish, spiritless, and sleepy old age. Young men are more frequently wanton and

dissolute than old men; but yet, as it is not all young men that are so, but the bad set among them, even so senile folly — usually called imbecility — applies to old men of unsound character, not to all. Appius governed four sturdy sons, five daughters, that great establishment, and all those clients, though he was both old and blind. For he kept his mind at full stretch like a bow, and never gave in to old age by growing slack. He maintained not merely an influence, but an absolute command over his family: his slaves feared him, his sons were in awe of him, all loved him. In that family, indeed, ancestral custom and discipline were in full vigour. The fact is that old age is respectable just as long as it asserts itself, maintains its proper rights, and is not enslaved to any one. For as I admire a young man who has something of the old man in him, so do I an old one who has something of a young man. The man who aims at this may possibly become old in body — in mind he never will. I am now engaged in composing the seventh book of my *Origins*. I collect all the records of antiquity. The speeches delivered in all the celebrated cases which I have defended I am at this particular time getting into shape for publication. I am writing treatises on augural, pontifical, and civil law. I am, besides, studying hard at Greek, and after the manner of the Pythagoreans — to keep my memory in working order — I repeat in the evening whatever I have said, heard, or done in the course of each day. These are the exercises of the intellect, these the training grounds of the mind: while I sweat and labour on these I don't much feel the loss of bodily strength. I appear in court for my friends; I frequently attend the Senate and bring motions before it on my own responsibility, prepared after deep and long reflection. And these I support by my intellectual, not my bodily forces. And if I were not strong enough to do these things, yet I should enjoy my sofa — imagining the very operations which I was now unable to perform. But what makes me capable of doing this is my past life. For a man who is always living in the midst of these studies and labours does not perceive when old age creeps upon him. Thus, by slow and imperceptible degrees life draws to its end. There is no sudden breakage; it just slowly goes out.

12. The third charge against old age is that it LACKS SENSUAL PLEASURES. What a splendid service does old age render, if it takes from us the greatest blot of youth! Listen, my dear young friends, to a speech of

Archytas of Tarentum, among the greatest and most illustrious of men, which was put into my hands when as a young man I was at Tarentum with Q. Maximus. "No more deadly curse than sensual pleasure has been inflicted on mankind by nature, to gratify which our wanton appetites are roused beyond all prudence or restraint. It is a fruitful source of treasons, revolutions, secret communications with the enemy. In fact, there is no crime, no evil deed, to which the appetite for sensual pleasures does not impel us. Fornications and adulteries, and every abomination of that kind, are brought about by the enticements of pleasure and by them alone. Intellect is the best gift of nature or God: to this divine gift and endowment there is nothing so inimical as pleasure. For when appetite is our master, there is no place for self-control; nor where pleasure reigns supreme can virtue hold its ground. To see this more vividly, imagine a man excited to the highest conceivable pitch of sensual pleasure. It can be doubtful to no one that such a person, so long as he is under the influence of such excitation of the senses, will be unable to use to any purpose either intellect, reason, or thought. Therefore nothing can be so execrable and so fatal as pleasure; since, when more than ordinarily violent and lasting, it darkens all the light of the soul."

These were the words addressed by Archytas to the Samnite Caius Pontius, father of the man by whom the consuls Spurius Postumius and Titus Veturius were beaten in the battle of Caudium. My friend Nearchus of Tarentum, who had remained loyal to Rome, told me that he had heard them repeated by some old men; and that Plato the Athenian was present, who visited Tarentum, I find, in the consulship of L. Camillus and Appius Claudius.

What is the point of all this? It is to show you that, if we were unable to scorn pleasure by the aid of reason and philosophy, we ought to have been very grateful to old age for depriving us of all inclination for that which it was wrong to do. For pleasure hinders thought, is a foe to reason, and, so to speak, blinds the eyes of the mind. It is, moreover, entirely alien to virtue. I was sorry to have to expel Lucius, brother of the gallant Titus Flamininus, from the Senate seven years after his consulship; but I thought it imperative to affix a stigma on an act of gross sensuality. For when he was in Gaul as consul, he had yielded to the entreaties of his paramour at a dinner-party to behead a man who happened to be in prison condemned on a capital charge. When his

brother Titus was Censor, who preceded me, he escaped; but I and Flaccus could not countenance an act of such criminal and abandoned lust, especially as, besides the personal dishonour, it brought disgrace on the Government.

13. I have often been told by men older than myself, who said that they had heard it as boys from old men, that Gaius Fabricius was in the habit of expressing astonishment at having heard, when envoy at the headquarters of king Pyrrhus, from the Thessalian Cineas, that there was a man of Athens who professed to be a “philosopher,” and affirmed that everything we did was to be referred to pleasure. When he told this to Manius Curius and Publius Decius, they used to remark that they wished that the Samnites and Pyrrhus himself would hold the same opinion. It would be much easier to conquer them, if they had once given themselves over to sensual indulgences. Manius Curius had been intimate with P. Decius, who four years before the former’s consulship had devoted himself to death for the Republic. Both Fabricius and Coruncanius knew him also, and from the experience of their own lives, as well as from the action of P. Decius, they were of opinion that there did exist something intrinsically noble and great, which was sought for its own sake, and at which all the best men aimed, to the contempt and neglect of pleasure. Why then do I spend so many words on the subject of pleasure? Why, because, far from being a charge against old age, that it does not much feel the want of any pleasures, it is its highest praise.

But, you will say, it is deprived of the pleasures of the table, the heaped up board, the rapid passing of the wine-cup. Well, then, it is also free from headache, disordered digestion, broken sleep. But if we must grant pleasure something, since we do not find it easy to resist its charms, — for Plato, with happy inspiration, calls pleasure “vice’s bait,” because of course men are caught by it as fish by a hook, — yet, although old age has to abstain from extravagant banquets, it is still capable of enjoying modest festivities. As a boy I often used to see Gaius Duilius the son of Marcus, then an old man, returning from a dinner-party. He thoroughly enjoyed the frequent use of torch and flute-player, distinctions which he had assumed though unprecedented in the case of a private person. It was the privilege of his glory. But why mention others? I will come back to my own case. To begin with, I have always remained a member of a “club” — clubs, you know, were

established in my quaestorship on the reception of the Magna Mater from Ida. So I used to dine at their feast with the members of my club — on the whole with moderation, though there was a certain warmth of temperament natural to my time of life; but as that advances there is a daily decrease of all excitement. Nor was I, in fact, ever wont to measure my enjoyment even of these banquets by the physical pleasures they gave more than by the gathering and conversation of friends. For it was a good idea of our ancestors to style the presence of guests at a dinner-table — seeing that it implied a community of enjoyment — a convivium, “a living together.” It is a better term than the Greek words which mean “a drinking together,” or, “an eating together.” For they would seem to give the preference to what is really the least important part of it.

14. For myself, owing to the pleasure I take in conversation, I enjoy even banquets that begin early in the afternoon, and not only in company with my contemporaries — of whom very few survive — but also with men of your age and with yourselves. I am thankful to old age, which has increased my avidity for conversation, while it has removed that for eating and drinking. But if anyone does enjoy these — not to seem to have proclaimed war against all pleasure without exception, which is perhaps a feeling inspired by nature — I fail to perceive even in these very pleasures that old age is entirely without the power of appreciation. For myself, I take delight even in the old-fashioned appointment of master of the feast; and in the arrangement of the conversation, which according to ancestral custom is begun from the last place on the left-hand couch when the wine is brought in; as also in the cups which, as in Xenophon’s banquet, are small and filled by driblets; and in the contrivance for cooling in summer, and for warming by the winter sun or winter fire. These things I keep up even among my Sabine countrymen, and every day have a full dinner-party of neighbours, which we prolong as far into the night as we can with varied conversation.

But you may urge — there is not the same tingling sensation of pleasure in old men. No doubt; but neither do they miss it so much. For nothing gives you uneasiness which you do not miss. That was a fine answer of Sophocles to a man who asked him, when in extreme old age, whether he was still a lover. “Heaven forbid!” he replied; “I was only too glad to escape from that, as

though from a boorish and insane master.” To men indeed who are keen after such things it may possibly appear disagreeable and uncomfortable to be without them; but to jaded appetites it is pleasanter to lack than to enjoy. However, he cannot be said to lack who does not want: my contention is that not to want is the pleasanter thing.

But even granting that youth enjoys these pleasures with more zest; in the first place, they are insignificant things to enjoy, as I have said; and in the second place, such as age is not entirely without, if it does not possess them in profusion. Just as a man gets greater pleasure from Ambivius Turpio if seated in the front row at the theatre than if he was in the last, yet, after all, the man in the last row does get pleasure; so youth, because it looks at pleasures at closer quarters, perhaps enjoys itself more, yet even old age, looking at them from a distance, does enjoy itself well enough. Why, what blessings are these — that the soul, having served its time, so to speak, in the campaigns of desire and ambition, rivalry and hatred, and all the passions, should live in its own thoughts, and, as the expression goes, should dwell apart! Indeed, if it has in store any of what I may call the food of study and philosophy, nothing can be pleasanter than an old age of leisure. We were witnesses to C. Gallus — a friend of your father’s, Scipio — intent to the day of his death on mapping out the sky and land. How often did the light surprise him while still working out a problem begun during the night! How often did night find him busy on what he had begun at dawn! How he delighted in predicting for us solar and lunar eclipses long before they occurred! Or again in studies of a lighter nature, though still requiring keenness of intellect, what pleasure Naevius took in his Punic War! Plautus in his *Truculentus* and *Pseudolus*! I even saw Livius Andronicus, who, having produced a play six years before I was born — in the consulship of Cento and Tuditanus — lived till I had become a young man. Why speak of Publius Licinius Crassus’s devotion to pontifical and civil law, or of the Publius Scipio of the present time, who within these last few days has been created Pontifex Maximus? And yet I have seen all whom I have mentioned ardent in these pursuits when old men. Then there is Marcus Cethegus, whom Ennius justly called “Persuasion’s Marrow” — with what enthusiasm did we see him exert himself in oratory even when quite old! What pleasures are there in feasts, games, or mistresses comparable to pleasures such

as these? And they are all tastes, too, connected with learning, which in men of sense and good education grow with their growth. It is indeed an honourable sentiment which Solon expresses in a verse which I have quoted before — that he grew old learning many a fresh lesson every day. Than that intellectual pleasure none certainly can be greater.

15. I come now to the pleasures of the farmer, in which I take amazing delight. These are not hindered by any extent of old age, and seem to me to approach nearest to' the ideal wise man's life. For he has to deal with the earth, which never refuses its obedience, nor ever returns what it has received without usury; sometimes, indeed, with less, but generally with greater interest. For my part, however, it is not merely the thing produced, but the earth's own force and natural productiveness that delight me. For received in its bosom the seed scattered broadcast upon it, softened and broken up, she first keeps it concealed therein (hence the harrowing which accomplishes this gets its name from a word meaning "to hide"); next, when it has been warmed by her heat and close pressure, she splits it open and draws from it the greenery of the blade. This, supported by the fibres of the root, little by little grows up, and held upright by its jointed stalk is enclosed in sheaths, as being still immature. When it has emerged from them it produces an ear of corn arranged in order, and is defended against the pecking of the smaller birds by a regular palisade of spikes.

Need I mention the starting, planting, and growth of vines? I can never have too much of this pleasure — to let you into the secret of what gives my old age repose and amusement. For I say nothing here of the natural force which all things propagated from the earth possess — the earth which from that tiny grain in a fig, or the grape-stone in a grape, or the most minute seeds of the other cereals and plants, produces such huge trunks and boughs. Mallet-shoots, slips, cuttings, quicksets, layers — are they not enough to fill anyone with delight and astonishment? The vine by nature is apt to fall, and unless supported drops down to the earth; yet in order to keep itself upright it embraces whatever it reaches with its tendrils as though they were hands. Then as it creeps on, spreading itself in intricate and wild profusion, the dresser's art prunes it with the knife and prevents it growing a forest of shoots and expanding to excess in every direction. Accordingly at the beginning of spring

in the shoots which have been left there protrudes at each of the joints what is termed an eye. From this the grape emerges and shows itself; which, swollen by the juice of the earth and the heat of the sun, is at first very bitter to the taste, but afterwards grows sweet as it matures; and being covered with tendrils is never without a moderate warmth, and yet is able to ward off the fiery heat of the sun. Can anything be richer in product or more beautiful to contemplate? It is not its utility only, as I said before, that charms me, but the method of its cultivation and the natural process of its growth: the rows of uprights, the cross-pieces for the tops of the plants, the tying up of the vines and their propagation by layers, the pruning, to which I have already referred, of some shoots, the setting of others. I need hardly mention irrigation, or trenching and digging the soil, which much increase its fertility. As to the advantages of manuring I have spoken in my book on agriculture. The learned Hesiod did not say a single word on this subject, though he was writing on the cultivation of the soil; yet Homer, who in my opinion was many generations earlier, represents Laertes as softening his regret for his son by cultivating and manuring his farm. Nor is it only in cornfields and meadows and vineyards and plantations that a farmer's life is made cheerful. There are the garden and the orchard, the feeding of sheep, the swarms of bees, endless varieties of flowers. Nor is it only planting out that charms: there is also grafting — surely the most ingenious invention ever made by husbandmen.

16. I might continue my list of the delights of country life; but even what I have said I think is somewhat over long. However, you must pardon me; for farming is a very favourite hobby of mine, and old age is naturally rather garrulous — for I would not be thought to acquit it of all faults.

Well, it was in a life of this sort that Manius Curius, after celebrating triumphs over the Samnites, the Sabines, and Pyrrhus, spent his last days. When I look at his villa — for it is not far from my own — I never can enough admire the man's own frugality or the spirit of the age. As Curius was sitting at his hearth the Samnites, who brought him a large sum of gold, were repulsed by him; for it was not, as he said, a fine thing in his eyes to possess gold, but to rule those who possessed it. Could such a high spirit fail to make old age pleasant?

But to return to farmers — not to wander from my own metier. Tn those days there were senators, i. e. old men, on their farms. For L. Quinctius Cincinnatus was actually at the plough when word was brought him that he had been named Dictator. It was by his order as Dictator, by the way, that C. Servilius Ahala, the Master of the Horse, seized and put to death Spurius Maelius when attempting to obtain royal power. Curius as well as other old men used to receive their summonses to attend the Senate in their farm-houses, from which circumstance the summoners were called viatores or “travellers.” Was these men’s old age an object of pity who found their pleasure in the cultivation of the land? In my opinion, scarcely any life can be more blessed, not alone from its utility (for agriculture is beneficial to the whole human race), but also as much from the mere pleasure of the thing, to which I have already alluded, and from the rich abundance and supply of all things necessary for the food of man and for the worship of the gods above. So, as these are objects of desire to certain people, let us make our peace with pleasure. For the good and hard-working farmer’s wine-cellar and oil-store, as well as his larder, are always well filled, and his whole farm-house is richly furnished. It abounds in pigs, goats, lambs, fowls, milk, cheese, and honey. Then there is the garden, which the farmers themselves call their “second flicht.” A zest and flavour is added to all these by hunting and fowling in spare hours. Need I mention the greenery of meadows, the rows of trees, the beauty of vineyard and olive-grove? I ‘will put it briefly: nothing can either furnish necessities more richly, or present a fairer spectacle, than well-cultivated land. And to the enjoyment of that, old age does not merely present no hindrance — it actually invites and allures to it. For where else can it better warm itself, either by basking in the sun or by sitting by the fire, or at the proper time cool itself more wholesomely by the help of shade or water? Let the young keep their arms then to themselves, their horses, spears, their foils and ball, their swimming baths and running path. To us old men let them, out of the many forms of sport, leave dice and counters; but even that as they choose, since old age can be quite happy without them.

17. Xenophon’s books are very useful for many purposes. Pray go on reading them with attention, as you have ever done. In what ample terms is agriculture lauded by him in the book about husbanding one’s property, which is called

Oeconomicus! But to show you that he thought nothing so worthy of a prince as the taste for cultivating the soil, I will translate what Socrates says to Critobulus in that book:

“When that most gallant Lacedaemonian Lysander came to visit the Persian prince Cyrus at Sardis, so eminent for his character and the glory of his rule, bringing him presents from his allies, he treated Lysander in all ways with courteous familiarity and kindness, and, among other things, took him to see a certain park carefully planted. Lysander expressed admiration of the height of the trees and the exact arrangement of their rows in the quincunx, the careful cultivation of the soil, its freedom from weeds, and the sweetness of the odours exhaled from the flowers, and went on to say that what he admired was not the industry only, but also the skill of the man by whom this had been planned and laid out. Cyrus replied: ‘Well, it was I who planned the whole thing these rows are my doing, the laying out is all mine; many of the trees were even planted by own hand.’ Then Lysander, looking at his purple robe, the brilliance of his person, and his adornment Persian fashion with gold and many jewels, said: ‘People are quite right, Cyrus, to call you happy, since the advantages of high fortune have been joined to an excellence like yours.’”

This kind of good fortune, then, it is in the power of old men to enjoy; nor is age any bar to our maintaining pursuits of every other kind, and especially of agriculture, to the very extreme verge of old age. For instance, we have it on record that M. Valerius Corvus kept it up to his hundredth year, living on his land and cultivating it after his active career was over, though between his first and sixth consulships there was an interval of six and forty years. So that he had an official career lasting the number of years which our ancestors defined as coming between birth and the beginning of old age. Moreover, that last period of his old age was more blessed than that of his middle life, inasmuch as he had greater influence and less labour. For the crowning grace of old age is influence.

How great was that of L. Caecilius Metellus! How great that of Atilius Calatinus, over whom the famous epitaph was placed, “Very many classes agree in deeming this to have been the very first man of the nation”! The line cut on his tomb is well known. It is natural, then, that a man should have had

influence, in whose praise the verdict of history is unanimous. Again, in recent times, what a great man was Publius Crassus, Pontifex Maximus, and his successor in the same office, M. Lepidus! I need scarcely mention Paulus or Africanus, or, as I did before, Maximus. It was not only their senatorial utterances that had weight: their least gesture had it also. In fact, old age, especially when it has enjoyed honours, has an influence worth all the pleasures of youth put together.

18. But throughout my discourse remember that my panegyric applies to an old age that has been established on foundations laid by youth. From which may be deduced what I once said with universal applause, that it was a wretched old age that had to defend itself by speech. Neither white hairs nor wrinkles can at once claim influence in themselves: it is the honourable conduct of earlier days that is rewarded by possessing influence at the last. Even things generally regarded as trifling and matters of course — being saluted, being courted, having way made for one, people rising when one approaches, being escorted to and from the forum, being referred to for advice — all these are marks of respect, observed among us and in other States — always most sedulously where the moral tone is highest. They say that Lysander the Spartan, whom I have mentioned before, used to remark that Sparta was the most dignified home for old age; for that nowhere was more respect paid to years, no-where was old age held in higher honour. Nay, the story is told of how when a man of advanced years came into the theatre at Athens when the games were going on, no place was given him anywhere in that large assembly by his own countrymen; but when he came near the Lacedaemonians, who as ambassadors had a fixed place assigned to them, they rose as one man out of respect for him, and gave the veteran a seat. When they were greeted with rounds of applause from the whole audience, one of them remarked:

“The Athenians know what is right, but will not do it.” There are many excellent rules in our augural college, but among the best is one which affects our subject — that precedence in speech goes by seniority; and augurs who are older are preferred only to those who have held higher office, but even to those who are actually in possession of imperium. What then are the physical pleasures to be compared with the reward of influence? Those who have

employed it with distinction appear to me to have played the drama of life to its end, and not to have broken down in the last act like unpractised players.

But, it will be said, old men are fretful, fidgety, ill-tempered, and disagreeable. If you come to that, they are also avaricious. But these are faults of character, not of the time of life. And, after all, fretfulness and the other faults I mentioned admit of some excuse — not, indeed, a complete one, but one that may possibly pass muster: they think themselves neglected, looked down upon, mocked, Besides with bodily weakness every rub is a source of pain. Yet all these faults are softened both by good character and good education. Illustrations of this may be found in real life, as also on the stage in the case of the brothers in the *Adeiphi*. What harshness in the one, what gracious manners in the other The fact is that, just as it is not every wine, so it is not every life, that turns sour from keeping, Serious gravity I approve of in old age, but, as in other things, it must be within due limits: bitterness I can in no case approve. What the object of senile avarice may be I cannot conceive. For can there be anything more absurd than to seek more journey money, the less there remains of the journey?

19. There remains the fourth reason, which more than anything else appears to torment men of my age and keep them in a flutter — THE NEARNESS OF DEATH, which, it must be allowed, cannot be far from an old man. But what a poor dotard must he be who has not learnt in the course of so long a life that death is not a thing to be feared? Death, that is either to be totally disregarded, if it entirely extinguishes the soul, or is even to be desired, if it brings him where he is to exist forever. A third alternative, at any rate, cannot possibly be discovered. Why then should I be afraid if I am destined either not to be miserable after death or even to be happy? After all, who is such a fool as to feel certain — however young he may be — that he will be alive in the evening? Nay, that time of life has many more chances of death than ours, Young men more easily contract diseases; their illnesses are more serious; their treatment has to be more severe. Accordingly, only a few arrive at old age. If that were not so, life would be conducted better and more wisely; for it is in old men that thought, reason, and prudence are to be found; and if there had been no old men, States would never have existed at all. But I return to the subject of the imminence of death. What sort of charge is this against old age,

when you see that it is shared by youth? I had reason in the case of my excellent son — as you had, Scipio, in that of your brothers, who were expected to attain the highest honours — to realise that death is common to every time of life. Yes, you will say; but a young man expects to live long; an old man cannot expect to do so. Well, he is a fool to expect it. For what can be more foolish than to regard the uncertain as certain, the false as true? “An old man has nothing even to hope.” Ah, but it is just there that he is in a better position than a young man, since what the latter only hopes he has obtained. The one wishes to live long; the other has lived long.

And yet, good heaven! what is “long” in a man’s life? For grant the utmost limit: let us expect an age like that of the King of the Tartessi. For there was, as I find recorded, a certain Agathonius at Gades who reigned eighty years and lived a hundred and twenty. But to my mind nothing seems even long in which there is any “last,” for when that arrives, then all the past has slipped away — only that remains to which you have attained by virtue and righteous actions. Hours indeed, and days and months and years depart, nor does past time ever return, nor can the future be known. Whatever time each is granted for life, with that he is bound to be content. An actor, in order to earn approval, is not bound to perform the play from beginning to end; let him only satisfy the audience in whatever act he appears. Nor need a wise man go on to the concluding “plaudite.” For a short term of life is long enough for living well and honourably. But if you go farther, you have no more right to grumble than farmers do because the charm of the spring season is past and the summer and autumn have come. For the word “spring” in a way suggests youth, and points to the harvest to be: the other seasons are suited for the reaping and storing of the crops. Now the harvest of old age is, as I have often said, the memory and rich store of blessings laid up in easier life. Again, all things that accord with nature are to be counted as good. But what can be more in accordance with nature than for old men to die? A thing, indeed, which also beliefs young men, though nature revolts and fights against it. Accordingly, the death of young men seems to me like putting out a great fire with a deluge of water; but old men die like a fire going out because it has burnt down of its own nature without artificial means. Again, just as apples when unripe are torn from trees, but when ripe and mellow drop down, so it is

violence that takes life from young men, ripeness from old. This ripeness is so delightful to me, that, as I approach nearer to death, I seem as it were to be sighting land, and to be coming to port at last after a long voyage.

20. Again, there is no fixed borderline for old age, and you are making a good and proper use of it as long as you can satisfy the call of duty and disregard death. The result of this is, that old age is even more confident and courageous than youth. That is the meaning of Solon's answer to the tyrant Pisistratus. When the latter asked him what he relied upon in opposing him with such boldness, he is said to have replied, "On my old age." But that end of life is the best, when, without the intellect or senses being impaired, Nature herself takes to pieces her own handiwork which she also put together. Just as the builder of a ship or a house can break them up more easily than any one else, so the nature that knit together the human frame can also best unfasten it. Moreover, a thing freshly glued together is always difficult to pull asunder; if old, this is easily done.

The result is that the short time of life left to them is not to be grasped at by old men with greedy eagerness, or abandoned without cause. Pythagoras forbids us, without an order from our commander, that is God, to desert life's fortress and outpost. Solon's epitaph, indeed, is that of a wise man, in which he says that he does not wish his death to be unaccompanied by the sorrow and lamentations of his friends. He wants, I suppose, to be beloved by them. But I rather think Ennius says better:

None grace me with their tears, nor weeping loud Make sad my funeral rites!

He holds that a death is not a subject for mourning when it is followed by immortality.

Again, there may possibly be some sensation of dying and that only for a short time, especially in the case of an old man: after death, indeed, sensation is either what one would desire, or it disappears altogether. But to disregard death is a lesson which must be studied from our youth up; for unless that is learnt, no one can have a quiet mind. For die we certainly must, and that too without being certain whether it may not be this very day. As death, therefore, is hanging over our head every hour, how can a man ever be unshaken in soul if he fears it?

But on this theme I don't think I need much enlarge: when I remember what Lucius Brutus did, who was killed while defending his country; or the two Decii, who spurred their horses to a gallop and met a voluntary death; or M. Atilius Regulus, who left his home to confront a death of torture, rather than break the word which he had pledged to the enemy; or the two Scipios, who determined to block the Carthaginian advance even with their own bodies; or your grandfather Lucius Paulus, who paid with his life for the rashness of his colleague in the disgrace at Cannae; or M. Marcellus, whose death not even the most bloodthirsty of enemies would allow to go without the honour of burial. It is enough to recall that our legions (as I have recorded in my *Origins*) have often marched with cheerful and lofty spirit to ground from which they believed that they would never return. That, therefore, which young men — not only uninstructed, but absolutely ignorant — treat as of no account, shall men who are neither young nor ignorant shrink from in terror? As a general truth, as it seems to me, it is weariness of all pursuits that creates weariness of life. There are certain pursuits adapted to childhood: do young men miss them? There are others suited to early manhood: does that settled time of life called “middle age” ask for them? There are others, again, suited to that age, but not looked for in old age. There are, finally, some which belong to Old age. Therefore, as the pursuits of the earlier ages have their time for disappearing, so also have those of old age. And when that takes place, a satiety of life brings on the ripe time for death.

21. For I do not see why I should not venture to tell you my personal opinion as to death, of which I seem to myself to have a clearer vision in proportion as I am nearer to it. I believe, Scipio and Laelius, that your fathers — those illustrious men and my dearest friends — are still alive, and that too with a life which alone deserves the name. For as long as we are imprisoned in this framework of the body, we perform a certain function and laborious work assigned us by fate. The soul, in fact, is of heavenly origin, forced down from its home in the highest, and, so to speak, buried in earth, a place quite opposed to its divine nature and its immortality. But I suppose the immortal gods to have sown souls broadcast in human bodies, that there might be some to survey the world, and while contemplating the order of the heavenly bodies to imitate it in the unvarying regularity of their life. Nor is it only reason and

arguments that have brought me to this belief, but the great fame and authority of the most distinguished philosophers. I used to be told that Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans — almost natives of our country, who in old times had been called the Italian school of philosophers — never doubted that we had souls drafted from the universal Divine intelligence. I used besides to have pointed out to me the discourse delivered by Socrates on the last day of his life upon the immortality of the soul — Socrates who was pronounced by the oracle at Delphi to be the wisest of men. I need say no more. I have convinced myself, and I hold — in view of the rapid movement of the soul, its vivid memory of the past and its prophetic knowledge of the future, its many accomplishments, its vast range of knowledge, its numerous discoveries — that a nature embracing such varied gifts cannot itself be mortal. And since the soul is always in motion and yet has no external source of motion, for it is self-moved, I conclude that it will also have no end to its motion, because it is not likely ever to abandon itself. Again, since the nature of the soul is not composite, nor has in it any admixture that is not homogeneous and similar, I conclude that it is indivisible, and, if indivisible, that it cannot perish. It is again a strong proof of men knowing most things before birth, that when mere children they grasp innumerable facts with such speed as to show that they are not then taking them in for the first time, but remembering and recalling them. This is roughly Plato's argument.

22. Once more in Xenophon we have the elder Cyrus on his deathbed speaking as follows: —

“Do not suppose, my dearest sons, that when I have left you I shall be nowhere and no one. Even when I was with you, you did not see my soul, but knew that it was in this body of mine from what I did. Believe then that it is still the same, even though you see it not. The honours paid to illustrious men had not continued to exist after their death, had the souls of these very men not done something to make us retain our recollection of them beyond the ordinary time. For myself, I never could be persuaded that souls while in mortal bodies were alive, and died directly they left them; nor, in fact, that the soul only lost all intelligence when it left the unintelligent body. I believe rather that when, by being liberated from all corporeal admixture, it has begun to be pure and undefiled, it is then that it becomes wise. And again, when man's natural

frame is resolved into its elements by death, it is clearly seen whither each of the other elements departs: for they all go to the place from which they came: but the soul alone is invisible alike when present and when departing. Once more, you see that nothing is so like death as sleep. And yet it is in sleepers that souls most clearly reveal their divine nature; for they foresee many events when they are allowed to escape and are left free. This shows what they are likely to be when they have completely freed themselves from the fetters of the body. Wherefore, if these things are so, obey me as a god. But if my soul is to perish with my body, nevertheless do you from awe of the gods, who guard and govern this fair universe, preserve my memory by the loyalty and piety of your lives.”

23. Such are the words of the dying Cyrus. I will now, with your good leave, look at home. No one, my dear Scipio, shall ever persuade me that your father Paulus and your two grandfathers Paulus and Africanus, or the father of Africanus, or his uncle, or many other illustrious men not necessary to mention, would have attempted such lofty deeds as to be remaindered by posterity, had they not seen in their minds that future ages concerned them. Do you suppose — to take an old man’s privilege of a little self-praise — that I should have been likely to undertake such heavy labours by day and night, at home and abroad, if I had been destined to have the same limit to my glory as to my life? Had it not been much better to pass an age of ease and repose without any labour or exertion? But my soul, I know not how, refusing to be kept down, ever fixed its eyes upon future ages, as though from a conviction that it would begin to live only when it had left the body. But had it not been the case that souls were immortal, it would not have been the souls of all the best men that made the greatest efforts after an immortality of fame.

Again, is there not the fact that the wisest man ever dies with the greatest cheerfulness, the most unwise with the least? Don’t you think that the soul which has the clearer and longer sight sees that it is starting for better things, while the soul whose vision is dimmer does not see it? For my part, I am transported with the desire to see your fathers, who were the object of my reverence and affection. Nor is it only those whom I knew that I long to see; it is those also of whom I have been told and have read, whom I have myself recorded in my history. When I am setting out for that, there is certainly no

one who will find it easy to draw me back, or boil me up again like second Pelios. Nay, if some god should grant me to renew my childhood from my present age and once more to be crying in my cradle, I would firmly refuse; nor should I in truth be willing, after having, as it were, run the full course, to be recalled from the winning — crease to the barriers. For what blessing has life to offer? Should we not rather say what labour? But granting that it has, at any rate it has after all a limit either to enjoyment or to existence. I don't wish to depreciate life, as many men and good philosophers have often done; nor do I regret having lived, for I have done so in a way that lets me think that I was not born in vain. But I quit life as I would an inn, not as I would a home. For nature has given us a place of entertainment, not of residence.

Oh glorious day when I shall set out to join that heavenly conclave and company of souls, and depart from the turmoil and impurities of this world! For I shall not go to join only those whom I have before mentioned, but also my son Cato, than whom no better man was ever born, nor one more conspicuous for piety. His body was burnt by me, though mine ought, on the contrary, to have been burnt by him; but his spirit, not abandoning, but ever looking back upon me, has certainly gone whither he saw that I too must come. I was thought to bear that loss heroically, not that I really bore it without distress, but I found my own consolation in the thought that the parting and separation between us was not to be for long.

It is by these means, my dear Scipio, — for you said that you and Laelius were wont to express surprise on this point, — that my old age sits lightly on me, and is not only not oppressive but even delightful. But if I am wrong in thinking the human soul immortal, I am glad to be wrong; nor will I allow the mistake which gives me so much pleasure to be wrested from me as long as I live. But if when dead, as some insignificant philosophers think, I am to be without sensation, I am not afraid of dead philosophers deriding my errors. Again, if we are not to be immortal, it is nevertheless what a man must wish — to have his life end at its proper time. For nature puts a limit to living as to everything else. Now, old age is as it were the playing out of the drama, the full fatigue of which we should shun, especially when we also feel that we have had more than enough of it.

This is all I had to say on old age. I pray that you may arrive at it, that you may put my words to a practical test.