

BOOK XII

LIBER DUODECIMUS

I

Dissertatio Favorini philosophi, qua suasit nobili feminae uti liberos quos peperisset, non nutricum aliarum, sed sibi suo lacte aleret.

- 1 NUNTIATUM quondam est Favorino philosopho, nobis praesentibus, uxorem auditoris sectatorisque sui paululum ante enixam auctumque eum esse nato
2 filio. "Eamus," inquit, "et puerum visum et patri gratulatum."
- 3 Is erat loci senatorii, ex familia nobiliore. Imus una qui tum aderamus prosecutique eum sumus ad domum quo pergebat, et cum eo simul introgressi
4 sumus. Tum in primis aedibus complexus hominem congratulatusque adsedit. Atque ubi percontatus est quam diutinum puerperium et quam laboriosi nixus fuissent, puellamque defessam labore ac vigilia somnum capere cognovit, fabulari instituit proluxius
5 nutritura sit." Sed cum mater puellae parcendum esse ei diceret adhibendasque puero nutrices, ne ad dolores quos in enitendo tulisset munus quoque nutritionis grave ac difficile accederet, "Oro te," inquit, "mulier, sine eam totam integram matrem

¹ The addition of a son to his family gave the father certain privileges.

BOOK XII

I

A discourse of the philosopher Favorinus, in which he urged a lady of rank to feed with her own milk, and not with that of other nurses, the children whom she had borne.

WORD was once brought in my presence to the philosopher Favorinus that the wife of an auditor and disciple of his had been brought to bed a short time before, and that his pupil's family had been increased by the birth of a son. "Let us go," said he, "both to see the child and to congratulate the father."¹

The father was of senatorial rank and of a family of high nobility. We who were present at the time went with Favorinus, attended him to the house to which he was bound, and entered it with him. Then the philosopher, having embraced and congratulated the father immediately upon entering, sat down. And when he had asked how long the labour had been and how difficult, and had learned that the young woman, overcome with fatigue and wakefulness, was sleeping, he began to talk at greater length and said: "I have no doubt she will suckle her son herself!" But when the young woman's mother said to him that she must spare her daughter and provide nurses for the child, in order that to the pains which she had suffered in childbirth there might not be added the wearisome and difficult task of nursing, he said: "I beg you, madam, let her be wholly and

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6 esse filii sui. Quod est enim hoc contra naturam
imperfectum atque dimidiatum matris genus, pepe-
risse ac statim a sese abiecisse? aluisse in utero
sanguine suo nescio quid quod non videret, non
alere nunc suo lacte quod videat, iam viventem, iam
7 hominem, iam matris officia inplorantem? An tu
quoque," inquit, "putas naturam feminis mammaram
ubera quasi quosdam venustiores naevulos, non
liberum alendorum, sed ornandi pectoris causa
8 dedisse? Sic enim, quod a vobis scilicet abest,
pleraeque istae prodigiosae mulieres fontem illum
sanctissimum corporis, generis humani educatorem,
arefacere et extinguere cum periculo quoque aversi
corruptique lactis laborant, tamquam pulcritudinis
sibi insignia devenustet, quod quidem faciunt eadem
vecordia, qua quibusdam commenticiis fraudibus
nituntur ut fetus quoque ipsi, in corpore suo concepti,
aboriantur, ne aequor illud ventris inrugetur ac de
9 gravitate oneris et labore partus fatiscat. Quod
cum sit publica detestatione communique odio
dignum, in ipsis hominem primordiis, dum fingitur,
dum animatur, inter ipsas artificis naturae manus
interfectum ire, quantum hinc abest, iam per-
fectum, iam genitum, iam filium proprii atque con-
sueti atque cogniti sanguinis alimonia privare?
10 "Sed nihil interest,' hoc enim dicitur, 'dum
11 alatur et vivat, cuius id lacte fiat.' Cur igitur iste
qui hoc dicit, si in capessendis naturae sensibus tam

entirely the mother of her own child. For what kind of unnatural, imperfect and half-motherhood is it to bear a child and at once send it away from her? to have nourished in her womb with her own blood something which she could not see, and not to feed with her own milk what she sees, now alive, now human, now calling for a mother's care? Or do you too perhaps think," said he, "that nature gave women nipples as a kind of beauty-spot, not for the purpose of nourishing their children, but as an adornment of their breast? For it is for that reason (though such a thing is of course far from your thoughts) that many of those unnatural women try to dry up and check that sacred fount of the body, the nourisher of mankind, regardless of the danger of diverting and spoiling the milk, because they think it disfigures the charms of their beauty. In so doing they show the same madness as those who strive by evil devices to cause abortion of the fetus itself which they have conceived, in order that their beauty may not be spoiled by the weight of the burden they bear and by the labour of parturition. But since it is an act worthy of public detestation and general abhorrence to destroy a human being in its inception, while it is being fashioned and given life and is still in the hands of Dame Nature, how far does it differ from this to deprive a child, already perfect, already brought into the world, already a son, of the nourishment of its own familiar and kindred blood?

"‘But it makes no difference,’ for so they say, ‘provided it be nourished and live, by whose milk that is effected.’ Why then does not he who affirms this, if he is so dull in comprehending natural feel-

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- obsurduit, non id quoque nihil interesse putat, cuius
in corpore cuiusque ex sanguine concretus homo et
12 coalitus sit? an quia spiritu multo et calore exalbit,
non idem sanguis est nunc in uberibus, qui in utero
13 fuit? Nonne hac quoque in re sollertia naturae
evidens est, quod, postquam sanguis ille opifex in
penetralibus suis omne corpus hominis finxit, adven-
tante iam partus tempore, in supernas se partis
perfert, ad fovenda vitae atque lucis rudimenta
praesto est et recens natis notum et familiarem
14 victum offert? Quamobrem non frustra creditum
est, sicut valeat ad fingendas corporis atque animi
similitudines vis et natura seminis, non secus ad
eandem rem lactis quoque ingenia et proprietates
15 valere. Neque in hominibus id solum, sed in pecu-
dibus quoque animadversum. Nam si ovium lacte
haedi aut caprarum agni alantur, constat ferme in
his lanam duriolem, in illis capillum gigni teneriolem.
16 In arboribus etiam et frugibus maior plerumque vis
et potestas est ad earum indolem vel detrectandam
vel augendam aquarum atque terrarum quae alunt,
quam ipsius quod iacitur seminis, ac saepe videas
arborem laetam et nitentem, in locum alium transpo-
17 sitam, deterioris terrae suco deperisse. Quae, malum,
igitur ratio est, nobilitatem istam nati modo hominis
corpusque et animum, bene ingeniatis primordiis in-
choatum, insitivo degenerique alimento lactis alieni
corrumpere? praesertim si ista quam ad praebendum
lactem adhibebitis, aut serva aut servilis est et, ut
plerumque solet, externae et barbarae nationis est,¹
si improba, si informis, si impudica, si temulenta est;

¹ et si improba, *Damsté*.

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ing, think that it also makes no difference in whose body and from whose blood a human being is formed and fashioned? Is the blood which is now in the breasts not the same that it was in the womb, merely because it has become white from abundant air and warmth? Is not the wisdom of nature evident also in this, that as soon as the blood, the artificer, has fashioned the whole human body within its secret precincts, when the time for birth comes, it rises into the upper parts, is ready to cherish the first beginnings of life and of light, and supplies the newborn children with the familiar and accustomed food? Therefore it is believed not without reason that, just as the power and nature of the seed are able to form likenesses of body and mind, so the qualities and properties of the milk have the same effect. And this is observed not only in human beings, but in beasts also; for if kids are fed on the milk of ewes, or lambs on that of goats, it is a fact that as a rule the wool is harsher in the former and the hair softer in the latter. In trees too and grain the power and strength of the water and earth which nourish them have more effect in retarding or promoting their growth than have those of the seed itself which is sown; and you often see a strong and flourishing tree, when transplanted to another spot, die from the effect of an inferior soil. What the mischief, then, is the reason for corrupting the nobility of body and mind of a newly born human being, formed from gifted seeds, by the alien and degenerate nourishment of another's milk? Especially if she whom you employ to furnish the milk is either a slave or of servile origin and, as usually happens, of a foreign and barbarous nation, if she is dishonest, ugly,

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