

BOOK XV

## LIBER QUINTUS DECIMUS

### I

Quod in Quinti Claudii *Annalibus* scriptum est lignum  
alumine oblitum non ardere.

1 DECLAMAVERAT Antonius Iulianus rhetor, praeter-  
quam semper alias, tum vero nimium quantum de-  
lectabiliter et feliciter. Sunt enim ferme scholasticae  
istae declamationes eiusdem hominis eiusdemque fa-  
2 cundiae, non eiusdem tamen cotidie felicitatis. Nos  
ergo familiares eius circumfusi undique eum prosequen-  
batur domum, cum inde subeuntes montem Cispium  
conspicimus insulam quandam occupatam igni multis  
arduisque tabulatis editam et propinqua iam omnia  
3 flagrare vasto incendio. Tum quispiam ibi ex comi-  
tibus Iuliani: "Magni," inquit, "reditus urbanorum  
praediorum, sed pericula sunt longe maxima. Si  
quid autem posset remedii fore, ut ne tam adsidue  
domus Romae arderent, venum hercle dedissem res  
4 rusticas et urbicas emissem." Atque illi Iulianus  
laeta, ut mos eius fuit, inter fabulandum venustate:  
"Si *Annalem*," inquit, "undevicensimum Q. Claudii le-  
gisses, optimi et sincerissimi scriptoris, docuisset te  
profecto Archelaus, regis Mitridati praefectus, qua  
medella quaque sollertia ignem defenderes, ut ne

## BOOK XV

### I

That it is written in the *Annals* of Quintus Claudius that wood smeared with alum does not burn.

THE rhetorician Antonius Julianus, besides holding forth on many other occasions, had once declaimed with marvellous charm and felicity. For such scholastic declamations generally show the characteristics of the same man and the same eloquence, but nevertheless are not every day equally happy. We friends of his therefore thronged about him on all sides and were escorting him home, when, as we were on our way up the Cispan Hill, we saw that a block of houses, built high with many stories, had caught fire, and that now all the neighbouring buildings were burning in a mighty conflagration. Then some one of Julianus' companions said: "The income from city property is great, but the dangers are far greater. But if some remedy could be devised to prevent houses in Rome from so constantly catching fire, by Jove! I would sell my country property and buy in the city." And Julianus replied to him in his usual happy and graceful style: "If you had read the nineteenth book of the *Annals* of Quintus Claudius, that excellent and faithful writer, you would surely have learned from Archelaus, a praefect of king Mithridates, by what method and by what skill you might prevent fires, so that no wooden building of yours

## ATTIC NIGHTS OF AULUS GELLIUS

ulla tua aedificatio e ligno correpta atque insinuata flammis arderet.”

- 5 Percontatus ego sum quid esset illud mirum  
6 Quadrigarii. Repetit: “ In eo igitur libro scriptum inveni, cum obpugnaret L. Sulla in terra Attica Piraeum et contra Archelaus regis Mitridati praefectus ex eo oppido propugnaret, turrim ligneam defendendi gratia structam, cum ex omni latere circumplexa igni foret, ardere non quisse, quod alumine ab Archelao oblita fuisset.”
- 7 Verba Quadrigarii ex eo libro haec sunt: “ Cum Sulla conatus<sup>1</sup> esset tempore<sup>2</sup> magno, eduxit copias, ut Archelai turrim unam quam ille interposuit ligneam incenderet. Venit, accessit, ligna subdidit, submovit Graecos, ignem admovit; satis sunt diu conati, numquam quiverunt incendere, ita Archelaus omnem materiam obleverat alumine, quod Sulla atque milites mirabantur, et postquam non succendit,<sup>3</sup> reduxit copias.”

## II

Quod Plato in libris quos *De Legibus* composuit largiores laetioresque in conviviis invitatiunculas vini non inutiles esse existimavit.

- 1 Ex insula Creta quispiam aetatem Athenis agens Platonicum sese philosophum dicebat et viderier gestibat. Erat autem nihili homo et nugator atque in

<sup>1</sup> cunctatus, *sugg. by Hosius.*      <sup>2</sup> opere, *Lipsius.*

<sup>3</sup> succendit,  $\omega$ ; successit, *Damsté.*

would burn, even though caught and penetrated by the flames."

I inquired what this marvel of Quadrigarius<sup>1</sup> was. He rejoined: "In that book then I found it recorded, that when Lucius Sulla attacked the Piraeus in the land of Attica, and Archelaus, praefect of king Mithridates, was defending it against him, Sulla was unable to burn a wooden tower constructed for purposes of defence, although it had been surrounded with fire on every side, because Archelaus had smeared it with alum."

The words of Quadrigarius in that book are as follows:<sup>2</sup> "When Sulla had exerted himself for a long time, he led out his troops in order to set fire to a single wooden tower which Archelaus had interposed. He came, he drew near, he put wood under it, he beat off the Greeks, he applied fire; though they tried for a considerable time, they were never able to set it on fire, so thoroughly had Archelaus covered all the wood with alum. Sulla and his soldiers were amazed at this, and failing in his attempt, the general led back his troops."

## II

That Plato in the work which he wrote *On the Laws* expressed the opinion that inducements to drink more abundantly and more merrily at feasts were not without benefit.

A MAN from the island of Crete, who was living in Athens, gave out that he was a Platonic philosopher and desired to pass as one. He was, however, a man of no worth, a trifler, boastful of his command

<sup>1</sup> That is, Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius; see § 4.

<sup>2</sup> Frag. 81, Peter<sup>2</sup>.

## ATTIC NIGHTS OF AULUS GELLIUS

3 Graecae facundiae gloria iactabundus et praeterea  
vini libidine adusque ludibria ebriosus. Is in convi-  
viis iuvenum, quae agitare Athenis hebdomadibus  
lunae sollemne nobis fuit, simulatque modus epulis  
factus et utiles delectabilesque sermones coeperant,  
tum, silentio ad audiendum petito, loqui coeptabat  
atque id genus vili et incondita verborum caterva  
hortabatur omnes ad bibendum, idque se facere ex  
decreto Platonico praedicabat, tanquam Plato in  
libris quos *De Legibus* composuit laudes ebrietatis  
copiosissime scripsisset utilemque esse eam bonis ac  
fortibus viris censuisset; ac simul inter eiusmodi  
orationem crebris et ingentibus poculis ingenium  
omne ingurgitabat, fomitem esse quendam dicens  
et ignitabulum ingenii virtutisque, si mens et corpus  
hominis vino flagraret.

4 Sed enim Plato in primo et secundo *De Legibus*  
non, ut ille nebulo opinabatur, ebrietatem istam  
turpissimam quae labefacere et inminuere hominum  
mentes solet laudavit, sed hanc largiorem paulo iu-  
cundioremque vini invitationem, quae fieret sub qui-  
busdam quasi arbitris et magistris conviviorum sobriis,  
5 non inprobavit. Nam et modicis honestisque inter  
bibendum remissionibus refici integrarique animos ad  
instauranda sobrietatis officia existumavit reddique  
eos sensim laetiores atque ad intentiones rursum ca-  
piendas fieri habiliores, et simul, si qui penitus in his  
adfectionum cupiditatumque errores inessent, quos

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<sup>1</sup> 9, p. 637, A; 14, p. 647, B.

of Grecian eloquence, besides having a passion for wine which fairly made him a laughing stock. At the entertainments which it was the custom of us young men to hold at Athens at the beginning of each week, as soon as we had finished eating and an instructive and pleasant conversation had begun, this fellow, having called for silence that he might be heard, began to speak, and using a cheap and disordered rabble of words after his usual fashion, urged all to drink; and this he declared that he did in accordance with the injunction of Plato, maintaining that Plato in his work *On the Laws* had written most eloquently in praise of drunkenness, and had decided that it was beneficial to good and strong men. And at the same time, while he was thus speaking, he drenched such wits as he had with frequent and huge beakers, saying that it was a kind of touchwood and tinder to the intellect and the faculties, if mind and body were inflamed with wine.

However, Plato in the first<sup>1</sup> and second<sup>2</sup> books of his work *On the Laws* did not, as that fool thought, praise that shameful intoxication which is wont to undermine and weaken men's minds, although he did not disapprove of that somewhat more generous and cheerful inspiration of wine which is regulated by some temperate arbiters, so to speak, and presidents of banquets. For he thought that by the proper and moderate relaxation of drinking the mind was refreshed and renewed for resuming the duties of sobriety, and that men were gradually rendered happier and became readier to repeat their efforts. At the same time, if there were deep in their hearts any errors of inclination or desire,

<sup>1</sup> 9, p. 666, A; 12, p. 671, B.

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