

Statius *Silvae* 1.3

He that has had the chance to view the chill Tiburtine estate of eloquent Vopiscus and the twin homes threaded by Anio or to acquaint himself with the intercourse of a common bank and the mansions that vie to keep their master each for herself, at him Sirius' hot star did not bark nor leafy Nemea's nursing frown. Such winter is in the edifice, unconscionable cools defeat the sun, the dwelling never swelters in a Pisaean season. Pleasure herself <is said> with tender hand to have traced with you *** Then Venus anointed the rooftops with Idalian juices, stroked them with her hair, and left gift of charm upon the residence, forbidding her winged children to depart there-from.

Day long to be remembered! What joy does my mind bring back, what weariness of vision amid so many marvels! How gentle the nature of the ground! What beauty in the blessed spot before art's handiwork! Nowhere has Nature indulged herself more lavishly. Tall woods brooded over rapid waters. A deceptive image answers the foliage and the reflexion flows unchanging in the lengthening stream. Anio himself, wondrous to tell, full of rocks above and below, here rests his swollen rage and foamy din, as though loath to disturb Vopiscus' Pierian days and song-filled slumbers. Either shore is at home, nor does the gentle river divide you. Stately mansions keep either bank, no strangers to each other, nor complain that the river blocks them: let Fame now boast of Sestos' bay and the sea a swimmer swam and dolphins outmatched by a bold stripling! Here is eternal quiet, storms have no jurisdiction, waters never boil. Here view and voice may be passed across, hands almost; neither do tidal waves drive Chalcis away nor does the Bruttian strand gaze on Sicilian Pelorus, sundered by the deep.

What shall I sing to begin with or halfway, on what ending shall I fall silent? Shall I wonder at gilded beams or Moorish doorposts everywhere or marble lucent with colours or water discharged through every bedchamber? Eyes draw me one way, mind another. Shall I tell of the venerable age of the groves? Of the courtyard that views the river's course below or that other looking back to the silent woods, where your rest is safe and night, impaired by no turbulence, is silent, or murmurs invite lazy slumber? Or of the steaming baths taken up by their grassy ledge and fire imposed on chilly banks, where the river linked to a vaporous furnace laughs at the Nymphs as they pant, though the stream be hard by?

Works of art I saw, creations of old masters, metals variously alive. 'Tis labour to list the golden figures or the ivory or gems fit to adorn fingers or all that artist's imagination wrought, first in silver or bronze miniature, then to attempt huge colossi. As I wandered agaze and cast my eyes over it all, I suddenly found myself treading wealth. For radiance streaming from aloft and tiles reflecting the dazzle showed a bright floor where the ground rejoiced in painting's variety, with strange shapes surpassing the Unswept Pavement.⁸ My steps were aghast.

Why now should I wonder at connecting structures or those distanced in separate stories? Why at the tree preserved in the dwelling's midst, rising through ceilings and doorways to emerge in the open, sure to suffer the cruel axe under any other master? But now it may be that some slippery Naiad or Hamadryad owes you unbroken years, to you unknown.

Why should I relate the tables alternate on the double bank or cool pools and springs deep under water or you, Marcia, gliding far down athwart the river, your daring lead running across its flow? Or should only Elis' stream be led by a salt-free path below Ionian waters to Aetnaean haven? There Anio himself, leaving grotto and fount in the secrecy of night, stript of his grey-green garb moves this way and that, spreading his chest with fragile moss; or his bulk plunges into the stream and splashes the glassy waters as he swims. In that shade reclines Tiburnus, there Albula would fain dip her sulphurous hair.

This house could part Phoebe from Egeria, deprive chill Taygetus of his choirs of

Dryads, and summon Pan from the woods of Lycaeus. And if the Titynthian shrine did not give other oracles, the sisters of Praeneste could migrate. Why should I laud the twice-bearing orchards of Alcinous and the boughs that never stretched empty to the sky? Let Telegonus' fields and the Laurentian acres of Turnus yield, and the Lucrine dwellings and bloody Antiphates' shore; likewise the treacherous ridge of glassy Circe, where Dulichian wolves howled, and Anxur's proud citadel and the home that the old dame owes to her Phrygian nurseling; likewise Antium's shores that will call you back when suns are narrowed in rainy midwinter.

Here for sure your way of life meditates weighty matters, here hides fertile repose and strenuous virtue with brow serene and sober elegance and enjoyment sans luxury, such as the old man of Gargettus would have preferred and left his Athens and forsaken the garden. This to visit were worth a voyage through Aegean storms and the snowy constellation of the Hyades under Olenian star, though the ship must be trusted to Malea and the way lie through Sicily's surge.

Why do our eyes scorn pleasure near at hand? Here your lyre delights Tibur's Fauns and Alcides himself and Catillus, named by a greater harp, whether you are minded to vie with Pindar's quill or lift your instrument to the doughty deeds of heroes or brandish satire, black with envy's venom, or give no less care to your sparkling letters.

O worthy of the wealth of Midas and Croesus and the treasure of Persia, hail to your soul's riches! Hermus should traverse your flooded fields with his yellow channel and Tagus with his shining silt. So may you cultivate learned leisure, I pray, so pass the limit of Nestor's age, and every cloud be wiped away from your heart.