brother, who is younger than I, and with whom you are well acquainted. He was delighted and gratified beyond measure by the thought of holding the place of a friend as well as of a brother.

At the time fixed we left the house, and by evening reached Malacenic, which lies at the foot of the mountain, to the north. Having rested there a day, we finally made the ascent this morning, with but one companion except two servants; and a most difficult task it was. The mountain is a very steep and almost inaccessible mass of stone and soil. But, as the poet has well said, "Resonous toil conquers all." It was a long day, the air fine. We enjoyed the advantages of vigour of mind and strength and agility of body, and everything else essential to those engaged in such an undertaking, and so had no other difficulties to face than those of the region itself. We found an old shepherd in one of the mountain dales, who tried, at great length, to dissuade us from the ascent, saying that some fifty years before he had, in the same season of youth, reached the summit, but had gotten for his pains nothing except fatigue and regret, and clothes and body torn by the rocks and briers. No one, so far as he or his companions knew, had ever tried the ascent before or after him. But his counsels increased rather than diminished our desire to proceed, since youth is suspicious of warnings. So the old man, finding that his efforts were in vain, went a little way with us, and pointed out a rough path among the rocks, uttering many admonitions, which he continued to send to us after we had left him behind. Surrendering to him all such garments or other possessions as might prove burdensome to us, we made ready for the ascent, and started off at a good pace. But, as usually happens, fatigue quickly followed upon our excessive exertion, and we soon came to a halt at the top of a certain cliff. Upon starting on again we went more slowly, and I especially advanced along the rocky way with a more deliberate step. While my brother chose a direct path straight up the ridge, I weakly took an easier one which really descended. When I was called back, and the right road was shown me, I replied that I hoped to find a better way round on the other side, and that I did not mind going farther if the path were only less steep. This was just an excuse for my laziness; and when the others had already reached a considerable height I was still wandering in the valleys. I had failed to find an easier path, and had only increased the distance and difficulty of the ascent. At last I became disgusted with the intricate way I had chosen, and resolved to ascend without more ado. When I reached my brother, who, while waiting for me, had bad ample opportunity for rest, I was tired and irritated. We walked along together for a time, but hardly had we passed the first spur when I forgot about the circuitous route which I had just tried, and took a lower one again. Once more I followed an easy, rounded path through winding valleys, only to find myself soon in my old difficulty. I was simply trying to avoid the exertion of the ascent; but no human ingenuity can alter the nature of things, or cause anything to reach a height by going down. Suffice it to say that, much to my vexation and my brother's amusement, I made this same mistake three times or more during a few hours.

After being frequently misled in this way, I finally sat down in a valley and

Letter to Dionisio da Borgo San Sepolcro
[The Ascent of Mount Vountos]

To-day I made the ascent of the highest mountain in the region, which is not improperly called Vountos. My only motive was the wish to see what so great an elevation had to offer. I have had the expedition in mind for many years; for as you know, I have lived in this region from infancy, having been cast here by that fate which determines the affairs of men. Consequently the mountain, which is visible from a great distance, was ever before my eyes, and I conceived the plan of some time doing what I have at last accomplished to-day. The idea took hold upon me with especial force when, in reading Livy's History of Rome, yesterday, I happened upon the place where Philip of Macedon, the same who waged war against the Romans, ascended Mount Haemus in Thessaly, from whose summit he was able, it is said, to see two seas, the Adriatic and the Euxine. Whether this be true or false I have not been able to determine, for the mountain is too far away, and writers disagree. Pompeius Mela, the cosmographer—not to mention others who have spoken of this occurrence—admits its truth without hesitation; Titus Livius, on the other hand, considers it false. I, assuredly, should not have left the question long in doubt, had that mountain been as easy to explore as this one. Let us leave this matter to one side, however, and return to the mountain here,—it seems to me that a young man in private life may well be excused for attempting what an aged king could undertake without arousing criticism.

When I came to look about for a companion I found, strangely enough, that hardly one among my friends seemed suitable, so rarely do we meet with just the right combination of personal tastes and characterisitics, even among those who are dearest to us. This one was too apathetic, that one over-anxious; this one too slow, that one too hasty; one was too sad, another too cheerful; one more simple, another more sagacious, than I desired. I feared this one's insensibility and that one's quickness. The heavy deliberation of some repelled me as much as the lean incapacity of others. I rejected those who were likely to irritate me by a cold want of interest, as well as those who might weary me by their excessive enthusiasm. Such defects, however grave, could be borne with at home, for charity suffereth all things, and friendship accepts any burden; but it is quite otherwise on a journey, where every weakness becomes much more obvious. So, as I was bent upon pleasure and amusement that my enjoyment should be unalloyed, I looked about me with unusual care, balanced against one another the various characteristics of my friends, and without committing my breach of friendship I silently condemned every trait which might prove disagreeable on the way. And—would you believe it?—I finally turned homeward for aid, and proposed the ascent to my only

1. Translated by James Henry Robinson and Henry Warchterolle Rolfe. Letter 4.1 from De Ruffo (Pamphil). Dionysius of Corinth. ed. W. H. Lecky. 4 vols. London: 1882-85. See also the suggestion made in note 6, where Pamphilus had probably seen the text in Paris in 1839. A similar suggestion, though not as arresting as Robinson, is due to Dr. W. H. Lecky.

2. In connexion with the trial of the Empress Constantia in 324, when the charge of her brother, the Emperor Constantine, was preferred against that of Emperor Licinius. The Edict of Milan was signed on the 11th of March, 313. (Constantius I was appointed emperor of the East in 324.)

3. April 26. From internal evidence the sea was likely 326, two years after Pamphilus left Rome. But the letter was probably written as an answer to a previous letter of the friend mentioned above in note 2. (Josephus mentions a letter to him written in the same season of the year.)


6. Trappus, who was about three years younger. 7. Vergil in Georgias 1:44-46. 8. In the allegorical reading of the letter, this would be an allusion to Gherardo achieving God and adoration soon directly (he became a monk in 1342, entering into the monastery of Saintes).
traveled my winged thoughts from things corporeal to the immaterial, addressing myself as follows:—"What thou hast repeatedly experienced today in the ascent of this mountain, happens to thee, as to many, in the journey toward the blessed life. But this is not so readily perceived by men, since the motions of the body are obvious and external while those of the soul are invisible and hidden. Yes, the life which we call blessed is to be sought for on a high eminence, and strait is the way that leads to it. Many, also, are the hills that lie between, and we must ascend, by a glorious stairway, from strength to strength. And as the top is at once the end of our struggles and the goal for which we are bound. All wish to reach this goal, but, as Ovid says, 'To wish is little; we must long with the utmost eagerness to gain our end.' Thou certainly dost ardently desire, as well as simply wish, unless thou deceivest thyself in this matter, as in so many others. What, then, doth hold thee back? Nothing, assuredly, except that thou wouldest take a path which, at first thought, more easy, leading through low and worldly pleasures. But nevertheless in the end, after long wanderings, thou must perform either climb the steeper path, under the burden of tasks foolishly deferred, to its blessed culmination, or lie down in the valley of thy sins, and (should to think of it!), if the shadow of death overtake thee, spend an eternal night amid constant torments." These thoughts stimulated both body and mind in a wonderful degree for facing the difficulties which yet remained. Oh, that I might traverse in spirit that other road for which I long and day, even, as to-day I overcame material obstacles by my bodily exertions! And I know not why it should not be far easier, since the swift immortal soul can reach its goal in the twinkling of an eye, without passing through space, while my progress to-day was necessarily slow, dependent as I was upon a failing body weighed down by heavy members.

One peak of the mountain, the highest of all, the people call "Sonny," why, I do not know, unless by antiphrasis, as I have sometimes suspected in other instances; for the peak is now, I think, the father of all the surrounding ones. On its top is a little level place, and here we could at least rest our tired horses.

Now, my father, since you have followed the thoughts that spurred me on in my ascent, listen to the rest of the story, and devote one hour, I pray you, to reviewing the experiences of my entire day. At first, owing to the unaccustomed quality of the air and the effect of the great sweep of view spread out before me, I stood like one dozed. I beheld the clouds under our feet, and what I had read of Athens and Olympus seemed less incredible as I myself witnessed the same things from a mountain of lesser fame. I turned my eyes toward Italy, in whose heart most inclined. The Alps, rugged and unyielding, seemed to rise close by, although they were really at a great distance; the very same Alps through which that fierce enemy of the Roman name once made his way, bursting the rocks, if we may believe the report, by the application of vinegar. I sighed, I must confess, for the siles of Italy, which I beheld rather with my mind than with my eyes. An inexplicable longing came over me to return once more to my friend and my country. At the same time I reproached myself for this double weakness, springing, as it did, from a soul not yet steel ed to manly resistance. And yet there were excuses for both of these cravings, and a number of distinguished writers might be summoned to support me.

Then a new idea took possession of me, and I shifted my thoughts to a consideration of time rather than place. 'To-day it is ten years since, having completed thy youthful studies, thou didst leave Bologna. Eternal God! In the name of immaterial wisdom, think what alterations in thy character this intervening period has beheld! I pass over a thousand instances. I am not yet in a safe harbour where I can calmly recall past storms. The time may come when I can review in due order all the experiences of the past, saying with St. Augustine, 'I desire to recall my soul actions and the carnal corruption of my soul, not because I love them, but that I may the more love thee, O my God.' Much that is doubtful and evil still clings to me, but what I once loved, that I love no longer. And yet what am I saying? I still love it, but with shame, but with heaviness of heart. Now, at last, I have confessed the truth. So it is. I love, but love what I would not love, what I would that I might hate. Though loath to do so, though constrained, though sad and sorrowing, still I do love, and I feel in my miserable self the truth of the well-known words, 'I will hate if I can; if not, will love against my will.' Three years have not yet passed since that perverse and wicked passion which had a firm grasp upon me and held undisturbed sway in my heart began to discover a rebellious opponent, who was unwilling longer to yield obedience. These two adversaries have joined in close combat for the supremacy, and for a long time now a harassing and doubtful war has been waged in the field of my thoughts.'

Thus I turned over the last ten years in my mind, and then, fixing my anxious gaze on the future, I asked myself: 'If, perchance, thou shouldst prolong this uncertain life of thine for yet two lustres, and shouldst make an advance toward virtue proportionate to the distance to which thou hast departed from thine original infatuation during the past two years, since the new longing first encountered the old, couldst thou, on reaching thy fortieth year, face death, if not with complete assurance, at least with hopefulness, calmly dismissing from thy thoughts the residuum of life as it faded into old age?'

These and similar reflections occurred to me, my father. I rejoiced in my progress, I measured my weaknesses, and commiserated the universal inability of human conduct. I had well-nigh forgotten where I was and our object in coming; but at last I dismissed my anxieties, which were better suited to other surroundings, and reached to look about me and see what we had come to see. The sinking sun and the lengthening shadows of the mountain were already warning us that the time was near at hand when we must go. As it suddenly waned from sleep, I turned about and gazed toward the west. I was unable to discern the summits of the Pyrenees, which form the barrier between France and Spain; not because of any intervening obstacle that I knew of but owing simply to the insufficiency of our mortal vision. But I could see with the unusual clearness, off to the right, the mountains of the region about Lyons, and to the left the bay of Marseilles and the waters that

9. Ex Pomp. 3.1.35. 1. The threatened use of a word in a sense opposite to its actual meaning.
lash the shores of Aegaeus Mortes, altho' all these places were so distant that it would require a journey of several days to reach them. Under my very eyes flowed the Rhone.

While I was thus dividing my thoughts, now turning my attention to some terrestrial object that lay before me, now raising my soul, as I had done my body, to higher planes, it occurred to me to look into my copy of St. Augustin's Confessions, a gift that I owe to your love, and that I always have about me, in memory of both the author and the giver. I opened the compact little volume, small indeed in size, but of infinite charm, with the intention of reading whatever came to hand, for I could happen upon nothing that would be otherwise than edifying and devout. Now it chanced that the tenth book presented itself. My brother, waiting to hear something of St. Augustin's from my lips, stood attentively by. I call him, and God too, to witness that where I first fixed my eyes it was written: "And men go about to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not." I was abashed, and asking my brother (who was anxious to hear more), not to annoy me, I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye upon myself, and from that time not a syllable fell from my lips until we had reached the bottom again. Those words had given me occupation enough, for I could not believe that it was by a mere accident that I happened upon them. What I had there read I believed to be addressed to me and to no other, remembering that St. Augustin had once suspected the same thing in his own case, when, on opening the book of the Apostle, as he himself tells us, 'the first words that he saw there were, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in uncle and envy ing. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."' The same thing happened earlier to St. Anthony, when he was listening to the Gospel where it is written, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." Believing this scripture to have been read for his especial benefit, as his biographer Athanasius says, he guided himself by its aid to the Kingdom of Heaven. And as Anthony on hearing these words waited for nothing more, and as Augustine upon reading the Apostle's admonition sought no farther, so I concluded my reading in the few words which I have given. I thought in silence of the lack of good counsel in us mortals, who neglect what is nobel in ourselves, scatter our energies in all directions, and waste ourselves in a vain show, because we know not for what is to be found only within. I wondered at the natural nobility of our soul, saved when it deserts itself of its own free will, and deserts its original estate, turning what God has given it for its honour into dishonour. How many times, think you, did I turn back that day, to glance at the summit of the mountain, which seemed scarcely a cubit high compared with the range of human contemplation,—when it is not immersed in the fulness of earth?

With every downward step I asked myself this: If we are not ready to endure a little nearer heaven, how can a soul struggling toward God, up the steep of human pride and human destiny, bear any cross or prison or sting of fortune? How few, I thought, but are diverted from their path by the fear of difficulties or the love of ease! How happy the lot of those few, if any such there be! It is to them, assuredly, that the poet was thinking, when he wrote:

Happy the man who is skilled to understand
Nature's hid causes; who beneath his feet
All terrors cast, and death's relentless doom,
And the loud roar of greedy Acheron.'

How earnestly should we strive, not to stand on mountain-tops, but to trample beneath us those appetites which spring from earthly impulses.

With no consciousness of the difficulties of the way, amidst these preoccupations which I have so frankly revealed, we came, long after dark, but with the full moon lending us its friendly light, to the little inn which we had left that morning before dawn. The time during which the servants have been occupied in preparing our supper, I have spent in a secluded part of the house, huddledly jotting down these experiences on the spur of the moment, lest, in case my task were postponed, my mood should change on my leaving the place, and so my interest in writing flag.

You will see, my dearest father, that I wish nothing to be concealed from you, for I am careful to describe to you not only my life in general but even my individual reflections. And I beseech you, in turn, to pray that these vague and wandering thoughts of mine may some time become firmly fixed, and, after having been vainly tossed about from one interest to another, may direct themselves at last toward the single, true, certain, and everlasting good.

MALAUGIENS, April 26.

[SONNETS]

1

You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart during my first youthful error, when I was in part another man from what I am now:

for the varied style in which I weep and speak between vain hopes and vain sorrows, where there is anyone who understands love through experience, I hope to find pity, not only pardon.

But now I see well how for a long time I was the talk of the crowd, for which often I am ashamed of myself within?
and of my raving, shame is the fruit, and repentance, and the
clear knowledge that whatever pleases in the world is a brief
dream.

3

It was the day when the sun’s rays turned pale with grief for his
Maker when I was taken, and I did not defend myself against it,
for your lovely eyes, Lady, bound me.

It did not seem to me a time for being on guard against Love’s
blows; therefore I went confident and without fear, and so my
misfortunes began in the midst of the universal woe.6

Love found me altogether disarmed, and the way open through
my eyes to my heart, my eyes which are now the portal and
passageway of tears.

Therefore, as it seems to me, it got him no honor to strike me
with an arrow in that state,7 and not even to show his bow to
you, who were armed.

34

Apollo, if the sweet desire is still alive that inflamed you beside
the Thessalian waves,8 and if you have not forgotten, with the
turning of the years, those beloved blood locks;

against the slow frost and the harsh and cruel time that lasts as
long as your face is hidden, now defend the honored and holy
leaves where you first and then I were limed;

and by the power of the amorous hope that sustained you in
your bitter life, disencumber the site of these impressions.9

Thus we shall then together see a marvel—our lady sitting on the
grass with her arms making a shade for herself.

6. Translated by Robert M. Darlington. 5. The anniversary of Christ’s crucifixion. Ephesians (verse 21)
and a note in Shakespeare’s copy of Virgil dated April 9, 1627. 6. The supposed Christian grief that
contrasts with Perark’s pagan verse. 7. State of grief over the crucifixion. 8. Translated by Robert
Darlington. 9. Patroclus’ lover. Love of men to the love of Apollo for Daphne is Odysseus’ simile.
Daphne, daughter of the god of the Fennic River in Thessaly, was pursued by Apollo, the god of poetry.
The tragic love for the dancer, which had “given me much pleasure,” and was transferred into
the laurel tree. Apollo, who Patroclus associates with the sun god, caused the laurel to be perpetual
eternally. 1. Grief, closely weather, and sighing. 2. Supernatural and highly meaningful auspices.

61

Blest be the day, and blest the month and year,
Season and hour10 and very moment blest,
The lovely land and place11 where first possessed
By two pure eyes I found me prisoner;

And blest the first sweet pain, the first most dear,
Which burnt my heart when Love came in as guest;
And blest the bow, the shafts which shook my breast,
And even the wounds which Love delivered there.

Blest be the words and voices which filled grove
And glen with echoes of my lady’s name;
The sighs, the tears, the fierce despair of love;

And blest the sonnet-sources of my fame;
And blest that thought of thoughts which is her own,
Of her, her only, of herself alone!

62

Father in heaven, after each lost day,
Each night spent raving with that fierce desire
Which in my heart has kindled into fire
Seeing your acts adored for my disobey;

Grant henceforth that I turn, within your light12
To another life and deeds more truly fair;
So having spread to no avail the snare
My bitter fate13 might hold it in despite.

The eleventh year,14 my Lord, has now come round
Since I was yoked beneath the heavy trace
That on the meekest weighs most cruelty.

Pity the object plighted where I am found;
Return my steaming thoughts to a nobler place;
Show them this day you were on Calvary.

78

When Simon15 received the high idea which, for my sake, put his
hand to his styrus, if he had given to his noble work voice and
intellect along with form

10. Translated by Joseph Adderley. 11. Season, April 9, 1627. summer. 12. The Church of Saint Clare
in Arignon during the last years of his life. His painting of Laura is the subject of the poem.
he would have lightened my breast of many sighs that make 5
what others prize most vile to me. For in appearance she seems
humble, and her expression promises peace;
then, when I come to speak to her, she seems to listen most
kindly: if she could only reply to my words!

Pylamion, how glad you should be of your statue, since you
received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once!

90

She used to let her golden hair fly free
For the wind to toy and tangle and molest;
Her eyes were brighter than the radiant west.
(Seldom they shine so now.) I used to see

Pity look out of those deep eyes on me.
("It was false pity," you would now protest.)
I had love's tender焘pped within my breast;
What wonder that the flame burned furiously?

She did not walk in any rostral way, 10
But with angelic progress; when she spoke,
Unearthly voices sang in unison.

She seemed divine among the dreary folk
Of earth. You say she is not so today?
Well, though the bow's unleast, the wound bleeds on.

126

Clear, fresh, sweet waters, where she who alone seems lady

to me rested her lovely body,
gentle branch where it pleased her (with sighing I remember)
to make a column for her lovely side,
grace and flowers that her rich garment covered along with
her angelic breast, sacred bright air where Love opened my heart
with her lovely eyes: listen all together to my sorrowful doting
words.

If it is indeed my destiny and Heaven exorts itself that Love
close these eyes while they are still weeping,
let some grace bury my poor body among you and let my soul
return naked to this its own dwelling:
death will be less harsh if I hear this hope to the fearful pass,
for my weary spirit could never in a more restful port or a more
tranquil grave flee my laboring flesh and my bones.

There will come a time perhaps when to her accustomed
sojourn the lovely, gentle wild one will return
and, seeking me, turn her desirous and happy eyes toward
where she saw me on that blessed day,
and oh the pity! seeing me already dust amid the stones,
Love will inspire her to sigh so sweetly that she will win mercy
for me and force Heaven, drying her eyes with her lovely veil.

From the lovely branches was descending (sweet in
memory) a rain of flowers over her bosom,
and she was sitting humble in such a glory, already covered
with the loving cloud,
this flower was falling on her skirt, this one on her blond
braid, which were burnished gold and pearls to see that day,
this one was coming to rest on the ground, this one on the water,
this one, with a lovely wandering, turning about seemed to say:
"Here reigns Love."

How many times did I say to myself then, full of awe: "She was
surely born in Paradise!"
Her divine bearing and her face and her words and her sweet
smile had so laden me with forgetfulness
and so divided me from the true image, that I was sighing:
"How did I come here and whom?" thinking I was in Heaven, not
there where I was. From then on this grace has pleased me so that
elsewhere I have no peace.

If you had as many beauties as you have desire, you could
boldly leave the wood and go among people. 1

180

My ship laden with forgetfulness passes through a harsh sea, at
midnight, in winter, between Scylla and Charybdis, and at the
tiller sits my lord, rather my enemy! 2

each oar is manned by a ready, cruel thought that seems to scorn
the tempest and the end; a wet, changeless wind of sighs, hopes,
and desires breaks the sail.

8. An image associated with the Virgin Mary. 9. Ance (Gymnai or Choris). The floral and hereditary images suggest Latry's body with the biretta of the King of Songs, whoso matronly charity is celebrated as an "ascendence godly" and "mercy seated." 11. The last two lines are addressed to the poesy. 180. From Vergil's Aeneid, 6. Translation by T.W. Haskell. 189. From Vergil's Aeneid, 6. Translation by Albert M. Durling. 7. Of the river forgetus.