

## C. PLINIUS GALLO SUO S.

1 Miraris cur me Laurentinum vel - si ita mavis -, Laurens meum tanto opere delectet; desines mirari, cum cognoveris gratiam villae, opportunitatem loci, litoris spatium. 2 Decem septem milibus passuum ab urbe secessit, ut peractis quae agenda fuerint salvo iam et composito die possis ibi manere. Aditur non una via; nam et Laurentina et Ostiensis eodem ferunt, sed Laurentina a quarto decimo lapide, Ostiensis ab undecimo relinquenda est. Utrisque excipit iter aliqua ex parte harenosum, iunctis paulo gravius et longius, equo breve et molle. 3 Varia hinc atque inde facies; nam modo occurrentibus silvis via coartatur, modo latissimis pratis diffunditur et patescit; multi greges ovium, multa ibi equorum boum armenta, quae montibus hieme depulsa herbis et tepore verno nitescunt. Villa usibus capax, non sumptuosa tutela. 4 Cuius in prima parte atrium frugi, nec tamen sordidum; deinde porticus in D litterae similitudinem circumactae, quibus parvola sed festiva area includitur. Egregium hac adversus tempestates receptaculum; nam specularibus ac multo magis imminentibus rectis muniuntur. 5 Est contra medias cavaedium hilare, mox triclinium satis pulchrum, quod in litus excurrit ac si quando Africo mare impulsus est, fractis iam et novissimis fluctibus leviter alluitur. Undique valvas aut fenestras non minores valvis habet atque ita a lateribus a fronte quasi tria maria prospectat; a tergo cavaedium porticum aream porticum rursus, mox atrium silvas et longinquos respicit montes. 6 Huius a laeva retractius paulo cubiculum est amplum, deinde aliud minus quod altera fenestra admittit orientem, occidentem altera retinet; hac et subiacens mare longius quidem sed securius intuetur. 7 Huius cubiculi et triclinii illius obiectu includitur angulus, qui purissimum solem

continet et accendit. Hoc hibernaculum, hoc etiam gymnasium meorum est; ibi omnes silent venti, exceptis qui nubilum inducunt, et serenum ante quam usum loci eripiunt. 8 Annectitur angulo cubiculum in hapsida curvatum, quod ambitum solis fenestris omnibus sequitur. Parieti eius in bibliothecae speciem armarium insertum est, quod non legendos libros sed lectitandos capit. 9 Adhaeret dormitorium membrum transitu interiacente, qui suspensus et tubulatus conceptum vaporem salubri temperamento huc illuc digerit et ministrat. Reliqua pars lateris huius servorum libertorumque usibus detinetur, plerisque tam mundis, ut accipere hospites possint. 10 Ex alio latere cubiculum est politissimum; deinde vel cubiculum grande vel modica cenatio, quae plurimo sole, plurimo mari lucet; post hanc cubiculum cum procoetone, altitudine aestivum, munimentis hibernum; est enim subductum omnibus ventis. Huic cubiculo aliud et procoeton communi pariete iunguntur. 11 Inde balinei cella frigidaria spatiosa et effusa, cuius in contrariis parietibus duo baptisteria velut eiecta sinuantur, abunde capacia si mare in proximo cogites. Adiacet unctorium, hypocauston, adiacet propnigeon balinei, mox duae cellae magis elegantes quam sumptuosae; cohaeret calida piscina mirifica, ex qua natantes mare aspiciunt, 12 nec procul sphaeristerium quod calidissimo soli inclinato iam die occurrit. Hic turris erigitur, sub qua diaetae duae, totidem in ipsa, praeterea cenatio quae latissimum mare longissimum litus villas amoenissimas possidet. 13 Est et alia turris; in hac cubiculum, in quo sol nascitur conditurque; lata post apotheca et horreum, sub hoc triclinium, quod turbati maris non nisi fragorem et sonum patitur, eumque iam languidum ac desinentem; hortum et gestationem videt, qua hortus includitur. 14 Gestatio buxo aut rore marino, ubi deficit buxus, ambitur; nam buxus, qua parte

defenditur tectis, abunde viret; aperto caelo apertoque vento et quamquam longinqua aspergine maris inarescit. 15 Adiacet gestationi interiore circumitu vinea tenera et umbrosa, nudisque etiam pedibus mollis et cedens. Hortum morus et ficus frequens vestit, quarum arborum illa vel maxime ferax terra est, malignior ceteris. Hac non deteriore quam maris facie Chianti remota a mari fruitur, cingitur diaetis duabus a tergo, quarum fenestris subiacet vestibulum villae et hortus alius pinguis et rusticus. 16 Hinc cryptoporticus prope publici operis extenditur. Utrimque fenestrae, a mari plures, ab horto singulae sed alternis pauciores. Hae cum serenus dies et immotus, omnes, cum hinc vel inde ventis inquietus, qua venti quiescunt sine iniuria patent. 17 Ante cryptoporticum xystus violis odoratus. Teporem solis infusi repercussu cryptoporticus auget, quae ut tenet solem sic aquilonem inhibet summovetque, quantumque caloris ante tantum retro frigoris; similiter africanum sistit, atque ita diversissimos ventos alium alio latere frangit et finit. Haec iucunditas eius hieme, maior aestate. 18 Nam ante meridiem xystum, post meridiem gestationis hortique proximam partem umbra sua temperat, quae, ut dies crevit decrevitve, modo brevior modo longior hac vel illa cadit. 19 Ipsa vero cryptoporticus tum maxime caret sole, cum ardentissimus culmini eius insistit. Ad hoc patentibus fenestris favonios accipit transmittitque nec umquam aere pigro et manente ingravescit. 20 In capite xysti, deinceps cryptoporticus horti, diaeta est amores mei, re vera amores: ipse posui. In hac heliocaminus quidem alia xystum, alia mare, utraque solem, cubiculum autem valvis cryptoporticum, fenestra prospicit mare. 21 Contra parietem medium zotheca perquam eleganter recedit, quae specularibus et velis obductis reductisve modo adicitur cubiculo modo aufertur. Lectum et duas cathedras capit; a pedibus mare, a tergo

villae, a capite silvae: tot facies locorum totidem fenestris et distinguit et miscet. 22 Iunctum est cubiculum noctis et somni. Non illud voces servolorum, non maris murmur, non tempestatum motus non fulgurum lumen, ac ne diem quidem sentit, nisi fenestris apertis. Tam alti abditique secreti illa ratio, quod interiacens andron parietem cubiculi hortique distinguit atque ita omnem sonum media inanitate consumit. 23 Applicatum est cubiculo hypocauston perexiguum, quod angusta fenestra suppositum calorem, ut ratio exigit, aut effundit aut retinet. Procoeton inde et cubiculum porrigitur in solem, quem orientem statim exceptum ultra meridiem oblicum quidem sed tamen servat. 24 In hanc ego diaetam cum me recepi, abesse mihi etiam a villa mea videor, magnamque eius voluptatem praecipue Saturnalibus capio, cum reliqua pars tecti licentia dierum festisque clamoribus personat; nam nec ipse meorum lusibus nec illi studiis meis obstrepunt. 25 Haec utilitas haec amoenitas deficitur aqua salienti, sed puteos ac potius fontes habet; sunt enim in summo. Et omnino litoris illius mira natura: quacumque loco moveris humum, obvius et paratus umor occurrit, isque sincerus ac ne leviter quidem tanta maris vicinitate corruptus. 26 Suggestunt affatim ligna proximae silvae; ceteras copias ostiensis colonia ministrat. Frugi quidem homini sufficit etiam vicus, quem una villa discernit. In hoc balinea meritoria tria, magna commoditas, si forte balineum domi vel subitus adventus vel brevior mora calfacere dissuadeat. 27 Litus ornant varietate gratissima nunc continua nunc intermissa tecta villarum, quae praestant multarum urbium faciem, sive mari sive ipso litore utare; quod non numquam longa tranquillitas mollit, saepius frequens et contrarius fluctus indurat. 28 Mare non sane pretiosis piscibus abundat, soleas tamen et squillas optimas egerit. Villa vero nostra etiam mediterraneas copias praestat, lac in primis; nam

illuc e pascuis pecora conveniunt, si quando aquam umbramve sectantur.

29 Iustisne de causis iam tibi videor incolere inhabitare diligere secessum? quem tu nimis urbanus es nisi concupiscis. Atque utinam concupiscas! ut tot tantisque dotibus villulae nostrae maxima commendatio ex tuo contubernio accedat. Vale.

Pliny the Younger (A.D. 62?–c.A.D. 113). Letters.  
The Harvard Classics. 1909–14.

### XXIII. To Gallus

You are surprised that I am so fond of my Laurentine, or (if you prefer the name) my Laurens: but you will cease to wonder when I acquaint you with the beauty of the villa, the advantages of its situation, and the extensive view of the sea-coast. It is only seventeen miles from Rome; so that when I have finished my business in town, I can pass my evenings here after a good, satisfactory day's work. There are two different roads to it: if you go by that of Laurentum, you must turn off at the fourteenth mile-stone; if by Astia, at the eleventh. Both of them are sandy in places, which makes it a little heavier and longer by carriage, but short and easy on horseback. The landscape affords plenty of variety, the view in some places being closed in by woods, in others extending over broad meadows, where numerous flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, which the severity of the winter has driven from the mountains, fatten in the spring warmth, and on the rich pasturage. My villa is of a convenient size without being expensive to keep up. The courtyard in front is plain, but not mean, through which you enter porticoes shaped into the form of the letter D, enclosing a small but cheerful area between. These make a capital retreat for bad weather, not only as they are shut in with windows, but particularly as they are sheltered by a projection of the roof. From the middle of these porticoes you pass into a bright, pleasant inner court, and out of that into a handsome hall running out towards the seashore; so that when there is a south-west breeze, it is gently washed with the waves, which spend themselves at its base. On every side of this hall there are either folding-doors or windows equally large, by which means you have a view from the front and the two sides of three different seas, as it were: from the back you see the middle court, the portico, and the area; and from another point you look through the portico into the courtyard, and out upon the woods and distant mountains beyond. On the left hand of this hall, a little farther from the sea, lies a large drawing-room, and beyond that, a second of a smaller size, which has one window to the rising and another to the setting sun: this as well has a view of the sea, but more distant and agreeable. The angle formed by the projection of the dining-room with this drawing-room retains and intensifies the warmth of the sun, and this forms our winter quarters and family gymnasium, which is sheltered

from all the winds except those which bring on clouds, but the clear sky comes out again before the warmth has gone out of the place. Adjoining this angle is a room forming the segment of a circle, the windows of which are so arranged as to get the sun all through the day: in the walls are contrived a sort of cases, containing a collection of authors who can never be read too often. Next to this is a bed-room, connected with it by a raised passage furnished with pipes, which supply, at a wholesome temperature, and distribute to all parts of this room, the heat they receive. The rest of this side of the house is appropriated to the use of my slaves and freedmen; but most of the rooms in it are respectable enough to put my guests into. In the opposite wing is a most elegant, tastefully fitted-up bed-room; next to which lies another, which you may call either a large bed-room or a modified dining-room; it is very warm and light, not only from the direct rays of the sun, but by their reflection from the sea. Beyond this is a bed-room with an ante-room, the height of which renders it cool in summer, its thick walls warm in winter, for it is sheltered, every way, from the winds. To this apartment another ante-room is joined by one common wall. From thence you enter into the wide and spacious *cooling-room* belonging to the bath, from the opposite walls of which two curved basins are thrown out, so to speak; which are more than large enough if you consider that the sea is close at hand. Adjacent to this is the anointing-room, then the sweating-room, and beyond that the bath-heating room: adjoining are two other little bath-rooms, elegantly rather than sumptuously fitted up: annexed to them is a warm bath of wonderful construction, in which one can swim and take a view of the sea at the same time. Not far from this stands the tennis-court, which lies open to the warmth of the afternoon sun. From thence you go up a sort of turret which has two rooms below, with the same number above, besides a dining-room commanding a very extensive look-out on to the sea, the coast, and the beautiful villas scattered along the shore line. At the other end is a second turret, containing a room that gets the rising and setting sun. Behind this is a large store-room and granary, and underneath, a spacious dining-room, where only the murmur and break of the sea can be heard, even in a storm: it looks out upon the garden, and the *gestatio* 1 running round the garden. The *gestatio* is bordered round with box, and where that is decayed, with rosemary: for the box, wherever sheltered by the buildings, grows plentifully, but where it lies open and exposed to the weather and spray from the sea, though at some distance from the latter, it quite withers up. Next the *gestatio*, and running along inside it, is a shady vine-plantation, the path of which is so soft and easy to the tread that you may walk bare-foot upon it. The garden is chiefly planted with fig and mulberry trees, to which this soil is as favourable as it is averse from all others. Here is a dining-room, which, though it stands away from the sea, enjoys the garden view which is just as pleasant: two apartments run round the back part of it, the windows of which look out upon the entrance of the villa, and into a fine kitchen-garden. From here extends an enclosed portico which, from its great length, you might take for a public one. It has a range of windows on either side, but more on the side facing the sea, and fewer on the garden side, and these, single windows and alternate with the opposite rows. In calm, clear weather these are all thrown open; but if it blows, those on the weather side are closed, whilst those away from the wind can remain open without any inconvenience. Before this enclosed portico lies a terrace fragrant with the scent of violets, and warmed by the reflection of the sun from the portico, which, while it retains the rays, keeps away the northeast wind; and it is as warm on this side as it is cool on the side opposite: in the same way it is a protection against the wind from the southwest; and thus, in short, by means of its several sides, breaks the force of the winds, from whatever quarter they may blow. These are some of its winter advantages; they are still more appreciable in the summertime; for at that season it throws a shade upon the terrace during the whole of the

forenoon, and upon the adjoining portion of the *gestatio* and garden in the afternoon, casting a greater or less shade on this side or on that as the day increases or decreases. But the portico itself is coolest just at the time when the sun is at its hottest, that is, when the rays fall directly upon the roof. Also, by opening the windows you let in the western breezes in a free current, which prevents the place getting oppressive with close and stagnant air. At the upper end of the terrace and portico stands a detached garden building, which I call my *favourite*; my *favourite* indeed, as I put it up myself. It contains a very warm winter-room, one side of which looks down upon the terrace, while the other has a view of the sea, and both lie exposed to the sun. The bed-room opens on to the covered portico by means of folding doors, while its window looks out upon the sea. On that side next the sea, and facing the middle wall, is formed a very elegant little recess, which, by means of transparent [2](#) windows and a curtain drawn to or aside, can be made part of the adjoining room, or separated from it. It contains a couch and two chairs: as you lie upon this couch, from where your feet are you get a peep of the sea; looking behind, you see the neighbouring villas, and from the head you have a view of the woods: these three views may be seen either separately, from so many different windows, or blended together in one. Adjoining this is a bed-room, which neither the servants' voices, the murmuring of the sea, the glare of lightning, nor daylight itself can penetrate, unless you open the windows. This profound tranquillity and seclusion are occasioned by a passage separating the wall of this room from that of the garden, and thus, by means of this intervening space, every noise is drowned. Annexed to this is a tiny stove-room, which, by opening or shutting a little aperture, lets out or retains the heat from underneath, according as you require. Beyond this lie a bed-room and ante-room, which enjoy the sun, though obliquely indeed, from the time it rises till the afternoon. When I retire to this garden summer-house, I fancy myself a hundred miles away from my villa, and take especial pleasure in it at the feast of the Saturnalia, [3](#) when, by the licence of that festive season, every other part of my house resounds with my servants' mirth: thus I neither interrupt their amusement nor they my studies. Amongst the pleasures and conveniences of this situation, there is one drawback, and that is, the want of running water; but then there are wells about the place, or rather springs, for they lie close to the surface. And, altogether, the quality of this coast is remarkable; for dig where you may, you meet, upon the first turning up of the ground, with a spring of water, quite pure, not in the least salt, although so near the sea. The neighbouring woods supply us with all the fuel we require, the other necessaries Ostia furnishes. Indeed, to a moderate man, even the village (between which and my house there is only one villa) would supply all ordinary requirements. It has three public baths, which are a great convenience if it happen that friends come in unexpectedly, or make too short a stay to allow time for preparing my own. The whole coast is very pleasantly sprinkled with villas either in rows or detached, which, whether looking at them from the sea or the shore, present the appearance of so many different cities. The strand is, sometimes, after a long calm, perfectly smooth, though, in general, through the storms driving the waves upon it, it is rough and uneven. I cannot boast that our sea is plentiful in choice fish; however, it supplies us with capital soles and prawns; but as to other kinds of provisions, my villa aspires to excel even inland countries, particularly in milk: for the cattle come up there from the meadows in large numbers, in pursuit of water and shade. Tell me, now, have I not good reason for living in, staying in, loving, such a retreat, which if you feel no appetite for, you must be morbidly attached to town? And I only wish you would feel inclined to come down to it, that to so many charms with which my little villa abounds, it might have the very considerable addition of your company to recommend it. Farewell.