

1

When I wished to tell in lyric song of battles and the conquest of cities, Apollo rebuked me and forbade my spreading tiny sails upon the Tyrrhenian Sea. Thine age, O Caesar, has brought back fertile crops to the fields and has restored to our own Jupiter the military standards stripped from the proud columns of the Parthians;⁶⁵ has closed Janus' temple [cf.

§ 195, paragraph 13] freed of wars; has put reins on license overstepping righteous bounds; has wiped away our sins and revived the ancient virtues through which the Latin name and the might of Italy waxed great, and the fame and majesty of our empire were spread from the sun's bed in the west to the east. As long as Caesar is the guardian of the state, neither civil dissension nor violence shall banish peace, nor wrath that forges swords and brings discord and misery to cities. Not those who drink the deep Danube shall violate the orders of Caesar, nor the Getae, nor the Seres,⁶⁶ nor the perfidious Parthians, nor those born by the Don River. And we, both on profane and sacred days, amidst the gifts of merry Bacchus, together with our wives and children, will first duly pray to the gods; then, after the tradition of our ancestors, in songs to the accompaniment of Lydian flutes we will hymn leaders whose duty is done, and Troy and Anchises and benign Venus' offspring.⁶⁷

2

Now then, I⁶⁹ shall describe the future glory that is to attend the Trojan people, the descendants from the Italian people that await you, illustrious souls destined to succeed to our name, and I shall unfold to you your fate. . . . Romulus, son of Mars . . . do you see how a double plume stands on his helmet, and how his father marks him out even now by his distinctive badge as one of the gods? Yes, my son, it is under his auspices that glorious Rome will extend her empire to the ends of the earth and her heroism to the sky, and will encircle together her seven hills with a wall, fortunate in her brood of heroes. . . . Now turn your eyes here, behold this stock, your Romans. Here is Caesar and the whole progeny of Iulus,⁷⁰ destined to come under the great vault of the sky. This, this is he, the man you have heard promised to you so often, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will once again establish the Golden Age in Latium, in the region once ruled by Saturn, and will extend the empire beyond the Garamantes⁷¹ and the Indians. . . .

Those souls, now, which you see equally agleam in armor, harmonious now and as long as they are confined in darkness, alas! how great a war will they wage against each other if they reach the light of day, what battles, what carnage will ensue, the father-in-law descending from the ramparts of the Alps . . . the son-in-law arrayed against him

with the forces of the east!⁷² Do not, do not, my children, cherish such wars in your hearts, do not turn your country's mighty power against the vitals of your country; and do you first, you who derive your descent from the gods, do you forbear, cast the weapons from your hand, my descendant. . . .

Others, doubtless, will mould lifelike bronze with greater delicacy, will win from marble the look of life, will plead cases better, chart the motions of the sky with the rod and foretell the risings of the stars.⁷³ You, O Roman, remember to rule the nations with might. This will be your genius—to impose the way of peace, to spare the conquered, and crush the proud.

3

O happy beyond measure the tillers of the soil, if they but knew their blessings, on whom, far from the clash of arms, the earth most justly showers an easy livelihood from her soil! Even if no high mansion with proud portals pours forth from every room a mighty wave of men coming to pay their respects in the morning; even if men do not gape at pillars inlaid with lovely tortoise-shell, or at tapestries embroidered with gold, or at Corinthian bronzes; even if white wool is not dyed with oriental purple; even if the pure olive oil they use is not spoiled with perfume, yet they enjoy sleep without worry, and a life that cannot bring disillusionment but rather one that is rich in varied treasures, and peace in their broad farms, and grottoes, natural lakes, cool valleys, the lowing of cattle, and gentle slumber beneath a tree. Pastures are there and the haunts of wild game, and youth is hardy in toil and accustomed to simple fare; there the rites of the gods are observed and reverence for age survives; Justice took her last steps among these as she left the earth. . . .

Blessed was he who could discover the causes of things,⁶⁸ and trample upon all fears and inexorable death and the roar of greedy Hades' waters. Yet happy he too who had come to know the rustic gods, Pan, aged Sylvanus, and the sister nymphs. He is moved neither by the *fascēs* which the people grant, nor by royal purple, nor by the conspiring Dacians swooping down from the Danube, nor by the affairs of Rome and the death throes of kingdoms. He has not had to grieve in pity for the poor nor to envy those who have. He plucks the fruits of the trees and reaps what the willing fields of their own accord produce and knows nothing of the rigor of the law, the frenzied Forum, and the public archives. Some ply unknown seas in their ships, rush to arms, make their way into the royal palaces of kings; another attacks and destroys cities and their hapless homes, to drink from jewelled cups and sleep on Tyrian purple; another hoards his wealth and broods over buried gold; another gapes with astonishment at the *Rostra*; another stands open-mouthed and is carried away by the applause that rings again and again through the theater from both plebs and senators; some rejoice when drenched in the blood of brothers, and go into exile, abandoning their dear hearths and homes and seeking another country underneath another sun.

But the farmer upturns the earth with his curved plow; this is his year-long toil, and thus he feeds his country and little grandchildren, his herds of cattle and bullocks that have served him well. Nor is there any halt throughout the year to the abundance of fruits or offspring of flocks or sheaves of grain, and his furrows are ever piled high with harvest and his granaries are filled to overflowing. When winter comes, the Sicilian olives are pressed by the mills, the pigs return well fed on acorns, the woods produce wild strawberries, and autumn drops her varied fruits, and high up on sunny rocks mellow grapes are ripened. Meanwhile, sweet children hang about his lips, his chaste household preserves its purity, the cows' udders hang full of milk, and the fat kids in the luxuriant meadow butt against each other locking horn with horn. The master himself celebrates the festal days; stretched on the grass, while about a fire in their midst his comrades wreath the bowl, he pours libation and invokes thee, O Bacchus, and for the shepherds of his flock he holds a contest of throwing the swift javelin at a mark on an elm tree, and they bare their hardened bodies for the rustic wrestling match.

This is the life the ancient Sabines once cherished; so, too, Remus and his brother [Romulus, mythical ancestor of the Romans]; thus, surely, brave Etruria waxed strong, and Rome became the fairest thing on earth, and encircled together her seven hills with a wall. Yea, before the power of the Cretan kings and before impious mankind fed on slaughtered oxen, this was the life that was led on earth in the Golden Age of Saturn. Yea, not yet had they heard the blast of trumpet, not yet the ring of swords placed on hard anvils.