

Horace and Epicurean Philosophy; Will They Won't They?

Post by "Don" of September 20, 2023 at 10:23 PM

The town mouse and country mouse appears to come down on the side of φιλαγρήσειν "to love the countryside"

Quote from Horace, excerpt Satire VI

"One day a country mouse in his poor home
Received an ancient friend, a mouse from Rome:
The host, though close and careful, to a guest
Could open still: so now he did his best.
He spares not oats or vetches: in his chaps
Raisins he brings and nibbled bacon-scrap,
Hoping by varied dainties to entice
His town-bred guest, so delicate and nice,
Who condescended graciously to touch
Thing after thing, but never would take much,
While he, the owner of the mansion, sate
On threshed-out straw, and spelt and darnels ate.
At length the townsman cries: "I wonder how
You can live here, friend, on this hill's rough brow:
Take my advice, and leave these ups and downs,
This hill and dale, for humankind and towns.
Come now, go home with me: remember, all
Who live on earth are mortal, great and small:

Then take, good sir, your pleasure while you may;
With life so short, 'twere wrong to lose a day."
This reasoning made the rustic's head turn round;
Forth from his hole he issues with a bound,
And they two make together for their mark,
In hopes to reach the city during dark.
The midnight sky was bending over all,
When they set foot within a stately hall,
Where couches of wrought ivory had been spread
With gorgeous coverlets of Tyrian red,
And viands piled up high in baskets lay,
The relics of a feast of yesterday.
The townsman does the honours, lays his guest
At ease upon a couch with crimson dressed,
Then nimbly moves in character of host,
And offers in succession boiled and roast;
Nay, like a well-trained slave, each wish prevents,
And tastes before the tit-bits he presents.
The guest, rejoicing in his altered fare,
Assumes in turn a genial diner's air,
When hark! a sudden banging of the door:
Each from his couch is tumbled on the floor:
Half dead, they scurry round the room, poor things,
While the whole house with barking mastiffs rings.
Then says the rustic: "It may do for you,

This life, but I don't like it; so adieu:

Give me my hole, secure from all alarms,

I'll prove that tares and vetches still have charms."

Display More

Don: The sage will be fond of the countryside, enjoying being outside the towns and cities.
(120)

Hicks: He will be fond of the country.

Yonge: He will like being in the country,

I think it's wonderful that this characteristic is a single word in the original: φιλαγρήσειν "They will love the ἀγρός "fields, land, country as opposed to the town." "