

# Johannes de Hauvilla *Architrenius*

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# Book One

## **Ch. 1 The power of hard work and ingenuity, and the impotence of sloth**

Ships sail over Athos, the ocean is spanned by a shaky bridge,<sup>1</sup> oars furrow the hillsides, the waves are subjected to walking feet, dry land is surveyed from the stern, Thetis has forsaken the deep. Salmoneus hurls  
5 his thunderbolt, Daedalus dons his wings, a frenzy of ingenuity is upon us, bursting headlong into regions uncharted, and nature yields to the onslaught of art.

Languid Sloth, the nurse of Venus, draws out the idle hours, toying with any undertaking while discouraging real endeavor. Like one who,  
10 having scarcely begun to hunt, breaks off the pursuit at the very outset, she puts off the day's duties until the morrow, and ever postpones the past obligations which she never fulfils. She wears down courage, oppresses the spirit, fetters the limbs, and befouls with the filthiness of her contempt any breast which retains the least scent of morality.  
15 Heedless of reputation, she lapses into a shameful life, keeps to the swamps of vice, and sinks into the mire. Blind and reckless, she inhospitably banishes Care and anxious Concern from the outposts of the mind, gives rein to galloping Ingenuity yet stands immovable in the path of  
20 Endeavor, till zealous Vigilance succumbs to sleepy Torpor. She shuns places difficult of access, and hates to bend her back in strenuous effort. She is attracted neither by praise, the crown of achievement, nor even by wealth, which makes exhaustion taste sweet, lures the swordsman  
25 into battle, and makes light of the perils of the sea and of hostile arms.

The companions of Sloth are Boredom, and Melancholy, the foe of all pleasure; Lechery, and Wantonness, given over to revelry; Venus, and Lewdness, which loosens the girdle about the loins; Sleep, the brother of  
30 Death, and Listlessness, the herald of helpless Poverty; harsh Detraction, with grim and livid face; Mockery, whose jests have the power to

wound; Shame, and Infamy, exposed in shameful nakedness; Fickleness, infirm of purpose, and Restlessness, incapable of maintaining a  
 35 fixed course, and wandering Error; Inconstancy, whose desires are  
 constantly changing; uncertain Purpose and unsteady Will; sluggish  
 Effeminacy and shiftless Idleness; Apathy, broken in spirit, the crippling  
 40 affliction of Age; Futility, its strength wasted in fruitless struggle; and  
 Faintheartedness, with its slack and shaky limbs.

## Ch. 2 A disavowal of arrogance

But Idleness cannot quench the fires of my Muse: a new work is  
 born, and utters its first childish squallings. The difficulty of the task  
 befits a heroic spirit, and that constancy of mind that is emboldened by  
 45 great challenges; but amid Apollo's laurels, be it right that the myrtle,  
 too, flourish with its drooping boughs. The lyre of Phoebus is not suited  
 to every hand; we cannot all charm the ear with Aonian chords; such  
 50 high artistry does not yield itself to everyone. It is the glory of true bards,  
 a brilliance and distinction that belong only to such as Homer. It is  
 enough for us if the lower note<sup>2</sup> of our pipe find acceptance among  
 ordinary people.<sup>3</sup> A homely Amyclas<sup>4</sup> should not aspire to the wealth of  
 55 a Croesus. A sound mind and a humble dwelling content me; though  
 modestly endowed, I hold myself capable of accomplishing much, and I  
 will never become broken-winded from striving to rival the Sirens or the  
 dying swan, for my song is as the whispering voice of the cicada. I do  
 60 not propose to soothe the lion's unbridled wrath with music, or refine  
 the savage behavior of beasts. My prayer will be answered if the sound  
 of my pipe, however dry and meager, may ease the hard lot of common  
 folk. A water-dwelling gull should not challenge eagles, who rise  
 toward heaven on gleaming wings!

### Ch. 3 An answer to the perversity of the old men of our day

65 O suspicious and backbiting generation, old men so eager to judge harshly the deeds of the young! Do not attack, but rather seek to rescue the names of worthy men already under attack, names which the sharp shears of envy have cut down. Utter the sweet and ennobling speech of just men, not words curdled by the acid of jealousy.

70 It is true that I did not witness the flood in the shipwrecking days of Deucalion and Pyrrha, nor those waters which the too ardent chariot-  
eer<sup>5</sup> subjected to the parching heat of the horses of the sun. I do not  
75 claim to be a survivor from ancient times, a contemporary of the old Maeonian; I do not, on grounds of mere seniority, lay claim to a grander name, as if I were greater than modern men, more deserving of renown because of my unnumbered years. Accept the fact that modern times have produced me, and do not, because you have seen the author, value  
80 the book more lightly or deny it whatever honor it may deserve. Neither far-off Acin<sup>6</sup> nor rough Atlas gave me birth; I am no prodigy who glories in a wondrous origin amid the Arctic ice or beneath the Egyptian sun, as if the place itself could make me a philosopher, one to be  
85 regarded with awe by men who fear the unknown. As yet I show no venerable maze of wrinkles; my hair does not yet gleam with the downy white of reverend age;<sup>7</sup> I am not one whom a heap of gold or silver may advance, whose sheer wealth might commend him to an adoring world,  
90 for whom robes of purple silk might gain a priestly dignity, whose eloquence the jewels on his fingers would declare, gaining ready access to the ear of a multitude dazed by their brilliance. Books, not balances,<sup>8</sup> provide the substance of Johannes' song; his modest libation is from the Cirrhaean fount, and it is Phoebus, not Bacchus, who fills the bowl.

95 How well Alexander said it: "Zoilus, you carp at Homer, you sneer at what is praiseworthy, you tear at the works of good men. What is well done causes you pain, you snipe at what is superior, and greatness drives you mad. Cease your posturing, I loathe your scurrility. Spare the book; let not the death of the author be extended to his work."<sup>9</sup>

## Ch. 4 The origins of him to whom the book is addressed

100 The glory of Pergama could not be extinguished by Achaean fire; its  
 loftiness remained unfallen amid the general destruction, and though it  
 yielded to the force of fate it did not wholly succumb. In subjecting the  
 Phrygians to the heat of the Danaean forge, Fortune was not cruel: she  
 105 taught them to endure greater things than war, and Troy destroyed  
 became greater than Troy at its height. It was not consumed by fire, but  
 instead its radiance attained a richer glow; Pelasgian torches only  
 enhanced Dardanian brilliance, the sun of Asia was not dimmed by  
 110 their smoke. Its august majesty, disdaining narrow confines and scorn-  
 ing to be basely contained by the ridges of Ida, reached forth to the ends  
 of the earth, and overcame great obstacles through great daring.  
 Augmented by the Roman fasces, the imperial authority of Pergama  
 115 was all the greater, and though envious fate cast it down from the  
 summit of power, virtue made good the loss: The one robbed the world  
 of a city, the other repaid the city with the world.

Britain, richly endowed and freely giving, not yet drained of her  
 supply of gleaming metals, mother of every resource, her soil rich and  
 fertile, granted the Greeks a final absolution for the destruction of the  
 120 Phrygians.<sup>10</sup> Indeed it was a man of Phrygian blood who solaced the  
 Phrygians, who brought them joy after exhausting labor, whom the  
 latterday majesty of the race of Iulus produced to lend its luster to our  
 own day. For only among a noble people could there be born such a  
 125 man – a temple of God, a bower of virtue, a garden of honor and good  
 deeds, immune to vice, a second Tempe, a Hybla which neither winter  
 nor the heat of summer can affect. He steers his course unharmed  
 through an age of storms, like some higher power that stills the raging  
 130 of wickedness. He is unshaken by the storms of worldly life, rising above  
 the winds and clouds of evil like a second Olympus which raises its peak  
 toward heaven, a new Ida made lofty by yet greater dignity. His glory  
 robs the night sky of its starry brilliance, his smile dries the flows of  
 135 dismal rain. Walter,<sup>11</sup> like spring itself, dispels the winter, Walter, in  
 whom flourishing Cornwall makes good the loss of Troy.

Even if it were possible to pour myself forth in a flood of commend-  
 ation and shower this man with praise, I would scarcely be drawing off

140 a cupful from a vast ocean. For with wings of virtue he far outstrips the  
 chariot of praise, and lays claim unaided to all the titles of renown. So  
 glorious Aetna does not deign to notice the coming of spring, so  
 Phoebus' light is hardly increased by a mere torch, the world by a grain  
 of sand, time by an instant, the sea by a shower, or a line by a point.

### Ch. 5 The dedication of the work

O you by whose zeal and guidance the see of Lincoln sails the  
 145 raging ocean of this world exempt from furious storms, you whom no  
 accounting of justice can exclude, whose sweetness of spirit is a promise  
 of heaven, a virtue so lofty that it cannot be made greater, an integrity  
 150 that admits no diminishment; whose name inscribes itself among the  
 stars, and is echoed the world over by the trumpet of Fame; o you for  
 whom the widowed see of Rouen hopes and yearns as husband, eager to  
 clasp you in firm embrace as a lover, to enjoy your fragrance, the  
 155 delights of your character, the virtuous aroma of a bridegroom whose  
 spirit is endowed with the vision of Phoebus, the judgment of Nestor.  
 She waits, ready to come to flower in the springtime of the marriage  
 bed, eager to enter that nuptial chamber where Virtue, with the sanc-  
 tion of Christ, will unite the consecrated bridegroom and sacred bride.  
 She prays that the manna which has been showered on the northerly  
 160 Britons may now be poured forth on Norman fields, that the dry earth  
 about the thirsting city may be watered with the sacred streams of  
 Lincoln, and the first pleasure of this new nectar, long awaited and as  
 yet barely tasted, be enjoyed without delay. She calls home the nursling  
 165 whom she had sent forth, seeks him whom she had assigned to  
 another's care and, discovering him, demands that England restore the  
 unquenchable light entrusted to it. The virgin desires a man, the  
 woman a marriage-bed, the maiden a husband, the orphan a father, the  
 maimed body a head, the fallen succor, the blind a guide, the shadowed  
 170 a light, the benighted a dawning. Cynthia, deprived of her luster,  
 searches the early morning darkness, and longs for the return of  
 Phoebus.

O thou Maecenas of my work, thou in whom my long labor finds its  
 long awaited rest, unquestioned inspiration of my uncouth genius,  
 grant to the work now begun the favor of your scrutiny and judgment.



## Ch. 6 An Invocation to God

175 O God, who measure out the moments of human life, and subject  
to your harmony the stars that reveal our uncertain fate, you who  
know whether the expanse of the universe is unbounded, and from  
whom the recesses of Stygian night are not hidden; God, you who alone  
180 know the course of the sun and the moon's wandering, and who  
conceal from our uncertain vision the courses of the stars (for the eye of  
man both deceives and is deceived when it pursues the secrets of  
heavenly Minerva); O lord of all things divine, unalterable pattern of  
185 supreme wisdom, scripture of the divine mind (where not a letter is  
missing, yet not a dot is superfluous), embracing in one moment all  
those single events which will be disposed over time by a serial law  
which none of the Sisters may alter; you whom Clotho, Lachesis and  
Atropos obey, one meting out thread for the spindles of lives, one  
190 working the threads into a pattern which the third will bring to  
completion.

O God, pure source of our Cirrhaean fount, infuse my mind, moisten  
my parched lips with the dew of eloquence; distill sweet springs which  
(though not so bright as the sandy stream of Tagus, or that stream so  
195 close to hand for which Tantalus thirsts) may be not so tasteless that the  
age will reject them, nor yet so bitter as to arouse their spleen. Guide the  
work which a hesitant hand has dared to begin, sustain my bold strokes  
and strengthen my faltering ones, be both the curb and the inspiration  
of my thought, and suffuse with the balm of your grace what a too  
200 barren spirit may have dictated. For you are the word, the mind, the  
right hand of the Father: may that word, mind and hand sustain my  
own.