

PLINY'S OWN MANUSCRIPT

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H. Keil ended his study of the text of Pliny's *Letters* with his precious edition of them in 1870. He had discovered that all of the hundred or more manuscripts and printed editions earlier than 1530 were derived from three early sources, a ten-book, a nine-book, and an eight-book manuscript. Much new material¹ has been discovered since 1870, and a new statement on this point is now required. It will show, I think, that the preservation of the correspondence with his friends is due to a manuscript of this correspondence made by Pliny himself in the period 107-109 and left at his home in Novum Comum on the west coast of Lake Como in northern Italy. His manuscript was not for sale; it was purely an official record.

Pliny had by this time completed the *cursus honorum* that qualified him for appointment as governor of a province, and was waiting for an appointment. With this he would begin a new unit of his life work and was planning for the change.

He had for one thing decided not to publish any more letters that he wrote to his friends. He was giving up this style of composition, and desired to leave an official record of what he had done in it. For this record he copied the text of these letters into papyrus rolls, each of them from ten to fifteen feet long. Such a *volumen* more than fifteen feet long would be inconvenient for a reader to manage. With each letter he preserved a simple form of the name of the recipient. The text was so long that it required nine *volumina* to receive it. This has caused it to come down to us as if he had deliberately arranged it into nine books.

¹ Much of this new material is discussed in my *Scribe and Critic at Work in Pliny's Letters*, published in 1954, in which readers may find support for many of the statements in this article. This volume is now out of print; but a microfilm is available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich.

The fact that he did not include in this manuscript the fourteen letters that had already passed between him and Trajan shows clearly that he had in mind to publish a volume of his correspondence with him after his government of a province. While he was governor of Pontus and Bithynia he preserved his correspondence with Trajan, but he died before his term as governor was completed.

In *Epp.* 10.51 Pliny thanks Trajan for permitting his friend Caelius Clemens, a kinsman of Pompeia Celerina,² to transfer to Bithynia. This gave Pliny companionship while he was away from home serving as governor of Bithynia. Clemens certainly saw the manuscript of the letters between the Princeps and his *legatus Augusti* growing, and it may safely be assumed that, when Pliny died, Clemens gathered up the unfinished manuscript and took it with him to Novum Comum, where he or some other friend of Pliny published it, and it became Book 10 of the *Epistulae*.

Pliny identifies the recipient of each of the letters to his friends by giving a simple form of his name. In a copy made apparently after Pliny's death by one of his personal friends at Novum Comum, a fuller form of many of the names is supplied and Pliny's name is given in its full legal form, C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus.

We refer to Pliny's manuscript by calling it W. A copy of W was seen and copied in full in the manuscript to which we refer as X; and the same or another copy—from which some leaves had been lost and an editor had changed the order of the letters—gave us the manuscript to which we refer as Y, from which were derived the Verona manuscript δ and the lost sister of δ which I have called θ .

Manuscripts M and V, which were in the monastery at Corbie in northern France in the first half of the ninth century, were derived from X. The copy of the first nine books of the *Epistulae* discovered in Italy by the poet Sidonius Apollinaris about 450 A.D. was directly from W.

² Celerina was the rich widow of a former neighbor and friend of the Plinys at Novum Comum. She was the mother of Pliny's second wife. In *Epp.* 1.3 Pliny asks her how things were going at four of her estates, in one of which there was even a bath—which Pliny himself did not have in his magnificent home described in *Epp.* 2.17.