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ON THE CARRIAGE OF PETRARCH'S LETTERS

By ERNEST H. WILKINS

WHEN Petrarch had a letter ready to send to a person living in the same city or in a place within daytime riding distance he sent it, naturally, by one of his own servants — or, if his letter was a reply to a letter just received, by the servant of the sender of that letter, if he was waiting for the reply. This would certainly have been the case for all letters exchanged between Vaucluse and Cavailon, which are about seven miles apart; it would probably have been the case for all or most letters exchanged between Vaucluse and Avignon, which are about fifteen miles apart; and it would probably have been the case for all or most letters exchanged between Arquà and Padua, which are about ten miles apart.

He had however no regular means of sending letters that were to go to greater distances.

The papacy had a large staff of couriers — apparently the only such staff operating in the fourteenth century¹ — and as long as Petrarch was even nominally a member of the household of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna (as he was from 1330 to 1347) and again in the years 1351 and 1352, when he was much in Avignon and in contact with the papacy, he was presumably able to send by papal couriers letters that were in any sense of an official character. He would certainly have been able to make use of this service while he was in Naples in 1343 on missions from the Pope and from Cardinal Colonna. Among the letters that may well have been sent by papal couriers are the four (*Fam.* II 12–15) to Cardinal Colonna that he wrote in or near Rome in 1337 and the five (*Fam.* V 2–6) that he wrote to him from Italy in 1343; his first letter (*Fam.* IV 3) to King Robert, written in 1338 or 1339; his first four letters to Niccolò Acciaiuoli (*Fam.* XI 13 and XII 2 and 15–16), written in 1351 and 1352; his second letter to the Emperor (*Fam.* XII 1), his second to the Doge Andrea Dandolo (*Fam.* XV 4), and his first to Cardinal Gui de Boulogne (*Fam.* XIII 1) — these last three all written in 1352. Very possibly, also, some of his correspondence with papal officers and with certain cardinals in his later years was carried by papal couriers.

Some letters written in Vaucluse may have been taken in to Avignon for carriage by papal couriers.

Fam. IV 7, which Petrarch, after his coronation, sent to King Robert as a report, was sent by a man to whom Petrarch refers in the words “hic maiestatis tue nuntius, qui pro te omnibus interfuit” — doubtless a trusted courier in the regular employ of King Robert.

During his residence in Milan, where he was held in honor by the Visconti, Petrarch was able to send and receive letters to and from the Emperor and members of the imperial court in Prague by means of the courier Sagremor de Pommiers, who was in the employ of the Visconti. Sagremor was no ordinary

¹ See Emmanuel Rodocanachi, “Les couriers pontificaux du quatorzième au dix-septième siècle,” in *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, XXVI (1912), 392–394. In 1353 there were forty-nine couriers on the papal staff.

courier, and his journeys between Milan and Prague were no ordinary journeys. He was a Frenchman of noble birth, and he served the Visconti, on occasion, in capacities other than that of courier. Once, at least, he acted for them as a diplomatic agent; and he was once sent to London to challenge Pandolfo Malatesta, who was spreading evil reports of Bernabò Visconti, and if necessary to engage in formal single combat with him.² The journey between Milan and Prague was fraught not only with Alpine difficulties but also with danger from roving bands of outlaws: another courier, Martinus Theutonus, was set upon and killed by such a band in a German forest. When Petrarch was sent on his mission to the Emperor in 1356 Sagremor accompanied him, and they were attended by a band of armed men. Presumably Sagremor was regularly so attended on his journeys between Milan and Prague. The journey, in one direction, must have taken from a fortnight to a month, depending on weather conditions and local difficulties, and the round trip, including a brief stay in Prague, must have taken the better part of two months. Yet in one particular year Sagremor made the round trip seven times. The letters that Petrarch sent to Prague by Sagremor were presumably written just before Sagremor's departures from Milan with letters from the Visconti; and the letters that Sagremor brought to Petrarch from Prague came of course simultaneously with imperial letters to the Visconti.

The extant letters that Sagremor, certainly or in all probability, carried to Prague for Petrarch during his residence in Milan include five addressed to the Emperor (*Fam.* xviii 1 and 12, xxi 7, xxii 2, and *Sen.* xvi 5); four to his chancellor, Jan ze Středa (*Fam.* xxi 2 and 5, xxiii 6, and *Misc.* 12); two to Archbishop Arnost z Pardubic (*Fam.* xxi 1 and 6); and one to the Empress Anna (*Fam.* xxi 8). The extant letters from Prague that Sagremor, certainly or probably, brought to Petrarch include one from the Emperor (LAP 10, Petrarch's diploma as Count Palatine) and four from Jan ze Středa (LAP 64-67).³ In the first few years after Petrarch had taken up residence elsewhere Sagremor continued to carry letters to and from Prague for him, though in some of the cases concerned the identity of the carrier is not clear. Before leaving Milan Petrarch had come to regard Sagremor as a personal friend; and he was greatly pleased when, in 1367 or 1368, he received a letter from Sagremor telling him that he had become a Cistercian monk.

He may have had a minor and merely temporary opportunity of somewhat the same kind from the autumn of 1351 to the spring of 1352, while two Florentine envoys, with a supporting staff, were in Avignon trying to influence papal policies. Bishop Angelo Acciaiuoli was one of the two envoys, and Forese Donati

² See the many references to Sagremor in the indexes in Paul Piur, *Petrarcas Briefwechsel mit deutschen Zeitgenossen* (=Konrad Burdach, *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation*, vii, Berlin, 1933); Roberto Weiss, *Il primo secolo dell'umanesimo* (Rome, 1949); and my *Petrarch's Eight Years in Milan and Petrarch's Later Years* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958 and 1959).

³ The symbol LAP stands for "Letters Addressed to Petrarch," as listed in my *The Prose Letters of Petrarch* (New York, 1951) and *Petrarch's Correspondence* (Padua, 1960). It is to be assumed that letters addressed to Petrarch and mentioned without use of the LAP (or, in the case of Nelli, without Roman numerals) are not extant.

was a member of the staff: it is clear that Petrarch saw much of them. It seems likely that during their months in Avignon the envoys kept in touch with Florence through messengers; and if so it is likely that Petrarch had the privilege of having their messengers carry his letters to Florence. During the short period concerned he wrote at least eight letters (*Fam.* XII 4, 5, 9, 12 and 13, and *Sine nom.* 6, 9 and 10) to Francesco Nelli — who was an adviser of Bishop Acciaiuoli but had remained in Florence — and received at least three letters from him (Nelli's IV and V and a lost letter); and within the same period he wrote one letter to the Florentine Lapo da Castiglionchio (a letter which he ultimately split into two parts, the first part becoming *Sine nom.* 5 and the second part *Fam.* XII 8).

Two local lords, Pandolfo Malatesta and Roberto di Battifolle, sent to Petrarch, from considerable distances, by servants or special messengers, letters that called for replies. In these cases Petrarch presumably wrote the replies at once and sent them by the same servants or messengers (*Fam.* XXII 1, *Sen.* XIV 9–11, and *Var.* 18 are replies to letters received from Pandolfo; and *Sen.* II 7 and 8 are replies to letters received from Roberto and from a man associated with him).

Petrarch wrote three letters (*Var.* 6, 59, and 63) for and in the name of Galeazzo Visconti, and two letters (*Misc.* 7 and 17) for and in the name of Bernabò Visconti: he had, of course, no responsibility as to the carriage of these letters.

The only quasi-professional private messenger with whom Petrarch ever dealt, as far as we know, was the endlessly chattering old-soldier-turned-monk to whom he refers as "Bolanus," taking the name from one of the satires of Horace.⁴ About 1 September 1353 Nelli had given this Bolanus a letter (Nelli's VII) to deliver to Petrarch. For some unknown reason, however, Bolanus did not deliver the letter himself, but gave it to another man, who duly delivered it. A few days later Bolanus himself, though errandless, came to Petrarch's house in Milan, and stayed there for some hours, talking incessantly. In the following January Nelli sent another letter (his IX) by Bolanus. In April 1358 Petrarch received four letters from Avignon, one of them certainly and all of them probably brought by Bolanus. In the following year Petrarch sent two letters (*Fam.* XXI 9, and a lost letter) to Avignon by Bolanus, who returned a month or two later bringing two letters to Petrarch, and talking in particular of the generosity of one of Petrarch's correspondents who had rewarded him richly. In 1360 he again brought to Petrarch a letter from Avignon. On his last recorded arrival, in 1363, he brought to Petrarch, now in Venice, a letter and a book from Avignon. In every case, presumably, he was paid something by the sender, and expected a gratuity from the recipient.

Petrarch wrote many letters of introduction and recommendation — many more, presumably, than the half-dozen or so that he included in his collections. In most or all such cases the letter was given by Petrarch to the man whom it introduced or recommended, for delivery to the person addressed.

⁴ On Petrarch's Bolanus see Arnaldo Foresti, *Aneddoti della vita di Francesco Petrarca* (Brescia, 1928), pp. 279–293, and my *Petrarch's Eight Years in Milan*, references in the index.

In most or all cases other than those already mentioned, however, individual arrangements had to be made for the carriage of letters that were to be sent to anyone beyond the radius of a day's riding.

The men who served as messengers in such cases were, at least in general, of one or the other of two types: friends or acquaintances who were going to the place in question, or at least to a point relatively near that place; or men paid for their services: such men might either, like Bolanus, have engaged frequently in the carriage of letters, or have been willing to undertake carriage in particular cases.

The instances of carriage of letters of Petrarch by friends or acquaintances include the following. *Fam.* xvi 16, to Lapo da Castiglionchio, was sent by a man referred to in the words "comuni hoc amico." *Fam.* ix 10, to Laelius, was sent by a man referred to as a friend who was eager to win the friendship of Laelius. *Fam.* xi 5, to the Prior and the People of Florence, was sent by Boccaccio. By the prior of the Milanese Certosa, who was leaving to attend a General Chapter of the Order, Petrarch sent three letters: *Sen.* xvi 8, to Jean Birel, the Grand Prior of the Order; *Var.* 64, to Philippe de Cabassoles, bishop of Cavaillon; and *Fam.* xviii 5, to Petrarch's brother Gherardo, now a Carthusian monk. *Fam.* xix 4, to Nelli, was sent by a Florentine friend. *Var.* 22, to Barbato da Sulmona, was entrusted to the Celestines of Milan, who were evidently able and willing to see that it should reach him safely whether he was in Sulmona or in Naples. *Fam.* xviii 15, to Boccaccio, was sent by a messenger referred to as "adolescens hic mei amans tui cupidus." *Fam.* xix 4, to Nelli, was sent by a Florentine friend. *Fam.* xx 6, to Nelli, was sent by Boccaccio. *Fam.* xxii 13 and 14, to Pierre Bersuire, were sent by a man who is referred to in the words "hoc religioso et insigni viro utriusque nostrum amantissimo." A lost letter to Nelli was sent by a priest. *Sen.* vi 4, to Pietro da Muglio, was sent by two priests. *Sen.* vii 1, to Urban V, was sent by a man whom Petrarch names as "Habilanus Lomelini," and to whom he refers as "vir hic nobilis et vetusta michi iuncta amicitia." *Misc.* 15, to Francesco Bruni, was given to Gasparino Favacio, to deliver or to send to Bruni.

Unnamed messengers who were presumably paid are mentioned in several letters.

In one instance Petrarch sent a particularly important letter (not extant) to Niccolò Acciaiuoli by his own factor, Matteo di Pietro, to whom he entrusted also a letter, *Misc.* 11, for Barbato da Sulmona. Matteo was no ordinary servant: Petrarch speaks of him as "familiaris meus" and calls him "fidelem hominem."

In many instances Petrarch wrote replies while the messenger who had brought a correspondent's letter was waiting. There are about a dozen letters in which the waiting messenger is mentioned — sometimes with special mention of his impatience. Thus at the end of *Fam.* vii 2 Petrarch writes: "I might go on; but your messenger is hanging over me, watching every stroke of my pen, counting the minutes when it pauses, looking at the door, or raising his eyes toward heaven and sighing." Similar passages occur in *Fam.* xiv 3 and 6.

There are many cases in which, after writing a letter, Petrarch had to wait for some time before finding a messenger to whom he could entrust it. The most notable cases of such delay, cases in which we know, at least approximately,

both the date of writing and the date on which a messenger was found, are as follows. *Fam.* xxii 14, written to Pierre Bersuire on 27 February 1361, was held, for lack of a messenger, until September. *Var.* 4 and 16 and a lost letter, all written, after the death of Azzo da Correggio, on or before 17 November 1362, were held, for lack of a messenger, until 9 December. *Sen.* iii 9, written to Bonaventura Baffo on 6 December 1363, was held, presumably for lack of a messenger, until the latter part of January. In December 1365 Petrarch, then in Pavia, wrote three letters to Boccaccio — *Sen.* v 1 and 3 and a third letter (later divided and incorporated in the other two letters); but when he had to leave for Venice, late in the month, he had not found a messenger for them, and he left them, therefore, with an acquaintance who was to send them to Boccaccio. On his return to Pavia in the following July, however, he found that this acquaintance had kept the letters for himself. Petrarch managed to recover them, held them until 2 September, and then sent them to Donato Albanzani in Venice, knowing that he could rely on Donato to put them in the hands of a trustworthy messenger who would take them to Boccaccio. In the spring and early summer of 1366 Petrarch, then in Venice, wrote his exceedingly important *Sen.* vii 1 to Pope Urban V. Not yet content with it, he took it with him to Pavia, where he arrived before 20 July. Not long thereafter he decided to send the letter on to the Pope, and to send it by an envoy of Galeazzo Visconti who was about to leave for Avignon; but he changed his mind, and continued to hold the letter, waiting to find a messenger whom he could trust absolutely. It was only on 17 August that he found Habillanus Lomelini. In the spring of 1373 Petrarch, now in Arquà, wrote two letters to Boccaccio, *Sen.* xvii 3, written probably in March (which contains Petrarch's translation of the Griselda story), and *Sen.* xvii 2, dated on 28 April. But he held them, for lack of a messenger, until the latter part of June.

Petrarch's correspondents had to deal with similar problems as to the carriage of their letters.

The prior of the Milanese Certosa, returning in 1354 from the Grand Chapter, brought to Petrarch a letter from the Grand Prior. Returning to Milan, after a brief absence, at about the end of 1354, Petrarch found four letters from Zanobi da Strada, which had been brought from Naples by a man to whom Petrarch refers as "iste vir clarus." In 1355 he received from Barbato da Sulmona two letters and a packet of scissors, brought to him by a monk from the monastery of Monte Cassino, named Raimondo. Nelli's XXIV, written probably in 1359, was brought to Petrarch by a man to whom Nelli refers as "Reuerendus hic lator Nerius." Toward the end of Petrarch's residence in Milan a letter (LAP 76) from his Venetian friend Paolo de Bernardo was brought to him by Giacomino da Mantova, a Veronese "doctor gramatice." Barbato's LAP 3, written in 1361, was carried at least as far as Florence by a Florentine merchant. In 1368 the Neapolitan Guglielmo Maramaldo entrusted a letter for Petrarch to a young musician (probably the son of Floriano da Rimini); but though that musician came near Padua he did not himself deliver the letter, which passed through many hands before it finally reached Petrarch. In 1369 Coluccio Salutati sent his LAP 19 to Petrarch by Gasparo Squaro dei Broaspini.

There are several references in the letters of Petrarch to unnamed and unidentified messengers who brought him letters from his correspondents.

There were a few cases in which the services of two successive carriers were required.

Petrarch's brother Gherardo was a monk in the remote Carthusian monastery of Montrieux, in southeastern Provence. In 1349, being then in Italy, Petrarch wrote *Fam.* x 3 to Gherardo, but sent it to his "Socrates" in Avignon (with a covering letter, *Fam.* x 2), confident that Socrates would see that the letter to Gherardo was safely forwarded. In 1354, when the prior of the Milanese Certosa was leaving to attend the General Chapter of the Order, which was to be held at the Grande Chartreuse (near Grenoble), Petrarch gave him a letter, *Fam.* xviii 5, for Gherardo, supposing, evidently, that the prior of Gherardo's monastery would attend the General Chapter and would take the letter back to Gherardo. (Petrarch gave the Milanese prior also a letter, *Var.* 64, for Philippe de Cabassoles, bishop of Cavillon, apparently thinking that the prior of Gherardo's monastery could without inconvenience deliver this letter on his way back to Montrieux — this appears to be the only case, among the many letters addressed by Petrarch to Philippe, in which a letter was sent to Philippe in two stages rather than directly.)

Barbato da Sulmona spent part of his time in Naples and part of it at his home in the Abruzzi; and if at a given time there was a chance of his being in Sulmona rather than in Naples it was likely that the carrying of a letter would have to be in two stages. On a day in 1355 Petrarch wrote two letters to Barbato, one of them, *Var.* 22, formal and lengthy, the other, *Misc.* 11, informal and brief. *Var.* 22 was entrusted to the Celestines, who would see that it was delivered to Barbato whether he was in Naples or Sulmona, even if this involved a transfer of the letter to a second Celestine carrier. Whether Petrarch's factor, Matteo di Pietro, who took *Misc.* 11 to Naples, had instructions to send it by messenger from Naples to Sulmona, if it turned out that Barbato was in Sulmona, we do not know. In LAP 3, written early in 1361, Barbato suggests that whatever Petrarch might send to him thereafter be transmitted through Boccaccio, or, if Boccaccio should be away from Florence at the time, through a Florentine referred to as Franciscus Iero. Petrarch presumably followed this plan in the case of *Misc.* 9, the only extant letter that he wrote to Barbato after receiving LAP 3. Barbato himself followed this plan in the case of LAP 74, which he sent to Boccaccio in 1361 or 1362 for transmission to Petrarch.

Whether Petrarch when in Pavia after 1365 sent his letters to Boccaccio directly to Florence or to Donato Albanzani for transmission to Boccaccio, we do not know.

There are also a few cases in which a letter addressed to a given man was sent not directly to him but to some friend of Petrarch's living in the same place, to be delivered to the addressee by that friend: these were cases in which Petrarch thought that the sponsorship of the deliverer would reënforce the influence of the letter. This practice, however, did not in general concern the matter of carriage, since the deliverer and the addressee were living in the same place.

The carrying of letters from or to Petrarch must have been, in general, a rather slow process. All land travel by messengers must have been on horseback. Barges must have been used for the crossing of the Venetian lagoon, and may have been used to some extent for travel on the great North Italian rivers or on the canals of Northeastern Italy.

Fam. VII 10, a reply written in northern Italy in 1348 to Giovanni dell'Incisa (a Florentine), opens with remarks that may be rendered thus: "Your letter . . . reached me on 23 March. If you will compare that date with the date on which you wrote your letter you will see that it took as long to reach me as if it had had to come from Egypt." The Emperor's LAP 9, written in the spring of 1351, did not reach Petrarch until the autumn of 1353 (probably it had gone first to Parma, then to Provence, and finally to Milan). A letter written by Barbato in 1351 took nearly a year to reach Petrarch (probably it had gone first to Parma, and then to Provence).

The following data as to letters exchanged by Nelli in Florence and Petrarch in Milan — about a hundred miles from Florence — are instructive (it is not assumed that a letter was necessarily answered immediately, except in case of urgency). Nelli's VIII, written on 4 August 1353, was answered by *Fam.* XVI 14, written 43 days later. *Var.* 56 (a letter of extreme urgency), written on 18 September 1353, was answered by Nelli's XI, written 14 days later. *Fam.* XIX 6, written on 25 December 1355, was answered by Nelli's XVII, written 40 days later. *Fam.* XIX 14, written on 20 September 1356, was answered by Nelli's XVI, written 20 days later. Nelli's XXI, written on 17 March 1359, was answered by *Fam.* XX 7, written 25 days later. *Fam.* XX 7, written on 11 April 1359, was answered by Nelli's XXIII, written 36 days later. The average length of the time elapsed between the writing of these letters (exclusive of *Var.* 56) and the writing of their respective replies was about 33 days, which would indicate that it usually took a messenger about two weeks to cover the hundred miles between Florence and Milan.

A letter written by Neri Morando in Rome about 1 April 1355 was answered by Petrarch on 20 April, by his *Var.* 32; but a letter written by Neri before 1 April reached Petrarch only late in June or in July. Barbato's LAP 3, written early in 1361, reached Petrarch on 21 June. In October 1370 Petrarch received from Francesco da Fiano (a Bolognese student) a letter telling of the serious illness of Pietro da Muglio; but at a somewhat later time he received from the same Francesco a letter (LAP 22) that had been written before the letter telling of Pietro's illness — perhaps several months before.

In many cases letters did not reach their addressees. Failure in such cases may have been due to any one of several possible causes: accident; carelessness or faithlessness on the part of the messenger; seizure of the messenger's pouch by highwaymen or by soldiers (warfare, more or less desultory, was prevalent in much of Northern Italy during the years concerned); or acquisition, with or without connivance, by Petrarchan enthusiasts (who were numerous).

Boccaccio was particularly unfortunate in his repeated failure to receive letters sent to him by Petrarch. In 1355 he wrote to Petrarch complaining that he had

not had any word from Petrarch acknowledging the receipt of certain books that he had sent to him: in his reply, *Fam.* xviii 15, Petrarch says that he had acknowledged the receipt of those books, and refers to loss of his letters as a source of daily distress. In 1365 Boccaccio asked Petrarch for a copy of a letter (*Sen.* v 2) that he had never received, though he knew that Petrarch had written it. Two years later, in his LAP 56, he described as best he could five letters that he had never received (apparently *Fam.* xviii 3, xxi 15 and xxiii 19, and *Sen.* iii 1 and viii 1, written at various times from 1355 to 1366), and asked for copies of them. In 1373 Petrarch sent to Boccaccio two very notable letters, *Sen.* xvii 2 and 3, and a covering letter, *Sen.* xvii 1. In this case he deliberately sent the letters unsealed: Padua and Venice were at war, and he wanted the "custodes passuum" to be able to read them and assure themselves that they contained nothing of any military concern. A year later, having learned that Boccaccio had never received these letters, he sent him another letter, *Sen.* xvii 4, apparently as a companion to copies of *Sen.* xvii 2 and 3. But some months after Petrarch's death Boccaccio wrote to his heir, Francescuolo da Brossano, saying that he had never received copies of *Sen.* xvii 2 and 3: evidently *Sen.* xvii 1 and 4 had also failed to reach him.

In *Fam.* xviii 7, written to Nelli in 1355, Petrarch says that he knows that some of his earlier letters have failed to reach him, and that this failure is due to interception by grasping admirers. In *Fam.* xx 6, written to Nelli in 1359, he refers again to the frequent interception of his letters; and soon afterward he heard that Nelli had found in the hands of a friend a letter that Petrarch had written to him long before. In 1362 he wrote letters to the Emperor and to Jan ze Stfeda that seem never to have reached them. At some time in 1373 he wrote a letter in reply to an inquiry from Luca da Penna (a legist then in Avignon); but in the following spring he received a letter from Luca saying that he had not had any letter from Petrarch and asking him to write again: it was in response to this second request that Petrarch wrote *Sen.* xvi 1.

Losses occurred also in cases of letters or packages sent to Petrarch by his correspondents. In or about 1351 Barbato sent him (with or without a covering letter) a packet, containing five pairs of scissors, that never reached him. In 1356 he learned that a letter that Nelli had sent to him had been intercepted. In 1359, on his way back to Milan after a brief stay in Padua, he found in the hands of persons whom he would never have suspected of having any interest in literary matters two letters addressed to him by Nelli that he had never seen: agreement was reached that he should take one of them, leaving the other. In 1362 Nelli sent to Petrarch a letter which he later had reason to think that Petrarch never received.

When the roads between Padua and Venice were closed — as they were during the Paduan-Venetian war of 1372–1373, and as they had been, briefly, on certain earlier occasions — correspondence with Venice was, for Petrarch, impossible. On one of the earlier occasions the closing prevented Giovanni Dondi, as he reports in LAP 58, from complying with a request by Petrarch that Giovanni send to Venice for a certain book that Petrarch wanted.

When Petrarch had a letter ready to send he folded it, wrote the address on a free fold, and sealed it.⁵

Passages in several of the letters of Petrarch show that in some cases the messenger was entrusted not only with a letter but with an oral message supplementary to the letter, or with authority to make an oral report. This message or report might be either a matter of some consequence, or a mere report of Petrarch's health and occupations. In *Sen.* 14, for instance, Petrarch, replying to Cardinal Talleyrand, says that while he himself cannot accept a papal secretaryship he knows of a man [Nelli] who is worthy of the office and would be glad to accept it. But Nelli's name is not given in the letter: instead, Petrarch writes, "Your messenger will tell you where he is, and what would need to be done to assure his coming." And in *Misc.* 11, for instance, Petrarch says to Barbato that if he wants personal news the messenger [Matteo di Pietro] will tell him "all about my health and my mode of life: what I am doing, what I am thinking, what I am hoping for, what I am planning, what I am expecting."

From time to time the messengers who carried letters for Petrarch and his correspondents carried other things for them — most commonly books, or shorter pieces of writing. Many of the letters of Petrarch speak of the sending or the receipt of books.

In or about 1348 Petrarch, in Parma, received from Luchino Visconti (then one of the two rulers of Milan) a request that Petrarch send him some scions from trees in his garden, and a poem. Petrarch complied, sending scions from fruit trees, the poem that is now *Ep. met.* III 6, and an accompanying letter, *Fam.* VII 15. In December 1352 Petrarch, in Vacluse, sent to Philippe de Cabassoles, in near-by Cavaillon, three gifts: a trout and a duck, both caught in the Sorgue, and a draft of a letter (evidently deploring conditions in the papal court) on which he wanted Philippe's opinion: with these gifts he sent *Fam.* XV 12 as an accompanying letter. Within the period 1351–1355, probably, Barbato da Sulmona sent to Petrarch three packets containing scissors (perhaps a specialty of Sulmona industry), a five-pair packet that never reached Petrarch, a six-pair packet, and a packet containing a single pair: this last pair was accompanied by a letter that is not extant. While Petrarch was in Prague in 1356 on his mission for the Visconti the Emperor had made him a Count Palatine; early in 1357 Sagremor de Pommiers brought him his diploma, prepared and sent by the Chancellor, Jan ze Středa; and to the diploma there was attached a beautiful and very interesting gold *bullā*. Petrarch, however, did not feel that he should accept a gift of gold, and he therefore sent it back to Jan, by Sagremor, with *Fam.* XXI 2 as an accompanying letter. Early in the following year Sagremor brought back the *bullā* with a letter from Jan — and Petrarch decided to accept it, not because it was of gold, but as a symbol of golden good will. After Petrarch had left Venice and while he was living in Padua or in Arquà his Venetian friend

⁵ For a reproduction of the actual autograph copy of *Fam.* XIX 5 as sent to Moggio dei Moggi, see Plate IV facing p. 322 in Vol. III of Vittorio Rossi's edition of the *Familiars* (Florence, 1937). The address in this case reads: "Ingenioso ac facundo viro, magistro Modio, grammaticæ professori, et amico carissimo."

Donato Albanzani was over-generous and over-persistent in his sending of gifts — so much so that in order to put an end to it Petrarch wrote him his severe *Sen.* xv 9. Within the same general period Donato's son Antonio, following his father's example, sent Petrarch a gift of pears: in *Sen.* XIII 6 Petrarch thanks him, but bids him desist from the sending of gifts. The last book that Petrarch sent as a gift was his precious copy of the *Confessions* of St Augustine, a small copy, in minute script, that had been given to him in his youth by the Augustinian monk, Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro. He had taken it with him wherever he went, in Italy, in France, and on his mission to Prague. It had shared many accidents that had befallen him: once it had been in peril with him on the sea. Early in 1374 he sent it to Luigi Marsili, also an Augustinian, who had once been a disciple of Petrarch and had now been sent by his Order to study theology in the University of Padua; and with the book Petrarch sent a covering letter, *Sen.* xv 7.

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