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THE ELDER SENECA

de singulis verbis in consilium eunt, necesse est quae totiens animo suo admovent novissime adfigant; at quorumcumque stilus velox est, tardior memoria est. In illo non tantum naturalis memoriae felicitas erat, sed ars summa et ad comprehendenda quae tenere debebat et ad custodienda, adeo ut omnes declamationes suas quascumque dixerat teneret etiam. Itaque supervacuos sibi fecerat codices; aiebat se in animo scribere. Cogitata dicebat ita ut in nullo umquam verbo eum memoria deceperit. Historiarum omnium summa notitia: iubebat aliquem nominari duces et statim eius acta cursu reddebat: adeo quaecumque semel in animum eius descenderant in promptu erant.

19 Video vos, iuvenes mei, plus iusto ad hanc eius virtutem obstupescere; alia vos mirari in illo volo: hoc, quod tantum vobis videtur, non operosa arte tradi potest. Intra exiguum paucissimorum dierum tempus poterit quilibet facere illud quod Cineas fecit, qui missus a Pyrrho legatus ad Romanos postero die novus homo et senatum et omnem urbanam circumfusam senatui plebem nominibus suis persalutavit; aut quod ille fecit qui recitatum a poeta novum carmen dixit suum esse et protinus (ex) memoria recitavit, cum hoc ille cuius carmen erat facere non posset; aut quod fecit Hortensius, qui a Sisenna provocatus in auctione persedit per diem totum et omnes res et pretia et emptores ordine suo argentariis recognoscentibus ita ut in nulla re falleretur

¹ For techniques of memorising, see Quintilian 11.2, where (§24) the story of Hortensius recurs (cf. Cic. *Brut.* 301). For Cineas' memory, see Cic. *Tusc.* 1.59; Plin. *N.H.* 7.88.

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on the rack, holding debates over every word, inevitably end up by fixing in the mind what has so often engaged it; but those who write quickly are slower to remember. Not only had nature blessed Latro with a fine memory, but he had supreme technique for grasping and for retaining what he had to remember, so that he could recall all the declamations he had ever spoken. He had thus made books superfluous—he used to say he wrote in his mind. What he had mentally rehearsed he used to speak without his memory ever failing in a single word. He had vast knowledge of the whole range of history; he would ask someone to name a general to him, and then immediately detail his feats with fluency—so true was it that he had at his finger-tips whatever had once come his way.

I can see, my dear young men, that you are more astonished by this talent of Latro than you should be; I want you to admire other qualities in him—this one, which you make so much of, can be acquired by a technique that requires little trouble.¹ Within the small space of a very few days, anyone can do what Cineas did: this man, sent as ambassador to Rome by Pyrrhus, next day, as a newcomer, greeted by their correct names the senate and the whole crowd of townspeople around the senate. Or he can emulate the man who, hearing a new poem recited by its author, said it was his own, and proceeded to recite it from memory, even though its *author* could not do the same; or Hortensius, who, challenged by Sisenna, sat all day at an auction, and then listed without a mistake and in the right order all the articles, their prices and purchasers, with the bankers authenticating the

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