

**Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon*, late 1<sup>st</sup> C. AD.**

[Note: The House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii has the “Cave Canum” mosaic at the entrance, as well as frescoes of the Iliad and the Odyssey. The Romans advised “dextro pede,” as you could curry favor with the gods by entering a house or a temple with the right foot. This is held to be the reason why Roman temples have always an odd number of steps leading up to the entrance level.

In the baths there were no lockers. Persons of means assigned their slaves to watch their clothes.]

We entered the bath [balneum], finally, and after sweating for a minute or two in the warm room, we passed through into the cold water. But short as was the time, Trimalchio had already been sprinkled with perfume and was being rubbed down, not with linen towels, however, but with cloths made from the finest wool. Meanwhile, three masseurs were guzzling Falernian under his eyes, and when they spilled a great deal of it in their brawling, Trimalchio declared they were pouring a libation to his Genius. He was then wrapped in a coarse scarlet wrap-rascal, and placed in a litter. Four runners, whose liveries were decorated with metal plates, preceded him, as also did a wheel-chair in which rode his favorite, a withered, blear eyed slave, even more repulsive looking than his master. A singing boy approached the head of his litter, as he was being carried along, and played upon small pipes the whole way, just as if he were communicating some secret to his master’s ear. Marveling greatly, we followed, and met Agamemnon at the outer door [januam], to the post of which was fastened a small tablet bearing this inscription:

NO SLAVE TO LEAVE THE PREMISES  
WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE MASTER.  
PENALTY ONE HUNDRED LASHES.

In the vestibule [aditu] stood the porter, clad in green and girded with a cherry-colored belt, shelling peas into a silver dish. Above the threshold [limen] was suspended a golden cage, from which a black and white magpie greeted the visitors. I almost fell backwards and broke my legs while staring at all this, for to the left, as we entered, not far from the porter’s alcove [cella], an enormous dog upon a chain was painted upon the wall, and above him this inscription, in capitals:

BEWARE THE DOG

My companions laughed, but I plucked up my courage and did not hesitate, but went on and examined the entire wall [parietum]. There was a scene in a slave market, the tablets hanging from the slaves’ necks, and Trimalchio himself, wearing his hair long, holding a caduceus in his hand, entering Rome, led by the hand of Minerva. Then again the painstaking artist had depicted him casting up accounts, and still again, being appointed steward; everything being explained by inscriptions. Where the walls gave way to the portico, Mercury was shown lifting him up by the chin, to a tribunal placed on high. Near by stood Fortune with her horn of plenty, and the three Fates, spinning golden flax. I also took note of a group of runners, in the portico [portico], taking their exercise under the eye of an

instructor, and in one corner [Angulo] was a large cabinet, in which was a very small shrine [aedicule] containing silver Lares, a marble Venus, and a golden casket by no means small, which held, so they told us, the first shavings of Trimalchio's beard. I asked the hall-porter [atriensem] what pictures were in the middle hall [in medio]. "The Iliad and the Odyssey," he replied, "and the gladiatorial games given under Laenas." There was no time in which to examine them all.

We had now come to the dining-room [triclinium] , at the entrance to which sat a factor, receiving accounts, and, what gave me cause for astonishment, rods and axes were fixed to the door-posts [in postibus], superimposed, as it were, upon the bronze beak of a ship, whereon was inscribed:

TO GAIUS POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO  
AUGUSTAL, SEVIR  
FROM CINNAMUS HIS  
STEWARD.

A double lamp, suspended from the ceiling, hung beneath the inscription, and a tablet was fixed to each door-post; one, if my memory serves me, was inscribed,

ON DECEMBER THIRTIETH AND  
THIRTY FIRST  
OUR  
GAIUS DINES OUT

The other bore a painting of the moon in her phases, and the seven planets, and the days which were lucky and those which were unlucky, distinguished by distinctive studs. We had had enough of these novelties and started to enter the dining-room [triclinium] when a slave, detailed to this duty, cried out, "Right foot first." Naturally, we were afraid that some of us might break some rule of conduct and cross the threshold [limen] the wrong way; nevertheless, we started out, stepping off together with the right foot, when all of a sudden, a slave who had been stripped, threw himself at our feet, and commenced begging us to save him from punishment, as it was no serious offense for which he was in jeopardy; the steward's clothing had been stolen from him in the baths, and the whole value could scarcely amount to ten sesterces. So we drew back our right feet and intervened with the steward, who was counting gold pieces in the hall, begging him to remit the slave's punishment. Putting a haughty face on the matter, "It's not the loss I mind so much," he said, "as it is the carelessness of this worthless rascal. He lost my dinner clothes, given me on my birthday they were, by a certain client, Tyrian purple too, but it had been washed once already. But what does it amount to? I make you a present of the scoundrel!"