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Dialogues and On Clemency

Dialogi · De clementia

Seneca

1st century AD

Philosophy · Religion

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Seneca

Translated from the Latin by Ether Library

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Dialogi · De clementia

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 BC–AD 65)

Translated from the Latin by Ether Library

Written in Latin between about AD 37 and 56.

A Note on the Translation

This volume is a complete translation of the twelve works that the manuscripts of Seneca call his *Dialogues*, together with the two surviving books of *On Clemency*, which he addressed to the young Nero. It is made directly from the Latin. The source is the electronic text of The Latin Library, which descends from the standard Teubner editions. Aubrey Stewart's public-domain translation of 1889 was consulted only where the Latin is in doubt, and none of its wording is kept.

The works are printed in the traditional order of the *Dialogues*, from *On Providence* to the *Consolation to His Mother Helvia*, followed by *On Clemency*. Each keeps its chapter numbers, in bold at the start of the paragraph where a chapter begins; the finer section numbers of modern editions are left out. Every one of the 438 paragraphs of the source appears here as one paragraph. Where an editor has supplied a word, it is translated without a mark; where an editor has deleted one, it is left out; where the text is lost, the gap is shown as ⟨…⟩ and a note says so.

Seneca writes as a man talking to a friend. He states a point in a sentence short enough to remember, presses it with questions, and lets an imagined objector interrupt him. The English keeps those voices apart: the objector speaks inside quotation marks, and Seneca answers outside them. His key words are rendered the same way in every work: *virtus* is "virtue," *animus* "mind," *fortuna* "Fortune," *ira* "anger," *iracundia* "irascibility," *clementia* "clemency," and the *sapiens* is "the wise man." Roman offices stay Roman: a consul is a consul.

The 210 notes are the translator's. Because each work can be read on its own, a person is identified at his first appearance in each work. The notes also give the sources of quotations, mark damaged passages and Seneca's own slips of fact, and offer no commentary.

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On Providence

1 You have asked me, Lucilius,[1] why, if the universe is governed by providence, so many bad things happen to good men. This would be answered more fittingly in the course of a larger work, once we had proved that providence presides over all things and that god takes part in our lives. But since you want one small piece torn from the whole, and one objection settled while the main case stays open, I will do something not difficult: I will plead the cause of the gods. For the present it is unnecessary to show that so vast a work does not stand without some guardian; that this gathering and wandering of the stars is not the work of random impulse; that what chance sets in motion is often thrown into disorder and quickly collides, whereas this unobstructed speed moves on under the command of an eternal law, carrying with it so much on land and sea, so many brilliant lights shining in their appointed order; that this order does not belong to drifting matter, and that things thrown together at random could not hang in the balance with such art that the earth, heaviest of weights, sits unmoved and watches the flight of the sky as it hurries around it; that the seas, poured into the valleys, soften the lands and feel no swelling from the rivers; that enormous things are born from the tiniest seeds. Not even those things that seem confused and irregular (I mean rains and clouds, the strokes of hurled lightning, fires pouring from the shattered peaks of mountains, tremors of the sliding ground, and the other things that the turbulent part of the world stirs up around the earth) happen without reason, however sud-

den they may be. They too have their causes, no less than the things seen in foreign places and taken for marvels, such as hot springs in the middle of the waves and new stretches of island leaping up in the vast sea. And again, if someone watches the shore laid bare as the sea draws back into itself and then, within a short time, covered once more, he will believe that some blind tossing now draws the waves together and drives them inward, now makes them burst out and rush back at great speed to their place; when all the while they grow by measured portions and come in at their hour and day, larger or smaller as the moon has drawn them, the star at whose pleasure the ocean overflows. These matters must be kept for their own time, all the more because you do not doubt providence; you complain of it. I will bring you back into favor with the gods, who are best to the best. For Nature never allows good things to harm the good. Between good men and the gods there is friendship, and virtue is the bond. Friendship, do I say? No, kinship and likeness, since the good man differs from god only in time: he is god's pupil and imitator and true offspring, and that magnificent parent, no lenient taskmaster where virtue is concerned, brings him up rather hard, as strict fathers do. So when you see good men, men dear to the gods, toiling, sweating, climbing a steep road, while bad men run riot and wallow in pleasures, remember that we take delight in our sons' modesty and in the impudence of our home-born slave boys; that the sons are kept in check by a sterner discipline, while the slaves' boldness is encouraged. Let the same be clear to you about god: he does not pamper the good man; he tests him, hardens him, and makes him ready for himself.

2 "Why do so many adversities befall good men?" No evil can happen to a good man: opposites do not mix. Just as all those rivers, all the rain pouring down from above, and the great mass of mineral springs do not change the taste of the sea, or even dilute

it, so the onrush of adversity does not overturn the mind of a brave man. He holds his ground and draws whatever happens into his own color, for he is stronger than everything outside him. I do not say he does not feel these things, but he overcomes them; and though at other times he is quiet and calm, he rises to meet whatever attacks him. He thinks all adversities are exercises. And who, if only he is a man and alert to what is honorable, does not long for toil that is fitting and stand ready for duties that carry danger? To what industrious man is idleness not a punishment? We see athletes, whose concern is their strength, fighting with all the strongest opponents and demanding of those who train them for the contest that they use their full strength against them; they let themselves be struck and battered, and if they cannot find single men to match them, they take on several at once. Virtue withers without an adversary: its greatness and its power appear only when it shows by enduring what it can do. You may be sure that good men must do the same: not shrink from what is hard and difficult, not complain of fate, take whatever happens in good part and turn it to good. What matters is not what you bear but how you bear it. Do you not see how differently fathers and mothers indulge their children? Fathers have them roused early to get on with their studies; even on holidays they do not let them be idle, and they wring sweat out of them, and sometimes tears. But mothers want to cuddle them in their laps and keep them in the shade, never sad, never crying, never toiling. God has a father's mind toward good men; he loves them sternly, and he says, "Let them be harried by toil, by pain, by loss, so that they may gather true strength." Things fattened on idleness grow sluggish, and they give out not only under toil but under mere movement and their own weight. Good fortune that has never been bruised cannot take a single blow; but the man who has been in a constant brawl with his troubles has grown calluses from his injuries, yields to no

evil, and even if he falls, fights on from his knees. Are you surprised if that god, who loves good men most dearly and wants them to be as good and excellent as possible, assigns them a fortune to train against? I, for my part, am not surprised if the gods are sometimes seized by a desire to watch great men wrestling with some calamity. We ourselves sometimes take pleasure when a young man of steady spirit meets a charging beast with his hunting spear, or stands the rush of a lion without fear; and the spectacle is the more welcome the more respectable the man who performs it. But these are not things that could turn the gods' eyes toward them; they are childish things, the amusements of human frivolity. Here is a spectacle worth the attention of god, even when he is intent on his own work; here is a pair worthy of god: a brave man matched with bad fortune, above all if he himself issued the challenge. I do not see, I say, what Jupiter has on earth more beautiful, should he wish to turn his mind there, than the sight of Cato,[2] his party broken more than once, still standing upright among the ruins of the commonwealth. "Though all things," he says, "have fallen under one man's rule, though the lands are guarded by legions and the seas by fleets, though Caesar's soldiers besiege the gates, Cato has a way out: with one hand he will open a broad road to freedom. This sword, kept clean and guiltless even in civil war, will at last do good and noble work: the freedom it could not give to his country it will give to Cato. Take up, my soul, the work you have long rehearsed; snatch yourself from human affairs. Petreius and Juba[3] have already met and lie dead, each struck down by the other's hand: a brave and noble pact with fate, but one unfit for my greatness. It is as shameful for Cato to ask anyone for death as to ask for life." I am sure the gods watched with great joy while that man, his own fiercest avenger, saw to the safety of others and arranged the escape of those who were leaving; while even on his last night he kept at his studies; while he drove the sword into his

sacred breast; while he scattered his entrails and drew out with his own hand that most holy soul, too good to be defiled by steel. That, I would like to believe, is why the wound was not sure and effective enough: it was not enough for the immortal gods to watch Cato once. His virtue was held back and called back, so that it might show itself in the harder part; for it takes less spirit to meet death than to seek it a second time. Why should they not gladly watch their pupil escaping by so glorious and memorable an end? Death makes sacred those whose end is praised even by those who fear it.

3 But as my discourse goes on I will show how far the things that seem evils are from being evils. For now I say this: these things you call harsh, adverse, and abominable are, first, for the good of the very people they happen to; second, for the good of all, whom the gods care for more than for individuals; next, they come to those who are willing, and those who are unwilling deserve evil. To this I will add that these things come by fate, and that they befall good men by the same law that makes them good. Then I will persuade you never to pity a good man; for he can be called wretched, but he cannot be wretched. Of all I have proposed, the hardest seems to be the first: that the things we shudder and tremble at are for the good of those to whom they happen. "Is it for their good," you say, "to be driven into exile, to be brought down to poverty, to bury children and wife, to be disgraced, to be crippled?" If you are surprised that these things can be for anyone's good, you will be surprised that some people are cured by knife and fire, and no less by hunger and thirst. But if you reflect that for the sake of a cure some people have their bones scraped and pieces taken out, their veins drawn, and limbs cut off that could not stay attached without ruining the whole body, you will also let it be proved to you that some troubles are for the good of those they happen to; just as surely, by Hercules, as some things

that are praised and sought after are harmful to those who enjoyed them, very like indigestion, drunkenness, and all the other things that kill through pleasure. Among the many splendid sayings of our friend Demetrius[4] is this one, which I heard only lately; it still rings and vibrates in my ears: "Nothing," he says, "seems to me more unfortunate than a man to whom nothing adverse has ever happened." For he has never been allowed to test himself. Though everything has flowed to him as he wished, even before he wished it, the gods have judged badly of him: he seemed unworthy ever to defeat Fortune. She shuns all the most cowardly, as if to say: "What, then? Shall I take this man for my opponent? He will lay down his arms at once. I do not need all my power against him; a light threat will rout him; he cannot bear my look. Let someone else be found with whom I can come to blows. I am ashamed to fight a man who is ready to be beaten." A gladiator thinks it a disgrace to be matched with an inferior, and knows that to win without danger is to win without glory. Fortune does the same: she seeks out the bravest as her equals and passes others by with disdain. She attacks the most defiant and upright, so that she can bend her strength against them: she tries fire on Mucius, poverty on Fabricius, exile on Rutilius, torture on Regulus,[5] poison on Socrates, death on Cato. Only bad fortune finds a great example. Is Mucius unfortunate because he presses his right hand into the enemy's fire and exacts from himself the penalty for his mistake? because with his hand burned away he puts to flight the king he could not put to flight with that hand armed? What, then? Would he be more fortunate if he were warming his hand in his mistress's bosom? Is Fabricius unfortunate because he digs his own field whenever the state leaves him free? because he wages war on riches as much as on Pyrrhus? because by his hearth he dines on the very roots and herbs that he, an old man who had celebrated a triumph, pulled while weeding his land? What, then? Would he be

more fortunate if he were stuffing his belly with fish from distant shores and birds caught in foreign lands, if he roused the sluggishness of his queasy stomach with shellfish from the seas on both sides of Italy, if he banked game of the finest kind, taken with great slaughter of huntsmen, with huge heaps of fruit? Is Rutilius unfortunate because those who condemned him will be defending themselves before every age to come? because he bore being torn from his country more calmly than having his exile torn from him? because he alone refused Sulla the dictator something, and when recalled all but walked backward and fled farther away? "Let them see to it," he says, "those whom your good fortune caught at Rome: let them see the forum running with blood, and above the Servilian Pool (for that is the stripping room of Sulla's proscriptions)[6] the heads of senators, and gangs of assassins roaming all over the city, and many thousands of Roman citizens butchered in one place after a pledge of safety, no, by means of that very pledge. Let those see these things who cannot go into exile." What, then? Is Lucius Sulla fortunate because a sword clears the way for him when he goes down to the forum, because he lets the heads of former consuls be shown to him and counts out the price of murder through the quaestor and the public accounts? And all this is done by the man, the very man, who carried the Cornelian Law.[7] Let us come to Regulus: what harm did Fortune do him in making him a model of good faith, a model of endurance? Nails pierce his skin, and wherever he leans his exhausted body, he lies on a wound; his eyelids are propped open for an endless waking. The more torment, the more glory. Do you want to know how little he regrets having valued virtue at this price? Pull out the nails and send him into the senate: he will give the same advice. Do you then think Maecenas[8] more fortunate? Anxious in love, weeping over the daily divorces of a sulky wife, he seeks sleep in the music of an orchestra playing softly far away. Though he drug himself with wine, divert himself

with the roar of waters, and beguile his anxious mind with a thousand pleasures, he will lie as wakeful on his feathers as Regulus on his cross. But Regulus has the comfort of enduring hardship for the sake of the honorable, and he looks away from his suffering to its cause; Maecenas, wilted by pleasures and sick with too much good fortune, is tormented more by the cause of his suffering than by what he suffers. The vices have not yet taken so complete possession of the human race that there can be any doubt whether, given the choice of their fate, more people would want to be born a Regulus than a Maecenas; or if anyone dared to say he would rather have been born Maecenas than Regulus, that same man, though he keep it to himself, would rather have been born Terentia. Do you judge that Socrates was badly treated because he drained that potion mixed by the state as if it were a drug of immortality, and argued about death right up to death itself? Did he fare badly because his blood froze and, as the cold crept in little by little, the vigor of his veins came to a stop? How much more is he to be envied than those who are served from jeweled cups, for whom a boy trained to submit to anything, gelded or of doubtful manhood, melts snow held in a golden strainer! These men will measure out again in vomit whatever they have drunk, gloomy, tasting their own bile; but Socrates will drink down the poison gladly and willingly. As for Cato, enough has been said, and the agreement of mankind will admit that the highest good fortune fell to him, the man Nature chose as the one against whom to dash all that is fearsome. “The enmities of the powerful are heavy: let him be pitted against Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus at once. It is heavy to be passed over for office by worse men: let him be ranked below Vatinius.”[9] It is heavy to take part in civil wars: let him fight all over the world for the good cause, as unluckily as stubbornly. It is heavy to lay hands on oneself: let him do it. What will I gain by all this?

That all may know these are not evils, since I thought Cato worthy of them."

4 Prosperity comes even to the common people and to petty minds; but to send the calamities and terrors of mortals under the yoke is the mark of a great man. To be always fortunate and to pass through life without a pang of the mind is to be ignorant of one half of Nature. You are a great man: but how do I know it, if Fortune gives you no chance to show your virtue? You have gone down to Olympia, but no one else did: you have the crown, but not the victory. I congratulate you, not as a brave man, but as one who has won a consulship or a praetorship: you have been raised in rank. I can say the same to a good man too, if no harder lot has given him an occasion to show the strength of his mind: "I judge you wretched, because you have never been wretched. You have gone through life without an adversary; no one will know what you could have done, not even you." For self-knowledge needs a test; no one learns what he can do except by trying. That is why some men have offered themselves of their own accord to misfortunes that were slow in coming, and sought for their virtue, which was about to sink into obscurity, a chance to shine. Great men, I say, sometimes rejoice in adversity, just as brave soldiers rejoice in war. Under the emperor Tiberius I heard Triumphus, a murmillo,[10] complain that there were so few games: "What a fine age," he said, "is going to waste!" Virtue is greedy for danger and thinks of where it is going, not of what it will suffer, since even what it will suffer is part of its glory. Soldiers boast of their wounds and gladly show off the blood flowing from a lucky cut: those who come back from the battle unharmed may have done as much, but the one who returns wounded draws more eyes. God, I say, is looking after the very men he wants to be as honorable as possible whenever he gives them the material for some act of spirit and courage, and for that some difficulty is needed. You know a pilot in a storm, a soldier in

the battle line. How can I know how much spirit you have against poverty if you are swimming in wealth? How can I know how much constancy you have against disgrace, infamy, and the hatred of the people, if you grow old amid applause, if a popularity follows you that nothing can storm, the favor of minds already leaning your way? How do I know how calmly you would bear the loss of children, if you see around you all the children you have raised? I have heard you consoling others; then I would have had a real look at you, if you had consoled yourself, if you had forbidden yourself to grieve. Do not, I beg you, be terrified of the things the immortal gods apply to our minds like spurs: calamity is virtue's opportunity. Those might rightly be called wretched who are numb with too much good fortune, whom a sluggish calm holds fast as if on a dead sea: whatever befalls them will come as something new. Cruel things press hardest on the inexperienced; the yoke is heavy on a tender neck. The recruit goes pale at the mere thought of a wound; the veteran looks boldly at his own blood, knowing that he has often won after bleeding. So god hardens, inspects, and exercises those he approves and loves; but those he seems to indulge and spare, he is keeping soft for the ills to come. You are wrong if you think anyone exempted: the man long fortunate will get his share too; whoever seems to have been let off has only been put off. Why does god afflict all the best men with ill health or mourning or other troubles? Because in the army, too, the dangerous tasks are assigned to the bravest: the general sends picked men to attack the enemy by a night ambush, or to scout the road, or to dislodge a garrison from its position. None of those who go out says, "The general has treated me badly," but, "He judged well of me." Let all who are ordered to suffer what makes the timid and cowardly weep say the same: "God thought us worthy to test how much human nature can endure." Flee luxuries, flee the enervating good fortune that soaks the mind through and, unless something

comes along to remind it of the human lot, leaves it wilting as if lulled in endless drunkenness. The man whose windowpanes have always shielded him from a draft, whose feet have been kept warm by poultices changed again and again, whose dining rooms have been tempered by heat from under the floor and all around the walls, will not be grazed by a light breeze without danger. Since all things that pass the limit do harm, the most dangerous of all is excess of good fortune: it addles the brain, calls the mind up into empty fantasies, and spreads a thick fog between false and true. Why would it not be better to endure lasting misfortune with the help of virtue than to burst with endless, unmeasured blessings? Starvation brings a gentler death; overeating makes men split apart. The gods therefore follow the same principle with good men as teachers with their pupils: they demand more work from those in whom their hope is surer. Do you suppose the Spartans hate their children because they test their mettle by public floggings? The fathers themselves urge them to bear the blows of the whip bravely, and when they are torn and half-dead, they beg them to keep offering their wounds to fresh wounds. What wonder, then, if god tests noble spirits harshly? The proof of virtue is never gentle. Fortune lashes and tears us: let us endure it. It is not cruelty; it is a contest, and the more often we enter it, the stronger we will be. The firmest part of the body is the one that frequent use has kept at work. We must offer ourselves to Fortune, so that she herself may harden us against her: little by little she will make us her match, and constant exposure to danger will give us contempt for danger. So sailors' bodies are toughened by bearing the sea, farmers' hands are calloused, soldiers' arms are strong for hurling spears, runners' legs are nimble: in each, what is strongest is what he has exercised. By endurance the mind comes to scorn the endurance of ills; and you will learn what endurance can do in us if you look at how much toil does for peoples who go unclothed and

are made stronger by want. Look at all the nations where the Roman peace ends: I mean the Germans and all the roving tribes one meets along the Danube. Endless winter and a gloomy sky weigh on them; a barren soil grudgingly feeds them; they keep off the rain with thatch or leaves, they bound across frozen marshes, and they hunt wild beasts for food. Do they seem wretched to you? Nothing is wretched that habit has turned into nature; for little by little what began from necessity becomes a pleasure. They have no homes and no settled places except those that weariness fixes for the day; their food is poor and must be won by hand, their climate dreadfully harsh, their bodies uncovered. What seems a calamity to you is the life of so many nations. Why are you surprised that good men are shaken so that they may be made firm? No tree is solid and strong unless the wind often falls on it; the very buffeting tightens it and fixes its roots more surely. Those that have grown up in a sunny valley are brittle. It is for the good of good men themselves, then, so that they may be fearless, to live much among frightening things and to bear calmly what is not bad except to one who bears it badly.

5 Add now that it is for the good of all that the best men should serve, so to speak, as soldiers and do their work. God's purpose is the same as the wise man's: to show that the things the crowd covets and dreads are neither goods nor evils. Yet they will appear to be goods if he grants them only to good men, and evils if he inflicts them only on bad men. Blindness will be detestable if no one loses his eyes except those who deserve to have them gouged out; so let Appius and Metellus[11] lack the light. Riches are not a good; so let even Elius the pimp have them, so that men who have consecrated money in temples may see it in the brothel too. In no way can god discredit the objects of desire more than by bestowing them on the most shameful men and keeping them from the best. "But it is unjust that a good man should be crippled or

pierced or chained, while bad men walk about with their bodies whole, free and pampered." What next? Is it not unjust that brave men take up arms, spend the night in camp, and stand guard at the rampart with their wounds bandaged, while in the city the gelded and the professional debauchees are free of care? What next? Is it not unjust that maidens of the noblest families are roused at night to perform the sacred rites, while defiled women enjoy the deepest sleep? Toil calls up the best. The senate often sits all day long, while at that very time every worthless fellow is amusing himself at leisure on the Campus, or hiding in a tavern, or wasting time in some knot of idlers. The same thing happens in this great commonwealth of the world: good men toil, they spend and are spent, and willingly at that; they are not dragged by Fortune, they follow her and keep pace; had they known, they would have gone ahead. I remember hearing this spirited saying too from Demetrius, the bravest of men: "Immortal gods," he said, "this is the one complaint I can make of you: you did not make your will known to me sooner. For I would have gone first of my own accord to the things I now come to at your summons. Do you want to take my children? It was for you I raised them. Do you want some part of my body? Take it: it is no great thing I promise, for I will soon leave the whole of it. Do you want my breath? Why should I make any delay in your taking back what you gave? Whatever you ask for, you will have from a willing man. What, then, is my complaint? I would rather have offered than handed over. What need was there to take it away? You could have received it. But even now you will not take it away, because nothing is snatched from a man unless he holds on to it." I am forced into nothing, I suffer nothing against my will; I do not serve god, I agree with him, all the more because I know that all things run their course by a law that is fixed and laid down for eternity. The fates lead us, and how much time remains for each of us was settled in the first hour of our birth. Cause

hangs on cause; a long chain of events drags private and public affairs along alike. Therefore everything must be borne bravely, because things do not, as we think, fall upon us; they come by appointment. Long ago it was settled what you would rejoice at and what you would weep at; and though the lives of individuals seem marked off by great variety, the sum comes to one thing: perishable ourselves, we receive what will perish. Why, then, are we indignant? Why do we complain? This is what we were made ready for. Let Nature use her bodies as she wishes; let us, cheerful and brave in the face of everything, reflect that nothing that is ours perishes. What is the good man's part? To offer himself to fate. It is a great comfort to be swept along with the universe. Whatever it is that ordered us to live thus and die thus binds the gods too by the same necessity. An irrevocable course carries human and divine things alike. The very founder and ruler of all things wrote the fates, but he follows them: he obeys always; he commanded once. "Why, though, was god so unjust in apportioning fate as to assign poverty, wounds, and bitter deaths to good men?" The craftsman cannot change his material: this is what it allowed. Some things cannot be separated from others; they cling together; they are indivisible. Feeble natures, made for sleep or for a waking very like sleep, are woven of sluggish elements; to make a man worth speaking of with respect, a stronger fate is needed. His road will not be level: he must go up and down, be tossed about, and steer his boat through rough water. He must hold his course against Fortune. Many hard and rough things will happen to him, but things he must soften and smooth himself. Fire tests gold; misfortune tests brave men. See how high virtue must climb: you will know that it cannot travel by safe ways.

"The first stretch of the road is steep, and my horses, fresh in the morning,
can barely struggle up it; at midheaven it is highest,
where I myself am often afraid to look down
on sea and land, and my heart trembles with dread.
The last stretch falls away and needs a sure hand on the reins;
then even Tethys, who receives me in her waves below,
is often afraid that I will be hurled headlong."[12]

When that high-born youth had heard this, he said, "I like the road; I am climbing. It is worth going through all that, even to fall." His father does not stop trying to frighten that fierce spirit:

"And even though you keep to the road and no mistake draws you off,
still you will pass through the horns of the Bull that faces you,
the Haemonian Bow, and the jaws of the raging Lion."[13]

After this he says, "Yoke the chariot you have given me. The very things you think will deter me spur me on. I want to stand where the Sun himself trembles." It is for the low and sluggish to chase after safety: virtue goes by the heights.

6 "But why does god allow anything bad to happen to good men?" In fact he does not allow it. He has removed all evils from them: crimes and disgraceful acts, wicked thoughts, greedy schemes, blind lust, and avarice that reaches for what is another's. He protects and defends good men themselves: does anyone also demand of god that he look after good men's baggage too? They themselves release god from this care: they despise external things. Democritus[14] threw away his riches, thinking them a burden to a sound mind: why, then, are you surprised if god allows to

happen to a good man what a good man sometimes wants to happen to himself? Good men lose their sons: why not, since sometimes they even put them to death? They are sent into exile: why not, since sometimes they leave their country of their own accord, never to return? They are killed: why not, since sometimes they lay hands on themselves? Why do they suffer certain hardships? To teach others to suffer them; they were born to be examples. Imagine, then, that god is saying: "What complaint can you have against me, you who have chosen what is right? Others I have surrounded with false goods, and I have mocked their empty minds as if with a long, deceitful dream. I have adorned them with gold and silver and ivory; inside there is nothing good. Those men you look on as fortunate, if you saw them not from the side they show but from the side they hide, are wretched, squalid, shameful, decorated on the outside like the walls of their houses. That is not solid and genuine good fortune: it is a veneer, and a thin one at that. So as long as they can stand and be displayed as they please, they shine and they deceive; but when something happens that shakes and uncovers them, then it becomes clear how much deep and real ugliness a borrowed splendor was hiding. To you I have given goods that are sure and lasting, and the more anyone turns them over and examines them from every side, the better and greater they are. I have let you despise what is feared and disdain desires. You do not shine on the outside; your goods are turned inward. So the universe has scorned what lies outside, glad in the spectacle of itself. I have placed every good within you: your good fortune is not to need good fortune. 'But many things happen that are sad, dreadful, hard to bear.' Since I could not take you out of their way, I have armed your minds against them all: bear them bravely. In this you can surpass god: he is beyond the endurance of ills, you are above it. Despise poverty: no one lives as poor as he was born. Despise pain: either it will end, or it will end you. Despise death: it

either finishes you or takes you elsewhere. Despise Fortune: I have given her no weapon that can strike the mind. Above all, I have taken care that no one should hold you against your will: the way out lies open. If you do not want to fight, you may flee. That is why, of all the things I wanted to be necessary for you, I have made nothing easier than dying. I have set life on a downward slope. If it drags on,[15] only look closely and you will see how short and how clear is the road that leads to freedom. I have not set such long delays for you on the way out as on the way in; otherwise Fortune would have held great power over you, if a man died as slowly as he is born. Let every time and every place teach you how easy it is to renounce Nature and throw her gift back in her face. At the very altars, amid the solemn rites of those who sacrifice, while life is being prayed for, learn death. The fat bodies of bulls fall from a tiny wound, and a blow from a human hand fells animals of great strength; a thin blade severs the joint of the neck, and once that joint that links head and neck is cut, that whole great mass collapses. The breath does not lie hidden deep, nor must it be dug out with steel; the vitals need not be searched by a wound driven deep: death is close at hand. I have fixed no particular place for these blows: wherever you like, the way is open. That very thing called dying, by which the soul leaves the body, is too short for such speed to be felt: whether a noose has crushed the throat, or water has stopped the breathing, or the hard ground below has shattered the head of one who fell on it, or fire breathed in has cut off the breath on its way back, whatever it is, it is quick. Do you not blush? You spend so long fearing a thing that happens so fast!"

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1. Lucilius: Seneca's younger friend, a Roman knight and imperial official, to whom he also addressed his *Moral Letters* and *Natural Questions*.

2. Cato the Younger, the leading Stoic opponent of Julius Caesar, killed himself at Utica in 46 BC after Caesar's victory at Thapsus; when his first wound was dressed, he tore it open.

3. Marcus Petreius, a Pompeian general, and Juba, king of Numidia, fled after Thapsus and died in a duel they had agreed on, each meaning to die by the other's hand.

4. Demetrius the Cynic, a philosopher at Rome and a friend of Seneca.

5. Gaius Mucius Scaevola burned his right hand before the Etruscan king Porsenna after failing to kill him; Gaius Fabricius, consul in 282 and 278 BC, refused Pyrrhus's bribes and lived in poverty; Publius Rutilius Rufus, unjustly convicted of extortion in 92 BC, lived in exile and declined to return; Marcus Atilius Regulus, captured by the Carthaginians, advised the senate against a peace, went back to Carthage, and was tortured to death.

6. The Servilian Pool was a basin in the forum where the heads of those killed in Sulla's proscriptions (82–81 BC) were displayed.

7. Sulla's Cornelian Law against assassins and poisoners.

8. Maecenas, Augustus's minister and patron of poets; his marriage to Terentia was famously stormy, with repeated divorces and reconciliations.

9. Cato opposed the alliance of Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus, and lost the praetorship of 55 BC to Publius Vatinius, a creature of Caesar.

10. A murmillo was a heavily armed gladiator; Tiberius gave few gladiatorial games.

11. Appius Claudius Caecus, censor in 312 BC, was blind in old age; Lucius Caecilius Metellus, chief pontiff, lost his sight rescuing sacred objects from the burning temple of Vesta in 241 BC.

12. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.63–69: the Sun warns his son Phaethon, who has asked to drive his chariot.

13. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.79–81. The Bull, the Bow (of the Thessalian centaur, Sagittarius), and the Lion are constellations of the zodiac.

14. Democritus of Abdera, the Greek philosopher of atoms, who was said to have given away his inheritance.

15. The text is corrupt here; read as "if it drags on."

On the Constancy of the Wise Man

1 I might say, Serenus,[1] and not without reason, that there is as great a difference between the Stoics and the other schools that profess wisdom as between women and men; for though each group contributes as much to the partnership of life, one was born to obey and the other to command. The other philosophers treat us softly and coaxingly, the way family doctors, friends of the house, usually treat sick bodies: not by the best and quickest way, but by the way they are allowed. The Stoics have set out on a manly road, and they do not care whether it looks pleasant to those who enter on it, but only that it should rescue us as soon as possible and lead us up to that lofty summit which rises so far beyond the range of any missile that it towers above Fortune. "But the way we are called to is steep and rugged." Well? Does anyone reach a height on level ground? Yet it is not even as sheer as some think. Only the first part has rocks and cliffs and looks pathless, just as many things seen from far off tend to look broken off or run together, because distance deceives the eye; then, as you come nearer, those same things that the error of the eyes had massed into one gradually open up, and what looked like precipices from a distance turns back into a gentle slope. Not long ago, when Marcus Cato happened to be mentioned, you were indignant, impatient of injustice as you are, that his own age had understood Cato so little, that when he rose above the Pompeys and Caesars, it had placed him below the Vatiniuses; and it seemed outrageous to you that his toga had been torn from him in the forum when he

was about to speak against a law, and that he had been passed from hand to hand by a seditious faction all the way from the rostra to the Arch of Fabius, enduring foul words and spitting and all the other insults of a frenzied mob.'[2]

2 I replied then that you had reason to be moved on behalf of the commonwealth, which Publius Clodius on one side, and Vatinius and every scoundrel on the other, were putting up for sale; and in the grip of blind greed they did not understand that while they were selling, they were being sold.[3] As for Cato himself, I told you to be free of care; for no wise man can suffer either a wrong or an insult, and in Cato the immortal gods have given us a surer model of the wise man than earlier ages had in Ulysses and Hercules. For our Stoics declared these two wise men, unconquered by labors, despisers of pleasure, and victors over all terrors. Cato did not grapple with wild beasts, which is work for the hunter and the countryman; he did not pursue monsters with fire and sword; he did not happen to live in times when it could be believed that the sky rested on one man's shoulders. In an age that had shaken off the old credulity and had been brought to the height of sophistication, he came to grips with corrupt ambition, an evil of many shapes, and with that boundless lust for power which the whole world divided among three men could not satisfy. He stood alone against the vices of a degenerate state sinking under its own weight, and he held up the falling commonwealth as far as one hand could drag it back, until he was torn away and gave himself as a companion to the ruin he had so long held off; and so two things were extinguished together that it would have been a sin to part. For Cato did not outlive freedom, nor freedom Cato. Do you think the people could have done a wrong to such a man because they took from him a praetorship or a toga, because they spattered that sacred head with the filth of their mouths? The wise man is safe; no wrong and no insult can touch him.

3 I seem to see your mind blazing and seething; you are getting ready to cry out: "These are the things that strip your precepts of their authority. You promise great things, things that cannot even be wished for, much less believed. Then, after all your grand talk, when you have denied that the wise man is poor, you do not deny that he often lacks a slave, a roof, and food. When you have denied that the wise man goes mad, you do not deny that he loses his mind, utters words that are hardly sane, and dares whatever the force of his illness drives him to. When you have denied that the wise man is a slave, you do not dispute that he will be sold, will do what he is told, and will perform slavish services for his master. So, with your eyebrows raised high, you come down to the same place as everyone else, only with the names of things changed. I suspect, then, that there is something of the kind in this too, which at first sight is fine and magnificent: that the wise man will suffer neither wrong nor insult. But it makes a great difference whether you place the wise man beyond indignation or beyond wrong. For if you say that he will bear it calmly, he has no special privilege; he has come by a common thing, one learned from the very frequency of wrongs: endurance. If you deny that he will suffer a wrong, meaning that no one will try to do him one, I am dropping all my business and becoming a Stoic." For my part, I have resolved not to dress the wise man in an imaginary honor of words, but to set him in a place where no wrong is allowed to reach him. "What, then? Will there be no one to provoke him, no one to try?" Nothing in Nature is so sacred that it does not find someone to commit sacrilege; but divine things are no less on high because there are men who aim at a greatness set far above them, which they will never touch. What is invulnerable is not what is never struck, but what is never hurt: by this mark I will show you the wise man. Can there be any doubt that strength which is not conquered is surer than strength which is not provoked? For untested powers are

doubtful, while the firmness that throws back every assault is rightly held to be the surest. In the same way, you may know that the wise man is of a better nature if no wrong harms him than if none is done to him; and I will call that man brave whom wars do not subdue and the approach of an enemy's force does not terrify, not the one who enjoys a fat leisure among idle peoples. This, then, is what I say: the wise man is exposed to no wrong. So it does not matter how many weapons are hurled at him, since none can pierce him. As some stones have a hardness that steel cannot conquer, and adamant cannot be cut or hewn or worn down but blunts whatever strikes it; as certain things cannot be consumed by fire but keep their firmness and their shape with the flames all around them; as certain cliffs jutting out into the deep break the sea and show no trace of its fury though they have been lashed for so many ages: so the mind of the wise man is solid, and has gathered such strength that it is as safe from wrong as the things I have named.

4 "What, then? Will there be no one who tries to do the wise man a wrong?" Someone will try, but the wrong will not reach him; for he has been removed too far from contact with lower things for any harmful force to carry its power all the way to him. Even when the powerful, raised high by command and strong in the consent of those who serve them, set out to harm him, all their attacks will fall short of wisdom, just as missiles shot up by bowstring or catapult, though they leap out of sight, still turn back short of the sky. Well? Do you think that when that stupid king darkened the daylight with his cloud of arrows, any arrow struck the sun? or that when he let chains down into the deep, he could lay hold of Neptune?[4] As heavenly things escape human hands, and no harm is done to the divine by those who tear down temples and melt down statues, so whatever is done against the wise man insolently, wantonly, arrogantly, is attempted in vain. "But it would be

better if there were no one who wanted to do it." You are wishing the human race something hard: innocence. And it is for the sake of those who would do it that it should not be done, not for the man who cannot suffer it even when it is done. Indeed, I am not sure that calm amid provocation does not show the strength of wisdom better, just as the strongest proof of a general powerful in arms and men is his safe freedom from care in the enemy's country.

5 Let us distinguish, Serenus, if you agree, between wrong and insult. The first is by nature heavier; the second is lighter and heavy only to the thin-skinned, for it does not hurt people but offends them. Yet such is the slackness and emptiness of men's minds that some think nothing more bitter. So you will find a slave who would rather be flogged than slapped, and who thinks death and the lash more bearable than insulting words. We have come to such absurdity that we are troubled not only by pain but by the idea of pain, like children, who are frightened by a shadow, by ugly masks, by a distorted face, and are brought to tears by names unpleasant to their ears, by movements of the fingers, and by other things they run from in a kind of blind and mistaken panic. A wrong has this aim: to bring evil on someone. But wisdom leaves no room for evil (for the only evil it knows is shamefulness, which cannot enter where virtue and the honorable already dwell). Therefore, if there is no wrong without evil, and no evil except what is shameful, and the shameful cannot reach a man occupied with the honorable, then no wrong reaches the wise man. For if a wrong is the suffering of some evil, and the wise man suffers no evil, then no wrong touches the wise man. Every wrong is a lessening of the one it strikes, and no one can suffer a wrong without some loss of dignity, or of body, or of the things placed outside us. But the wise man can lose nothing. He has stored everything within himself, trusts nothing to Fortune, and holds his goods on

solid ground, content with virtue, which needs nothing from chance and therefore can be neither increased nor diminished. For things brought to their peak have no room to grow, and Fortune takes away nothing but what she gave; but she does not give virtue, and so she does not take it away. Virtue is free, inviolable, unmoved, unshaken, so hardened against misfortune that it cannot even be bent, much less overcome. It looks straight at the apparatus of terror and does not change its expression whether harsh things or prosperous ones are paraded before it. So the wise man will lose nothing whose loss he will feel. For he is in possession of virtue alone, from which he can never be driven; everything else he holds on loan. And who is moved by the loss of what belongs to another? But if a wrong can harm none of the things that are the wise man's own, since they are safe as long as his virtue is safe, then no wrong can be done to the wise man. Demetrius, the one surnamed Poliorcetes, had taken Megara. When he asked the philosopher Stilpo whether he had lost anything, Stilpo said, "Nothing: I have all that is mine with me."[5] And yet his estate had gone as plunder, his daughters had been carried off by the enemy, his country had passed under foreign rule, and the king himself, ringed by the arms of his victorious army, was questioning him from a higher place. But Stilpo shook the victory out of his hands and bore witness that, though his city was taken, he was not only unconquered but unharmed. For he had his true goods with him, on which no one can lay hands; and the things that were being scattered and plundered and carried off he did not judge to be his, but things that had come from outside and followed Fortune's nod. So he had not loved them as his own; for the possession of all that flows in from outside is slippery and uncertain.

6 Consider now whether a thief, or a false accuser, or a high-handed neighbor, or some rich man wielding the power that a

childless old age gives, could do a wrong to this man, from whom war and an enemy, and that man who professed the splendid art of battering cities, could take nothing. Amid swords flashing everywhere and soldiers rioting in plunder, amid flames and blood and the slaughter of the stricken city, amid the crash of temples falling on their gods, one man had peace. So there is no reason to judge my promise rash; and if you do not trust me enough, I will give you a guarantor. For you hardly believe that so much firmness or such greatness of mind can fall to a human being; but here a man comes forward to say: "There is no reason for you to doubt that one born a man can raise himself above human things; that he can look on pains and losses, sores and wounds, and the great upheavals of the world roaring around him, free of care; that he can bear hardship calmly and prosperity with moderation, neither yielding to the one nor relying on the other, and remain one and the same amid opposites; that he can think nothing his own but himself, and himself only in the part that is better. Here I am to prove it to you. Under this destroyer of so many cities, walls are shaken by the blows of the ram, high towers suddenly sink into mines and hidden trenches, and the siege mound grows until it will match the loftiest citadels; but no engines can be found that will shake a well-founded mind. I have just crept out of the ruins of my house, and with fires blazing on every side I have fled the flames through blood. What has become of my daughters, whether something worse than the common lot, I do not know. Alone and old, and seeing everything around me in enemy hands, I still declare that my estate is whole and unharmed: I keep, I have, whatever of mine I ever had. There is no reason for you to think me conquered and yourself the conqueror: your fortune has conquered my fortune. Where those perishable things are that change their masters, I do not know; as for what is mine, it is with me and will be with me. The rich have lost their estates, the lustful their loves and the har-

lots they cherished at a great cost to their honor, the ambitious the senate house and the forum and the places set aside for practicing their vices in public; the moneylenders have lost their account books, in which avarice, falsely glad, imagines its riches. But I have everything whole and untouched. So go and ask those who are weeping and wailing, who set their bare bodies against drawn swords for the sake of money, who flee the enemy with their clothes stuffed with valuables." Take it, then, Serenus, that this perfect man, full of human and divine virtues, loses nothing. His goods are girded by solid and insurmountable defenses. Do not compare them with the walls of Babylon, which Alexander entered, nor with the walls of Carthage or Numantia, taken by a single hand,[6] nor with the Capitol or the citadel: those bear the enemy's footprint. The defenses that guard the wise man are safe from flame and from assault; they offer no way in; they are lofty, impregnable, equal to the gods.

7 There is no reason for you to say, as you usually do, that this wise man of ours is nowhere to be found. We are not inventing an empty ornament of human talent, nor conceiving a huge image of something unreal; we have shown, and will show, such a man as we portray, rarely perhaps, and only one in many ages; for great things that surpass the usual and common measure are not often produced. But this very Marcus Cato, with whose mention this discussion began, may, I fear, even be above our model. Then, too, what does harm must be stronger than what is harmed; but wickedness is not stronger than virtue; so the wise man cannot be harmed. A wrong against the good is attempted only by the bad; the good are at peace with one another, while the bad are as destructive to the good as to one another. But if only the weaker can be harmed, and the bad man is weaker than the good, and the good need fear wrong only from those unlike them, then wrong does not befall the wise man. For by now you need not be

reminded that no one is good except the wise man. "If Socrates," someone says, "was unjustly condemned, he suffered a wrong." Here we must understand that it can happen that someone does me a wrong and yet I do not suffer it: as if someone stole a thing from my country house and put it in my town house, he would have committed theft, but I would have lost nothing. A man can become guilty even though he has done no harm. If a man lies with his own wife as though she were another man's, he will be an adulterer, though she will not be an adulteress. Someone has given me poison, but it lost its strength when mixed with food: by giving the poison he bound himself to the crime, even though he did no harm. A man is no less a brigand because his blade was foiled by the clothing in its way. All crimes are complete, as far as guilt is concerned, even before the deed is done. Some things are so constituted and linked in such a relation that one can exist without the other, but the other cannot exist without the first. I will try to make clear what I mean. I can move my feet without running; I cannot run without moving my feet. I can be in water without swimming; if I swim, I cannot help being in water. What we are discussing is of this sort: if I have suffered a wrong, it must have been done; if it has been done, I need not have suffered it. For many things can intervene to ward off a wrong. As some chance can strike down a raised hand and turn aside weapons already thrown, so something can repel wrongs of any kind and intercept them midway, so that they have been done and yet not suffered.

8 Besides, justice can suffer nothing unjust, since opposites do not come together; but a wrong cannot be done except unjustly; therefore a wrong cannot be done to the wise man. Nor should you wonder that no one can do him a wrong: no one can do him good either. The wise man lacks nothing that he could accept as a gift, and the bad man can give nothing worthy of the wise man; for he must have before he can give, and he has nothing that the wise

man would be glad to have passed on to him. So no one can either harm the wise man or help him, since divine things neither need help nor can be hurt, and the wise man stands next to the gods, their close neighbor, like god except for his mortality. Striving and pressing toward those things that are lofty, ordered, fearless, flowing in an even and harmonious course, free of care, kindly, born for the public good, and wholesome to himself and to others, he will desire nothing base and weep for nothing. The man who leans on reason and walks through human misfortunes with a divine mind has no place where he can receive a wrong—from man only, do you think I mean? Not even from Fortune, who has never left the field an equal whenever she has met virtue. If we accept with a calm and peaceful mind that greatest thing, beyond which angry laws and the cruelest masters have nothing to threaten, in which Fortune uses up her power, and if we know that death is not an evil, and therefore not even a wrong, we will much more easily bear the rest: losses and pains, disgraces, changes of place, the loss of children, separations. These do not overwhelm the wise man even if they surround him all at once, much less make him grieve at their blows one by one. And if he bears the wrongs of Fortune with moderation, how much more those of powerful men, whom he knows to be Fortune's hands!

9 So he endures everything as he endures the cold of winter and bad weather, fevers and diseases and the other things that happen by chance; and he does not think so well of anyone as to believe he has done anything by deliberate purpose, which is found in the wise man alone. In all others there are no purposes, only frauds and plots and disorderly movements of the mind, and he counts these among accidents; and everything that comes by chance rages only around us, and against what is of little worth. Consider this too: the widest field for wrongs lies in the means by which danger is sought for us, as by a suborned accuser, a false

charge, the stirring up of powerful men's hatred against us, and all the other kinds of highway robbery practiced among men in togas. Another frequent wrong is when someone has had a profit knocked out of his hands, or a reward he has long angled for, when an inheritance pursued with great effort has been diverted, or the favor of a lucrative house has been snatched away. The wise man escapes these, for he does not know how to live for hope or for fear. Add now that no one suffers a wrong with his mind unmoved; he is thrown into turmoil when he feels it. But the man rescued from errors, master of himself, in deep and peaceful calm, is free of turmoil. For if a wrong touches him, it moves and pushes him; but the wise man is free of anger, which is roused by the impression of having been wronged, and he could not be free of anger unless he were also free of wrong, which he knows cannot be done to him. That is why he is so upright and cheerful, why he is lifted up by constant joy. And so far is he from shrinking at the blows of circumstances and of men that wrong itself is useful to him, since through it he puts himself to the proof and tests his virtue. Let us, I beg you, favor this proposition and lend it fair minds and ears while the wise man is being exempted from wrong. Nothing is taken away on that account from your insolence, or from your most rapacious desires, or from your blind rashness and pride: this freedom is sought for the wise man with your vices left untouched. We are not trying to make it impossible for you to do wrong, but to have him sink all wrongs deep and defend himself by endurance and greatness of mind. So in the sacred games many have won by wearing out the hands of those who struck them, through stubborn endurance. Think of the wise man as one of this kind, those who by long and faithful training have gained the strength to endure and to tire out every hostile force.

10 Since we have run through the first part, let us pass to the second, in which we will refute insult with some arguments of its

own, though most are shared with the first. Insult is a lesser wrong, one we can complain of rather than prosecute, and which even the laws have thought deserving of no penalty. This passion is stirred by a lowness of mind that shrinks at some act or word that does it dishonor: “He did not admit me today, though he admitted others”; “He turned away haughtily from what I was saying,” or “He laughed at it openly”; “He put me not on the middle couch but on the lowest”; and other things of this stamp. What should I call these but the complaints of a queasy mind? It is mostly the pampered and prosperous who fall into them; for a man pressed by worse things has no time to notice these. Minds that are weak by nature and womanish, running riot from too much leisure and the lack of any real wrong, are stirred by these things, most of which consist in the fault of the one who interprets them. So the man who is affected by insult shows that he has neither prudence nor confidence in himself; for he has no doubt that he has been despised, and this sting does not come without a certain lowness in a mind that abases and lowers itself. But the wise man is despised by no one. He knows his own greatness and tells himself that no one has such license over him; and all these things, which I would call not miseries of the mind but annoyances, he does not overcome; he does not even feel them. There are other things that strike the wise man, even if they do not overthrow him, such as bodily pain and infirmity, the loss of friends and children, and the calamity of his country ablaze with war. I do not deny that the wise man feels these; for we do not claim for him the hardness of stone or iron. It is no virtue to endure what you do not feel. What, then? He takes some blows, but once he has taken them he overcomes them, heals them, and checks them; these lesser things, however, he does not even feel, nor does he use against them his usual virtue of enduring hardship; he either does not notice them or thinks them laughable.

11 Besides, since a great part of insults come from the proud and insolent and from those who carry good fortune badly, he has something with which to spurn this puffed-up passion: the most beautiful of all the virtues, magnanimity. It passes over everything of this sort like the empty shapes of dreams and visions of the night that have nothing solid or real in them. At the same time he reflects that all men are too low to dare to look down on things so far above them. Insult (*contumelia*) takes its name from contempt (*contemptus*), because no one brands a man with such a wrong unless he has despised him; but no one despises a greater and better man, even if he does something that despisers usually do. For children strike their parents in the face, and a baby has tousled and torn its mother's hair, spat on her, or exposed before the family what should be covered, and has not spared obscene words; and we call none of these things insult. Why? Because the one who does them is incapable of contempt. It is for the same reason that the wit of our slaves, insolent toward their masters, delights us; their boldness wins its license against the guests only if it has begun with the master; and the more despised a slave is, the looser his tongue. Some people buy impudent boys for this very purpose, sharpen their impudence, and keep them under a teacher so that they may pour out studied abuse; and we call these not insults but witticisms. But what madness it is to be delighted one moment and offended the next by the same things, and to call a remark slander when a friend says it, and playful raillery when a little slave says it!

12 The attitude we have toward children the wise man has toward all those whose childishness persists even after youth and gray hair. Have such people made any progress, whose minds are diseased and whose errors have grown larger, who differ from children only in the size and shape of their bodies, but are otherwise no less flighty and unsettled, grasping at pleasures without

discrimination, fearful, and quiet not by nature but from fright? No one could say there is any difference between them and children on the grounds that children are greedy for knucklebones and nuts and copper coins, and these men for gold and silver and costly tables; that children play at being magistrates among themselves and imitate the purple-bordered toga, the fasces, and the tribunal, while these men play the same games in earnest in the Campus, the forum, and the senate house; that children on the shore pile up sand into the likeness of houses, while these men, as if engaged in something great, busy themselves heaping up stones and walls and roofs, and have turned what was invented to protect the body into a danger. So children and those who have gone further in years are alike, but the error of the latter concerns other and larger things. Not without reason, then, does the wise man take their insults as jokes; and sometimes he corrects them, as one would children, with pain and punishment, not because he has suffered a wrong, but because they have done one, and so that they may stop doing it. For so beasts too are tamed with the whip; we do not get angry with them when they have refused a rider, but we restrain them, so that pain may overcome stubbornness. So you will see that this objection made against us is also answered: "Why, if the wise man has suffered neither wrong nor insult, does he punish those who did them?" For he is not avenging himself; he is correcting them.

13 Why, then, should you not believe that this firmness of mind belongs to the wise man, when you are allowed to observe the same thing in others, though not from the same cause? What doctor gets angry with a madman? Who takes in bad part the curses of a man in a fever who has been denied cold water? The wise man has the same attitude toward all men that a doctor has toward his patients: he does not disdain to handle their private parts if they need treatment, or to inspect their excrement and discharges, or

to take abuse from those raging in delirium. The wise man knows that all those who strut about in togas and purple, healthy and with good color, are unsound, and he sees them as nothing but sick men without self-control. So he is not even annoyed if in their sickness they have dared some impudence against their healer; and with the same mind with which he sets no value on their honors, he sets none on their dishonoring acts. Just as he will not be pleased with himself if a beggar pays him respect, nor judge it an insult if a man of the lowest class does not return his greeting, so he will not be impressed either if many rich men look up to him (for he knows that they differ in nothing from beggars, and are even more wretched, since beggars need little and they need much); and again, he will not be touched if the king of the Medes, or Attalus of Asia, passes him by in silence and with an arrogant look when he greets him. He knows that the king's position has nothing more to envy in it than that of the man whose charge in a large household is to keep the sick and the insane in order. Shall I be annoyed if one of those who do business at the temple of Castor, buying and selling worthless slaves, whose shops are crammed with a crowd of the worst slaves, does not return my greeting? I think not; for what good is there in a man who has no one under him who is not bad? So as the wise man disregards this man's courtesy or rudeness, so he disregards a king's: "You have under you Parthians and Medes and Bactrians; but you hold them by fear; but because of them you have never been free to unstring your bow; but they are the foulest of enemies; but they are for sale; but they are on the lookout for a new master." So he will not be moved by anyone's insult; for though all men differ from one another, the wise man considers them all equal because of their equal folly. For if he once lowered himself so far as to be moved by either wrong or insult, he could never be free of care; and freedom from care is the wise man's own special good. Nor will he let him-

self, by judging that an insult has been done to him, pay honor to the one who did it; for whoever is upset at being despised by someone must be glad to be looked up to by him.

14 Some people are possessed by such madness that they think an insult can be done to them by a woman. What does it matter how well-off they consider her, how many litter-bearers she has, how weighed down her ears, how roomy her sedan chair? She is just as thoughtless a creature, and unless knowledge and much learning have come to her, a wild one, with no control over her desires. Some are upset at being jostled by a hair-curler, and they call it an insult when the doorkeeper is difficult, the slave who announces names is haughty, the chamberlain supercilious. Oh, what laughter should be raised at such things, with how much pleasure the mind should be filled as it contemplates its own calm amid the turmoil of other people's errors! "What, then? Will the wise man not approach doors guarded by a surly porter?" Certainly he will, if necessary business calls him; he will try even that porter, whoever he is, and will soothe him, like a fierce dog, by tossing him food, and will not resent paying something to get across the threshold, reflecting that on some bridges, too, a toll is paid for crossing. So he will also tip whoever it is that runs this public business of morning calls: he knows that what is for sale is bought with cash. It is a petty mind that is pleased with itself for having answered a doorkeeper boldly, broken his staff, gone in to his master and asked to have him flogged. The man who contends makes himself an adversary, and even if he wins, he has been an equal. "But what will the wise man do when he is struck with a fist?" What Cato did when he was hit in the face: he did not flare up, he did not avenge the wrong, he did not even pardon it; he denied it had been done. It took a greater spirit not to recognize it than to have forgiven it. We will not dwell on this long; for who does not know that none of the things believed to be evils or goods

appear to the wise man as they do to everyone else? He does not consider what men judge shameful or wretched; he does not go where the people go; but as the stars set their course against the turning of the heavens, so he goes against the opinion of all.

15 Stop saying, then: "So the wise man will not suffer a wrong if he is beaten, if his eye is gouged out? He will not suffer an insult if he is driven through the forum amid the foul cries of obscene men? if at a king's banquet he is ordered to recline below the table and eat with the slaves assigned to degrading duties? if he is forced to bear anything else that can be devised to wound a free-born sense of shame?" However much these things grow, in number or in size, they will be of the same nature: if small ones do not touch him, neither will larger ones; if a few do not touch him, neither will more. But you judge a vast mind from your own weakness, and when you have reckoned how much you think you could bear, you set the limit of the wise man's endurance a little farther out. But his virtue has placed him in another region of the universe, with nothing in common with you. Seek out harsh things and everything that is heavy to bear, from which ear and eye recoil: he will not be overwhelmed by their massed attack, and as he resists them one by one, so he will resist them all together. The man who says that this is bearable for the wise man and that unbearable, and keeps greatness of mind within fixed bounds, is mistaken: Fortune conquers us unless she is wholly conquered. Do not think this is mere Stoic hardness. Epicurus, whom you adopt as the patron of your sloth, and whom you suppose to teach soft and lazy doctrines that lead to pleasures, says: "Fortune seldom gets in the wise man's way."[7] How close he came to uttering a man's word! Will you speak more bravely, and remove her altogether? This house of the wise man is narrow, without adornment, without noise, without trappings; it is guarded by no doorkeepers sorting the crowd with a disdain that can be bought; but over this

threshold, empty and free of porters, Fortune does not pass: she knows there is no place for her where nothing is hers.

16 But if even Epicurus, who indulged the body most, rises up against wrongs, what can seem incredible among us, or beyond the measure of human nature? He says that wrongs are bearable for the wise man; we say there are no wrongs. Nor is there any reason for you to say that this is against nature. We do not deny that it is an unpleasant thing to be beaten and shoved and to lose a limb; but we deny that any of these things are wrongs. We do not take from them the feeling of pain, but the name of wrong, which cannot be admitted while virtue is unharmed. Which of the two speaks more truly we shall see; on contempt for wrong, at any rate, both agree. Do you ask what the difference between them is? The same as between two very brave gladiators, one of whom presses his hand to his wound and holds his ground, while the other turns to the shouting crowd, signals that it is nothing, and will not let the fight be stopped. There is no reason to think our disagreement is great. On the point at issue, the only one that concerns you, both examples urge the same thing: to despise wrongs, and insults too, which I might call the shadows and suspicions of wrongs. To despise these one does not need a wise man, only a man in his senses, who can say to himself: "Do these things happen to me deservedly or undeservedly? If deservedly, it is not an insult, it is a verdict; if undeservedly, it is the one who acts unjustly who should blush." And what is it that is called an insult? Someone has joked about my bald head, my weak eyes, my thin legs, my height. What insult is there in hearing what is plain to see? We laugh at something said in front of one person and are indignant at it in front of several, and we do not allow others the freedom to say what we ourselves are used to saying about ourselves. Moderate jokes delight us; immoderate ones make us angry.

17 Chrysippus says that a certain man was indignant because someone had called him a sea-sheep. We saw Cornelius Fidus, Ovid's son-in-law, weeping in the senate when Corbulo called him a plucked ostrich.[8] Against other abuse that wounded his character and his life, his face held firm; at this absurd jibe the tears came pouring out: so great is the weakness of minds once reason has left them. What of the fact that we take offense if someone imitates our speech or our walk, or mimics some defect of our body or our tongue? As if these became better known when another imitates them than when we do them ourselves! Some people do not like to hear about their old age and gray hair and the other things men pray to reach. The taunt of poverty has burned some deeply, though whoever hides his poverty makes it a reproach against himself. So you take the material away from the impudent and from those who are witty at others' expense if you seize on it first, of your own accord; no one has given cause for laughter who laughed at himself first. It has been handed down that Vatinius, a man born for both laughter and hatred, was a buffoon, and a charming and witty one. He made a great many jokes himself about his feet and his scarred neck; and so he escaped the wit of his enemies, of whom he had more than diseases, and above all of Cicero. If he could do this, a man so brazen-faced that constant abuse had made him unlearn shame, why should not a man who has made some progress through liberal studies and the cultivation of wisdom? Add that it is a kind of revenge to rob the one who insulted you of the pleasure of his insult. People like that usually say: "Too bad for me! I don't think he got it." So much does the fruit of an insult lie in the feeling and indignation of the victim. Besides, the insulter will someday meet his match; someone will be found to avenge you as well.

18 Gaius Caesar,[9] who among the other vices in which he abounded was given to insult, was carried away by a strange pas-

sion for branding everyone with some mark of ridicule, though he himself was the richest material for laughter: such was the ugliness of his pallor, which bore witness to his madness, such the savagery of his eyes lurking under an old woman's brow, such the deformity of his bald head sprinkled with a few borrowed hairs;[10] add to this a neck overgrown with bristles, the thinness of his legs, and the enormity of his feet. It would be an endless task if I wished to recount each of the ways he insulted his parents and grandparents, and every rank of society; I will recount those that brought him to his end. He counted Valerius Asiaticus among his foremost friends, a fierce man and one hardly likely to bear another's insults calmly. At a banquet, that is, before a public assembly, Gaius in a very loud voice taunted this man with what his wife was like in bed. Good gods! That a husband should hear this, that the emperor should know it, and that license should have gone so far that the emperor should tell, I do not say a former consul, I do not say a friend, but simply a husband, of his own adultery and his disappointment! Chaerea,[11] on the other hand, a military tribune, had a way of speaking that did not match his hand: his voice was languid and, if you did not know his deeds, rather suspect. When he asked for the watchword, Gaius would give him now "Venus," now "Priapus," taunting the armed man with effeminacy in one way after another; and this from a man himself in see-through clothes, sandals, and gold ornaments. So he forced Chaerea to use the sword, so as not to have to ask for the watchword any more. He was the first of the conspirators to raise his hand; he cut through the middle of Gaius's neck with one blow. After that, many swords were thrust in from every side by men avenging public and private wrongs; but the first to act like a man was the one who least seemed to be one. Yet this same Gaius took everything as an insult, as those who most desire to inflict insults are least able to bear them. He was angry with Herennius Macer for having greeted

him as Gaius; and a chief centurion did not go unpunished for having called him Caligula. For that was what he used to be called, born as he was in the camp and the nursling of the legions, and by no name had he ever been better known to the soldiers; but now that he wore the high boots of tragedy, he judged "Caligula" an abuse and a disgrace.'[12] So this very thing will be a comfort, even if our own easygoing nature has let revenge go: there will be someone who will exact punishment from the impudent, arrogant, insulting man, for these vices are never used up on one person or in one insult. Let us look back at the examples of those whose endurance we praise, such as Socrates, who took in good part the jokes made public against him in comedies and watched by the crowd, and laughed no less than when his wife Xanthippe drenched him with dirty water. Antisthenes was taunted with having a barbarian mother, a Thracian; he replied that the mother of the gods also came from Mount Ida.'[13]

19 We must not get into brawls and wrestling matches. We must keep our feet far away and ignore whatever of this kind is done by the unwise (and it can be done only by the unwise), and hold the honors and the wrongs of the crowd to be all one. We must not grieve at the one or rejoice at the other. Otherwise, out of fear of insults or weariness of them, we will leave many necessary things undone and fail to attend to public and private duties, some of them even beneficial, while a womanish anxiety torments us about hearing something we dislike. Sometimes, too, in anger at the powerful, we will betray this passion by speaking our minds without restraint. But freedom is not suffering nothing; we are mistaken there. Freedom is setting the mind above wrongs and making oneself the only source of one's joys, separating oneself from external things, so as not to lead an anxious life, fearing everyone's laughter and everyone's tongue. For who is there who could not offer an insult, if anyone can? The wise man and the one

who aspires to wisdom will use different remedies. To those who are not yet perfect and who still steer by the judgment of the public, this must be put forward: they must spend their lives amid wrongs and insults; everything comes more lightly to those who expect it. The more honorable a man is by birth, reputation, and fortune, the more bravely he should conduct himself, remembering that the highest ranks stand in the front line. Insults, abusive words, disgraces, and other dishonors he should bear like the shouting of the enemy, like spears flung from far off and stones rattling harmlessly around his helmet; wrongs he should bear like wounds, some taken on his armor, some in his breast, without being thrown down, without even being moved from his position. Even if you are hard pressed and driven by hostile force, it is still shameful to yield: guard the post that nature assigned you. Do you ask what that post is? The post of a man. The wise man has a different help, the opposite of this; for you are still fighting, while he has already won the victory. Do not resist your own good; nourish this hope in your minds until you reach the truth, gladly welcome what is better, and help it along with belief and prayer. That there should be something unconquered, that there should be someone against whom Fortune has no power, is in the interest of the commonwealth of the human race.

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1. Annaeus Serenus: Seneca's younger friend and kinsman, later prefect of the watch under Nero; Seneca also addressed *On Tranquility of Mind* and *On Leisure* to him.

2. Marcus Porcius Cato (Cato the Younger, 95–46 BC). In 55 BC he was manhandled and driven from the forum while opposing a law that gave Pompey and Crassus long provincial commands. The Arch of Fabius stood at the east end of the forum.

3. Publius Clodius, the demagogue tribune of 58 BC, and Publius Vatinius, Caesar's partisan, who defeated Cato for the praetorship of 55 BC. The three

among whom the world was divided were Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus.

4. Xerxes, king of Persia, whose archers were said to darken the sun with their arrows, and who had chains thrown into the Hellespont to punish the sea.

5. Demetrius Poliorcetes ("the Besieger"), a Macedonian king, took Megara in 307 BC; Stilpo was a philosopher of the Megarian school.

6. Scipio Aemilianus destroyed Carthage in 146 BC and Numantia, in Spain, in 133 BC.

7. Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* 16.

8. Chrysippus was the third head of the Stoic school. Cornelius Fidus and the senator Domitius Corbulo were Seneca's contemporaries.

9. Gaius Caesar: the emperor known as Caligula (reigned AD 37–41), killed by officers of his guard in AD 41.

10. The text is corrupt here; read as "borrowed hairs."

11. Decimus Valerius Asiaticus was twice consul; Cassius Chaerea, a tribune of the praetorian guard, led the conspiracy that killed Gaius.

12. "Caligula" ("Little Boot") was the soldiers' pet name for him as a child in the camp of his father, Germanicus, after the soldier's boot (*caliga*). The high boots (buskins) were worn by tragic actors. Herennius Macer is otherwise unknown.

13. Socrates was mocked on the stage, above all in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Antisthenes was a pupil of Socrates. The mother of the gods, Cybele, was worshiped on Mount Ida in Phrygia, a barbarian land to the Greeks.

On Anger, Book One

1 You have pressed me, Novatus,[1] to write about how anger can be soothed, and you are right, I think, to fear this passion above all others, since it is the most hideous and frenzied of them all. The others have some element of quiet and calm in them; this one is all agitation and onrush. Raging with a most inhuman lust for wounds and weapons, for blood and torture, it cares nothing for itself so long as it can harm another; it throws itself onto the very spears, greedy for a vengeance that will drag the avenger down with it.

Some wise men, therefore, have said that anger is a brief madness. Anger is no more master of itself than madness is: forgetful of decency, unmindful of every tie, stubborn and intent on whatever it has begun, closed to reason and counsel, stirred up by empty causes, unfit to discern what is fair and true, very like a collapsing building that shatters on top of what it crushes. And so that you may know that those whom anger has seized are not sane, look at their very bearing. Madmen show sure signs: a bold and threatening look, a grim brow, a fierce face, a hurried step, restless hands, a changed color, sighs that come thick and are drawn too hard. The angry show the same signs. Their eyes blaze and flash, the whole face is flushed as the blood surges up from deep in the chest, the lips quiver, the teeth are clenched, the hair bristles and stands on end, the breath comes forced and hissing, the joints crack as they wrench themselves, there is groaning and bellowing and talk broken off in words hardly made out, the hands are struck together again and again, the ground is pounded with

the feet, the whole body is in an uproar and acting out the great threats of anger. Men who twist themselves out of shape and swell up present a face foul and horrible to see; you could not tell whether this vice is more hateful or more ugly.

Other passions can be hidden and nursed in secret; anger shows itself and comes out on the face, and the greater it is, the more plainly it boils over. Do you not see how in all animals, as soon as they rise up to do harm, warning signs run ahead, and their whole bodies leave their usual quiet bearing and sharpen their fierceness? Boars foam at the mouth and whet their tusks by rubbing them; bulls toss their horns at the empty air and scatter the sand with pounding hooves; lions roar; snakes swell their necks when provoked; mad dogs have a grim look. No animal is so horrible and so deadly by nature that a fresh surge of fierceness does not appear in it once anger has invaded it. I know, of course, that the other passions too are hard to hide, that lust and fear and boldness give signs of themselves and can be detected in advance; for no violent agitation enters us without moving something in the face. What, then, is the difference? The other passions show; this one stands out.

2 Now if you care to look at what it does and the damage it causes, no plague has cost the human race more. You will see slaughter and poisoning, defendants in mourning clothes accusing one another, the ruin of cities and the destruction of whole nations, the lives of leading men put up for sale at public auction, torches set to houses, and fires not kept within city walls but whole vast regions glowing with enemy flame. Look at the foundations of the most famous cities, now barely to be traced: anger threw them down. Look at the wastes, deserted for many miles without an inhabitant: anger emptied them. Look at all the leaders handed down to memory as examples of an evil fate: anger stabbed one in his bed, struck down another amid the sacred laws

of the table, tore another to pieces within the very precincts of the law and in full view of the crowded forum, made another shed his blood by his own son's parricidal hand, another to bare his royal throat to a slave's hand, another to have his limbs stretched on a cross. And so far I am telling only of punishments of individuals. What if you chose to leave aside those against whom anger blazed one by one, and to look at assemblies cut down with the sword, the plebs butchered by soldiers let loose on them, and whole peoples condemned to death in a common ruin ⟨...⟩[2]

[Fragment: Martin of Braga, *On Anger* 2]

Anger turns everything from the best and most just into its opposite. Whomever it takes hold of, it lets him remember no duty. Give it to a father, he is an enemy; give it to a son, he is a parricide; give it to a mother, she is a stepmother; give it to a citizen, he is a public enemy; give it to a king, he is a tyrant.

[Fragment: Lactantius, *On the Anger of God* 17.13]

Anger is the desire to avenge a wrong, or, as Posidonius[3] says, the desire to punish the person by whom you think you have been unjustly harmed. Some have defined it like this: anger is an incitement of the mind to harm someone who has either done harm or wished to do harm.

⟨...⟩ as though against people who either neglect our care or despise our authority. And what of this? Why does the crowd get angry with gladiators, and so unjustly that it thinks it a wrong that they do not die willingly? It judges itself despised, and in face, gesture, and heat it turns from spectator into adversary. Whatever is of this kind is not anger but something like anger, like the anger of children who, if they fall, want the ground beaten, and often do not even know why they are angry, but are simply angry, without cause and without a wrong, though not without some impression of a wrong and not without some desire for punishment. So they are fooled with pretended blows and appeased by the sham tears

of someone begging pardon, and a false grief is removed by a false revenge.

3 "We are often angry," someone says, "not with those who have harmed us but with those who are going to harm us; so you can see that anger is not born of a wrong." It is true that we are angry with those who are going to harm us, but they harm us by the very thought of it, and the man who is about to do a wrong is already doing it. "So you can see," he says, "that anger is not a desire for punishment: the weakest are often angry with the most powerful, and they do not desire a punishment they cannot hope for." First, we said it was a desire to exact punishment, not the power to do so; and men desire even what they cannot have. Second, no one is so lowly that he cannot hope to punish even the highest of men: we all have power enough to do harm.

Aristotle's definition is not far from ours; he says anger is the desire to pay back pain. What the difference is between our definition and his would take long to set out. Against both it is objected that wild beasts get angry, though they are neither provoked by a wrong nor seeking anyone's punishment or pain; for even if they bring these about, they do not aim at them. But we must say that wild beasts are without anger, and so is everything except man; for though anger is the enemy of reason, it is never born except where reason has a place. Beasts have impulses, rage, fierceness, the urge to attack; but anger they have no more than they have luxury, even though in certain pleasures they are less restrained than man. There is no reason to believe the poet who says:

> "The boar forgets his rage, the deer forgets to trust her speed,
> the bears forget to charge the sturdy herds."[4]

When he says "rage," he means being roused and driven forward; they no more know how to be angry than how to pardon. Dumb animals lack human passions, but they have certain

impulses like them. Otherwise, if there were love and hate in them, there would also be friendship and enmity, discord and concord; some traces of these do exist in them too, but good and evil belong to human hearts alone. Prudence, foresight, diligence, reflection have been granted to no one but man, and animals are barred not only from human virtues but from human vices as well. Their whole make, inside as well as outside, is unlike man's; that royal and ruling part in them is shaped differently. They have a voice, but one that cannot be articulated, confused and incapable of words; they have a tongue, but one that is tied and not free for varied movements; in the same way their ruling part itself is not fine, not exact. So it takes in sights and impressions of things that call it to impulses, but blurred and confused ones. Hence their rushes and tumults are violent, but fear and anxiety, sorrow and anger they do not have, only certain things like them; and so these quickly subside and turn into their opposites, and after the fiercest raging and panic they graze, and wild roaring and running about are followed at once by rest and sleep.

4 What anger is has been explained well enough. How it differs from irascibility (*iracundia*) is plain: as the drunk man differs from the drunkard, and the frightened man from the timid one. An angry man may not be irascible; an irascible man may sometimes not be angry. The other terms by which the Greeks divide anger into kinds under several names I shall pass over, since they have no words of their own in our language, even though we call people bitter and sharp, and no less peevish, rabid, loud, difficult, and harsh, all of which are varieties of anger; among these you may put the morose, a finicky kind of irascibility. For there are angers that settle down after some shouting; some no less persistent than frequent; some savage with the hand and sparing of words; some that pour themselves out in bitter words and abuse; some that go no further than complaining and turning away; some that are deep

and heavy and turned inward. There are a thousand other kinds of this many-sided evil.

5 We have asked what anger is, whether it befalls any animal besides man, how it differs from irascibility, and how many kinds of it there are. Now let us ask whether anger is according to nature, and whether it is useful and should be kept in some part.

Whether it is according to nature will be clear if we look at man. What is gentler than man, as long as his mind is in its right condition? And what is crueler than anger? What loves others more than man? What is more hostile than anger? Man was born for mutual help, anger for destruction; he wants to come together, it wants to break apart; he wants to help, it wants to harm; he will aid even strangers, it will attack even those dearest to it; he is ready even to spend himself for the good of others, it is ready to plunge into danger so long as it drags others down. Who, then, knows less of Nature than the man who assigns this savage and deadly vice to her best and most finished work? Anger, as we said, is greedy for punishment, and for such a craving to dwell in man's most peaceable heart is not at all according to his nature. Human life rests on benefits and concord, and it is bound into a compact of common help not by terror but by mutual love.

6 "Well then? Is correction not sometimes necessary?" Of course it is, but without anger, with reason. For it does not harm; it heals under the guise of harming. Just as we scorch certain crooked spear shafts to straighten them, and squeeze them with driven wedges, not to break them but to take out the bend, so we correct characters warped by vice with pain of body and mind. A doctor, you know, when the disorders are slight, first tries not to change the daily routine much, to set an order for food, drink, and exercise, and to strengthen the health merely by rearranging the way of life. The next step is to see whether a limit on quantity helps. If limit and order do no good, he takes some things away

and cuts others back; if even then the body does not respond, he forbids food and relieves the body by fasting; if the gentler measures have failed, he opens a vein, and if limbs clinging to the body do harm and spread the disease, he puts his hand to the limbs themselves; and no treatment seems harsh whose result is health. So it is fitting for the guardian of the laws and ruler of the state to heal characters with words, and gentle ones, as long as he can, persuading people to do what they should, winning their minds over to a desire for the honorable and the fair, and creating a hatred of vice and a regard for virtue; then let him pass to sterner speech, in which he still warns and reproaches; last of all let him resort to punishments, and these still light and revocable; let him reserve the extreme penalties for the extreme crimes, so that no one dies unless dying is good even for the one who dies. In one thing only will he be unlike those who heal: they give an easy end to those whom they could not give life, while he drives the condemned out of life with disgrace and public exposure, not because he takes pleasure in anyone's punishment (such inhuman fierceness is far from the wise man), but so that they may be a lesson to all, and so that, since they would not be useful to the state alive, the state may at least make use of their death.

So man's nature does not crave punishment; and therefore anger is not in accordance with man's nature either, because anger craves punishment. I will also bring in Plato's argument, for what harm is there in using other people's arguments where they are on our side? "The good man," he says, "does no harm."[5] Punishment does harm; therefore punishment does not suit the good man, and for this reason neither does anger, since punishment suits anger. If the good man takes no joy in punishment, he will take no joy either in the passion that finds its pleasure in punishment; therefore anger is not natural.

7 But even though anger is not natural, should we take it up because it has often been useful? It lifts the spirit and spurs it on; without it courage does nothing magnificent in war: the flame must be kindled from this source, this goad must drive men on and send them boldly into danger. That is why some think it best to temper anger, not to remove it, and, cutting away what overflows, to bring it down to a healthy measure, but to keep that part without which action will flag and the force and vigor of the mind will go slack. First, it is easier to shut out harmful things than to govern them, and easier not to let them in than to moderate them once they are in; for once they have taken possession, they are stronger than their ruler and will not let themselves be cut back or reduced. Second, reason itself, to which the reins are handed, is powerful only so long as it is kept apart from the passions; if it has mixed with them and been stained by them, it cannot hold back those it could have kept away. For the mind, once shaken and dislodged, is the slave of whatever drives it. With some things the beginnings are in our power; what follows sweeps us along by its own force and leaves no way back. Bodies thrown over a cliff have no control over themselves; once cast down, they cannot resist or stop, for the headlong fall that cannot be recalled cuts off all second thoughts and regret, and they cannot help arriving where they were free not to go. In the same way the mind, if it has flung itself into anger, love, and the other passions, is not allowed to check its onrush; its own weight and the downhill nature of vice must carry it off and drive it to the bottom.

8 The best course is to reject the first provocation to anger at once, to fight its very seeds, and to take care not to fall into anger. For if it begins to carry us off course, the way back to safety is hard, since there is no room for reason once passion has been let in and given some rights by our own will: from then on it will do as much as it likes, not as much as you allow. The enemy, I say, must

be held off at the very frontier; for once he has entered and burst through the gates, he takes no terms from his captives. The mind is not set apart, watching the passions from outside so as to keep them from going further than they should; it is itself changed into the passion, and so it cannot call back that useful and saving strength once it has been betrayed and weakened. As I said, these two do not have separate and distinct seats; passion and reason are only the mind changing for the better or for the worse. How, then, will reason rise again once vices have seized and crushed it, once it has given way to anger? Or how will it free itself from a confusion in which the admixture of the worse has prevailed? "But some people," someone says, "control themselves in anger." Do they, then, do nothing of what anger dictates, or something? If they do nothing, it is clear that anger is not needed for action, though you called it in as if it had something stronger than reason. Finally, I ask: is it stronger than reason or weaker? If stronger, how will reason be able to impose a limit on it, when only weaker things usually obey? If it is weaker, reason is enough by itself to get things done without it and has no need of help from something weaker. "But some angry men keep steady and control themselves." When? When the anger is already fading and leaving of its own accord, not when it is at the boil; then it is the stronger. "Well then? Do they not sometimes, even in anger, let those they hate go unharmed and untouched, and refrain from harming them?" They do. When? When one passion has beaten back another, and either fear or greed has won its point. Then the mind has grown quiet not by the kindness of reason but by a faithless and evil truce among the passions.

9 Then again, anger has nothing useful in it and does not sharpen the mind for war; for virtue is sufficient to itself and never needs the help of vice. Whenever it needs to charge, it does not get angry; it rises up, and it is roused or relaxed as far as it judges

necessary, just as missiles shot from catapults are in the control of the man who shoots them, as to how far they are hurled. "Anger," says Aristotle, "is necessary, and nothing can be taken by storm without it, unless it fills the mind and kindles the spirit; but it must be used not as a commander but as a soldier." This is false. For if it listens to reason and follows where it is led, it is no longer anger, whose very mark is defiance; but if it resists and does not grow quiet when ordered, but is carried on by its own will and fierceness, it is as useless a servant of the mind as a soldier who ignores the signal to retreat. So if it lets a limit be set on it, it must be called by another name; it has stopped being anger, which I understand to be unbridled and untamed. If it does not, it is deadly and not to be counted among our aids. So either it is not anger or it is useless. For if someone exacts punishment not out of greed for punishment itself but because it is right, he is not to be counted among the angry. The useful soldier will be the one who knows how to obey orders; the passions make as bad servants as they make leaders.

10 Reason, therefore, will never take into its service reckless and violent impulses over which it would have no authority, and which it could never hold down except by setting against them others equal and like them, fear against anger, anger against sloth, greed against fear. Far from virtue be this evil, that reason should ever take refuge in vices! A mind like that cannot find a trustworthy rest; it must be shaken and tossed about if it relies on its own evils for its safety, if it cannot be brave unless it is angry, hard-working unless it craves, quiet unless it fears: it must live under a tyranny, once it has passed into slavery to some passion. Are we not ashamed to lower the virtues into clientship to the vices? Then again, reason ceases to have any power if it can do nothing without passion, and it begins to be equal and like it. For what is the difference, if passion without reason is as rash a thing as reason

without passion is ineffective? The two are equal when one cannot exist without the other. But who could bear to make passion the equal of reason? "So passion is useful," someone says, "if it is moderate." No: if it is useful by nature. But if it will not submit to command and to reason, all it will gain by moderation is that the less of it there is, the less harm it will do; so a moderate passion is nothing but a moderate evil.

11 "But against enemies," someone says, "anger is necessary." Nowhere less: there the onrush must not be let loose but kept in check and obedient. What else is it that breaks the barbarians, so much sturdier of body, so much more enduring of hardship, but anger, which is its own worst enemy? Gladiators too are protected by skill and laid bare by anger. Then, what need is there for anger, when reason achieves the same thing? Do you think the hunter is angry with the beasts? Yet he meets them as they come and pursues them as they flee, and reason does all this without anger. What wiped out so many thousands of Cimbri and Teutones pouring over the Alps,[6] so completely that the news of so great a disaster reached their people not by a messenger but by rumor, except that they had anger in place of courage? Anger has sometimes driven forward and flattened whatever stood in its way, but more often it destroys itself. What is more spirited than the Germans? What fiercer in a charge? What more eager for arms, among which they are born and bred, their one concern while they neglect everything else? What more hardened to every kind of endurance, since for the most part they have provided themselves with no clothing for their bodies, no shelter against the endless harshness of their climate? Yet Spaniards and Gauls and the men of Asia and Syria, who are soft in war, cut them down before a legion is even in sight, and nothing makes them such easy prey as their irascibility. Come, then: give those bodies, those minds that know nothing of luxuries, extravagance, and wealth, give them reason, give them

discipline. To say no more, we shall certainly have to go back to the old Roman ways. By what else did Fabius[7] restore the shattered strength of the empire, except that he knew how to delay, to drag things out, to wait, all of which angry men do not know how to do? The empire, which then stood on the brink, would have perished if Fabius had dared as much as anger urged. He took the fortune of the state into his counsel, and having weighed its strength, of which nothing more could now be lost without losing everything, he set aside resentment and revenge, intent only on advantage and opportunity; he conquered anger before he conquered Hannibal. What of Scipio? Did he not leave Hannibal and the Carthaginian army and everything he had cause to be angry with, and carry the war into Africa, so slow about it that he gave the spiteful grounds to call him self-indulgent and lazy? What of the other Scipio?[8] Did he not sit a long, long time before Numantia, and bear calmly this grief, his own and the state's, that Numantia took longer to conquer than Carthage? By walling in and enclosing the enemy he drove them to fall by their own swords. So anger is not useful even in battles or wars; it is prone to rashness, and while it wants to bring danger on others, it does not guard against danger itself. The surest courage is the kind that has looked around long and carefully, has kept itself in hand, and has moved forward slowly and by design.

12 "Well then?" someone says. "Will the good man not be angry if he sees his father murdered, his mother carried off?" He will not be angry; he will avenge them, he will protect them. Why are you afraid that devotion, even without anger, will be too weak a spur for him? Or say in the same way: "Well then? When the good man sees his father or his son under the surgeon's knife, will he not weep and faint?" That is what we see happen to women whenever the slightest hint of danger strikes them. The good man will carry out his duties undisturbed and unafraid; and he will do what is

worthy of a good man in such a way as to do nothing unworthy of a man. My father is being murdered: I will defend him. He has been murdered: I will avenge him, because it is right, not because it hurts. “Good men are angry at wrongs done to their own.” When you say this, Theophrastus,[9] you are trying to make braver precepts unpopular, and you turn from the judge to the crowd of bystanders. Because everyone gets angry when such a thing happens to his own people, you think men will judge that what they do ought to be done; for as a rule everyone judges a passion just if he recognizes it in himself. But they do the same if the hot water is not served properly, if a glass gets broken, if a shoe is splashed with mud. It is not devotion that stirs that anger but weakness, as with children, who will cry as much over losing their parents as over losing their nuts. To be angry on behalf of one’s own is the mark not of a devoted mind but of a weak one. What is fine and worthy is to come forward as defender of parents, children, friends, and fellow citizens, led by duty itself, willing, judging, foreseeing, not driven and raving. For no passion is more eager for revenge than anger, and for that very reason it is unfit to take it: headlong and senseless, like almost every desire, it gets in its own way toward the very thing it hurries to. And so it has never been good either in peace or in war; it makes peace like war, and in arms it forgets that Mars favors neither side, and it falls into another’s power while it is not in its own.

Then again, vices are not to be taken into use because they have sometimes achieved something. Fevers too relieve certain kinds of illness, yet it is still better to be wholly free of them: it is a loathsome kind of remedy to owe one’s health to disease. In the same way, even if anger has sometimes helped unexpectedly, as poison, a fall, or a shipwreck has, it should not on that account be judged healthy; for deadly things have often saved lives.

13 Then again, with things worth having, the greater they are, the better and more desirable. If justice is a good, no one will say it will be better if something is taken away from it; if courage is a good, no one will want any part of it reduced. So anger too would be the better the greater it is; for who would refuse an increase of any good? But it is useless for anger to grow; therefore it is useless for it to exist. Nothing is a good that becomes an evil by increase.

"Anger is useful," someone says, "because it makes men readier to fight." So does drunkenness: it makes men brash and bold, and many have been better with the sword for being less than sober. By that reasoning you may as well say that delirium and madness are necessary for strength, because frenzy often makes men stronger. Well? Has not fear sometimes worked the other way and made a man bold, and has not the fear of death roused even the most sluggish to battle? But anger, drunkenness, fear, and the like are foul and fleeting stimulants; they do not equip virtue, which needs nothing from vices, but they lift a little a mind that is otherwise slow and cowardly. No one becomes braver by getting angry except the man who would not have been brave without anger; so anger comes not to help virtue but to take its place. And what of this: if anger were a good, would it not attend the most perfect men? Yet the most irascible are infants, old men, and the sick, and everything weak is by nature querulous.

14 "It cannot be," says Theophrastus, "that the good man is not angry with the wicked." By that reasoning, the better a man is, the more irascible he will be. See whether it is not the opposite: that he will be calmer, freer of passions, and a man who hates no one. What reason has he to hate those who do wrong, when it is error that drives them into such offenses? It is not for a prudent man to hate those who err; otherwise he will hate himself. Let him think how many things he does against good conduct, how many of his own acts need pardon: he will soon be angry with himself as well.

A fair judge does not pass one sentence on his own case and another on someone else's. No one, I say, will be found who can acquit himself, and everyone who calls himself innocent is looking to the witness, not to his conscience. How much more humane to show a mild and fatherly spirit to those who do wrong, and not to hunt them down but to call them back! A man who has lost his way and is wandering through the fields is better led to the right road than driven off.

15 So the man who does wrong must be corrected, by warning and by force, gently and harshly, and made better for himself as well as for others, not without correction, but without anger; for who is angry with the patient he is healing? "But they cannot be corrected, and there is nothing in them that is mild or capable of good hope." Then let them be removed from the society of mortals, since they will make worse whatever they touch, and let them stop being wicked in the only way they can; but let this be done without hatred. For what reason is there for me to hate a man whom I help most at the very moment I rescue him from himself? Does anyone hate his own limbs when he cuts them off? That is not anger but a pitiful cure. We put down mad dogs; we kill a fierce and untamable ox; we take the knife to sick sheep so that they do not infect the flock; we destroy monstrous births; we even drown children if they are born weak and deformed; and it is not anger but reason to separate the useless from the sound. Nothing suits a man who punishes less than anger, since punishment does more good for reform when it is imposed with judgment. That is why Socrates said to a slave, "I would beat you if I were not angry." He put off rebuking the slave to a saner moment; at that moment he rebuked himself. Whose passion, then, will ever be under control, when Socrates did not dare trust himself to anger?

16 So there is no need for an angry punisher to restrain those who err and those who commit crimes; for since anger is an

offense of the mind, it is not right for one who does wrong to correct wrongs. “Well then? Shall I not be angry with a robber? Well then? Shall I not be angry with a poisoner?” No; I am not angry with myself when I have my blood let. I apply every kind of punishment as a remedy. “You are still in the first stage of error, and your slips are not serious but frequent: a rebuke, first in private, then in public, will try to correct you. You have already gone too far to be cured by words: disgrace will hold you in check. You need something stronger, something branded on you that you will feel: you will be sent into exile, to unknown places. Your wickedness, hardened by now, calls for harsher remedies: public chains and prison will be applied. Your mind is incurable, weaving crime upon crime; you are no longer driven by causes, which will never be lacking to a wicked man, but sinning is reason enough for you to sin. You have drunk wickedness down and worked it so deep into your vitals that it cannot leave except with them. Wretched man, you have long been looking for a way to die: we shall do you a service. We shall take from you this madness with which you torment others and are tormented, and when you have rolled through punishments, your own and others’, we shall pay you at once the one good left to you: death.” Why should I be angry with a man when I am helping him most? Sometimes the best kind of pity is to kill. If I had entered an army hospital or a rich man’s house, I would not have given the same orders to everyone, when they were sick with different illnesses. I see a variety of vices in so many minds, and I have been called in to heal the state: let the remedy be sought for each man’s disease. Let shame cure this one, travel that one, pain this one, poverty that one, the sword this one. And so, if I must put on my magistrate’s robe reversed and summon the assembly with the trumpet,[10] I shall go up to the tribunal not raging or hostile but with the face of the law; I shall pronounce those solemn words in a voice gentle and grave rather than furious, and I shall order the

law to take its course, not angry but severe. And when I command a guilty man's head to be cut off, and when I sew parricides into the sack, and when I send a man to military execution, and when I set a traitor or public enemy on the Tarpeian Rock, I shall be without anger, with the same face and the same mind with which I strike at snakes and venomous creatures. "Irascibility is needed to punish." What? Do you think the law is angry with people it does not know, has not seen, and hopes will never exist? We must take on the mind of the law, which does not get angry but decrees. For if it is fitting for a good man to be angry at evil deeds, it will also be fitting for him to envy the prosperity of evil men. For what is more outrageous than that some men flourish and abuse the indulgence of fortune, men for whom no fortune bad enough could be found? But he will look on their advantages without envy, just as he looks on their crimes without anger; a good judge condemns what deserves blame, but he does not hate. "Well then? When the wise man has something of this kind on his hands, will his mind not be touched, and will he not be more stirred than usual?" I admit it: he will feel a slight and faint movement; for, as Zeno[11] says, even in the wise man's mind, after the wound has healed, a scar remains. So he will feel certain hints and shadows of the passions, but he will be free of the passions themselves.

17 Aristotle says that certain passions, if one uses them well, serve as weapons. That would be true if, like the tools of war, they could be taken up and laid down as the man who arms himself pleases. These weapons that Aristotle gives to virtue fight on their own; they do not wait for a hand; they possess, they are not possessed. We need no other instruments; Nature has equipped us well enough with reason. She gave us this weapon, firm, lasting, obedient, not two-edged, not one that could be turned back on its owner. Reason by itself is enough not only for planning but for action. What could be more foolish than for reason to seek protec-

tion from irascibility, the stable from the unstable, the faithful from the faithless, the sound from the sick? And what of this: even for action, the one field where the help of irascibility seems necessary, reason is far stronger on its own? Once it has judged that something must be done, it persists in it; it will find nothing better than itself to change into, and so it stands by what it has once decided. Anger has often been driven back by pity; for it has no solid strength but only an empty swelling, and its beginnings are violent, just like the winds that rise from the land and, born of rivers and marshes, are violent but do not last. It starts with a great rush, then fails before its time, worn out, and though it had been turning over nothing but cruelty and new kinds of punishment, when the time comes to punish it is already broken and mild. Passion falls quickly; reason is even. Besides, even where anger has persisted, if there are several who deserve to die, it sometimes stops killing after the blood of two or three. Its first blows are sharp: so snakes' venom does harm when they first creep out of their holes, but their fangs are harmless once frequent biting has drained them. So those who committed equal crimes do not suffer equally, and often the one who did less suffers more, because he was thrown to a fresher anger. And it is uneven in everything: now it runs further than it should, now it stops short of what is due. For it indulges itself, judges by whim, refuses to listen, leaves no room for a defense, holds onto what it has seized, and will not let its judgment be taken from it, even if that judgment is wrong.

18 Reason gives each side time, then asks for an adjournment for itself as well, to have room to sift out the truth: anger is in a hurry. Reason wants to judge what is fair: anger wants what it has judged to seem fair. Reason looks at nothing but the matter in question: anger is stirred by empty things hovering outside the case. A face too much at ease, a voice too clear, speech too free,

dress too elegant, too ambitious a show of supporters, popularity with the crowd: all these exasperate it. Often from hatred of the advocate it condemns the defendant; even if the truth is thrust before its eyes, it loves and defends its error; it does not want to be proved wrong, and once it has begun badly it thinks persisting more honorable than repenting.

Gnaeus Piso,[12] within our memory, was a man free of many vices, but perverse, and one who took rigidity for constancy. In anger he had ordered a soldier led off to execution for returning from leave without the comrade he had gone with, as though he had killed the man he could not produce; and when the soldier asked for a little time to search for him, Piso refused. The condemned man was led outside the rampart and was already stretching out his neck when suddenly the comrade who was thought to have been killed appeared. Then the centurion in charge of the execution ordered the guardsman to sheathe his sword and led the condemned man back to Piso, meaning to give Piso back his innocence; for fortune had given the soldier back his. The two comrades were brought in with a huge crowd around them, embracing each other, and the whole camp rejoicing. Piso mounted the tribunal in a rage and ordered both of them executed, both the soldier who had not killed and the one who had not died. What could be more outrageous? Because one had been shown innocent, two were to die. Piso added a third as well: he ordered the centurion himself, who had brought the condemned man back, to be executed. Three men were set in that same place to die because of one man's innocence. Oh, how clever irascibility is at inventing reasons for its frenzy! "You," he said, "I order executed because you have been condemned; you, because you were the cause of your comrade's condemnation; you, because when ordered to kill you did not obey your general." He devised a way to make three crimes because he had found none.

19 Irascibility, I say, has this evil in it: it refuses to be governed. It is angry with the truth itself if the truth has come to light against its wishes; with shouting and uproar and the tossing of the whole body, it pursues those it has marked out, heaping on insults and curses. Reason does not do this. But if there is need, silent and quiet, it wipes out whole houses root and branch and destroys families dangerous to the state along with their wives and children; it tears down their very houses and levels them to the ground and roots out names hostile to freedom. All this it does without gnashing its teeth or shaking its head or doing anything unbecoming a judge, whose face should be at its calmest and most composed when he is pronouncing a heavy sentence. "What need is there," says Hieronymus,[13] "when you want to strike someone, to bite your own lips first?" What if he had seen a proconsul leap down from the tribunal, snatch the fasces[,14] from the lictor, and tear his own clothes because other men's clothes were not being torn off fast enough? What need is there to overturn the table? To smash the cups? To dash oneself against pillars? To tear out one's hair, beat one's thigh and breast? How great do you think an anger is that turns back on itself because it cannot burst out on another as fast as it wants? So such men are held back by those nearest them and begged to make their peace with themselves.

The man who, free of anger, imposes on each the punishment he deserves does none of this. He often lets go a man whose offense he has caught: if remorse for the deed holds out good hope, if he sees that the wickedness does not come from deep within but, as they say, clings to the surface of the mind, he will grant an impunity that will harm neither those who receive it nor those who give it. Sometimes he will check great crimes more lightly than lesser ones, if the great were committed by a slip, not out of cruelty, while the lesser have a hidden, covert, and long-practiced cunning in them; the same offense committed by two

men he will not visit with the same penalty, if one committed it through carelessness and the other took pains to do harm. In every punishment he will always keep this in mind: one kind is applied to reform the wicked, the other to remove them. In both cases he will look not to the past but to the future (for, as Plato says, no prudent man punishes because a wrong has been done, but so that none will be done;[15] the past cannot be called back, the future can be prevented), and those whom he wants to make examples of wickedness that ends badly he will execute in public, not only so that they themselves die, but so that by dying they deter others. You see how a man who must weigh and judge all this ought to come free of every disturbance to a matter that calls for the greatest care, the power of life and death. The sword is ill entrusted to an angry man.

20 Nor should we think that anger contributes anything to greatness of mind. That is not greatness; it is swelling. In bodies bloated with a mass of diseased fluid, the disease is not growth but a deadly excess. All those whom a crazed mind lifts above human thoughts believe that they breathe something lofty and sublime; but there is nothing solid underneath, and what has grown up without foundations is ready to fall. Anger has nothing to stand on; it does not arise from anything firm and lasting, but is windy and empty, and it is as far from greatness of mind as rashness is from courage, insolence from confidence, gloom from austerity, cruelty from severity. There is a great difference, I say, between a lofty mind and a proud one. Irascibility attempts nothing grand or noble; on the contrary, it seems to me the mark of a sluggish and unhappy mind, aware of its own weakness, to smart often, like ulcerated and sick bodies that groan at the lightest touch. So anger is a vice above all of women and children. “But it befalls men too.” Yes, for men too have the characters of children and women. “Well then? Are there not some words spoken by angry men that

seem to come from a great mind?" Yes, to those who do not know what true greatness is: such as that dreadful and abominable line, "Let them hate, so long as they fear."[16] You can tell it was written in Sulla's age. I do not know which was worse to wish on himself, to be hated or to be feared. "Let them hate." It occurs to him that they will curse him, plot against him, crush him. What did he add? May the gods damn him! What a hateful remedy he found! "Let them hate": and then what? "So long as they obey"? No. "So long as they approve"? No. Then what? "So long as they fear." On those terms I would not want even to be loved. Do you think this was said with a great spirit? You are wrong; that is not greatness but monstrousness. There is no reason to trust the words of angry men: their noise is loud and threatening, but within, the mind is utterly fearful. Nor need you think it true, what we read in that most eloquent man Titus Livy: "a man of great rather than good character."[17] The two cannot be separated: either it will be good as well, or it will not be great either, because I understand greatness of mind to be unshaken, solid within, even and firm from the bottom up, such as cannot exist in evil characters. They may be terrible and turbulent and destructive; but greatness, whose foundation and strength is goodness, they will not have. Yet by their talk, their efforts, and all their outward show they will win belief in their greatness; they will say something you might think came from a great mind, like Gaius Caesar.[18] Angry at the sky because its thunder drowned out the pantomime dancers, whom he imitated more eagerly than he watched them, and because his revels were being frightened by thunderbolts (and very badly aimed ones at that), he challenged Jupiter to a fight, and a fight with no quarter, shouting that line of Homer:

"Lift me, or I will lift you."[19]

What madness! He thought either that he could not be harmed even by Jupiter or that he could harm even Jupiter. I believe these words of his did no small part in rousing the minds of the conspirators; for it seemed the limit of endurance to put up with a man who would not put up with Jupiter.

21 There is nothing great, then, nothing noble in anger, not even when it seems violent and contemptuous of gods and men. Or if anyone thinks anger produces a great mind, let him think the same of luxury: it wants to rest on ivory, be dressed in purple, be roofed with gold, move lands, shut in seas, send rivers over cliffs, hang groves in the air. Let him think avarice too the mark of a great mind: it broods over heaps of gold and silver, farms estates the size of provinces, and has wider estates under each one of its bailiffs than consuls once drew by lot. Let him think lust the mark of a great mind: it swims across straits, castrates troops of boys, walks under a husband's sword in contempt of death. Let him think ambition the mark of a great mind: it is not content with offices held for a year; if it could, it would fill the calendar with a single name and set up its titles all over the world. All these, no matter how far they go and spread, are narrow, wretched, and low; virtue alone is lofty and exalted, and nothing is great that is not also calm.

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1. Lucius Annaeus Novatus, Seneca's elder brother, later called Gallio after his adoptive father; as proconsul of Achaea he appears in the Acts of the Apostles (18:12–17).

2. A gap in the manuscript. The two passages that follow are quoted from this book by later writers, Martin of Braga (sixth century) and Lactantius (fourth century); the text then resumes in the middle of a sentence.

3. Posidonius of Apamea (c. 135–51 BC), Stoic philosopher who taught at Rhodes.

4. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.545–546, from the plague on Aegina.

5. Plato, *Republic* 1.335d.

6. Germanic peoples who invaded Italy and were destroyed by Gaius Marius at Aquae Sextiae (102 BC) and Vercellae (101 BC).

7. Quintus Fabius Maximus, called Cunctator ("the Delayer"), who wore Hannibal down by refusing battle during the Second Punic War (218–201 BC).

8. The first is Scipio Africanus, who invaded Africa in 204 BC and defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202. The second is Scipio Aemilianus, who destroyed Carthage in 146 BC and took Numantia in Spain in 133 BC after a long siege.

9. Theophrastus (c. 371–287 BC), Aristotle's pupil and successor as head of his school.

10. A magistrate passing a death sentence changed his dress; the exact form of the change is uncertain. The punishments that follow are Roman: parricides were sewn into a leather sack and drowned, and traitors were thrown from the Tarpeian Rock on the Capitol.

11. Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 BC), founder of the Stoic school.

12. Probably Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, consul in 7 BC, who killed himself in AD 20 while on trial for the death of Germanicus.

13. Hieronymus of Rhodes, a Peripatetic philosopher of the third century BC.

14. The bundle of rods, with an ax, carried by lictors before a Roman magistrate as the sign of his power to punish.

15. Plato, *Laws* 11.934a.

16. From the tragedy *Atreus* by Lucius Accius (170–c. 86 BC).

17. The passage is lost, and the man Livy described is not known.

18. The emperor known as Caligula (reigned AD 37–41), killed by conspirators.

19. Homer, *Iliad* 23.724, Ajax's words to Odysseus in their wrestling match.

On Anger, Book Two

1 My first book, Novatus,[1] had the more inviting material; it is easy to run down the slope of the vices. Now we must come to finer points. We are asking whether anger begins from judgment or from impulse, that is, whether it is set in motion of its own accord or, like most of what arises within us, not without our knowing it. Our discussion has to lower itself to these matters so that it can rise to those loftier ones as well. In our bodies too, the bones, sinews, and joints, the framework of the whole and the seat of life, which are anything but pleasing to the eye, are laid out first; then come the parts that give face and appearance all their beauty; after all these, color, which catches the eye most of all, is poured on last, when the body is already complete.

There is no doubt that anger is set in motion by the impression of having been wronged; but we are asking whether it follows straight on the impression itself and runs out without the mind taking part, or whether it is set in motion with the mind's assent. Our view is that anger ventures nothing on its own, but only with the mind's approval. For to form the impression of having been wronged, to crave vengeance for it, and to join the two, judging both that one ought not to have been harmed and that one ought to be avenged, is not the work of an impulse that is stirred up without our will. That impulse is simple; this is compound and contains several parts: the mind has understood something, become indignant, condemned, and now takes revenge. These

things cannot happen unless the mind has given its assent to what struck it.

2 "What is the point," you ask, "of this question?" So that we may know what anger is; for if it arises against our will, it will never give way to reason. All the movements that happen without our will are unconquerable and unavoidable, like the shiver when we are splashed with cold water, or the recoil at certain touches; at bad news the hair stands on end, a blush spreads at foul language, and dizziness follows when we look down a sheer drop. Since none of these is in our power, no reasoning can persuade them not to happen. Anger is put to flight by precepts; for it is a voluntary vice of the mind, not one of those things that happen through some condition of the human lot and so befall even the wisest. Among these we must also place that first jolt of the mind that moves us after the opinion that we have been wronged. This creeps in even amid the entertainments of the stage and the reading of ancient history. We often seem to be angry with Clodius as he drives Cicero out, and with Antony as he kills him. Who is not stirred against the arms of Marius, against Sulla's proscription?[2] Who is not hostile to Theodotus and Achillas, and to the boy himself, who dared a crime beyond his years?[3] Sometimes singing and a quick rhythm excite us, and that martial sound of trumpets; a savage painting stirs the mind, and so does the grim sight of punishments, even the most just. That is why we smile at those who smile, why a crowd of mourners saddens us, why we grow heated at other people's contests. These are not anger, any more than it is sorrow that knits the brow at the sight of a shipwreck on the stage, any more than it is fear that runs through readers' minds when Hannibal after Cannae lays siege to the walls. All these are movements of minds that do not want to be moved, not passions but the preludes to passions. So too the trumpet rouses the ears of a military man now wearing the toga in the midst of peace, and the

clash of arms pricks up the ears of army horses. They say that when Xenophantus[4] was singing, Alexander reached for his weapons.

3 None of the things that strike the mind by chance should be called passions: the mind, so to speak, undergoes them rather than causes them. So passion does not consist in being moved by the impressions of things that present themselves, but in giving oneself up to them and following up this chance movement. If anyone thinks that pallor, falling tears, the stirring of the sexual fluid, a deep sigh, eyes suddenly sharper, or anything like these is evidence of passion and a sign of the mind, he is mistaken and does not understand that these are jolts of the body. So the bravest man often turns pale while he is putting on his armor; when the signal for battle is given, the knees of the fiercest soldier tremble a little; the heart of a great general leaps before the lines crash together; and the most eloquent orator goes stiff to his fingertips as he composes himself to speak. Anger must not merely be moved; it must break out, for it is an impulse. But there is never an impulse without the intellect's assent, since it is impossible for revenge and punishment to be at issue without the mind's knowledge. Someone thought himself wronged, wanted revenge, and at once settled down when some consideration talked him out of it: this I do not call anger, but a movement of the mind obedient to reason. Anger is what leaps over reason and carries it off. So that first agitation of the mind which the impression of a wrong has struck into it is no more anger than the impression of a wrong itself is. The impulse that follows, which has not only received the impression of a wrong but approved it, is anger: the rousing of a mind that advances toward revenge by will and judgment. There is never any doubt that fear involves flight, and anger an onrush; consider, then, whether you think anything can be either sought or shunned without the intellect's assent.

4 And so that you may know how passions begin, grow, and run wild: the first movement is involuntary, a sort of preparation for passion and a kind of threat. The second comes with the will, but a will that is not stubborn, holding that I ought to be avenged since I have been wronged, or that this man ought to be punished since he has committed a crime. The third movement is already out of control: it wants revenge not if it is right but at all costs; it has overpowered reason. That first jolt of the mind we cannot escape by reason, any more than those things we said happen to the body: we cannot keep someone else's yawn from tempting us to yawn, or our eyes from shutting when fingers are suddenly thrust at them. These reason cannot conquer; habit and constant watchfulness may perhaps weaken them. The second movement, which is born of judgment, is removed by judgment.

5 We must still ask whether those who rage indiscriminately and delight in human blood are angry when they kill people from whom they have received no wrong and do not even think they have, men like Apollodorus or Phalaris.[5] This is not anger; it is fierceness. It does not do harm because it has received a wrong; it is ready even to receive a wrong so long as it can do harm, and it seeks floggings and mutilations not for revenge but for pleasure. What, then? This evil has its origin in anger. When anger, through frequent exercise and glut, has come to forget clemency and has cast every human compact out of the mind, it passes at last into cruelty. So these men laugh and rejoice and take great pleasure, and their faces are very far from those of angry men; they are savage at their leisure. They say that Hannibal, when he saw a ditch full of human blood, said, "Oh, what a beautiful sight!" How much more beautiful it would have seemed to him if it had filled a river or a lake! What wonder if this sight above all delights you, born to blood and set among slaughter from infancy? Fortune will follow you, favoring your cruelty for twenty years, and will give your eyes

the sight they love everywhere; you will see it at Trasimene and at Cannae, and last of all around your own Carthage. Volesus,[6] not long ago proconsul of Asia under the deified Augustus, after beheading three hundred men in one day, walked among the corpses with a proud face, as though he had done something magnificent and worth seeing, and cried out in Greek, "Oh, what a kingly deed!" What would this man have done as a king? This was not anger but a greater evil, and an incurable one.

6 "Virtue," someone says, "just as it is well disposed toward honorable things, ought to be angry with shameful ones." What if he said that virtue ought to be both low and great? Yet that is what he is saying when he wants it raised and lowered at once, since gladness at a right action is bright and splendid, while anger at another's wrongdoing is mean and belongs to a narrow heart. Virtue will never let itself imitate vices while it is checking them; it regards anger itself as something to be punished, for anger is no better, and often even worse, than the offenses it is angry with. To rejoice and be glad is proper and natural to virtue; to be angry is no more in keeping with its dignity than to grieve. Yet sorrow is the companion of irascibility, and all anger comes round to sorrow, either after repentance or after a rebuff. And if it is the wise man's part to be angry with wrongdoing, he will be angrier with greater wrongs, and he will be angry often: it follows that the wise man will be not only angry but irascible. Yet if we believe that neither great nor frequent anger has a place in the wise man's mind, why not free him from this passion altogether? For there can be no limit if he must be angry in proportion to each man's deed: either he will be unfair, if he is equally angry at unequal offenses, or he will be the most irascible of men, if he flares up as often as crimes deserve anger.

7 And what is more unworthy than that the wise man's passion should hang on other people's wickedness? Will the great Socrates

no longer be able to bring home the same face he took out of the house? Yet if the wise man must be angry at shameful deeds and be stirred and saddened by crimes, nothing is more wretched than the wise man: his whole life will pass in irascibility and grief. For what moment will there be when he does not see things to condemn? Every time he leaves his house he will have to walk among criminals, misers, spendthrifts, the shameless, and men who prosper because of all this; nowhere will his eyes turn without finding something to be indignant at. He will give out if he demands anger of himself as often as there is cause. These thousands hurrying to the forum at first light: how shameful their lawsuits are, and how much more shameful their advocates! One contests his father's will, when he would have done better not to deserve what it says of him; another goes to law against his mother; another comes forward to inform on a crime of which he himself is more plainly guilty; a judge is chosen to condemn what he himself has done; and the crowd of bystanders, won over by an advocate's fine voice, stands up for a bad cause.

8 Why go through them one by one? When you see the forum packed with people, the voting enclosures crammed with a crowd from every quarter, and that Circus where the people show themselves in their greatest numbers, know this: there are as many vices there as there are people. Among those you see in togas there is no peace. One is drawn into ruining another for a small gain; no one makes a profit except from another's loss; they hate the fortunate and despise the unfortunate; they resent those above them and weigh on those below; they are goaded by conflicting desires; they would have everything ruined for a little pleasure or plunder. Their life is just like that of a gladiatorial school, where men live with the same people they fight. It is a gathering of wild beasts, except that beasts are gentle among themselves and do not bite their own kind, while these men glut themselves on

tearing one another to pieces. In this alone they differ from dumb animals: animals grow tame toward those who feed them, while these men's madness devours the very people who nourished it.

9 The wise man will never stop being angry once he has begun. Everything is full of crimes and vices; more is committed than can be cured by restraint; men compete in a vast contest of wickedness. Every day the desire to sin is greater and shame is less; all regard for what is better and fairer has been driven out, and lust hurls itself wherever it pleases. Crimes are no longer furtive: they pass before our eyes, and wickedness has been let loose in public and has grown so strong in every heart that innocence is not rare but nonexistent. Is it only one man or a few who have broken the law? From every side, as if at a signal, they have risen up to throw right and wrong together:

> "Guest is not safe from host,
> nor father-in-law from son-in-law; even between brothers love is rare;
> the husband plots his wife's death, she plots her husband's;
> dreadful stepmothers mix the deadly aconite;
> the son looks into his father's years before the day is due."[7]

And how small a part of the crimes is that! The poet did not describe camps set against each other by the same people, parents and children sworn to opposite sides, a citizen's hand putting the torch to his own country, squadrons of hostile cavalry flying about to hunt out the hiding places of the proscribed, springs fouled with poison, plague made by hand, the trench dug in front of besieged parents, the crowded prisons, the fires burning whole cities to the ground, the deadly tyrannies, the secret plots to seize kingdoms and ruin the state, and, counted as glory, deeds that are crimes only so long as they can be put down: rapes and debauch-

ery, and not even the mouth spared from lust. Add now the public perjuries of nations, broken treaties, whatever did not resist carried off as plunder by the stronger, the swindles, thefts, frauds, and denials of debt for which three forums are not enough.[8] If you want the wise man to be as angry as the outrageousness of crimes demands, he will not have to be angry; he will have to go mad.

10 You will do better to reflect that we must not be angry with errors. What if someone were angry with people who stumble in the dark? What if with the deaf, for not hearing orders? What if with children, because they forget their duties and look to games and the silly jokes of their playmates? What if you chose to be angry with those who are sick, growing old, worn out? Among the other drawbacks of mortality there is this too, the darkness of our minds, and not only the necessity of erring but the love of error. So as not to be angry with individuals, you must forgive everyone; you must grant the human race pardon. If you are angry with young men and old men because they do wrong, be angry with infants: they are going to do wrong. Does anyone get angry with children, whose age cannot yet tell one thing from another? To be a human being is a greater and juster excuse than to be a child. On these terms we were born: animals liable to no fewer diseases of mind than of body, not dull or slow, but making bad use of our sharpness, each an example of vice to the other. Whoever follows those who set out badly before him, why should he not have an excuse, since he went astray on the public road? A general's severity is drawn against individuals, but pardon is necessary when the whole army has deserted. What takes away the wise man's anger? The crowd of wrongdoers. He understands how unfair and how dangerous it is to be angry with a public vice.

Every time Heraclitus[9] went out and saw around him so many people living badly, or rather dying badly, he wept; he pitied all those who met him glad and prosperous. His spirit was gentle but

too weak: he himself was among those who should be wept for. Democritus, on the other hand, they say, was never in public without laughing, so far was anything done in earnest from seeming serious to him. Where is there room for anger here? Everything calls for either laughter or tears.

The wise man will not be angry with wrongdoers. Why? Because he knows that no one is born wise but becomes so; he knows that in every age very few turn out wise, because he has looked closely at the condition of human life; and no sane man is angry with nature. What if he chose to be surprised that fruit does not hang from the bushes in the woods? What if he were surprised that thickets and briars are not full of some useful crop? No one is angry where nature excuses the flaw. So the wise man, calm and fair toward errors, not the enemy but the corrector of wrongdoers, goes out every day with this thought: "Many will meet me who are given to wine, many lustful, many ungrateful, many greedy, many driven by the furies of ambition." He will look on all of them as kindly as a doctor looks on his patients. Is the man whose ship has sprung its seams and is taking in water everywhere angry with the sailors and with the ship itself? No, he runs to help: he keeps out some of the water and bails out the rest, stops up the holes he can see, and fights with constant work the hidden ones that let the bilge in secretly; and he does not stop because as much comes in as has been bailed out. Against evils that are constant and prolific we need patient help, not to make them stop, but to keep them from winning.

11 "Anger is useful," someone says, "because it escapes contempt, because it frightens the wicked." First, if anger is as strong as its threats, it is hated for the very reason that it is terrifying; and it is more dangerous to be feared than to be despised. If it is without strength, it is all the more exposed to contempt and does not escape ridicule; for what is more flat than irascibility raging to

no purpose? Second, some things are not better for being more terrifying, and I would not want this said to the wise man: "The wild beast's weapon is the wise man's weapon too: being feared." Well? Are fever, gout, and a bad ulcer not feared? Is there therefore anything good in them? On the contrary, they are all despised and foul and shameful, and feared for that very reason. So too anger is ugly in itself and not at all to be dreaded, yet most people fear it, as children fear an ugly mask. And what of this: fear always rebounds on those who cause it, and no one is feared who is himself free of fear? Here you may recall that line of Laberius which, spoken in the theater in the middle of the civil war, turned the whole people toward it just as if it had voiced the public feeling:

"The man whom many fear must fear many."[10]

Nature has so arranged it that whatever is great through others' fear is not free of its own. How the hearts of lions quail at the slightest sounds! A shadow, a voice, an unfamiliar smell throw the fiercest beasts into a panic: whatever terrifies, trembles. So there is no reason for any wise man to want to be feared, or to think anger something great because it inspires dread, since even the most contemptible things are feared, like poisons, plague-infected bones, and bites. Nor is it surprising, when a line strung with feathers can hold in the greatest herds of wild beasts and drive them into traps, and is called a "scare" (*formido*) from the very feeling it causes; for to empty creatures empty things are frightening. The motion of a chariot and the sight of turning wheels have driven lions back into their cages; the squeal of a pig terrifies elephants. So anger is feared in the way a shadow is feared by children, a red feather by wild beasts. It has nothing firm or strong in itself, but it moves light minds.

12 "Wickedness," someone says, "must be removed from the nature of things if you want to remove anger; and neither can be done." First, a man can keep from being cold even though it is win-

ter, and from being hot even though it is the summer months: either the advantage of his place protects him against the harsh season, or his bodily endurance has overcome the feeling of both. Second, turn that around: you must remove virtue from the mind before you let irascibility in, since vices do not keep company with virtues, and no one can be at the same time angry and a good man any more than he can be sick and well. "Not all anger can be removed from the mind," he says, "and human nature does not allow it." Yet nothing is so hard and steep that the human mind cannot conquer it and constant practice cannot make it familiar, and no passions are so wild and so much their own masters that discipline cannot tame them. Whatever the mind has commanded itself, it has achieved. Some have managed never to laugh; some have forbidden their bodies wine, others sex, some all liquids; another, content with little sleep, stretches out an untiring wakefulness. Men have learned to run along the thinnest ropes, and up them too, to carry huge loads scarcely bearable by human strength, to dive to immense depths and endure the sea without any chance to take a breath. There are a thousand other things in which persistence has surmounted every obstacle and shown that nothing is difficult once the mind has ordered itself to endure it. For the men I have just mentioned there was either no reward for such persistent effort or none worth having (for what splendid thing does the man achieve who has practiced walking on stretched ropes, putting his neck under a huge load, keeping his eyes from closing in sleep, reaching the bottom of the sea?), and yet their labor reached the end of the task for no great pay. Shall we not call on endurance, we for whom so great a prize waits, the unshaken tranquility of a fortunate mind? What a thing it is to escape the greatest evil, anger, and with it rage, savagery, cruelty, frenzy, and the other passions that keep it company!

13 There is no reason for us to look for a defense and an excuse for license by saying that anger is either useful or unavoidable; for what vice, after all, has ever lacked an advocate? There is no reason to say that it cannot be cut out. The ills we suffer from are curable, and Nature herself, who made us for what is right, helps us if we want to be set right. Nor is the road to the virtues steep and rough, as some have thought: they are reached on level ground. I am not coming to you with an empty promise. The road to the happy life is easy: only set out under good auspices, with the gods themselves helping. It is much harder to do what you are doing now. What has more leisure than a quiet mind, what more toil than anger? What is more relaxed than clemency, what busier than cruelty? Chastity has time to spare; lust is always occupied. In short, all the virtues are easy to keep; vices are maintained at great cost. Anger must be removed (even those who say it should be reduced admit this in part): let it be dismissed entirely; it will do no good. Without it crimes will be removed more easily and more rightly, and the wicked punished and brought over to the better. The wise man will accomplish everything he ought without the help of anything evil, and he will mix in nothing whose limits he must anxiously watch.

14 So irascibility must never be admitted, though sometimes it may be feigned, if the sluggish minds of listeners need to be roused, just as we rouse horses slow to start a race with goads and torches put under them. Sometimes fear must be struck into those on whom reason has no effect; but being angry is no more useful than grieving or being afraid. “Well then? Do causes not arise that provoke anger?” But that is precisely when we must put up our hands against it. Nor is it hard to conquer the mind, when even athletes, who are concerned with the basest part of themselves, still endure blows and pain so as to wear out the strength of the man striking them, and strike not when anger urges but when the

opening comes. They say that Pyrrhus, the greatest trainer for athletic contests, used to instruct those he trained not to get angry; for anger confuses skill and looks only for a way to hurt. So reason often counsels endurance, anger revenge, and we who could have got off with the first ills roll down into greater ones. Some have been flung into exile because they could not calmly bear an insult of a single word; men who would not bear a slight wrong in silence have been crushed by the heaviest ills; and indignant that anything should be taken from their full freedom, they have brought the yoke of slavery on themselves.

15 "So that you may know," someone says, "that anger has something noble in it, you will see that the most irascible nations are free, like the Germans and the Scythians." This happens because characters strong and solid by nature are prone to anger before discipline softens them. For some things grow only in better natures, just as land, even when neglected, puts out strong trees and lush growth, and the forest is tall on fertile soil. So too characters strong by nature bring forth irascibility, and, being fiery and hot, admit nothing thin or slight; but their vigor is incomplete, as in everything that springs up without art from the bounty of nature alone; and unless they are tamed quickly, what was suited to courage grows used to boldness and rashness. Well? Are not milder vices joined to gentler minds, like pity, love, and bashfulness? So I will often show you a good disposition even by its faults; but they are no less vices for being signs of a better nature. Then again, all these nations, free in their fierceness, are like lions and wolves: just as they cannot serve, so they cannot rule; for they have the strength not of a human character but of a wild and untamable one, and no one can rule who cannot also be ruled. So for the most part empires have been held by peoples who enjoy a milder climate. Those who lie toward the cold and the north have "untamed characters," as the poet says,

"and very like their own sky."[11]

16 "The animals considered noblest," someone says, "are those with a great deal of anger in them." He is wrong to take as a model for man creatures that have impulse in place of reason: man has reason in place of impulse. But not even among animals does the same thing help them all: irascibility helps lions, fear deer, the swoop the hawk, flight the dove. And what of this: it is not even true that the best animals are the most irascible. I might suppose wild beasts that live by plunder to be the better the angrier they are; but I would praise the endurance of oxen and of horses that follow the rein. Yet why do you call man back to such sorry models, when you have the universe and god, whom man alone of all animals understands, so that he alone may imitate him? "The irascible," he says, "are considered the most straightforward of all men." Yes, because they are compared with the deceitful and the cunning, and seem straightforward because they are exposed. I would call them not straightforward but unguarded. That is the name we give to fools, voluptuaries, and spendthrifts, and to all vices that lack cunning.

17 "The orator," he says, "is sometimes better when angry." No: when he imitates an angry man. Actors too move the audience in their delivery not by being angry but by playing anger well. So before judges, in the assembly, and wherever other people's minds must be driven where we want them, we shall feign now anger, now fear, now pity, in order to strike these into others; and often the imitation of passions has achieved what real passions would not have.

"A mind without anger," he says, "is slack." True, if it has nothing stronger than anger. One should be neither robber nor prey, neither pitying nor cruel: the one has too soft a mind, the other too hard. Let the wise man be balanced, and when something must be done with force, let him use not anger but strength.

18 Since we have dealt with the questions about anger, let us move on to its remedies. There are two, I think: not to fall into anger, and not to do wrong in anger. As in the care of the body there are some precepts for keeping health and others for restoring it, so we must fight off anger in one way and check it in another. To avoid it, certain precepts will be given that concern the whole of life: these will be divided between upbringing and the years that follow.

Upbringing demands the greatest care, and it will do the most good; for it is easy to shape minds while they are still tender, but vices that have grown up with us are hard to cut back.

19 A hot nature of mind is the most liable to irascibility. There are four elements, fire, water, air, and earth, and matching powers: hot, cold, dry, and moist. And so the mixture of the elements accounts for the differences among places, animals, bodies, and characters, and natures lean more toward one thing or another according to which element is present in greater force. That is why we call some regions moist and others dry, some hot and others cold. The same distinctions hold among animals and men: it matters how much moisture and heat each contains; whichever element has the larger share in him will determine his character. A hot nature of mind will make men irascible, for fire is active and persistent; a mixture of cold makes them timid, for cold is sluggish and contracted. So some of our school hold that anger is stirred in the chest as the blood boils around the heart; the only reason this place in particular is assigned to anger is that the chest is the hottest part of the whole body. In those who have more moisture, anger grows little by little, because their heat is not ready to hand but has to be acquired by motion; so the angers of children and women are sharp rather than heavy, and lighter at the start. In the dry years of life anger is violent and strong, but it does not grow, not adding much to itself, because cold follows on heat as it begins

to decline. Old men are difficult and querulous, like the sick and the convalescent and those whose heat has been drained by exhaustion or loss of blood; in the same condition are those wasted by thirst and hunger, and those whose bodies are bloodless, poorly nourished, and failing. Wine kindles anger, because it increases heat; according to their natures, some men boil over when drunk, others when only tipsy. And the only reason why blond and ruddy people are the most irascible is that their natural color is what other people's becomes in anger; their blood is quick and restless.

20 But just as nature makes some people prone to anger, so many causes arise that can do the same as nature. Some have been brought to it by disease or bodily injury, others by toil, constant lack of sleep, anxious nights, longings, and love affairs; whatever else has harmed the body or the mind makes the ailing mind ready to complain. But all these are only beginnings and causes. Habit counts for most, and if it is heavy, it feeds the vice. To change nature is difficult, and one cannot alter the elements once they have been mixed at birth; but knowing it will help us at least to take wine away from hot natures. Plato thinks it should be denied to boys, and he forbids fanning fire with fire.[12] They should not be stuffed with food either; their bodies will be distended, and their minds will swell along with their bodies. Let work exercise them short of exhaustion, so that their heat is reduced, not used up, and the excess of that boiling is skimmed off. Games will help too; for moderate pleasure relaxes the mind and balances it. For the moister, the drier, and the cold natures there is no danger from anger, but more sluggish vices are to be feared: fear, peevishness, despair, and suspicion. Such characters, then, must be softened and coddled and drawn out into gladness. And since some remedies must be used against anger and others against sorrow, and

the two must be treated not just by different means but by opposite ones, we shall always meet whichever has grown stronger.

21 It will do the most good, I say, to give children a healthy training from the start; but the guiding is difficult, because we must take care neither to nourish anger in them nor to blunt their native spirit. The matter needs careful watching; for both what must be encouraged and what must be checked are fed by similar things, and similar things easily deceive even an attentive observer. Spirit grows with freedom and is crushed by servitude; it rises when it is praised and led to hope well of itself, but these same things breed insolence and irascibility. So the child must be guided between the two, using the bridle at one time and the spur at another. Let him suffer nothing humiliating, nothing servile; let him never have to beg humbly, nor gain anything by begging; let him rather be granted things for the merits of his case, for his past conduct, and for good promises for the future. In contests with his peers let us not allow him to be beaten or to get angry; let us see to it that he is friendly with those he usually competes with, so that in competition he grows used to wanting not to hurt but to win. Whenever he has come out on top and done something worthy of praise, let us allow him to be lifted up but not to exult; for joy is followed by exultation, and exultation by swelling and too high an opinion of oneself. We will give him some relaxation, but we will not let him dissolve into idleness and leisure, and we will keep him far from contact with luxuries; for nothing makes people more irascible than a soft and coddling upbringing. That is why the more an only child is indulged, and the more an orphan is allowed, the more corrupt the mind becomes. He will not stand up to offenses who has never been refused anything, whose tears an anxious mother has always wiped away, who has had his way against his tutor. Do you not see how a greater anger goes with every greater fortune? It shows most in the rich, the nobly born,

and magistrates, when whatever was light and empty in the mind has been carried up on a favoring wind. Prosperity feeds irascibility, when a crowd of flatterers has gathered around proud ears: "Is he to answer you back? You do not measure yourself by your rank; you are selling yourself short," and other things that even sound minds, well founded from the start, have scarcely resisted. So childhood must be kept far from flattery: let the child hear the truth. Let him feel fear at times, respect always, and let him rise for his elders. Let him get nothing by a fit of temper: what was refused him while he cried should be offered when he is calm. Let him have his parents' wealth in view, not in use. Let him be reproached for what he does wrong. It will be to the point to give children calm teachers and tutors: everything tender attaches itself to what is nearest and grows into its likeness, and young men soon reproduce the characters of their nurses and tutors. A boy brought up in Plato's house, when he was taken back to his parents and saw his father shouting, said, "I never saw this at Plato's." I have no doubt he imitated his father sooner than Plato. Above all, let his food be plain, his clothes not costly, and his way of life like that of his peers: he will not resent being compared with someone if from the start you have made him the equal of many.

22 But these things concern our children; in our own case, the lot of our birth and our upbringing leave no more room either for fault or for precept: what follows must be set in order. So we must fight against the first causes. The cause of irascibility is the opinion that we have been wronged, and this should not be readily believed. We should not give in at once even to what looks open and plain; for some false things bear the look of truth. We must always allow time: the day reveals the truth. Let our ears not be open to accusers; let us recognize and distrust this flaw in human nature, that we readily believe what we do not want to hear, and that we get angry before we judge. And what of this: we are driven

not only by accusations but by suspicions, and, reading the worst into someone's look or smile, we get angry with the innocent? So we must plead the absent man's case against ourselves and keep anger in suspense; for a punishment that has been put off can be exacted, but one that has been exacted cannot be recalled.

23 Everyone knows of the tyrant-slayer who, caught before he had finished the job and tortured by Hippias to make him reveal his accomplices, named the tyrant's friends who were standing around, and all those to whom he knew the tyrant's safety was most dear. When the tyrant had had each of them killed as he was named, and asked whether anyone was left, the man said, "Only you; I have left no one else to whom you were dear."[13] Anger made the tyrant lend his hands to the tyrant-slayer and cut down his own guards with his own sword. How much more spirited was Alexander! When he had read his mother's letter warning him to beware of poison from his doctor Philip, he took the draught and drank it undeterred. He trusted his own judgment of his friend more. He deserved to have an innocent friend; he deserved to make him one. I praise this in Alexander all the more because no one was so prone to anger; and the rarer moderation is in kings, the more it deserves praise. Julius Caesar did the same, the man who used his victory in the civil war with the greatest clemency. When he had seized boxes of letters sent to Pompey by men who seemed to have been either on the other side or on neither, he burned them.'[14] Though he was usually moderate in his anger, he preferred not to be able to be angry at all; he thought the most gracious kind of pardon was not to know what each man's offense had been.

24 Credulity does the most harm. Often we should not even listen, since in some matters it is better to be deceived than to distrust. Suspicion and conjecture, the most deceptive of provocations, must be removed from the mind: "That man greeted me

rather coldly; that one cut short my kiss; that one broke off a conversation he had begun; that one did not invite me to dinner; that one's face seemed rather unfriendly." Suspicion will never lack arguments: what we need is simplicity and a kindly way of judging things. Let us believe nothing except what strikes our eyes and is plain; and whenever our suspicion proves empty, let us scold our credulity, for this correction will build the habit of not believing easily.

25 From this it also follows that we should not be exasperated by the smallest and most trivial things. A slave is too slow, or the water too lukewarm for drinking, or the couch rumpled, or the table set carelessly: to be roused by such things is madness. A man is sick and in poor health if a light breeze makes him shiver; his eyes are diseased if white clothing dazzles them; he is undone by luxury if his side aches at someone else's labor. They say there was a man from the city of the Sybarites, Mindyrides, who, seeing a man digging and raising his mattock rather high, complained that it made him tired and forbade the man to work within his sight; he also complained that he felt worse because he had lain on rose petals that were folded double. When pleasures have corrupted mind and body together, nothing seems bearable, not because what is endured is hard but because the one who endures it is soft. Why else should someone's cough or sneeze, or a fly not chased off carefully enough, drive us into a rage, or a dog getting under our feet, or a key slipping from a careless slave's hands? Will a man bear calmly the abuse of public life and the curses hurled at him in the assembly or the senate house when the screech of a bench being dragged offends his ears? Will the man who gets angry with a slave for doing a poor job of melting the snow for his drink endure hunger and the thirst of a summer campaign? So nothing feeds irascibility more than a luxury that knows no restraint and

can bear nothing: the mind must be treated hard, so that it feels no blow but a heavy one.

26 We are angry either with things from which we could not even have received a wrong, or with those from which we could. Among the first are some things without feeling, like a book we have often thrown aside because it was written in letters too small, or torn up because it was full of mistakes, or clothes we have ripped because we did not like them. How foolish to be angry with these, which neither deserved our anger nor feel it! "But of course it is the people who made them who offend us." First, we often get angry before we draw this distinction in our minds. Second, perhaps the craftsmen themselves will offer just excuses: one could not have done better than he did, and it was not to insult you that he learned too little; another did not do it in order to offend you. Last of all, what is more insane than to pour out on things the bile collected against men? But just as it is insane to be angry with things that have no life, so it is to be angry with dumb animals, which do us no wrong because they cannot will it; for there is no wrong unless it proceeds from intent. So they can harm us, like iron or stone, but they cannot do us a wrong. Yet some people think themselves despised when the same horses are obedient to one rider and stubborn with another, as though it were by judgment, and not through habit and skill in handling, that some animals are more submissive to certain people. Yet just as it is foolish to be angry with these, so it is with children and with those whose sense is not much beyond a child's; for before a fair judge, in all these offenses ignorance counts as innocence.

27 Some things cannot do harm and have no power except what is beneficent and saving, like the immortal gods, who neither wish to do harm nor can; for their nature is mild and gentle, as far removed from wronging others as from being wronged. So it is madmen, ignorant of the truth, who blame them for the savagery

of the sea, excessive rains, the stubbornness of winter, when in fact none of the things that harm or help us is aimed at us in particular. We are not the reason the universe brings back winter and summer; these things have their own laws, by which divine affairs are carried on. We think too highly of ourselves if we consider ourselves worthy of having such great things set in motion on our account. So none of these things happens to wrong us; on the contrary, everything happens for our good. Some things, we said, cannot do harm, and others will not. Among the latter will be good magistrates, parents, teachers, and judges, whose correction we must take as we take the scalpel, a fast, and other things that torment us for our good. We have been punished: let us think not only of what we are suffering but of what we have done; let us sit in judgment on our own life. If only we are willing to tell ourselves the truth, we shall assess the damages in our own case higher.

28 If we want to be fair judges of all things, let us first convince ourselves that none of us is without fault; for this is where the greatest indignation comes from: "I have done nothing wrong," and "I have done nothing." No: you admit nothing. We are indignant at being corrected by some warning or restraint, when at that very moment we are doing wrong by adding arrogance and defiance to our misdeeds. Who is this man who declares himself innocent before every law? Suppose he is: how narrow an innocence it is to be good by the letter of the law! How much more widely the rule of duty extends than the rule of law! How many things are demanded by devotion, humanity, generosity, justice, and good faith, all of which lie outside the public statutes! But we cannot measure up even to that narrowest formula of innocence. Some things we have done, others we have thought, others wished, others favored; in some things we are innocent only because they did not succeed. Thinking of this, let us be fairer to wrongdoers and believe those who rebuke us; above all let us not be angry with

good men (for with whom will we not be angry, if with good men too?), and least of all with the gods; for it is not by their fault but by the law of mortality that we suffer whatever trouble befalls us. "But diseases and pains attack us." Of course: those who have been allotted a crumbling dwelling must move out of it somehow. Someone will be said to have spoken ill of you: consider whether you did it first; consider how many people you speak of. Let us consider, I say, that some do not do us a wrong but pay one back, others do it for our sake, others under compulsion, others in ignorance; and that even those who do it willingly and knowingly are not seeking the wrong itself in wronging us. One slipped, carried away by the charm of a witticism; another did something not to hurt us but because he could not get what he was after without pushing us aside; flattery often offends while it fawns. Whoever recalls how often he himself has fallen under false suspicion, how many of his good offices fortune has dressed up as wrongs, how many people he began to love after hating them, will be able not to get angry at once, especially if he says to himself silently, at each thing that offends him, "I have done this too." But where will you find so fair a judge? The man who lusts after everyone's wife and thinks it reason enough to love her that she belongs to someone else will not have his own wife looked at; the faithless man is the sternest exactor of good faith; the perjurer prosecutes lies; the trumped-up litigant bitterly resents a lawsuit brought against himself; the man who did not spare his own chastity will not have his slaves' tampered with. Other people's vices are before our eyes, our own behind our backs. That is why a father worse than his son rebukes the son's banquets for starting early, why the man who denied himself no luxury forgives no one else's, why the tyrant is angry with a murderer and the temple robber punishes thefts. A great part of mankind is angry not with sins but with sinners. Looking at ourselves will make us more moderate, if we ask our-

selves: “Have we ourselves done something like this? Have we gone wrong in this way? Is it in our interest to condemn these things?”

29 The greatest remedy for anger is delay. Ask this of it at the start, not that it pardon but that it judge: its first onrushes are heavy; it will subside if it waits. Do not try to remove it all at once: it will be wholly conquered if it is picked off piece by piece. Of the things that offend us, some are reported to us, others we hear or see ourselves. What is told us we should not be quick to believe: many lie to deceive, many because they have been deceived; one seeks favor by accusing and invents a wrong so as to seem upset that it was done; another is malicious and wants to split close friendships; another is a mischief-maker who wants to watch the show and observe from a safe distance those he has set at each other. If you were about to judge a case over a tiny sum, you would not accept the matter as proved without a witness, a witness would count for nothing without an oath, you would give both parties a hearing, give them time, hear them more than once; for the truth shines out more clearly the more often it is handled. Do you condemn a friend on the spot? Before you hear him, before you question him, before he is allowed to know either his accuser or the charge, are you angry? Have you already, already heard what is said on both sides? This very man who brought you the report will stop talking if he has to prove it. “There is no reason,” he says, “to drag me in; if I am brought forward, I’ll deny it; otherwise I’ll never tell you anything again.” In the same breath he goads you on and withdraws himself from the contest and the fight. A man who will tell you something only in secret is hardly telling you at all: what is more unfair than to believe in secret and be angry in public?

30 Some things we witness ourselves: in these we shall examine the nature and the intention of those who do them. It is a child: let

us make allowance for his age; he does not know whether he is doing wrong. It is a father: either he has done us so much good that he has a right even to wrong us, or perhaps the very thing that offends us is a service he is doing us. It is a woman: she errs. He was ordered to: who but an unfair man resents necessity? He was wronged: it is no wrong to suffer what you did first. It is a judge: trust his verdict more than your own. It is a king: if he punishes you when you are guilty, yield to justice; if when you are innocent, yield to fortune. It is a dumb animal, or something like one: you imitate it if you are angry. It is a disease or a calamity: it will pass over you more lightly if you bear it. It is a god: you waste your effort as much in being angry with him as in praying for him to be angry with someone else. It is a good man who did you the wrong: do not believe it. A bad man: do not be surprised; he will pay someone else the penalty he owes you, and a man who has done wrong has already paid it to himself.

31 There are two things, as I said, that rouse irascibility: first, if we seem to have received a wrong (enough has been said about this); second, if we seem to have received it unjustly (this must now be discussed). Men judge some things unjust because they ought not to have suffered them, others because they did not expect them. We think unexpected things outrageous; so what happens against our hopes and expectations upsets us most. That is precisely why the smallest things offend us at home, and why with friends we call carelessness a wrong. "How is it, then," someone says, "that the wrongs our enemies do upset us?" Because we did not expect them, or at least not so great. This comes of our excessive self-love: we judge that we ought to be inviolable even to our enemies. Each of us carries a king's mind inside him: he wants license given to himself but not used against himself. So it is either ignorance or inexperience that makes us irascible. For what is surprising in bad men doing bad deeds? What is new if an enemy

harms you, a friend offends you, a son slips, a slave does wrong? Fabius[15] used to say that the most shameful excuse for a general was "I didn't think it would happen"; I think it the most shameful for a man. Think of everything, expect everything: even in good characters something rough will come out. Human nature produces treacherous minds, ungrateful ones, greedy ones, impious ones. When you judge one man's character, think of men's in general. Where you most rejoice, you will most fear; where everything seems calm to you, things that will harm you are not missing, only asleep. Always reckon that something will happen to offend you. No helmsman ever spread his sails so fully, so free of care, that he did not keep his tackle ready to take them in.

Above all, think of this: the power to do harm is foul and accursed and utterly alien to man, by whose kindness even savage creatures grow tame. Look at elephants with their necks bowed to the yoke, bulls whose backs boys and women leap on and trample unharmed, snakes gliding harmlessly among the cups and in and out of people's clothes, and, inside houses, bears and lions with their jaws gentle to those who handle them, and wild beasts fawning on their master: you will be ashamed to have traded characters with the animals. It is a crime to harm one's country; therefore to harm a citizen too, for he is part of the country (the parts are sacred if the whole is to be revered); therefore to harm a man too, for he is your fellow citizen in the greater city. What if the hands wanted to harm the feet, or the eyes the hands? Just as all the limbs agree among themselves, because it is in the interest of the whole that each be preserved, so men will spare each individual because they were born for fellowship, and society cannot be safe except by the protection and love of its parts. We would not even kill vipers and water snakes and whatever harms by bite or sting if we could tame them for the future or make them no danger to us or to others; so neither will we harm a man because he has done

wrong, but so that he will not do wrong, and punishment will never look to the past but to the future; for it is not angry but cautious. For if everyone with a depraved and evil character is to be punished, punishment will except no one.

32 "But anger has some pleasure in it, and it is sweet to pay back pain." Not at all. With benefits it is honorable to repay service with service; with wrongs it is not so. There it is shameful to be outdone, here to outdo. Revenge is an inhuman word, and yet it has been accepted as just. The man who pays back pain differs little from the one who caused it, except in the order; he only does wrong with a better excuse. Someone struck Marcus Cato[16] in the baths without knowing who he was; for who would knowingly do him a wrong? When the man later apologized, Cato said, "I don't remember being struck." He thought it better not to acknowledge it than to avenge it. "Did nothing bad," you say, "happen to the man after such insolence?" On the contrary, something very good: he came to know Cato. It belongs to a great mind to despise wrongs; the most insulting kind of revenge is to seem not worth taking revenge on. Many have taken slight wrongs too deeply to heart by avenging them. That man is great and noble who, like a great beast, listens unconcerned to the yapping of little dogs.

33 "We shall be less despised," someone says, "if we avenge a wrong." If we come to it as to a remedy, let us come without anger, not as if revenge were sweet, but as if it were useful. Yet it has often been better to pretend not to notice than to take revenge. The wrongs of the powerful must be borne with a cheerful face, not just patiently: they will do it again if they believe they have done it. Minds made insolent by great fortune have this worst trait: they hate those they have wronged. Well known is the remark of the man who had grown old in the service of kings: when someone asked him how he had achieved the rarest thing at court, old age, he said, "By accepting wrongs and giving thanks."

Often it is so far from expedient to avenge a wrong that it is not even expedient to admit it. Gaius Caesar[17] had put the son of Pastor, a distinguished Roman knight, in custody, offended by his elegance and his too carefully dressed hair. When the father begged him to spare his son's life, Gaius, as though he had been reminded to punish him, ordered him led off to execution at once; yet, so as not to treat the father with complete inhumanity, he invited him to dinner that same day. Pastor came with a face that reproached nothing. The emperor drank his health in a half-pint of wine and set a guard over him: the wretched man held out, as if he were drinking his son's blood. The emperor sent him perfume and garlands and ordered someone to watch whether he put them on: he put them on. On the day he had buried his son, or rather the day he had not buried him, he lay at table as the hundredth guest, a gouty old man downing drinks hardly decent at a child's birthday, and all the while he did not shed a tear or let his grief break out by any sign; he dined as though he had won his son's pardon. You ask why? He had another son. What of the famous Priam? Did he not hide his anger and clasp the king's knees, raise to his lips that deadly hand stained with his son's blood, and dine?'[18] Yes, but without perfume, without garlands, and his most savage enemy urged him with many words of comfort to take food, not to drain enormous cups with a guard standing over his head. I would have despised the Roman father if he had been afraid for himself; as it was, devotion held his anger in check. He deserved to be allowed to leave the banquet to gather his son's bones; but not even this did that kindly and courteous young man allow. He kept plying the old man with toasts, urging him to lighten his cares. The old man, for his part, showed himself cheerful and forgetful of what had been done that day. The other son would have perished if the guest had not pleased the executioner.

34 So we must refrain from anger, whether the one we would provoke is our equal, our superior, or our inferior. To quarrel with an equal is risky, with a superior mad, with an inferior degrading. It is the mark of a petty and wretched man to bite back at what bites him: mice and ants turn their mouths on you if you put your hand near them; weak creatures think themselves hurt if they are touched. It will make us gentler if we think how much the man we are angry with has helped us at one time or another; his services will buy off the offense. Let this occur to us as well: how much credit a reputation for clemency will bring us, how many useful friends pardon has made. Let us not be angry with the children of our personal and public enemies: among the examples of Sulla's cruelty is that he barred the children of the proscribed from public life; nothing is more unjust than to make someone heir to his father's hatred. Whenever we find it hard to forgive, let us consider whether it would be good for us if everyone were inexorable. How often the man who refused pardon asks for it! How often he has fallen at the feet of a man he spurned from his own! What is more glorious than to change anger into friendship? What allies does the Roman people have more loyal than those who were once its most stubborn enemies? What would our empire be today if a healthy foresight had not mingled the conquered with the conquerors? Someone will get angry with you: you, on the other hand, challenge him with benefits. A quarrel drops at once when one side abandons it; only equals fight. But if anger fights on both sides and they clash, the better man is the one who steps back first; the winner is the loser. He hit you: back off. By hitting back you will give him both the occasion and the excuse to hit you again; you will not be able to pull yourself away when you want to.

35 Would anyone want to strike an enemy so hard that he leaves his hand in the wound and cannot pull himself back from the blow? Yet anger is a weapon of that kind: it can hardly be

drawn back. We look for handy weapons, a convenient and manageable sword: shall we not avoid these heavy, cumbersome, irrevocable impulses of the mind? The only speed we like is the kind that stops in its tracks when ordered, does not run past the mark, and can be turned and brought down from a run to a walk. We know the sinews are diseased when they move against our will; it is an old man or someone with a weak body who runs when he wants to walk. Let us consider those movements of the mind the soundest and strongest that go at our discretion and are not carried off at their own. Nothing, however, will help so much as to look first at the ugliness of the thing, then at its danger. No passion has a more disordered face: it has disfigured the most beautiful features and makes the most peaceful faces fierce. All grace deserts the angry. If their dress was arranged as it should be, they will let their clothes trail and throw off all care for themselves; if their hair, by nature or by art, lay in a not unbecoming style, it bristles along with the mind; the veins swell; the chest heaves with rapid breathing; a frenzied outburst of the voice strains the neck; then the limbs tremble, the hands are restless, the whole body pitches and tosses. What do you think the mind is like within, when its image outside is so foul? How much more terrible is its face within the breast, how much fiercer its breathing, how much more intense its onrush, ready to burst itself if it does not burst out! Like the look of enemies or wild beasts dripping with slaughter or going to slaughter, like the monsters of the underworld the poets have imagined, girt with snakes and breathing fire, like the most hideous goddesses who come out of the underworld to stir up wars, spread discord among peoples, and tear peace to pieces: so let us picture anger. Her eyes blaze with flame; she roars with hissing and bellowing, moaning and screeching, and any sound more hateful than these; she brandishes weapons in both hands (for she has no care to protect herself); she is grim and bloody,

scarred and bruised from her own blows, wild in her gait, wrapped in thick darkness, charging, laying waste, putting to flight, tormented by hatred of everything, and most of all of herself, longing, if she can do harm no other way, to bring down lands, seas, and sky, as hostile as she is hated. Or, if you like, let her be as she is in our poets:

"Bellona, shaking the bloody scourge in her right hand,"

or

"Discord goes rejoicing in her torn mantle,"[19]

or any face still more dreadful that can be devised for this dreadful passion.

36 Some angry men, as Sextius[20] says, have been helped by looking in a mirror. So great a change in themselves upset them; brought face to face with the thing itself, as it were, they did not recognize themselves. And how little of the real ugliness did that image reflected in the mirror give back! If the mind could be shown, if it could shine through any material, it would confound those who looked at it, black, spotted, seething, twisted, and swollen. Even now its ugliness is great as it seeps out through bones and flesh and so many obstacles: what if it were shown naked? You may be sure, of course, that no one has been frightened out of anger by a mirror. How so? The man who had come to the mirror to change himself had already changed. To the angry, in fact, no likeness is handsomer than a fierce and savage one, and they want to look as they are. We should rather consider how many people anger has harmed in itself. Some have burst their veins from too much heat; shouting raised beyond their strength has brought up blood; fluid forced too violently into the eyes has dimmed their sight; and the sick have fallen back into illness. There is no quicker road to madness. Many, then, have prolonged the frenzy of anger and never got back the mind they had driven out: frenzy drove Ajax to death, and anger drove him to frenzy.

They call down death on their children, poverty on themselves, ruin on their house, and they deny that they are angry no less than madmen deny that they are mad. Enemies to their closest friends, to be avoided by those dearest to them, mindless of the laws except where they can do harm, stirred by the smallest things, hard to approach by word or courtesy, they do everything by force, ready both to fight with swords and to fall on them. For the greatest of evils has seized them, one that surpasses all the vices. Other vices enter little by little; the force of this one is sudden and total. In short, it subjects all the other passions to itself. It conquers the most ardent love: men have run through the bodies they loved and lain in the arms of those they had killed. Avarice, the hardest and least pliant of evils, anger has trampled underfoot, forcing it to scatter its wealth and to set fire to its house and all its goods heaped together. Well? Has not the ambitious man thrown away insignia he prized and refused an office that was offered him? There is no passion over which anger does not rule.

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1. Lucius Annaeus Novatus, Seneca's elder brother, later called Gallio after his adoptive father.

2. Publius Clodius, as tribune in 58 BC, drove Cicero into exile; Mark Antony had him killed in 43 BC. Gaius Marius and Sulla were the rival leaders of Rome's first civil war; Sulla's proscriptions (82 BC) published lists of citizens who could be killed for a reward.

3. Theodotus and Achillas, ministers of the boy king Ptolemy XIII of Egypt, had Pompey murdered when he landed there after his defeat in 48 BC.

4. A musician at Alexander's court; other ancient writers tell the same story of Timotheus.

5. Apollodorus, tyrant of Cassandreia in Macedonia in the third century BC, and Phalaris, tyrant of Acragas in Sicily in the sixth, who was said to roast his victims alive in a bronze bull.

6. Lucius Valerius Messalla Volesus, proconsul of Asia about AD 11–12, later condemned by the senate for his cruelty there.

7. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.144–148, describing the Age of Iron.

8. The Roman Forum, the Forum of Julius Caesar, and the Forum of Augustus, all used for the law courts.

9. Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 500 BC) and Democritus of Abdera (c. 460–370 BC), Greek philosophers, known in later tradition as the weeping and the laughing philosopher.

10. Decimus Laberius (c. 105–43 BC), a Roman knight who wrote mimes; the line was taken as aimed at Julius Caesar.

11. The poet is unknown.

12. Plato, *Laws* 2.666a.

13. The tyrant is Hippias, ruler of Athens (527–510 BC); the story is usually told of Aristogeiton, who with Harmodius killed Hippias's brother Hipparchus in 514 BC.

14. After his victory over Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BC.

15. Probably Quintus Fabius Maximus, called Cunctator ("the Delayer"), Hannibal's opponent in the Second Punic War.

16. Marcus Porcius Cato the Younger (95–46 BC), Stoic statesman and opponent of Julius Caesar.

17. The emperor known as Caligula (reigned AD 37–41).

18. In Homer, *Iliad* 24, Priam goes to Achilles, who killed his son Hector, to ransom the body, and eats with him.

19. Adapted from Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.702–703, where the two lines stand in the opposite order.

20. Quintus Sextius, Roman philosopher of the time of Augustus, whose school Seneca admired.

On Anger, Book Three

1 What you have wanted most, Novatus,[1] I shall now try to do: to cut anger out of our minds, or at least to rein it in and check its impulses. Sometimes this must be done openly and frankly, when the evil is mild enough to allow it; sometimes in secret, when it burns too hot and every obstacle only sharpens it and makes it grow. It matters how much strength it has and how fresh that strength is, whether it should be beaten back and driven to retreat, or whether we should give way to it while the first storm rages itself out, so that it does not sweep the remedies away with it. The plan will have to suit each person's character. Some are won over by entreaties; some trample on those who submit and press all the harder; some we shall calm by frightening them. Rebuke has turned some from their course, confession others, shame others, delay others: a slow remedy for a headlong evil, and the one to fall back on last. The other passions allow postponement and can be treated more slowly; the violence of this one, roused and sweeping itself along, does not advance by degrees but is complete the moment it begins. Nor does it tempt the mind, as the other vices do; it carries it off, drives men who have lost control of themselves and are eager even for a disaster that falls on all alike, and it rages not only at what it aimed at but at whatever it meets on the way. The other vices push the mind; anger hurls it headlong. Even where we cannot resist our passions, the passions themselves can at least come to a halt; anger, no differently from lightning and storms and anything else that cannot be called back

because it does not travel but falls, strains its force harder and harder. The other vices desert reason; this one deserts sanity. The others come on gently and grow without our noticing; into anger the mind plunges. So nothing drives on harder, so frantic and so reckless with its own strength, arrogant if it succeeds, insane if it is thwarted; not even when beaten back does it sink into weariness, but when Fortune has taken its adversary out of reach, it turns its teeth on itself. Nor does it matter how small the thing it rose from: from the slightest causes it grows to the greatest.

2 It passes over no age; it spares no race of men. Some nations, thanks to their poverty, have never known luxury; some, because they are active and roving, have escaped idleness; those whose ways are rough and whose life is rustic know nothing of sharp dealing and fraud and every evil born in the marketplace; but there is no nation that anger does not goad, as powerful among the Greeks as among the barbarians, no less ruinous to those who fear the laws than to those whose only rule of right is the measure of their strength. Then, too, the other passions seize individuals; this is the one passion that is sometimes caught by a whole people. Never has an entire people burned with love for a woman, nor has a whole city set its hopes on money or gain; ambition takes hold of men one by one; want of self-control is not a public evil; but often a people has marched into anger in a single column. Men and women, old men and boys, leaders and rabble have agreed, and the whole multitude, roused by a very few words, has outrun the man who roused it; they have rushed straight to arms and torches, declared wars on their neighbors or waged them against fellow citizens; whole houses have been burned with their entire families, and a man held in high honor a moment before for his popular eloquence has caught the anger of his own assembly; legions have hurled their javelins at their own general; the whole plebs has split from the senators; the senate, the state's own council, without

waiting for a levy or naming a general, has picked impromptu leaders for its anger, hunted down noble men through the houses of the city, and executed them with its own hands; embassies have been violated, the law of nations broken, and an unspeakable rage has swept a city away; no time has been given for the public swelling to go down, but fleets have been launched at once and loaded with soldiers scraped together in haste; without custom, without auspices, a people has marched out with its anger for a leader, carried whatever chance or plunder supplied for arms, and then paid for the rashness of its reckless anger with a great disaster. This is how it ends for barbarians who rush blindly into war: when the impression of having been wronged has struck their restless minds, they are driven at once, and wherever their resentment drags them they fall on the legions like a collapsing building, disordered, fearless, heedless, seeking out their own dangers; they rejoice to be struck, to press on against the sword, to drive the spears home with their bodies, and to perish by their own wounds.

3 "There is no doubt," you say, "that this is a great and pestilent force; so show how it ought to be cured." And yet, as I said in the earlier books, Aristotle stands up as the defender of anger and forbids us to cut it out: it is, he says, the spur of virtue; take it away, and the mind is left unarmed, sluggish and inert for great efforts. So it is necessary to expose its ugliness and fierceness and to set before our eyes what a monster a man is when he rages against a man, and with what an onrush he charges, ruinous but not without ruin to himself, sinking things that cannot sink unless they take the one who sinks them down too. What, then? Does anyone call this man sane, who, as if caught in a storm, does not walk but is driven, and is the slave of a raging evil; who does not delegate his revenge but exacts it himself, savage in mind and hand alike, the butcher of those dearest to him and of things he will soon weep for having lost? Does anyone give virtue this passion as its helper

and companion, when it throws into confusion the counsels without which virtue does nothing? The strength that sickness and a fit of fever have roused in a sick man is fleeting and ill-omened, strong only for its own harm. So you need not think I am wasting time on superfluous things in denouncing anger as though men's opinion of it were in doubt, when there is someone, and one of the illustrious philosophers at that, who assigns it duties and calls on it as useful, as supplying spirit for battle, for the conduct of affairs, for everything that must be done with some heat. So that no one may be deceived into thinking it will be useful at some time, in some place, we must show its unbridled and frantic rage and give it back its own equipment: the rack and the cords, the slave prisons and the crosses, the fires lit around bodies buried in the ground, the hook that drags even corpses, the various kinds of chains, the various kinds of punishments, the mangling of limbs, the branding of foreheads, and the cages of monstrous beasts. Among these instruments let anger be placed, hissing something dire and dreadful, fouler than all the means through which it rages.

4 Whatever may be said of the others, no passion, certainly, has a worse face. I described it in the earlier books: harsh and fierce, now pale as the blood is drawn back and put to flight, now flushed and like blood itself, all the heat and breath having rushed to the face, the veins swelling, the eyes now darting and starting out, now fixed and riveted in a single stare. Add the teeth gnashing against each other, as of men eager to devour someone, a sound no different from that of boars whetting their tusks by rubbing; add the cracking of the joints when the hands wring themselves, the chest beaten again and again, the rapid panting and the deep-drawn groans, the unsteady body, the broken words and sudden shouts, the trembling lips, sometimes pressed together and hissing out something dire. By Hercules, the face of wild beasts, whether

hunger drives them or a spear fixed in their entrails, even when, half dead, they go for their hunter with a last bite, is less foul than that of a man ablaze with anger. Come, if you have the leisure to listen to their cries and threats, what words come from a mind on the rack!

Will not everyone want to call himself back from anger once he has understood that it begins with harm to himself? Do you not want me, then, to remind those who wield anger with supreme power, who think it a proof of their strength and count ready revenge among the great goods of great fortune, that a man who is the captive of his own anger cannot be called powerful, cannot even be called free? Do you not want me to remind them, so that each may be more careful and keep watch on himself, that while the other evils of the mind belong to the worst of men, irascibility (*iracundia*) creeps even into learned men, men sound in every other respect? So much so that some call irascibility a sign of an open nature, and it is commonly believed that the most good-natured people are most subject to it.

5 "What is the point of this?" you say. That no one may judge himself safe from it, since it calls even those gentle and placid by nature out into savagery and violence. As against the plague a strong body and careful attention to health are no help (for it attacks the weak and the robust indiscriminately), so anger is as much a danger to restless characters as to composed and easygoing ones, and in these it is the more shameful and dangerous the more it changes them. But since the first thing is not to get angry, the second to stop, the third to cure another's anger as well, I shall speak first of how we may avoid falling into anger, then of how we may free ourselves from it, and last of how we may restrain an angry man, calm him, and bring him back to sanity.

We shall make sure we do not get angry if we keep setting all of anger's vices before ourselves and take its true measure. It must

be accused before our own tribunal and condemned; its evils must be searched out and dragged into the open; to show what it is, it must be compared with the worst. Avarice acquires and gathers, for someone better to use; anger spends, and few escape its cost. How many slaves an irascible master has driven to flight, how many to death! How much more he has lost by getting angry than the thing he was angry about! Anger has brought a father mourning, a husband divorce, a magistrate hatred, a candidate defeat. It is worse than luxury, since luxury enjoys its own pleasure, anger another's pain. It outdoes spite and envy, for they want a man to become unhappy, anger wants to make him so; they delight in ills that come by chance, anger cannot wait for Fortune: it wants to harm the man it hates, not to see him harmed. Nothing is more grievous than feuds: anger brings them about. Nothing is more deadly than war: into war the anger of the powerful bursts out; and even the anger of the common man and the private citizen is a war, only unarmed and without forces. Besides, anger, to set aside what will follow presently, its losses, its plots, the endless anxiety of mutual quarrels, pays the penalty while it exacts one. It renounces human nature: nature urges us to love, anger to hate; nature bids us help, anger harm. Add that, though its indignation comes from too high a regard for itself, so that it seems spirited, it is small and narrow; for everyone is smaller than the man by whom he judges himself despised. But the truly great mind, the true judge of its own worth, does not avenge a wrong, because it does not feel it. As spears bounce back from something hard, and solid things hurt the one who strikes them, so no wrong makes a great mind feel it, since the wrong is frailer than what it attacks. How much finer it is to spit back every wrong and insult, as if no spear could pierce you! Revenge is a confession of pain. That is not a great mind which a wrong can bend. Whoever has hurt you was

either stronger than you or weaker: if weaker, spare him; if stronger, spare yourself.

6 There is no surer proof of greatness than that nothing can happen to you that could provoke you. The higher part of the universe, better ordered and near the stars, is neither massed into cloud, nor driven into storm, nor whirled into a tempest; it is free of all turmoil: it is the lower regions that are struck by lightning. In the same way a lofty mind, always calm and set in a tranquil station, keeping beneath it everything from which anger gathers, is modest, worthy of respect, and well ordered; you will find none of this in an angry man. For who, given over to resentment and raging, has not first thrown off his sense of shame? Who, in a turbulent rush against someone, has not cast away whatever was worthy of respect in him? Whose sense of his duties, their number or their order, has held firm once he was roused? Who has held his tongue in check? Who has controlled any part of his body? Who, once let loose, has been able to govern himself? We shall profit from that wholesome precept of Democritus,[2] which teaches that tranquility comes if we do not undertake many things, or things beyond our strength, either in private or in public. For the man who rushes about among many affairs, no day ever passes so happily that some offense does not arise, from a person or a thing, to ready the mind for anger. Just as anyone hurrying through the crowded parts of the city must bump into many people, and is bound to slip in one place, be held back in another, be splashed in another, so in this scattered and wandering activity of life many hindrances, many grievances befall us: one man has disappointed our hope, another has put it off, another has snatched it away; our plans have not flowed as intended. Fortune is not so devoted to anyone that she answers him everywhere if he tries many things; it follows, then, that the man for whom some things have turned out contrary to what he proposed grows impatient with people and

things, and on the slightest grounds gets angry now with a person, now with a business, now with a place, now with Fortune, now with himself. So, for the mind to be calm, it must not be tossed about, nor, as I said, wearied by doing many things, nor by great things sought beyond its strength. It is easy to fit light loads to the neck and shift them to one side or the other without slipping; but the loads that others' hands have put on us, which we can hardly carry, overcome us and we throw them off at the next step; even while we stand under the pack, unequal to the load, we stagger.

7 You may be sure that the same happens in public and domestic affairs. Business that is easy and manageable follows the man who handles it; huge business, beyond the measure of the one who carries it on, does not yield easily, and once it is taken on, it weighs down and carries off the man in charge, and just when it seemed to be in hand, it falls and takes him with it. So it happens that a man's will often comes to nothing when he does not take on what is easy but wants what he has taken on to be easy. Whenever you attempt something, measure yourself, and at the same time the thing you are preparing and the means you have prepared; for regret at unfinished work will make you harsh. It makes a difference whether a man is of a fiery temperament or of a cold and low one: in a spirited man defeat will squeeze out anger, in a languid and sluggish one, sorrow. So let our actions be neither petty nor bold and reckless; let our hope not range beyond what is near; let us attempt nothing that, even once we have achieved it, would amaze us by its success.

8 Let us take care not to receive wrongs, since we do not know how to bear them. We should live with the calmest and easiest of people, the least anxious and peevish; we take on the character of those we spend time with, and as certain diseases of the body leap to those who touch them, so the mind hands its evils on to those nearest it. The drunkard has drawn his companions into a love of

wine; the company of the shameless has softened even a brave man, born of flint; avarice has passed its poison to those nearby. The same principle works the other way with the virtues: they soften everything they come into contact with; and a healthy region and a more wholesome climate have done less good to the body's health than living in a better crowd has done to minds that are not very firm. You will understand how strong this is if you see that even wild beasts grow tame by living with us, and that no animal, however monstrous, keeps its violence if it has long endured the company of man: all its harshness is blunted and gradually unlearned among gentle things. Add to this that a man who lives with quiet people is made better not only by their example but because he finds no reasons for anger and does not exercise his vice. So he ought to avoid everyone he knows will provoke his irascibility. "Who are they?" you say. Many people, for various reasons, who will have the same effect: the proud man will offend you with his contempt, the wit with an insult, the insolent man with a wrong, the spiteful man with his malice, the quarrelsome man with his contentiousness, the windbag and the liar with his vanity; you will not bear being feared by the suspicious, beaten by the stubborn, scorned by the fastidious. Choose people who are simple, easy, and moderate, who will neither provoke your anger nor mind it; better still will be those who are yielding, humane, and sweet, though not to the point of flattery, for too much agreement offends the irascible. I had a friend, certainly a good man but quick to anger, whom it was no safer to flatter than to abuse. It is well known that Caelius the orator[3] was extremely irascible. A client of rare patience, so they say, was dining with him in his bedroom, but it was hard for the man, once he was yoked in that pair, to escape a quarrel with the one he was tied to; he judged it best to agree with whatever Caelius said and to play the supporting part. Caelius could not stand the agreement and shouted, "Say something

against me, so that there are two of us!" But even he, angry because the other would not be angry, soon stopped, having no opponent. If we are aware that we are irascible, then, let us choose, rather, even people of this sort, who follow our expression and our talk: they will spoil us, to be sure, and lead us into the bad habit of hearing nothing against our wishes, but it will do good to give our vice a pause and a rest. Even those who are difficult and untamed by nature will put up with a flatterer: nothing is harsh or grim to the hand that strokes it. Whenever an argument promises to be longer and more combative, let us resist at the very start, before it gathers strength: contention feeds itself and holds those who have sunk into it all the deeper; it is easier to keep out of a fight than to get out of one.

9 The irascible should also give up the more strenuous studies, or at least pursue them short of weariness; the mind should not be kept among hard things but handed over to pleasant arts: let the reading of poems soothe it and history hold it with its stories; let it be handled softly and delicately. Pythagoras used to calm the disturbances of his mind with the lyre; and who does not know that horns and trumpets rouse us, just as certain songs are soothing and relax the mind? Green things are good for troubled eyes, and weak sight rests on some colors while it is dazzled by the brilliance of others: so cheerful studies soothe sick minds. We ought to avoid the forum, pleading, and the courts, and everything that inflames the vice, and equally to beware of bodily weariness; for it uses up whatever is mild and gentle in us and stirs up what is sharp. This is why people who mistrust their stomachs temper their bile with food before they set out to do business of some importance; bile is stirred most by fatigue, either because fatigue drives the heat to the center of the body, harms the blood, and stops its flow as the veins labor, or because the thin and weak body weighs on the mind; certainly for the same reason those worn out by ill health or

age are more irascible. Hunger and thirst, too, are to be avoided for the same reasons: they exasperate and inflame minds. There is an old saying that a tired man goes looking for a quarrel; so, equally, does a hungry man, a thirsty man, and any man chafed by something. For as sores hurt at a light touch, and later even at the suspicion of a touch, so a mind in a bad state is offended by the smallest things, so much so that a greeting, a letter, a speech, a question calls some people out to a quarrel: sore places are never touched without complaint.

10 So the best thing is to treat oneself at the first sense of the evil, and then to give one's words, too, as little freedom as possible and to check the impulse. It is easy to catch one's passions as soon as they arise: the symptoms run ahead of the disease. As signs of storm and rain come before the storm itself, so anger, love, and all those tempests that harass minds have certain forewarnings. Those who are subject to epileptic fits know that the attack is coming if the heat leaves their extremities, their sight wavers, their sinews tremble, their memory slips, and their head spins; so they head off the illness as it begins with their usual remedies: whatever it is that unsettles the mind is driven off with smells and tastes, or they fight the cold and stiffness with warm compresses; or, if the medicine has done little good, they avoid the crowd and fall without a witness. It is useful to know your disease and to crush its strength before it spreads. Let us see what it is that provokes us most: one man is stirred by insults in words, another by insults in deeds; this one wants his noble birth spared, that one his looks; this one wants to be thought the most elegant, that one the most learned; this one cannot stand arrogance, that one stubbornness; one thinks his slaves not worth his anger, another is savage at home and mild outside; one judges it a wrong to be asked for something, another an insult not to be asked. Not everyone is

struck on the same side; so you must know what is weak in you, in order to protect it most.

11 It does not pay to see everything, to hear everything. Let many wrongs pass us by; most of them are never received by the man who does not know of them. You do not want to be irascible? Do not be inquisitive. The man who asks what has been said about him, who digs up malicious talk even if it was held in private, disturbs his own peace. Interpretation brings some things to the point of looking like wrongs; so some must be put off, some laughed off, some forgiven. Anger must be hemmed in in many ways; let most things be turned into play and jest. They say that Socrates, when he was punched, said nothing more than that it was a nuisance that people did not know when they ought to go out wearing a helmet. What matters is not how a wrong was done but how it was borne; and I do not see why moderation should be difficult, since I know that even tyrants, their natures swollen by fortune and license, have held back the savagery that was habitual to them. It is recorded, at any rate, that Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens, when a drunken guest at dinner had said much against his cruelty, and there was no lack of people ready to lend a hand against the man, and one from this side, another from that, kept fanning the flames, bore it calmly and answered those provoking him that he was no more angry with the man than if someone blindfolded had run into him.

12 A great many people have manufactured their grievances, either by suspecting what is false or by making much of what is trivial. Often anger comes to us; more often we go to it. It should never be sent for; even when it falls on us, let it be thrown back. No one says to himself, "What I am angry about I have either done myself or could have done"; no one weighs the mind of the doer, only the deed itself. Yet it is the doer who should be considered: whether he meant it or it happened by accident, whether he was

forced or deceived, whether he was after hatred or reward, whether he was pleasing himself or lending his hand to another. The wrongdoer's age counts for something, and so does his position, so that bearing and enduring it becomes either humane or useful. Let us put ourselves in the place of the man we are angry with: as it is, an unfair estimate of ourselves makes us irascible, and we are unwilling to suffer what we would be willing to do. No one puts himself off; and yet the greatest remedy for anger is delay, so that its first heat may die down and the darkness that weighs on the mind may either settle or thin. Some of the things that were sweeping you headlong will be softened by an hour, let alone a day; some will vanish entirely; if the adjournment you asked for achieves nothing, it will be clear that what is acting now is judgment, not anger. Whatever you want to know the true nature of, hand over to time: nothing is seen clearly in rough water. Plato could not win time from himself when he was angry with his slave; he ordered him at once to take off his tunic and bare his shoulders for the lash, meaning to beat him with his own hand. When he realized he was angry, he held his hand where he had raised it, in midair, and stood like a man about to strike; then, asked by a friend who happened to come in what he was doing, he said, "I am punishing an angry man." As if stunned, he held that posture of savagery, unseemly in a wise man, having already forgotten the slave, since he had found another man whom he would rather punish. So he took away from himself his power over his own household, and once, when he was rather upset over some offense, he said, "Speusippus,[4] you beat that slave; I am angry." He did not strike him for the very reason that another man would have struck him. "I am angry," he said; "I shall do more than I should, and I shall enjoy doing it; let this slave not be in the power of a man who is not in his own." Does anyone want vengeance entrusted to an angry man, when Plato stripped himself of his own

authority? Allow yourself nothing while you are angry. Why? Because you want to be allowed everything.

13 Fight with yourself: if you want to conquer anger, it cannot conquer you. You begin to conquer if it is hidden, if it is given no outlet. Let us bury its signs and keep it, as far as possible, concealed and secret. This will cost us a great deal of trouble (for it longs to leap out, to set the eyes ablaze, to change the face), but if it has been allowed to show outside us, it is above us. Let it be stored away in the deepest recess of the breast, and let it be carried, not carry us. Better still, let us turn all its signs to the opposite: let the face relax, the voice be gentler, the step slower; little by little the inner self takes its shape from the outer. In Socrates the sign of anger was a lowered voice and sparer speech; it was clear then that he was resisting himself. So his friends would catch him and charge him with it, and he did not mind being reproached for a hidden anger. Why should he not be glad that many understood his anger and no one felt it? But they would have felt it if he had not given his friends the right to rebuke him, as he himself had claimed it over his friends. How much more should we do this! Let us ask each of our closest friends to use his frankness toward us most when we are least able to bear it, and not to agree with our anger; against an evil that is powerful and stands in our good graces, let us call for help while we have our wits, while we are ourselves. Those who hold their wine badly and fear the rashness and insolence of their drunkenness instruct their people to carry them out of the dinner party; those who have learned their lack of self-control in sickness forbid others to obey them when they are ill. It is best to provide obstacles against known vices, and above all so to compose the mind that even when it is shaken by the heaviest and most sudden events it either does not feel anger, or, if anger has arisen from the size of an unexpected wrong, drives it back into the depths and does not let its resentment show. That

this can be done will be clear if I bring out a few examples from an enormous crowd of them, from which we can learn both things: how much evil there is in anger when it uses the full power of men of supreme power, and how far it can command itself when it is held down by a greater fear.

14 King Cambyses was too much given to wine, and Praexaspes, one of his dearest friends, kept advising him to drink more sparingly, saying that drunkenness was shameful in a king, whom the eyes and ears of all men followed.[5] To this the king said, "So that you may know that I never lose control of myself, I shall prove to you now that after wine my eyes and my hands do their duty." Then he drank more freely than at other times, from larger cups, and when he was already heavy and sodden with wine he ordered his critic's son to go out beyond the threshold and stand with his left hand raised above his head. Then he drew his bow and pierced the young man's heart itself (for he had said that was what he was aiming at), had the chest cut open, showed the arrowhead stuck in the heart, and, looking back at the father, asked whether his hand was steady enough. The father said that Apollo could not have shot more surely. May the gods damn him, a slave more in spirit than in station! He praised a thing that it was too much even to have watched. He thought his son's chest split in two and the heart quivering under the wound an occasion for flattery: he ought to have disputed the king's glory and called for another shot, so that the king might have the pleasure of showing a still steadier hand on the father himself. What a bloodthirsty king! How he deserved to have all his people's bows turned on him! But though we have cursed him for ending his banquets in executions and funerals, still that arrow was more wickedly praised than shot. We shall see how the father ought to have conducted himself, standing over his son's corpse and that slaughter of which he was both witness and cause: what is now under discussion is plain, that anger can be

suppressed. He did not curse the king; he let out not a word, not even of the kind a man in calamity lets out, though he saw his own heart pierced as surely as his son's. He can rightly be said to have swallowed his words; for if he had said anything as an angry man, he could have done nothing as a father. He may seem, I say, to have behaved more wisely in that misfortune than when he was giving advice on how much to drink to a man who had better drink wine than blood, whose hands meant peace when they were busy with cups. So he joined the number of those who have shown, by great disasters, how dearly good advice costs the friends of kings.

15 I do not doubt that Harpagus, too, gave some such advice to his king, the king of the Persians, who, offended by it, served him his own children to eat and kept asking whether he liked the seasoning; then, when he saw that Harpagus was full enough of his own misfortunes, he ordered their heads brought in and asked how he had liked his entertainment.[6] The wretched man did not lack words; his mouth did not lock shut: "At the king's table," he said, "every dinner is pleasant." What did he gain by this flattery? Only that he was not invited to the leftovers. I do not forbid a father to condemn his king's deed; I do not forbid him to seek a punishment worthy of so savage a monstrosity; but meanwhile I draw this conclusion: that even anger born of enormous evils can be hidden and forced into words that contradict it. This curbing of resentment is necessary, especially for those whose lot is this kind of life, who are called to the king's table: that is how one eats among them, how one drinks, how one answers; one must smile at the deaths of one's own. Whether life is worth so much we shall see; that is another question. We shall not console so grim a slave prison, we shall not urge men to bear the commands of butchers: we shall show that in every slavery the road to freedom lies open. A man who is free to end his miseries along with himself is sick in mind and wretched through his own fault. I will say both to the

man who has fallen in with a king who shoots arrows at his friends' hearts and to the man whose master feeds fathers on their children's flesh: "Why do you groan, madman? Why are you waiting for some enemy to avenge you by destroying your nation, or for a powerful king to fly to you from far away? Wherever you look, there is an end to your ills. Do you see that precipice? That way is the descent to freedom. Do you see that sea, that river, that well? Freedom sits there at the bottom. Do you see that tree, stunted, withered, barren? Freedom hangs from it. Do you see your throat, your neck, your heart? They are ways of escape from slavery. Are the ways out I show you too laborious, do they demand too much spirit and strength? Do you ask what the road to freedom is? Any vein in your body."

16 As long, at least, as nothing seems to us so unbearable that it drives us out of life, let us put away anger, whatever our condition. It is ruinous to those who serve; for all indignation only adds to its own torment, and the more defiantly it suffers commands, the heavier it feels them. So a wild beast, by struggling, tightens the noose; so birds, fluttering to shake off the birdlime, smear it over all their feathers. No yoke is so tight that it chafes the one who goes along with it less than the one who fights it: the one relief for great ills is to endure and to submit to one's necessities. But though restraint of the passions, and especially of this rabid and unbridled one, is useful to those who serve, it is more useful to kings: all is lost where fortune permits as much as anger urges, and a power that is exercised to the harm of many cannot stand long; for it is in danger when a common fear has united those who groan apart. So many kings have been slaughtered, sometimes by individuals, sometimes by whole peoples, when public resentment had driven them to pool their angers into one. And yet many have exercised anger as if it were a mark of royalty, like Darius, who was the first, after the power had been taken from the Magus, to rule

the Persians and a large part of the East. For when he had declared war on the Scythians, who hem in the East, and Oeobazus, an old nobleman, asked him to leave one of his three sons behind as a comfort to his father and to make use of the services of the other two, Darius promised more than he was asked: he said he would release them all to him, and he threw them down dead before their parent's eyes, as though he would have been cruel if he had taken them all away. But how much more obliging Xerxes was! When Pythius, the father of five sons, asked him to excuse one from service, Xerxes let him choose the one he wanted, then had the one he had chosen torn in two, set the halves on either side of the road, and purified his army with this victim.[7] So he had the end he deserved: defeated, routed far and wide, seeing his ruin strewn everywhere, he walked among the corpses of his own men.

17 Such was the fierceness in anger of barbarian kings, whom no learning, no culture of letters had touched. I will give you one from Aristotle's own lap, King Alexander, who at a banquet ran Clitus through, his dearest friend, raised with him, and did it with his own hand, because Clitus flattered too little and was slow to pass from being a Macedonian and a free man into Persian slavery. And Lysimachus, who was just as close to him, he threw to a lion. Was this Lysimachus, then, who by some good fortune escaped the lion's teeth, any milder for that when he became king himself? For he mutilated his friend Telesphorus of Rhodes all over, cutting off his ears and nose, and kept him for a long time in a cage, feeding him like some new and unheard-of animal, since the deformity of his hacked and mutilated face had lost all human look;[8] add to this hunger and filth and the squalor of a body left in its own excrement; besides, with his knees and hands calloused, since the narrowness of the place forced him to use them as feet, and his sides ulcerated from rubbing, his shape was no less foul than frightening to those who came to see him, and, made a monster by his punish-

ment, he had lost even pity. Yet though the man who suffered these things was most unlike a human being, the man who did them was more unlike one.

18 If only that savagery had stayed among foreign examples, and the barbarity of punishments and angers had not passed into Roman ways along with other imported vices! Marcus Marius, to whom the people had set up statues in every street, to whom they made offerings of incense and wine, Lucius Sulla ordered to have his legs broken, his eyes gouged out, his tongue and hands cut off, and, as if he could kill him as many times as he wounded him, he tore him slowly, limb by limb.[9] Who was the agent of this command? Who but Catiline, already training his hands for every crime? He cut him to pieces before the tomb of Quintus Catulus, an outrage to the ashes of that gentlest of men, above which a man of bad example, yet popular, and loved not so much undeservedly as too much, shed his blood drop by drop. Marius deserved to suffer it, Sulla to order it, Catiline to do it; but the commonwealth did not deserve to take into its body the swords of enemies and avengers alike. Why do I search out old history? Just recently Gaius Caesar,[10] had Sextus Papinius, whose father was a former consul, Betilienus Bassus, his own quaestor and the son of his own procurator, and others, both senators and Roman knights, flogged and tortured on a single day, not to get evidence but for his amusement. Then he was so unable to bear putting off his pleasure, a huge pleasure that his cruelty demanded without delay, that, walking with matrons and other senators on the terrace of his mother's gardens (which separates the colonnade from the riverbank), he beheaded some of them by lamplight. What was the hurry? What danger, private or public, did a single night threaten? How little it would have cost to wait for daylight, at least, so as not to kill senators of the Roman people in his slippers!

19 How arrogant his cruelty was is relevant to know, though I may seem to some to wander and go off the road; but this itself will be part of an anger that rages beyond the usual. He had flogged senators: he himself made it possible to say, "It is often done." He had tortured them with all the grimmest things in the world: the cords, the ankle-irons, the rack, fire, his own face. And here the answer will be: "A great matter, to be sure! A man who was planning to butcher the whole senate, who wished that the Roman people had a single neck so that he could gather his crimes, spread over so many places and times, into one blow and one day, parceled out three senators like worthless slaves between whips and flames!" What is so unheard of as an execution by night? Robberies are usually hidden in the dark, but punishments, the better known they are, do more good as an example and a correction. And here I will be answered: "What you so marvel at is everyday for that beast; for this he lives, for this he lies awake, for this he works by lamplight." Certainly no one else will be found who ordered that all those he had sentenced to punishment should have their mouths shut with a sponge stuffed in, so that they could not utter a sound. Who about to die was ever not left the means to groan? He was afraid that their last agony would send out some too-free word, that he might hear something he did not want to; and he knew that there were countless things nobody would dare throw in his face except a man about to perish. When sponges could not be found, he ordered the poor wretches' clothes torn and the rags stuffed into their mouths. What savagery is this? Let a man draw his last breath; give the departing soul a place to leave by; let it leave by some way other than a wound. It would take long to add that he also finished off the fathers of the men he had killed, that same night, sending centurions round to their houses; that is, being a man of pity, he freed them from mourning. For it is not my purpose to describe Gaius's savagery

but anger's, which does not only rage man by man but tears whole nations apart, and lashes cities and rivers and things beyond all feeling of pain.

20 So the king of the Persians cut off the noses of a whole people in Syria, which is how the place got its name, Rhinocolura. Do you think he showed mercy because he did not cut off their whole heads? He enjoyed a new kind of punishment. Something of the same kind the Ethiopians would also have suffered, who are called Macrobians because of the great length of their lives.[11] Against them, because they had not held out their hands, palms up, to receive slavery, and had given free answers to the envoys sent to them, answers that kings call insolent, Cambyses raged, and without providing supplies, without scouting the routes, he dragged his whole crowd of fighting men through trackless, parched country. Within the first stage of the march they lacked necessities, and the region, barren, uncultivated, and unknown to human foot, supplied nothing. At first the tenderest leaves and the tops of trees staved off hunger, then hides softened by fire and whatever necessity had made into food; when, among the sands, even roots and grasses had given out and a wilderness empty even of animals appeared, they chose every tenth man by lot and had a food more savage than hunger. Anger still drove the king headlong, when he had lost part of his army and eaten part, until he was afraid that he too would be called to the lot: then at last he gave the signal to retreat. All the while those choice birds were being kept for him, and his dining equipment was carried on camels, while his soldiers drew lots for who should die miserably and who should live worse.

21 This king was angry with a nation both unknown and undeserving, but at least able to feel it; Cyrus was angry with a river. When he was hurrying to war, intending to besiege Babylon, a war in which everything turns on opportunities, he tried to ford the Gyndes, a broad river, which is barely safe even when it has felt

the summer and has sunk to its lowest. There one of the white horses that used to draw the royal chariot was swept away, and this greatly upset the king; so he swore that he would reduce that river, which carried off the king's retinue, to such a state that even women could cross it on foot. Then he moved his whole war equipment there and kept at the work until he had cut the channel by one hundred and eighty trenches, scattered it into three hundred and sixty streams, and left it dry, the waters flowing off in different directions.[12] So he lost time, a great loss in great matters, and the soldiers' ardor, which useless labor broke, and the chance of attacking the enemy unprepared, while he waged against a river the war he had declared on an enemy. This frenzy (for what else would you call it?) has touched Romans too. For Gaius Caesar destroyed a most beautiful villa near Herculaneum because his mother had once been held under guard there, and by this he made its fate famous; for while it stood we used to sail past it, and now people ask why it was destroyed.[13]

22 We should think, too, both of these examples, which you should avoid, and of those, on the other side, which you should follow: examples of moderation and mildness, in men who lacked neither cause for anger nor power to avenge. What would have been easier for Antigonus[14] than to order two common soldiers led off, who, leaning against the king's tent, were doing what men do both most dangerously and most gladly: speaking ill of their king? Antigonus had heard everything, since only a curtain stood between the speakers and the listener; he moved it gently and said, "Move farther off, or the king will hear you." The same man, one night, when he overheard some of his soldiers calling down every curse on the king for leading them on that march and into hopeless mud, went up to those who were struggling most, and when he had pulled them out, without their knowing who was helping them, he said, "Now curse Antigonus, by whose fault you

fell into these miseries, but wish well to the man who led you out of this swamp." The same man bore the abuse of his enemies as mildly as that of his own citizens. So when some Greeks were besieged in a tiny fort and, trusting in their position, despised the enemy and made many jokes about Antigonus's ugliness, mocking now his short stature, now his flattened nose, he said, "I am glad, and I hope for some good fortune, if I have Silenus in my camp." When he had tamed these wits by hunger, he treated the captives this way: those useful for military service he assigned to his cohorts, the rest he put up for auction; and he said he would not have done so if it were not good for men with such bad tongues to have a master.

23 His grandson was Alexander, who used to hurl his spear at his guests, who, of the two friends I mentioned a little earlier, threw one to a wild beast and the other to himself. Of these two, however, the one who was thrown to the lion lived. Alexander did not have this vice from his grandfather, nor even from his father; for if Philip had any other virtue, he had also the endurance of insults, a great instrument for protecting a kingdom.[15] Democharés, called Parrhesiastes, the Outspoken, for his excessive and impudent tongue, had come to him among other envoys of the Athenians. When Philip had heard the embassy kindly, he said, "Tell me what I can do that would please the Athenians." Democharés broke in: "Hang yourself." The bystanders were indignant at so inhuman an answer; Philip told them to be quiet and to send that Thersites away safe and unharmed. "But you," he said, "you other envoys, tell the Athenians that those who say such things are much more arrogant than those who hear them said and let them go unpunished."

The deified Augustus, too, did and said many things worth remembering, from which it is clear that anger did not rule him. Timagenes, the historian, had said certain things against him, cer-

tain things against his wife and his whole house, and his words had not been wasted; for reckless wit travels further and stays on people's lips.[16] The emperor often warned him to use his tongue more moderately; when he persisted, he barred him from his house. Afterward Timagenes grew old as a guest in the household of Asinius Pollio, and the whole city fought over him: the emperor's house, closed to him, shut no other door. He gave public readings of the histories he had written afterward, and the books that contained the deeds of Caesar Augustus he threw into the fire; he carried on a feud with the emperor: no one feared his friendship, no one fled from him as from a man struck by lightning; someone was found to offer his lap to a man falling from so high. The emperor bore this, as I said, patiently, not even moved by the fact that Timagenes had laid hands on his praises and his achievements; he never complained to his enemy's host. He said only this to Asinius Pollio: "You are keeping a wild beast." Then, when Pollio began to make his excuses, he stopped him and said, "Enjoy him, my dear Pollio, enjoy him!" And when Pollio said, "If you order it, Caesar, I will bar him from my house at once," he said, "Do you think I would do that, when it was I who reconciled you?" For Pollio had once been angry with Timagenes and had had no other reason for stopping than that the emperor had begun.

24 So let each man say to himself, whenever he is provoked: "Am I more powerful than Philip? Yet he was abused with impunity. Do I have more power in my own house than the deified Augustus had in the whole world? Yet he was content to withdraw from the man who abused him." Why should I make my slave pay with the lash and the shackles for an answer too loud, a look too defiant, a muttering that does not even reach me? Who am I, that it should be a sin to offend my ears? Many have pardoned their enemies: shall I not pardon the lazy, the careless, the chatterers? Let age excuse a child, sex a woman, freedom a stranger, familiarity a

member of the household. He is offending now for the first time: let us think how long he has pleased us. He has often offended at other times too: let us bear what we have long borne. He is a friend: he did what he did not mean to; an enemy: he did what he had to. Let us give way to the wiser man and excuse the more foolish; whoever it is, let us answer ourselves for him: that even the wisest men do much wrong; that no one is so circumspect that his care does not sometimes fail him; no one so mature that chance does not drive his gravity into some hotter act; no one so afraid of giving offense that he does not fall into it while trying to avoid it.

25 Just as a man of small account has found comfort in misfortune in seeing that the fortune of great men, too, totters, and as a man weeps for his son in his corner with a calmer mind once he has seen bitter funerals go out even from the palace, so a man bears it with a calmer mind to be hurt by someone, despised by someone, when it occurs to him that no power is so great that wrong does not run up against it. And if even the most prudent go wrong, whose error does not have a good excuse? Let us look back on how often in our youth we were not careful enough in our duties, not modest enough in our talk, not temperate enough with wine. If he is angry, let us give him time to see what he has done: he will punish himself. Finally, suppose he deserves punishment: there is no reason for us to get even with him. This will not be in doubt: whoever has looked down on those who provoke him has lifted himself out of the crowd and stands higher. It is the mark of true greatness not to feel a blow. So a huge wild beast turns slowly to look at barking dogs; so the wave dashes in vain against a great rock. The man who does not get angry has stood firm, unshaken by the wrong; the man who gets angry has been moved. But the man I have just placed above every misfortune holds the highest good in a kind of embrace, and answers not only man but Fortune

herself: “Do whatever you like, you are too small to cloud my calm. Reason forbids it, and to reason I have given my life to govern. Anger will harm me more than the wrong. Why more? The wrong has a fixed limit; how far anger will carry me is uncertain.”

26 “I cannot bear it,” you say; “it is hard to put up with a wrong.” You are lying; for who cannot bear a wrong who can bear anger? Add now that what you are doing is bearing both anger and the wrong. Why do you bear a sick man’s rage, a madman’s words, children’s impudent hands? Because, of course, they seem not to know what they are doing. What difference does it make which flaw makes a person unwise? Lack of wisdom is an equal defense for all. “What, then?” you say. “Will he get away with it?” Suppose you wanted him to: still he would not; for the greatest punishment for doing a wrong is to have done it, and no one is more heavily punished than the man handed over to the torture of remorse. Next, we must look to the condition of human affairs, so as to be fair judges of everything that happens; and he is unfair who blames individuals for a vice common to all. An Ethiopian’s color does not mark him out among his own people, nor among the Germans does red hair gathered into a knot disgrace a man: you will judge nothing remarkable or ugly in one man that is common to his nation. And the things I have mentioned are defended by the custom of one region, one corner of the world: see now how much more justly pardon is given in things spread through the whole human race. We are all thoughtless and improvident, all unreliable, querulous, ambitious—why do I hide the public sore with gentler words?—we are all bad. So whatever is blamed in another, each of us will find in his own breast. Why do you remark on this man’s pallor, that man’s leanness? It is a plague. So let us be gentler with one another: we are bad men living among bad men. One thing can make us calm: a pact of mutual forbearance. “He has already harmed me; I have not yet harmed him.” But perhaps you have

already hurt someone; you will hurt someone. Do not judge by this hour or this day; look at the whole disposition of your mind: even if you have done no wrong, you are capable of it.

27 How much better it is to heal a wrong than to avenge it! Revenge takes up a great deal of time; it exposes itself to many wrongs while it smarts over one; we all stay angry longer than we are hurt. How much better to go the other way and not set vices against vices! Would anyone seem quite in his right mind if he kicked back at a mule and bit a dog? "But those," you say, "do not know they are doing wrong." First, how unfair is the man in whose eyes being human hurts someone's chance of pardon! Next, if other animals are exempt from your anger because they lack judgment, put anyone who lacks judgment in the same place; for what does it matter that he has other qualities unlike dumb animals, if he has the one that excuses dumb animals in every wrong they do, the darkness of the mind? He has done wrong: is this the first time? Is this the last? There is no reason to believe him even if he says, "I will not do it again": he will do wrong, and someone else will wrong him, and his whole life will be tossed about among errors. What is ungentle must be handled gently. What is usually said to most effect in mourning will be said in anger too: will you stop some day, or never? If some day, how much better to leave anger than to be left by it! Or will this agitation last forever? Do you see what an unpeaceful life you are sentencing yourself to? For what will it be like for a man always swelling with rage? Add now that, when you have worked yourself up thoroughly and kept renewing the causes that goad you, anger will leave of its own accord, and time will drain its strength: how much better that it should be conquered by you than by itself!

28 You are angry with this man, then with that one; with slaves, then with freedmen; with parents, then with children; with acquaintances, then with strangers; for there are always causes

enough everywhere unless a mind comes forward to plead for mercy. Frenzy will sweep you from here to there, from there somewhere else, and as new provocations keep arising, the rage will never break off. Come, unhappy man, will you ever love? Oh, what good time you are wasting on a bad thing! How much better it would be now to win friends, soften enemies, serve the state, give your effort to your household affairs, than to look around for what harm you can do to someone, what wound you can inflict on his rank or his estate or his body, when you cannot manage that without struggle and danger, even if you clash with an inferior! Suppose you get him in chains, exposed to your will and to every kind of suffering: often the excessive force of the striker has put a joint out, or left a sinew stuck in the teeth it broke; irascibility has crippled many, disabled many, even when it found material that could not fight back. Add now that nothing is born so weak that it dies without danger to the one who crushes it: sometimes pain, sometimes chance makes the weak equal to the strongest. What of the fact that most of the things we are angry about offend us more than they harm us? Yet there is a great difference between someone's thwarting my will and his failing to support it, between his snatching something away and his not giving it. And yet we rate it the same whether someone takes away or refuses, whether he cuts off our hope or delays it, whether he acts against us or for himself, out of love for another or hatred of us. Some, indeed, have reasons for standing against us that are not only just but honorable: one is protecting a father, another a brother, another his country, another a friend; yet we do not forgive them for doing what we would condemn them for not doing; indeed, and this is incredible, we often think well of the deed and badly of the doer. But by Hercules, a great and just man looks up to the bravest of his enemies, the most stubborn for the freedom and safety of his

country, and wishes that such a citizen, such a soldier, could be his.

29 It is shameful to hate the man you praise; but how much more shameful to hate someone for the very thing that makes him deserve pity: if a captive, suddenly thrust down into slavery, holds on to the remnants of his freedom and does not run nimbly to mean and toilsome services; if, sluggish from idleness, he cannot keep pace on foot with his master's horse and carriage; if sleep has overcome him, worn out by night watch after night watch; if he refuses work on the farm, or does not take it on vigorously, having been moved from the holiday slavery of the city to hard labor! Let us distinguish whether someone cannot or will not: we shall acquit many if we begin to judge before we get angry. As it is, we follow the first impulse, and then, however empty the things that roused us, we persist, so as not to seem to have begun without cause; and, what is most unjust of all, the injustice of our anger makes us more stubborn; for we hold on to it and increase it, as if being fiercely angry proved that we were justly angry.

30 How much better to look closely at the beginnings themselves, how trivial they are, how harmless! What you see happen in dumb animals you will catch in man as well: we are disturbed by trifles and empty things. A red color excites a bull, an asp rears up at a shadow, a cloth provokes bears and lions; everything that is fierce and rabid by nature is thrown into a panic by empty things. The same happens to restless and stupid natures: they are struck by mere suspicions, so much so that sometimes they call modest benefits wrongs; and in these lies the most frequent, certainly the bitterest, material for irascibility. For we are angry with those dearest to us because they have done less for us than we imagined, and less than others received, though there is a ready remedy for both. He has favored someone else more: let us enjoy our own without comparing; no one will ever be fortunate who is tor-

mented by someone more fortunate. I have less than I hoped: but perhaps I hoped for more than I should have. This is the part most to be feared; from here the most ruinous angers are born, angers that will attack everything most sacred. The deified Julius was killed by more friends than enemies, friends whose insatiable hopes he had not satisfied. He wanted to, certainly (for no one ever used a victory more generously; from it he claimed nothing for himself but the power to give away), but how could he satisfy such shameless desires, when every one of them coveted as much as only one man could have? So he saw his fellow soldiers with swords drawn around his chair: Tillius Cimber, a little earlier the keenest defender of his party, and others who became Pompeians only after Pompey was dead. It is this that has turned kings' own weapons against them and driven their most loyal men to plot the death of those for whom and before whom they had vowed to die.

31 No one who looks at what others have is pleased with his own: that is why we are angry even with the gods, because someone is ahead of us, forgetting how many people are behind us, and how great a mass of envy follows at the back of the man who envies a few. Yet such is men's insatiability that, however much they have received, it counts as a wrong that they could have received more. "He gave me the praetorship, but I had hoped for the consulship; he gave me the twelve fasces, but did not make me an ordinary consul; he was willing to have the year dated by my name, but I still lack a priesthood; I was co-opted into a college, but why only one? He crowned my career, but contributed nothing to my estate; he gave me what he had to give to somebody; out of his own pocket he gave nothing."[17] Rather, give thanks for what you have received; wait for the rest and be glad you are not yet full: it is one of life's pleasures that something remains to hope for. You have outstripped everyone: rejoice that you are first in your friend's mind. Many outstrip you: consider how many more you

are ahead of than behind. You ask what your greatest fault is? You keep false accounts: you value what you have given highly, what you have received low.

32 Let different considerations deter us in different cases: with some people let us be afraid to get angry, with some ashamed, with some too proud. A great thing, no doubt, we shall have done if we send some poor wretch of a slave to the slave prison! Why are we in such a hurry to flog him at once, to break his legs on the spot? That power will not perish if it is put off. Let the time come when we are the ones giving the orders: now we would be speaking at anger's command; when it has gone, then we shall see what that dispute is worth. For this is where we go wrong most: we come to the sword, to capital punishment, and we avenge with chains, prison, and hunger a thing that should be corrected with lighter lashes. "So," you say, "you are telling us to see how petty, pitiful, and childish all the things are by which we think ourselves hurt!" I would indeed advise nothing more strongly than to take on a mighty spirit and to see how low and abject these things are for which we go to law, run about, and pant, things that no one whose thoughts are on anything lofty or magnificent should even glance back at.

33 Over money there is the most shouting: money wears out the courts, sets fathers and sons at odds, mixes poisons, hands swords to assassins and legions alike; it is smeared with our blood; because of it the nights of wives and husbands ring with quarrels, crowds press around the tribunals of magistrates, kings rage and plunder and overturn cities built by the long labor of centuries, to search for gold and silver in the ashes of cities. It is worth looking at the money chests lying in a corner: these are what eyes are shouted out of their sockets for, what makes the basilicas ring with the din of lawsuits, why judges are summoned from distant regions to sit and decide whose avarice is the more just. What if it

is not even for a chest of money but for a handful of copper or a denarius charged to his account by a slave that an old man, about to die without an heir, bursts with rage? What if, for interest of a tenth of a percent, a sickly moneylender with twisted feet and hands no longer fit for counting shouts and, through summonses to court, claims his coppers in the very fits of his disease? If you were to bring me all the money from all the mines we are sinking deepest right now, if you threw into the open whatever treasure lies hidden, as avarice puts back under the earth what it had wickedly dug out, I would not think that whole heap worth the frown of a good man. With how much laughter we should follow the things that draw tears from us!

34 Come now, go through the rest: food and drink and the elegances prepared for them out of vanity, insulting words, gestures not respectful enough, stubborn beasts of burden and lazy slaves, suspicions and malicious readings of other people's words, by which the gift of speech to man comes to be counted among nature's wrongs: believe me, the things over which we blaze up so far from lightly are light, the sort of things that drive children to brawls and squabbles. None of the things we do so gloomily is serious, none is great; that, I say, is the source of your anger and madness: you rate small things highly. This man wanted to take an inheritance from me; this one slandered me to a man I had long courted in hope of a legacy; this one coveted my mistress: what ought to have been a bond of love, wanting the same thing, becomes a cause of strife and hatred. A narrow road causes fights among those passing through; a broad, wide-open road does not bring even whole peoples into collision: the things you strive for, because they are small and cannot pass to one man unless snatched from another, stir up fights and quarrels among those who want the same things.

35 You are indignant that your slave has answered back, and your freedman, your wife, your client; and then you, the same man, complain that freedom has been taken from the state, when you have taken it away at home. Again, if he kept silent when questioned, you call it defiance. Let him speak, and keep silent, and laugh! "In front of his master?" you say. No: in front of the father of the household. Why do you shout? Why do you bellow? Why do you call for the whip in the middle of dinner because the slaves are talking, because, where there is a crowd as big as a public meeting, there is not the silence of a wilderness? You have ears for this purpose, that they should take in not only what is tuneful and soft, sweetly drawn out and well composed: you must hear laughter as well as weeping, flattery as well as quarrels, good news as well as bad, the voices of men as well as the roaring and barking of animals. Why, poor wretch, do you start in terror at the shout of a slave, at the clang of bronze or the banging of a door? Delicate as you are, you will have to hear thunder. Apply what has been said about the ears to the eyes, which suffer no less from fastidiousness if they have been badly trained: they are offended by a stain and by dirt, by silver not bright enough, by a pool not clear to the bottom. These same eyes, of course, which can bear only marble that is variegated and gleaming with fresh polish, only a table marked with close-set veins, which at home want to tread on nothing less precious than gold, look with perfect calm, out of doors, on rough and muddy lanes, on most of the people they meet unwashed, on the walls of tenements eaten away, cracked, and crooked. What else is it, then, that keeps these things from offending them in public but lets them upset them at home, than an opinion that is fair and patient out there and peevish and querulous at home?

36 All the senses must be brought to firmness; they are by nature able to endure, if the mind stops corrupting them, and the

mind must be called every day to render its account. Sextius[18] used to do this: at the end of the day, when he had retired for the night's rest, he would question his mind: "What evil of yours have you healed today? What vice have you resisted? In what part are you better?" Anger will cease, or grow more moderate, when it knows that every day it must come before a judge. Is anything finer, then, than this habit of sifting through the whole day? What sleep follows this review of oneself, how calm, how deep and free, when the mind has been either praised or admonished, and, as its own secret observer and censor, has examined its own conduct! I use this power and every day plead my case before myself. When the light has been taken away and my wife, who knows my habit by now, has fallen silent, I search through my whole day and go back over what I did and said; I hide nothing from myself, I pass over nothing. For why should I fear any of my mistakes, when I can say: "See that you do not do that again; this time I forgive you. In that discussion you spoke too combatively: from now on, do not argue with the ignorant; those who have never learned do not want to learn. You admonished that man more freely than you should have, and so you did not correct him but offended him: in the future, see not only whether what you say is true, but whether the man you say it to can bear the truth. A good man is glad to be admonished; the worse a man is, the more bitterly he takes correction.

37 "At a dinner party certain people's jokes and words aimed to hurt you touched you: remember to avoid common company; license is looser after wine, because not even the sober have any shame. You saw your friend angry with the doorkeeper of some lawyer or rich man because he had turned him away as he was coming in, and you yourself got angry on his behalf with the lowest of slaves: are you going to be angry, then, with a chained dog? He too, when he has barked a lot, grows tame when food is thrown to him. Stand farther back and laugh! Now that fellow thinks he is

somebody because he guards a threshold besieged by a crowd of litigants; now the man who lies inside is fortunate and lucky, and thinks a door hard to get through is the sign of a happy and powerful man: he does not know that the hardest door is the prison's. Settle it in your mind in advance that you will have to endure many things: is anyone surprised to be cold in winter, seasick at sea, jolted on the road? The mind is strong against what it comes prepared for. Given a less honorable place at table, you began to be angry with your host, with the slave who gave out the invitations, with the man himself who was put above you: madman, what does it matter what part of the couch you lie on? Can a cushion make you more honorable or more disgraceful? You looked at someone unkindly because he spoke ill of your talent: do you accept this law? Then Ennius, whom you do not enjoy, would hate you, and Hortensius would declare feuds against you, and Cicero, if you laughed at his poems, would be your enemy. Are you willing, as a candidate, to accept the votes calmly?"

38 Someone has insulted you: surely not more grossly than Diogenes the Stoic philosopher was insulted, when, just as he was lecturing on anger, an impudent young man spat on him? He bore it gently and wisely: "I am not angry," he said, "but I am not sure, all the same, that I ought not to be." How much better our Cato! He was pleading a case when Lentulus, that factious and uncontrolled man of our fathers' time, worked up as much thick spittle as he could and spat it right in the middle of his forehead; Cato wiped his face and said, "I will assure everyone, Lentulus, that people are wrong when they say you have no mouth (*os*)."[19]

39 We have now succeeded, Novatus, in settling the mind well: either it does not feel irascibility or it is above it. Let us see how we may soothe another's anger; for we want not only to be healthy ourselves but to heal.

Anger in its first stage we shall not dare to soothe with speech: it is deaf and out of its mind; we shall give it room. Remedies do good when the illness abates; we do not touch eyes while they are swollen, for moving them would only provoke the stiff inflammation, nor other ills while they are at their height: the beginnings of diseases are cured by rest. "How little good your remedy does," you say, "if it calms an anger that is stopping of its own accord!" First, it makes it stop sooner; next, it keeps watch so that it does not relapse; and the very onrush it does not dare to soothe, it will outwit: the healer will remove all the instruments of revenge, will pretend to be angry, so that, as a helper and companion in resentment, he may carry more weight in counsel; he will contrive delays and, while he looks for a greater punishment, put off the present one. By every art he will give the frenzy rest: if the anger is more violent, he will strike into it a shame or a fear it cannot resist; if weaker, he will bring in conversation that is either pleasant or new and draw it off with curiosity. They say that a doctor, when he had to treat a king's daughter and could not do it without the knife, slipped in a scalpel hidden in a sponge while he was gently bathing her swollen breast: the girl would have fought the remedy if it had been applied openly; because she did not expect it, she bore the pain. Some things are cured only by deception.

40 To one man you will say, "Take care that your irascibility does not give your enemies pleasure"; to another, "Take care that your greatness of mind and the strength most people credit you with do not collapse. I am indignant myself, by Hercules, and can find no limit to my resentment, but we must wait for the right time; he will pay for it. Keep it in your mind: when you can, you will pay him back for the delay as well." But to rebuke a man who is angry, and to get angry with him in turn, is to incite him: you will approach him in various ways and gently, unless perhaps you are so great a person that you can crush the anger, as the deified

Augustus did when he was dining with Vedius Pollio.[20] One of Vedius's slaves had broken a crystal cup; Vedius ordered him seized, to die not even an ordinary death: he was to be thrown to the moray eels, huge ones, which he kept in a fishpond. Who would not think he did this out of luxury? It was savagery. The boy slipped out of their hands and fled to the emperor's feet, meaning to ask for nothing except to die some other way and not become food. The emperor was moved by the novelty of the cruelty and ordered him let go, and all the crystal cups broken before his eyes, and the fishpond filled in. That is how the emperor had to rebuke a friend; he used his power well: "Do you order men snatched from a banquet and torn apart with new kinds of punishment? If your cup has been broken, are a man's entrails to be pulled apart? Do you think so highly of yourself that you would order a man led off to his death where the emperor is?" So whoever has power enough to attack anger from a higher place may handle it roughly, but only anger of the kind I have just described: fierce, monstrous, bloodthirsty, which can no longer be cured unless it has come to fear something greater.

41 Let us give the mind the peace that constant meditation on wholesome precepts will give it, and good actions, and an intellect intent on the desire for the honorable alone. Let conscience be satisfied; let us not toil at all for reputation; let even a bad one follow, so long as we deserve well. "But the crowd admires spirited men, and the bold are held in honor, while the calm are taken for sluggish." At first sight, perhaps; but as soon as the evenness of a life has made people believe that this is not sluggishness of mind but peace, the same public reveres them and honors them. So this foul and hostile passion has nothing useful in it, but on the contrary every evil: sword and fire. Trampling on shame, it has stained its hands with slaughter, scattered the limbs of children, left noth-

ing free from crime, mindful of no glory, afraid of no infamy, past correction once it has hardened from anger into hatred.

42 Let us be free of this evil, cleanse the mind of it, and tear out by the roots what will grow again, however slight, wherever it has clung; and let us not moderate anger but remove it entirely—for what moderation can there be of a bad thing? And we can do it, if only we make the effort. Nor will anything help more than the thought of our mortality. Let each man say to himself and to another: "What good is it to declare feuds as though we were born to live forever, and squander the briefest span? What good is it to turn days that could be spent on honorable pleasure into someone's pain and torment? Our days do not allow for waste, and we have no time to lose. Why do we rush into battle? Why do we bring fights on ourselves? Why, forgetting our weakness, do we take up huge hatreds, and, fragile ourselves, rise up to break others? Soon a fever or some other ill of the body will forbid these feuds that we carry on with implacable minds; soon death will step between the fiercest pair and part them. Why do we make a commotion and throw our lives into disorder with our quarrels? Fate stands over our heads, reckons up the days as they perish, and comes nearer and nearer; the time you are setting aside for someone else's death is perhaps close to your own.

43 "Why not rather gather up your short life and make it peaceful for yourself and for everyone else? Why not rather make yourself loved by all while you live, and missed when you have gone? Why do you want to bring down that man who treats you too loftily? Why do you try with all your strength to crush that man who barks at you, a low and despised fellow, but sharp and troublesome to his betters? Why are you angry with your slave, your master, your king, your client? Wait a little: look, death is coming, which will make you equals. We often see, among the morning shows in the arena, a fight between a bull and a bear tied together;

when they have mauled each other, the man who will finish them off is waiting. We do the same: we provoke someone tied to us, when the end, and an early one, hangs over victor and vanquished alike. Let us rather spend whatever little remains in quiet and peace; let no one hate our corpse as it lies there. Often a shout of fire in the neighborhood breaks up a brawl, and the arrival of a wild beast parts the robber and the traveler: there is no time to wrestle with lesser evils when a greater fear has appeared. What have we to do with fighting and plots? Surely you do not wish the man you are angry with anything more than death? He will die even if you do nothing. You are wasting your effort if you want to do what is going to happen anyway. 'I do not necessarily want to kill him,' you say, 'but to punish him with exile, with disgrace, with loss.' I am more ready to forgive a man who wants to wound his enemy than one who wants to give him a blister; for that man's mind is not only bad but petty. Whether you are thinking of the ultimate punishments or of lighter ones, how short is the time in which either he may be tormented by his punishment or you may take a wicked joy in another's pain! Soon we shall spit out this breath. Meanwhile, while we draw it, while we are among men, let us cultivate humanity; let us be a cause of fear to no one, of danger to no one; let us despise losses, wrongs, abuse, and taunts, and bear brief annoyances with a great spirit: while we look back, as they say, and turn around, death will be upon us."

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1. Novatus: Seneca's elder brother, Lucius Annaeus Novatus, later known by his adoptive name Gallio; as proconsul of Achaea he appears in Acts 18.

2. Democritus of Abdera (fifth century BC), the atomist philosopher, wrote a treatise on contentment (*euthymia*).

3. Marcus Caelius Rufus (82–48 BC), orator and politician, pupil and friend of Cicero, who defended him in the speech *For Caelius*.

4. Speusippus, Plato's nephew, succeeded him as head of the Academy.

5. Cambyses, king of Persia (530–522 BC), son of Cyrus. The story of Praexaspes is told by Herodotus (3.34–35).

6. The king was Astyages, king of the Medes (Seneca says "of the Persians"), who punished Harpagus for sparing the infant Cyrus; Herodotus 1.117–119.

7. Both stories are in Herodotus: Darius and Oeobazus (4.84), Xerxes and Pythius the Lydian (7.38–39). The Magus is the impostor who seized the Persian throne in 522 BC, posing as Cambyses' brother.

8. Clitus, who had saved Alexander's life at the Granicus, was killed at Maracanda in 328 BC. Lysimachus, one of Alexander's officers, later became king of Thrace and Macedonia; the story of the lion is probably legend.

9. Marcus Marius Gratidianus, nephew of the great Marius, popular for a currency reform; he was killed in Sulla's proscriptions in 82 BC, at the tomb of Quintus Lutatius Catulus, whom the great Marius had driven to suicide in 87 BC.

10. Gaius Caesar: the emperor known as Caligula (reigned AD 37–41).

11. Rhinocolura (Greek, "cut-nose") lay on the border between Egypt and Syria. Macrobians is Greek for "long-lived"; Cambyses' failed expedition against them is told by Herodotus (3.17–25).

12. The Gyndes is a tributary of the Tigris; the story is in Herodotus (1.189).

13. Gaius's mother was Agrippina the Elder, whom Tiberius held under guard and later exiled.

14. Antigonus "the One-Eyed" (c. 382–301 BC), one of Alexander's generals and later king. Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, was pictured as squat and snub-nosed.

15. Seneca's slip: Alexander was not Antigonus's grandson; his father was Philip II of Macedon. Democharas was the nephew of Demosthenes; Thersites is the loud-mouthed railer of Homer's *Iliad*.

16. Timagenes of Alexandria, a historian brought to Rome as a captive in 55 BC. Gaius Asinius Pollio (76 BC–AD 4) was a consul, historian, and patron of letters. Augustus's remark is in Greek in the original.

17. The twelve fasces were the insignia of a consul. The ordinary consuls took office on January 1 and gave their names to the year; replacement consuls

served later in the year.

18. Quintus Sextius, a Roman philosopher of the age of Augustus, whose school mixed Stoic and Pythagorean teaching.

19. Diogenes of Babylon (second century BC), head of the Stoic school. Cato is Cato the Younger; Lentulus is probably Publius Cornelius Lentulus Sura, executed in 63 BC as a Catilinarian. Os means both “mouth” and “face,” and so also “impudence” or “eloquence.”

20. Publius Vedius Pollio (d. 15 BC), a rich Roman knight and friend of Augustus.

Consolation to Marcia

1 If I did not know, Marcia, that you have withdrawn as far from a woman's weakness of mind as from the other vices, and that your character is looked upon as a kind of model from the old days, I would not dare to stand in the way of your grief, a grief that even men cling to and brood over by choice; nor would I have conceived any hope that, at so unfavorable a time, before so hostile a judge, against so odious a charge, I could bring you to acquit your fortune. What gave me confidence was the strength of your mind, already tested, and your virtue, proved in a great trial.

It is well known how you conducted yourself toward your father, whom you loved no less than your children, except that you did not wish him to outlive you. And I am not sure you did not wish that too; for great devotion allows itself certain liberties against good custom. You did all you could to prevent the death of your father, Aulus Cremutius Cordus;[1] but once it was clear to you that, surrounded by the henchmen of Sejanus,[2] he had this one way of escape from slavery open to him, you did not favor his plan, but you gave in, defeated. You shed tears openly; you choked back your sobs, it is true, but you did not hide them behind a cheerful face; and you did this in an age when it was great devotion to do nothing undutiful. As soon as the change of times gave you some opening, you brought your father's genius, on which the punishment had been inflicted, back into men's use; you rescued him from the true death and restored to the public records the books which that bravest of men had written in his own blood. You did

the greatest service to Roman letters: a large part of them had been burned. The greatest service to posterity, to whom an uncorrupted record of events will come, one that cost its author dear. The greatest service to the man himself, whose memory flourishes and will flourish as long as there is any value in knowing Roman history, as long as there is anyone who wants to go back to the deeds of our ancestors, as long as there is anyone who wants to know what a Roman man is: what a man is who stays unconquered when every other neck has been bowed and forced under Sejanus's yoke, what a man is who is free in intellect, in spirit, in hand. By Hercules, the state would have suffered a great loss if you had not dug him out of the oblivion into which he had been thrown for two of the finest things there are, eloquence and freedom. He is read, he flourishes; taken into men's hands and hearts, he fears no lapse of years. But the crimes of those butchers, the only thing for which they have earned remembrance, will soon be forgotten too.

This greatness of mind of yours forbade me to consider your sex, forbade me to consider your face, which so many years of unbroken sorrow, once they had clouded it, have kept clouded. And see how little I mean to creep up on you or to rob your feelings by stealth: I have brought old ills back to your memory, and, so that you would know this wound too can be healed, I have shown you the scar of a wound just as great. Let others, then, handle you gently and flatter you; I have resolved to do battle with your grief, and I will stop those weary, worn-out eyes, which, if you want the truth, now weep more from habit than from longing. If possible, I will do it with you on the side of your own cure; if not, even against your will, though you hold and embrace your grief, which you have kept alive in place of your son. For what end will there be? Everything has been tried in vain: the exhausted exhortations of your friends, the influence of great men related to you.

Your studies, the good you inherited from your father, pass by deaf ears, a futile comfort, barely enough to distract you for a moment. Even time, that natural remedy which settles the greatest troubles, has lost its power in you alone. The third year is already passing, and in the meantime nothing of that first onrush has abated. Your mourning renews and strengthens itself daily; delay has given it a right of its own, and it has come to think it shameful to stop. Just as all vices settle in deep unless they are crushed as they rise, so too these sad and wretched things, which rage against themselves, end by feeding on their own bitterness, and grief becomes the perverse pleasure of an unhappy mind. I would have wished, then, to approach this cure in the early days; a gentler medicine might have checked its force while it was still rising: against what has grown inveterate the fight must be harder. Wounds too are easily healed while they are fresh from the blood; once they have festered and turned into an evil ulcer, they must be cauterized, opened to the bottom, and made to admit the probing fingers. I cannot now approach so hard a grief with deference or gently: it must be broken.

2 I know that all who wish to counsel someone begin with precepts and end with examples. It pays to change this custom for once, since different people must be handled differently. Some are led by reason; others must be shown famous names and an authority that leaves the mind no freedom, dazzled as they are by what looks fine. I will put before your eyes two very great examples of your sex and your age: one, a woman who gave herself up to be swept away by grief; the other, a woman who, struck by the same misfortune and a greater loss, still did not give her ills a long dominion over her, but quickly put her mind back in its place. Octavia and Livia, the one Augustus's sister, the other his wife, lost young sons, each with the sure hope that her son would one day be emperor.[3] Octavia lost Marcellus. His uncle, who was also his

father-in-law, had begun to lean on him, to rest on him the burden of empire: a young man quick in spirit, powerful in talent, and yet, for one of his years and his wealth, remarkable for frugality and self-restraint; patient of toil, a stranger to pleasures, able to carry whatever his uncle might wish to lay on him and, so to speak, to build on him. His uncle had chosen well: here was a foundation that would give way under no weight. Through the whole of her life Octavia made no end of weeping and moaning; she admitted no words that brought her anything wholesome; she would not even let herself be distracted. Intent on one thing and fixed on it with her whole mind, she was all her life what she had been at the funeral. I do not say she lacked the courage to rise; she refused to be lifted, and judged it a second bereavement to let her tears go. She wanted no portrait of her dearest son, no mention of him made to her. She hated all mothers, and raged above all against Livia, because the good fortune promised to herself seemed to have passed to that woman's son. Most at home with darkness and solitude, not even turning to look at her brother, she rejected the poems composed to celebrate Marcellus's memory and the other honors that letters paid him, and shut her ears against all comfort. Withdrawn from her customary duties, hating the very good fortune of her brother's greatness, which shone too brightly around her, she buried and hid herself. With her children and grandchildren sitting beside her she did not put off her mourning dress, an insult to all her family, since with them alive she thought herself bereaved.

3 Livia had lost her son Drusus, who would have been a great emperor and was already a great general. He had gone deep into Germany and planted the Roman standards where it was barely known that Romans existed. He had died on campaign, and the enemy themselves honored him in his sickness with reverence and a mutual truce and did not dare to wish for what was to their

advantage. Added to this death, which he had met in the service of the state, was the immense longing of the citizens, the provinces, and all Italy; through Italy, as the towns and colonies poured out to perform the mournful office, his funeral procession was led all the way to the city, very like a triumph. His mother had not been allowed to take her son's last kisses and the dear words of his dying lips. She followed the remains of her Drusus on the long journey, harrowed by so many pyres blazing throughout Italy, as though she were losing him again each time; yet as soon as she had laid him in the tomb, she laid down her grief along with him, and grieved no more than was honorable, or fair, while the emperor was alive and well. In short, she never ceased to celebrate her Drusus's name, to keep him before her everywhere, in private and in public, to speak of him and to hear of him most gladly: she lived with his memory, which no one can keep and dwell with who has made it a sorrow to himself.

Choose, then, which example you think more commendable. If you want to follow the first, you will remove yourself from the number of the living. You will turn away from other people's children and from your own, and from the very son you long for; you will cross the path of mothers like an evil omen; you will reject honorable, permitted pleasures as unbecoming to your lot; you will cling to the daylight you hate and be the bitterest enemy of your own years, because they do not hurry you headlong and finish you as soon as possible; and you will show, the most shameful thing of all and the most foreign to a mind known for its better side, that you do not want to live and cannot die. If you apply yourself to the other example, that of a very great woman, and do so with more moderation and more gentleness, you will not live in misery or wear yourself down with torments. For what madness is it, for heaven's sake, to exact penalties from yourself for your unhappiness and to add to your own ills! The integrity and the

modesty of character you have kept all your life you will show in this matter too; for there is a kind of restraint in grieving as well. And that young man himself, so worthy to make you glad whenever he is named or thought of, you will set in a better place if he comes before his mother as he used to when he was alive, cheerful and full of joy.

4 Nor will I lead you to sterner precepts and bid you bear human things in an inhuman way, or dry a mother's eyes on the very day of the funeral. I will go with you before an arbiter, and the question between us will be this: should grief be great, or should it be endless? I have no doubt that the example of Julia Augusta, whom you cultivated as a friend, will please you more: she calls you to her counsel. In her first fever, when miseries are most impatient and fierce, she offered herself to be consoled by Areus, her husband's philosopher,[4] and she admitted that this had helped her greatly: more than the Roman people, whom she did not wish to sadden with her sadness; more than Augustus, who was staggering with one of his two props taken away and was not to be bowed further by the mourning of his family; more than her son Tiberius, whose devotion made her feel, in that bitter funeral wept over by whole nations, that she had lost nothing but a number. This, I suppose, was how he approached her, this his opening with a woman who guarded her reputation most carefully: "Up to this day, Julia, so far as I know, and I have been the constant companion of your husband, who knows not only what is given out in public but all the more secret movements of your minds, you have taken care that there should be nothing in you anyone could find fault with. And you have observed this not only in greater matters but in the smallest, so as to do nothing for which you would want rumor, the freest judge of rulers, to pardon you. I think nothing finer than for those placed at the very summit to grant pardon for many things and to ask it for none. So in this matter too you must

keep your habit, and commit nothing you would wish done less, or done otherwise.

5 "Next, I beg and implore you not to make yourself difficult and intractable to your friends. You must surely know that none of them knows how to behave, whether to say something about Drusus in your presence or nothing, for fear that forgetting a most illustrious young man may wrong him, or mentioning him may wrong you. When we have withdrawn and met by ourselves, we celebrate his deeds and his sayings with the regard he deserved; in your presence there is a deep silence about him. So you are missing the greatest of pleasures, your son's praises, which I do not doubt you would prolong into all eternity, if the power were given you, even at the cost of your life. So allow, no, seek out the conversations in which he is talked of, and offer open ears to your son's name and memory; and do not count it a burden, as others do, who in such a misfortune think it part of the ill to hear words of comfort. As it is, you have thrown your whole weight to one side, and, forgetting the better things, you look at your fortune from its worse side. You do not turn to your son's company and the pleasure of meeting him, to his sweet boyish endearments, to the progress of his studies: you dwell on that last face of things, and onto it, as though it were not ghastly enough in itself, you heap whatever you can. Do not, I beg you, covet the most perverse glory of all, that of seeming the unhappiest of women. Consider too that it is no great thing to bear yourself bravely in prosperity, when life goes on with a fair wind: a calm sea and an obliging wind do not show even a helmsman's skill; something adverse must strike him to prove his spirit. So do not give in; on the contrary, plant your step firmly and bear whatever burden has fallen on you from above, frightened only by the first crash of it. Nothing brings more reproach on Fortune than a calm mind." After this he showed her

the son who was still alive; he showed her grandchildren from the son she had lost.

6 It was your case, Marcia, that was argued there; it was by you that Areus sat. Change the name: it was you he consoled. But suppose, Marcia, that more has been snatched from you than any mother ever lost (I am not soothing you or making light of your calamity): if the fates can be conquered by weeping, let us pool our tears. Let every day pass in mourning, let sorrow consume the night without sleep; let hands be laid on a torn breast, let blows be aimed at the face itself, and let grief, if it will do any good, exercise itself in every kind of savagery. But if no beating of breasts calls the dead back, if a lot unmoved and fixed forever is changed by no misery, and death holds on to whatever it has taken, then let grief cease, since it is wasted. Let us steer ourselves, then, and not let that force carry us off course. A disgrace is the pilot who has had the rudder torn from his hands by the waves, who has abandoned the flapping sails and given the ship up to the storm; but even in shipwreck the pilot deserves praise whom the sea overwhelms still holding the helm and straining against it.

7 "But longing for one's own is natural." Who denies it, so long as it is moderate? For at the mere departure of those dearest to us, not only at their loss, there is an unavoidable sting, and even the firmest minds contract. But what opinion adds is more than what nature commanded. Look at dumb animals: how intense their longings are, and yet how brief. Cows are heard lowing for a day or two, and the wild, frantic running of mares lasts no longer. Wild beasts, when they have followed the tracks of their cubs and roamed the forests, when they have come back again and again to their plundered dens, put out their fury within a short time. Birds, after circling their empty nests with loud shrieks, are quiet a moment later and take to their flight again. No animal feels a long

longing for its young except man, who abets his own grief, and is affected not as much as he feels but as much as he has decided to.

And so that you may know that being broken by mourning is not natural: first, the same bereavement wounds women more than men, barbarians more than people of a peaceful and civilized nation, the uneducated more than the educated. Yet what has received its force from nature keeps the same force in everyone: clearly, what varies is not natural. Fire will burn people of every age and of every city, men as well as women; iron will show its power to cut in every body. Why? Because their powers were given them by nature, which makes no distinction of persons. Poverty, mourning, ambition: each person feels them differently, according to how habit has dyed him, and a frightening opinion formed in advance about things that are not to be feared makes him weak and unable to bear them.

8 Then again, what is natural does not lessen with delay; but grief is consumed by length of days. However stubborn it is, rising up daily and boiling over against every remedy, time, the most effective means of taming its ferocity, still wears it down. There remains in you even now, Marcia, an immense sorrow, and it seems to have grown hard already, no longer the agitated sorrow it was at first, but persistent and obstinate; yet this too the years will take from you little by little: whenever you are busy with something else, your mind will loosen. As it is, you keep watch over yourself; but it makes a great difference whether you allow yourself to grieve or order yourself to. How much better it suits the refinement of your character to make an end of mourning rather than wait for one, and not to wait for the day when grief stops against your will! Renounce it yourself.

9 "Why, then, are we so stubborn in lamenting ourselves, if it does not happen at nature's command?" Because we never picture any ill to ourselves before it comes; as though we were exempt

and had set out on a more peaceful road than others, we are not reminded by other people's misfortunes that misfortunes are common to all. So many funerals pass our house: we do not think of death. So many deaths of the young: we turn over in our minds our infants' coming of age, their military service, their succession to their father's estate. The sudden poverty of so many rich men falls before our eyes, and it never enters our minds that our own wealth too stands on slippery ground. So we necessarily fall harder: we are struck as though unawares; blows long foreseen land more softly. Do you want to know that you stand exposed to every blow, and that the weapons which have pierced others have quivered all around you? Imagine you are going up, half-armed, against some wall, or a position held by a large enemy force and hard to climb: expect a wound, and think that the stones flying down from above, and the arrows and javelins with them, are all aimed at your body. Whenever someone falls at your side or behind your back, cry out: "You will not deceive me, Fortune, nor catch me off guard or careless. I know what you are preparing: you struck someone else, but it was me you were aiming at." Who ever looked at his possessions as though he were about to lose them? Who among you ever dared to think of exile, of want, of mourning? Who, if he were advised to think of them, would not spit the thought out like an evil omen and bid it go onto the heads of his enemies, or of the untimely adviser himself? "I didn't think it would happen." Do you think anything will not happen which you know can happen, which you see has happened to many? Here is a splendid line, too good to have come from the stage:

"What can happen to anyone can happen to you."[5]

That man lost his children: you too can lose yours. That man was condemned: your innocence too is within range of the blow. This is the error that deceives us and unmans us, when we suffer

what we never foresaw we could suffer. He who has looked ahead to coming ills takes the force out of them when they arrive.

10 Whatever it is, Marcia, that glitters around us from outside, children, offices, wealth, spacious halls and vestibules packed with a crowd of clients left waiting at the door, a famous name, a wife of noble birth or great beauty, and everything else that hangs on uncertain and changeable chance, these are borrowed trappings, someone else's; none of them is given to us as a gift. The stage is dressed with props lent to us and due to go back to their owners; some will be taken back on the first day, some on the second, and few will stay to the end. So there is no reason for us to admire ourselves as though we were placed among our own possessions: we have received them on loan. The use and the enjoyment are ours, but the term is set by the giver who controls his gift. We must keep ready what was given us for no fixed date, and return it without complaint when it is called in: it is the worst kind of debtor who abuses his creditor. All our own, then, both those we hope will survive us by the law of birth and those whose most just wish is to go before us, we must love as though we had been promised nothing about their lasting forever, no, nothing about their lasting long. The mind must often be reminded to love things as things that will leave, rather, as things already leaving: whatever Fortune has given, possess it as though it came without a guarantee. Snatch the pleasures your children give, let your children enjoy you in turn, and drain every joy without delay: nothing is promised about tonight—I have granted too long an adjournment—nothing about this hour. We must hurry; the enemy is at our backs. Soon this company will be scattered, soon these fellowships will be broken up with a shout. Everything is being plundered: poor wretches, you do not know how to live in a rout.

If you grieve that your son has died, the fault lies with the time when he was born; for death was announced to him at his birth.

He was begotten under this law; this fate went with him straight from the womb. We have come into the kingdom of Fortune, a harsh and unconquerable kingdom, to suffer at her whim what we deserve and what we do not. She will abuse our bodies violently, insultingly, cruelly. Some she will burn with fire, applied as a punishment or as a remedy; some she will put in chains, a thing allowed now to an enemy, now to a fellow citizen; some she will toss naked on uncertain seas, and when they have wrestled with the waves she will not even cast them up on the sand or the shore, but will bury them in the belly of some enormous sea beast; others she will waste with every kind of disease and hold for a long time suspended between life and death. Like a capricious, wanton mistress careless of her slaves, she will go astray in her punishments and her rewards alike.

11 What need is there to weep over parts of life? All of life is cause for tears. New troubles will press on you before you have settled with the old. You women, then, who bear things without moderation, must above all learn moderation, and the strength of the human heart must be spread out against many griefs. And what is this forgetfulness of your own condition and of the common one? You were born mortal, and you gave birth to mortals. Did you, yourself a rotting, perishable body assailed again and again by disease, hope that from such frail matter you had carried something solid and eternal? Your son has died; that is, he has run his course to the end toward which the things you think more fortunate than your child are hurrying. To this end goes all that crowd, at unequal paces, which wrangles in the forum, applauds in the theaters, prays in the temples: what you love and revere and what you despise, one heap of ashes will make equal. This, surely, ⟨...⟩ that saying ascribed to the Pythian oracle: Know yourself.[6] What is man? A vessel that any knock, any toss will break. It does not take a great storm to scatter you: wherever you strike, you

come apart. What is man? A weak and fragile body, naked, defenseless by its own nature, in need of others' help, thrown open to all the insults of fortune; even when it has trained its arms well, it is food for any wild beast, a victim for anyone. It is woven of weak and fluid stuff, handsome only in its outward lines, unable to bear cold, heat, toil, and yet bound to rot from mere disuse and leisure; afraid of its own food, since it fails now for lack of food, now bursts from too much; anxious and fretful in its keeping, with a breath held on sufferance and clinging poorly, which a sudden fright or a loud, unexpected sound in the ears shakes out of it; forever feeding its own anxiety, flawed and useless. Do we wonder at death in this thing, which takes no more than a single sob? Does it need a great effort to bring it down? Smells, tastes, weariness, sleeplessness, drink, food, and the very things it cannot live without are deadly to it. Wherever it goes it is at once aware of its weakness; it cannot bear every climate; strange water, a breath of unfamiliar air, the slightest causes and upsets make it sick; it is rotten and ailing, and begins its life with weeping. And yet what tumults this contemptible creature stirs up, into what grand schemes it falls, forgetting its condition! It turns over immortal, eternal things in its mind and makes arrangements for grandsons and great-grandsons, while death crushes it in the middle of its long undertakings, and what is called old age is the round of a very few years.

12 Your grief, if there is any reason in it: does it look to its own troubles, or to those of the one who has died? Are you moved, in the loss of your son, because you received no pleasures from him, or because you could have received greater ones if he had lived longer? If you say you received none, you will make your loss more bearable; for people long less for things from which they had received no joy and gladness. If you admit that you received great pleasures, you ought not to complain of what was taken away but

to give thanks for what you were given. For the rearing itself brought you a large enough return on your labors; unless perhaps people who raise puppies and birds and the trifling playthings of the mind with the greatest care get some pleasure from the sight and touch and fawning of dumb creatures, while for those who raise children the rearing itself is not the reward of rearing. So even if his diligence brought you nothing, his care kept nothing safe for you, his prudence gave you no advice, the very fact that you had him, that you loved him, is the reward. "But it could have been longer, greater." Still, you were treated better than if it had never been granted you at all; for if the choice were offered, whether it is better to be fortunate for a short time or never, it is better for us to be given good things that will leave than none. Would you rather have had some degenerate who would merely fill the place and the name of a son, or a son as gifted as yours was, a young man early prudent, early devoted, early a husband, early a father, early attentive to every duty, early a priest, hurrying in all things? Hardly anyone is given good things both great and lasting; only a slow good fortune endures and goes on to the end. The immortal gods, not meaning to give you a son for long, gave you at once a son such as long years can hardly make.

You cannot even say that the gods singled you out as the one woman not allowed to enjoy her son. Cast your eyes over the whole crowd of those you know and those you do not: everywhere you will meet people who have suffered worse. Great generals have felt these things, rulers have felt them; the myths have not left even the gods exempt, I suppose so that it might lighten our bereavements that the divine too can fall. Look around, I say, at everyone: you will not name a house so wretched that it does not find comfort in a more wretched one. By Hercules, I do not think so ill of your character as to suppose you could bear your misfortune more lightly if I paraded a huge number of mourners before

you: a crowd of the wretched is a spiteful kind of comfort. Still, I will mention some, not so that you may learn that this commonly happens to people (it is absurd to collect examples of mortality), but so that you may learn there have been many who softened harsh things by bearing them calmly.

I will begin with the most fortunate. Lucius Sulla lost a son,[7] and that did not blunt either his malice or his fierce courage against enemies and citizens alike, nor make it seem that he had falsely taken the famous surname Felix, "the Fortunate," which he took after losing his son, fearing neither the hatred of men, whose sufferings paid for that too prosperous success, nor the resentment of the gods, whose reproach it was that Sulla was so fortunate. But let the question of what Sulla was go among the matters not yet judged (even his enemies will admit that he took up arms well and laid them down well); the point at issue here will stand: that is not the greatest evil which comes even to the most fortunate.

13 Let Greece not admire too much that father who, when his son's death was announced to him in the middle of a sacrifice, only ordered the flute player to be silent and took the garland from his head, and duly finished the rest. Pulvillus the pontiff did as much, when his son's death was announced to him as he was holding the doorpost and dedicating the temple on the Capitol.[8] He pretended not to hear it and pronounced the solemn words of the pontifical formula, with no groan interrupting the prayer, and won Jupiter's favor with his son's name still ringing in his ears. Do you think there ought to be some end to the mourning of a man whose first day and first onrush of grief did not draw him, a father, away from the public altars and the words of good omen? By Hercules, he was worthy of that memorable dedication, worthy of the highest priesthood, a man who did not stop worshiping the gods even when they were angry. Yet when he went home, his eyes too filled

with tears and he let out some words of lament; but once he had performed what custom required for the dead, he went back to that face he had worn on the Capitol.

Paullus, about the time of that most glorious triumph in which he drove Perseus in chains before his chariot, gave two sons in adoption and buried the two he had kept for himself.[9] What do you think the sons he kept were like, when Scipio was among those he lent? The Roman people did not look at Paullus's empty chariot without emotion. Yet he gave a speech to the assembly and thanked the gods for granting his prayer; for he had prayed that, if some price had to be paid to envy for so great a victory, it should be paid by his own loss rather than the state's. Do you see with how great a spirit he bore it? He congratulated himself on his bereavement. And whom could so great a change have shaken more? He lost his comforts and his supports at once. Yet Perseus did not get to see a sad Paullus.

14 Why should I lead you now through countless examples of great men, and search for the wretched, as though it were not harder to find the fortunate? For how many houses have stood intact in all their parts to the end, with nothing in them thrown into disorder? Take any single year and call over its magistrates: Lucius Bibulus, if you like, and Julius Caesar. You will see that between colleagues who were bitter enemies fortune was in harmony. Lucius Bibulus, a better man than a brave one, had two sons killed at the same time, and mocked besides by Egyptian soldiery, so that the agent of his loss was as much a thing to weep over as the loss itself. Yet Bibulus, who in his whole year of office had hidden at home to throw odium on his colleague, came out on the day after the double funeral was reported and went about his usual duties as general. Who can give less than one day to two sons? So quickly did he end his mourning for his children, a man who had mourned his consulship for a year. When Caesar was crossing

Britain and could not keep his good fortune within the bounds of the ocean, he heard that his daughter had died, and that she was drawing the fate of the state after her.[10] Already Gnaeus Pompey stood before his eyes, a man who would not bear calmly that anyone else should be great in the state, and who would set a limit to Caesar's rise, which he found oppressive even while it grew to their common advantage. Yet within three days Caesar was back at his duties as general, and he conquered his grief as quickly as he used to conquer everything.

15 Why should I recount to you the funerals of the other Caesars? Fortune seems to me to wound them now and then for this purpose, that even in this way they may serve the human race, by showing that not even those who are said to be born of gods and to be fathers of gods have their own fortune in their power as they have the fortune of others. The deified Augustus, having lost his children and his grandchildren, with the crowd of Caesars used up, propped up his empty house by adoption; yet he bore it as bravely as befitted one whose own cause was already being tried, and to whom it mattered most that no one should complain of the gods. Tiberius lost both the son he had begotten and the son he had adopted;[11] yet he himself delivered the eulogy for his son from the rostra, and stood in full view of the body laid out, with only a veil placed between to keep the pontiff's eyes from the corpse, and while the Roman people wept he did not change his expression. He let Sejanus, who stood at his side, see how patiently he could lose his own.

Do you see how great a number of the greatest men there are whom this misfortune, which lays everything low, has not spared, men on whom so many good qualities of mind, so many distinctions public and private, had been heaped? But this storm, clearly, makes its rounds, lays waste everything without choosing, and

drives all before it as its own. Have each of them render his accounts: no one has been born with impunity.

16 I know what you will say: "You have forgotten that you are consoling a woman; you cite examples of men." But who has said that nature dealt grudgingly with women's characters and narrowed their virtues? They have, believe me, equal vigor, an equal capacity for the honorable, if only they choose; they endure pain and toil as well as men do, if they are used to them. In what city, good gods, are we saying this? In the city where Lucretia and Brutus threw a king off the necks of the Romans: we owe our freedom to Brutus, Brutus to Lucretia. In the city where we all but enrolled Cloelia among the men for her remarkable daring, when she scorned both the enemy and the river: seated on an equestrian statue on the Sacred Way, the busiest place in Rome, Cloelia reproaches our young men, who climb into their cushioned litters, for going about like that in a city where we have given even women a horse. If you want me to cite examples of women who bore the loss of their own bravely, I will not go begging from door to door; from one family I will give you two Cornelias. First, the daughter of Scipio, the mother of the Gracchi. She acknowledged her twelve births by as many funerals; and with the others it is easy, since the state never noticed their births or their deaths; but Tiberius and Gaius, whom even a man who denies they were good will admit were great, she saw both killed and left unburied. Yet when people consoled her and called her wretched, she said: "I shall never say I am not fortunate, I who bore the Gracchi." The other Cornelia, mother of Livius Drusus, had lost that most illustrious young man of brilliant talent, as he walked in the footsteps of the Gracchi; he was killed in his own house with so many of his bills left unfinished, and his murderer was never known.[12] Yet she bore her son's bitter and unavenged death with as great a spirit as he had carried his laws. Will you now make your peace with for-

tune, Marcia, if she has not held back even from you the weapons she has hurled at the Scipios and at the mothers and daughters of the Scipios, the weapons with which she assails the Caesars?

Life is full of all kinds of misfortune, and beset by them; from them no one has a long peace, hardly even a truce. You had raised four children, Marcia. They say no weapon falls in vain that is hurled into a packed column: is it any wonder that so large a band could not get by without arousing envy and suffering loss? "But fortune was all the more unjust in that she did not merely snatch away my sons, she picked them out." Yet you should never call it a wrong to share equally with someone stronger. She has left you two daughters and their children; and the very son you mourn most (you have forgotten the first) she did not take from you entirely: you have two daughters by him, great burdens if you bear it badly, great comforts if you bear it well. Bring yourself to this: when you see them, let them remind you of your son and not of your grief. When his trees have been overturned, torn up by the roots by the wind or snapped off by the sudden twisting onrush of a whirlwind, the farmer nurses the offspring that is left from them, and at once sets out seeds and seedlings in place of those he has lost; and in a moment (for time is swift and quick for gains as for losses) they grow up more flourishing than the ones that were lost. Put these daughters of your Metilius in his place now, fill the empty place, and lighten one grief with a double comfort. It is indeed the nature of mortals that nothing pleases them more than what they have lost: we are less fair to what is left us because of our longing for what was snatched away. But if you are willing to reckon how much fortune spared you even in her savagery, you will know that you have more than comforts: look at all your grandchildren, your two daughters. Say this too, Marcia: "I would be moved if each person's fortune matched his character and ills

never befell the good; as it is, I see that, with no distinction made, the bad and the good are tossed about alike."

17 "But it is hard to lose a young man you have raised, who was already a protection and an honor to his mother and his father." Who denies it is hard? But it is human. You were born for this: to lose, to perish, to hope, to fear, to disturb others and yourself, both to fear death and to wish for it, and, worst of all, never to know what your true condition is.

If someone said to a person bound for Syracuse: "Learn beforehand all the troubles and all the pleasures of your coming journey, and then set sail. These are the things you can marvel at. First you will see the island itself, cut off from Italy by a narrow strait; it is agreed that it was once joined to the mainland, but the sea suddenly broke in and

"severed the Hesperian shore from the Sicilian."[13]

"Next you will see (for you will be allowed to skirt that most greedy whirlpool of the sea) the famous Charybdis of the stories, lying smooth as long as the south wind is still, but, if any stronger wind has blown from that quarter, sucking ships down into its huge, deep maw. You will see the fountain of Arethusa, most celebrated in song, a pool gleaming and clear to the very bottom, pouring out the iciest waters, whether it found them springing up there for the first time, or gives back a river that sank into the earth and ran whole beneath so many seas, kept safe from mixing with the inferior water. You will see the calmest harbor of all those that nature has placed, or human hands have improved, for the protection of fleets, so safe that not even the fury of the greatest storms finds any room there. You will see where the power of Athens was broken, where that natural prison, hewn out of the rock to an endless depth, held so many thousands of captives; you will see the great city itself, and a territory wider than the bounds of many cities, the mildest winters, and no day without the sun.

But when you have come to know all this, a heavy, unhealthy summer will spoil the benefits of the winter climate. Dionysius the tyrant will be there, the ruin of freedom, justice, and law, greedy for absolute power even after Plato, for life even after exile. Some he will burn, some he will flog, some he will have mutilated for a slight offense; he will summon males and females to his lust, and among the foul herds of his royal excess it will be too little for him to couple with two at once. You have heard what can tempt you and what can frighten you away: so either sail or stay." After this warning, if someone said he wanted to go to Syracuse, could he have any just complaint against anyone but himself, since he had not stumbled into these things but had come knowingly and with his eyes open?

Nature says to all of us: "I deceive no one. If you raise children, you may have handsome ones, and you may have deformed ones. Perhaps many will be born to you; one of them may as easily be the savior of his country as its betrayer. There is no reason to despair that they will be held in such esteem that no one will dare to speak ill of you on their account; but picture also that they may be so disgraceful that they themselves become a byword for abuse. Nothing forbids them to perform the last rites for you and to deliver your eulogy; but prepare yourself as though you were going to lay a child, or a young man, or an old man on the pyre; for years have nothing to do with it, since every funeral that a parent follows is untimely." If you raise children after these terms have been set out, you free the gods from all reproach, for they promised you nothing certain.

18 Come, now, apply this picture to your entrance into life as a whole. When you were deliberating whether to visit Syracuse, I set out for you whatever could delight you and whatever could offend you; now imagine that I come to advise you at your birth. "You are about to enter a city shared by gods and men, which embraces all

things, is bound by fixed and eternal laws, and keeps the heavenly bodies turning in their tireless offices. There you will see countless stars twinkling; you will see one star fill everything with light, the sun, which marks out the spaces of day and night in its daily course, and in its yearly course divides summers and winters still more evenly. You will see the moon take his place by night, borrowing a gentle, softened light from her meetings with her brother, now hidden, now hanging over the earth with her whole face, changing as she waxes and wanes, always unlike the night before. You will see five stars driving on different paths and striving against the headlong whirl of the universe; on their slightest motions hang the fortunes of nations, and the greatest things and the smallest are shaped according to whether a kindly or an unkindly star has come into play. You will marvel at the gathered clouds and the falling rain, the slanting thunderbolts and the crash of the sky. When, sated with the spectacle of things above, you lower your eyes to the earth, another form of things will receive you, wonderful in another way: here the level spread of plains stretching endlessly, there the peaks of mountains rising high on great, snowy ridges; the fall of rivers, and streams flowing from a single source both east and west; groves swaying on the topmost summits, and so many forests with their animals and the discordant chorus of birds; the varied sites of cities, and nations shut off by the difficulty of the ground, some withdrawing into steep mountains, others settling timidly around riverbanks, lakes, and valleys; crops helped by tillage, and trees that grow wild without a tiller; brooks winding gently through the meadows, lovely bays, and shores curving back into harbors; so many islands scattered over the vast deep, which break up the seas with their presence. And what of the gleam of stones and gems, and the gold that runs among the sands of rushing torrents, and the torches of fire bursting out in the middle of the land and again in the middle of the sea,

and the ocean, the bond of the lands, which cuts the continuity of nations with its three gulfs and surges in its vast license? Here you will see, swimming in waters that heave restlessly even without wind, animals larger than any on land, some heavy and moving under another's guidance, some swift and faster than galleys under full oars, some drinking in the waves and blowing them out again, to the great danger of those who sail past; here you will see ships seeking lands they do not know. You will see that human daring has left nothing untried, and you will be both a spectator of those who attempt great things and yourself a great part of them. You will learn and teach arts, some that equip life, some that adorn it, some that govern it. But there too will be a thousand plagues of body and of mind: wars and banditry and poisons and shipwrecks, the inclemencies of the climate and of the body, the bitter loss of those dearest to you, and death, whether easy or by way of punishment and torture, no one knows. Deliberate with yourself and weigh what you want: to come to those things you must go out by way of these." You will answer that you want to live. Why not? No, I think you will not come near a thing from which you would be sorry to have anything struck off! Live, then, on the terms agreed. "No one consulted us," you say. Our parents were consulted about us, and they, knowing the conditions of life, raised us to live on them.

19 But to come to the comforts, let us first see what is to be treated, then how. What moves a mourner is longing for the one he loved. In itself this is plainly bearable; for we do not weep for those who are absent, or will be absent as long as they live, although all our enjoyment of them has been taken from us along with the sight of them. It is opinion, then, that tortures us, and every ill is as great as the price we have set on it. We have the remedy in our own power: let us judge that they are away, and let us deceive ourselves. We have sent them off; no, we have sent

them ahead, and we shall follow. This too moves a mourner: "There will be no one to defend me, no one to protect me from contempt." To use a comfort hardly creditable, but true: in our city childlessness brings more influence than it takes away, and solitude, which used to ruin old age, now so far leads it to power that some men pretend to hate their sons, disown their children, and make themselves childless by their own hand.

I know what you will say: "My own losses do not move me; for no one deserves comfort who resents his son's death as he would a slave's, and who has room to consider anything in his son besides his son himself." What, then, moves you, Marcia? That your son has died, or that he did not live long? If it is that he has died, you should always have grieved; for you always knew he would die. Consider that the dead are touched by no ills, that the things which make the underworld terrible to us are fables, that no darkness threatens the dead, no prison, no rivers blazing with fire, no river of Forgetfulness, no judgment seats and defendants, and, in a freedom so unconfined, no tyrants a second time. The poets have played with these things and troubled us with empty terrors. Death is the release from all pains and the end beyond which our ills do not pass; it puts us back into the tranquility in which we lay before we were born. If anyone pities the dead, let him pity the unborn too. Death is neither good nor evil; for only what is something can be either good or evil; but what is itself nothing and reduces everything to nothing hands us over to no fortune. For evils and goods have to do with some matter: fortune cannot hold what Nature has let go, nor can anyone be wretched who is no one. Your son has passed beyond the bounds within which men are slaves; a great and eternal peace has received him. He is not assailed by fear of poverty, or the cares of wealth, or the goads of lust that tear at minds through pleasure; he is not touched by envy of another's good fortune, nor weighed down by envy of his own;

not even his modest ears are struck by any abuse. He foresees no public disaster, no private one; he does not hang anxious over the future, on an outcome that always depends on something more uncertain still. At last he has come to rest where nothing can drive him out, where nothing can frighten him.

20 How ignorant men are of their own ills, that they do not praise death and look forward to it as Nature's best invention! Whether it closes in prosperity or drives off calamity, whether it ends an old man's satiety and weariness, or carries off youth in its flower while better things are still hoped for, or calls childhood back before its harsher stages, it is the end for all, a remedy for many, a prayer for some, and it has deserved best of none so much as of those to whom it came before it was called. It frees the slave against his master's will; it lightens the captives' chains; it leads out of prison those whom a tyrant's power forbade to leave; it shows exiles, whose minds and eyes are always straining toward their homeland, that it makes no difference among whom one lies buried; when fortune has divided common goods badly, and given one man to another though they were born with equal rights, it makes all things equal. It is the thing after which no one has done anything at another's bidding; it is the thing in which no one has felt his lowliness; it is the thing that has stood open to all; it is, Marcia, what your father longed for; it is, I say, what makes being born no punishment, what keeps me from falling before the threats of misfortune, what lets me keep my mind unharmed and master of itself: I have something to appeal to. I see crosses there, and not of one kind only, but made differently by different peoples: some have hung their victims head down toward the ground, some have driven a stake up through their private parts, some have stretched out their arms on a gibbet; I see cords, I see scourges, and a separate engine for each limb and each joint: but I see death too. There are bloodthirsty enemies there, arrogant fellow citi-

zens: but I see death there too. Slavery is no hardship when, if you weary of your master, a single step will take you over to freedom. Life, I hold you dear, thanks to the benefit of death.

Consider how much good a timely death holds, how many have been harmed by living longer. If illness had carried off Pompey at Naples, that glory and pillar of the empire, he would have died the undisputed first citizen of the Roman people: as it was, the addition of a little time threw him down from his height. He saw his legions slaughtered before his eyes, and from that battle in which the senate was the front line (how unhappy the remnant that survived!) he saw that he himself, the general, had survived. He saw the Egyptian executioner and offered to a henchman a body that even the victors would have held sacred, though even if he had been spared he would have repented of his safety; for what would have been more shameful than Pompey living by the favor of a king? If Marcus Cicero had fallen at the time when he escaped the daggers of Catiline, which were aimed at him and at his country alike, as the savior of the state he had set free, or if, at the last, he had followed his daughter's funeral, even then he could have died fortunate. He would not have seen swords drawn against the heads of citizens, nor the goods of the murdered shared out among their murderers, so that men died even at their own expense, nor the auctioneer's spear selling off the spoils of former consuls, nor murders contracted for by the state, nor robberies, wars, plunder, so many Catilines. If the sea had swallowed Marcus Cato as he was returning from Cyprus and the settlement of the king's inheritance, or even together with that very money he was bringing, the pay for a civil war, would it not have been well with him? This at least he would have taken with him: that no one would dare to do wrong in Cato's presence. As it is, the addition of a very few years forced a man born for freedom, not only his own but the state's, to flee from Caesar and to follow Pompey.

So an untimely death brought him no ill: it even released him from having to endure all ills.

21 "Still, he died too soon, before his time." First, suppose he had lived on: grant him the longest span a man is allowed to go: how much is it? Brought forth for the briefest time, we look on this life as an inn we have been crowded into, soon to give up our place to the next comer. Am I speaking of our lifetimes, which time rolls away with incredible speed? Count up the centuries of cities: you will see how short a time even those that boast of their antiquity have stood. All human things are brief and perishable, and occupy no part of infinite time. This earth, with its cities and peoples and rivers and the circuit of the sea, we treat as a point when we compare it with the universe; our lifetime is a smaller portion than a point if it is compared with all time, whose measure is greater than that of the universe, since the universe measures itself out again so many times within its span. What does it matter, then, to stretch out something whose increase, however great, will never be far from nothing? Our life is long in one way only: if it is enough. You may name to me long-lived men whose old age has been handed down to memory, you may count up a hundred and ten years: once you have let your mind range over all time, there will be no difference between the shortest life and the longest, if you look at how long a man has lived and compare it with how long he has not lived. Next, he died ripe for himself; for he lived as long as he had to live; nothing further remained for him. Men do not have one and the same old age, nor do animals: some are worn out within fourteen years, and the longest life for them is only the first stage for a man; to each a different capacity for living has been given. No one dies too soon, because he was not going to live longer than he did. Each man's boundary is fixed: it will always stay where it was set, and no diligence or favor will move it farther. Hold to this: you lost him by design. He took what was his,

"and reached the goal of the span he was given."[14]

So there is no reason to burden yourself with the thought: "He could have lived longer." His life was not cut short, and chance never breaks in on the years. What is promised to each is paid out; the fates go their own way, and neither add anything nor take anything away from what they have once promised. Prayers and efforts are in vain: each will have as much as his first day assigned him. From the day he first saw the light he set out on the road to death and drew nearer his fate, and the very years that were being added to his youth were being taken from his life. We all go about in this error, of thinking that only the old and those already bowed are sinking toward death, when infancy at once, and youth, and every age carries us there. The fates do their work: they take from us the awareness of our own death, and, the more easily to creep up on us, death hides under the very name of life. Childhood turns infancy into itself, youth turns childhood, and the old man has carried off the young. Our very growth, if you reckon rightly, is loss.

22 Do you complain, Marcia, that your son did not live as long as he could have? How do you know whether it was to his advantage to live longer, or whether this death served his interest? Can you find anyone today whose affairs are so well placed and founded that he has nothing to fear as time goes on? Human things slip and flow, and no part of our life is so exposed or tender as the part that pleases us most. That is why the most fortunate should wish for death: in such inconstancy and turmoil, nothing is certain but what is past. Who can guarantee you that your son's beautiful body, which he kept pure under the strictest guard of his modesty amid the eyes of a dissolute city, could have escaped so many diseases as to carry the grace of its beauty unharmed into old age? Think of the thousand blemishes of the mind. Fine characters have not carried into old age the hope of themselves they raised in youth, but have generally been turned aside: either lux-

ury came late, and all the fouler for that, invaded them and began to disgrace a handsome beginning, or they gave themselves wholly to the tavern and the belly, and their chief concern was what to eat and what to drink. Add fires, collapsing buildings, shipwrecks, the lacerations of surgeons who pick bones out of living bodies, thrust whole hands into the bowels, and treat the private parts with more than one kind of pain. After these, exile: your son was no more innocent than Rutilius. Prison: he was no wiser than Socrates. A breast pierced by a self-inflicted wound: he was no holier than Cato. When you have looked these over, you will know that it goes best with those whom Nature, since this was the wage life had in store for them, has quickly taken into safety. Nothing is so deceitful as human life, nothing so treacherous: by Hercules, no one would have accepted it if it were not given to those who do not know. So if it is the most fortunate thing not to be born, the next best, I think, is to die after a brief span and be quickly restored to our former state.

Picture to yourself that most bitter time when Sejanus made a present of your father to his client Satrius Secundus. He was angry with your father over one or two remarks spoken too freely, because Cordus had not been able to bear in silence that Sejanus was not merely being placed on our necks, but was climbing onto them. A statue was being voted to Sejanus, to be set up in the theater of Pompey, which had burned down and which the emperor was rebuilding; Cordus cried out that now the theater was truly being destroyed. What then? Should he not burst at the sight of Sejanus set up over the ashes of Gnaeus Pompey, a faithless soldier enshrined in the monument of the greatest of generals? The indictment is signed, and the fiercest of hounds, which Sejanus fed on human blood to keep them tame to himself alone and savage to all the world, begin to bark around the man, unshaken as he still was.[15] What was he to do? If he wished to live, he had to beg

Sejanus; if to die, his daughter; and both were inexorable. He decided to deceive his daughter. So, after taking a bath to drain his strength further, he withdrew to his bedroom as though to have a bite to eat, and when he had sent his slaves away, he threw some of the food out of the window so that he would seem to have eaten; then he went without dinner, as though he had already eaten enough in his room. He did the same on the second day and on the third; the fourth gave him away by the very weakness of his body. So, embracing you, he said: "Dearest daughter, this is the one thing I have hidden from you in my whole life: I have set out on the road to death, and I am already almost halfway along it. You neither should nor can call me back." And with that he ordered all light shut out and buried himself in darkness. When his plan became known, there was public rejoicing that the prey was being snatched from the jaws of those ravenous wolves. The accusers, at Sejanus's prompting, went to the consuls' tribunal and complained that Cordus was dying, to stop what they themselves had driven him to: so much did Cordus seem to them to be escaping. A great question was at stake: whether they were to lose their right to the accused man's death. While it was being debated, while the accusers came back a second time, he had acquitted himself. Do you see, Marcia, how great the reversals are that break in unexpectedly in evil times? You weep because one of your own had to die? He was very nearly not allowed to!

23 Besides the fact that the whole future is uncertain, and certain only to turn out worse, the way to the gods above is easiest for souls released early from human company; for they have taken on the least dregs and weight. Set free before they could harden and take in earthly things too deeply, they fly back lighter to their origin, and more easily wash off whatever stain and smear clings to them. Great spirits never love to linger in the body; they long to go out and break free, they can hardly bear these narrow confines,

used as they are to roaming through all things and looking down from on high on human affairs. That is why Plato cries out that the wise man's soul leans wholly toward death, wants this, meditates on this, and is always carried by this desire, straining toward what lies outside.

What? When you saw in him, Marcia, an old man's prudence in a young man, a mind that had conquered all pleasures, corrected, free of vice, seeking wealth without greed, offices without ambition, pleasures without luxury, did you think you could keep him safe for long? Whatever has reached the top is near its end. Perfect virtue snatches itself away and removes itself from our eyes, and what has ripened at the first does not wait for the last season. The brighter a fire burns, the sooner it goes out; it lives longer when it is set to slow, stubborn fuel and, smothered in smoke, shines out of the murk; for the same cause that feeds it meanly makes it last. So too with gifted minds: the more brilliant, the briefer; for where there is no room left for growth, the setting is near. Fabianus says,[16] and our parents too saw it, that there was a boy at Rome with the stature of a huge man; but he soon died, and every sensible person had said beforehand that he would die soon; for he could not reach the age he had seized in advance. That is how it is: too great a ripeness is the sign of an end close at hand; the finish draws near when growth is used up.

24 Begin to judge him by his virtues, not by his years: he lived long enough. Left a ward, he was under the care of guardians until his fourteenth year, and under his mother's guardianship always. When he had a household of his own, he did not want to leave yours, and he went on living with his mother, though children can hardly bear to live with a father. A young man whose stature, beauty, and sound bodily strength made him born for the camp, he refused military service so as not to leave you. Reckon, Marcia, how rarely mothers who live in separate houses see their children;

consider how many years are lost to mothers who have sons in the army, years spent in anxiety: you will see that this time was long, and that you lost none of it. He never went out of your sight; under your eyes he shaped his studies, with an excellent talent that would have equaled his grandfather's, had not modesty stood in his way, the modesty that has kept many men's progress silent. A young man of rare beauty, among so great a crowd of women who corrupt men, he gave hope to none of them; and when the shamelessness of some went so far as to tempt him, he blushed as though he had sinned by pleasing them. By this purity of character he brought it about that, while still a boy, he seemed worthy of a priesthood, with his mother's support, no doubt, but not even a mother would have prevailed except for a good candidate. Contemplate these virtues, and hold your son as if in your lap! Now he has more time for you, now he has nothing to call him away; he will never be a worry to you, never a grief. The one thing you could grieve over in so good a son, you have grieved; the rest, beyond the reach of misfortune, is full of pleasure, if only you know how to enjoy your son, if only you understand what was most precious in him. Only the image of your son has perished, and a likeness not very like him; he himself is eternal and now in a better state, stripped of burdens not his own and left to himself. These things you see wrapped around us, bones and sinews and the covering skin, the face and the serving hands and the rest in which we are swathed, are the chains and the darkness of souls. The soul is buried by them, stifled, stained, kept from what is true and its own and thrown into what is false. Its whole struggle is with this heavy flesh, so as not to be dragged down and sink; it strives toward the place from which it was sent down. There eternal rest awaits it, as it leaves the confused and gross and looks upon the pure and clear.

25 So there is no reason for you to run to your son's tomb. What lies there is the worst of him and what troubled him most, bones and ashes, no more parts of him than his clothes and the other coverings of the body. He is whole, and leaving nothing of himself on earth, he has fled and departed entirely; and after lingering a little above us while he is cleansed and shakes off the faults that clung to him and all the rust of mortal life, he is then raised to the heights and runs among the fortunate souls. A holy company has received him, the Scipios and the Catos, and among those who scorned life and were set free by the gift of death, your father, Marcia. He draws his grandson to himself (though there all are kin to all) as the boy rejoices in the new light, and teaches him the courses of the stars near them, and gladly leads him into the secrets of nature, not by guesswork but with true knowledge of all things; and as a guide to unknown cities is welcome to a stranger, so to one who asks the causes of heavenly things is an interpreter from his own family. And he bids him turn his gaze down to the depths of the earth; for it is a pleasure to look back from on high on what one has left behind. So conduct yourself, Marcia, as though you were set under the eyes of your father and your son, not as you knew them, but as beings so much loftier, placed in the highest place. Blush to think anything low or common, and to weep for your own, who have been changed for the better! They have been released into the free and vast spaces of eternal things. No seas lie between to shut them off, no height of mountains, no pathless valleys, no shallows of the shifting Syrtes: everything there is level, and they, moving easily and unencumbered, pass through one another and mingle with the stars.

26 Imagine, then, Marcia, that from that citadel of heaven your father, who had as much authority with you as you had with your son, speaks to you, not with the genius with which he wept over the civil wars, with which he proscribed the proscribers forever,

but with one as much loftier as he himself now stands higher: "Why, daughter, does so long a distress hold you? Why do you live in such ignorance of the truth as to judge that your son was badly treated, because, with his house intact, he himself went intact to his ancestors? Do you not know with what storms Fortune throws everything into confusion? How she has shown herself kind and easy to none but those who had the fewest dealings with her? Shall I name kings to you who would have been the most fortunate of men if death had withdrawn them sooner from the ills bearing down on them? Or Roman generals, whose greatness would lack nothing if you took something from their years? Or men of the noblest birth and highest fame, settling their necks and bowing them to a soldier's sword? Look at your father and your grandfather. He fell into the power of another man's assassin; I gave no one any power over me, and, cutting myself off from food, I showed that I had as great a spirit as I seemed to have when I wrote. Why is the longest mourning in our house for the one who died most fortunately? We are all gathered together here, and, no longer surrounded by deep night, we see that nothing among you is, as you think, desirable, nothing lofty, nothing splendid, but all things low and heavy and anxious, and seeing only the smallest part of our light! Need I say that here no armies rage in clashes with one another, no fleets are shattered by fleets, no parricides are planned or even imagined, no forums ring with lawsuits all day long; that here nothing is hidden, minds are laid bare and hearts open, life is lived in public and in the open, with a view of all time and all that is to come?

"It used to delight me to put together the deeds of a single age, done in the farthest corner of the world and among a very few. Now I may look on so many centuries, the chain and succession of so many ages, all the sum of years; I may look ahead to kingdoms that will rise and kingdoms that will fall, to the collapse of great

cities and new courses of the sea. For if the common fate can be any comfort to you for your longing, nothing will stand where it stands now; time will lay all things low and carry them off with it. It will make sport not of men only (for how small a part of fortune's power are they?) but of places, of regions, of whole quarters of the world. It will bury whole mountains and elsewhere thrust new crags up on high; it will drink up seas, turn rivers aside, and, breaking off the commerce of nations, dissolve the society and fellowship of the human race. Elsewhere it will swallow cities in vast chasms, shake them with earthquakes, and send up plague-laden vapors from the depths; it will cover with floods whatever is inhabited and kill every living thing in a drowned world, and scorch and burn all mortal things with vast fires. And when the time comes for the universe to put itself out in order to be renewed, these things will destroy themselves by their own strength, stars will crash into stars, and, all matter ablaze, whatever now shines in its ordered place will burn in a single fire. Then we too, fortunate souls who have been allotted eternity, when it pleases god to build all this anew, as all things fall, we too, a small addition to the vast ruin, shall be changed back into our ancient elements."

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1. Aulus Cremutius Cordus, a historian, was prosecuted in AD 25 for praising Brutus and Cassius; he starved himself to death, and the senate ordered his books burned. Copies saved by Marcia were later published again.

2. Lucius Aelius Sejanus, praetorian prefect under Tiberius and the most powerful man in Rome until his fall and execution in AD 31.

3. Marcellus, Octavia's son, married Augustus's daughter Julia and died in 23 BC, at nineteen. Livia's son Drusus, brother of the future emperor Tiberius, died in Germany in 9 BC after a fall from his horse.

4. Julia Augusta is Livia, who took that name when Augustus adopted her in his will. Areus of Alexandria was a Stoic philosopher in Augustus's household.

5. Publilius Syrus, a writer of mimes in Caesar's time, whose one-line maxims were collected.

6. A gap in the text; the sense is probably "This is what that saying … means."

7. Lucius Cornelius Sulla, victor in the civil war of 83–82 BC and then dictator, took the surname Felix ("Fortunate").

8. The Greek father is Xenophon, told at a sacrifice that his son Gryllus had fallen at Mantinea (362 BC). Marcus Horatius Pulvillus dedicated the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol in 509 BC.

9. Lucius Aemilius Paullus defeated Perseus, king of Macedon, at Pydna in 168 BC. One of the sons he gave in adoption became Scipio Aemilianus, who later destroyed Carthage.

10. Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus, Caesar's colleague as consul in 59 BC, kept to his house for most of that year; his two sons were killed in Egypt in 50 BC by soldiers stationed there. Caesar's daughter Julia, Pompey's wife, died in 54 BC; her death loosened the tie between the two men.

11. Tiberius's son Drusus died in AD 23; his adopted son Germanicus had died in AD 19.

12. Cornelia, daughter of Scipio Africanus, was the mother of the tribunes Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, killed in 133 and 121 BC. The tribune Marcus Livius Drusus, son of the second Cornelia, was murdered in 91 BC.

13. Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.418.

14. Virgil, *Aeneid* 10.472.

15. The text is corrupt here; read as "the indictment is signed" and "unshaken as he still was."

16. Papirius Fabianus, rhetorician and philosopher, was one of Seneca's teachers.

On the Happy Life

1 Everyone wants to live happily, my brother Gallio,[1] but when it comes to seeing clearly what it is that makes a life happy, they are in a fog. Reaching the happy life is so far from easy that the more eagerly a man rushes toward it, the farther he gets from it, if he has taken the wrong road; when the road leads the other way, his very speed only widens the distance.

So we must first set out what it is we are seeking; then we must look around for the road by which we can get there fastest. On the journey itself, if only it is the right one, we will learn how much ground is covered each day and how much nearer we are to the thing our natural desire drives us toward. As long as we wander here and there, following no guide but the din and discordant shouting of people calling us in different directions, life will be worn away in wandering, and life is short even if we work day and night for a sound mind. Let us decide, then, both where we are heading and by what road, and not without some expert who has explored the ground we are entering, since the conditions here are not the same as on other journeys. On those, some recognized track and the locals you ask keep you from going astray; here the most beaten and most crowded road is the one that deceives you most. Nothing, then, matters more than not to follow, like cattle, the herd in front of us, going not where we ought to go but where everyone goes. And yet nothing entangles us in greater troubles than shaping ourselves to rumor, thinking that what has been received with great approval is best, and taking our many exam-

ples for good ones, so that we live not by reason but by imitation. Hence that enormous pile of people falling over one another. What happens in a great crush of people, when the crowd presses on itself (no one falls without pulling someone else down on top of him, and those in front are the ruin of those behind), you can see happening in all of life. No one goes wrong only for himself; he is the cause and the author of another's error as well. It does harm to be pressed against those in front; and since each of us would rather believe than judge, we never judge about life, we always believe, and an error handed down from hand to hand whirls us around and throws us headlong. We are dying of other people's examples: we will be healed if only we separate ourselves from the crowd. As it is, the people stand against reason, defending their own evil. And so the same thing happens as at elections, where, once fickle favor has swung around, the very men who elected the praetors marvel that they were elected: we approve the same things, we condemn the same things. This is the outcome of every decision that goes by the majority.

2 When the question is the happy life, there is no reason for you to answer me as they do when the senate divides: "This side seems to be the larger." That is exactly why it is the worse. Human affairs are not so well arranged that the better things please the greater number: the crowd is the proof of the worst. Let us ask, then, what is best to do, not what is most usual, and what will set us in possession of an everlasting good fortune, not what has been approved by the common herd, that worst interpreter of the truth. And by the common herd I mean the cloaked as much as the crowned; I do not look at the color of the clothes that drape their bodies. I do not trust my eyes about a man; I have a better and surer light by which to tell the true from the false: let the mind find the good of the mind. If it ever has time to breathe and to withdraw into itself, oh, how it will confess the truth to itself,

under torture from itself, and say: "Whatever I have done so far I wish undone; whenever I think back over what I have said, I envy the dumb; whatever I have prayed for I count as a curse from my enemies; whatever I have feared, good gods, how much lighter it was than what I desired! I have been at enmity with many and have come back from hatred into friendship, if there is any friendship among the wicked: with myself I am not yet a friend. I have taken every pains to raise myself out of the crowd and make myself conspicuous for some gift: what have I done but expose myself to weapons and show malice something to bite? Do you see those people who praise eloquence, who chase wealth, who flatter influence, who extol power? All of them are enemies or, what amounts to the same, can be. The crowd of those who envy is as large as the crowd of those who admire. Why do I not look instead for some good that is good in use, one I can feel, not one I can show? These things that people gaze at, that they stop for, that one points out to another in amazement, shine on the outside and are wretched within."

3 Let us look for some good that is not for show but solid, consistent throughout, and more beautiful in its hidden part; let us dig this out. It is not far off: it will be found; you need only know where to reach out your hand. As it is, we pass by what is near us as though in the dark, stumbling against the very things we long for.

But not to drag you around by detours, I will pass over the opinions of others, since it would take long to list them and long to refute them: hear ours. When I say "ours," I do not bind myself to any one of the Stoic leaders: I too have the right to an opinion. So I will follow one, I will ask another to divide his motion, and perhaps, called on after all the rest, I will reject nothing that my predecessors have decided and will say, "I move the following in addition." Meanwhile, as all Stoics agree, I assent to Nature; wisdom is

not to stray from her, and to be shaped by her law and her example.

The happy life, then, is a life in harmony with its own nature, and it can come about in no other way than if, first, the mind is sound and in lasting possession of its soundness; next, if it is brave and vigorous, then nobly enduring, ready for every circumstance, attentive to its body and what belongs to the body, but not anxiously, careful of the other things that furnish life without being dazzled by any of them, ready to use the gifts of Fortune, not to be their slave. You understand, even if I do not add it, that there follows a lasting tranquility and freedom, once the things that either provoke us or frighten us have been driven away; for in place of pleasures and ⟨...⟩,[2] in place of things that are petty and fragile and harmful in their very wickedness, there comes an immense joy, unshaken and steady, then peace and harmony of mind, and greatness together with gentleness; for all fierceness comes from weakness.

4 Our good can also be defined in other ways; that is, the same idea can be expressed in different words. Just as the same army is sometimes deployed more widely, sometimes packed into a narrow space, and either curves back at the center with its wings thrown forward or spreads out in a straight line, and yet, however it is drawn up, its strength is the same and so is its will to stand for the same side, so the definition of the highest good can sometimes be spread out and extended, sometimes gathered up and compressed into itself. So it will be the same if I say, "The highest good is a mind that looks down on what chance brings and rejoices in virtue," or "an unconquerable strength of mind, experienced in the world, calm in action, with great humanity and care for those it deals with." We may also define it so as to call that man happy for whom nothing is good or evil except a good or evil mind; who cultivates the honorable and is content with virtue; whom chance

neither lifts up nor breaks; who knows no greater good than the one he can give himself; for whom true pleasure will be the contempt of pleasures. If you want to range further, you can carry the same thing into one form after another, keeping its force safe and whole; for what prevents us from saying that the happy life is a mind free, upright, unafraid, and steady, placed beyond fear and beyond desire, for which the one good is the honorable and the one evil the shameful, and everything else a worthless crowd of things that neither takes anything from the happy life nor adds anything to it, coming and going without increase or loss to the highest good? A man so grounded must, whether he will or not, be attended by a constant cheerfulness and a gladness that is deep and comes from deep within, since he delights in what is his own and wants nothing greater than what he has at home. Why should he not weigh all this well against the petty, trivial, and fleeting movements of his poor body? On the day he is beneath pleasure, he will be beneath pain as well; and you see what an evil and harmful slavery he will serve whom pleasures and pains, the most capricious and most tyrannical of masters, will possess by turns: so we must break out into freedom. Nothing gives this but indifference to Fortune. Then will arise that priceless good, the calm of a mind set in safety, and its elevation, and, once errors have been driven out, a great and unshaken joy from the knowledge of the truth, together with kindliness and expansiveness of mind; and in these he will delight not as goods but as things born of his own good.

5 Since I have begun to be generous with definitions, a man may be called happy who, thanks to reason, neither desires nor fears; for stones too are free of fear and sorrow, and so are cattle, yet no one would call those things fortunate that have no understanding of good fortune. Put in the same place those people whom a dull nature and ignorance of themselves have reduced to

the level of cattle and animals. There is no difference between the two, since the animals have no reason, and these people have a reason that is depraved, clever only at their own harm and at perversity. For no one can be called happy who has been thrown outside the truth. The happy life, then, is one established on a right and sure judgment, and unchangeable. For then the mind is pure and free of all evils, having escaped not only wounds but even pinches; it will always stand where it has taken its stand and will defend its ground even against an angry and hostile Fortune. As for pleasure, though it pour around us on every side and flow in by every channel and soothe the mind with its caresses and bring up one charm after another to tempt us, whole and in part, what mortal with any trace of a human being left in him would want to be tickled day and night and, deserting his mind, devote himself to his body?

6 "But the mind too," he says, "will have its pleasures." Let it have them, then, and let it sit as judge of luxury and pleasures; let it fill itself with everything that usually delights the senses, then look back on the past and, remembering pleasures long faded, exult in the former ones and already lean toward the ones to come, and arrange its hopes, and, while the body lies stuffed in the present, send its thoughts ahead to the future: this will seem to me all the more wretched, for to choose evils in place of goods is madness. No one is happy without sanity, and no one is sane who seeks what is to come as if it were the best. The happy man, then, is one whose judgment is right; the happy man is content with what he has, whatever it is, and on good terms with his circumstances; the happy man is the one to whom reason commends every condition of his affairs.

7 Even those who have placed the highest good in pleasure see what a shameful place they have put it in. So they deny that pleasure can be separated from virtue, and say that no one can live

honorably without living pleasantly, nor pleasantly without also living honorably. I do not see how things so different can be thrown into the same yoke. What is the reason, I beg you, why pleasure cannot be separated from virtue? Is it, I suppose, because all goods have their beginning in virtue, the things you love and seek also spring from its roots? But if those two were inseparable, we would not see some things that are pleasant but dishonorable, and others that are most honorable but harsh, to be achieved through pain. Add now that pleasure comes even to the most shameful life, while virtue does not admit an evil life; and some people are unfortunate not without pleasure, indeed because of pleasure itself. This would not happen if pleasure had mixed itself with virtue, which often lacks pleasure and never needs it. Why do you join things that are unlike, indeed opposed? Virtue is something lofty, exalted and royal, unconquered, untiring; pleasure is low and servile, weak and perishable, and its post and home are the brothels and the taverns. Virtue you will meet in the temple, in the forum, in the senate house, standing on the walls, covered with dust, sunburned, with calloused hands; pleasure, more often skulking and seeking the dark, around the baths and sweating rooms and places that fear the aedile, soft, nerveless, soaked with wine and perfume, pale or painted and embalmed in cosmetics. The highest good is immortal; it does not know how to depart, and it has neither satiety nor regret; for a right mind never turns, is never hateful to itself, and, being the best, changes nothing. But pleasure is extinguished at the very moment it delights most; it has little room, so it quickly fills up, becomes tedious, and wilts after the first onrush. Nor is anything ever certain whose nature lies in motion; so there cannot even be any substance in what comes and passes most quickly and will perish in the very use of itself; for it strains toward the point where it stops, and while it begins it looks toward its end.

8 What of the fact that pleasure belongs to the good and the bad alike, and that the shameful delight in their disgrace no less than the honorable in noble deeds? That is why the ancients told us to follow the best life, not the most pleasant, so that pleasure should be not the guide of a right and good will but its companion. For we must take Nature as our guide; reason watches her and consults her. To live happily, then, and to live according to nature are the same. What this means I will now explain: if we preserve the gifts of the body and the things that suit our nature carefully and without fear, as things given for a day and fleeting; if we do not submit to slavery to them, and things outside us do not possess us; if the things that please the body and come from outside hold the place with us that auxiliaries and light-armed troops hold in camp (let them serve, not command), only then are they useful to the mind. Let a man be uncorrupted by externals and unconquerable, an admirer only of himself,

"confident in spirit, and ready for either fate,"[3]

a craftsman of his own life. Let his confidence not be without knowledge, nor his knowledge without constancy; let what he has once decided stay decided, and let there be no erasure in his decrees. It is understood, even if I do not add it, that such a man will be composed and orderly, and in all he does both magnificent and courteous. But reason, stirred by the senses and taking its first principles from them (for it has nothing else to start from or from which to launch its drive toward the truth), should return into itself. For the universe too, which embraces all things, and god, its ruler, reach outward, yet from every side return inward into themselves. Let our mind do the same: when, following its senses, it has reached out through them to external things, let it be master both of them and of itself. In this way a single force and power will be formed, in harmony with itself, and that sure reason will be born which is not divided or hesitant in its opinions and apprehensions

or in its convictions; and once it has ordered itself, has agreed with its own parts, and, so to speak, sung in tune, it has reached the highest good. For nothing crooked, nothing slippery is left, nothing on which it might stumble or slide; it will do everything on its own authority, and nothing unexpected will happen to it; whatever it does will turn out well, easily, readily, and without shuffling on the part of the doer; for sluggishness and hesitation show conflict and inconstancy. So you may boldly declare that the highest good is harmony of the mind; for the virtues must be where there is agreement and unity: it is the vices that are at odds.

9 "But you too," he says, "cultivate virtue for no other reason than that you hope to get some pleasure from it." First of all, even if virtue is going to supply pleasure, it is not sought for that reason; for it does not supply pleasure as its aim; it supplies pleasure as well, and it does not labor for pleasure; its labor, though it aims at something else, will attain this as well. Just as in a field plowed for grain some flowers spring up in between, and yet all that work was not spent on this little plant, however much it delights the eye (the sower had something else in view; this came in addition), so pleasure is not the reward or the cause of virtue but a by-product; and virtue is not welcome because it delights, but if it is welcome, it also delights. The highest good lies in the very judgment and disposition of the best mind; when that mind has filled out its course and enclosed itself within its own limits, the highest good is complete and wants nothing more; for there is nothing outside the whole, any more than beyond the end. So you are wrong when you ask what it is for the sake of which I seek virtue; you are looking for something above the highest. You ask what I seek from virtue? Virtue itself. It has nothing better; it is its own reward. Or is that not great enough? When I tell you, "The highest good is the unbreakable firmness of the mind, and foresight, and loftiness, and soundness, and freedom, and harmony, and grace," do you still

demand something greater to which all this can be referred? Why do you mention pleasure to me? I am looking for the good of a man, not of a belly, and cattle and beasts have roomier bellies.

10 "You are pretending not to understand what I say," he says. "I say that no one can live pleasantly unless he also lives honorably, and this cannot happen to dumb animals or to those who measure their good by food. I declare loudly and openly that this life which I call pleasant comes only when virtue is added." And yet who does not know that the greatest fools are the fullest of your pleasures, that wickedness overflows with delights, and that the mind itself suggests many depraved kinds of pleasure? First of all arrogance, and too high an opinion of oneself, and a swollen sense of being above others, and a blind, improvident love of one's own things, and exultation over the smallest and most childish causes; then a biting tongue and a pride that delights in insults; sloth, and the slackness of a lazy mind that wallows in luxury and falls asleep on itself. All this virtue shakes off; it tweaks the ear, weighs pleasures before admitting them, and sets no great store by those it has approved; it does admit them, but it is glad not in using them but in self-control. Self-control, however, since it lessens pleasures, is a wrong done to the highest good. You embrace pleasure, I restrain it; you enjoy pleasure, I use it; you think it the highest good, I do not even think it good; you do everything for the sake of pleasure, I do nothing.

11 When I say that I do nothing for the sake of pleasure, I am speaking of that wise man to whom alone we grant pleasure. But I do not call a man wise if anything is above him, much less pleasure. And if he is taken over by it, how will he withstand toil and danger, poverty, and all the threats that roar around human life? How will he bear the sight of death, how bear pain, how bear the crashes of the world and so many fierce enemies, if he has been beaten by so soft an adversary? "He will do whatever pleasure

advises." Come now, do you not see how many things it will advise? "It will not be able to advise anything shameful," he says, "because it is joined to virtue." Do you not see, again, what kind of highest good it is that needs a guard in order to be good? And how will virtue rule pleasure if it follows it, since following is for one who obeys, ruling for one who commands? Do you put the commander at the rear? A fine duty virtue has among you: to be pleasure's food taster! But we shall see whether, among those who treat virtue so insultingly, it is still virtue, for it cannot keep its name once it has given up its place. Meanwhile, to stick to the point, I will show you many people besieged by pleasures, on whom Fortune has poured out all her gifts, and whom you must admit to be wicked. Look at Nomentanus and Apicius,[4] hunting down the good things, as they call them, of land and sea, and reviewing on their table the animals of every nation; look at these same men gazing down from a heap of roses on their own cookshop, delighting their ears with the sound of voices, their eyes with spectacles, their palates with flavors; their whole bodies are coaxed with soft and soothing applications, and, so that their nostrils are not idle meanwhile, the very room in which they hold funeral rites for luxury is steeped in various scents. You will say these men live in pleasures, and yet it will not go well with them, because what they rejoice in is not a good.

12 "It will go badly with them," he says, "because many things will come up to disturb the mind, and conflicting opinions will unsettle the intellect." I grant that this is so; but nonetheless these very fools, inconsistent and exposed to the stroke of regret, will feel great pleasures, so that we must admit that they are then as far from all distress as from a sound mind, and that, as happens to most people, they are mad with a merry madness and rave while they laugh. The pleasures of the wise, on the other hand, are mild and modest, almost languid, held in and barely noticeable, as things that are never sent for and, even when they come of them-

selves, are not held in honor or received with any joy by those who feel them; for the wise mix them into life and insert them, like play and jest amid serious matters.

Let them stop, then, joining things that do not fit and entangling pleasure with virtue, a fault by which they flatter all the worst people. The man sunk in pleasures, always belching and drunk, believes, because he knows he lives with pleasure, that he lives with virtue too (for he hears that pleasure cannot be separated from virtue); then he labels his vices wisdom and makes a show of what ought to be hidden. So it is not that Epicurus[5] drove them to luxury; rather, men given over to vice hide their luxury in the lap of philosophy and flock to where they hear pleasure praised. They do not consider how sober and dry that pleasure of Epicurus is (for that, by Hercules, is what I think), but fly to the name itself, seeking some defense and cover for their lusts. So they lose the one good they had in their evils, shame at doing wrong; for they praise what they used to blush at and glory in vice; and so even the young cannot rise again, once an honorable label has been attached to shameful idleness. This is why that praise of pleasure is ruinous: its honorable precepts lie hidden within; what corrupts is plain to see.

13 For my part I hold this opinion (I will say it, though our own people will not like it): Epicurus' teachings are holy and right, and even, if you come closer, austere; for that pleasure of his is reduced to something small and thin, and the law we lay down for virtue he lays down for pleasure. He bids it obey nature; but what is enough for nature is too little for luxury. What, then? The man who calls lazy idleness and gluttony and lust by turns good fortune looks for a good sponsor for a bad thing, and when he has come to that school, drawn by its attractive name, he follows not the pleasure he hears of there but the pleasure he brought with him; and once he has begun to think his vices resemble its precepts, he

indulges them not timidly or in secret, but from then on flaunts his luxury with his head uncovered. So I will not say, as most of our people do, that the school of Epicurus is a teacher of vice; but this I do say: it has a bad name, it is in ill repute. "But undeservedly." Who can know that unless he has been admitted inside? Its very front gives occasion for gossip and invites evil hopes. It is like a brave man dressed in a woman's gown: your chastity is firm, your manhood is safe, your body is not given over to any shameful submission, but there is a tambourine in your hand. So let an honorable title be chosen, and an inscription that in itself rouses the mind: the one that stands there now has drawn the vices.

Whoever has approached virtue has given proof of a noble nature; the man who follows pleasure seems nerveless, broken, falling away from manhood, bound to end in shameful things unless someone sorts out his pleasures for him, so that he knows which of them stay within natural desire and which are swept headlong, are boundless, and grow more insatiable the more they are filled. Come, then, let virtue go first: every step will be safe. And too much pleasure does harm; with virtue there is no fear of too much, because measure is in virtue itself; that is not a good which suffers from its own size. Besides, for beings who have been allotted a rational nature, what better thing can be set before them than reason? And if this partnership pleases you, if you like to go to the happy life in this company, let virtue go in front and pleasure follow, hovering about the body like a shadow. But to hand over virtue, the loftiest of mistresses, to pleasure as a maidservant is the act of a mind that can hold nothing great.

14 Let virtue go first and carry the standard: we shall have pleasure all the same, but we shall be its masters and moderators; it will win something from us by asking, but force nothing. Those, however, who have given the lead to pleasure lack both; for they lose virtue, and besides, they do not have pleasure; pleasure has

them, and they are either tortured by its lack or strangled by its abundance, wretched if it deserts them, more wretched if it overwhelms them, like sailors caught in the shoals of the Syrtes, now left on dry ground, now tossed on a rushing flood. This comes from excessive intemperance and a blind love of the thing; for when a man seeks evils in place of goods, it is dangerous for him to get them. As we hunt wild beasts with toil and danger, and even when they are caught their possession is anxious (for they often tear their masters apart), so it is with great pleasures: they have turned into a great evil, and once captured they have captured their captors; and the more and greater they are, the smaller and the more widely enslaved is the man whom the crowd calls fortunate. I would like to stay with this image a little longer. As the man who tracks down the lairs of wild beasts, and to whom

"to take wild beasts in snares"

is worth a great deal, and so is

"to ring the wide glades with hounds,"[6]

so that he may press close on their tracks, abandons better things and renounces many duties, so the man who pursues pleasure puts everything else second, neglects his first possession, freedom, and pays it out for his belly; he does not buy pleasures for himself, he sells himself to pleasures.

15 "Still," he says, "what prevents virtue and pleasure from being blended into one, and the highest good from being so formed that the same thing is both honorable and pleasant?" Because a part of the honorable can only be honorable, and the highest good will not keep its purity if it sees anything in itself unlike the better part. Not even the joy that springs from virtue, though it is a good, is a part of the absolute good, any more than gladness and tranquility are, though they are born of the noblest causes; for these are goods, but they follow the highest good, they do not complete it. Whoever makes a partnership between virtue and pleasure, and

not even an equal one, dulls whatever vigor there is in the one good by the frailty of the other, and sends under the yoke that freedom which is unconquered only so long as it knows nothing more precious than itself. For he begins to need Fortune, and that is the greatest slavery; there follows a life anxious, suspicious, fearful, dreading chance, hanging on every moment of time. You give virtue no solid, immovable foundation, but bid it stand on shifting ground; and what is so shifting as waiting on chance and the changeableness of the body and of the things that affect the body? How can such a man obey god and take whatever happens in good spirit and not complain of fate, a kindly interpreter of his own misfortunes, if he is shaken by the little pinpricks of pleasures and pains? Nor is he a good guardian or defender of his country, or a champion of his friends, if he leans toward pleasures. So let the highest good climb to a place from which no force can drag it down, where neither pain nor hope nor fear has access, nor anything else that would weaken the rights of the highest good; and only virtue can climb there. By its step that slope must be conquered; it will stand bravely and bear whatever happens, not only enduring but willing, and it will know that every hardship of the times is a law of nature; and like a good soldier it will bear its wounds, count its scars, and, pierced through with spears, will love in dying the general for whom it falls; it will keep in mind that old precept: Follow god. But whoever complains and weeps and groans is forced by violence to do what he is ordered, and is dragged, unwilling, to his orders all the same. What madness it is to be dragged rather than to follow! As much, by Hercules, as it is folly and ignorance of one's condition to grieve because something is lacking or something harsher has befallen you, or likewise to be surprised or indignant at things that happen to the good as much as to the bad: I mean diseases, deaths, infirmities, and the other things that run crosswise into human life. Whatever we must suf-

fer by the constitution of the universe, let us take it up with a great spirit: this is the oath we were sworn to, to bear the lot of mortals and not to be troubled by what it is not in our power to avoid. We were born in a kingdom: to obey god is freedom.

16 True good fortune, then, lies in virtue. What will this virtue advise you? Not to think anything good or evil that does not come about through virtue or wickedness; then to be immovable both against evil and in good, so that, as far as is permitted, you may model yourself on god. What does it promise you for this campaign? Vast things, equal to the divine: you will be forced to nothing, you will lack nothing; you will be free, safe, unharmed; you will attempt nothing in vain, be prevented from nothing; everything will turn out as you intend, nothing adverse will happen, nothing against your expectation and your will. "What, then? Is virtue enough for living happily?" Perfect and divine as it is, why should it not be enough, and more than enough? What can be lacking to one who is placed beyond the desire of anything? What need of outside things has the man who has gathered all that is his into himself? But the man who is making his way toward virtue, even if he has advanced far, still needs some indulgence from Fortune while he is still struggling among human things, until he loosens that knot and every mortal bond. What, then, is the difference? That others are tightly bound, fettered, even pulled apart; this man, who has advanced to the higher regions and raised himself higher, drags a loose chain: not yet free, but already as good as free.

17 So if one of those who bark at philosophy says what they usually say: "Why, then, do you talk more bravely than you live? Why do you lower your voice before a superior, and think money a necessary tool, and get upset at a loss, and shed tears on hearing of the death of your wife or a friend, and care about your reputation, and feel the sting of malicious talk? Why is your country

place more cultivated than natural need requires? Why do you not dine according to your own rules? Why is your furniture so elegant? Why is wine older than you drunk at your house? Why is gold laid out on display? Why are trees planted that will give nothing but shade? Why does your wife wear in her ears the fortune of a rich household? Why are your page boys dressed in costly clothes? Why is waiting at table an art in your house, and why is the silver not set out at random, as you please, but arranged with skill, and why is there a master carver?" Add, if you like: "Why do you have property overseas? Why more than you know? Why are you so shamefully careless that you do not know your few slaves, or so luxurious that you have more than your memory can keep track of?" I will help these insults along later and charge myself with more than you think; for now I give you this answer: I am not a wise man and, to feed your malice, I never shall be. So demand of me not that I be equal to the best, but that I be better than the bad: this is enough for me, to take away something from my vices each day and to rebuke my errors. I have not reached health, and I will not reach it either; I compound soothing remedies rather than cures for my gout, content if it comes less often and torments me less: compared with your feet, cripples that you are, I am a runner. I do not say this for my own sake (for I am deep in every vice), but for the sake of one who has achieved something.

18 "You talk one way," you say, "and live another." This, you most malicious creatures and most hostile to all the best men, was charged against Plato, charged against Epicurus, charged against Zeno;[7] for all of these spoke not of how they themselves lived, but of how they too ought to live. I speak of virtue, not of myself, and when I rail at vices, I rail first of all at my own: when I am able, I will live as I ought. Nor will that malice of yours, dipped in much poison, deter me from what is best; not even that venom with which you spatter others and with which you kill yourselves will

keep me from continuing to praise not the life I lead but the life I know ought to be led, from worshiping virtue, and from following it, crawling, at an immense distance. Am I to expect, I suppose, that anything will be left untouched by malice, to which neither Rutilius nor Cato was sacred?[8] Should anyone care whether he seems too rich to people for whom Demetrius the Cynic is not poor enough? That fiercest of men, who fights against all the desires of nature, poorer than the other Cynics in that, having forbidden himself to own, he has also forbidden himself to ask: they say he is not needy enough. For you see, it is not the knowledge of virtue he has professed, but of poverty.

19 Diodorus, the Epicurean philosopher,[9] who a few days ago put an end to his life with his own hand, did not, they say, act according to the teaching of Epicurus when he cut his throat: some want this act of his to be seen as madness, others as recklessness. He, meanwhile, happy and full of a good conscience, bore witness to himself as he left life, praised the quiet of a life spent in harbor and at anchor, and said what you have heard unwillingly, as though you too had to do it:

"I have lived, and finished the course that Fortune gave."[10]

You argue about one man's life and another's death, and at the name of men great for some outstanding merit you bark, as little dogs do when they meet strangers; for it suits you that no one should seem good, as though another's virtue were a reproach to all your misdeeds. In envy you compare their splendor with your filth, and do not understand how much this daring costs you. For if those who follow virtue are greedy, lustful, and ambitious, what are you, who hate the very name of virtue? You say that no one lives up to what he says or lives by the model of his own words: what wonder, since what they speak of is brave, vast, beyond the reach of all the storms of human life? They are trying to pull themselves down from their crosses (crosses into which each one of

you drives his own nails); yet even when they are led to execution, they hang each from a single stake, while these people, who are their own executioners, are torn apart on as many crosses as they have desires. But they are slanderers, and witty at others' expense. I would believe they had time for it, were it not that some men spit on the spectators from their own gibbet.

20 "Philosophers do not practice what they preach." Yet they accomplish much by what they preach, by what they conceive with an honorable mind. If only they also acted on a par with their words: who would be happier than they? Meanwhile there is no reason for you to despise good words and hearts full of good thoughts: the pursuit of wholesome studies deserves praise even short of result. What wonder if those who attempt the steep do not reach the summit? But if you are a man, look up to those who attempt great things, even if they fall. It is a noble thing to look not to one's own strength but to the strength of one's nature, to attempt lofty things, and to conceive in the mind greater things than can be carried out even by those endowed with an immense spirit. The man who has set himself this goal: "I will look on death with the same face with which I hear of it. I will submit to toil, however great it is, propping up the body with the mind. I will despise riches, present and absent alike, neither sadder if they lie elsewhere nor bolder if they glitter around me. I will not feel Fortune either coming or going. I will look on all lands as mine, and on mine as everyone's. I will live as though I knew I was born for others, and I will give thanks to Nature on this account: for how could she have managed my affairs better? She has given me, one man, to all, and all to me alone. Whatever I have I will neither guard meanly nor scatter wastefully; I will believe that I possess nothing more truly than what I have given well. I will not count benefits by number or by weight, or value them at all except by the worth of the receiver; never will that seem much to me which a

worthy man receives. I will do nothing for the sake of reputation, everything for the sake of conscience. Whatever I do with only myself aware, I will believe is done with the whole people watching. The end of eating and drinking for me will be to quench the desires of nature, not to fill the belly and empty it. I will be pleasant to my friends, mild and easy to my enemies. I will be won over before I am asked, and will meet honorable requests halfway. I will know that the universe is my country and that the gods preside over it, and that they stand above me and around me as censors of what I do and say. Whenever nature asks back my breath, or reason releases it, I will depart bearing witness that I loved a good conscience and good pursuits, that no one's freedom was lessened through me, and least of all my own." The man who resolves, wills, and tries to do these things will be making his way to the gods; truly, even if he does not keep his hold, "yet he fell in a great venture."[11]

You, for your part, are doing nothing new in hating virtue and its devotee. For sore eyes, too, dread the sun, and night creatures shun the bright day; at its first rising they are dazed and seek their hiding places everywhere, and, afraid of the light, bury themselves in any crack. Groan, and exercise your ill-starred tongues in abusing good men; gape, bite: you will break your teeth much sooner than you leave a mark.

21 "Why does that man study philosophy and live so rich a life? Why does he say that wealth should be despised, and have it; think that life should be despised, and yet live; that health should be despised, and yet guard it most carefully and want it to be excellent? And why does he think exile an empty name and say, 'What evil is there in changing countries?' and yet, if he can, grow old in his native land? And why does he judge that there is no difference between a longer time and a shorter one, yet, if nothing prevents him, prolong his life and stay green and peaceful in a ripe old age?"

He says these things ought to be despised, not so that he should not have them, but so that he should not have them anxiously; he does not drive them away from himself, but when they leave he sees them off, free of care. Where, after all, will Fortune deposit riches more safely than with one from whom she will take them back without complaint from the man returning them? Marcus Cato, while he was praising Curius and Coruncanius and that age in which a few small plates of silver were an offense for the censor, himself owned four million sesterces, less, no doubt, than Crassus, but more than Cato the Censor.[12] He had outstripped his great-grandfather by a wider margin, if they were compared, than he was outstripped by Crassus; and if greater wealth had come his way, he would not have scorned it. For the wise man does not think himself unworthy of any gifts of chance: he does not love riches, but he prefers them; he takes them not into his mind but into his house; he does not spurn what he possesses but keeps it, and wants more material to be supplied to his virtue.

22 And what doubt is there that the wise man has more material for unfolding his mind in riches than in poverty, since in poverty there is only one kind of virtue, not to be bent or crushed, while in riches self-control, generosity, diligence, orderliness, and magnificence all have an open field? The wise man will not despise himself even if he is very short, but he will want to be tall. And if he is frail in body or has lost an eye, he will still be strong, but he will prefer to have bodily strength, and that while knowing there is something else in him that is stronger; he will endure ill health, he will wish for good health. For some things, even if they are small in the sum of the whole and can be taken away without the ruin of the principal good, still add something to the lasting gladness that springs from virtue: riches affect him and cheer him as a fair and following wind does a sailor, as a fine day does, or a sunny spot in the cold of winter. Further, which of the wise (I mean of our

school, for whom virtue is the only good) denies that even these things we call indifferent have some value in themselves, and that some are preferable to others? To some of them a little honor is given, to some a great deal; so make no mistake: riches are among the preferable things. "Why, then," you say, "do you laugh at me, when they have the same place with you as with me?" Do you want to know how far from the same place they have? If my riches slip away, they will take away nothing but themselves; you will be stunned and will seem to yourself left without yourself, if they leave you. With me riches have some place; with you, the highest. In short, my riches belong to me; you belong to your riches.

23 Stop, then, forbidding philosophers money: no one has condemned wisdom to poverty. The philosopher will have ample wealth, but wealth taken from no one, not stained with another's blood, acquired without wrong to anyone, without sordid gains, whose exit is as honorable as its entrance, over which no one groans except the spiteful. Pile it up as high as you like: it is honorable if, while there is much in it that each man would like to call his own, there is nothing that anyone can say is his own. He will not push away the kindness of Fortune, and he will neither boast of nor blush at an inheritance honorably acquired. Yet he will have something to boast of if he can throw open his house, let the whole city in among his possessions, and say, "Let each take whatever he recognizes as his." What a great man, what an excellent rich man, if after these words he still has as much! I mean this: if he can safely and calmly let the people search, if no one finds anything in his house to lay hands on, he will be rich boldly and openly. The wise man will not let a single denarius across his threshold that enters wrongly; but he will not reject or shut out great wealth, the gift of Fortune and the fruit of virtue. For why should he begrudge it a good lodging? Let it come, let it be his guest. He will neither flaunt it nor hide it (the one is the mark of a

silly mind, the other of a timid and petty one, which keeps it in its pocket like some great good), nor, as I have said, will he throw it out of the house. For what will he say? "You are useless"? Or "I do not know how to use riches"? Just as he could make a journey on foot but would rather climb into a carriage, so, though he could be poor, he will want to be rich. So he will have wealth, but as something light and ready to fly away, and he will not allow it to be a burden to anyone else or to himself. He will give (why have you pricked up your ears? why are you holding open your pockets?), he will give either to the good or to those he can make good; he will give with the greatest deliberation, choosing the most worthy, as one who remembers that an account must be rendered of what is spent as well as of what is received; he will give for right and defensible reasons, for a gift badly placed is among the shameful losses; he will have a pocket that opens easily but has no holes, from which much goes out and nothing falls.

24 He is mistaken who thinks giving an easy thing: it involves the greatest difficulty, if it is done with judgment and not scattered at random and on impulse. This man I put under obligation, to that one I repay; this one I help, this one I pity; that one I equip, as one who deserves not to be dragged down by poverty or kept tied up by it; to some I will not give though they are in need, because even if I give they will still be in need; to some I will offer, on some I will even press it. I cannot be careless in this matter; I am never more a lender than when I give. "What?" you say. "Do you give in order to get it back?" No: in order not to lose it. Let a gift be placed where it need not be asked back but can be returned. Let a benefit be laid up like a treasure buried deep, which you would not dig up unless you had to. Why, the very house of a rich man, what scope it offers for doing good! For who confines generosity to men in togas? Nature bids me do good to human beings. Whether they are slaves or free, freeborn or freed-

men, freed in due form or by a declaration among friends, what does it matter? Wherever there is a human being, there is room for a benefit. So money can be spread even within one's own threshold and give play to generosity (*liberalitas*), which is so called not because it is owed to the free (*liberi*) but because it comes from a free (*liber*) mind. With the wise man it is never thrown at the shameful and unworthy, nor does it ever grow so tired and wander so far that it does not flow, as if from a full source, whenever it finds someone worthy.

There is no reason, then, for you to misunderstand what is said honorably, bravely, and with spirit by students of wisdom. And first note this: a student of wisdom is one thing, a man who has already attained wisdom another. The first will tell you: "I speak very well, but I am still rolling among very many evils. There is no reason for you to hold me to my own formula: at this very moment I am making and shaping myself and raising myself toward a mighty model; if I advance as far as I have resolved, then demand that my deeds match my words." But the one who has attained the summit of human good will deal with you differently and will say: "First of all, there is no reason for you to permit yourself to pass judgment on your betters; I have already had the good fortune to displease the wicked, which is the proof of what is right. But so that I may give you the account that I grudge no mortal, hear what I promise and what value I set on each thing. I deny that riches are a good; for if they were, they would make men good; as it is, since what is found in the hands of the wicked cannot be called good, I deny them that name. For the rest, I admit that they are to be had, and are useful, and bring great conveniences to life.

25 "Hear, then, why I do not count them among goods, and what I do differently from you in regard to them, since we both agree they are to be had. Put me in the most opulent house, put me where gold and silver are in common use: I will not look up to

myself because of these things, which, even if they are in my house, are still outside me. Move me to the Sublician Bridge[13] and throw me among the beggars: I will not look down on myself for sitting among those who hold out a hand for alms. For what does it matter whether a man lacks a crust of bread if he does not lack the power to die? What, then? I prefer that splendid house to the bridge. Put me among splendid furnishings and refined luxury: I will believe myself no more fortunate because my cloak is soft, because purple is spread beneath my guests. Change my bedding: I will be no more wretched if my tired neck rests on a handful of hay, if I lie on a circus cushion with the stuffing coming out through the patches of old linen. What, then? I prefer to show what spirit I have wearing the purple-bordered toga and shoes rather than with bare shoulders or cut feet.'[14] Let all my days go as I wish, let new congratulations be added to the old: I will not be pleased with myself for that. Turn this kindness of the times to its opposite, let my mind be struck from this side and that by loss, mourning, and assaults of every kind, let no hour pass without some complaint: I will not on that account call myself wretched among the most wretched things, I will not on that account curse any day; for I have seen to it that no day is a black day for me. What, then? I prefer to moderate joys than to suppress sorrows."

The great Socrates will tell you this: "Make me conqueror of all nations, let the luxurious chariot of Bacchus carry me in triumph from the rising of the sun all the way to Thebes, let kings come to me for their laws: I will remember most of all that I am a man when I am hailed as a god on every side. Join to this lofty height, without a pause, a headlong change: let me be set on a foreign litter to adorn the procession of a proud and savage conqueror: I will be driven beneath another's chariot no humbler than I stood in my own. What, then? I would still rather conquer than be captured. I will despise the whole kingdom of Fortune, but from it, if I am

given the choice, I will take the better things. Whatever comes to me will become good, but I prefer that what comes be easier and more pleasant and less troublesome to the one who handles it. For there is no reason for you to think that any virtue is without toil; but some virtues need spurs, others reins. Just as the body must be held back on a downward slope and pushed on against a steep one, so some virtues are on a downward slope, others climb a hill. Can there be any doubt that endurance, courage, perseverance, and every other virtue that is set against hardships and subdues Fortune climbs, strains, and struggles uphill? What, then? Is it not just as plain that generosity, self-control, and gentleness go downhill? In these we hold the mind back so that it does not slip forward; in those we urge it on and spur it hard. So to poverty we shall apply the braver virtues, which know how to fight; to riches, the more careful ones, which tread lightly and keep their own weight in check. With this division made, I prefer to have in use those that can be practiced more calmly, rather than those whose testing is blood and sweat. So I do not live," says the wise man, "otherwise than I speak; but you hear otherwise; only the sound of the words reaches your ears; what they mean you do not ask."

26 "What difference is there, then, between me, a fool, and you, a wise man, if we both want to have them?" A very great one: for with the wise man riches are in slavery, with the fool in command; the wise man entrusts nothing to riches; to you riches are everything; you grow used to them and cling to them as if someone had promised you their possession forever; the wise man thinks most about poverty when he stands in the midst of riches. No general ever trusts peace so much as not to prepare himself for a war that, even if it is not being waged, has been declared: a beautiful house makes you insolent, as if it could neither burn nor fall down; wealth stuns you, as if it had risen above every danger and were too great for Fortune to have strength enough to consume it. You

play idly with your riches and do not foresee their danger, as barbarians for the most part do when they are shut in and know nothing of siege engines: they idly watch the work of the besiegers and do not understand what the things being built in the distance are for. The same thing happens to you: you go limp among your possessions and do not think how many misfortunes threaten on every side, ready any moment to carry off the precious spoils. Whoever takes away the wise man's riches will leave him all that is his; for he lives glad in the present, free of care about the future.

"There is nothing," says Socrates, or some other who has the same attitude toward human affairs and the same power, "that I have more firmly resolved than not to bend the conduct of my life to your opinions. Pour out your usual words from every side: I will think you are not abusing me but wailing, like the most miserable infants." This is what he will say who has attained wisdom, whose mind, free of vices, bids him rebuke others not because he hates them but as a remedy. He will add this: "Your opinion of me moves me not on my own account but on yours, because to hate virtue, to keep shouting at it and attacking it, is to renounce the hope of good. You do me no wrong; nor do those who overturn altars wrong the gods. But an evil purpose shows itself, and an evil plan, even where it could do no harm. I bear your ravings as Jupiter Best and Greatest bears the absurdities of the poets: one has given him wings, another horns, another has brought him on as an adulterer staying out all night, another as cruel to the gods, another as unjust to men, another as a ravisher of the freeborn, even of his own kin, another as a parricide and the usurper of a kingdom not his own, his father's. All they have achieved is to take away from men their shame at sinning, if men believed the gods were like that. But although these things do not hurt me at all, I warn you for your own sake: look up to virtue, believe those who have followed it long and proclaim that what they follow is something

great, which appears greater every day; worship virtue like the gods and its teachers like priests, and whenever mention of the sacred writings comes up, keep a holy silence (*favete linguis*). The phrase does not come, as most people suppose, from applause (*favor*); it commands silence, so that the rite can be duly performed with no ill-omened word breaking in. It is much more necessary that this be commanded of you, so that whenever anything is uttered from that oracle, you listen attentively, with your voices held in. When someone shaking a sistrum lies on command, when someone skilled at slashing his own arms bloodies his arms and shoulders with a careful hand, when some woman crawling on her knees along the road howls, and an old man in linen, carrying a laurel branch and a lamp at midday, cries out that one of the gods is angry, you run together and listen, and, feeding each other's stupefaction, declare him inspired."

27 See, Socrates, from that prison which he cleansed by entering it and made more honorable than any senate house, cries out: "What frenzy is this, what nature hostile to gods and men, to defame the virtues and violate holy things with malicious talk? If you can, praise the good; if not, pass them by; and if you enjoy indulging that foul license, attack one another. For when you rage against heaven, I do not say you commit sacrilege, but you waste your effort. I once gave Aristophanes matter for jokes; that whole troop of comic poets poured out their poisoned wit on me; my virtue was made to shine by the very things by which it was attacked; for it profits from being brought out and tested, and no one understands how great it is better than those who have felt its strength by assailing it: the hardness of flint is known to none better than to those who strike it. I offer myself like some rock left alone in a shallow sea, which the waves, from whatever quarter they are driven, never stop beating, and yet they neither move it from its place nor wear it away by their frequent assaults over so

many ages. Leap at me, charge me: I will conquer you by enduring. Whatever strikes against what is firm and unconquerable exerts its force to its own harm: so look for some soft and yielding material in which your darts can stick.

"But do you have time to pry into the evils of others and pass judgment on anyone? 'Why does this philosopher live so spaciously? Why does that one dine so lavishly?' Do you look at other people's pimples when you are covered with countless sores? It is as if a man being eaten up by foul mange should laugh at the moles or warts on the most beautiful bodies. Reproach Plato for having sought money, Aristotle for having taken it, Democritus for having neglected it, Epicurus for having spent it; throw Alcibiades and Phaedrus in my face,[15] you who will be most fortunate the moment you get the chance to imitate our vices! Why not rather look around at your own evils, which stab you from every side, some attacking from outside, others burning in your very vitals? Human affairs are not in such a state, even if you know little of your own condition, that you have so much leisure left over as to have time to wag your tongues in abuse of your betters.

28 "This you do not understand, and you wear a face that does not fit your fortune, like so many people sitting in the circus or the theater whose house is already in mourning while the bad news has not yet reached them. But I, looking out from on high, see what storms either hang over you, to burst their clouds a little later, or have already come close, near enough to sweep away you and yours. And then? Even now, though you barely feel it, is not some whirlwind spinning your minds and wrapping them round, as they flee and seek the same things, now lifted on high, now dashed to the depths ⟨...⟩[16]

1. Seneca's elder brother Novatus, who took the name Lucius Junius Gallio when he was adopted by the orator Junius Gallio; *On Anger* is addressed to him under his earlier name.

2. Some words are lost here, and the phrase that follows is corrupt; read as "harmful in their very wickedness."

3. Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.61, said of the Greek Sinon.

4. Nomentanus and Marcus Gavius Apicius were proverbial gluttons; Apicius lived under Augustus and Tiberius.

5. Epicurus (341–270 BC), the Athenian philosopher whose school held pleasure to be the highest good.

6. Virgil, *Georgics* 1.139–140, slightly adapted.

7. Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 BC), founder of the Stoic school.

8. Publius Rutilius Rufus, consul in 105 BC, was unjustly condemned and died in exile; Cato the Younger, the Stoic opponent of Julius Caesar, killed himself at Utica in 46 BC.

9. An Epicurean otherwise unknown.

10. Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.653, the last words of Dido before her suicide.

11. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.328, from the epitaph of Phaethon, who fell while driving the chariot of the Sun.

12. Manius Curius Dentatus and Tiberius Coruncanius, heroes of the third century BC, were models of old Roman frugality; Marcus Licinius Crassus was the richest Roman of the younger Cato's time, and Cato the Censor was his great-grandfather.

13. The ancient wooden bridge over the Tiber at Rome, a haunt of beggars.

14. The text is corrupt here; read as "and shod … with bare shoulders or cut feet."

15. Democritus of Abdera, the philosopher of atoms, was said to have neglected his inheritance; Alcibiades and Phaedrus were young men of Socrates' circle, named in slanders about his loves.

16. The rest is lost.

On Leisure

1 ⟨...⟩[1] commend vices to us with one great voice. Even if we attempt nothing else that is wholesome, withdrawal in itself will do us good: we shall be better, each of us, on our own. And what of the fact that we can withdraw into the company of the best of men and choose some example by which to direct our lives? That cannot happen except in leisure. Only then can we hold to what we have once resolved, when no one intervenes to bend our still-weak judgment with the crowd's help; only then can life go forward on one even course, the life we now tear apart with the most contradictory aims. For among our other ills the worst is that we keep changing our very vices. So we are not even granted this much: to stay in an evil we have grown used to. One thing pleases us, then another, and we are troubled also by this, that our judgments are not only wrong but fickle. We waver and grasp at one thing after another; we abandon what we sought and seek again what we abandoned; our desire and our regret take turns. For we hang wholly on the judgments of others, and that seems best to us which has many seekers and many praisers, not what deserves to be praised and sought; and we judge a road good or bad not by itself but by the number of footprints, and none of them are the footprints of people coming back.

You will say to me: "What are you saying, Seneca? Are you deserting your side? Surely your Stoics say: 'We shall be in action to the very end of life; we shall never stop working for the common good, helping individuals, bringing aid even to our enemies

with an old man's hand. We are the ones who grant no discharge at any age and who, as that most eloquent man says,

"press our gray hair beneath the helmet;"[2]

we are the ones for whom nothing before death is a time of leisure, so much so that, if circumstances allow, death itself is not leisure either.' Why do you preach the precepts of Epicurus to us in the very headquarters of Zeno?[3] If you're tired of your party, why don't you go over to the other side outright, like a man, instead of betraying it?" For the present I will give you this answer: Do you want anything more than that I show myself like my leaders? What then? I will go not where they send me, but where they lead.

2 Now I will prove to you that I am not deserting the precepts of the Stoics; for they themselves did not desert their own. And yet I would have the best of excuses even if I followed not their precepts but their examples. I will divide what I have to say into two parts. First, that a man may, even from his earliest years, give himself wholly to the contemplation of truth, seek a principle of living, and practice it in private. Second, that a man may do this with the fullest right once his service is done and his years are far spent, and turn his mind to other pursuits,[4] after the manner of the Vestal Virgins, whose years are divided among their duties: they learn to perform the rites, and when they have learned, they teach.

3 I will show that the Stoics too approve of this, not because I have made it a law for myself to do nothing against the word of Zeno or Chrysippus, but because the matter itself allows me to go over to their opinion; for a man who always follows one person belongs not to the senate but to a faction. Would that everything were already grasped, that truth lay in the open and acknowledged, and that we changed nothing in our doctrines! As it is, we are searching for the truth together with the very people who teach it.

The two sects that differ most, here too, are the Epicureans and the Stoics, but each of them sends us to leisure by a different road. Epicurus says: "The wise man will not enter public life unless something intervenes." Zeno says: "He will enter public life unless something prevents him." The one seeks leisure on principle, the other for a cause; but that cause has a wide reach. If the state is too corrupt to be helped, if it is in the grip of evils, the wise man will not strain to no purpose or spend himself where he can do no good. If he has too little authority or strength, and the state will not admit him, if his health hinders him, then, just as he would not launch a battered ship, just as he would not enlist for the army if he were disabled, so he will not set out on a road he knows he cannot travel. So even a man whose prospects are all still untouched may, before he meets any storms, stay in safety, devote himself at once to the liberal arts, and enjoy an unbroken leisure as a cultivator of the virtues, which can be practiced even by the most retiring. What is required of a man, surely, is this: that he benefit men, many if he can; if not, a few; if not, those nearest him; if not, himself. For when he makes himself useful to others, he is doing the common business. Just as a man who makes himself worse harms not only himself but all those he could have benefited had he become better, so whoever deserves well of himself benefits others by this very fact, that he is preparing what will benefit them.

4 Let us embrace in our minds two commonwealths. One is great and truly common, and holds gods and men; in it we look not to this corner or that, but measure the bounds of our state by the sun. The other is the one to which the accident of birth has assigned us: this will be the commonwealth of the Athenians or of the Carthaginians or of some other city that belongs not to all men but to particular ones. Some serve both commonwealths at the same time, the greater and the lesser; some only the lesser; some

only the greater. This greater commonwealth we can serve even in leisure; in fact I am not sure we cannot serve it better in leisure, by inquiring what virtue is, whether it is one or many; whether it is nature or art that makes men good; whether this thing that embraces seas and lands, and all that is set in sea and land, is one, or whether god has scattered many such bodies about; whether all the matter from which everything is born is continuous and full, or divided, with void mixed among the solids; where god's seat is; whether he looks on his work or handles it; whether he is poured around it from outside or set within the whole; whether the universe is immortal or must be counted among things perishable and born for a time. What does the man who contemplates these things do for god? He keeps such great works of his from going without a witness.

5 We often say that the highest good is to live according to nature: Nature brought us forth for both, for the contemplation of things and for action. Now let us prove what we stated first. What then? Will it not be proved if each person asks himself how great a desire he has to know the unknown, how he is roused by every tale? Some people sail and endure the toils of the longest journeys for no other reward than learning something hidden and remote. This is what draws whole peoples to spectacles, what drives them to pry into what is closed, to search out the more secret, to unroll antiquities, to hear of the customs of barbarous nations. Nature gave us a curious mind, and, aware of her own art and beauty, she brought us forth to be spectators of so great a spectacle, since she would lose the fruit of herself if she displayed things so great, so bright, so finely drawn, so shining and beautiful in more ways than one, to an empty solitude. So that you may know she wanted to be gazed at, not merely seen, look at the place she has given us. She set us in her own center and gave us a view all around; and she did not merely make man upright, but, meaning to fit him for contem-

plation, so that he could follow the stars as they glide from their rising to their setting and turn his face along with the whole sky, she made his head high and set it on a flexible neck. Then, bringing out six signs by day and six by night, she unfolded every part of herself, so that through what she had offered to his eyes she might make him desire the rest as well. For we do not see all things, nor see them as great as they are; but our sight opens a path of inquiry for itself and lays the foundations for the truth, so that inquiry may pass from what is plain to what is obscure, and find something older than the universe itself: where those stars came from; what the state of the whole was before its separate parts went their ways; what principle drew apart the sunken and confused mass; who assigned places to things; whether heavy things sank and light ones flew up by their own nature, or whether, beyond the thrust and weight of bodies, some higher power laid down a law for each; whether that is true which is the chief argument that men are of divine breath: that a part of the stars, sparks of them as it were, leaped down to earth and stuck in a place not its own. Our thought breaks through the ramparts of heaven and is not content to know what is shown it. "I search into," it says, "what lies beyond the universe: whether it is a boundless vastness, or whether this too is closed in by its own limits; what the condition of things outside is, whether they are shapeless and confused, filling the same amount of space in every direction, or whether they too are arranged in some order; whether they cling to this universe, or have withdrawn far from it and this one rolls in a void; whether the things from which everything born and to be born is built are indivisible, or their matter is continuous and changeable throughout; whether the elements are at war with one another, or do not fight but work together through their differences." Born to inquire into these things, consider how little time man has received, even if he claims all of it for himself. Though he lets nothing be snatched

away through easygoingness and nothing slip through carelessness, though he guards his hours with the greatest avarice and goes on to the farthest limit of human life, and fortune shakes nothing loose from what nature has allotted him, still man is too mortal for the knowledge of immortal things. Therefore I live according to nature if I have given myself wholly to her, if I am her admirer and her worshiper. But Nature wanted me to do both, to act and to be free for contemplation. I do both, since not even contemplation is without action.

6 "But it matters," you say, "whether you have come to it for pleasure, seeking nothing from it but endless contemplation that leads nowhere; for it is sweet and has its own allurements." To this I answer: it matters just as much in what spirit you lead the life of a citizen, whether you are always restless and never take any time for yourself in which to turn your eyes from human things to divine. Just as it is far from commendable to strive after things without any love of the virtues and without cultivating the mind, and to turn out mere labor (for these must be mixed and bound together), so virtue thrown away into leisure without action is an imperfect and languid good, never showing what it has learned. Who denies that it ought to test its progress in practice, and not only think about what should be done but sometimes also put its hand to work and bring what it has meditated into reality? But if the delay is not the wise man's own fault, if it is not the doer who is lacking but things to do, will you not allow him to keep his own company? With what intention does the wise man withdraw into leisure? Knowing that even then he will be doing things by which he benefits posterity. We, certainly, are the ones who say that Zeno and Chrysippus did greater things than if they had led armies, held offices, and passed laws; and they did pass laws, not for one state but for the whole human race. Why, then, should such leisure not befit a good man, a leisure through which he may

give order to the ages to come and speak, not before a few, but before all men of all nations, those who are and those who will be? In short, I ask whether Cleanthes and Chrysippus and Zeno lived by their own precepts. You will answer, no doubt, that they lived as they had said one should live: yet none of them governed a state. "They did not have," you say, "the fortune or the rank that usually gets a man admitted to the handling of public affairs." But all the same they did not lead an idle life: they found a way for their own repose to benefit men more than the bustle and sweat of others. So these men were nonetheless seen to have done a great deal, though they did nothing in public life.

7 Besides, there are three kinds of life, and people commonly ask which of them is best: one is given to pleasure, another to contemplation, the third to action. First, setting aside our quarrel and setting aside the implacable hatred we have declared on those who follow other paths, let us see how all these arrive at the same point under one label or another. The man who approves of pleasure is not without contemplation; the man who devotes himself to contemplation is not without pleasure; and the man whose life is given over to action is not without contemplation. "There is all the difference in the world," you say, "between a thing's being your goal and its being an appendage of some other goal." Granted, the difference is great; still, the one does not exist without the other. That man does not contemplate without action, nor does this one act without contemplation; nor does that third man, of whom we have agreed to think badly, approve of an inert pleasure, but of one he makes firm for himself by reason. So even this pleasure-loving sect is in action. Why should it not be in action, when Epicurus himself says that he will sometimes draw back from pleasure, and even seek out pain, if regret hangs over the pleasure, or if a lesser pain is taken in place of a heavier one? What is the point of saying

this? To make it plain that contemplation pleases everyone. Others make for it as their goal; for us it is a roadstead, not a harbor.

8 Add now that by the law of Chrysippus a man may live in leisure; I do not mean put up with leisure, but choose it. Our school says the wise man will not enter just any state; but what does it matter how the wise man comes to leisure, whether because the state is lacking to him or he is lacking to the state, if a state is going to be lacking to everyone? And it will always be lacking to those who look for one fastidiously. I ask you what state the wise man should enter. That of the Athenians, where Socrates is condemned, and Aristotle flees so as not to be condemned? Where envy crushes the virtues? You will tell me the wise man will not enter this state. Will the wise man enter the state of the Carthaginians, then, where there is constant sedition, and a freedom hostile to every good man, where justice and goodness are held cheapest of all, where there is inhuman cruelty toward enemies, and hostility even toward their own? He will flee this one too. If I choose to go through them one by one, I shall find none that could put up with the wise man, or that the wise man could put up with. But if that state we imagine for ourselves is not to be found, leisure begins to be necessary for everyone, since the one thing that could have been preferred to leisure exists nowhere. If someone says that the best thing is to sail, and then says that one should not sail on a sea where shipwrecks commonly happen and there are often sudden storms that sweep the pilot off his course, I think this man forbids me to put out from shore, even though he praises sailing. ⟨...⟩[5]

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1. The beginning is lost.

2. Virgil, *Aeneid* 9.612.

3. Epicurus (341–270 BC) founded the Epicurean school; Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 BC) founded the Stoic school, which Cleanthes and then Chrysippus led after him.

4. The text is corrupt here; read as “turn his mind to other pursuits.”

5. The rest is lost.

On Tranquility of Mind

1 When I examined myself, Seneca, some of my vices showed themselves in plain sight, where I could take hold of them with my hand; some were more hidden, back in a corner; and some were not there all the time but came back at intervals. These last I would call the most troublesome of all. They are like roving enemies who spring on you whenever they see a chance, and with them you can do neither one thing nor the other: you can neither stand ready as in war nor be free of care as in peace.

Still, the condition I catch myself in most of all (for why should I not confess the truth to you, as to a doctor?) is this: I am neither honestly free of the things I used to fear and hate, nor, on the other hand, in their power. The state I am in is not the worst, but it is the most complaining and peevish: I am neither sick nor well. There is no need to tell me that all virtues are tender at first, and that time gives them firmness and strength. I know, too, that the things that work for show, I mean rank and a name for eloquence and whatever depends on other people's votes, grow strong with time: both the things that build real strength and the things that are dressed up with some kind of paint to please must wait for years, until length of time gradually gives them their color. But I am afraid that habit, which gives things stability, may fix this vice deeper in me. Long acquaintance breeds love for bad things as much as for good.

What it is like, this weakness of a mind hesitating between the two, leaning bravely neither toward the right nor toward the wrong, I can show you better piece by piece than all at once. I will

tell you what happens to me; you will find a name for the disease. I have, I admit, a great love of thrift. I like a bed that is not made up for show; clothes not brought out of a chest, not pressed under weights and a thousand screws that force them to shine, but plain, everyday clothes that need no care to keep or to put on. I like food that no household of slaves has to prepare or watch being eaten, not ordered many days ahead or served by many hands, but easy to get and easy to make, with nothing exotic or costly about it, to be had anywhere, a burden neither to the estate nor to the body, and not likely to come back up the way it went down. I like a plain servant, a rough little houseborn slave; my rustic father's heavy silver with no maker's name on it; and a table not conspicuous for the variety of its markings, or known to the whole city from passing through the hands of a long line of fashionable owners, but set up for use, one that holds no guest's eyes with pleasure and inflames none with envy. Then, after all this has pleased me well, my mind is dazzled by the display of some training school for page boys: slaves dressed more carefully than for a procession and decked in gold, a whole troop of gleaming servants; and then a house where even the floor you walk on is precious, where wealth is scattered in every corner and the very ceilings glitter; and the crowd that tags along after fortunes on their way to ruin. Why should I speak of waters clear to the bottom that flow round the very guests at dinner, of banquets worthy of such a stage? Coming as I do from long, dull years of frugality, I find luxury pouring around me in all its splendor and echoing on every side. My eyes waver a little; I can lift my mind against it more easily than my eyes. So I come away, not worse, but sadder; I do not walk so tall among my own paltry things; and a silent pang comes over me, and a doubt whether that life may not be better. None of this changes me, yet none of it fails to shake me.

I like to follow my teachers' orders and go into the thick of public life. I like to take up office and the fasces, not, of course, because the purple or the rods have lured me, but so that I may be more ready and more useful to my friends and relatives and all my fellow citizens, and then to all mankind. Eager and untried, I follow Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus,[1] none of whom went into public life, and every one of whom sent others into it. But when something has struck a mind not used to being battered, when something happens that is either unworthy (as so much is in every human life) or not going smoothly, or when things not worth much have demanded a great deal of time, I turn back to leisure; and, as cattle walk faster toward home even when they are tired, so do I. I like to confine my life within my own walls again. Let no one rob me of a single day, since he will give back nothing worth so great a cost; let the mind cling to itself, cultivate itself, do nothing that is another's business, nothing that has to wait on anyone's verdict; let me love a tranquility free of public and private cares. But when some stirring reading has roused my mind, and noble examples have spurred me on, I want to leap into the forum, lend my voice to one man and my help to another, help that, even if it does no good, will at least try to, and check in the forum the arrogance of someone puffed up by undeserved success.

In my studies, by heaven, I think it better to keep my eyes on the matter itself and to speak for its sake, and for the rest to leave the words to the matter, so that my style follows, unlabored, wherever the matter leads. What need is there to compose things that will last for centuries? Won't you stop working to keep posterity from being silent about you? You were born to die; a silent funeral has fewer annoyances. So write something in a simple style to fill your time, for your own use, not for advertisement: study for the day's needs takes less labor. Then again, when my mind has been lifted up by the greatness of its thoughts, it grows ambitious

for words; as it aspires higher, so it longs to speak higher, and the style rises to the dignity of the matter. Forgetting then my rule and my stricter judgment, I am carried higher, with a voice no longer my own.

Not to go on with details any longer: in everything this weak hold on a sound mind follows me. I am afraid I may gradually slip away, or, what is more worrying, that I may hang forever like someone about to fall, and that there may be more wrong with me than I myself can see. For we look on our own affairs with a friend's eyes, and favor always gets in the way of judgment. I think many men could have reached wisdom if they had not thought they had reached it already, if they had not hidden some things in themselves and closed their eyes and jumped over others. For there is no reason to think that we are ruined more by other people's flattery than by our own. Who has dared to tell himself the truth? Who, surrounded though he was by crowds of people praising and fawning on him, has not still been his own greatest flatterer? So I ask you, if you have any remedy to stop this wavering of mine, to think me worthy of owing my tranquility to you. I know these movements of the mind are not dangerous and bring no real turmoil. To express what I complain of with an exact comparison: it is not a storm that troubles me but seasickness. So take away this ill, whatever it is, and help someone struggling within sight of land.

2 I have been asking myself in silence for a long time now, Serenus, by heaven, what I should liken such a state of mind to, and I can bring it closest to the case of people who have recovered from a long and serious illness but are still touched by slight twinges and little discomforts now and then. Though they have escaped the last traces of the disease, they are still troubled by suspicions; already well, they hold out their wrist to doctors and suspect every warmth of their body of being fever. Their body,

Serenus, is not unsound; it is only unused to soundness, just as even a calm sea still has a certain trembling and motion when it has come to rest after a storm. What you need, then, is not the harsher treatments we have already gone through, resisting yourself here, being angry with yourself there, pressing hard on yourself elsewhere, but the one that comes last: to trust yourself and believe you are on the right road, not drawn aside by the criss-crossing tracks of the many who run this way and that, some of them wandering close around the road itself. But what you long for is something great and supreme and close to god: not to be shaken.

The Greeks call this steady footing of the mind euthymia,[2] and Democritus has an excellent book on it; I call it tranquility (*tranquillitas*). For there is no need to imitate words and copy them in the Greek form; the thing we are talking about must be marked by some name that has the force of the Greek word, not its look. What we are asking, then, is how the mind may always go on an even and favorable course, be well disposed to itself, look on its own affairs with gladness, and never interrupt this joy but stay in a calm state, never lifting itself up and never casting itself down. That will be tranquility. Let us ask in general how it can be reached; you will take from the common remedy as much as you like. Meanwhile the whole vice must be dragged into the open, and in it each man will recognize his own share. At the same time you will understand how much less trouble you have with your dislike of yourself than those who, tied to some showy profession and laboring under a grand title, are held in their pretense by shame more than by choice.

They are all in the same case: both those who are plagued by fickleness and boredom and constant change of purpose, who always like better what they have left behind, and those who droop and yawn. Add those who toss and turn like people who cannot

sleep, settling themselves now this way, now that, until they find rest through sheer weariness: by reshaping their way of life again and again, they end up staying in the one where they are caught, not by dislike of change, but by old age, too sluggish for anything new. Add, too, those who fail to be fickle, a fault that comes not from constancy but from inertia, and who live not as they want but as they began. There are countless varieties after this, but the vice has one effect: to be displeased with oneself. This springs from a mind out of balance and from desires that are timid or unsuccessful, when men either do not dare as much as they desire or do not attain it, and lean out wholly toward hope. They are always unsteady and changeable, as must happen to people who live in suspense. They strain toward their wishes by every road, teach and force themselves to do shameful and difficult things, and when their labor goes unrewarded, they are tortured by disgrace that bought them nothing: they are sorry not for having wished for wrong things but for having wished in vain. Then they are seized both by regret for what they began and by fear of beginning again, and there creeps over them that tossing of a mind that finds no way out, because they can neither command their desires nor obey them, and the hesitation of a life that never gets under way, and the stagnation of a mind growing numb among abandoned wishes. All this is worse when, out of hatred for their laborious failure, they have taken refuge in leisure and in private studies, which a mind bent on public affairs, eager for action, and restless by nature cannot bear, since, of course, it has too few consolations within itself. So, once it is deprived of the amusements that busy affairs themselves supply to people rushing about, it cannot stand home, solitude, the four walls; it looks unwillingly at itself left to itself.

From this come that boredom, that displeasure with oneself, that tossing of a mind that settles nowhere, that gloomy and sick

endurance of one's own leisure. It is worst when people are ashamed to confess the causes and their sense of shame has driven their torments inward: then their desires, shut up in a narrow space with no way out, strangle themselves. From this come grief and listlessness and the thousand surges of an unsettled mind, which hopes begun keep in suspense and hopes given up leave gloomy. From this comes the state of those who loathe their leisure and complain that they themselves have nothing to do, and the bitterest envy of other people's advancement (for unhappy idleness feeds spite, and they want everyone destroyed because they could not get ahead themselves); then, from this aversion to others' progress and despair of their own, comes a mind that rages at Fortune, complains about the times, withdraws into corners, and broods over its own punishment, while it is sick and weary of itself. For the human mind is by nature active and prone to movement. Anything that rouses and distracts it is welcome to it, and more welcome still to all the worst natures, which are glad to be worn down by preoccupations. Just as certain sores crave the hands that will hurt them and delight in being touched, and the foul itch of the body enjoys whatever scratches it, so, I would say, these minds, in which desires have broken out like evil sores, take pleasure in toil and torment. For there are some things that delight even our body while giving it a certain pain, such as turning over and changing to a side that is not yet tired, and cooling ourselves now in one position, now in another. Homer's Achilles is like that, lying now on his face, now on his back, arranging himself in one position after another: this is the mark of a sick man, to put up with nothing for long and to use changes as remedies.

Hence people take up aimless journeys and wander along shores, and their fickleness, always hostile to whatever is at hand, tries itself now on sea, now on land. "Now let's head for Campania." Soon soft living bores them: "Let's see some wild country; let's go

through the forests of Bruttium and Lucania." Yet in the wilderness they look for something pleasant, where their pampered eyes can find relief from the long squalor of rough places: "Let's make for Tarentum, its famous harbor, its mild winters, a district rich enough even for its crowds of old … Now let's turn our course back to Rome: our ears have gone too long without applause and noise; now I'd like to enjoy a little human blood too." One journey is undertaken after another, and one spectacle is exchanged for another. As Lucretius says:

"Thus each man is forever running from himself."[3]

But what good does it do, if he does not escape? He follows himself and presses on himself, the most tiresome of companions. So we must understand that the fault we suffer from is not in the places but in ourselves: we are too weak to endure anything, unable to bear toil or pleasure, ourselves or anything else, for long. This has driven some people to death: by changing their purposes again and again they kept coming round to the same things and had left no room for anything new, and life and the universe itself began to disgust them; and there came over them that cry of people rotting in luxury: "How much longer the same things?"

3 You ask what help I think we should use against this boredom. The best course, as Athenodorus[4] says, would be to keep oneself occupied with practical affairs, the management of the state, and the duties of a citizen. Some men spend the day in the sun, in exercise, and in care of the body, and for athletes by far the most useful thing is to spend the greater part of their time feeding their arms and the strength to which alone they have devoted themselves; just so, for us, who are preparing our minds for the contest of civic life, by far the finest thing is to be at our work. For when a man has set himself the aim of making himself useful to his fellow citizens and to mankind, he both trains and makes progress at once by putting himself in the middle of public duties and manag-

ing common and private affairs to the best of his ability. “But because,” he says, “in this insane ambition of men, with so many slanderers twisting what is right into something worse, honesty is not very safe, and there will always be more to block us than to help us succeed, we must indeed withdraw from the forum and public life. But a great mind has room to unfold itself freely even in private life; and the energies of men are not, like the onrush of lions and other animals, held in by cages, for men’s greatest actions are done in retirement. Yet a man should hide himself in such a way that, wherever he has hidden his leisure, he still wants to be of use to individuals and to everyone by his intellect, his voice, his advice. For it is not only the man who brings forward candidates, defends the accused, and votes on peace and war who serves the state. The man who encourages the young, who in so great a dearth of good teachers instills virtue into minds, who grabs and pulls back those rushing headlong after money and luxury and, if nothing else, at least slows them down, is doing public business in private life. Or does the man who, as praetor for foreigners or praetor of the city, pronounces his assessor’s words to those who come before him, do more than the man who teaches what justice is, what devotion, what endurance, what courage, what contempt for death, what understanding of the gods, and what a free good a good conscience is? So if you give to study the time you have taken away from your duties, you will not have deserted or refused your post. For the soldier is not only the one who stands in the battle line and defends the right wing and the left, but also the one who guards the gates and holds a post less dangerous, though not an idle one, who keeps the night watch and is in charge of the armory: these duties, though bloodless, count as military service. If you call yourself back to study, you will escape all disgust with life; you will not long for night out of weariness of daylight, you will not be a burden to yourself or useless to

others; you will draw many people into friendship, and all the best men will flock to you. For virtue, however obscure, is never hidden; it sends out signs of itself, and whoever is worthy will follow its tracks. For if we do away with all social life, renounce the human race, and live turned in on ourselves alone, this solitude without any pursuit will be followed by a lack of things to do: we will begin to put up some buildings and pull down others, push back the sea, bring water in against the lie of the land, and squander the time that nature gave us to use. Some of us use it sparingly, others wastefully; some of us spend it so that we can give an account of it, others so that we have nothing left, and nothing is more shameful than that. Often a man old in years has no other proof that he has lived long except his age."

4 To me, my dearest Serenus, Athenodorus seems to have given in to the times too much and to have run away too soon. I would not deny that at times one must give way, but by stepping back gradually, with the standards safe and military honor safe: those who come over to the enemy on terms, still armed, are more respected by him and safer. This, I think, is what virtue and the student of virtue should do: if Fortune gets the upper hand and cuts off the chance to act, he should not at once turn his back and flee unarmed, looking for hiding places, as if there were any place where Fortune could not follow him; he should throw himself into duties more sparingly and choose with care some way to be useful to the state. He may not serve in the army: let him seek office. He must live as a private citizen: let him be an orator. Silence has been imposed on him: let him help his fellow citizens by silent advocacy. Even entering the forum is dangerous: in homes, at shows, at dinners, let him play the good companion, the faithful friend, the temperate guest. He has lost the duties of a citizen: let him practice those of a man. That is why, with a great spirit, we have not shut ourselves within the walls of one city but have gone out into

dealings with the whole world and declared the universe our country: so that we might give virtue a wider field. The tribunal is closed to you, and you are kept from the rostra or the assemblies: look behind you at how many broad lands lie open, how many peoples. Never will so large a part be blocked to you that a larger one is not left. But see that this whole trouble is not your own fault. You do not want to serve the state unless as consul, or as prytanis at Athens, or herald, or sufete at Carthage. What if you refused to be a soldier unless as general or tribune? Even if others hold the front line and the lot has put you in the rear ranks, fight from there with your voice, encouragement, example, and spirit: even with his hands cut off, a man finds something to contribute to his side in battle if he still stands his ground and helps with his shout. Do something like that: if Fortune has removed you from the first place in the state, stand your ground anyway and help with your shout; and if someone chokes your throat, stand your ground anyway and help with your silence. The work of a good citizen is never useless: he is heard and seen. By his look, his nod, his silent stubbornness, his very walk, he does good. As some healthful things do their work by their smell, without being tasted or touched, so virtue spreads its benefit even from a distance and in hiding. Whether it walks abroad and uses its own rights, or goes out only on sufferance and is forced to shorten sail, or is idle and mute and narrowly hemmed in, or out in the open, in whatever state it is, it does good. Do you think the example of a man who rests well is of little use? So by far the best thing is to mix leisure with affairs whenever an active life is blocked by chance obstacles or by the condition of the state; for everything is never so shut off that there is no room for honorable action.

5 Can you find a city more wretched than Athens was when the Thirty Tyrants were tearing it apart?[5] They had killed thirteen hundred citizens, all the best men, and that did not make them

stop; their savagery egged itself on. In the city that had the Areopagus, the most sacred of courts, that had a senate and a people like its senate, there met every day a grim board of executioners, and the wretched senate house was too small for its tyrants. Could that city ever find rest, which had as many tyrants as it had henchmen? Not even a hope of recovering freedom could present itself to their minds, and there seemed to be no room for any remedy against such a mass of evils: for where would a wretched city find so many Harmodiuses? Yet Socrates was in their midst. He consoled the grieving fathers, encouraged those who despaired of the state, reproached the rich who feared for their wealth with repenting too late of their dangerous greed, and carried about a great model for those willing to imitate it, as he walked a free man among thirty masters. Yet Athens herself killed him in prison, and freedom could not bear the freedom of a man who had safely mocked a whole troop of tyrants: so that you may know that even in a stricken state the wise man has occasion to put himself forward, and that in a flourishing and happy one wantonness, envy, and a thousand other idle vices reign. However the state presents itself, then, however Fortune allows, we will either spread ourselves out or draw ourselves in; but in any case we will move, and not lie numb, bound by fear. No, he will be a man indeed who, with dangers threatening on every side, with arms and chains clanking around him, neither dashes his virtue against them nor hides it: for to bury yourself is not to save yourself. Curius Dentatus, I believe, used to say that he would rather be dead than live as a dead man: the last of evils is to leave the number of the living before you die. But if you happen on a time when the state is less manageable, you will have to claim more for leisure and letters, and, just as on a dangerous voyage, make for harbor now and then, and not wait until affairs let you go, but cut yourself loose from them.

6 But we will have to examine, first, ourselves; then the business we will undertake; then the people for whose sake or with whom we undertake it. Above all, a man must assess himself, because we usually think we can do more than we can. One man comes to grief through confidence in his eloquence; another has demanded more of his estate than it could bear; another has weighed down a weak body with a laborious office. Some men's modesty is ill suited to public affairs, which require a bold face; some men's stubbornness is no good at court; some do not have their anger under control, and any indignation carries them away into rash words; some do not know how to hold back their wit and cannot keep away from dangerous jokes: for all these, quiet is more useful than business. A fierce and impatient nature should avoid whatever provokes a freedom of speech that will do it harm. You must consider whether your nature is better suited to doing things or to quiet study and contemplation, and lean the way the force of your talent carries you. Isocrates laid hands on Ephorus and led him away from the forum, thinking him more useful for writing history. Talents that are forced respond badly; when nature fights back, labor is in vain.

Next we must assess the tasks themselves that we undertake, and compare our strength with the things we are going to attempt. For there should always be more strength in the doer than in the work: loads larger than the one who carries them are bound to crush him. Besides, some tasks are not so much great as fertile, and breed a lot of further business: these too should be avoided, since new preoccupations, and many of them, will spring from them. Nor should you go anywhere you cannot freely come back from. Put your hand to things whose end you can bring about, or at least hope for; leave alone those that spread wider as you go and do not stop where you meant them to. Above all we must choose our people: whether they are worth spending part of

our life on, whether the loss of our time reaches them at all; for some people actually count our services to them as favors they have done us. Athenodorus says he would not even go to dinner with a man who would feel no obligation to him for coming. You understand, I think, how much less he would go to those who settle their accounts with their friends' services by means of their table, who count their courses as gifts of money, as if they were gluttons in other people's honor. Take away their witnesses and spectators, and gluttony in private will give them no pleasure …

7 Yet nothing will delight the mind so much as a faithful and sweet friendship. How great a good it is to have hearts ready into which any secret may safely sink, whose knowledge of you you fear less than your own, whose conversation soothes your worry, whose judgment settles your plans, whose cheerfulness scatters your sadness, whose very sight delights you! We will choose them, of course, as free from desires as possible: for vices creep, leap to whoever is nearest, and harm by contact. So, just as in a plague we must take care not to sit by bodies already seized and burning with the disease, because we will draw in danger and suffer from their very breath, so in choosing our friends' characters we will take pains to take on the least tainted: mixing the sound with the sick is the beginning of disease. Not that I would instruct you to follow or draw to yourself no one but a wise man: for where will you find him, whom we have been seeking for so many ages? The least bad counts as the best. You would hardly have the chance of a more fortunate choice if you were seeking good men among the Platos and Xenophons and that whole crop of Socratic offspring, or if you had at your disposal the age of Cato, which produced many men worthy of being born in Cato's time (just as it produced many worse than ever before, contrivers of the greatest crimes; for both crowds were needed for Cato to be understood: he had to have good men to win approval from and bad men to test his

strength on). But now, in so great a shortage of good men, let the choice be less fastidious. Above all, though, avoid the gloomy who lament everything and are glad of any excuse to complain. However loyal and kindly he may be, a companion who is agitated and moans about everything is an enemy to tranquility.

8 Let us pass on to property, the greatest source of human troubles. For if you compare all the other things that distress us, deaths, illnesses, fears, longings, the endurance of pains and toils, with the ills our money causes us, this side will far outweigh them. So we must reflect how much lighter a pain it is not to have than to lose, and we will understand that poverty has less to torment it because it has less to lose. For you are wrong if you think the rich bear their losses with more spirit: the pain of a wound is the same for the biggest bodies and the smallest. Bion[6] puts it neatly: it hurts the bald no less than the hairy to have their hair pulled out. You may be sure the same goes for poor and rich, that their torment is equal, for in both cases their money has grown onto them and cannot be torn away without their feeling it. But it is more bearable, as I said, and easier not to acquire than to lose, and so you will see that those whom Fortune has never favored are more cheerful than those she has deserted. Diogenes, a man of enormous spirit, saw this and made sure that nothing could be taken from him. Call it poverty, want, need; give that freedom from care any shameful name you like: I will grant he is not fortunate when you find me anyone else who has nothing to lose. Either I am mistaken, or it is a kingship to be the one man among misers, swindlers, robbers, and kidnappers who cannot be harmed. If anyone doubts Diogenes' good fortune, he can doubt the condition of the immortal gods too, whether they live less than happily because they have no estates or gardens, no costly farms worked by another man's tenant, no large loans out in the forum. Are you not ashamed, whoever you are who gape at riches? Come, look at the

universe: you will see the gods naked, giving everything, having nothing. Do you think this man poor, or like the immortal gods, who has stripped himself of everything that chance can give? Do you call Demetrius, Pompey's freedman, more fortunate,[7] who was not ashamed to be richer than Pompey? Every day the number of his slaves was reported to him as an army's is to its general, though his riches should long since have been two under-slaves and a roomier cell. But Diogenes' only slave ran away, and when he was pointed out to him, Diogenes did not think it worth the trouble to bring him back. "It would be a disgrace," he said, "if Manes could live without Diogenes and Diogenes could not live without Manes." He seems to me to have said: "Fortune, mind your own business; there is nothing of yours left with Diogenes. My slave has run away; no, it is I who have gone free." A household of slaves needs clothes and food; so many bellies of the greediest creatures must be looked after, clothing bought, the most thieving hands watched, and the services of people who weep and curse put to use. How much more fortunate is the man who owes nothing to anyone except the one he can most easily refuse, himself! But since we do not have that much strength, we should at least cut down our property, so as to be less exposed to the wrongs of Fortune. In war, bodies that can be drawn in behind their armor are handier than those that spill out beyond it and by their very size expose themselves to wounds on every side. The best measure of money is one that neither falls into poverty nor goes far from it.

9 This limit will please us if thrift has pleased us first; without it no wealth is enough, and with it any wealth is ample, especially since the remedy is close by, and poverty itself, by calling in frugality, can turn itself into riches. Let us get used to putting display away from us and to measuring things by their use, not their ornament. Let food tame hunger, drink thirst; let lust flow only where

it must. Let us learn to rely on our own limbs, to arrange our dress and diet not by the latest fashions but as the customs of our ancestors advise. Let us learn to increase our self-restraint, check luxury, temper the love of glory, soften irascibility, look on poverty with level eyes, cultivate frugality, even if many are ashamed of it, apply to our natural needs remedies cheaply got, hold our unbridled hopes and our mind that leans out toward the future as if in chains, and see to it that we seek our riches from ourselves rather than from Fortune. So great a variety and injustice of misfortunes can never be driven off so completely that many storms will not burst on those who spread a great deal of sail. Our affairs must be drawn into a narrow compass, so that the weapons fall wide; that is why exile and disasters have sometimes turned out to be a cure, and heavier troubles have been healed by lighter ones. When the mind pays too little heed to precepts and cannot be cured by gentler means, why should it not be looked after by applying poverty, disgrace, and the overturning of its fortunes? One ill is set against another. Let us get used, then, to being able to dine without a crowd, to being slaves to fewer slaves, to getting clothes for the purpose they were invented for, and to living in smaller quarters. Not only in the races and contests of the circus, but on these laps of life too, we must keep to the inside of the turn. Even the money spent on studies, the most liberal of expenses, is sensible only as long as it is moderate. What is the point of countless books and libraries, whose owner can hardly read through the catalogues in his whole life? The mass of them burdens the learner; it does not instruct him; and it is far better to give yourself to a few authors than to wander among many. Forty thousand books burned at Alexandria.[8] Someone else may praise that library as the finest monument of royal wealth, as Livy did, who says it was an outstanding work of the taste and care of kings. It was not taste or care, but learned luxury; no, not even learned, since they had col-

lected it not for study but for show, just as for many people ignorant even of a schoolboy's letters, books are not tools of study but decorations for dining rooms. So let us get as many books as are enough, none for display. "It is more respectable," you say, "to pour money out on these than on Corinthian bronzes and paintings." Excess is a fault everywhere. What reason have you to forgive a man who hunts for bookcases of citron wood and ivory, who collects the works of authors unknown or discredited, and who yawns among so many thousands of books, a man who likes the ends and labels of his volumes best? So it is among the laziest of men that you will see all the speeches and histories there are, cases piled up to the ceiling: for now, along with the baths and hot rooms, a library too is polished up as a necessary ornament of a house. I would readily forgive it if men went wrong from too much desire for learning; as it is, these collected works of sacred genius, arranged with portraits of their authors, are bought for show and to decorate walls.

10 But suppose you have fallen into some hard kind of life, and public or private fortune has thrown a noose around you before you knew it, which you can neither untie nor break. Remember that men in fetters find the weights and shackles on their legs hard to bear at first; then, once they have resolved not to rage against them but to endure them, necessity teaches them to bear them bravely, and habit to bear them easily. In any kind of life you will find amusements and relaxations and pleasures, if you are willing to think your ills light rather than make them hateful. Nature has done us no greater kindness than this: knowing to what troubles we were born, she invented habit to soften disasters, quickly making the heaviest things familiar. No one would last if the continuance of adversity had the same force as its first blow. We are all chained to Fortune: some by a chain of gold and loose, others by one tight and shabby; but what difference does it make?

The same custody surrounds us all, and those who have chained others are chained too, unless perhaps you think the chain lighter on the left arm. Some are bound by office, others by wealth; some are weighed down by noble birth, others by low birth; some live under another's command, others under their own; some are kept in one place by exile, others by priesthoods. All life is slavery. So we must get used to our condition, complain about it as little as possible, and seize whatever advantages it has: nothing is so bitter that a calm mind cannot find comfort in it. Small plots of ground have often, by the skill of the planner, been made to serve many uses, and arrangement has made even a cramped foothold livable. Apply reason to difficulties: hard things can be softened, narrow things widened, and heavy things weigh less on those who bear them skillfully.

Besides, we should not send our desires far afield; let us allow them to go out only into the neighborhood, since they will not stand being shut up entirely. Leaving aside things that are either impossible or hard to achieve, let us follow what lies close by and smiles on our hopes, but let us know that all things are equally trivial, with different faces on the outside, alike empty within. And let us not envy those who stand higher: what seemed lofty heights are sheer cliffs.

Those, on the other hand, whom an unkind lot has set in a precarious place will be safer if they take the pride out of things proud in themselves and bring their fortune down to level ground as far as they can. There are many, of course, who must cling to their height, from which they cannot come down except by falling; but let them bear witness that this itself is their heaviest burden, that they are forced to be a burden to others, and that they have not been lifted up but nailed up there. By justice, gentleness, humanity, and a generous and kindly hand, let them lay up many safeguards against the falls that may follow, in the hope of which

they may hang there more free of care. Yet nothing will free us from these surges of the mind so well as always setting some limit to our advancement, and not leaving it to Fortune to decide when we stop, but halting ourselves well short of that point. In this way some desires will still sharpen the mind, and, being limited, will not lead it out into the boundless and uncertain.

11 This talk of mine is meant for those who are imperfect, ordinary, and not quite sound, not for the wise man. He need not walk timidly or step by step: for he has such confidence in himself that he does not hesitate to go out to meet Fortune and will never give ground to her. Nor has he any reason to fear her, since he counts not only his slaves, his possessions, and his rank, but even his body, his eyes, his hand, and whatever makes life dearer, and himself too, among things held on sufferance; and he lives as one lent to himself, ready to give everything back without sorrow when it is asked for. Nor is he of little worth to himself because he knows he is not his own; but he will do everything as carefully, as attentively, as a devout and scrupulous man guards what has been entrusted to him. And whenever he is ordered to give it back, he will not quarrel with Fortune but will say: "I thank you for what I have possessed and held. I have cared for your property at great cost to myself, but since you so command, I give it up, I hand it over, gratefully and gladly. If you want me to keep anything of yours even now, I will keep it safe; if you wish otherwise, I give back and restore my silver, wrought and coined, my house, and my household." If Nature calls in the debt, she who first lent to us, we will say to her too: "Take back a soul better than you gave it. I do not dodge or run away. What you gave to one who did not know it, you have ready from one who is willing: take it." What is so hard about going back where you came from? He will live badly who does not know how to die well. So the first thing we must do is take away the value we set on life and count our breath among cheap things.

As Cicero says, we hate gladiators if they are eager to win their lives by any means; we favor them if they display contempt for life. You may be sure the same happens to us: for often the cause of dying is to die timidly. Fortune, who stages games for her own amusement, says: "What should I save you for, you worthless, trembling creature? You will be wounded and stabbed all the more because you do not know how to offer your throat. But you, who take the sword boldly, without pulling back your neck or putting up your hands, will both live longer and die more easily." The man who fears death will never do anything worthy of a living man; but the man who knows that this was settled for him the moment he was conceived will live by the terms, and at the same time, with the same strength of mind, he will see to it that nothing that happens comes to him suddenly. For by looking ahead to whatever can happen as if it were going to happen, he will soften the onrush of all ills, which bring nothing new to those prepared and waiting for them, and fall heavily on those who feel free of care and look only for happy things. Illness, captivity, collapse, fire: none of these is sudden. I knew what a riotous lodging nature had shut me up in. So often the cry for the dead has gone up in my neighborhood; so often torch and taper have gone past my door ahead of funerals of the young; often the crash of a falling building has sounded beside me; many of those whom the forum, the senate house, and conversation had brought close to me night has carried off, cutting apart hands joined in friendship. Should I be surprised that dangers have at last reached me which have always been roaming around me? A great many people set out to sail without a thought of storms. I will never be ashamed of a bad author when what he says is good. Publilius, more forceful than the tragic and comic poets whenever he left aside the silliness of the mime and the words aimed at the top gallery, said, among many other things too

strong not only for the mime's curtain but for the tragic buskin, this too:

"What can happen to anyone can happen to you."[9]

If a man lets this sink into his marrow and looks at all other people's ills, of which there is a huge supply every day, as if they had a clear road to him too, he will arm himself long before he is attacked. It is too late to train the mind to endure dangers after the dangers have come. "I didn't think this would happen," and, "Would you ever have believed this would happen?" But why not? What riches are there that poverty, hunger, and beggary do not follow close behind? What office is there whose purple-bordered toga, augur's staff, and patrician shoe straps are not attended by squalor, the brand of disgrace, a thousand stains, and the utmost contempt? What kingdom is there for which ruin and trampling, a master and an executioner, are not in store? Nor are these things separated by long intervals: the turn of an hour lies between the throne and clasping another man's knees. Know, then, that every condition can turn, and that whatever falls on anyone can fall on you too. You are rich: are you richer than Pompeius? When Gaius,[10] an old kinsman and a new host, opened Caesar's house to him so that he could close his own, he went without bread and water. Though he owned so many rivers that rose and ended on his own land, he begged for drips from the eaves; he died of hunger and thirst in his kinsman's palace, while his heir was contracting for a state funeral for a starving man. You have held the highest offices: were they as great, as unexpected, or as all-embracing as those of Sejanus?[11] On the day the senate had escorted him, the people tore him to pieces. Of the man on whom gods and men had heaped everything that could be heaped, nothing was left for the executioner to drag away. You are a king: I will not send you to Croesus, who mounted his pyre at command and saw it put out, outliving not only his kingdom but his own death;

nor to Jugurtha, whom the Roman people gazed at within a year of fearing him. We have seen Ptolemy, king of Africa, and Mithridates, king of Armenia, under Gaius's guards:[12] one was sent into exile; the other prayed to be sent there in better faith. In such a turning of things up and down, if you do not take whatever can happen as going to happen, you give adversity a power over you that anyone who saw it coming first has broken.

12 Next after these comes the rule that we should not labor either for useless things or uselessly: that is, not desire what we cannot get, nor, having got it, realize too late, after much sweat, the emptiness of our desires; that is, our labor should not be fruitless and without result, nor the result unworthy of the labor. For sadness usually follows from these, if we have either not succeeded or are ashamed of our success. We must cut back the restless running about that is typical of a great many people who wander through houses and theaters and forums: they offer themselves for other people's business, always looking like people with something to do. If you ask one of them as he comes out of his house, "Where are you off to? What are you planning?" he will answer you: "By heaven, I don't know; but I'll see some people, I'll do something." They wander without a purpose, looking for business, and they do not do what they meant to do but what they ran into. Their course is unplanned and empty, like that of ants crawling over trees, which are driven, empty-handed, up to the very top and from there down to the bottom. Most people live a life like theirs, which one might fairly call restless idleness. Some you will pity, as if they were running to a fire: they knock into people they meet and send themselves and others headlong, when all the while they have been running to call on someone who will not return the call, or to follow the funeral of a man they did not know, or to the trial of someone who is always going to law, or to the betrothal of a woman who is always getting married; and, tagging after a litter, in

some places they have even carried it. Then, coming home with a useless weariness, they swear they do not know themselves why they went out or where they have been; and the next day they will wander over the very same tracks. So let all labor be directed toward something, have something in view. It is not hard work that makes them restless; false images of things drive them as they drive madmen. For not even madmen move without some hope; they are stirred by the impression of something whose emptiness the captive mind does not detect. In the same way, each of those who go out to swell the crowd is led around the city by empty and trivial reasons; daybreak drives him out though he has nothing to work at, and when, after knocking against many doorways in vain, he has greeted the slaves who announce the callers and been shut out by many, he finds no one harder to meet at home than himself. From this evil hangs that most loathsome vice, eavesdropping and prying into public and secret matters, and the knowledge of many things that are neither safe to tell nor safe to hear.

13 I think it was with this in mind that Democritus began like this: "Whoever wants to live tranquilly should not do many things, either in private or in public," meaning, of course, useless things. For if they are necessary, we must do not only many things in private and in public but countless things; but where no customary duty summons us, we should hold back from action. For a man who does many things often puts himself in Fortune's power. The safest course is to try her rarely, but always to keep her in mind and promise ourselves nothing on her good faith: "I will sail, unless something happens," and, "I will become praetor, unless something stands in the way," and, "My business will pay off, unless something interferes." That is why we say that nothing happens to the wise man against his expectation: we do not exempt him from the accidents of men but from their mistakes, and not everything turns out for him as he wished, but as he thought it would. And first of

all he thought that something could stand in the way of his plans. Besides, the pain of a disappointed desire must reach the mind more lightly if you have not promised it certain success.

14 We must also make ourselves adaptable, so that we do not cling too much to the plans we have made, and we should move on to whatever chance has brought us to, and not dread a change of plan or of position, provided fickleness, the vice most hostile to quiet, does not get hold of us. For obstinacy, from which Fortune often wrests something, is bound to be anxious and wretched, and fickleness, which never keeps itself in check anywhere, is much worse. Both are hostile to tranquility: to be unable to change anything and to be unable to put up with anything. In any case the mind must be called back from all external things into itself: let it trust itself, rejoice in itself, admire its own things, withdraw as far as it can from what belongs to others, and devote itself to itself; let it not feel losses, and let it put a kind interpretation even on adversity. When news came of a shipwreck and our own Zeno heard that everything he had was sunk, he said: "Fortune orders me to do philosophy with less baggage." A tyrant was threatening the philosopher Theodorus with death, and death without burial at that. "You have something to be pleased with," he said: "half a pint of my blood is in your power. As for burial, what a fool you are if you think it matters to me whether I rot above the ground or below it." Canus Julius, an exceptionally great man, whom we admire all the same even though he was born in our own age, had a long dispute with Gaius. As he was leaving, that Phalaris said to him: "In case you are flattering yourself with some foolish hope, I have ordered you to be led away to execution." "I thank you," he said, "most excellent emperor."[13] What he meant I am not sure, for many explanations occur to me. Did he mean to insult him and show how great his cruelty was, if under it death was a kindness? Or was he reproaching him with his daily madness? For people

used to thank him whose children had been killed and whose goods had been taken. Or was he welcoming death gladly as freedom? Whatever it was, it was the answer of a great spirit. "After this," someone will say, "Gaius could have ordered him to live." Canus was not afraid of that: Gaius's good faith in orders of this kind was well known. Would you believe that he spent the ten days until his execution without any anxiety? It passes belief what that man said, what he did, how tranquil he was. He was playing draughts. When the centurion who was dragging a whole column of condemned men to their death ordered him too to be called, he counted his pieces when summoned and said to his partner: "Mind you don't claim after my death that you won." Then, nodding to the centurion, he said: "You will be my witness that I am one piece ahead." Do you think Canus was playing at that board? He was playing with the tyrant. His friends were sad at losing such a man. "Why so gloomy?" he said. "You are asking whether souls are immortal; I shall soon know." And he did not stop searching for the truth at the very end, and made his own death a subject of inquiry. His philosopher was escorting him, and they were not far now from the mound where daily sacrifice was offered to Caesar, our god. "What are you thinking about now, Canus?" he said. "What is in your mind?" "I have decided," said Canus, "to watch, in that swiftest of moments, whether the soul will feel itself leaving." And he promised that if he found anything out, he would go round to his friends and tell them what the state of souls is. Here is tranquility in the midst of the storm; here is a mind worthy of eternity, which calls its own fate to testify to the truth, which, standing on that last step, questions the departing soul, and learns not only up to death but something from death itself: no one has done philosophy longer. So great a man will not be dropped in haste; he must be spoken of with care. We will commit you to all memory, most

illustrious of men, you who were so great a part of Gaius's slaughter!

15 But it does no good to have thrown off the causes of private sadness: for sometimes hatred of the human race takes hold of us, and the throng of so many successful crimes comes to mind. When you think how rare honesty is, how unknown innocence, how good faith is hardly ever found except when it pays; when you think of the gains and losses of lust, both equally hateful, and of ambition that no longer even keeps within its own bounds but seeks to shine through vileness, the mind is driven into night, and, as if the virtues had been overthrown, which we may neither hope for nor profit by having, darkness rises over it. So we must turn ourselves to this: to see all the vices of the crowd as not hateful but ridiculous, and to imitate Democritus rather than Heraclitus. For Heraclitus, whenever he went out in public, used to weep, and Democritus to laugh; to the one all our doings seemed miseries, to the other follies. So we should make light of everything and bear it with an easy mind: it is more humane to laugh at life than to lament it. Add that the man who laughs at the human race does it more of a kindness than the man who mourns it: the one leaves it some good hope, while the other foolishly weeps over what he despairs of putting right. And when you look at the whole, it shows a greater mind to be unable to hold back laughter than to be unable to hold back tears, since such a man stirs the lightest of the mind's passions and thinks nothing great, nothing serious, not even anything wretched, in all this apparatus. Let each man set before himself the particular things that make us glad or sad, and he will know that what Bion said is true: all the doings of men are very like their beginnings, and their life is no more holy or serious than their conception. But it is better to accept public morals and human vices calmly, falling into neither laughter nor tears; for to be tormented by other people's ills is endless misery, and to

delight in other people's ills is an inhuman pleasure. Just as it is a useless sort of humanity to weep because someone is burying his son, and to put on a face to match, so in your own ills too you should behave so as to give grief only as much as nature demands, not as much as custom. Most people shed tears in order to show them, and have dry eyes whenever there is no spectator, thinking it shameful not to weep when everyone does. So deeply has this evil fixed itself, dependence on other people's opinion, that even the simplest of things, grief, turns into pretense.

16 Next comes a part of the subject that, not without reason, usually saddens us and makes us anxious. When good men come to bad ends, when Socrates is forced to die in prison, Rutilius to live in exile, Pompey and Cicero to offer their necks to their own clients, and the great Cato, that living image of the virtues, to fall on his sword and declare at once the end of himself and of the commonwealth,[14] we cannot help being tormented that Fortune pays out such unjust rewards. And what can each of us hope for himself when he sees the best men suffer the worst? What, then? See how each of them bore it, and if they were brave, long for them with a spirit like their own; if they died like women and cowards, nothing has been lost. Either they are worthy of having their virtue please you, or they are unworthy of having their cowardice missed. For what is more shameful than if the greatest men, by dying bravely, make others timid? Let us praise again and again one who deserves praise, and say: "So much the braver, so much the more fortunate! You have escaped all misfortunes, envy, disease; you have come out of custody; the gods did not judge you worthy of bad fortune, but unworthy of having Fortune hold any power over you any longer." But those who draw back and look back toward life in the very face of death must be taken in hand. I will weep for no one who is glad, and for no one who weeps: the first has wiped away my tears himself; the second, by his own

tears, has made himself unworthy of any. Should I weep for Hercules because he is burned alive, or for Regulus because he is pierced by so many nails, or for Cato because he opens his wounds a second time? All of them found, at a slight cost of time, the way to become eternal, and by dying they came to immortality.

17 There is also no small source of anxieties if you pose anxiously and show yourself plainly to no one, as many people live, a false life got up for display: for constant watching of oneself is a torment, and one is afraid of being caught looking different from usual. Nor are we ever free of worry when we think we are being judged every time we are looked at. For many things happen that strip us bare against our will, and even if so much care for oneself succeeds, the life of those who live always behind a mask is neither pleasant nor free of care. But how much pleasure there is in a simplicity that is sincere and unadorned in itself, that hides nothing of its character! Yet even this life runs the risk of contempt, if everything lies open to everyone: for there are people who scorn whatever they have come close to. But virtue runs no risk of losing its value by being brought near the eyes, and it is better to be despised for simplicity than tormented by endless pretense. Still, let us use moderation in this: there is a great difference between living simply and living carelessly.

We must also withdraw into ourselves a great deal: for the company of people unlike us upsets what has been well settled, renews passions, and inflames whatever is weak in the mind and not thoroughly healed. Yet the two must be mixed and alternated, solitude and company. The one will make us long for people, the other for ourselves, and each will be a remedy for the other: solitude will cure our hatred of the crowd, and the crowd our boredom with solitude.

Nor should the mind be held equally at the same strain, but called away to jokes. Socrates did not blush to play with little boys;

Cato relaxed with wine a mind tired by public cares; and Scipio moved that body of his, the body of a soldier and a triumphing general, to rhythm, not breaking himself down effeminately, as is the fashion now for men who even in their walk flow with more than a woman's softness, but as those men of old used to dance in a manly way in times of games and festival, men who would have lost nothing even if their enemies had watched them. Minds must be given relaxation: they will rise better and keener after rest. Just as you must not overwork fertile fields (for productivity that is never interrupted will quickly exhaust them), so constant labor will break the drive of minds; they will recover their strength if they are loosened and relaxed a little. Constant labor gives rise to a kind of dullness and listlessness of mind.

Nor would men's desire tend so strongly toward this if play and jest did not hold some natural pleasure. But using them too often will rob minds of all weight and all force: for sleep too is necessary for refreshment, yet if you keep it up day and night, it will be death. There is a great difference between loosening something and undoing it altogether. Lawgivers established holidays so that people would be made cheerful by public authority, putting between their labors a balance, as it were, that they needed; and some men of great judgment gave themselves a holiday on fixed days each month, and some divided every single day between leisure and cares. Such, as I remember, was Asinius Pollio, the great orator: nothing kept him at work past the tenth hour. After that hour he would not even read letters, so that no new care should arise, but in those two hours he laid aside the weariness of the whole day. Some have made a break in the middle of the day and put off some lighter work to the afternoon hours. Our ancestors, too, forbade any new motion to be brought before the senate after the tenth hour. A soldier divides the watches, and those returning from a campaign are exempt from night duty. We must

indulge the mind and give it leisure from time to time, to serve it as food and strength.

And we should stroll on open walks, so that the mind may grow and lift itself up under a free sky and with plenty of air; sometimes a drive, a journey, and a change of scene will give it vigor, and company and freer drinking. Sometimes we should even go as far as drunkenness, not so that it drowns us, but so that it sinks us a little: for it washes away cares, stirs the mind from its depths, and heals sadness as it heals certain diseases; and the inventor of wine was called Liber not because of the license of the tongue, but because he frees (*liberat*) the mind from the slavery of cares, sets it free, invigorates it, and makes it bolder for every attempt.[15] But in wine, as in freedom, moderation is healthy. People believe that Solon and Arcesilaus indulged in wine; Cato has been charged with drunkenness: whoever charges him will more easily make the charge honorable than Cato shameful. But we should not do it often, so that the mind does not get into a bad habit; and yet sometimes it must be drawn out into exuberance and freedom, and gloomy sobriety put aside for a while. For whether we believe the Greek poet, "Sometimes it is sweet even to be mad"; or Plato, "A man in his right mind knocks at the doors of poetry in vain"; or Aristotle, "There has never been a great genius without some mixture of madness":[16] the mind cannot utter anything grand and above the rest unless it is stirred. When it has scorned the common and the customary and risen higher by a sacred inspiration, then at last it sings something too grand for a mortal mouth. As long as it is in its senses, it cannot reach anything lofty and set on a height: it must leave the usual track and be carried away and take the bit in its teeth and run off with its rider and carry him where it would have been afraid to climb by itself.

There you have, my dearest Serenus, the things that can protect tranquility, that can restore it, that can resist the vices creep-

ing up on us. But know this: none of them is strong enough for those who are guarding so frail a thing, unless constant, attentive care surrounds the slipping mind.

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1. Zeno of Citium founded the Stoic school at Athens about 300 BC; Cleanthes and Chrysippus led it after him.

2. Greek for "good spirits" or "cheerfulness." Democritus of Abdera (fifth century BC) wrote a work *On Euthymia*, now lost except for fragments.

3. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 3.1068.

4. Athenodorus of Tarsus, a Stoic philosopher of the first century BC and a teacher of Augustus.

5. An oligarchy that ruled Athens with Spartan backing in 404–403 BC. Harmodius, with Aristogeiton, killed Hipparchus, brother of the tyrant Hippias, in 514 BC and was honored as a tyrant-slayer.

6. Bion of Borysthenes, a popular philosopher of the third century BC with Cynic leanings, known for his witty sayings.

7. A freedman of Pompey the Great who grew enormously rich.

8. The books burned during Julius Caesar's war in Alexandria, 48 BC. Livy's account is lost.

9. Publilius Syrus, a writer of mimes of the first century BC whose single-line maxims were collected.

10. Gaius Caesar, the emperor known as Caligula (reigned AD 37–41). The Pompeius starved in his palace is not Pompey the Great but a later kinsman of the imperial house; his identity is uncertain.

11. Tiberius's praetorian prefect, condemned by the senate and executed in AD 31; his body was torn apart by the crowd.

12. Ptolemy, king of Mauretania and a cousin of Gaius, was summoned to Rome and put to death in AD 40. Mithridates, king of Armenia, was summoned by Gaius, held prisoner, and deprived of his kingdom.

13. Julius Canus, a Stoic put to death by Gaius. Phalaris, tyrant of Acragas in Sicily in the sixth century BC, was a byword for cruelty. Theodorus, called the Atheist, was a philosopher of Cyrene of about 300 BC.

14. Publius Rutilius Rufus, unjustly condemned for extortion in 92 BC, lived out his life in exile. Pompey was killed in Egypt in 48 BC by men of a king whose father had been his client; Cicero, in 43 BC, by a man he had once defended. Cato killed himself at Utica in 46 BC after Caesar's victory; Regulus, captured by the Carthaginians, was said to have been tortured to death.

15. Liber is the Italian god of wine, identified with Bacchus; Seneca plays on his name and *liberat*, "frees."

16. The Greek poet is unidentified. The Plato is a paraphrase of *Phaedrus* 245a; the Aristotle saying is not found in this form in his surviving works (compare *Problems* 30.1).

On the Shortness of Life

1 The greater part of mortals, Paulinus,[1] complain of the meanness of Nature: that we are born for a brief span of life, that the time given us runs out so swiftly, so rapidly, that apart from a very few, life abandons the rest just as they are getting ready to live. Nor is it only the crowd and the unthinking masses who groan over this evil, which they suppose is common to all; the same feeling has drawn complaints from famous men as well. Hence that exclamation of the greatest of physicians: "Life is short, art is long."[2] Hence Aristotle's quarrel with Nature, little befitting a wise man: "She has been so indulgent to animals that they live out five hundred or a thousand years, while for man, born for so many and such great things, the limit stands so much nearer."[3] It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it. Life is long enough, and it has been given generously for the accomplishment of the greatest things, if the whole of it is well invested; but when it drains away through luxury and carelessness, when it is spent on nothing good, then at last, under the pressure of the final necessity, we feel that it has passed, though we never noticed it going. So it is: we are not given a short life, we make it short; we are not poor in it, but wasteful. Just as great and princely wealth, when it comes to a bad master, is squandered in a moment, while wealth however modest, if entrusted to a good guardian, grows by use, so our lifetime offers ample room to the man who manages it well.

2 Why do we complain about Nature? She has behaved generously: life is long, if you know how to use it. One man is gripped by

insatiable greed, another by laborious diligence in useless tasks; one is soaked in wine, another numb with idleness; one is worn out by an ambition that always hangs on the judgments of others, another is driven by a headlong desire for trade over every land and every sea in the hope of profit; some are tormented by a passion for soldiering, always either intent on others' dangers or anxious about their own; there are those whom thankless attendance on their superiors wears away in voluntary servitude; many have been held fast by aspiring to another's condition or complaining of their own; most, pursuing nothing fixed, have been tossed from one new plan to another by a fickleness that is aimless, inconstant, and displeased with itself; some like nothing toward which to steer their course, but the fates catch them yawning and languid, so that I do not doubt the truth of what was said, like an oracle, by the greatest of poets: "Small is the part of life we really live."[4] All the rest of the span is not life but merely time. Vices press on them and surround them from every side and do not let them rise again or lift their eyes to discern the truth. They hold them down, submerged and impaled on desire; they are never allowed to come back to themselves. If ever some calm comes to them by chance, they toss about as on a deep sea where the swell goes on even after the wind has dropped, and they never have leisure from their desires. Do you think I am speaking of those whose evils are admitted? Look at those whose good fortune people flock to see: they are choked by their own goods. How many find their riches a burden! How many have their blood drained by their eloquence and the daily strain of displaying their talent! How many are pale from continual pleasures! How many are left no freedom by the crowd of clients swarming around them! In short, run through them all, from the lowest to the highest: this man calls for support in court, that one gives it; this one is on trial, that one defends him, that one judges; no one claims himself for himself; each is

used up for another. Ask about those whose names are learned by heart, and you will see they are distinguished by these marks: this one cultivates that one, that one another; no one belongs to himself. Then there is the utterly insane indignation of some: they complain of the arrogance of their superiors, because they had no time for them when they wished to call! Does anyone dare complain of another's pride, when he himself never has time for himself? Yet that great man has at some point looked at you, whoever you are, even if with an insolent face; he has bent his ears to your words; he has admitted you to his side: you have never deigned to look into yourself, to listen to yourself. There is no reason, then, to claim credit with anyone for those attentions, since when you paid them, it was not that you wanted to be with another; you could not bear to be with yourself.

3 Though all the brilliant minds that ever shone agree on this one point, they will never sufficiently wonder at this fog in human minds. Men will not let anyone seize their estates, and if there is the slightest dispute about the boundary line, they run for stones and weapons; yet they let others trespass on their life, indeed they themselves bring in those who will become its owners. No one is found who wants to share out his money, but among how many people each of us distributes his life! They are tightfisted in keeping their property; as soon as it comes to wasting time, they are most prodigal with the one thing in which it is honorable to be greedy. So I would like to seize upon someone from the crowd of old men: "We see that you have reached the farthest limit of human life; your hundredth year or more is pressing on you. Come now, call your life to an accounting. Reckon how much of that time a creditor has taken, how much a mistress, how much a patron, how much a client, how much quarreling with your wife, how much punishing your slaves, how much running about the city on social calls; add the illnesses we have brought on ourselves, add

the time that has lain unused: you will see that you have fewer years than you count. Call back to mind when you were ever firm in a plan, how few days went as you had intended, when you had the use of yourself, when your face kept its natural expression, when your mind was unafraid, what work you have done in so long a life, how many have plundered your life without your noticing what you were losing, how much has been taken by empty pain, foolish gladness, greedy desire, the charms of society, how little of your own has been left you: you will understand that you are dying before your time." What, then, is the cause? You live as if you were going to live forever; your frailty never occurs to you; you do not notice how much time has already gone by; you waste it as though from a full and overflowing supply, while all the while that very day which you are giving to some person or thing may be your last. You fear everything like mortals, you desire everything like immortals. You will hear many people say: "At fifty I will retire into leisure; at sixty I will be free of my duties." And what surety, may I ask, do you have for a longer life? Who will allow these things to go as you arrange them? Are you not ashamed to keep for yourself only the leftovers of life, and to set aside for a sound mind only the time that cannot be put to any other use? Is it not far too late to begin living just when you must stop? What forgetfulness of our mortality could be so foolish as to put off sound plans to the fiftieth and sixtieth year, and to want to begin life at a point few have reached?

4 You will see the most powerful men, raised to the heights, let fall words in which they long for leisure, praise it, and prefer it to all their goods. They desire, at times, to step down from that pinnacle, if they could do it safely; for even if nothing outside attacks or shakes it, great fortune collapses on itself. The deified Augustus, to whom the gods granted more than to anyone, never stopped praying for rest and seeking release from the affairs of

state; all his talk always came back to this, the hope of leisure. He used to beguile his labors with this consolation, false perhaps but sweet: that one day he would live for himself. In a letter he sent to the senate, in which he had promised that his rest would not be without dignity or out of keeping with his former glory, I found these words: "But these things are finer to do than to promise. Still, my longing for that time so much desired has carried me so far that, since the joy of the reality is still delayed, I may taste some pleasure in advance from the sweetness of the words." So great a thing did leisure seem to him that, because he could not have it in fact, he enjoyed it in advance in thought. The man who saw everything depend on himself alone, who gave fortune to men and nations, thought with the greatest gladness of the day on which he would lay aside his greatness. He had learned by experience how much sweat those goods shining across every land squeezed out, how many hidden anxieties they covered. Forced to fight it out in arms first with his fellow citizens, then with his colleagues, finally with his relatives, he shed blood on land and sea. Driven through Macedonia, Sicily, Egypt, Syria, Asia, and almost every coast, he turned his armies, weary of Roman slaughter, to foreign wars. While he was pacifying the Alps and subduing enemies planted in the middle of a peaceful empire, while he was moving the frontiers beyond the Rhine, the Euphrates, and the Danube, in the city itself the swords of Murena, Caepio, Lepidus, Egnatius, and others were being sharpened against him.[5] He had not yet escaped their plots when his daughter and so many young nobles, bound by adultery as by an oath, kept frightening his already broken old age, and Paullus, and a woman to be feared once again with an Antony.'[6] He had cut out these ulcers along with the limbs themselves; others grew up beneath; like a body overburdened with blood, it was always breaking out somewhere. So he longed for leisure; in the hope and thought of it his labors

found rest; this was the prayer of the man who could grant others' prayers.

5 Marcus Cicero, tossed among Catilines and Clodiuses, Pompeys and Crassuses,[7] some open enemies, some doubtful friends, while he rode the waves with the state and held it up as it went down, was at last swept away; never at peace in prosperity nor patient in adversity, how often he curses that very consulship of his, which he praised not without cause, but without end! What tearful words he utters in a letter to Atticus, when Pompey the father had already been defeated and the son was still reviving his broken arms in Spain! "You ask," he says, "what I am doing here? I am lingering in my Tusculan villa, half free." He then adds other things, in which he bewails his past life, complains of the present, and despairs of the future. Cicero called himself half free: but by Hercules, the wise man will never stoop to so lowly a name; he will never be half free; his freedom will always be whole and solid; he will be unbound, his own master, and higher than all others. For what can be above the man who is above Fortune?

6 Livius Drusus,[8] a keen and vehement man, after he had stirred up new laws and the evils of the Gracchi, with a huge throng from all Italy around him, not foreseeing the outcome of measures he could neither carry through nor, once begun, was free to abandon, is said to have cursed a life restless from its beginnings and to have said that he alone had never had a holiday, not even as a boy. For while still a ward and wearing the purple-bordered toga, he dared to commend defendants to the jurors and to bring his influence to bear in the forum, and so effectively that it is agreed some verdicts were extorted by him. Where would such premature ambition not break out? You could have known that such precocious boldness would end in great evil, both private and public. So it was too late that he complained of never having had a holiday, he who had been a troublemaker from boyhood and a burden to

the forum. It is debated whether he laid hands on himself; for he collapsed after receiving a sudden wound in the groin, some doubting whether his death was voluntary, no one whether it was timely. It would be superfluous to mention more who, though others thought them most fortunate, bore true witness against themselves, loathing every act of their years; but with these complaints they changed neither others nor themselves; for when the words have burst out, the passions slip back into habit. Your life, by Hercules, though it should exceed a thousand years, will be squeezed into the narrowest space: those vices will swallow any number of centuries; but this span, which reason extends though nature hurries it on, must quickly escape you; for you do not grasp it or hold it back or delay the swiftest of all things, but let it go as something superfluous and replaceable.

7 First of all, I count among them those who have time for nothing but wine and lust; for none are more shamefully preoccupied. The others, even if they are held by an empty image of glory, at least go wrong with some show; you may list for me the greedy, the irascible, those who pursue unjust hatreds or unjust wars: all these sin in a more manly way; the decay of those sunk in belly and lust is dishonorable. Examine all the time of these people; see how long they spend calculating, how long plotting, how long fearing, how long courting, how long being courted, how much time their own court dates and other people's take up, how much their banquets, which are now themselves duties: you will see how their evils, or their goods, do not let them breathe. Finally, everyone agrees that no activity can be pursued well by a preoccupied man, not eloquence, not the liberal arts, since a distracted mind takes in nothing deeply but spits everything out as if it had been crammed in. Nothing is less the business of a preoccupied man than living; there is nothing harder to learn. Teachers of the other arts are everywhere and many, and some of these arts mere boys have

seemed to master so well that they could even teach them. But living must be learned all your life, and, what will perhaps surprise you more, all your life you must learn to die. So many great men, having set aside every hindrance and renounced riches, duties, and pleasures, made it their single aim, up to the end of their lives, to know how to live; yet most of them left life confessing that they did not yet know it, much less do these people know it. It is the mark of a great man, believe me, one who rises above human errors, to let nothing be skimmed off his time; and his life is the longest for this reason, that however much of it there was, the whole was free for himself. None of it lay fallow and idle, none of it was under another's control; for he found nothing worth exchanging for his time, of which he was the most sparing guardian. And so he had enough of it; but those from whose life the public has taken a great deal were bound to run short. Nor need you think that these people never understand their loss: you will certainly hear many of those whom great prosperity weighs down cry out now and then, amid their herds of clients or their pleadings in court or their other respectable miseries: "I am not allowed to live." How could you be allowed? All who call you to their side take you away from yourself. How many days has that defendant taken? How many that candidate? How many that old woman worn out with burying her heirs? How many that man pretending to be sick to whet the greed of legacy hunters? How many that more powerful friend, who keeps you not as a friend but as part of his retinue? Check off, I say, and review the days of your life: you will see that very few, and those the castoffs, have remained with you. The man who has reached the fasces he longed for wants to lay them down, and keeps saying: "When will this year be over?" Another is giving games, and he set great store on the lot falling to him: "When," he says, "shall I escape them?" An advocate is fought over throughout the forum and fills every corner with a great crowd, farther than

his voice can reach: "When," he says, "will the courts recess?" Each man hurries his life on and suffers from longing for the future and weariness of the present. But the man who devotes all his time to his own use, who orders every day as if it were his last, neither longs for tomorrow nor fears it. For what new pleasure can any hour now bring him? Everything is known, everything has been enjoyed to the full. As for the rest, let chance and Fortune dispose of it as they please: his life is already safe. Something can be added to it, nothing taken away, and added only as some food is to a man already full and satisfied: he takes it without wanting it. So you have no reason to think that anyone has lived long because of his gray hair or wrinkles: he has not lived long, he has existed long. For what if you thought a man had sailed far whom a savage storm caught as he left harbor and drove here and there, and with the shifts of winds raging from opposite quarters drove round and round in a circle over the same waters? He has not sailed much; he has been tossed about much.

8 I am always amazed when I see some people asking for time and those who are asked so very obliging. Both look at the purpose for which the time is asked, neither at the time itself: as if what is asked were nothing, as if what is given were nothing. People play with the most precious thing of all; but it deceives them because it is an incorporeal thing, because it does not come before the eyes, and so it is valued very cheaply, indeed it has almost no value at all. People accept annual pensions and handouts most gratefully and hire out for them their labor or their service or their diligence: no one values time; they use it lavishly, as if it cost nothing. But see these same people when they are sick, if the danger of death comes closer, clasping the knees of their doctors; if they fear capital punishment, ready to spend all they have in order to live! So great is the conflict of their passions. But if the number of each man's future years could be set before him, as the number of his

past years can, how those who saw only a few remaining would tremble, how sparingly they would use them! And yet it is easy to manage what is certain, however small; you should guard more carefully what you do not know when it will run out. Still, you have no reason to think that they do not know how precious a thing it is: they often say to those they love most that they are ready to give them part of their own years. They give and do not understand: they give in such a way that they take from themselves without adding to the others. But they do not even know whether they are taking from themselves; and so the loss is bearable to them because the damage is hidden. No one will bring back the years, no one will restore you to yourself. Your lifetime will go the way it began and will neither turn back nor check its course; it will make no noise, it will give no warning of its speed: it will glide on in silence. It will not lengthen itself at the command of a king or the favor of the people: as it was sent off from the first day, so it will run, nowhere turning aside, nowhere delaying. What will happen? You are preoccupied, life is hurrying on; meanwhile death will be at hand, and for death, whether you will or not, you must make time.

9 Can anything be more foolish than the outlook of certain people, I mean those who boast of their prudence? They are preoccupied more laboriously. In order to live better, they prepare for life at the expense of life. They lay out their plans far ahead; but postponement is the greatest waste of life: it takes away each day as it comes, it snatches away the present by promising what lies further on. The greatest obstacle to living is expectation, which hangs on tomorrow and loses today. You arrange what lies in the hand of Fortune, you let go what lies in your own. Where are you looking? How far are you stretching yourself? All that is to come lies in uncertainty: live now. Listen: the greatest of bards cries out and, as if inspired by a divine dread, sings this healing song:

"The best day of life, for wretched mortals,

is always the first to flee."[9]

"Why do you hesitate?" he says. "Why are you idle? Unless you seize it, it flees." And even when you have seized it, it will flee all the same; so you must match the swiftness of time with the speed of your use of it, and drink quickly, as from a rushing torrent that will not always flow. This too is a very fine rebuke to endless planning, that he says not "the best age" but "the best day." Why, free of care and sluggish in so great a flight of time, do you stretch out months and years for yourself in a long series, however your greed sees fit? He is speaking to you about a day, and about this very day as it flees. Is there any doubt, then, that the best day is always the first to flee from wretched mortals, that is, from the preoccupied? Old age overwhelms their minds while they are still childish, and they come to it unprepared and unarmed; for nothing has been provided: they have fallen into it suddenly and unexpectedly; they did not feel it drawing nearer day by day. Just as conversation or reading or some deep thought deceives travelers, and they find they have arrived before they knew they were near, so this unceasing and very swift journey of life, which we make at the same pace waking and sleeping, is not apparent to the preoccupied until the end.

10 If I wanted to divide my thesis into heads and arguments, many things would occur to me by which to prove that the life of the preoccupied is very short. Fabianus,[10] who was not one of these armchair philosophers but one of the true and old-fashioned kind, used to say: "Against the passions we must fight by force, not by subtlety; we must turn back their battle line not with small wounds but with a charge." He did not approve of quibbles: "They must be crushed," he said, "not pricked." Still, so that their error may be brought home to them, the preoccupied must be taught,

not merely mourned. Life is divided into three periods: what has been, what is, and what will be. Of these, the time we are living is short, the time we shall live is doubtful, the time we have lived is certain. For this is the one over which Fortune has lost her rights, which cannot be brought back under anyone's control. This the preoccupied lose; for they have no time to look back on the past, and even if they had, the memory of something to be regretted is unpleasant. So they are unwilling to call their minds back to times ill spent and do not dare to go over again those whose vices, even those that slipped by under the seductive charm of momentary pleasure, become plain when reviewed. No one turns back willingly to the past except the man who has done everything under his own censorship, which is never deceived: the man who has ambitiously desired many things, arrogantly despised, recklessly conquered, treacherously deceived, greedily seized, wastefully squandered, must fear his own memory. Yet this is the part of our time that is sacred and dedicated, beyond all human misfortunes, removed from the kingdom of Fortune, which no want, no fear, no onset of disease can disturb; it can be neither troubled nor snatched away; its possession is everlasting and untroubled. Only one day at a time is present, and that moment by moment; but all the days of past time will appear when you bid them, will let you inspect them and hold them at your pleasure, a thing the preoccupied have no time to do. It belongs to a mind free of care and at rest to roam through all the parts of its life; the minds of the preoccupied, as if under a yoke, cannot turn and look back. So their life vanishes into an abyss; and just as it is no use pouring in as much as you like if there is nothing underneath to receive and keep it, so it does not matter how much time is given if there is nowhere for it to settle: it passes through minds that are cracked and full of holes. The present is very brief, so brief indeed that to some it seems to be no time at all; for it is always in motion, it

flows and rushes headlong; it ceases to be before it has come, and it no more admits delay than the universe or the stars, whose ever restless motion never stays in the same track. Only the present, then, belongs to the preoccupied, and it is so short that it cannot be grasped, and even that is stolen from them while they are distracted among many things.

11 In short, do you want to know how little they live? See how much they long to live long. Decrepit old men beg in their prayers for the addition of a few years; they pretend to be younger than they are; they flatter themselves with a lie and deceive themselves as gladly as if they were cheating the fates at the same time. And when some infirmity has reminded them of their mortality, how terrified they die, not as if they were leaving life but as if they were being dragged out of it! They keep crying out that they were fools not to have lived, and that if only they escape from this illness, they will live in leisure; then they think how uselessly they acquired what they would never enjoy, how all their labor has come to nothing. But for those whose life is spent far from all business, why should it not be ample? None of it is assigned away, none scattered here and there, none of it handed over to Fortune, none lost through carelessness, none subtracted by lavish giving, none of it is superfluous: the whole of it, so to speak, is income. However small it is, then, it is abundantly sufficient, and so, whenever his last day comes, the wise man will not hesitate to go to meet death with a sure step.

12 Do you perhaps ask whom I call the preoccupied? You need not think I mean only those whom the dogs, let in at last, drive out of the basilica, those whom you see crushed more grandly in their own crowd or more contemptibly in someone else's, those whom their duties call out of their own houses to dash them against other people's doors, or whom the praetor's auction spear keeps busy with disreputable gain that will one day fester. Some people's

leisure is preoccupied: in their country house or on their couch, in the midst of solitude, though they have withdrawn from everyone, they are a burden to themselves; their life should be called not leisure but idle preoccupation. Do you call that man at leisure who arranges Corinthian bronzes, made precious by the mania of a few, with anxious care, and spends the greater part of his days on rusty bits of metal? Who sits in the wrestling ground (for, what a shame! we suffer from vices that are not even Roman) watching boys fight? Who sorts his herds of pack animals into pairs by age and color? Who feeds the latest athletes? What? Do you call those men at leisure who spend many hours at the barber's, while whatever grew the night before is plucked out, while a consultation is held over each separate hair, while either the disordered locks are rearranged or thinning hair is brought forward from either side onto the forehead? How angry they get if the barber has been a little careless, as if he were trimming a real man! How they flare up if anything is cut from their mane, if any hair lies out of place, if everything does not fall into its proper curls! Which of them would not rather have the state in disorder than his hair? Who is not more anxious about the beauty of his head than its safety? Who would not rather be well groomed than honorable? Do you call these men at leisure, who are preoccupied between comb and mirror? What of those who are busy composing, hearing, and learning songs, while they twist the voice, whose straight course Nature made the best and simplest, into the turns of the most idle melodies; whose fingers are always drumming as they beat time to some song inside them; whose silent humming can be heard even when they have been called to serious, often even sad, business? These people do not have leisure; they have idle busyness. Their banquets, by Hercules, I would not count among their free hours, when I see how anxiously they arrange the silver, how carefully they tuck up the tunics of their boy favorites, how breathless they

are about how the boar will come out of the cook's hands, with what speed, at a given signal, the smooth-skinned slaves rush to their tasks, with what skill the birds are carved into pieces of proper size, how carefully the wretched little slave boys wipe up the spit of drunkards: from such things they seek a reputation for elegance and refinement, and their evils follow them so far into every retreat of life that they neither drink nor eat without ambition. Nor would you count among the leisured those who have themselves carried here and there in a sedan chair or a litter, and turn up at the hours for their rides as if they were not allowed to miss them, who are reminded by someone else when they ought to bathe, when to swim, when to dine: they are so enfeebled by the excessive languor of a pampered mind that they cannot tell by themselves whether they are hungry. I hear that one of these pampered men (if indeed unlearning human life and habit is to be called pampering), when he had been carried out of the bath in someone's arms and set in his chair, asked: "Am I sitting down now?" Do you think this man, who does not know whether he is sitting, knows whether he is alive, whether he sees, whether he is at leisure? I could not easily say whether I pity him more if he really did not know this or if he pretended not to know. They do feel forgetfulness of many things, but they also imitate it for many; some vices delight them as proofs of good fortune; it seems the mark of a very low and contemptible man to know what you are doing. Go now and think that the mime actors invent a great deal to mock luxury! By Hercules, they pass over more than they make up, and such an abundance of incredible vices has come forth in this age, so clever in this one thing, that we can now accuse the mimes of neglect. To think that there is someone so far lost in luxury that he takes another's word on whether he is sitting! This man, then, is not at leisure; you must give him another name: he is sick, no, he is dead; the man at leisure is the one who is also aware

of his leisure. But this half-alive man, who needs someone to tell him the posture of his own body, how can he be master of any time?

13 It would take long to go through them one by one, those whose lives have been eaten up by board games or ball games or the care of baking their bodies in the sun. They are not at leisure whose pleasures involve much business. As for those who are kept busy with the study of useless literature, no one will doubt that they toil at doing nothing; and there is now a large band of them among the Romans too. It used to be the disease of the Greeks to ask how many oarsmen Ulysses had, whether the Iliad or the Odyssey was written first, and whether, besides, they were by the same author, and other things of this sort, which, if you keep them to yourself, do your silent mind no good, and if you bring them out, make you seem not more learned but more tiresome. Look, the Romans too have been invaded by an empty passion for learning useless things. The other day I heard someone reporting what each Roman general had been the first to do: Duilius was the first to win a naval battle, Curius Dentatus was the first to lead elephants in a triumph. Still, such things, even if they do not lead to true glory, are at least concerned with examples of civic deeds; such knowledge will do no good, but it is the kind that holds us with the specious appeal of trifles. Let us also pardon those who ask who first persuaded the Romans to board a ship (it was Claudius, called Caudex for this very reason, because the ancients called a structure of many planks joined together a "caudex," whence the public records are called "codices," and the boats that carry provisions up the Tiber are still called "codicariae" by ancient custom); granted that this too is to the point, that Valerius Corvinus was the first to conquer Messana, and the first of the Valerian family to be called Messana, the name of the captured city transferred to himself, and that, as common speech gradually

changed the letters, he came to be called Messala: will you also allow anyone to care that Lucius Sulla was the first to show lions loose in the circus, when otherwise they had been shown tied up, and that javelin men were sent by King Bocchus to kill them? Let this too be pardoned: but does it serve any good purpose to know that Pompey was the first to show in the circus a fight of eighteen elephants, with condemned criminals pitted against them as in a battle? The first man of the state and, as tradition has it, a man of outstanding goodness among the leaders of old, he thought it a memorable kind of spectacle to destroy men in a new way. Are they fighting to the death? Not enough. Are they being torn to pieces? Not enough: let them be crushed by animals of enormous bulk! It would have been better for these things to go into oblivion, lest some powerful man later learn of them and envy so inhuman a deed. Oh, what darkness great prosperity casts over our minds! He believed himself above Nature at the moment when he threw so many troops of wretched men to beasts born under another sky, when he set up a war between such unequal creatures, when he shed much blood before the eyes of the Roman people, soon to force it to shed more; yet later, betrayed by Alexandrian treachery, he himself offered his body to be stabbed by the lowest slave, and only then understood the empty boast of his surname.[11] But to return to the point from which I strayed and to show the superfluous diligence of some people in the same subject: the same man was telling how Metellus, celebrating his triumph after defeating the Carthaginians in Sicily, was the only Roman ever to lead a hundred and twenty captured elephants before his chariot; that Sulla was the last of the Romans to extend the pomerium,[12] which it was the custom of the ancients to extend only on acquiring Italian, never provincial, territory. Is it more useful to know this than that the Aventine Hill is outside the pomerium, as he asserted, for one of two reasons, either because the plebs had seceded there or

because, when Remus took the auspices at that place, the birds were not favorable, and countless other things in turn that are either stuffed with lies or like them? For even if you grant that they say everything in good faith, that they write as though vouching for it, still whose errors will these things lessen? Whose desires will they restrain? Whom will they make braver, whom more just, whom more generous? Our Fabianus used to say that he sometimes doubted whether it was better not to take up any studies than to be entangled in these.

14 Of all people, only those are at leisure who have time for wisdom; they alone are alive. For they do not only keep good watch over their own lifetime: they add every age to their own; all the years that went before them are added to their store. Unless we are utterly ungrateful, those most famous founders of sacred doctrines were born for us; they prepared a life for us. We are led by the labor of others to the most beautiful things, brought out of darkness into light; no age is closed to us, we are admitted to all, and if we choose, by greatness of mind, to go beyond the narrow bounds of human weakness, there is a great stretch of time through which we may roam. We may argue with Socrates, doubt with Carneades, find peace with Epicurus, overcome human nature with the Stoics, go beyond it with the Cynics. Since Nature allows us to enter into partnership with every age, why should we not turn from this brief and fleeting passage of time and give ourselves with all our mind to the things that are immeasurable, eternal, and shared with the better? Those who rush about on their social duties, who disturb themselves and others, when they have gone thoroughly mad, when they have crossed everyone's threshold every day and passed by no open door, when they have carried their mercenary morning greetings around the most varied houses, how few will they be able to see in a city so immense and distracted by such various desires? How many there will be whose

sleep or self-indulgence or rudeness will shut them out! How many who, after torturing them with a long wait, will rush past them with a pretense of haste! How many will avoid going out through a hall crowded with clients and will escape through some hidden passage of the house, as if it were not ruder to deceive than to shut out! How many, half asleep and heavy from yesterday's drinking, will barely part their lips and, with a most arrogant yawn, give back to those poor wretches, who break their own sleep to wait for another's, the name whispered to them a thousand times! Those, let us say, are engaged in true duties who will want to have Zeno, Pythagoras, Democritus, and the other high priests of the liberal arts, Aristotle and Theophrastus, as their most intimate friends every day. None of these will lack time for you, none will fail to send away the one who comes to him happier and more devoted to him, none will let anyone leave him empty-handed; they can be visited by any mortal, by night or by day.

15 None of these will force you to die, all will teach you how; none of them wears away your years, each adds his own to yours; with none of them will conversation be dangerous, friendship deadly, or attendance costly. You will take from them whatever you wish; it will not be their fault if you do not draw from them as much as you desire. What good fortune, what a fine old age awaits the man who has made himself their client! He will have those with whom to deliberate about the smallest and the greatest matters, whom he can consult about himself every day, from whom he can hear the truth without insult and praise without flattery, on whose likeness he can model himself. We often say that it was not in our power to choose the parents we were allotted, that they were given to us by chance: but the good may be born as they choose. There are families of the noblest minds: choose the one into which you wish to be adopted; you will be adopted not only into the name but into the property itself, which need not be guarded

meanly or grudgingly: it will grow greater the more people you share it with. These will give you a path to eternity and will raise you to that place from which no one is thrown down. This is the only way to extend mortality, or rather to turn it into immortality. Honors, monuments, whatever ambition has ordered by decrees or built up in works, are quickly torn down; there is nothing that long age does not demolish and remove; but it cannot harm what wisdom has consecrated; no age will abolish it, no age diminish it; the next and every later one will only add something to its veneration, since envy works at close range, and we admire more frankly what is far away. So the wise man's life extends far; he is not confined by the same boundary as others; he alone is freed from the laws of the human race; all ages serve him as they serve a god. Has some time passed? He holds it in memory. Is it present? He uses it. Is it to come? He anticipates it. The gathering of all times into one makes his life long.

16 The life of those is very short and very anxious who forget the past, neglect the present, and fear the future: when they come to the end, the poor wretches understand too late that they have been preoccupied for so long in doing nothing. Nor need you think it proves that they lead a long life because they sometimes call on death: their imprudence torments them with unsettled passions that rush into the very things they fear; they often long for death because they fear it. Nor need you think this a proof that they live long, that the day often seems long to them, that they complain the hours go slowly until the appointed time for dinner comes; for if ever their preoccupations leave them, they are restless when left in leisure and do not know how to arrange it or how to get through it. So they reach for some preoccupation, and all the time in between is heavy, exactly, by Hercules, as when the day of a gladiatorial show has been announced, or when the appointed date of some other spectacle or pleasure is awaited, they want to

skip over the days between. Every postponement of what they hope for is long to them; but the time that they love is short and fleeting, and much shorter through their own fault; for they flee from one thing to another and cannot settle on one desire. Their days are not long to them, but hateful; on the other hand, how short seem the nights they spend in the arms of harlots or over wine! Hence too the madness of the poets, who feed human errors with their fables, and in whose eyes Jupiter, charmed by the pleasure of lovemaking, doubled the length of a night; what else is it to inflame our vices than to inscribe the gods as their authors and to give the disease, by the example of divinity, an excused license? Can the nights not seem very short to these men, when they buy them so dearly? They lose the day in waiting for the night, and the night in fear of the dawn.

17 Their very pleasures are anxious and disturbed by various fears, and at the moment of their greatest exultation an anxious thought creeps in: "How long will this last?" This feeling has made kings weep over their power; the greatness of their fortune did not delight them, but the end that must someday come terrified them. When that most arrogant king of the Persians was spreading out his army over vast stretches of plain, and could grasp not its number but its extent, he shed tears because within a hundred years not one of so many young men would be alive;[13] but the very man who wept was about to bring their fate upon them, and to destroy some on sea and some on land, some in battle and some in flight, and within a short time to wipe out those for whose hundredth year he was afraid. What of the fact that even their joys are anxious? For they do not rest on solid causes but are disturbed by the same emptiness from which they spring. What do you think those times are like that are wretched even by their own admission, when even these joys by which they raise themselves up and lift themselves above humanity are not quite pure? All the greatest

goods are anxious, and no fortune is less to be trusted than the best; more good fortune is needed to protect good fortune, and for the very prayers that have been granted more prayers must be offered. For everything that comes by chance is unstable: the higher it has risen, the readier it is to fall. And no one takes pleasure in what is going to fall; so the life of those who gain with great labor what they must hold with greater labor must be not only very short but very wretched. They achieve what they want with toil, they hold what they have achieved with anxiety; meanwhile they take no account of time, which will never return: new preoccupations take the place of old, hope stirs up hope, ambition ambition. They do not seek an end to their miseries; they only change the material. Have our own honors tormented us? Other people's take more of our time. Have we stopped laboring as candidates? We begin canvassing for others. Have we laid down the burden of prosecuting? We take up that of judging. Has he stopped being a juror? He becomes a presiding judge. Has he grown old in the hired management of other people's property? He is kept busy by his own wealth. Has the soldier's boot released Marius? The consulship keeps him busy. Does Quinctius hurry to get through his dictatorship? He will be called back from the plow. Scipio will go against the Carthaginians before he is ripe for so great a task; victor over Hannibal, victor over Antiochus, the glory of his own consulship, the guarantor of his brother's, he would have been set up beside Jupiter had he not himself prevented it: civil strife will harass the savior, and after he has scorned as a young man honors equal to the gods', in his old age he will take pleasure in the ambition of a defiant exile.'[14] There will never be lacking causes of anxiety, either fortunate or wretched; life will be pushed on through one preoccupation after another; leisure will never be had, always longed for.

18 So tear yourself away from the crowd, my dearest Paulinus, and, tossed about more than your years deserved, withdraw at last into a calmer harbor. Think how many waves you have faced, how many storms you have endured, some private, some public ones you drew upon yourself; your virtue has long since been displayed in toilsome and restless proofs; try what it can do in leisure. The greater part of your life, certainly the better part, has been given to the state: take some of your time for yourself as well. I am not calling you to a sluggish or idle rest, nor to drown whatever lively talent is in you in sleep and the pleasures dear to the crowd; that is not resting: you will find greater works than all those you have so energetically managed so far, to occupy you in retirement and free of care. You, for your part, manage the accounts of the whole world as scrupulously as you would another's, as carefully as your own, as conscientiously as the public's. You win affection in an office in which it is hard to avoid hatred; but still, believe me, it is better to know the accounts of one's own life than those of the public grain. Call back that vigor of mind, most capable of the greatest things, from a post that is honorable indeed, but little suited to the happy life, and consider that it was not for this that from your earliest years you devoted yourself to every liberal study, that many thousands of measures of grain might be safely entrusted to you; you had promised something greater and loftier of yourself. There will be no lack of men of exact frugality and diligent labor; slow pack animals are much better suited to carrying loads than thoroughbred horses, and who ever weighed down their noble speed with a heavy pack? Think, besides, how much anxiety it is to expose yourself to so great a burden: your dealings are with the human belly; a hungry people neither listens to reason, nor is calmed by fairness, nor bent by any prayer. Just recently, within those few days in which Gaius Caesar died[15] (if the dead have any feeling, he is taking it very hard that he was dying

while the Roman people survived), there was food left for seven or eight days at most! While he was joining bridges of boats and playing with the resources of the empire, the last of evils even for the besieged was at hand, a shortage of food; his imitation of a mad, foreign, and ill-starred proud king nearly cost the city destruction and famine, and what follows famine, the collapse of everything. What spirit did those have then who had been entrusted with the care of the public grain, facing stones, the sword, fire, Gaius? With the greatest concealment they covered up so great an evil hidden in the vitals of the state, and with good reason: for some ailments must be treated without the patient's knowledge; for many, knowing their disease has been the cause of death.

19 Withdraw to these calmer, safer, greater things! Do you think it is the same thing whether you see to it that grain is poured into the granaries untouched by the fraud or the carelessness of the shippers, that it does not take in moisture and spoil and heat up, that it tallies with the measure and the weight, or whether you approach these sacred and lofty studies, to learn what the substance of god is, what his pleasure, his condition, his form; what lot awaits your soul; where Nature lays us to rest when we are released from our bodies; what it is that holds all the heaviest things of this universe in the center, suspends the light things above, carries fire to the highest region, rouses the stars to their courses; and other things in turn, full of immense wonders? Come, leave the ground behind and turn your mind to these! Now, while the blood is warm, we must go in our vigor to better things. In this kind of life there await you many good arts, the love and practice of the virtues, forgetfulness of desires, the knowledge of living and dying, a deep calm.

20 The condition of all the preoccupied is wretched, but most wretched is the condition of those who do not even toil at their own preoccupations, who sleep by another's sleep, walk at

another's pace, are ordered to love and to hate, the freest things of all. If these people want to know how short their life is, let them consider how small a part of it is their own. So when you see a man who has often put on the purple-bordered toga, when you see a name famous in the forum, do not envy him: these things are bought with the loss of life. To have a single year named after them, they will wear out all their years. Some, before they could struggle up to the summit of ambition, life left behind among their first struggles; some, when they had crawled through a thousand indignities to the crowning dignity, were seized by the wretched thought that they had labored for an inscription on a tomb; for some, extreme old age, still being planned out for new hopes as though it were youth, has given out in weakness amid great and shameless efforts. Disgraceful is the man whose breath left him while he was pleading in court for the most obscure litigants, at a great age, angling for the applause of an ignorant ring of bystanders; shameful the man who, worn out by living sooner than by working, collapsed in the very midst of his duties; shameful the man who died over his accounts, and whose heir, long kept waiting, laughed at him. I cannot pass over an example that comes to mind. Turranius was an old man of scrupulous diligence who, after his ninetieth year, when Gaius Caesar had released him of his own accord from his post as procurator, ordered himself to be laid out on his bed and mourned by the household standing around him as if he were dead.[16] The house lamented its old master's leisure, and did not end its sorrow until his work was restored to him. Is it so pleasant, then, to die preoccupied? Most people have the same attitude; their desire for work outlasts their ability; they fight against the weakness of the body, and they judge old age itself a hardship on no other ground than that it sets them aside. The law does not enlist a soldier after fifty, nor summon a senator after sixty: men find it harder to obtain leisure from themselves than

from the law. Meanwhile, while they snatch and are snatched, while one breaks another's rest, while they make each other wretched, life is without profit, without pleasure, without any progress of the mind; no one keeps death in view, no one fails to stretch his hopes far ahead; some even arrange things that lie beyond life: huge masses of tombs, dedications of public works, gifts for their funeral pyre, and ostentatious funerals. But, by Hercules, the funerals of these men should be conducted by torches and tapers, as though they had lived the shortest of lives.

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1. Pompeius Paulinus, prefect of the grain supply, the official responsible for feeding the city of Rome; he was probably the father of Seneca's wife Paulina.

2. Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 1.1.

3. Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 3.69) attributes this complaint to Theophrastus, not Aristotle.

4. The line has not been found in Homer or Virgil; its source is unknown.

5. Conspirators against Augustus: Marcus Lepidus (30 BC), Varro Murena and Fannius Caepio (23 or 22 BC), and Egnatius Rufus (19 BC).

6. Augustus's daughter Julia was banished for adultery in 2 BC; among her lovers was Iullus Antonius, son of Mark Antony, which recalled Cleopatra and Antony. Lucius Aemilius Paullus, husband of Julia's daughter, was later executed for conspiracy.

7. Catiline's conspiracy was suppressed by Cicero as consul in 63 BC; Publius Clodius drove Cicero into exile in 58 BC. The letter quoted below does not survive.

8. Marcus Livius Drusus, tribune of the people in 91 BC, proposed reforms in the manner of the Gracchi and was murdered that year.

9. Virgil, *Georgics* 3.66–67.

10. Papirius Fabianus, rhetorician and philosopher, one of Seneca's teachers.

11. Pompey, defeated by Julius Caesar, was stabbed to death on landing in Egypt in 48 BC; his surname Magnus means "the Great."

12. The pomerium was the sacred boundary of the city of Rome; the emperor Claudius extended it again in AD 49.

13. Xerxes, reviewing his army before the invasion of Greece in 480 BC (Herodotus 7.45–46).

14. Gaius Marius rose from the ranks to seven consulships; Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was called from his plow to be dictator; Scipio Africanus defeated Hannibal in 202 BC, served as his brother Lucius's guarantor in the war against Antiochus (190 BC), and ended his life in voluntary exile at Liternum.

15. Gaius Caesar is the emperor known as Caligula (AD 37–41); his bridge of boats across the Bay of Baiae imitated Xerxes's bridge over the Hellespont.

16. Gaius Turranius, prefect of the grain supply under Augustus and Tiberius.

Consolation to Polybius

1 ⟨...⟩[1] compared with our own, they are firm; but if you bring them down to the terms of nature, which destroys all things and calls them back to where it brought them forth, they are perishable. For what immortal thing have mortal hands ever made? The famous Seven Wonders, and any far more wonderful that the ambition of later years has raised, will one day be seen leveled with the ground. So it is: nothing is everlasting, few things are long-lasting; each thing is fragile in its own way, the ends of things vary, but whatever has begun also ends. Some threaten the universe with destruction, and this whole, which embraces all things divine and human, will one day, if you think it right to believe it, be scattered and plunged back into its ancient chaos and darkness. Let someone go now and weep over single lives; let him lament the ashes of Carthage, Numantia, and Corinth, and anything else that has fallen from a greater height, when even this, which has nowhere to fall, is going to perish; let someone go and complain that the fates, which will one day dare so great a crime, have not spared him. Who is of such proud and unbridled arrogance that, under this necessity of nature which calls all things back to the same end, he wants himself alone and his own set apart, and would snatch one house of his own from the ruin that hangs over the universe itself? The greatest comfort, then, is to reflect that what has happened to you has been suffered by all before you and will be suffered by all after you; and that is why, it seems to me, Nature made common

what she had made hardest, so that equality might console us for the cruelty of fate.

2 This too will help you not least, if you reflect that your grief will do no good either to him whom you long for or to yourself; for you will not want to prolong what is useless. If we are going to gain anything by sorrow, I do not refuse to pour out for your fortune whatever tears my own has left me; even now I will find something to flow from these eyes, already drained by the weeping of my own house, if only it will do you good. Why do you hesitate? Let us lament together, and I will even make this suit my own: "Fortune, most unjust in the judgment of all, until now you seemed to have held in your lap a man who by your gift had won such regard that, as rarely happens to anyone, his good fortune escaped envy. And now you have dealt him the greatest grief he could suffer while the emperor[2] is safe; you had circled him well on every side, and you saw that only on this side did he lie open to your blows. For what else could you have done to him? Taken his money? He was never in its power; even now he drives it from him as far as he can, and with every means of getting it so ready to hand he seeks no greater profit from it than to despise it. Taken his friends? You knew he was so lovable that he could easily put others in the place of those he lost; for of all the men I have seen powerful in the emperor's household, he is the one, I think, whom everyone finds it useful to have as a friend, and still more a pleasure. Taken his good name? It is too firmly founded with him for even you to shake it. Taken his good health? You knew his mind was so grounded in liberal studies, in which he was not only raised but born, that it rose above all the pains of the body. Taken his life? How little harm you would have done! Fame has promised his genius the longest age; he himself has seen to it that he would endure in the better part of himself and, by composing splendid works of eloquence, would set himself free from mortality. As long

as letters are held in any honor, as long as the strength of the Latin tongue or the grace of the Greek survives, he will flourish beside the greatest men, whose genius he has matched or, if his modesty refuses that, attached himself to. This, then, is the one way you devised to hurt him most; for the better a man is, the more often he has to bear you, who rage without any discrimination and are to be feared even in the midst of your benefits. How small a thing it would have been for you to spare this wrong to a man on whom your favor seemed to have come on a sure principle, and not, as is your habit, at random!"

3 Let us add to these complaints, if you like, the young man's own character, cut off in its first growth: he was worthy to have you as a brother. You certainly were most worthy never to have grief from a brother, even an unworthy one. He has the same testimony from all men; he is missed for your sake and praised for his own. There was nothing in him you would not gladly have owned. You would have been good even to a less good brother, but in him your devotion found fit material and exercised itself far more freely. No one felt his power through a wrong; never did he threaten anyone with you as his brother. He had shaped himself on the model of your modesty and reflected how much you were both the ornament and the burden of your family: he was equal to that load. O harsh fates, fair to no virtue! Before your brother knew his good fortune, he was taken away. I know my indignation falls short; for nothing is harder than to find words equal to a great grief. Yet even now, if we can accomplish anything, let us lament: "What did you mean by this, Fortune, so unjust and so violent? Did you so quickly regret your favor? What cruelty is this, to charge into the midst of brothers and thin out so united a band by so bloody a robbery, to throw into confusion a house so well filled with excellent young men, not one of them falling short of the rest, and to take your toll of it without any cause! Is there no use,

then, in an innocence that meets every law, no use in old-fashioned frugality, no use in the greatest power of the greatest good fortune kept with the greatest restraint, no use in a sincere and safe love of letters, no use in a mind free of every stain? Polybius[3] mourns, and warned by one brother of what he may fear for the rest, he fears even for the very comforts of his grief. A shameful deed! Polybius mourns, and grieves at something while the emperor is gracious to him! Beyond doubt, headstrong Fortune, this is what you were after: to show that no one can be defended against you, not even by the emperor."

4 We can go on accusing the fates; we cannot change them. They stand hard and inexorable; no one moves them by abuse, no one by weeping, no one by pleading his case; they never spare anyone or let anything off. Let us spare, then, tears that do no good; for this grief will sooner add us to the dead than bring the dead back to us. If it torments us and does not help, it should be laid aside at the first moment, and the mind should be recovered from empty comforts and from a kind of bitter pleasure in grieving. For unless reason puts an end to our tears, fortune will not. Come, look around at all mortals: everywhere there is ample and constant matter for weeping. One man is called to his daily work by toilsome poverty; another is harried by ambition that never rests; another fears the riches he wished for and suffers from his own prayer; one is tormented by loneliness, another by the crowd forever besieging his front hall; this man grieves that he has children, that one that he has lost them. Our tears will run out before our reasons for grief. Do you not see what kind of life Nature has promised us, when she wanted weeping to be the first act of human beings at birth? With this beginning we are brought forth, and the whole course of the years that follow agrees with it. So we spend our lives; and therefore what we must do often we ought to do in moderation, and, looking back at how much sorrow hangs

over us from behind, we ought, if not to end our tears, at least to save them. There is nothing we should spare more than this, which we use so often.

5 This too will help you not least, if you reflect that your grief is welcome to no one less than to the one to whom it seems to be offered: he either does not want you tormented or does not know it. So there is no sense in a duty that, to the one it is paid to, is superfluous if he feels nothing and unwelcome if he feels. I would boldly say there is no one in the whole world who takes delight in your tears. What then? Do you believe that your brother has toward you a feeling no one else has, that he would harm you by tormenting you, that he wants to draw you away from your occupations, that is, from your studies and from the emperor? That is not likely. For he gave you affection as a brother, reverence as a parent, respect as a superior; he wants to be longed for by you, not to be a torment to you. What good is it, then, to waste away in a grief that, if the dead have any feeling, your brother wants ended? With another brother, whose wishes might seem uncertain, I would leave all this in doubt and say: "If your brother wants you tormented by tears that never cease, he is unworthy of this affection of yours; if he does not want it, let go of the grief that clings to you both. An unloving brother should not be longed for like this, and a loving one would not want to be." But with this brother, whose devotion is so well proven, you must take it as certain that nothing could be more bitter to him than for this misfortune of his to be bitter to you, for it to torment you in any way, for it to trouble your eyes, which least deserve this ill, and drain them too, with no end to weeping. Yet nothing will draw your devotion away from such useless tears so well as reflecting that you ought to be an example to your brothers of bearing this wrong of Fortune bravely. What great generals do when things go badly, deliberately feigning cheerfulness and hiding adversity under a show of gladness, so

that the soldiers' spirits may not collapse too if they see their commander's mind broken, you too must do now: put on a face unlike your mind and, if you can, throw off all grief entirely; if not, hide it within and hold it in so that it does not show; and see to it that your brothers imitate you, for they will think honorable whatever they see you doing and will take their spirit from your face. You ought to be both their comfort and their consoler; but you will not be able to stand against their grief if you indulge your own.

6 This too can keep you from excessive mourning, if you remind yourself that nothing you do can be hidden. The agreement of mankind has laid a great role on you: you must sustain it. All that crowd of consolers stands around you, probing your mind and looking to see how much strength it has against grief, and whether you only know how to handle prosperity deftly or can also bear adversity like a man: your eyes are watched. Everything is freer for those whose feelings can be hidden; you are not free to keep anything private. Fortune has set you in a strong light; everyone will know how you have conducted yourself under this wound of yours, whether at the first blow you lowered your arms or stood your ground. Long ago the emperor's love raised you to a higher rank, and your studies brought you up to it. Nothing common becomes you, nothing low. And what is so low and womanish as to give oneself up to grief to be consumed by it? In an equal mourning you are not allowed what your brothers are; the opinion received of your studies and your character does not permit you many things; men demand much of you and expect much. If you wanted everything to be allowed you, you should not have turned all faces toward yourself: now you must deliver as much as you promised. All those who praise the works of your genius, who copy them out, who have no need of your fortune but do need your genius, are guardians of your mind. You can never do anything so unworthy of your claim to be a complete and learned man that

many will not regret their admiration of you. You may not weep without measure; and not only that: you may not even stretch your sleep into part of the day, or escape from the uproar of affairs to quiet leisure in the country, or refresh a body worn out by constant duty at its laborious post with a pleasure trip, or occupy your mind with the variety of the shows, or arrange your day as you please. Many things are not allowed you that are allowed to the humblest, who lie in some corner: a great fortune is a great servitude. You may not do anything at your own discretion: so many thousands of people must be heard, so many petitions put in order; so great a mass of affairs, streaming in from the whole world, must be sorted, so that it can be laid in its proper order before the mind of the greatest of emperors. You may not, I say, weep: so that you can listen to the many who weep, to those in danger who long to reach the pity of the gentlest of emperors, you must dry your own tears.

7 Even so, these things help you only with lighter remedies; when you want to forget everything, think of the emperor. See how much loyalty, how much diligence you owe in return for his kindness to you: you will understand that you may no more stoop than the figure of legend, if there is one, on whose shoulders the universe rests. The emperor himself, to whom everything is allowed, is for that very reason not allowed many things: his watchfulness protects everyone's sleep, his labor everyone's leisure, his diligence everyone's pleasures, his preoccupation everyone's holiday. From the moment the emperor dedicated himself to the world, he took himself away from himself; and like the stars, which unroll their courses forever without rest, he is never allowed to stop or to do anything for himself. To a certain degree, then, the same necessity is laid on you too: you may not look to your own interests, to your own studies. While the emperor holds the world, you cannot give yourself to pleasure or to grief or to

anything else: you owe yourself wholly to the emperor. Add now that, since you always declare that the emperor is dearer to you than your own life, it is not right for you to complain of fortune while the emperor is safe: with him unharmed, your family is safe, you have lost nothing; your eyes ought to be not only dry but glad. In him you have everything; he stands for everything. Though nothing is further from your most modest and devoted heart, you are ungrateful toward your good fortune if you let yourself weep for anything while he is safe.

8 I will show you now a remedy not stronger, indeed, but more familiar. Whenever you have gone home, then is the time to fear sorrow: for as long as you look upon your divinity, it will find no way in to you; the emperor will hold the whole of you. When you have left him, then grief, as if given its chance, will lie in wait for your solitude and creep little by little into your mind as it rests. So there is no reason to let any time go empty of your studies: then let your letters, loved so long and so faithfully, repay you; then let them claim you as their high priest and worshiper; then let Homer and Virgil keep you long company, who have deserved as well of the human race as you have deserved of them and of everyone, since you wanted them known to more people than they wrote for. All the time you entrust to their keeping will be safe. Then compose, as far as you can, the deeds of your emperor, so that they may be told through all the ages by a herald of his own household; for he himself will give you both the matter and the model for shaping and recording history. I do not dare lead you so far as to string together fables too, and Aesop's tales, a work Roman talent has not attempted,[4] with your usual charm. It is hard, of course, for a mind struck so violently to turn so soon to these lighter studies; but take it as proof that it has grown strong again and been restored to itself if it can go on from more serious writing to these looser things. For in serious work, however sick it still is and

struggling with itself, the very austerity of the subjects it handles will call it away from grief; these, which must be thought out with a relaxed brow, it will not bear until it has steadied itself in every part. So you ought first to exercise it with sterner material, then to temper it with lighter.

9 This too will be a great relief to you, if you often question yourself this way: "Am I grieving on my own account or on account of him who has died? If on my own, the show of affection is gone, and grief, whose one excuse is that it is honorable, begins to fall away from devotion once it looks to its own advantage; and nothing suits a good man less than doing his accounts in mourning for a brother. If I grieve on his account, one of these two things must decide it: for if the dead have no feeling left, my brother has escaped all the troubles of life and has been restored to the place where he was before he was born, and free of every evil he fears nothing, desires nothing, suffers nothing; what madness is this, that I never stop grieving for one who will never grieve? If the dead have some feeling, then my brother's mind, released as if from a long imprisonment, at last its own master and free to choose, rejoices and enjoys the spectacle of Nature, looks down on all things human from a higher place, and gazes from nearer at things divine, whose reason it had so long sought in vain. Why then do I waste away with longing for one who is either happy or nothing? To weep for the happy is envy; to weep for what is nothing is madness." Or does this move you, that he seems to have lost great goods just as they were pouring around him? When you reflect that there are many things he has lost, reflect that there are more he does not fear: anger will not torment him, illness will not afflict him, suspicion will not harass him, envy, greedy and forever hostile to others' success, will not hound him, fear will not trouble him, the fickleness of Fortune, quick to hand her gifts to someone else, will not disquiet him. If you reckon it rightly, more

has been spared him than taken from him. He will not enjoy wealth, nor your influence together with his own; he will not receive benefits, nor give them. Do you think him wretched because he has lost these things, or happy because he does not miss them? Believe me, the man who has no need of fortune is happier than the man who has it at hand. All those goods that delight us with a showy but deceptive pleasure, money, rank, power, and many others at which the blind greed of mankind stands gaping, are held with toil and looked upon with envy, and in the end they weigh down the very people they adorn; they threaten more than they help; they are slippery and uncertain, never held securely; for even if one fears nothing from the future, the mere guarding of great prosperity is full of anxiety. If you are willing to believe those who look more deeply into the truth, all life is a punishment. Thrown into this deep and restless sea, which ebbs and flows with alternate tides, now lifting us with sudden gains, now carrying us down with greater losses, and tossing us without pause, we never stand in a steady place; we hang and float and are dashed against one another and sometimes are shipwrecked, and we are always afraid. For those who sail this sea, so stormy and open to every tempest, there is no harbor but death. So do not begrudge your brother: he is at rest. At last he is free, at last safe, at last eternal. He leaves behind him the emperor and all his offspring alive, and you alive with the brothers you share. He left Fortune before she changed anything of her favor, while she still stood by him and heaped gifts on him with a full hand. He now enjoys an open and free sky; from a low and sunken place he has sprung up to that place, whatever it is, that receives into its happy bosom souls set free from their chains; and now he roams there freely and surveys all the goods of Nature with the highest pleasure. You are wrong: your brother has not lost the light, but has been given a purer one. That road is common to all of us: why do

we weep over the fates? He has not left us; he has gone on ahead. Believe me, there is great good fortune in the very necessity of dying. Nothing is certain even for a whole day: when the truth is so dark and tangled, who can divine whether death begrudged your brother or looked after him?

10 This too, given your sense of justice in all things, must help you: to reflect that no wrong was done to you in losing such a brother, but a benefit given in that you were allowed so long to have the use and enjoyment of his devotion. He is unfair who does not leave the giver the right to decide about his own gift; he is greedy who counts not as gain what he has received but as loss what he has given back. He is ungrateful who calls the end of pleasure a wrong; he is a fool who thinks there is no profit in goods except present ones, who does not also find rest in past ones and judge those more certain that have gone, since there is no fear that they will end. A man narrows his joys too much who thinks he enjoys only what he has and sees, and counts having had the same things as nothing; for every pleasure leaves us quickly: it flows and passes and is carried off almost before it comes. So the mind must be sent back into past time, and whatever once delighted us must be brought back and handled again in frequent thought: the memory of pleasures lasts longer and is more faithful than their presence. Count it, then, among the highest goods that you had the best of brothers! There is no reason to think how much longer you might have had him, but how long you did have him. Nature gave him to you, as she gives others their brothers, not to own but on loan; then, when it seemed good to her, she asked for him back, and she followed not your fill of him but her own law. If someone took it hard that he had to repay a loan, especially one whose use he had received free of interest, would he not be thought an unjust man? Nature gave life to your brother; she gave it to you as well. If she, using her own right, has called in her debt sooner from the

one she chose, the fault is not hers, whose terms were known, but that of the greedy hope of the mortal mind, which keeps forgetting what Nature is and never remembers its own lot unless it is reminded. Rejoice, then, that you had so good a brother, and be content with the use and enjoyment of him, though it was shorter than you prayed for. Reflect that what you had was most delightful, what you lost was human; for nothing is less consistent than to be troubled that such a brother was yours for too short a time and not to rejoice that he was yours at all.

11 "But he was taken from me when I did not expect it." Each of us is deceived by his own credulity and, in the things he loves, by a willing forgetfulness of mortality. Nature has declared that she will make no exception to her necessity for anyone. Every day the funerals of people known and unknown pass before our eyes, yet we look the other way, and we call sudden what we have been told all our lives would come. It is not, then, the injustice of the fates but the perversity of the human mind, insatiable for everything, which is indignant at being turned out of a place it was admitted to on sufferance. How much fairer was the man who, on being told of his son's death, spoke words worthy of a great man: "When I fathered him, I knew then that he would die." You need not wonder at all that from such a man was born one who could die bravely. He did not take the death of his son as news; for what is new in a man's dying, when his whole life is nothing but a journey toward death? "When I fathered him, I knew then that he would die." Then he added something showing still greater wisdom and spirit: "And it was for this that I raised him." We are all raised for this; whoever is brought forth to life is destined for death. Let us rejoice in what will be given, and give it back when it is asked for: the fates will seize one at one time, another at another; they will pass no one by. Let the mind stand ready for battle, and never fear what is necessary, always expect what is uncertain. Why should I speak of gen-

erals and the sons of generals, and men made famous by many consulships or triumphs, who have met their inexorable lot? Whole kingdoms with their kings, peoples with their nations, have borne their fate: all men, no, all things, look toward their last day. The end is not the same for all: life deserts one in midcourse, leaves another at the very threshold, and barely lets go of another in extreme old age when he is already weary and longing to depart; at one time or another, but we are all heading for the same place. Whether it is more foolish to be ignorant of the law of mortality or more shameless to refuse it, I do not know. Come, take into your hands the poems of either author, made famous by the great labor of your genius, which you have so turned into prose that, though their structure is gone, their charm remains (for you have carried them from one language into another in such a way that, hardest of all, every one of their virtues has followed you into a foreign speech): there will be no book in those writings that does not offer you a great many examples of the shifts of human life, of uncertain misfortunes, and of tears flowing from one cause after another. Read with how great a spirit you have thundered in mighty words: you will be ashamed to falter suddenly and fall away from such grandeur of speech. Do not let it come about that whoever has admired your writings as models asks how so frail a mind conceived things so grand and so solid.

12 Turn rather from these things that torment you to the many great things that console you, and look at your excellent brothers, look at your wife, look at your son: for the safety of them all Fortune has settled with you for this one share. You have many in whom to find rest. Save yourself from this disgrace, that everyone should think one grief counts for more with you than so many comforts. You see that all of them are struck down together with you and cannot help you, and you understand that, on the contrary, they are waiting for you to lift them up; and so, the less

learning and genius they have, the more you must stand against the common ill. And this itself serves as a comfort, to divide one's grief among many; because it is shared out among several, only a small part of it ought to settle with you. I will not stop offering you the emperor again and again: while he governs the earth and shows how much better an empire is guarded by benefits than by arms, while he presides over human affairs, there is no danger that you will feel you have lost anything; in him alone you have protection enough, comfort enough. Lift yourself up and, as often as tears well up in your eyes, so often turn your eyes toward the emperor: they will be dried by the sight of that greatest and most glorious divinity; his brightness will dazzle them so that they can look at nothing else, and will hold them fixed on himself. He whom you look upon day and night, from whom you never turn your mind away, is the one you must think of, the one you must call to your side against fortune. Nor do I doubt that, since he has such gentleness and such kindness toward all his own, he has already covered over this wound of yours with many comforts and already piled up many things to block your grief. What more? Even if he had done none of this, is not the emperor himself, merely seen and thought of, the greatest comfort to you? May the gods and goddesses lend him long to the earth! May he equal the deeds of the deified Augustus and surpass his years! As long as he is among mortals, may he find nothing in his house mortal! May he find his son, after long proof of loyalty, fit to rule the Roman empire, and see him as his father's partner before he sees him as his successor! May the day be late, and known only to our grandchildren, on which his family claims him for heaven!

13 Keep your hands off him, Fortune, and show your power over him only on the side where you do good! Let him heal the human race, so long sick and afflicted; let him restore and put back in its place whatever the frenzy of the previous emperor shook loose!

May this star, which has shone out on a world cast headlong into the depths and sunk in darkness, shine forever! May he pacify Germany, open up Britain, and lead triumphs like his father's and new ones too; and his clemency, which holds first place among his virtues, promises that I too shall watch them. For he did not cast me down so as not to wish to raise me up; no, he did not even cast me down, but when I was struck by fortune and falling, he held me up, and as I went headlong he set me down gently, using the moderation of a divine hand. He interceded for me with the senate, and he did not only give me my life but asked for it.[5] Let him see to it: let him judge my case to be whatever he wishes it to be; either let his justice see that it is good or his clemency make it good. Either way his benefit to me will be equal, whether he knows me to be innocent or wills me to be. Meanwhile it is a great comfort in my miseries to see his pity ranging over the whole world: since from the very corner where I am pinned down it has dug out several men buried under a ruin of many years and brought them back to the light, I do not fear that it will pass me alone by. He himself knows best the time at which he ought to come to each man's aid; I shall do everything I can so that he need not blush to reach me. O fortunate clemency of yours, Caesar, which lets exiles live a quieter life under you than the leading men lived lately under Gaius![6] They do not tremble or wait for the sword every hour or panic at the sight of every ship; through you they have, as well as a limit to the savagery of fortune, hope that it will improve and peace in the present. You may be sure that those thunderbolts are the most just of all which even those struck by them worship.

14 This emperor, then, who is the public comfort of all mankind, has already, unless I am wholly deceived, revived your mind and applied greater remedies to so great a wound. He has already strengthened you in every way, already recounted with his most tenacious memory all the examples that would drive you to calm

of mind, already set out with his accustomed eloquence the precepts of all the wise. No one, then, could better take on this part of speaking to you: when he speaks, words will have another weight, as though sent from an oracle; his divine authority will crush all the force of your grief. Imagine him, then, saying to you: "Fortune has not singled out you alone to strike with so heavy a wrong; there is no house in the whole world, nor has there ever been, without some lamentation. I will pass over common examples, which, though lesser, are countless, and lead you to the calendars and the public annals. Do you see all these ancestral masks that have filled the hall of the Caesars? Not one of them is not marked by some misfortune in his family; not one of these men, who shine out as the ornaments of the ages, was not either tortured by longing for his own or longed for by his own with the greatest anguish of mind. Why should I tell you of Scipio Africanus,[7] who received the news of his brother's death in exile? That brother who had rescued his brother from prison could not rescue him from fate; and how impatient of equal justice the devotion of Africanus was became plain to all: on the same day on which Scipio Africanus had taken his brother out of the hands of the officer, he, a private citizen, also vetoed a tribune of the people. Yet he longed for his brother with as great a spirit as he had defended him. Why should I tell you of Scipio Aemilianus,[8] who almost at one and the same time saw his father's triumph and the funerals of his two brothers? Yet, a youth and almost a boy, he bore the sudden desolation of his family, collapsing on top of Paullus's very triumph, with as great a spirit as was fitting for a man born so that Rome should not lack a Scipio nor Carthage survive.

15 "Why should I tell you of the harmony of the two Luculli,[9] broken by death? Or of the Pompeys? Fortune in her savagery did not even leave them this, to fall in one and the same ruin. Sextus

Pompey first outlived his sister,[10] by whose death the bonds of a well-knit Roman peace were loosened; and he likewise outlived his excellent brother, whom Fortune had lifted up only so as to cast him down from no less a height than she had cast down his father; and yet after this misfortune Sextus Pompey was equal not only to his grief but to war. Countless examples of brothers separated by death come to mind from every side; indeed, on the contrary, hardly any pairs of brothers have ever been seen growing old together; but I will be content with examples from my own house. For no one will be so lacking in feeling and sanity as to complain that Fortune has brought mourning on anyone, when he knows that she has coveted even the tears of the Caesars. The deified Augustus lost Octavia, his dearest sister, and Nature did not take away the necessity of mourning even from him for whom she had destined heaven; no, harassed by every kind of bereavement, he lost his sister's son, who was being prepared to succeed him;[11] in short, not to list his griefs one by one, he lost sons-in-law, children, and grandchildren, and no one of all mortals felt more that he was a man, while he was among men. Yet his breast, which could hold all things, held so many and such great griefs, and the deified Augustus was the victor not only over foreign nations but also over sorrows. Gaius Caesar, grandson of my great-uncle the deified Augustus, in the first years of his youth lost his dearest brother Lucius, one Prince of Youth losing another, while preparing for the Parthian war, and he was struck by a much heavier wound to his mind than he later suffered in his body;[12] and he bore both with the greatest devotion and the greatest courage. Caesar, my uncle,[13] lost my father, Drusus Germanicus, his younger brother, as he was opening up the depths of Germany and bringing the fiercest nations under Roman rule; he lost him in his arms and amid his kisses. Yet he set a measure to mourning not only for

himself but for others, and when the whole army, not only sorrowful but stunned, was claiming the body of its Drusus for itself, he brought it back to the Roman manner of mourning and judged that discipline must be kept not only in soldiering but also in grieving. He could not have checked the tears of others if he had not first held back his own.

16 "Mark Antony, my grandfather,[14] second to no one except the man who defeated him, at the time when he was setting the state in order and, armed with the power of a triumvir, saw nothing above him and, except for his two colleagues, everything below him, heard that his brother had been killed. Headstrong Fortune, what games you make for yourself out of human ills! At the very time when Mark Antony sat as judge of the life and death of his fellow citizens, Mark Antony's brother was being ordered led to execution! Yet Mark Antony bore this sad wound with the same greatness of mind with which he had endured all his other adversities, and this was his mourning: to offer his brother the blood of twenty legions. But to pass over all other examples, and to keep silent about other deaths even in my own case, Fortune has twice attacked me with mourning for a brother, twice learned that I could be hurt but not beaten. I lost my brother Germanicus,[15] and how I loved him anyone surely understands who thinks of how loving brothers love their brothers; yet I so governed my affection that I neither left undone anything that ought to be asked of a good brother nor did anything that could be blamed in an emperor."

Imagine, then, that the father of the people is recounting these examples to you, and that he is showing you too how nothing is sacred and untouched for Fortune, who has dared to lead funerals out of the very household from which she was to seek gods. So let no one be surprised that she does anything cruelly or unjustly; for can she know any fairness or any restraint toward private houses,

when her implacable savagery has so often brought death to the very couches of the gods? We may abuse her not only with our own voice but with the voice of the whole people, yet she will not be changed; she will hold her course against all prayers and all complaints. This is what Fortune has been in human affairs, and this is what she will be: she has left nothing undared, she will leave nothing untouched; she will go more violently through everything, as she always has, daring for the sake of wrong to enter even those houses that are approached through temples, and she will dress doors wreathed with laurel in black. This one thing let us obtain from her by public vows and prayers, if she has not yet resolved to consume the human race, if she still looks kindly on the Roman name: that she will wish this emperor, given to the fallen affairs of men, to be sacred to her as he is to all mortals! Let her learn clemency from him, and be gentle to the gentlest of all emperors!

17 You ought, then, to look at all those I named a little earlier, who have been either taken up into heaven or stand next to it, and to bear calmly that Fortune stretches out her hands toward you too, since she does not keep them off even those by whom we swear. You ought to imitate their firmness in enduring and overcoming griefs, as far as it is right for a man to walk in divine footsteps. However great the differences of rank and nobility in other things, virtue is set in the middle for all: it disdains no one who only judges himself worthy of it. You will certainly do best to imitate those who, though they might have been indignant that they were not exempt from this ill, still judged that being made equal to other men in this one thing was not a wrong but the law of mortality, and bore what had happened neither too bitterly and harshly nor softly and effeminately; for not to feel one's ills is not human, and not to bear them is not manly. And yet, having gone around all the Caesars from whom Fortune snatched brothers and sisters, I cannot pass over this one, who ought to be struck from the whole

roll of the Caesars, whom Nature brought forth for the ruin and shame of the human race, who burned the empire and overturned it from its foundations, an empire the clemency of the gentlest of emperors is now restoring. Gaius Caesar, when he lost his sister Drusilla,[16] a man who could no more grieve than rejoice as an emperor should, fled the sight and company of his fellow citizens, did not attend his sister's funeral, did not pay his sister the rites due to her, but at his Alban villa he lightened the ills of that most bitter death with dice and the gaming board and other common pastimes of the kind. Shame on the empire! A Roman emperor mourning his sister, and dice were his comfort! That same Gaius, in his frenzied inconstancy, now letting his beard and hair grow, now cutting them, now wandering the coasts of Italy and Sicily, and never quite sure whether he wanted his sister mourned or worshiped, at the very time he was setting up temples and sacred couches for her, was punishing with the cruelest penalties those who had not been sad enough; for he bore the blows of adversity with the same intemperance of mind with which, carried away by success, he swelled beyond human measure. Far from every Roman man be this example: to call one's mourning away with ill-timed amusements, or to aggravate it with the ugliness of squalor and filth, or to divert it with the ills of others, a comfort hardly human.

18 You, however, need change nothing of your habits, since you have learned to love those studies which best exalt good fortune and most easily lessen calamity, and which are at once the greatest ornaments and the greatest comforts a man has. Now, then, plunge yourself deeper into your studies; now set them around you like fortifications for your mind, so that grief may find no way in at any point. Prolong your brother's memory too with some monument in your writings; for this is the one work in human affairs that no storm can harm and no age consume. The others,

which consist of piled stones and masses of marble or mounds of earth raised to a great height, do not last long, since they themselves perish too: the memory of genius is immortal. Give this lavishly to your brother, set him in it; you will consecrate him better with a genius that will last forever than you will mourn him with useless grief. As for Fortune herself, even if her case cannot be pleaded before you now (for everything she has given us is hateful for the very reason that she has taken something away), it must be pleaded then, as soon as time has made you a fairer judge of her; for then you will be able to make your peace with her. For she has provided many things with which to make good this wrong, and she will still give many with which to atone for it; and in the end, this very thing she has taken away she herself had given you. Do not, then, use your genius against yourself; do not take your grief's side. Your eloquence, of course, can make small things pass for great and, again, make great things slight and bring them down to the least; but let it save these powers for something else, and now give itself wholly to your comfort. And yet consider whether even this is not already superfluous; for nature demands something of us, but more is taken on through vanity. I, however, will never demand of you that you not grieve at all. And I know there are some men whose prudence is more hard than brave, who say the wise man will not grieve: these seem to me never to have met with a misfortune of this kind; otherwise Fortune would have knocked their proud wisdom out of them and driven them, even against their will, to confess the truth. Reason will have done enough if it cuts away from grief only what is excessive and overflowing; that it should allow none at all, no one should hope or desire. Let it rather keep a measure that imitates neither a lack of devotion nor madness and holds us in a state that befits a mind that is loving, not shaken: let tears flow, but let them also stop; let groans be drawn from the depths of the breast, but let them also end; so

govern your mind that you can win the approval of the wise and of your brothers. See to it that you want your brother's memory to come to you often, that you celebrate him in conversation and bring him before you by constant recollection; and you will achieve this only if you make his memory pleasant rather than tearful; for it is natural that the mind always shrinks from what it returns to with sorrow. Think of his modesty, think of his skill in handling affairs, his diligence in carrying them out, his constancy in his promises. Tell others all his words and deeds, and recall them to yourself. Think what he was and what he might have been hoped to become: for what could not safely be promised of such a brother?

These things I have put together as best I could, with a mind grown stale and dulled by long neglect. If they seem to answer too little to your genius or to heal your grief too little, reflect how little a man can spare time for consoling another when his own ills keep him occupied, and how hard it is for Latin words to come to a man around whom echoes the uncouth din of barbarians, offensive even to the more civilized barbarians.

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1. The beginning is lost.

2. Claudius, emperor AD 41–54, whom Seneca calls "Caesar" throughout.

3. Polybius, a freedman of Claudius, was his secretary for literary studies and later for petitions; he had put Homer into Latin and Virgil into Greek.

4. Phaedrus had already published Latin verse fables after Aesop under Tiberius.

5. In AD 41 Claudius banished Seneca to Corsica on a charge of adultery with Julia Livilla, sister of the emperor Gaius (Caligula); he was recalled in 49.

6. Gaius Caesar, the emperor known as Caligula (reigned 37–41).

7. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, who defeated Hannibal in 202 BC. In the 180s BC his brother Lucius Scipio Asiaticus was threatened with prison over

public funds; Africanus ended his life in voluntary retirement at Liternum.

8. Scipio Aemilianus, son of Lucius Aemilius Paullus, was adopted into the Scipios; his two younger brothers died just before and after their father's triumph over Macedonia in 167 BC. He destroyed Carthage in 146 BC.

9. Lucius Licinius Lucullus, the general of the war against Mithridates, and his brother Marcus.

10. Sextus Pompey was the younger son of Pompey the Great. Seneca seems to mean Julia, Julius Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, whose death in 54 BC loosened the alliance between Caesar and Pompey; she was not Sextus's sister. The brother is Gnaeus Pompey, killed after the battle of Munda in 45 BC.

11. Marcellus, son of Octavia, married to Augustus's daughter Julia; he died in 23 BC.

12. The imagined speaker, Claudius, was Augustus's great-nephew. Gaius and Lucius Caesar, Augustus's grandsons and adopted sons, each held the title "Prince of Youth"; Lucius died in AD 2, and Gaius, wounded in Armenia, died in AD 4.

13. Tiberius, later emperor. His brother Drusus the Elder, Claudius's father, died in Germany in 9 BC after a fall from his horse; Tiberius reached him before he died.

14. Mark Antony, triumvir with Octavian and Lepidus from 43 BC, was Claudius's maternal grandfather. His brother Gaius Antonius was put to death in 42 BC on the order of Marcus Brutus; the twenty legions are the armies of Brutus and Cassius defeated at Philippi.

15. Germanicus, Claudius's elder brother, died in Syria in AD 19.

16. Julia Drusilla, sister of Gaius, died in AD 38 and was declared a goddess.

Consolation to His Mother Helvia

1 Often before now, best of mothers, I have felt the impulse to console you, and often I have held it back. Many things urged me to dare it. First, I thought I would be laying down all my troubles if I could at least wipe away your tears for a while, even if I could not stop them; then I had no doubt that I would have more authority to rouse you if I had first risen up myself; besides, I was afraid that Fortune, beaten by me, might beat someone else of my family. And so, as best I could, I kept trying, my hand pressed over my own wound, to crawl forward and bind up your wounds. Then again there were things that held this purpose of mine back. I knew I must not confront your grief while it was fresh and raging, or the very comforts might provoke and inflame it, for in illness too nothing is more harmful than medicine given too soon; so I waited until it had broken its own strength and, softened by time to bear remedies, would let itself be touched and handled. Besides, when I unrolled all the works of the most illustrious minds composed to check and moderate mourning, I found no example of anyone who had consoled his family while he himself was being lamented by them; so in this new situation I hesitated, and I feared that this would be not consolation but a reopening of the sore. What of the fact that a man lifting his head from his own pyre to console his family needed new words, not taken from common, everyday speech? And every grief so great that it passes all measure must take away the choice of words, since often it shuts off the voice itself. Still, I will make the attempt as best I can, not from confidence in my talent, but because I, the consoler, can myself be the

most effective consolation. You would deny me nothing; and though all grief is stubborn, I hope you will not deny me this one thing: to let me set a limit to your longing.

2 See how much I have promised myself from your kindness: I do not doubt that I will have more power over you than your grief, and nothing has more power over the wretched. So, not to clash with it at once, I will first take its side and heap up everything that may rouse it; I will bring everything out and tear open what has already scarred over. Someone will say: "What kind of consolation is this, to call back forgotten ills and set a mind that can barely endure one sorrow in full view of all its sufferings?" But let him reflect that disorders so dangerous that they have grown strong against remedy are usually cured by their opposites. So I will bring before your mind all its sorrows, all its mourning: this will be healing not by a gentle method but by cautery and the knife. What will I gain? That a mind that has conquered so many miseries will be ashamed to take hard one wound in a body so covered with scars. Let those weep longer and moan whose delicate minds long prosperity has unnerved, and let them collapse at the stir of the slightest wrongs; but let those whose every year has passed through calamities bear even the heaviest with brave and unmoved constancy. Constant misfortune has one good: those whom it always harasses it hardens in the end.

Fortune has given you no respite from the heaviest mournings; she did not except even the day of your birth. You lost your mother as soon as you were born, no, while you were being born, and you were in a way exposed to life. You grew up under a stepmother, whom you, by all the obedience and devotion that can be seen even in a daughter, compelled to become a mother; yet even a good stepmother costs everyone dear. Your most affectionate uncle, an excellent and very brave man, you lost while you were awaiting his arrival; and so that Fortune would not lighten her sav-

agery by spacing it out, within thirty days you buried your dearest husband, by whom you were the mother of three children. The news of this mourning reached you while you were already mourning, and while all your children were away, as though your ills had been deliberately crowded into that time so that your grief would have nowhere to lean. I pass over so many dangers, so many fears, which you endured as they assaulted you without a pause: only lately, only lately, you took back into the same lap from which you had sent forth three grandchildren the bones of three grandchildren; within twenty days after you had buried my son, who died in your hands and amid your kisses, you heard that I had been carried off.[1] This was all you still lacked: to mourn the living.

3 The fresh wound is the heaviest of all that have ever come down on your body, I admit; it has not broken the surface of the skin, it has cleft your breast and your very vitals. But just as raw recruits, though only lightly wounded, still cry out and dread the hands of the doctors more than the sword, while veterans, though run through, let their wounds be cleansed patiently and without a groan, as if the bodies were someone else's, so you must now submit bravely to treatment. Put away laments and wailing and the other things by which a woman's grief usually makes its uproar; for you have wasted all those ills if you have not yet learned how to be wretched. Do I seem to have dealt with you without timidity? I have kept back nothing of your ills, but have set them all before you in a heap.

4 I did this with a great spirit; for I have resolved to conquer your grief, not to hem it in. And I will conquer it, I think, first if I show that I suffer nothing for which I could myself be called wretched, still less anything for which I would make wretched even those close to me; then if I turn to you and prove that not even your fortune is heavy, since it depends entirely on mine.

I will take up first what your devotion longs to hear: that nothing bad has befallen me. If I can, I will make it plain that the very things by which you think me weighed down are not unbearable; but if that cannot be believed, I at least will be the better pleased with myself for being happy amid the things that usually make men wretched. There is no reason for you to believe others about me: I myself tell you, so that you may not be troubled by uncertain rumors, that I am not wretched. I will add, to make you freer of care, that I cannot even be made wretched.

5 We were born on good terms, if we do not abandon them. Nature saw to it that living well would need no great apparatus: each one of us can make himself happy. External things carry little weight and have no great power either way: prosperity does not lift up the wise man, nor does adversity bring him down; for he has always worked to place as much as he can in himself, to seek all his joy from himself. What then? Do I call myself a wise man? Not at all; if I could claim that, I would not only deny that I am wretched but would proclaim myself the most fortunate of all men, brought into the neighborhood of god. As it is, and this is enough to soften all miseries, I have given myself to wise men, and, not yet strong enough to help myself, I have fled to another's camp, the camp, of course, of those who easily protect themselves and their own. They have ordered me to stand always on watch, as if posted at a guard station, and to foresee every attempt of Fortune, every onrush, long before it strikes. Fortune is heavy for those to whom she comes suddenly; the man who always expects her easily withstands her. For an enemy's arrival too overwhelms those it catches unawares; but those who have prepared themselves for the coming war before the war, drawn up and equipped, easily take the first blow, which is the most violent. I never trusted Fortune, even when she seemed to be keeping the peace; all the things she most kindly bestowed on me, money, offices, influence, I put where she

could take them back without disturbing me. I kept a wide distance between them and myself; so she has taken them away, not torn them away. No one is broken by adverse fortune unless he was first deceived by favorable fortune. Those who loved her gifts as if they were their own and lasting, who wanted to be looked up to because of them, lie prostrate and grieve when false and fickle delights abandon their empty and childish minds, which know nothing of solid pleasure; but the man who was not puffed up by happy times does not shrink when they change. Against either condition he keeps an unconquered mind whose firmness has already been tested; for in good fortune itself he has tried what would hold against misfortune. So I have always judged that there is no true good in the things everyone wishes for; and then I found them empty, daubed over with a showy and deceptive paint, with nothing inside like their outward face. And now, in the things called evils, I find nothing so terrible and harsh as the opinion of the crowd threatened. The word itself, indeed, by a kind of conviction and general agreement, now falls more harshly on the ear and strikes the hearer as something grim and accursed: so the people has decreed; but the decrees of the people are for the most part repealed by the wise.

6 Setting aside, then, the judgment of the majority, who are carried away by the first appearance of things, however it has come to be believed, let us see what exile is. A change of place, obviously. So that I may not seem to narrow its force and take away whatever is worst in it, let me add that disadvantages follow this change of place: poverty, disgrace, contempt. I will fight against these later; meanwhile I want to look first at what bitterness the change of place itself brings.

"To be without one's country is unbearable." Come, look at this throng, for which the houses of the vast city are barely enough: the greater part of that crowd is without its country. They have

streamed in from their towns and colonies, in short from the whole world: some were brought by ambition, some by the necessity of public office, some by an embassy laid on them, some by luxury seeking a convenient place rich in vices, some by the desire for liberal studies, some by the shows; some were drawn by friendship, some by energy that found ample scope for displaying its virtue; some have brought their beauty for sale, some their eloquence for sale. There is no kind of human being that has not flocked into the city, which sets high prices on both virtues and vices. Have all of them called by name and ask each one where he comes from: you will see that the greater part have left their own homes and come to a city that is indeed the greatest and most beautiful, but not theirs. Then leave this city, which may be called the common city of all, and go around all the cities: there is none that does not have a large share of foreign population. Pass by those whose pleasant site and convenient region attract more people; go through deserted places and the roughest islands, Sciathus and Seriphus, Gyara and Cossura: you will find no place of exile where someone is not staying of his own free will. What can be found so bare, so steep on every side, as this rock? What more barren, if you look at its resources? What more savage, if you look at its people? What more forbidding, if you look at the lie of the land? What more intemperate, if you look at its climate? Yet more foreigners than natives live here. So far, then, is the change of place itself from being a hardship that even this place has drawn some away from their country. I find people who say that there is in minds a certain natural restlessness that drives them to change their abode and move their dwelling; for man has been given a mind that is mobile and restless; it never keeps still, it scatters itself and sends its thoughts out into all things known and unknown, roving, impatient of rest, and happiest in novelty. You will not wonder at this if you look at its first origin: it is not formed

of earthly and heavy matter, it came down from that heavenly spirit; and the nature of heavenly things is always in motion, fleeing and driven on at the swiftest pace. Look at the stars that light the universe: not one of them stands still. The sun glides on continually and changes from place to place, and though it turns with the whole, it is nonetheless carried in the direction opposite to the universe itself; it runs through all the signs of the zodiac and never halts; its movement is perpetual, its migration from one place to another. All things are always revolving and in passage; as law and the necessity of nature have ordained, they are carried from one place to another; when they have unrolled their circuits over fixed spaces of years, they will go again through the places they came from. Go now and suppose that the human mind, made of the same seeds as divine beings, resents passage and migration, when the nature of god delights in constant and very swift change, or preserves itself by it.

7 Come, turn from heavenly things to human: you will see that whole nations and peoples have changed their homes. What are Greek cities doing in the midst of barbarian lands? What is the Macedonian tongue doing among Indians and Persians? Scythia and that whole region of wild and untamed tribes displays cities of Achaea planted on the shores of the Black Sea: neither the savagery of an endless winter nor the temper of the men, as rough as their climate, stopped those who moved their homes there. There is a crowd of Athenians in Asia; Miletus has poured out the population of seventy-five cities in every direction; the whole coast of Italy washed by the Lower Sea was Greater Greece. Asia claims the Etruscans as her own; Tyrians live in Africa, Carthaginians in Spain; Greeks thrust themselves into Gaul, Gauls into Greece; the Pyrenees did not block the passage of the Germans. Human restlessness has made its way through trackless and unknown places. They dragged their children and wives and parents heavy with age.

Some, tossed about by long wandering, did not choose a place by judgment but in weariness took the nearest; others made themselves a right in a foreign land by arms; some nations the sea swallowed up as they sought unknown lands; some settled where the lack of everything set them down. Nor did all have the same reason for leaving their country and seeking one: some, escaping the destruction of their cities by enemy arms, were driven into foreign lands stripped of their own; some were removed by civil strife at home; some were sent out by an overcrowded and overflowing population, to relieve its strength; some were cast out by plague, or frequent chasms in the earth, or some unbearable flaws of an unlucky soil; some were seduced by the fame of a fertile shore, praised beyond its worth. Different reasons roused different peoples from their homes; this at least is plain: nothing has remained in the place where it was born. The human race is forever on the move; every day something changes in so great a world: new foundations of cities are laid, new names of nations arise as the old ones are extinguished or absorbed into a stronger one. And what are all these migrations of peoples but public exiles? Why do I drag you around so long a circuit? What is the point of listing Antenor, the founder of Padua, and Evander, who set up the kingdom of the Arcadians on the bank of the Tiber? Or Diomedes and the others whom the Trojan War scattered through foreign lands, conquered and conquerors alike?[2] The Roman empire, after all, looks back to an exile as its founder, a refugee from his captured country, dragging a scant remnant with him, whom necessity and fear of the victor carried to Italy as he sought distant lands. And how many colonies this people has since sent into every province! Wherever the Roman has conquered, he lives. For this change of place men gladly gave in their names, and the old man left his altars and followed the colonists across the seas. The subject does not need a longer list; but I will add one example that thrusts itself before my

eyes: this very island has often changed its inhabitants. To pass over older things that time has covered over, the Greeks who now live in Massilia, after leaving Phocis,[3] first settled on this island; what drove them from it is uncertain, whether the unhealthy climate, or the sight of all-powerful Italy, or the harborless nature of the sea; for that the savagery of the natives was not the reason is clear from the fact that they placed themselves among the peoples of Gaul, who were then at their fiercest and most uncivilized. Then Ligurians crossed over to it, and Spaniards crossed too, as appears from the likeness of their customs: they have the same head coverings and the same kind of footwear as the Cantabrians, and certain words; for the language as a whole, through contact with Greeks and Ligurians, has departed from the native one. Then two colonies of Roman citizens were brought here, one by Marius, one by Sulla: so often has the population of this dry and thorny rock changed! In short, you will hardly find any land still inhabited by its natives; everything is mixed and grafted. One people has followed another: one coveted what another had disdained; one was driven from the place it had driven others from. So it has pleased fate that the fortune of nothing should stand always in the same place.

8 Against the change of place itself, setting aside the other disadvantages attached to exile, Varro, the most learned of the Romans, thinks this remedy enough: wherever we come, we have the same Nature to live with. Marcus Brutus thinks this enough: that those going into exile may take their virtues with them.[4] Even if someone judges each of these by itself too weak to console an exile, he will admit that both together can do a great deal. For how little it is that we lose! The two finest things will follow us wherever we move: nature, which is common to all, and virtue, which is our own. This was arranged, believe me, by whoever was the shaper of the universe, whether he is a god with power over all

things, or incorporeal reason, the craftsman of mighty works, or a divine spirit spread with equal tension through all things greatest and smallest, or fate and the unchangeable chain of causes linked to one another; this, I say, was arranged so that nothing but the most worthless things should fall into another's power. Whatever is best for a man lies beyond human power; it can be neither given nor taken away. This universe, than which Nature has produced nothing greater or more beautifully ordered, and the mind, which contemplates and admires the universe and is its most magnificent part, are our own and everlasting, and will stay with us as long as we ourselves remain. Eager and upright, then, let us hurry with fearless step wherever circumstances take us; let us travel across any lands whatever: no exile can be found within the universe, for nothing within the universe is foreign to man. From anywhere alike the gaze is lifted to the sky; all things divine are the same distance from all things human. So, as long as my eyes are not drawn away from that spectacle of which they never tire, as long as I may look at the sun and the moon, may dwell on the other stars, may trace their risings and settings and intervals and the causes of their moving faster or slower; as long as I may watch so many stars twinkling through the night, some motionless, some not going out into a wide space but circling within their own track, some suddenly bursting forth, some dazzling the eye with a spread of fire as if they were falling, or flying past in a long trail with much light; as long as I am with these and mingle with heavenly things, as far as a man may; as long as I keep my mind on high, straining toward the sight of things akin to it, what does it matter to me what ground I tread?

9 "But this land is not rich in fruitful or pleasant trees; it is not watered by great or navigable rivers; it produces nothing that other peoples seek, and is barely fertile enough to support its inhabitants; no precious stone is quarried here, no veins of gold

and silver are dug out." Narrow is the mind that earthly things delight: it must be led away to those things that appear equally everywhere and shine equally everywhere. And this must be borne in mind: that these things, through false and wrongly held beliefs, stand in the way of true goods. The longer the colonnades men extend, the higher they raise their towers, the wider they stretch their streets, the deeper they dig their summer grottoes, the more massive the roofs they lift over their dining halls, the more there will be to hide the sky from them. Chance has cast you into a region where the most luxurious shelter is a hut: you are indeed small-minded and console yourself meanly if you bear it bravely because you know the hut of Romulus. Say this instead: "This humble hovel, surely, gives shelter to the virtues? It will at once be more beautiful than all temples when justice is seen there, and self-restraint, and prudence, devotion, the method of rightly apportioning every duty, the knowledge of things human and divine. No place is narrow that holds this great crowd of virtues; no exile is heavy into which one may go with this company." Brutus, in the book he wrote on virtue, says he saw Marcellus[5] in exile at Mytilene, living as happily as human nature allows, and never more eager for liberal studies than at that time. And so he adds that he felt it was rather he who was going into exile, since he was to return without him, than Marcellus who was being left in exile. O Marcellus, more fortunate at the time when he won Brutus's approval for his exile than when he won the state's approval for his consulship! How great a man he was, who made someone feel himself an exile because he was leaving an exile! How great a man, who brought to admiration of himself a man whom even his own Cato admired! The same Brutus says that Caesar sailed past Mytilene because he could not bear to see the man disgraced. The senate did obtain his recall by public prayers, so anxious and sorrowful that all seemed that day to share Brutus's

feelings and to be pleading not for Marcellus but for themselves, lest they be exiles if they were left without him; but he achieved much more on the day when Brutus could not bear to leave him an exile, nor Caesar to see him. For he had the testimony of both: Brutus grieved to return without Marcellus, Caesar blushed. Can you doubt that so great a man often encouraged himself in this way to bear his exile calmly? "That you are without your country is not wretched: you have so steeped yourself in learning that you know every place is a country to the wise man. And then? Was not the very man who drove you out himself without his country for ten years running? To extend the empire, no doubt; but still he was without it. Now look: Africa drags him to itself, full of the threats of a war rising again; Spain drags him, reviving the broken and shattered party; faithless Egypt drags him; in short the whole world, watching for its chance against a shaken empire. Which matter will he meet first? Against which part will he set himself? His victory will drive him through all lands. Let the nations look up to him and worship him; you, live content with Brutus as your admirer."

10 Marcellus, then, bore his exile well, and the change of place changed nothing in his mind, though poverty went with it; and that there is no evil in poverty anyone understands who has not yet arrived at the madness of greed and luxury, which turn everything upside down. For how little is necessary to keep a man! And who can lack this if he has any virtue at all? As for me, I understand that I have lost not wealth but busyness. The body's wants are few: it wants to keep off the cold and to quench hunger and thirst with food; whatever is craved beyond this is labor spent on vices, not needs. There is no need to search every deep, to load the belly with a slaughter of animals, or to dig shellfish out of an unknown shore of the farthest sea: may the gods and goddesses destroy those whose luxury goes beyond the bounds of an empire

so envied! They want game caught beyond the Phasis to stock their pretentious kitchens, and they are not ashamed to fetch birds from the Parthians, from whom we have not yet exacted punishment. From every side they bring together everything known to a jaded palate; what a stomach weakened by delicacies can barely take in is carried from the farthest ocean; they vomit so that they may eat, they eat so that they may vomit, and the feasts they hunt out over the whole world they do not even deign to digest. If someone despises such things, how does poverty harm him? If someone craves them, poverty even does him good; for he is cured against his will, and if he does not accept remedies even under compulsion, at least for a time, while he cannot have those things, he is like a man who does not want them. Gaius Caesar,[6] whom Nature seems to me to have produced to show what the greatest vices could do in the greatest fortune, spent ten million sesterces on dinner in a single day; and though everyone's ingenuity helped him in this, he could barely find a way to turn the tribute of three provinces into one dinner. Pitiable people, whose palate is not roused except by costly foods! And it is not exceptional flavor or any sweetness to the throat that makes them costly, but rarity and the difficulty of getting them. Otherwise, if they cared to return to a sound mind, what need would there be of so many arts that serve the belly? What need of trade? Of laying waste the forests? Of searching the deep? Food lies everywhere, which Nature has set out in every place; but they pass it by as if blind, and roam through every region and cross the seas, and, though they could quiet their hunger with little, they provoke it with much. I would like to say: "Why do you launch ships? Why do you arm your hands against beasts and against men? Why do you rush about in such an uproar? Why do you pile wealth on wealth? Will you not consider how small your bodies are? Is it not madness and the last error of the mind, when you can hold so little, to want

so much? You may increase your fortunes and push out your boundaries, but you will never enlarge your bodies. When business has gone well and soldiering has brought in much, when food hunted from everywhere has been gathered together, you will have nowhere to put all your provisions. Why do you seek out so many things? No doubt our ancestors were unhappy, whose virtue even now props up our vices: they prepared their food with their own hands, the ground was their bed, their roofs did not yet gleam with gold, their temples did not yet shine with gems. And so in those days men swore piously by gods of clay; those who had called on them went back to the enemy to die rather than break their word. No doubt our dictator[7] lived less happily, who listened to the envoys of the Samnites while he turned the cheapest food on the hearth with his own hand, the same hand with which he had so often struck the enemy and laid the laurel in the lap of Capitoline Jupiter, than Apicius[8] lived within our memory, who, in the city from which philosophers were once ordered to leave as corrupters of the young, professed the science of the cookshop and infected the age with his teaching." His end is worth knowing. When he had thrown a hundred million sesterces into his kitchen, when he had drained at single banquets so many gifts of the emperors and the huge revenue of the Capitol, he was overwhelmed by debt and forced for the first time to look at his accounts: he calculated that he would have ten million sesterces left, and, as though he would be living in utter starvation if he lived on ten million sesterces, he ended his life with poison. How great was the luxury of a man for whom ten million sesterces was poverty! Go now and think that it is the amount of money that matters, not the state of the mind. Someone was terrified of ten million sesterces, and fled by poison what others pray for. Yet for a man of so depraved a mind that last drink was the most wholesome; it was earlier that he ate and drank poison, when he not

only delighted in immense feasts but boasted of them, when he paraded his vices, when he turned the city toward his own luxury, when he enticed the young to imitate him, though they are quick to learn even without bad examples. This is what happens to those who measure riches not by reason, which has fixed limits, but by vicious habit, whose whim is boundless and beyond grasp. Nothing is enough for greed; for nature even a little is enough. So the poverty of an exile brings no hardship; for no place of exile is so barren that it is not abundantly fertile for feeding a man.

11 "But the exile will miss his clothes and his house." These too he will miss only as far as use requires: he will lack neither roof nor covering; for the body is covered with as little as it is fed; nothing that nature made necessary for man did she make laborious. But he misses purple soaked in much shellfish dye, interwoven with gold and picked out with various colors and arts: that man is poor through his own fault, not fortune's. Even if you restore to him whatever he has lost, you will accomplish nothing; for once restored he will lack more of what he craves than he lacked as an exile of what he had. But he misses furniture gleaming with golden vessels, silver made famous by the names of old craftsmen, bronze made precious by the madness of a few, a crowd of slaves to cramp however large a house, draft animals whose bodies are stuffed and forced to fatten, and stones from every nation: let all these be heaped up, they will never fill an insatiable mind, any more than any liquid will suffice to satisfy a man whose craving arises not from lack but from the heat of burning entrails; for that is not thirst but disease. Nor does this happen only with money or food; the same nature is found in every desire that arises not from want but from vice: whatever you heap upon it will be not the end of greed but a step. So whoever keeps himself within natural measure will not feel poverty; whoever goes beyond natural measure will be followed by poverty even in the greatest wealth. For necessities

even exile is enough; for superfluities not even kingdoms are. It is the mind that makes men rich; it follows them into exile, and in the harshest wildernesses, when it has found enough to sustain the body, it overflows with its own goods and enjoys them: money has no more to do with the mind than with the immortal gods. All those things that untrained minds, too much enslaved to their bodies, look up to, marble, gold, silver, and great round polished tables, are earthly weights, which a pure mind, mindful of its own nature, cannot love, being itself light, unencumbered, and ready, whenever it is released, to spring up to the heights; meanwhile, as far as the hindrance of the limbs and this heavy burden around it allow, it surveys divine things with swift and winged thought. And so it can never be exiled, free as it is, kin to the gods, and equal to the whole universe and to all time; for its thought goes around the whole sky and is sent out into all time past and future. This poor body, the prison and chain of the mind, is tossed this way and that; on it punishments, robberies, diseases do their work; but the mind itself is sacred and eternal, and no hand can be laid on it.

12 So that you may not think that, to make light of the hardships of poverty, which no one feels as heavy unless he thinks it so, I rely only on the precepts of the wise, look first at how much greater a part of mankind is poor; you will not find them any sadder or more anxious than the rich; indeed, I wonder whether they are not happier, inasmuch as their minds are pulled in fewer directions. Let us pass on to the rich: how many are the times when they are like the poor! The baggage of travelers is cut down, and whenever the needs of a journey call for speed, the crowd of attendants is dismissed. Men on campaign, how small a part of their possessions they have with them, when military discipline forbids all luxury! Nor is it only the conditions of the times or the lack of a place that puts them on a level with the poor: they pick certain days, when they have grown weary of riches, on which

they dine on the ground and, putting away their gold and silver, use earthenware. Madmen! What they long for now and then, they always fear. Oh, what a fog of mind, what ignorance of the truth ⟨...⟩[9] torments them, which they imitate for pleasure! As for me, whenever I look back at the examples of old, I am ashamed to use comforts for poverty, since the luxury of our times has slid so far that the traveling allowance of exiles is greater than the inheritance of leading men once was. It is well established that Homer had one slave, Plato three, and Zeno, with whom the stern and manly wisdom of the Stoics began, none; will anyone say, then, that they lived wretchedly, without seeming to everyone, for saying so, the most wretched of men himself? Menenius Agrippa, who was the mediator of public peace between the senators and the plebs, was buried by a public collection. Atilius Regulus, while he was routing the Carthaginians in Africa, wrote to the senate that his hired man had gone off and left the farm deserted; the senate decided that it should be tended at public expense while Regulus was away. Was it not worth having no slave, to have the Roman people for his tenant farmer? Scipio's daughters received their dowries from the treasury, because their father had left them nothing;[10] it was fair, by Hercules, for the Roman people to pay tribute to Scipio once, since it was always exacting it from Carthage. O fortunate husbands of those girls, who had the Roman people for a father-in-law! Do you think those people happier whose pantomime dancers marry with a dowry of a million sesterces than Scipio, whose children received heavy bronze coin as a dowry from the senate, their guardian? Does anyone disdain poverty, when its ancestral masks are so illustrious? Is an exile indignant that he lacks something, when Scipio lacked a dowry, Regulus a hired man, Menenius a funeral, when for all of them what was lacking was supplied all the more honorably because it

had been lacking? With these men as its advocates, poverty is not only safe but even in favor.

13 It may be answered: "Why do you artfully pull apart these things, which can be borne one at a time but not all together? A change of place is bearable if you only change your place; poverty is bearable if disgrace is absent, which by itself usually crushes the spirit." Against this man, whoever tries to frighten me with a crowd of ills, I shall have to use these words: "If you have strength enough against any one part of fortune, you will have the same against all of it. Once virtue has hardened the mind, it makes it invulnerable on every side. If greed, the most violent plague of the human race, has let you go, ambition will not hold you back; if you look on your last day not as a punishment but as a law of nature, then into the breast from which you have cast out the fear of death the fear of nothing else will dare to enter; if you consider that lust was given to man not for pleasure but for propagating the race, then every other desire will pass by untouched the man whom this secret ruin, planted in our very vitals, has not violated. Reason lays low not single vices but all of them together: the victory is won once and for all." Do you think any wise man can be moved by disgrace, a man who has placed everything in himself, who has withdrawn from the opinions of the crowd? Worse even than disgrace is a disgraceful death; yet Socrates entered prison with the same expression with which he had once, alone, brought the Thirty Tyrants to order, and he was going to take the disgrace away from the place itself; for a place in which Socrates was could not seem a prison. Who is so blind to the truth that he thinks it was a disgrace to Marcus Cato to be defeated twice, as candidate for the praetorship and for the consulship?[11] The disgrace belonged to the praetorship and the consulship, which Cato would have honored. No one is despised by another unless he has first despised himself. A low and abject mind lies open to that insult;

but the man who rises up against the cruelest misfortunes and overturns the ills by which others are crushed counts his very miseries as sacred fillets, since we are so made that nothing wins such great admiration from us as a man who is wretched bravely. Aristides was being led to execution at Athens;[12] everyone who met him lowered his eyes and groaned, as though it was not a just man but justice itself that was being punished; yet someone was found who spat in his face. He could have taken this hard, since he knew that no one with a clean mouth would dare to do it; but he wiped his face and, smiling, said to the magistrate escorting him: "Tell that man not to yawn so rudely next time." This was to insult insult itself. I know some people say that nothing is heavier than contempt, and that death seems to them preferable. To these I will answer that exile too is often free of all contempt: if a great man has fallen, he lies there great; he is no more despised than the ruins of sacred buildings are trodden underfoot, which the devout worship just as they did when they stood.

14 Since on my account, dearest mother, you have nothing to drive you to endless tears, it follows that it is reasons of your own that goad you. And there are two: either you are moved by the thought that you have lost some protection, or you cannot bear the longing in itself.

The first part I need only touch on lightly; for I know your heart, which loves nothing in its own but themselves. Let those mothers see to it who exercise their children's power with a woman's lack of restraint, who, because women may not hold office, are ambitious through their sons, who drain their sons' inheritances and angle for them too, who wear out their sons' eloquence by lending it to others. You have taken the greatest joy in your children's goods and made the least use of them; you have always set a limit to our generosity while setting none to your own; while you were still under your father's authority, you even

made gifts, unasked, to your rich sons; you managed our inheritances so that you worked at them as if they were your own and kept your hands off them as if they were someone else's; you were sparing of our influence, as though you were using what belonged to others, and from our offices nothing came to you but pleasure and expense. Your affection never looked to advantage; so you cannot miss, in a son taken from you, what you never thought concerned you while he was safe.

15 All my consolation must be turned to the point from which the true force of a mother's grief arises: "So I am deprived of the embrace of my dearest son; I cannot enjoy the sight of him or his conversation. Where is he at whose sight I smoothed my sad face, on whom I laid down all my anxieties? Where are the talks I could never have enough of? Where are the studies, which I shared more gladly than a woman would, more intimately than a mother would? Where is his coming to meet me? Where is that boyish gladness, always, at the sight of his mother?" To these you add the very places where we rejoiced together and lived together, and, as is bound to happen, the reminders of our recent companionship, which are most effective at tormenting the mind. For Fortune contrived this too against you, cruelly: she wanted you to leave, free of care and fearing nothing of the kind, only two days before I was struck down. It was well that distance had separated us, well that an absence of some years had prepared you for this blow; you came back not to have pleasure from your son but to lose the habit of longing for him. If you had been away long before, you would have borne it more bravely, since the interval itself would have softened your longing; if you had not gone away, you would at least have had the last benefit of seeing your son two days longer. As it is, cruel fate arranged things so that you were neither present at my misfortune nor accustomed to my absence. But the harsher these things are, the greater the virtue you must summon, and the

more fiercely you must engage, as with an enemy you know and have often beaten before. This blood has not flowed from an unwounded body: you have been struck through your very scars.

16 There is no reason for you to use the excuse of being a woman, to whom a right to tears has been granted that is almost unrestrained, though not unlimited; and that is why our ancestors gave women ten months for mourning their husbands, to settle the stubbornness of a woman's grief by public decree. They did not forbid mourning, but limited it; for to be affected by endless grief when you have lost one of your dearest is foolish indulgence, and by none, inhuman hardness: the best balance between devotion and reason is both to feel longing and to suppress it. There is no reason for you to look at certain women whose sorrow, once taken up, ended only with death (you know some who, after losing their sons, never put off the mourning clothes they had put on): a life braver from the start demands more of you; the excuse of being a woman cannot apply to one from whom all women's vices have been absent. Unchastity, the greatest evil of the age, has not drawn you into the number of the many; jewels have not swayed you, nor pearls; riches have not shone before you as the greatest good of the human race; you were well brought up in an old-fashioned and strict house, and the imitation of worse women, dangerous even to the virtuous, did not turn you aside; you were never ashamed of your fertility, as though it reproached you with your age; you never, like other women whose whole appeal is sought in their looks, hid your swelling belly as an unbecoming burden, nor crushed the hope of children conceived within you; you did not defile your face with paints and cosmetics; you never liked a dress that would show nothing more when it was taken off. Modesty has seemed to you your one ornament, the loveliest beauty and one no age can touch, your greatest glory. So you cannot hold up the name of woman as a claim to keep your grief, a

name from which your virtues have set you apart; you ought to keep as far from women's tears as from their vices. Not even women will let you waste away from your wound; they will tell you to get through your necessary mourning quickly and lightly and to rise up, if only you are willing to look at those women whom conspicuous virtue has placed among great men. Fortune had reduced Cornelia from twelve children to two: if you wanted to count Cornelia's funerals, she had lost ten; if to weigh them, she had lost the Gracchi.[13] Yet when those around her were weeping and cursing her fate, she forbade them to accuse fortune, which had given her the Gracchi as sons. From this woman was bound to be born the man who said in the assembly: "Would you speak ill of my mother, who bore me?" The mother's words seem to me far more spirited: the son set a high value on the birth of the Gracchi, the mother on their funerals too. Rutilia followed her son Cotta into exile,[14] and was so bound up in her affection that she preferred to suffer exile rather than longing, and did not return to her country until she returned with her son. When he had come home and was flourishing in public life, she lost him as bravely as she had followed him, and no one saw her tears after she had buried her son. When he was banished she showed virtue; when he was lost, prudence; for nothing deterred her from devotion, and nothing kept her in superfluous and foolish sorrow. With these women I want you to be counted; you have always imitated their lives, and you will do best to follow their example in checking and suppressing grief.

17 I know that this is not in our power, and that no passion is obedient, least of all the one that arises from grief; for it is fierce and stubborn against every remedy. Sometimes we want to bury it and swallow our groans; yet tears pour down through the very face we have composed and feigned. Sometimes we occupy the mind with games or gladiators; but in the midst of the very shows

that divert it, some slight reminder of its loss undermines it. So it is better to conquer grief than to cheat it; for grief that has been tricked and drawn away by pleasures or occupations rises again, and in its very rest gathers force to rage; but grief that has yielded to reason is laid to rest forever. So I am not going to show you the means I know many have used: to keep yourself occupied with a long journey or amuse yourself with a pleasant one, to spend much time in careful checking of accounts and in managing your estate, to entangle yourself always in some new business. All these help for a brief moment and are not remedies for grief but hindrances; and I would rather it ended than were deceived. So I lead you to the place where all who flee from fortune must take refuge, to liberal studies: they will heal your wound, they will root out all your sorrow. Even if you had never been used to them, you would have to use them now; but as far as my father's old-fashioned strictness allowed you, you have, if not mastered all the liberal arts, at least touched on them. If only my father, the best of men, had been less devoted to the custom of our ancestors and had wished you to be thoroughly taught the precepts of wisdom rather than given a taste of them! You would not now have to procure help against fortune, only to bring it out. Because of those women who use learning not for wisdom but to fit themselves out for luxury, he allowed you less indulgence in study. Yet thanks to your quick mind you drank in more than the time allowed; the foundations of every discipline have been laid. Go back to them now; they will keep you safe. They will console you, they will delight you; if they have entered your mind in good faith, never again will grief enter, never anxiety, never the superfluous torment of useless distress. Your breast will be open to none of these; for it has long been closed to the other vices. These are the surest defenses, and the only ones that can rescue you from fortune.

18 But since, until you reach that harbor which your studies promise you, you need supports to lean on, I want meanwhile to show you your own comforts. Look at my brothers:[15] while they are safe, you have no right to accuse fortune. In each you have something to delight you through a different kind of virtue: one has won offices by hard work, the other has wisely despised them. Find rest in the rank of one son, in the quiet of the other, in the devotion of both. I know the inmost feelings of my brothers: one cultivates his rank in order to be an ornament to you, the other has withdrawn into a tranquil and quiet life in order to have time for you. Fortune has arranged your children well, both for your help and for your delight: you can be protected by the rank of one and enjoy the leisure of the other. They will compete in their attentions to you, and the loss of one will be made up by the devotion of two. I can boldly promise: you will lack nothing but the number.

From them look also to your grandchildren: to Marcus, a most charming boy, at the sight of whom no sorrow can last; nothing so great, nothing so fresh rages in anyone's breast that his embraces cannot soothe it. Whose tears would his cheerfulness not stop? Whose mind, tight with anxiety, would his clever prattle not loosen? Whom will that playfulness not call out to jokes? Whom, however lost in his thoughts, will that chatter, which no one will ever tire of, not turn toward itself and draw away? I pray the gods that it may be our lot to have him outlive us! Let all the cruelty of the fates be wearied and stop with me; whatever the mother had to grieve over, let it have passed to me, whatever the grandmother, to me. Let the rest of the family flourish as it is: I will make no complaint of my childlessness, none of my condition, if only I may be the expiatory offering for a house that will grieve no more. Hold close in your lap Novatilla, who will soon give you great-grandchildren, whom I had so taken over and so enrolled as my own that in

losing me she may seem an orphan, though her father is alive; love her for me too. Fortune lately took away her mother: your devotion can see to it that she only grieves at having lost her mother, and does not also feel it. Now shape her character, now mold it: precepts sink deeper that are stamped on tender years. Let her grow used to your conversation, let her be formed to your judgment; you will give her much, even if you give her nothing but your example. This sacred duty will serve you as a remedy; for nothing can turn a mind that grieves out of devotion away from anxiety except reason or honorable occupation.

I would count your father too among your great comforts, if he were not away. Now, however, judge from your own affection what his is for you: you will understand how much more right it is for you to be kept for him than spent on me. Whenever the excessive force of grief assails you and orders you to follow it, think of your father. By giving him so many grandchildren and great-grandchildren you have indeed made yourself not his only one; yet the crowning of a life happily lived rests on you. While he lives, it is wrong for you to complain that you have lived.

19 Until now I had said nothing of your greatest comfort, your sister, that heart most faithful to you, into which all your cares pass to be held in common, that mind which is a mother's to all of us. With her you have mingled your tears; in her lap you first drew breath again. She always shares your feelings, it is true; but in my case she grieves not only for you. It was in her arms that I was carried to the city; it was through her loving and motherly nursing that I recovered from a long illness; she stretched her influence for my quaestorship and, though she could not bear the boldness even of conversation or of a loud greeting, for my sake her affection overcame her shyness. Neither her retired way of life, nor her modesty, which looked countrified amid so much forwardness among women, nor her quiet, nor her private habits given to

leisure kept her from becoming even ambitious for me. This, dearest mother, is the comfort by which you may be restored: join yourself to her as closely as you can, bind yourself in her tightest embraces. The grieving tend to flee what they love most and to seek freedom for their grief: you, whatever you are thinking, take yourself to her; whether you want to keep this state of mind or lay it aside, with her you will find either an end to your grief or a companion in it. But if I know the prudence of this most perfect woman, she will not let you be consumed by a sorrow that will do no good, and she will tell you her own example, which I too witnessed.

She had lost her dearest husband, our uncle, whom she had married as a girl, and lost him on the voyage itself; yet she bore grief and fear at the same time, and when the storms had been overcome, shipwrecked as she was, she carried his body ashore. Oh, how many women's noble deeds lie in obscurity! If she had been granted that simple antiquity which was so ready to admire virtues, with what a contest of talents would the wife be celebrated who, forgetting her weakness, forgetting the sea, which even the bravest fear, exposed her own life to danger for a burial, and, while she thought of her husband's funeral, feared nothing for her own! The woman who gave herself as a substitute for her husband is made famous by the poems of all: this is more, to seek a tomb for one's husband at the risk of one's life; that love is greater which, at an equal risk, buys back less.

After this, let no one wonder that during the sixteen years in which her husband governed Egypt[16] she was never seen in public, admitted no provincial into her house, asked nothing of her husband, and allowed nothing to be asked of herself. And so the province, talkative and clever at insulting its prefects, in which even those who avoided wrongdoing did not escape ill repute, looked up to her as a unique example of purity, and, what is hardest for a

people that enjoys even dangerous wit, held back all license of words, and to this day always wishes, though it never hopes, for another like her. It would have been much if the province had approved of her for sixteen years; it is more that it never knew her. I do not tell these things in order to go through her praises, which one cuts short by running over them so sparingly, but so that you may understand that she is a woman of a great mind, whom neither ambition nor greed, the companions and plagues of all power, overcame, and whom the fear of death did not deter, when the ship was already disabled and she was watching her own shipwreck, from clinging to her dead husband and seeking not how she might get out of it but how she might carry him out. You must show a virtue equal to hers, recover your mind from mourning, and see to it that no one thinks you regret having borne children.

20 But since, whatever you do, your thoughts must keep running back to me, and none of your children is now more often before your eyes, not because they are less dear but because it is natural to put one's hand more often to the place that hurts, hear how you are to think of me: glad and eager, as if in the best of circumstances. And they are the best, since my mind, free of every occupation, has time for its own work, and now delights itself with lighter studies, now, eager for truth, rises up to consider its own nature and the nature of the universe. It inquires first into the lands and where they lie, then into the condition of the surrounding sea and its alternating ebb and flow; then it looks into whatever lies between heaven and earth, full of terror, this space made turbulent by thunder, lightning, blasts of wind, and the falling of rain, snow, and hail; then, having traveled through the lower regions, it bursts through to the highest and enjoys the most beautiful spectacle of divine things, and, mindful of its own eternity, it goes into all that has been and all that will be, through all the ages.

1. In AD 41 the emperor Claudius banished Seneca to Corsica on a charge of adultery with Julia Livilla, sister of the emperor Gaius (Caligula); he was recalled in 49.

2. Legendary founders: the Trojan Antenor of Padua, the Arcadian Evander of a town on the site of Rome; the Greek hero Diomedes was said to have settled in southern Italy. The exile who founded Rome's empire is the Trojan Aeneas.

3. The founders of Massilia (Marseille) came from Phocaea in Asia Minor, not from Phocis in Greece; they had earlier settled at Alalia on Corsica.

4. Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), the scholar; Marcus Junius Brutus, the assassin of Caesar, who wrote a treatise *On Virtue*.

5. Marcus Claudius Marcellus, consul in 51 BC and an enemy of Caesar, lived in exile at Mytilene after Pharsalus; Caesar pardoned him in 46 BC, and he was murdered on his way home.

6. Gaius Caesar, the emperor known as Caligula (reigned 37–41).

7. Manius Curius Dentatus, conqueror of the Samnites; he was consul, not dictator.

8. Marcus Gavius Apicius, a famous gourmet of the reign of Tiberius.

9. The text is damaged here.

10. Menenius Agrippa, consul in 503 BC, reconciled the plebs with the senate during their secession. Marcus Atilius Regulus commanded in Africa in 256–255 BC, during the First Punic War. The Scipio is Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus, killed in Spain in 211 BC.

11. Cato the Younger was defeated for the praetorship in 55 BC and for the consulship in 52 BC.

12. Aristides "the Just" was ostracized from Athens, not executed; the story is told elsewhere of Phocion, executed in 318 BC.

13. Cornelia, daughter of Scipio Africanus and mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, the reforming tribunes killed in 133 and 121 BC.

14. Gaius Aurelius Cotta, exiled in 90 BC, returned in 82 and was consul in 75 BC.

15. Seneca's elder brother Novatus, later called Gallio after his adoption, and his younger brother Mela, father of the poet Lucan. Marcus is probably Lucan;

Novatilla is the daughter of Novatus.

16. Gaius Galerius, prefect of Egypt from AD 16 to 31.

On Clemency, Book One

Book One

1 I have undertaken to write on clemency, Nero Caesar, so that I might in some fashion serve as a mirror and show you to yourself as one who is about to arrive at the greatest of all pleasures. For although the true reward of right actions lies in having done them, and there is no price worthy of the virtues outside the virtues themselves, still it is a delight to look into a good conscience and examine it from every side, and then to cast one's eyes over this vast multitude, discordant, seditious, unruly, ready to leap up for the ruin of others and of itself alike if it should break this yoke, and to speak thus with oneself: "Have I of all mortals found favor and been chosen to act on earth in the place of the gods? I am the arbiter of life and death for the nations. What lot and station each man shall have is placed in my hand. What Fortune wishes to grant to each mortal, she proclaims by my mouth. From my answer peoples and cities take their reasons for gladness. No region anywhere flourishes except by my will and favor. These many thousands of swords, which my peace holds in check, will be drawn at my nod. Which nations shall be utterly destroyed, which transplanted, which shall be given freedom and which robbed of it, which kings shall become slaves and whose heads shall be crowned with the royal diadem, which cities shall fall and which shall rise: this is mine to decree. In this vast power over all things, I have not been driven to unjust punishments by anger, nor by the impulse of youth, nor by the recklessness and defiance of men, which has often wrung patience even from the calmest hearts, nor

by that glory, dreadful but common among great empires, of displaying power through terror. With me the sword is sheathed, no, it is bound fast; I am sparing to the utmost even of the meanest blood; there is no one, though he lack every other claim, who does not find favor with me for the mere name of human being. Severity I keep hidden, but clemency I keep girded and ready. I watch over myself as though I must render an account to the laws, which I have called forth from neglect and darkness into the light. I have been moved by one man's youth and by another's old age; I have spared one man for his rank and another for his lowliness; whenever I found no reason for pity, I spared for my own sake. Today, if the immortal gods should call me to account, I am ready to render them the human race, counted out in full."

You can proclaim this boldly, Caesar: that everything which has come under your trust and protection is kept safe, and that nothing is taken from the state by you, either by force or by stealth. You have coveted the rarest of praises, one granted to no emperor before you: innocence. Your labor is not wasted, nor has that singular goodness of yours met with ungrateful or spiteful judges. Gratitude is returned to you; no single man was ever so dear to another single man as you are to the Roman people, its great and lasting good. But you have laid a huge burden on yourself. No one speaks any longer of the deified Augustus or of the first years of Tiberius,[1] nor looks for a model outside you that he would want you to imitate; your reign is judged by the sample it has already given. This would have been hard if that goodness of yours were not natural but put on for the occasion. For no one can wear a mask for long; things feigned soon fall back into their own nature, while things that have truth beneath them, and that grow, so to speak, out of solid ground, advance with time itself to something greater and better.

The Roman people ran a great risk while it was uncertain which way that noble nature of yours would turn. Now the prayers of the public are safe; for there is no danger that a sudden forgetfulness of yourself will seize you. Too much good fortune, it is true, makes men greedy, and desires are never so moderate that they come to a stop at what they have obtained; the step is from great to greater, and those who have gained what they never hoped for embrace the most reckless hopes. Yet now all your citizens are compelled to confess both that they are fortunate and that nothing more can be added to these goods, except that they should last forever. Many things drive them to this confession, which of all confessions a human being is slowest to make: a deep and abundant freedom from care, and justice placed above every wrong. Before their eyes hovers the happiest form of commonwealth, which lacks nothing for the fullest freedom except the license to destroy itself. Above all, admiration for your clemency reaches the highest and the lowest equally. Other goods each man feels or expects, greater or smaller, in proportion to his own fortune; from clemency all hope for the same thing. And there is no one so pleased with his own innocence that he is not glad to see clemency standing in view, ready for human errors.

2 I know, however, that there are some who think that clemency props up the worst men, since it is useless except after a crime, and this alone of the virtues has nothing to do among the innocent. But first of all, just as medicine, though its use is among the sick, is held in honor among the healthy too, so clemency, though it is invoked by those who deserve punishment, is revered by the innocent as well. Next, it has its place in the case of the innocent too, because at times misfortune stands in the place of guilt; and clemency comes to the aid not only of innocence but often of virtue, since the conditions of the times bring about certain deeds that can be punished even while they are praised. Add

that a large part of mankind could return to innocence if punishment were remitted. Yet it is not fitting to pardon indiscriminately; for when the distinction between bad men and good is removed, confusion follows and an outbreak of vices. A moderation must therefore be applied that knows how to tell curable natures from those past hope. Clemency should be neither promiscuous and common nor cut off altogether; for to pardon everyone is as much a cruelty as to pardon no one. We must keep to the mean; but since the right balance is hard to strike, whatever is going to exceed the fair amount should tip toward the more humane side.

3 But these things will be better said in their place. For now I shall divide this whole subject into three parts. The first will concern the remission of punishment. The second will show the nature and character of clemency: for since there are certain vices that imitate virtues, they cannot be told apart unless you stamp on them marks by which they can be distinguished. In the third place we shall ask how the mind is led to this virtue, how it makes the virtue firm and by practice makes it its own.

It must be agreed, not only among us, who wish man to be seen as a social animal born for the common good, but also among those who give man over to pleasure, whose every word and deed looks to their own advantage, that no virtue of all is more fitting for a human being, since none is more humane. For if man seeks quiet and leisure, he has found in this virtue one suited to his nature, a virtue that loves peace and holds back the hand. Yet of all men clemency befits none more than a king or an emperor. For great strength is an honor and a glory only if its power is a saving power; to be strong for harm is a pestilent force. That man's greatness alone is stable and well founded whom all know to be as much for them as above them, whose care they find every day keeping watch over the safety of each and of all, at whose

approach they do not scatter as if some evil or noxious beast had sprung from its lair, but rush eagerly toward him as toward a bright and beneficent star. They are most ready to throw themselves before the daggers of assassins on his behalf and to lay their bodies beneath him, if his road to safety must be paved with a slaughter of men. They guard his sleep with watches through the night, they surround him and defend his flanks, they set themselves against the dangers that rush upon him.

It is not without reason that peoples and cities agree in thus protecting and loving their kings, and in flinging themselves and all they have wherever the safety of their ruler has required it. Nor is it contempt for oneself, or madness, for so many thousands to take the steel for one head, and by many deaths to ransom one life, sometimes that of an old and feeble man.

The whole body serves the mind; and though the body is so much larger and so much more splendid, while the mind remains hidden, slight, and uncertain in what seat it lurks, yet hands, feet, and eyes do its business, this skin protects it, at its command we lie still or run restlessly about; when it has given the order, if it is a greedy master, we search the sea for gain, if it is ambitious, we have long since thrust our right hand into the flames or leapt of our own will into a chasm in the earth. In the same way this vast multitude, surrounding one life, is ruled by his spirit and guided by his reason, and it would crush and break itself by its own strength if it were not sustained by his wisdom.

4 So it is their own safety they love when they lead ten legions at a time into battle for one man, when they rush to the front line and turn their breasts to wounds so that their emperor's standards may not be turned in flight. For he is the bond that holds the commonwealth together, he is the breath of life that these many thousands draw; by themselves they would be nothing but a burden and a prey if the empire were robbed of that intellect.

"While the king is safe, all are of one mind;

once he is lost, they break faith."[2]

Such a disaster would be the end of the Roman peace; it would drive the fortune of so great a people to ruin. This people will be free from that danger just so long as it knows how to bear the reins. But if ever it tears them off, or, once some accident has shaken them loose, will not let them be put back, this unity and this fabric of the greatest of empires will fly apart into many pieces, and the end of this city's rule will come with the end of its obedience. It is no wonder, then, that emperors and kings, and the guardians of the public order under whatever other name, are loved beyond even private ties; for if to sensible men public interests come before private ones, it follows that he too is dearer on whom the whole commonwealth turns. Long ago the emperor so clothed himself in the commonwealth that the two could not be pulled apart without the ruin of both; for he needs its strength, and it needs a head.

5 My discourse seems to have wandered rather far from its purpose, but, by Hercules, it is pressing hard on the matter itself. For if, as the argument so far has established, you are the mind of your commonwealth and it is your body, you see, I think, how necessary clemency is: you are sparing yourself when you seem to be sparing another. Even citizens who deserve censure must therefore be spared, just like ailing limbs; and if ever blood must be let, the hand must be held back so that it does not cut deeper than is necessary. Clemency, then, as I was saying, is in accord with nature for all men, but it is most becoming in emperors, because they have more to save and it shows itself on a larger field. How little harm private cruelty does! The savagery of emperors is war. Now although there is concord among the virtues, and none is better or more honorable than another, still some suit certain per-

sons better. Greatness of mind befits any mortal, even one below whom there is nothing; for what is greater or braver than to beat back bad fortune? Yet this greatness of mind has more room in good fortune, and is seen better on the tribunal than on level ground.

Clemency will make any house it enters happy and tranquil, but in a palace it is the more wonderful for being rarer. For what is more memorable than this: that a man whose anger nothing blocks, whose heavier sentences even those who perish assent to, whom no one will interrupt, whom indeed, if he has blazed up too fiercely, no one will even dare to entreat, should lay a restraining hand on himself and use his power for the better and gentler course, thinking this very thought: "Anyone can kill against the law; no one but I can save"? A great fortune befits a great mind; and unless the mind raises itself to that fortune and stands above it, it drags the fortune too down to the ground. It is the mark of a great mind to be calm and tranquil and to look down from above on wrongs and offenses. It is womanish to rage in anger; and it is the way of beasts, and not even noble ones, to bite and worry those who are down. Elephants and lions pass by what they have struck down; persistence belongs to the ignoble beast. Savage and inexorable anger does not become a king, for he does not rise much above the man to whom he makes himself equal by being angry. But if he grants life, if he grants rank to those who are in danger and deserve to lose it, he does what no one may do but the master of the world; for life can be taken even from a superior, but it is never given except to an inferior. To save is the privilege of a lofty fortune, which is never more to be looked up to than when it has the good luck to be able to do what the gods do, by whose benefit we are brought into the light, the good and the bad alike. Let an emperor, then, claiming for himself the mind of the gods, look gladly on some of his citizens because they are useful and

good, and leave others to make up the number; let him rejoice that some exist, and put up with others.

6 Think of this city, where a crowd flowing without a break through the widest streets is crushed whenever anything gets in the way to check its course, as of a rushing torrent; where seats are demanded in three theaters at the same time; where whatever is plowed in all the lands of the earth is consumed: think what a solitude and a wasteland it would be if nothing were left but what a severe judge had acquitted. How few of the presiding judges are not liable under the very law by which they conduct the inquiry? How few accusers are free of guilt? And I rather think that no one is harder about granting pardon than the man who has more often deserved to ask for it. We have all done wrong, some gravely, some more lightly, some by design, some driven by chance or carried away by another's wickedness; some of us have stood too weakly by good resolutions and lost our innocence against our will and while trying to hold on to it. And not only have we done wrong; we shall go on doing wrong to the end of our lives. Even if someone has already cleansed his mind so well that nothing can trouble or deceive him any longer, still he has arrived at innocence by way of wrongdoing.

7 Since I have mentioned the gods, I shall do best to set this up as the model on which an emperor should shape himself: he should wish to be to his citizens what he would wish the gods to be to him. Is it to our advantage, then, to have deities inexorable toward sins and errors, deities hostile to the point of our final ruin? And then what king will be safe, whose limbs the soothsayers will not be gathering up? But if the gods, who can be appeased and are fair, do not at once pursue the offenses of the powerful with their thunderbolts, how much fairer is it that a man set over men should exercise his power with a gentle mind, and consider which state of the world is more pleasing and more beautiful to the eyes,

a calm and clear day, or one when everything shakes with crash on crash and fires flash on this side and that! And yet the look of a quiet and orderly reign is no other than that of a calm and shining sky. A cruel reign is stormy and dark with shadows; among men who tremble and start in terror at a sudden sound, not even he who throws everything into turmoil is left unshaken. Private persons are more easily pardoned for avenging themselves stubbornly; for they can be hurt, and their pain comes from a wrong. They fear contempt besides, and not to have paid back those who hurt them looks like weakness, not clemency. But he for whom vengeance is easy wins, by passing it by, sure praise for gentleness. Those placed in a humble station are freer to use their fists, to go to law, to rush into a brawl, and to indulge their anger; between equals, blows are light. In a king, even shouting and intemperate words do not befit his majesty.

8 You think it hard that kings should be robbed of the freedom to speak as they please, which the humblest have. "That," you say, "is slavery, not command." What? Do you not find that the command is ours and the slavery yours? The condition of those who lie hidden in a crowd they never rise above is different: their virtues must struggle long before they are seen, and their vices have darkness to hide them. Your deeds and words are caught up by rumor, and so no one should care more about the reputation he has than those who, whatever reputation they have earned, are bound to have a great one. How many things are not allowed to you which, thanks to you, are allowed to us! I can walk alone in any part of the city without fear, though no companion follows me, though I keep none at home, though I have no sword at my side; you must live armed in your own peace. You cannot stray from your fortune; it besieges you, and wherever you come down, it follows you with great pomp. This is the slavery of supreme greatness, that it cannot become smaller; but this very necessity you share with the

gods. For heaven holds them too in bondage, and it is no more granted to them to come down than it is safe for you: you are fastened to your summit. Few notice our movements; we may go out, withdraw, and change our dress without the public taking note; you can no more hide than the sun can. There is much light about you, and all eyes are turned upon it. Do you think you are going out? You are rising. You cannot speak without the nations everywhere catching your voice; you cannot be angry without everything trembling, since you cannot strike anyone down without shaking whatever is around him. As thunderbolts fall to the danger of few but to the fear of all, so the punishments of great powers terrify more widely than they harm, and not without cause; for in one who can do anything, men consider not how much he has done but how much he is going to do. Add now that private men are made more open to receiving wrongs by their endurance of wrongs received, whereas for kings freedom from care is surer through gentleness, because frequent vengeance crushes the hatred of a few and provokes the hatred of all. The will to rage ought to give out before the cause does. Otherwise, just as trees that are cut back sprout again with many branches, and many kinds of crops are cut down so that they may come up thicker, so royal cruelty increases the number of its enemies by removing them; for the parents and children of those who have been put to death, and their relatives and friends, step into the place of each one.

9 How true this is I wish to remind you by an example from your own family. The deified Augustus was a mild emperor, if one begins to judge him from the start of his reign; but in the time when the commonwealth was shared, he wielded the sword. When he was the age you are now, just past his eighteenth year, he had already hidden daggers in the clothing of his friends, had already sought by treachery the life of the consul Mark Antony, had

already been a partner in the proscription.[3] But when he had passed his fortieth year and was staying in Gaul, information was brought to him that Lucius Cinna,[4] a man of dull wits, was laying a plot against him. He was told where, when, and how Cinna meant to attack him; one of the accomplices was the informer. Augustus resolved to take vengeance on him and ordered a council of his friends to be called. He spent a restless night, thinking that he must condemn a young man of noble birth, blameless but for this, the grandson of Pompey; he to whom Mark Antony had once dictated the edict of proscription over dinner could not now bring himself to kill one man. Groaning, he uttered from time to time words of every kind, contradicting one another: "What then? Shall I let my assassin walk about free of care while I am anxious? Shall he go unpunished, then, who has resolved, now that peace has been won on land and sea, not to kill but to sacrifice this head of mine, a head sought in vain in so many civil wars, unharmed in so many battles by sea and by land?" (For he had planned to attack him while he was sacrificing.) Then, after a silence, he raged at himself, in a much louder voice than he had at Cinna: "Why do you live, if so many have an interest in your death? What end will there be to punishments? To bloodshed? I am a head set out for young nobles to sharpen their swords on. Life is not worth so much, if so much must be destroyed so that I may not perish." At last his wife Livia broke in. "Will you take a woman's advice?" she said. "Do what doctors do: when the usual remedies fail, they try the opposite. So far you have gained nothing by severity. Salvidienus was followed by Lepidus, Lepidus by Murena, Murena by Caepio, Caepio by Egnatius,[5] not to mention others whose daring is a shame to speak of. Now try how clemency turns out for you: pardon Lucius Cinna. He has been caught; he can no longer harm you, but he can help your reputation." Glad to have found an advocate, he thanked his wife, then at once ordered word to be sent to the friends he had

summoned to his council that it was called off, and sent for Cinna alone. He sent everyone out of the room, had a second chair set for Cinna, and said: "The first thing I ask of you is not to interrupt me while I am speaking, not to cry out in the middle of what I say; you will be given time to speak freely. Cinna, when I found you in the camp of my enemies, not made my enemy but born one, I saved you; I let you keep your whole inheritance. Today you are so fortunate and so rich that the victors envy the vanquished. When you sought a priesthood, I gave it to you, passing over many whose fathers had served with me. And though I have deserved this of you, you have resolved to kill me." When at these words Cinna cried out that such madness was far from him, Augustus said: "You are not keeping your word, Cinna; we agreed that you would not interrupt. You are preparing, I tell you, to kill me." He added the place, the accomplices, the day, the plan of the ambush, and to whom the dagger had been entrusted. And when he saw him with his eyes fixed on the ground, silent now not because of their agreement but because of his conscience, he said: "With what purpose are you doing this? To become emperor yourself? By Hercules, it goes badly with the Roman people if nothing but I stands in the way of your ruling. You cannot look after your own house; just recently, in a private lawsuit, you were beaten by the influence of a freedman. So it is that nothing comes easier to you than pleading against the emperor! Tell me: if I alone stand in the way of your hopes, will Paulus put up with you, and Fabius Maximus, and the Cossi and the Servilii, and that great column of nobles who do not parade empty names but bring honor to their ancestral masks?"

Not to take up a large part of this volume by repeating his whole speech (for it is agreed that he spoke for more than two hours, drawing out this punishment, the only one he meant to be content with), he said: "Cinna, I give you your life a second time:

the first time as an enemy, now as a plotter and a parricide. From this day let friendship begin between us; let us compete to see whether I have given you your life in better faith or you owe it in better faith." Afterward he offered him the consulship of his own accord, complaining that Cinna did not dare to stand for it. He found him his most devoted and most loyal friend, and Cinna made him his sole heir. No one ever again plotted against Augustus.

10 Your great-great-grandfather pardoned the conquered; for if he had not pardoned them, whom would he have ruled? Sallustius, the Cocceii, the Dellii, and the whole company first admitted to his morning levee he recruited from the camp of his adversaries.[6] The Domitii, the Messallae, the Asinii, the Ciceros, all that was the flower of the state, he owed to his clemency. Lepidus himself: how long he let him take to die! For many years he put up with his keeping the insignia of a leading man, and he did not allow the office of chief pontiff to pass to himself until Lepidus was dead; for he preferred that it be called an honor rather than a spoil. This clemency brought him to safety and freedom from care; this made him welcome and popular, although he had laid his hand on the necks of the Roman people before they had been broken to the yoke; this still wins him a renown such as hardly serves emperors while they live. We believe that he is a god, and not as though we had been ordered to. We confess that Augustus was a good emperor and that the name of parent suited him well, for no other reason than this: that he did not pursue with any cruelty even insults to himself, which sting emperors more than wrongs do; that he smiled at abuse spoken against him; that he plainly suffered when he inflicted punishment; that he was so far from killing those he had condemned for adultery with his daughter that he sent them away and gave them passes so that they might travel more safely.[7] This is pardon: when you know there will be many

who will grow angry on your behalf and do you a favor with another's blood, not only to grant safety but to guarantee it.

11 This was Augustus as an old man, or when his years were already turning toward old age. In his youth he was hot, he blazed with anger, he did many things on which he looked back with reluctant eyes. No one will dare to compare the deified Augustus with your gentleness, even if he matches an old age more than ripe against your youthful years. Granted that he was moderate and clement: yes, after the sea at Actium was stained with Roman blood, yes, after fleets, his own and his enemy's, were wrecked off Sicily, yes, after the altars of Perusia and the proscriptions.[8] But I do not call weary cruelty clemency. This, Caesar, is true clemency, the clemency you display, which did not begin from remorse for savagery: to have no stain, never to have shed a citizen's blood. This, in the greatest power, is the truest self-control of mind, and a love of the human race that embraces it as itself; a love not corrupted by any desire, by any rashness of temper, or by the examples of earlier emperors, into testing by experiment how far it may go against its citizens, but one that blunts the edge of its own power. You have given us, Caesar, a state unstained by blood; and this boast you made with a great spirit, that in the whole world you have not shed a drop of human blood, is all the greater and more wonderful because no one was ever entrusted with the sword at an earlier age.

Clemency, then, makes rulers not only more honorable but safer; it is at once the ornament of empires and their surest safety. For why is it that kings have grown old and handed down their kingdoms to children and grandchildren, while the power of tyrants is accursed and short? What difference is there between a tyrant and a king (for the outward show of their fortune and their license is the same), except that tyrants rage for pleasure, and kings only for a reason and from necessity?

12 "What then? Do kings not kill too?" They do, but only when the public good persuades them that it must be done; tyrants delight in savagery. And a tyrant differs from a king in deeds, not in name. For Dionysius the Elder can rightly and deservedly be ranked above many kings,[9] and what prevents us from calling Lucius Sulla a tyrant, whose killing was ended only by a shortage of enemies? Though he stepped down from his dictatorship and returned to the toga, what tyrant ever drank human blood as greedily as he did, who ordered seven thousand Roman citizens to be butchered, and who, sitting nearby in the temple of Bellona and hearing the outcry of so many thousands groaning under the sword, said to the terrified senate: "Let us attend to business, conscript fathers; a handful of rebels are being put to death on my orders"?[10] In this he did not lie: to Sulla they seemed few. But of Sulla presently, when we ask how one should be angry with enemies, especially when citizens torn from the same body have passed over to the name of enemy. Meanwhile, as I was saying, clemency makes the difference between a king and a tyrant a great one, though each is no less fenced about with arms. But the one has arms that he uses to protect the peace; the other uses them to hold down great hatreds by great fear, and he cannot look free of care even on the very hands to which he has entrusted himself. He is driven from one contrary to another: since he is hated because he is feared, he wishes to be feared because he is hated, and he takes up that accursed line which has sent many headlong, "Let them hate, so long as they fear,"[11] not knowing what rage arises when hatreds have grown beyond measure.

For fear in moderation restrains men's minds; but fear that is constant and sharp and threatens the worst rouses even the prostrate to boldness and urges them to try everything. So wild beasts may be kept penned in by a cord hung with feathers; but let a horseman attack them from behind with darts, and they will try to

escape through the very things they had shied away from, and trample their fear underfoot. The fiercest courage is the one that utmost necessity hammers out. Fear must leave men some freedom from care, and hold out much more hope than danger; otherwise, when a man who keeps quiet has as much to fear as one who acts, he is glad to rush into danger and to spend his life as if it were another's.

13 A calm and tranquil king has auxiliaries he can trust, since he uses them for the common safety; and the soldier, proud because he sees that he is serving the public security, gladly endures every toil as the guardian of a father. But the harsh and bloodthirsty king is bound to be a burden to his own guards. No one can have servants of good and loyal will whom he uses as instruments of torture, like the rack and the irons made ready for killing, to whom he throws men as if to wild beasts. Such a king is more troubled and anxious than any defendant, since he fears gods and men as witnesses and avengers of his crimes, and he has been brought to the point where he is no longer free to change his ways. For this, among other things, is the very worst feature of cruelty: it must persist, and no way back to better things lies open; crimes must be protected by crimes. And what is more unfortunate than the man who now must be wicked? O how pitiable he is, to himself at least! For it would be a sin for others to pity him, a man who has used his power for murder and plunder, who has made everything suspect to himself, both abroad and at home, who fears arms yet takes refuge in arms, who trusts neither the loyalty of friends nor the devotion of his children; who, when he has looked around at what he has done and what he is about to do, and has laid bare his conscience, full of crimes and torments, often fears death and more often longs for it, more hateful to himself than to those who serve him. On the other hand, consider the king who cares for the whole, who protects some parts more and some less but cherishes

every part of the commonwealth as part of himself; who leans toward the milder course, and even when punishment is useful shows how unwillingly he puts his hand to a harsh remedy; in whose mind there is nothing hostile, nothing wild; who exercises his power calmly and for the good of all, eager to have his commands approved by his citizens; who thinks himself abundantly fortunate if he has shared his good fortune with the public; affable in speech, easy of approach and access, lovable in the countenance that most wins the hearts of peoples, inclined to grant fair requests and not harsh even toward unfair ones: such a king is loved, defended, and revered by the whole state. Men say the same things about him in private as in public. They are eager to raise children, and the childlessness that public ills imposed comes to an end; no one doubts that he will have deserved well of his children by showing them such an age. This emperor, safe through his own benefits, has no need of guards; he keeps arms for ornament.

14 What, then, is his duty? The duty of good parents, who are accustomed to rebuke their children sometimes gently, sometimes with threats, and at times even to admonish them with blows. Does any sane man disinherit his son for the first offense? Unless great and many wrongs have overcome his patience, unless what he fears is greater than what he condemns, he does not set his pen to the decisive document. First he tries many means to call back a character that wavers and has already slipped into a worse state; once it is past hope, he tries the last resort. No one comes to exacting punishment until he has used up the remedies. What a parent must do, an emperor must do too, whom we have called Father of his Country, not led on by empty flattery. Other surnames were given as honors: we have called men the Great, the Fortunate, and the August, and heaped on their ambitious majesty every title we could, granting them this much; but we called him Father of his Country so that he might know that the power given

him was a father's power, which is the most restrained of all, caring for its children and putting its own interests after theirs. Let a father be slow to cut off his own limbs; even when he has cut them off, let him wish to put them back; and in the cutting let him groan, after long and much hesitation. For he who condemns quickly is close to condemning gladly, and he who punishes too much is close to punishing unjustly.

15 Within our memory, a Roman knight named Tricho, because he had flogged his son to death, was stabbed with writing styluses by the people in the Forum; the authority of Augustus Caesar barely rescued him from the hostile hands of fathers and sons alike. Tarius caught his son in a plot to kill him and, after examining the case, condemned him; and everyone admired him because, content with exile, and a comfortable exile at Marseilles, he kept the parricide there and paid him the same yearly allowance he used to give him while he was guiltless. This generosity brought it about that, in a city where the worse cause never lacks an advocate, no one doubted that the accused had been justly condemned, since he had been condemned by a father who could not hate him.

From this very example I shall give you a good emperor to compare with the good father. When Tarius was about to try his son, he invited Caesar Augustus to his council. Augustus came into a private household, sat beside him, and took part in another man's council. He did not say, "No, let him come to my house"; had that happened, the trial would have been the emperor's, not the father's. When the case had been heard and everything examined, both what the young man had said in his own defense and the charges against him, he asked each man to write down his verdict, so that it might not become everyone's verdict because it had been the emperor's. Then, before the tablets were opened, he swore that he would not accept the inheritance of Tarius, who was a

wealthy man. Someone will say: "It was small-minded of him to fear that he might seem to be clearing the way for his own hopes by the son's condemnation." I think the opposite. Any one of us ought to have enough confidence in a good conscience against spiteful opinions; but emperors must yield much even to reputation. He swore that he would not accept the inheritance. Tarius did, it is true, lose a second heir on the same day; but the emperor bought the freedom of his own vote. And after he had proved that his severity was disinterested, which an emperor must always take care to do, he said that the son should be banished to wherever the father thought fit. He did not decree the sack, or the serpents, or prison,[12] mindful not of whom he was passing judgment on but of whose council he was sitting in. He said that a father ought to be content with the mildest kind of punishment for a young son who had been led into that crime and had acted in it timidly, which was the next thing to innocence; that the son ought to be removed from the city and from his father's sight.

16 O worthy man, for fathers to call into their councils! O worthy man, for them to write in as co-heir with innocent children! This is the clemency that befits an emperor: wherever he comes, let him make everything gentler.

Let no one be so cheap in a king's eyes that the king does not feel his loss; whatever he is, he is a part of the empire. Let us take an example for great powers from lesser ones. There is more than one kind of command: an emperor commands his citizens, a father his children, a teacher his pupils, a tribune or a centurion his soldiers. Will he not seem the worst of fathers who keeps his children in check with constant beatings even for the slightest causes? And which teacher is more worthy of the liberal studies: the one who flays his pupils if their memory fails them or if their eye, not nimble enough in reading, stumbles, or the one who prefers to correct and teach by admonition and by appeal to their sense of shame?

Give me a savage tribune or centurion: he will make deserters, and deserters who are pardoned for it all the same. Is it at all fair for a human being to be ruled more harshly and more severely than dumb animals are ruled? Yet a trainer skilled in breaking horses does not terrify a horse with frequent blows; for it will grow timid and stubborn unless you soothe it with a coaxing touch. The hunter does the same, both the one who teaches puppies to follow a trail and the one who uses dogs already trained to rouse or pursue game: he does not threaten them often (for that will crush their spirit, and whatever good breeding they have will be worn away by a cringing fear), nor does he give them license to wander and roam about at will. You may add to these the beasts of burden that move rather slowly, which, though born to abuse and misery, are driven by too much savagery to throw off the yoke.

17 No animal is more difficult, none needs to be handled with greater skill, than man, and none should be spared more. For what is more foolish than to be ashamed to vent one's anger on beasts of burden and dogs, and yet to have man live under man on the worst of terms? We treat diseases and are not angry with them; yet this too is a disease, a disease of the mind; it calls for gentle medicine and for a healer who is not in the least hostile to the patient. It is a bad doctor who despairs so as to spare himself the cure. In the case of those whose minds are afflicted, the one to whom the safety of all has been entrusted must act the same way: he must not quickly throw away hope or pronounce the signs fatal. Let him wrestle with the vices and resist them; let him reproach some with their disease, and deceive others with a gentle cure, to heal them more quickly and better with remedies they do not notice. Let the emperor take care not only for their recovery but also for an honorable scar. A king gets no glory from savage punishment (for who doubts that he is able to inflict it?), but, on the contrary, the greatest glory if he holds his power in check, if he

has rescued many from the anger of others and sacrificed none to his own.

18 To rule slaves with moderation is praiseworthy. Even with a slave one must consider not how much he can be made to suffer without punishment to you, but how much the nature of right and fairness allows you, which bids us spare even captives and those bought for a price. How much more justly does it bid us not to abuse free men, freeborn men, respectable men, as if they were chattels, but to treat them as those whom you surpass in rank, and whose guardianship, not whose slavery, has been handed to you! Slaves may take refuge at a statue; though everything is permitted against a slave, there is something that the common law of living beings forbids to be permitted against a human being. Who did not hate Vedius Pollio[13] worse even than his own slaves did, because he fattened his lampreys on human blood and ordered those who had offended him in anything to be thrown into his fishpond, which was nothing but a pond of serpents? O man worthy of a thousand deaths, whether he threw his slaves to be devoured by lampreys he meant to eat, or kept the lampreys only so as to feed them on such food!

Just as cruel masters are pointed out all over the city and are hated and detested, so the wrong done by kings spreads more widely, and their infamy and the hatred of them are handed down through the ages. And how much better it would have been never to be born than to be counted among those born to be a public evil!

19 No one will be able to think of anything more becoming to a ruler than clemency, however he has come to be set over others and by whatever right. We shall admit, of course, that it is the more beautiful and splendid the greater the power in which it is displayed, a power that ought not to be harmful if it is ordered by the law of nature. For Nature devised the king, as we may learn

from other animals, and from bees in particular. Their king has the largest cell, in the middle and safest spot; besides, he is free from work, as overseer of the work of others; and when the king is lost the whole swarm breaks up. Nor do they ever tolerate more than one, and they seek out the better by fighting. Further, the king is conspicuous in appearance, unlike the rest both in size and in sheen. But in this above all he is distinguished: bees are most irascible and, for the size of their bodies, most combative, and they leave their stings in the wound; the king himself has no sting. Nature did not wish him to be savage or to seek a vengeance that would cost him dear, and she took away his weapon and left his anger unarmed.

This is a mighty model for great kings; for it is Nature's custom to exercise herself on small things and to bring forth lessons for very great matters in the least. Let us be ashamed not to learn our ways from tiny creatures, since the mind of man ought to be the more restrained the more violently it can harm. Would that man were under the same law, that anger broke along with its weapon, that one could not harm more than once nor work out one's hatreds through the strength of others! For frenzy would soon tire if it had to satisfy itself by its own effort, and if it poured out its force at the risk of death. But even as things are, that course is not safe. A man who takes it must fear as much as he wished to be feared, watch everyone's hands, believe himself attacked even at moments when no one is reaching for him, and have no moment free from fear. Can anyone bear to live such a life when he could exercise the power that is his by right as a saving power, harmless to others and therefore free of care himself, while all rejoice? For a man is mistaken if he thinks that a king is safe where nothing is safe from the king; freedom from care must be bargained for by granting freedom from care in return. There is no need to build citadels raised on high, or to fortify hills steep to climb, or to cut

away the sides of mountains, or to fence oneself in with many walls and towers: clemency will keep a king safe in the open. The one impregnable fortification is the love of the citizens.

What is more beautiful than to live with all men wishing you to live, and offering their vows without a guard standing over them? To have men's fear aroused, not their hope, if your health falters a little? To know that no one has anything so precious that he would not wish to give it in exchange for the safety of his protector? What a man he is, whose lot is such that he owes it to himself, too, to stay alive! In this he has proved by constant evidence of his goodness that the commonwealth is not his, but he is the commonwealth's. Who would dare to devise any danger for such a man? Who would not wish, if he could, to turn even Fortune aside from him, under whom justice, peace, chastity, freedom from care, and dignity flourish, under whom a wealthy state abounds in plenty of all good things? It looks on its ruler with no other feeling than that with which we would look on the immortal gods, venerating and worshiping them, if they granted us the power to see them. And what then? Does he not hold the place next to them who conducts himself in keeping with the nature of the gods, beneficent and generous and powerful for good? This is what it is fitting to aim at, this to imitate: to be held the greatest only in such a way that you are held the best at the same time.

20 An emperor usually punishes for one of two reasons: to avenge either himself or another. I shall first discuss the part that concerns himself; for it is harder to keep moderation when vengeance is owed to one's own pain than when it is owed to example. It is needless here to warn him not to believe readily, to shake out the truth, to favor innocence, and to know, and let it be seen that he knows, that the case concerns the man on trial no less than the judge; for this belongs to justice, not to clemency. What we now urge on him is this: when he has plainly been

wronged, let him keep his mind under control, and remit the punishment if he can safely do so, if not, moderate it, and be far more easily entreated in wrongs done to himself than in wrongs done to others. For just as it is not the man who is generous with another's property who shows greatness of mind, but the man who takes from himself what he gives to another, so I shall call clement not the man who is easygoing about another's pain, but the man who, though goaded by his own stings, does not leap out; who understands that it is the mark of a great mind to endure wrongs in the height of power, and that nothing is more glorious than an emperor wronged with impunity.

21 Vengeance usually accomplishes one of two things: either it brings comfort to the one who has received the wrong, or it brings freedom from care for the future. An emperor's fortune is too great to need comfort, and his strength too evident to seek a reputation for strength from another's harm. I mean when he has been attacked and injured by inferiors; for if he sees beneath him those whom he once held as equals, he is avenged enough. A king can be killed by a slave, by a serpent, by an arrow; but no one has ever saved anyone without being greater than the one he saved. The man who has the power of giving and taking away life ought, then, to use this great gift of the gods with a great spirit. Especially in the case of those whom he knows to have once held a height equal to his own, when he has gained this power over them he has fulfilled his vengeance and accomplished all that true punishment requires. For he has lost his life who owes it; and whoever has been cast down from on high at his enemy's feet and has waited for another's sentence on his life and his kingdom lives on to the glory of his savior, and adds more to his name by remaining unharmed than if he had been removed from sight. For he is a lasting spectacle of another's virtue; in a triumph he would quickly have passed by. If, besides, his kingdom too could safely be left in

his hands, and he be restored to the place from which he had fallen, the praise of the man who was content to take nothing from a conquered king but glory rises by an immense increase. This is to triumph even over one's own victory and to bear witness that one found among the conquered nothing worthy of the victor. With citizens, and with the unknown and the humble, one must deal the more moderately the less it means to have struck them down. Some you may gladly spare; on some you may disdain to avenge yourself, and you must draw your hand back from them as from small creatures that soil the hand that crushes them. But in the case of those who will be spared or punished before the eyes of the whole city, the opportunity for a clemency that will become known must be seized.

22 Let us pass to wrongs done to others. In avenging these the law has pursued three aims, which the emperor too ought to pursue: either to reform the man it punishes, or to make others better by his punishment, or to let the rest live more free of care by removing the wicked. You will reform the offenders themselves more easily with a lighter punishment; for a man lives more carefully when he has something left intact. No one spares a standing that is already lost; it is a kind of impunity to have no room left for punishment. But the morals of a state are better corrected by sparing use of punishment. For a multitude of wrongdoers creates a habit of wrongdoing, and a brand is less heavy when a crowd of condemnations lightens it; and severity, by being constant, loses its authority, which is the chief source of its healing power. The emperor establishes good morals in the state and washes away vices if he is patient with them, not as though he approved of them, but as one who comes to chastise unwillingly and in great torment. The very clemency of a ruler makes men ashamed to do wrong; a punishment seems much heavier when it is fixed by a gentle man.

23 Besides, you will see that the crimes most often committed are those most often punished. Your father[14] sewed more men into the sack within five years than we are told were sewn into it in all the ages before. Children were much less bold to commit the ultimate crime as long as the crime had no law. For the greatest of men, who best understood the nature of things, in their supreme wisdom preferred to pass it over as a crime beyond belief and beyond the reach of daring, rather than to show, by punishing it, that it could be done. And so parricides began with the law, and the punishment showed them the deed. Filial devotion was at its lowest once we saw more sacks than crosses. In a state where men are rarely punished, a consensus for innocence forms, and it is cherished as a public good. Let a state think itself innocent, and it will be; it will be angrier with those who fall away from the common decency if it sees that they are few. It is dangerous, believe me, to show a state how far the wicked outnumber the rest.

24 A proposal was once made in the senate that slaves should be distinguished from free men by their dress; then it became clear how great a danger would threaten if our slaves began to count us. Know that the same is to be feared if no one is pardoned: it will soon be clear how far the worse part of the state outweighs the rest. Many executions are no less disgraceful to an emperor than many funerals to a doctor; the one who rules more gently is better obeyed. The human mind is stubborn by nature, straining against opposition and toward what is hard, and it follows more readily than it is led. And just as well-bred and noble horses are better guided with an easy rein, so innocence follows clemency of its own will and by its own impulse, and the state thinks clemency worth preserving for itself. More, therefore, is achieved by this way.

25 Cruelty is an evil least of all human and unworthy of so gentle a mind. It is the rage of a wild beast to delight in blood and

wounds, to cast off the human being and change into a creature of the woods. What difference does it make, I ask you, Alexander, whether you throw Lysimachus[15] to a lion or tear him with your own teeth? That lion's mouth is yours, that fierceness is yours. Oh, how you would wish that you yourself had those claws, that you yourself had those jaws, wide enough to devour men! We do not demand of you that this hand, the surest death of your friends, should bring safety to anyone, that this fierce mind, the insatiable evil of nations, should be sated short of blood and slaughter; it is already called clemency when, to kill a friend, an executioner is chosen from among men. This is why savagery is above all to be abhorred: it passes first the usual bounds, then the human ones; it searches out new punishments, calls ingenuity to its aid to devise instruments by which pain may be varied and prolonged; it takes delight in the ills of men. Then that dreadful disease of the mind reaches the last degree of madness, when cruelty has turned into pleasure and killing a man has become a joy. Swift and close behind such a man follow revulsion, hatreds, poisons, swords. He is assailed by as many dangers as the many to whom he himself is a danger, and he is beset sometimes by private plots, at other times by a public uprising. For a slight and private harm does not stir whole cities; what has begun to rage far and wide and attacks everyone is pierced from every side. Little snakes escape notice and are not hunted down by the public; but when one passes the usual size and grows into a monster, when it poisons springs with its spittle, scorches whatever it breathes on, and crushes everything in its path, it is attacked with catapults. Petty evils can trick us and get away; great ones are met head-on. So one sick man does not disturb even his own household; but when frequent deaths have made it clear that there is a plague, the city cries out and flees, and men shake their fists at the gods themselves. A flame appears under some single roof: the household and the

neighbors pour on water. But a vast fire that has already devoured many houses is smothered by pulling down part of the city.

26 The cruelty even of private men has been avenged by the hands of slaves, at the certain risk of the cross. Tyrants have been set upon for destruction by nations and peoples, both those who suffered the evil and those whom it threatened. Sometimes their own guards have risen up against them and practiced on them the treachery, the impiety, the fierceness, and whatever else they had learned from them. For what can anyone hope for from a man he has taught to be wicked? Wickedness does not stay a servant for long, nor does it sin only as much as it is ordered to. But suppose cruelty is safe: what is its reign like? Nothing other than the look of captured cities and the terrible faces of public fear. Everything is gloomy, fearful, confused; pleasures themselves are feared. Men do not go free of care to banquets, where even when drunk they must anxiously guard their tongues, nor to the shows, where material for charges and danger is hunted out. Though the games are staged at great expense, with royal wealth and the choicest names among the performers, who can enjoy games in prison?

What an evil this is, good gods, to kill, to rage, to delight in the clank of chains and to cut off the heads of citizens, to shed much blood wherever one goes, to terrify and put to flight by one's mere appearance! What other life would there be if lions and bears ruled, if power over us were given to serpents and to every most noxious animal? Those creatures, though without reason and condemned by us for the crime of brutality, spare their own kind, and likeness is a safeguard even among wild beasts. But the rage of these men does not hold back even from their own kin; it treats strangers and its own alike, and the more it exercises itself, the more it is roused. Then from the murder of individuals it creeps on to the destruction of nations, and it thinks it a mark of power to throw fire on roofs and to drive the plow over ancient cities. To

order the death of one man or two it considers hardly worthy of an emperor; unless a herd of wretches stands under the blow at one and the same time, it thinks its cruelty has been reduced to the ranks.

That is good fortune: to give safety to many, to call them back to life from death itself, and to earn the civic crown by clemency. No ornament is more worthy of an emperor's high station, or more beautiful, than that crown given for saving citizens:[16] not enemy arms stripped from the conquered, not chariots stained with the blood of barbarians, not spoils won in war. This is godlike power, to save men in crowds and on behalf of the public; to kill many without distinction is the power of fire and collapse.

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1. Tiberius, emperor AD 14–37, whose first years of rule were remembered as moderate.

2. Virgil, *Georgics* 4.212–213, on bees and their king.

3. Mark Antony was consul in 44 BC; the proscriptions of 43 BC were issued by Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus.

4. The conspirator was Gnaeus Cornelius Cinna Magnus, grandson of Pompey through his mother and consul in AD 5; Seneca calls him Lucius.

5. Salvidienus Rufus, Marcus Lepidus (son of the triumvir), Varro Murena, Fannius Caepio, and Egnatius Rufus were all put to death for plots against Augustus.

6. Augustus was Nero's great-great-grandfather through Nero's mother, Agrippina. Sallustius Crispus, Cocceius Nerva, and Quintus Dellius had come over from the side of his enemies; the morning levee was the formal call clients and friends paid a great man at dawn, admitted in ranks.

7. Augustus's daughter Julia was banished in 2 BC; most of the men accused with her were exiled.

8. The naval victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (31 BC); the sea war against Sextus Pompey off Sicily (38–36 BC), in which Octavian lost fleets to

storms and battle; and the siege of Perusia (41–40 BC), after which Octavian was said to have sacrificed captives at an altar to the deified Julius.

9. Dionysius the Elder, tyrant of Syracuse 405–367 BC.

10. Lucius Cornelius Sulla, dictator 82–79 BC. After his victory at the Colline Gate in 82 BC he had several thousand prisoners killed while he addressed the senate in the temple of Bellona.

11. A line from the *Atreus* of the tragic poet Accius.

12. The penalty for parricide: the condemned man was sewn into a leather sack with a dog, a cock, a monkey, and a serpent and thrown into the water.

13. Publius Vedius Pollio, a wealthy knight and friend of Augustus (d. 15 BC).

14. The emperor Claudius, Nero's adoptive father.

15. Lysimachus, one of Alexander's officers and later king of Thrace; the story that Alexander had him thrown to a lion was current in antiquity.

16. The civic crown, a wreath of oak leaves, was awarded for saving the life of a fellow citizen in battle.

On Clemency, Book Two

1 What more than anything else drove me to write on clemency, Nero Caesar, was a single remark of yours, which I remember hearing, not without admiration, when it was spoken, and then repeating to others: a generous remark, the remark of a great mind and of great mildness, which was not studied nor meant for other ears, but burst out suddenly and brought into the open the quarrel between your goodness and your fortune. Your prefect Burrus,[1] an excellent man, born to serve you as emperor, was about to execute two bandits, and he kept pressing you to write down whom you wished to be punished and on what grounds; this had often been put off, and he was insisting that it be done at last. When he, reluctant, brought out the paper and was handing it to you, reluctant too, you cried out: "I wish I did not know how to write!" O remark worthy to be heard by all the nations that live within the Roman empire, and by those that lie beside it in doubtful freedom, and by those that rise against it with their strength or their spirit! O remark that ought to be sent out to an assembly of all mortals, a remark in whose words emperors and kings should take their oath! O remark worthy of a human race innocent as a whole, a remark for whose sake that ancient age ought to be restored! Now, surely, it would be fitting for all to agree on what is fair and good; for greed for what belongs to others, the source of every evil of the mind, to be driven out; for piety and integrity to rise again, together with good faith and modesty; and for the vices,

having abused their long reign, to give way at last to an age fortunate and pure.

2 That this will come to pass in great measure, Caesar, I am glad to hope and to trust. That gentleness of your mind will be handed on and will spread little by little through the whole body of the empire, and everything will be shaped in your likeness. Good health flows from the head: it is from there that all the parts are lively and erect, or droop in languor, according as their mind is alive or withers. There will be citizens, there will be allies worthy of this goodness, and right morals will return to the whole world; everywhere your hands will be spared their work. Allow me to linger here a while longer, not to please your ears (for that is not my way; I would rather give offense with the truth than give pleasure by flattery). What, then, is my reason? Besides wishing you to be as familiar as possible with your own good deeds and words, so that what is now nature and impulse may become judgment, I reflect that many great but detestable sayings have entered human life and are passed about on everyone's lips, like that one, "Let them hate, so long as they fear,"[2] which a Greek line resembles, in which a man bids the earth be mingled with fire once he is dead,[3] and others of this stamp. And somehow talents working on monstrous and hateful material have found a happier expression for violent and excited feelings; I have never yet heard a spirited saying come from a good and gentle man. What, then, is the upshot? That you must sometimes write, though rarely, unwillingly, and with great hesitation, the thing that made you hate the knowledge of letters, but write it as you do now: with great hesitation, after many postponements.

3 And so that the fair-sounding name of clemency may not at some point deceive us and lead us off into its opposite, let us see what clemency is, what it is like, and what limits it has.

Clemency is self-control of the mind when it has the power to take vengeance, or the mildness of a superior toward an inferior in fixing punishments. It is safer to put forward several definitions, so that a single one may not fail to take in the whole matter and, so to speak, lose its case on the wording; so it can also be called an inclination of the mind toward mildness in exacting punishment. The following definition will meet with objections, though it comes very close to the truth, if we say that clemency is a moderation that remits something from a deserved and due punishment: the protest will be that no virtue does less than is due to anyone. Yet everyone understands that clemency is this: the quality that turns aside short of what could deservedly be imposed.

4 The unskilled think that its opposite is severity; but no virtue is opposed to a virtue. What, then, is set against clemency? Cruelty, which is nothing else than harshness of mind in exacting punishments. "But some people do not exact punishments and yet are cruel, like those who kill strangers and passersby, not for gain but for the sake of killing, and, not content with killing, torture them, like the notorious Busiris and Procrustes,[4] and pirates who flog their captives and put them on the fire alive." This is cruelty, certainly; but since it neither pursues vengeance (for it has not been wronged) nor is angry at any offense (for no crime has gone before), it falls outside our definition; for the definition covered lack of self-control of the mind in exacting punishments. We can say that this is not cruelty but fierceness, to which savagery is a pleasure; we can call it madness, for there are various kinds of madness, and none more unmistakable than the kind that goes as far as the slaughter and mangling of men. Those, then, I shall call cruel who have a reason for punishing but no measure, as in the case of Phalaris,[5] who, they say, raged not indeed against innocent men, but beyond all human and reasonable measure. We can escape quibbling by defining cruelty in this way: an inclination of

the mind toward harsher measures. Clemency drives this far off and bids it keep its distance; with severity clemency is in harmony.

It is to the point to ask here what pity (*misericordia*) is; for many praise it as a virtue and call the man who feels pity a good man. But it too is a vice of the mind. Both of these lie close to severity and to clemency, and we must avoid both; for under the appearance of severity we fall into cruelty, under the appearance of clemency into pity. In the second the danger is lighter, but the error is equal for all who depart from the truth.

5 So, just as religion honors the gods and superstition wrongs them, all good men will show clemency and gentleness but will avoid pity; for it is the vice of a small mind that gives way at the impression of others' ills. That is why it is most familiar to the worst sort of people: it is old women and silly girls who are moved by the tears of the guiltiest, and who, if they could, would break open the prison. Pity looks not at the cause but at the fortune; clemency takes the side of reason.

I know that the Stoic school has a bad name among the unskilled as too hard, and the least likely to give good counsel to emperors and kings; it is held against the school that it denies that the wise man feels pity, denies that he pardons. These claims, stated by themselves, are hateful; for they seem to leave no hope to human errors, and to bring every offense to punishment. If that is so, what kind of knowledge is this, which bids us unlearn humanity and closes the surest harbor against fortune, the help we give one another? But no school is kinder or milder, none more loving of men or more attentive to the common good; its very purpose is to be of use and of help, and to look out not only for itself but for all together and for each one. Pity is a sickness of the mind brought on by the impression of others' miseries, or a sorrow caught from the ills of others when it believes that they befall people who do not deserve them. But sickness does not befall the wise

man; his intellect is serene, and nothing can happen that would cloud it over. And nothing so befits a man as a great mind; but a mind cannot be great and sorrowful at once. Grief bruises the intellect, casts it down, shrinks it. This will not happen to the wise man even in his own calamities: he will beat back all the wrath of fortune and break it before it reaches him; he will always keep the same countenance, calm and unshaken, which he could not do if he let sorrow in.

6 Add that the wise man both foresees and has a plan ready at hand; but nothing clear and pure ever comes from what is muddy. Sorrow is unfit for discerning things, for devising what is useful, avoiding what is dangerous, weighing what is fair; therefore the wise man does not feel pity, because pity cannot occur without misery of mind. Everything else that I would wish those who feel pity to do, he will do gladly and with a lofty mind. He will come to the aid of others' tears, but will not join in them; he will give his hand to the shipwrecked, hospitality to the exile, a coin to the needy, not the insulting coin that most of those who wish to be thought full of pity fling at those they help, disdaining them and afraid of their touch, but he will give as one human being to another, out of what is common to all. He will give a son back to his mother's tears, order chains to be loosed, release a man from the gladiators' school, and bury even the corpse of a criminal; but he will do these things with a calm intellect and an unchanged face. So the wise man will not feel pity, but he will help, he will be of use, born as he is for the common aid and the public good, of which he will give a share to each. He will extend his goodness in due proportion even to the unfortunate who deserve censure and need correction; but to the afflicted and to those in trouble through bad luck he will come to the rescue far more gladly. Whenever he can, he will step in between Fortune and her victims; for where will he better use his wealth or his strength than in set-

ting up again what chance has knocked down? He will not drop his eyes or lose heart at the sight of someone's withered leg, or ragged leanness, or old age leaning on a staff; but he will help all who are worthy and, in the manner of the gods, look graciously on the unfortunate.

Pity is next door to misery (*miseria*); for it has something of misery in it and draws something from it. You may be sure that eyes are weak if they fill with tears themselves at the sight of another's inflamed eyes, just as surely, by Hercules, as it is a disease, not merriment, always to laugh when others laugh and to open one's own mouth wide whenever anyone yawns. Pity is a vice of minds too much afraid of misery; to demand it of the wise man is very nearly to demand that he wail and groan at strangers' funerals.

7 "But why will he not pardon?" Come, let us now settle this too, what pardon is, and we shall know that the wise man ought not to grant it. Pardon is the remission of a deserved punishment. Why the wise man ought not to grant it is explained at greater length by those who have made this their subject; I, to speak briefly, as though pleading another's case, say this: a man is pardoned who ought to have been punished; but the wise man does nothing that he ought not to do and leaves out nothing that he ought to do; therefore he does not remit a punishment that he ought to exact. But what you wish to obtain from pardon he will grant you by a more honorable way. For the wise man will spare, will look out for the man, will correct him; he will do the same as if he pardoned, and yet he will not pardon, since the man who pardons admits that he has left undone something that ought to have been done. One man he will merely admonish with words and not punish at all, looking to his age, which can still be reformed; another, who is plainly laboring under the odium of his crime, he will order to go unharmed, because he was deceived, because he slipped through

wine; enemies he will let go safe, sometimes even with praise, if they were called to war for honorable reasons, for good faith, for a treaty, for freedom. All these are the works not of pardon but of clemency. Clemency has free discretion. It judges not by the letter of a legal formula but by what is fair and good; it may acquit, and it may set the damages at whatever figure it wishes. It does none of these things as though it were doing less than is just, but as though what it has decided were the most just. To pardon, on the other hand, is not to punish a man whom you judge deserving of punishment; pardon is the remission of a punishment that is due. The first thing clemency achieves is this: it declares that those it lets go ought to have suffered nothing else. It is fuller than pardon, and more honorable. The dispute, in my opinion, is over the word; about the thing we agree. The wise man will remit much; he will save many whose character is unsound but curable. He will imitate good farmers, who tend not only straight and tall trees: to those too that some cause has bent crooked they fasten props to straighten them; some they trim around so that the branches may not weigh down their height; some that are weak through a fault of the ground they nourish; for some that suffer under another's shade they open up the sky. He will see which character is to be treated by which method, and how crooked things may be bent straight. ⟨...⟩[6]

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1. Sextus Afranius Burrus, praetorian prefect from AD 51 to 62 and, with Seneca, Nero's chief adviser.

2. A line from the *Atreus* of the tragic poet Accius.

3. A line from an unknown Greek tragedy, much quoted in antiquity: "When I am dead, let earth be mingled with fire."

4. Busiris, a mythical king of Egypt who sacrificed strangers; Procrustes, a robber of Attica who made his victims fit his bed by stretching them or cutting

them down.

5. Phalaris, tyrant of Acragas in Sicily in the sixth century BC, said to have roasted men alive in a bronze bull.

6. The rest is lost.

Colophon

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