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# **Of Consolation: To Helvia, His Mother**

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Translated by Aubrey Stewart

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# Introduction

Of Consolation: To Helvia, His Mother was written while Seneca was exiled on the island of Corsica. Addressed to his mother, Helvia, it attempts an unusual reversal of the consolatory relationship: the person who appears to be suffering offers comfort to the family member grieving for him. Seneca's purpose is to persuade Helvia that exile has not made him miserable and that her sorrow can therefore be brought within rational limits.

The work was probably composed around 42 or 43 CE, during the early part of an exile that lasted approximately eight years. Seneca had been removed from Rome under the emperor Claudius and separated from family, influence and public life. These circumstances give the argument an immediate personal pressure. The philosophical claim that external misfortune cannot destroy happiness is tested against the author's own loss of place, status and intimacy.

Seneca begins carefully. Consolation offered too soon can inflame grief rather than heal it, so he has waited until Helvia's first shock has weakened. He also recognises that the situation lacks an easy precedent: she mourns not someone dead but a living son who is himself writing to prevent her sorrow. His authority must come from demonstrating that he has first mastered the condition she fears for him.

The opening sections recall the many losses Helvia has already endured. This severe method is intended to reveal her tested strength. Seneca's language sometimes relies upon Roman assumptions about masculine and feminine behaviour, but his larger argument concerns acquired resilience: a person who has survived repeated blows possesses evidence of an ability that present grief may temporarily conceal.

Seneca then distinguishes the fact of exile from the judgements attached to it. At its simplest, exile is a change of place. The beliefs that it necessarily entails misery arise from imagined necessities, social disgrace and dependence upon luxury. Human history, travel and migration show that people continually leave their native homes for ambition, study, employment, trade or preference. Place alone cannot secure or remove a well-governed mind.

The argument against poverty follows the same pattern. Nature requires little, while custom multiplies wants and then treats them as needs. Food, shelter and clothing support life; elaborate consumption supports comparison and display. If happiness depends upon possessions that fortune can remove, it remains permanently vulnerable. Simplicity gives the mind fewer points at which circumstance can seize it.

Seneca does not claim to have reached perfect wisdom. He presents himself as a student sheltered by the arguments and examples of wiser people. This admission is important. Consolation is not offered from an impossible height of invulnerability. Philosophy supplies a discipline through which someone still imperfect can challenge appearances, prepare for change and prevent external conditions from defining the whole self.

Disgrace and contempt are also treated as matters of judgement. The opinion of a crowd cannot make character good or bad. A person who knows the instability of public approval need not experience lost rank as moral collapse. Seneca's position is complicated by his evident concern for eventual return, yet the philosophical test remains whether honour is located in social standing or in the use of reason.

The middle of the work turns directly to Helvia. Seneca praises her traditional restraint, courage and lack of interest in luxury, then encourages her to rely upon the capacities already visible in her life. Study offers a particularly fitting remedy. Unlike entertainment that merely interrupts sorrow, liberal learning can examine its causes, widen the mind and provide lasting occupation.

This recommendation also reveals the limits of Roman education for women. Seneca regrets that Helvia's father did not permit a fuller intellectual education because of conservative attitudes. He nevertheless treats her existing learning as a genuine resource and urges her to return to it. Philosophy is presented as a means of independent inner activity rather than a decorative accomplishment.

Family relationships provide another source of consolation. Helvia still has children, grandchildren and a sister whose courage has already been proved in danger and bereavement. Seneca does not suggest that one relationship simply replaces another. He directs attention towards living bonds and responsibilities that grief risks obscuring.

The portrait of Helvia's sister is one of the work's most memorable passages. Seneca recounts her fidelity to her husband, her bravery during shipwreck and her refusal to exploit his provincial office. The example turns consolation into moral recognition: Helvia belongs to a family in which women have already displayed endurance, integrity and public restraint.

The final section explains how Helvia should imagine Seneca. He describes himself as cheerful, released from administrative pressures and free to pursue literary, geographical and natural inquiry. His mind travels beyond Corsica through study and contemplation. Whether this portrait is wholly descriptive or partly therapeutic, it gives Helvia an image of her son as active rather than defeated.

Of Consolation: To Helvia combines personal affection, Stoic argument and self-presentation. Some of its claims may sound severe, particularly where grief is

confronted through shame or endurance. Yet its sustaining insight is that love need not express itself through endless suffering. By correcting false pictures of exile, returning to study and remaining present to family, Helvia can honour her bond with Seneca without turning his absence into the destruction of her own life.

# I.

My best of mothers, I have often felt eager to console you, and have as often checked that impulse. Many things urged me to make the attempt: in the first place, I thought that if, though I might not be able to restrain your tears, yet that if I could even wipe them away, I should set myself free from all my own sorrows: then I was quite sure that I should rouse you from your grief with more authority if I had first shaken it off myself. I feared, too, lest Fortune, though overcome by me, might nevertheless overcome some one of my family.

Then I endeavoured to crawl and bind up your wounds in the best way I could, holding my hand over my own wound; but then again other considerations occurred to me which held me back: I knew that I must not oppose your grief during its first transports, lest my very attempts at consolation might irritate it, and add fuel to it: for in diseases, also, there is nothing more hurtful than medicine applied too soon. I waited, therefore, until it exhausted itself by its own violence, and being weakened by time, so that it was able to bear remedies, would allow itself to be handled and touched. Beside this, while turning over all the works which the greatest geniuses have composed, for the purpose of soothing and pacifying grief, I could not find any instance of one who had offered consolation to his relatives, while he himself was being sorrowed over by them.

Thus, the subject being a new one, I hesitated and feared that instead of consoling, I might embitter your grief. Then there was the thought that a man who had only just raised his head after burying his child, and who wished to console his friends, would require to use new phrases not taken from our common every-day words of comfort: but every sorrow of more than usual magnitude must needs prevent one's choosing one's words, seeing that it often prevents one's using one's very voice. However this may be, I will make the attempt, not trusting in my own genius, but because my consolation will be most powerful since it is I who offer it. You never would deny me anything, and I hope, though all grief is obstinate, that you will surely not refuse me this request, that you will allow me to set bounds to your sorrow.

## II.

See how far I have presumed upon your indulgence: I have no doubts about my having more power over you than your grief, than which nothing has more power over the unhappy. In order, therefore, to avoid encountering it straightway, I will at first take its part and offer it every encouragement: I will rip up and bring to light again wounds already scarred. Some one may say, "What sort of consolation is this, for a man to rake up buried evils, and to bring all its sorrows before a mind which scarcely can bear the sight of one?" but let him reflect that diseases which are so malignant that they do but gather strength from ordinary remedies, may often be cured by the opposite treatment: I will, therefore, display before your grief all its woes and miseries: this will be to effect a cure, not by soothing measures, but by cautery and the knife.

What shall I gain by this? I shall make the mind that could overcome so many sorrows, ashamed to bewail one wound more in a body so full of scars. Let those whose feeble minds have been enervated by a long period of happiness, weep and lament for many days, and faint away on receiving the slightest blow: but those whose years have all been passed amid catastrophes should bear the severest losses with brave and unyielding patience. Continual misfortune has this one advantage, that it ends by rendering callous those whom it is always scourging. Ill fortune has given you no respite, and has not left even your birthday free from the bitterest grief: you lost your mother as soon as you were born, nay, while you were being born, and you came into life, as it were, an outcast: you grew up under a step-mother, whom you made into a mother by all the obedience and respect which even a real daughter could have bestowed upon her: and even a good step-mother costs every one dear.

You lost your most affectionate uncle, a brave and excellent man, just when you were awaiting his return: and, lest Fortune should weaken its blows by dividing them, within a month you lost your beloved husband, by whom you had become the mother of three children. This sorrowful news was brought you while you were already in mourning, while all your children were absent, so that all your misfortunes seemed to have been purposely brought upon you at a time when your grief could nowhere find any repose. I pass over all the dangers and alarms which you have endured without any respite: it was but the other day that you received the bones of three of your grandchildren in the bosom from which you had sent them forth: less than twenty days after you had buried my child, who perished in your arms and amid your kisses, you heard that I had been exiled: you wanted only this drop in your cup, to have to weep for those who still lived.

### III.

The last wound is, I admit, the severest that you have ever yet sustained: it has not merely torn the skin, but has pierced you to the very heart: yet as recruits cry aloud when only slightly wounded, and shudder more at the hands of the surgeon than at the sword, while veterans even when transfixed allow their hurts to be dressed without a groan, and as patiently as if they were in some one else's body, so now you ought to offer yourself courageously to be healed. Lay aside lamentations and wailings, and all the usual noisy manifestations of female sorrow: you have gained nothing by so many misfortunes, if you have not learned how to suffer. Now, do I seem not to have spared you? nay, I have not passed over any of your sorrows, but have placed them all together in a mass before you.

## IV.

I have done this by way of a heroic remedy: for I have determined to conquer this grief of yours, not merely to limit it; and I shall conquer it, I believe, if in the first place I can prove that I am not suffering enough to entitle me to be called unhappy, let alone to justify me in rendering my family unhappy: and, secondly, if I can deal with your case and prove that even your misfortune, which comes upon you entirely through me, is not a severe one. The point to which I shall first address myself is that of which your motherly love longs to hear, I mean, that I am not suffering: if I can, I will make it clear to you that the events by which you think that I am overwhelmed, are not unendurable: if you cannot believe this, I at any rate shall be all the more pleased with myself for being happy under circumstances which could make most men miserable.

You need not believe what others say about me: that you may not be puzzled by any uncertainty as to what to think, I distinctly tell you that I am not miserable: I will add, for your greater comfort, that it is not possible for me to be made miserable.

## V.

We are born to a comfortable position enough, if we do not afterwards lose it: the aim of Nature has been to enable us to live well without needing a vast apparatus to enable us to do so: every man is able by himself to make himself happy. External circumstances have very little importance either for good or for evil: the wise man is neither elated by prosperity nor depressed by adversity; for he has always endeavoured to depend chiefly upon himself and to derive all his joys from himself. Do I, then, call myself a wise man? far from it: for were I able to profess myself wise, I should not only say that I was not unhappy, but should avow myself to be the most fortunate of men, and to be raised almost to the level of a god: as it is, I have applied myself to the society of wise men, which suffices to lighten all sorrows, and, not being as yet able to rely upon my own strength, I have betaken myself for refuge to the camp of others, of those, namely, who can easily defend both themselves and their friends.

They have ordered me always to stand as it were on guard, and to mark the attacks and charges of Fortune long before she delivers them; she is only terrible to those whom she catches unawares; he who is always looking out for her assault, easily sustains it: for so also an invasion of the enemy overthrows those by whom it is unexpected, but those who have prepared themselves for the coming war before it broke out, stand in their ranks fully equipped and repel with ease the first, which is always the most furious onset. I never have trusted in Fortune, even when she seemed most peaceful. I have accepted all the gifts of wealth, high office, and influence, which she has so bountifully bestowed upon me, in such a manner that she can take them back again without disturbing me: I have kept a great distance between them and myself: and therefore she has taken them, not painfully torn them away from me.

No man loses anything by the frowns of Fortune unless he has been deceived by her smiles: those who have enjoyed her bounty as though it were their own heritage for ever, and who have chosen to take precedence of others because of it, lie in abject sorrow when her unreal and fleeting delights forsake their empty childish minds, that know nothing about solid pleasure: but he who has not been puffed up by success, does not collapse after failure: he possesses a mind of tried constancy, superior to the influences of either state; for even in the midst of prosperity he has experimented upon his powers of enduring adversity.

Consequently I have always believed that there was no real good in any of those things which all men desire: I then found that they were empty, and merely painted over with artificial and deceitful dyes, without containing anything within which corresponds to their outside: I now find nothing so harsh and fearful as the common

opinion of mankind threatened me with in this which is known as adversity: the word itself, owing to the prevalent belief and ideas current about it, strikes somewhat unpleasantly upon one's ears, and thrills the hearers as something dismal and accursed, for so hath the vulgar decreed that it should be: but a great many of the decrees of the vulgar are reversed by the wise.

## VI.

Setting aside, then, the verdict of the majority, who are carried away by the first appearance of things and the usual opinion about them, let us consider what is meant by exile: clearly a changing from one place to another. That I may not seem to be narrowing its force, and taking away its worst parts, I must add, that this changing of place is accompanied by poverty, disgrace, and contempt. Against these I will combat later on: meanwhile I wish to consider what there is unpleasant in the mere act of changing one's place of abode. "It is unbearable," men say, "to lose one's native land." Look, I pray you, on these vast crowds, for whom all the countless roofs of Rome can scarcely find shelter: the greater part of those crowds have lost their native land: they have flocked hither from their country towns and colonies, and in fine from all parts of the world.

Some have been brought by ambition, some by the exigencies of public office, some by being entrusted with embassies, some by luxury which seeks a convenient spot, rich in vices, for its exercise, some by their wish for a liberal education, others by a wish to see the public shows. Some have been led hither by friendship, some by industry, which finds here a wide field for the display of its powers. Some have brought their beauty for sale, some their eloquence: people of every kind assemble themselves together in Rome, which sets a high price both upon virtues and vices. Bid them all to be summoned to answer to their names, and ask each one from what home he has come: you will find that the greater part of them have left their own abodes, and journeyed to a city which, though great and beautiful beyond all others, is nevertheless not their own.

Then leave this city, which may be said to be the common property of all men, and visit all other towns: there is not one of them which does not contain a large proportion of aliens. Pass away from those whose delightful situation and convenient position attracts many settlers: examine wildernesses and the most rugged islands, Sciathus and Seriphus, Gyarus and Corsica: you will find no place of exile where some one does not dwell for his own pleasure. What can be found barer or more precipitous on every side than this rock? what more barren in respect of food? what more uncouth in its inhabitants? more mountainous in its configuration? or more rigorous in its climate? yet even here there are more strangers than natives. So far, therefore, is the mere change of place from being irksome, that even this place has allured some away from their country.

I find some writers who declare that mankind has a natural itch for change of abode and alteration of domicile: for the mind of man is wandering and unquiet; it never stands still, but spreads itself abroad and sends forth its thoughts into all regions, known or unknown; being nomadic, impatient of repose, and loving novelty beyond

everything else. You need not be surprised at this, if you reflect upon its original source: it is not formed from the same elements as the heavy and earthly body, but from heavenly spirit: now heavenly things are by their nature always in motion, speeding along and flying with the greatest swiftness. Look at the luminaries which light the world: none of them stands still.

The sun is perpetually in motion, and passes from one quarter to another, and although he revolves with the entire heaven, yet nevertheless he has a motion in the contrary direction to that of the universe itself, and passes through all the constellations without remaining in any: his wandering is incessant, and he never ceases to move from place to place. All things continually revolve and are for ever changing; they pass from one position to another in accordance with natural and unalterable laws: after they have completed a certain circuit in a fixed space of time, they begin again the path which they had previously trodden. Be not surprised, then, if the human mind, which is formed from the same seeds as the heavenly bodies, delights in change and wandering, since the divine nature itself either takes pleasure in constant and exceeding swift motion or perhaps even preserves its existence thereby.

## VII.

Come now, turn from divine to human affairs: you will see that whole tribes and nations have changed their abodes. What is the meaning of Greek cities in the midst of barbarous districts? or of the Macedonian language existing among the Indians and the Persians? Scythia and all that region which swarms with wild and uncivilized tribes boasts nevertheless Achaean cities along the shores of the Black Sea. Neither the rigours of eternal winter, nor the character of men as savage as their climate, has prevented people migrating thither. There is a mass of Athenians in Asia Minor. Miletus has sent out into various parts of the world citizens enough to populate seventy-five cities. That whole coast of Italy which is washed by the Lower Sea is a part of what once was "Greater Greece." Asia claims the Tuscans as her own: there are Tyrians living in Africa, Carthaginians in Spain; Greeks have pushed in among the Gauls, and Gauls among the Greeks.

The Pyrenees have proved no barrier to the Germans: human caprice makes its way through pathless and unknown regions: men drag along with them their children, their wives, and their aged and worn-out parents. Some have been tossed hither and thither by long wanderings, until they have become too wearied to choose an abode, but have settled in whatever place was nearest to them: others have made themselves masters of foreign countries by force of arms: some nations while making for parts unknown have been swallowed up by the sea: some have established themselves in the place in which they were originally stranded by utter destitution.

Nor have all men had the same reasons for leaving their country and for seeking for a new one: some have escaped from their cities when destroyed by hostile armies, and having lost their own lands have been thrust upon those of others: some have been cast out by domestic quarrels: some have been driven forth in consequence of an excess of population, in order to relieve the pressure at home: some have been forced to leave by pestilence, or frequent earthquakes, or some unbearable defects of a barren soil: some have been seduced by the fame of a fertile and over-praised clime. Different people have been led away from their homes by different causes; but in all cases it is clear that nothing remains in the same place in which it was born: the movement of the human race is perpetual: in this vast world some changes take place daily.

The foundations of new cities are laid, new names of nations arise, while the former ones die out, or become absorbed by more powerful ones. And yet what else are all these general migrations but the banishments of whole peoples? Why should I lead you through all these details? what is the use of mentioning Antenor the founder of Padua, or Evander who established his kingdom of Arcadian settlers on the banks of

the Tiber? or Diomedes and the other heroes, both victors and vanquished, whom the Trojan war scattered over lands which were not their own? It is a fact that the Roman Empire itself traces its origin back to an exile as its founder, who, fleeing from his country after its conquest, with what few relics he had saved from the wreck, had been brought to Italy by hard necessity and fear of his conqueror, which bade him seek distant lands.

Since then, how many colonies has this people sent forth into every province? wherever the Roman conquers, there he dwells. These migrations always found people eager to take part in them, and veteran soldiers desert their native hearths and follow the flag of the colonists across the sea. The matter does not need illustrations by any more examples: yet I will add one more which I have before my eyes: this very island has often changed its inhabitants. Not to mention more ancient events, which have become obscure from their antiquity, the Greeks who inhabit Marseilles at the present day, when they left Phocaea, first settled here, and it is doubtful what drove them hence, whether it was the rigour of the climate, the sight of the more powerful land of Italy, or the want of harbours on the coast: for the fact of their having placed themselves in the midst of what were then the most savage and uncouth tribes of Gaul proves that they were not driven hence by the ferocity of the natives.

Subsequently the Ligurians came over into this same island, and also the Spaniards, which is proved by the resemblance of their customs: for they wear the same head-coverings and the same sort of shoes as the Cantabrians, and some of their words are the same: for by association with Greeks and Ligurians they have entirely lost their native speech. Hither since then have been brought two Roman colonies, one by Marius, the other by Sulla: so often has the population of this barren and thorny rock been changed. In fine, you will scarcely find any land which is still in the hands of its original inhabitants: all peoples have become confused and intermingled: one has come after another: one has wished for what another scorned: some have been driven out of the land which they took from another. Thus fate has decreed that nothing should ever enjoy an uninterrupted course of good fortune.

## VIII.

Varro, that most learned of all the Romans, thought that for the mere change of place, apart from the other evils attendant on exile, we may find a sufficient remedy in the thought that wherever we go we always have the same Nature to deal with. Marcus Brutus thought that there was sufficient comfort in the thought that those who go into exile are permitted to carry their virtues thither with them. Though one might think that neither of these alone were able to console an exile, yet it must be confessed that when combined they have great power: for how very little it is that we lose! whithersoever we betake ourselves two most excellent things will accompany us, namely, a common Nature and our own especial virtue.

Believe me, this is the work of whoever was the Creator of the universe, whether he be an all-powerful deity, an incorporeal mind which effects vast works, a divine spirit by which all things from the greatest to the smallest are equally pervaded, or fate and an unalterable connected sequence of events, this, I say, is its work, that nothing above the very lowest can ever fall into the power of another: all that is best for a man's enjoyment lies beyond human power, and can neither be bestowed or taken away: this world, the greatest and the most beautiful of Nature's productions, and its noblest part, a mind which can behold and admire it, are our own property, and will remain with us as long as we ourselves endure.

Let us therefore briskly and cheerfully hasten with undaunted steps whithersoever circumstances call us: let us wander over whatever countries we please; no place of banishment can be found in the whole world in which man cannot find a home. I can raise my eyes from the earth to the sky in one place as well as in another; the heavenly bodies are everywhere equally near to mankind: accordingly, as long as my eyes are not deprived of that spectacle of which they never can have their fill, as long as I am allowed to gaze on the sun and moon, to dwell upon the other stars, to speculate upon their risings and settings, their periods, and the reasons why they move faster or slower, to see so many stars glittering throughout the night, some fixed, some not moving in a wide orbit but revolving in their own proper track, some suddenly diverging from it, some dazzling our eyes by a fiery blaze as though they were falling, or flying along drawing after them a long trail of brilliant light: while I am permitted to commune with these, and to hold intercourse, as far as a human being may, with all the company of heaven, while I can raise my spirit aloft to view its kindred sparks above, what does it matter upon what soil I tread?

## IX.

“But this country does not produce beautiful or fruit-bearing trees; it is not watered by the courses of large or navigable rivers; it bears nothing which other nations would covet, since its produce barely suffices to support its inhabitants: no precious marbles are quarried here, no veins of gold and silver are dug out.” What of that! It must be a narrow mind that takes pleasure in things of the earth: it ought to be turned away from them to the contemplation of those which can be seen everywhere, which are equally brilliant everywhere: we ought to reflect, also, that these vulgar matters by a mistaken perversion of ideas prevent really good things reaching us: the further men stretch out their porticos, the higher they raise their towers, the more widely they extend their streets, the deeper they sink their retreats from the heats of summer, the more ponderous the roofs with which they cover their banqueting halls, the more there will be to obstruct their view of heaven.

Fortune has cast you into a country in which there is no lodging more splendid than a cottage: you must indeed have a poor spirit, and one which seeks low sources of consolation, if you endure this bravely because you have seen the cottage of Romulus: say, rather, “Should that lowly barn be entered by the virtues, it will straightway become more beautiful than any temple, because within it will be seen justice, self-restraint, prudence, love, a right division of all duties, a knowledge of all things on earth and in heaven. No place can be narrow, if it contains such a company of the greatest virtues; no exile can be irksome in which one can be attended by these companions. Brutus, in the book which he wrote upon virtue, says that he saw Marcellus in exile at Mytilene, living as happily as it is permitted to man to live, and never keener in his pursuit of literature than at that time.

He consequently adds the reflexion: ‘I seemed rather to be going into exile myself when I had to return without him, than to be leaving him in exile.’ O how much more fortunate was Marcellus at that time, when Brutus praised him for his exile, than when Rome praised him for his consulship! what a man that must have been who made any one think himself exiled because he was leaving him in exile! what a man that must have been who attracted the admiration of one whom even his friend Cato admired! Brutus goes on to say:— ‘Gaius Caesar sailed past Mytilene without landing, because he could not bear to see a fallen man.’ The Senate did indeed obtain his recall by public petition, being so anxious and sorrowful the while, that you would have thought that they all were of Brutus’s mind that day, and were not pleading the cause of Marcellus, but their own, that they might not be sent into exile by being deprived of him: yet he gained far greater glory on the day when Brutus could not bear to leave him in exile, and Caesar could not bear to see him: for each of them bore witness to his worth: Brutus grieved, and Caesar blushed at going home without Marcellus.

Can you doubt that so great a man as Marcellus frequently encouraged himself to endure his exile patiently in some such terms as these: "The loss of your country is no misery to you: you have so steeped yourself in philosophic lore, as to know that all the world is the wise man's country? What! was not this very man who banished you absent from his country for ten successive years? he was, no doubt, engaged in the extension of the empire, but for all that he was absent from his country. Now see how his presence is required in Africa, which threatens to re-kindle the war, in Spain which is nursing up again the strength of the broken and shattered opposite faction, in treacherous Egypt, in fine, in all the parts of the world, for all are watching their opportunity to seize the empire at a disadvantage.

Which will he go to meet first? which part of the universal conspiracy will he first oppose? His victory will drag him through every country in the world. Let nations look up to him and worship him: do thou live satisfied with the admiration of Brutus."

## X.

Marcellus, then, nobly endured his exile, and his change of place made no change in his mind, even though it was accompanied by poverty, in which every man who has not fallen into the madness of avarice and luxury, which upset all our ideas, sees no harm. Indeed, how very little is required to keep a man alive? and who, that has any virtue whatever, will find this fail him? As for myself, I do not feel that I have lost my wealth, but my occupation: the wants of the body are few: it wants protection from the cold, and the means of allaying hunger and thirst: all desires beyond these are vices, not necessities.

There is no need for prying into all the depths of the sea, for loading one's stomach with heaps of slaughtered animals, or for tearing up shell-fish from the unknown shore of the furthest sea: may the gods and goddesses bring ruin upon those whose luxury transcends the bounds of an empire which is already perilously wide. They want to have their ostentatious kitchens supplied with game from the other side of the Phasis, and though Rome has not yet obtained satisfaction from the Parthians, they are not ashamed to obtain birds from them: they bring together from all regions everything, known or unknown, to tempt their fastidious palate: food, which their stomach, worn out with delicacies, can scarcely retain, is brought from the most distant ocean: they vomit that they may eat, and eat that they may vomit, and do not even deign to digest the banquets which they ransack the globe to obtain.

If a man despises these things, what harm can poverty do him? If he desires them, then poverty even does him good, for he is cured in spite of himself, and though he will not receive remedies even upon compulsion, yet while he is unable to fulfil his wishes he is as though he had them not. Gaius Caesar, whom in my opinion Nature produced in order to show what unlimited vice would be capable of when combined with unlimited power, dined one day at a cost of ten millions of sesterces: and though in this he had the assistance of the intelligence of all his subjects, yet he could hardly find how to make one dinner out of the tribute-money of three provinces.

How unhappy are they whose appetite can only be aroused by costly food! and the costliness of food depends not upon its delightful flavour and sweetness of taste, but upon its rarity and the difficulty of procuring it: otherwise, if they chose to return to their sound senses, what need would they have of so many arts which minister to the stomach? of so great a commerce? of such ravaging of forests? of such ransacking of the depths of the sea? Food is to be found everywhere, and has been placed by Nature in every part the world, but they pass it by as though they were blind, and wander through all countries, cross the seas, and excite at a great cost the hunger which they might allay at a small one.

One would like to say: Why do you launch ships? why do you arm your hands for battle both with men and wild beasts? why do you run so riotously hither and thither? why do you amass fortune after fortune? Are you unwilling to remember how small our bodies are? is it not frenzy and the wildest insanity to wish for so much when you can contain so little? Though you may increase your income, and extend the boundaries of your property, yet you never can enlarge your own bodies: when your business transactions have turned out well, when you have made a successful campaign, when you have collected the food for which you have hunted through all lands, you will have no place in which to bestow all these superfluities. Why do you strive to obtain so much?

Do you think that our ancestors, whose virtue supports our vices even to the present day, were unhappy, though they dressed their food with their own hands, though the earth was their bed, though their roofs did not yet glitter with gold, nor their temples with precious stones? and so they used then to swear with scrupulous honesty by earthenware gods; those who called these gods to witness would go back to the enemy for certain death rather than break their word. Do you suppose that our dictator who granted an audience to the ambassadors of the Samnites, while he roasted the commonest food before the fire himself with that very hand with which he had so often smitten the enemy, and with which he had placed his laurel wreath upon the lap of Capitoline Jove, enjoyed life less than the Apicius who lived in our own days, whose habits tainted the entire century, who set himself up as a professor of gastronomy in that very city from which philosophers once were banished as corrupters of youth?

It is worth while to know his end. After he had spent a hundred millions of sesterces on his kitchen, and had wasted on each single banquet a sum equal to so many presents from the reigning emperors, and the vast revenue which he drew from the Capitol, being overburdened with debt, he then for the first time was forced to examine his accounts: he calculated that he would have ten millions left of his fortune, and, as though he would live a life of mere starvation on ten millions, put an end to his life by poison. How great must the luxury of that man have been, to whom ten millions signified want? Can you think after this that the amount of money necessary to make a fortune depends upon its actual extent rather than on the mind of the owner?

Here was a man who shuddered at the thought of a fortune of ten million sesterces, and escaped by poison from a prospect which other men pray for. Yet, for a mind so diseased, that last draught of his was the most wholesome: he was really eating and drinking poisons when he was not only enjoying, but boasting of his enormous banquets, when he was flaunting his vices, when he was causing his country to follow his example, when he was inviting youths to imitate him, albeit youth is quick to learn evil, without being provided with a model to copy. This is what befalls those

who do not use their wealth according to reason, which has fixed limits, but according to vicious fashion, whose caprices are boundless and immeasurable. Nothing is sufficient for covetous desire, but Nature can be satisfied even with scant measure.

The poverty of an exile, therefore, causes no inconvenience, for no place of exile is so barren as not to produce what is abundantly sufficient to support a man.

## XI.

Next, need an exile regret his former dress and house? If he only wishes for these things because of their use to him, he will want neither roof nor garment, for it takes as little to cover the body as it does to feed it: Nature has annexed no difficult conditions to anything which man is obliged to do. If, however, he sighs for a purple robe steeped in floods of dye, interwoven with threads of gold and with many coloured artistic embroideries, then his poverty is his own fault, not that of Fortune: even though you restored to him all that he has lost, you would do him no good; for he would have more unsatisfied ambitions, if restored, than he had unsatisfied wants when he was an exile.

If he longs for furniture glittering with silver vases, plate which boasts the signature of antique artists, bronze which the mania of a small clique has rendered costly, slaves enough to crowd however large a house, purposely overfed horses, and precious stones of all countries: whatever collections he may make of these, he never will satisfy his insatiable appetite, any more than any amount of liquor will quench a thirst which arises not from the need of drink but from the burning heat within a man; for this is not thirst but disease. Nor does this take place only with regard to money and food, but every want which is caused by vice and not by necessity is of this nature: however much you supply it with you do not quench it but intensify it. He who restrains himself within the limits prescribed by nature, will not feel poverty; he who exceeds them will always be poor, however great his wealth may be.

Even a place of exile suffices to provide one with necessities; whole kingdoms do not suffice to provide one with superfluities. It is the mind which makes men rich: this it is that accompanies them into exile, and in the most savage wildernesses, after having found sufficient sustenance for the body, enjoys its own overflowing resources: the mind has no more connexion with money than the immortal gods have with those things which are so highly valued by untutored intellects, sunk in the bondage of the flesh. Gems, gold, silver, and vast polished round tables are but earthly dross, which cannot be loved by a pure mind that is mindful of whence it came, is unblemished by sin, and which, when released from the body, will straightway soar aloft to the highest heaven: meanwhile, as far as it is permitted by the hindrances of its mortal limbs and this heavy clog of the body by which it is surrounded, it examines divine things with swift and airy thought.

From this it follows that no free-born man, who is akin to the gods, and fit for any world and any age, can ever be in exile: for his thoughts are directed to all the heavens and to all times past and future: this trumpery body, the prison and fetter of the spirit, may be tossed to this place or to that; upon it tortures, robberies, and

diseases may work their will: but the spirit itself is holy and eternal, and upon it no one can lay hands.

## XII.

That you may not suppose that I merely use the maxims of the philosophers to disparage the evils of poverty, which no one finds terrible, unless he thinks it so; consider in the first place how many more poor people there are than rich, and yet you will not find that they are sadder or more anxious than the rich: nay, I am not sure that they are not happier, because they have fewer things to distract their minds. From these poor men, who often are not unhappy at their poverty, let us pass to the rich. How many occasions there are on which they are just like poor men! When they are on a journey their baggage is cut down, whenever they are obliged to travel fast their train of attendants is dismissed. When they are serving in the army, how small a part of their property can they have with them, since camp discipline forbids superfluities!

Nor is it only temporary exigences or desert places that put them on the same level as poor men: they have some days on which they become sick of their riches, dine reclining on the ground, put away all their gold and silver plate, and use earthenware. Madmen! they are always afraid of this for which they sometimes wish. O how dense a stupidity, how great an ignorance of the truth they show when they flee from this thing and yet amuse themselves by playing with it! Whenever I look back to the great examples of antiquity, I feel ashamed to seek consolation for my poverty, now that luxury has advanced so far in the present age, that the allowance of an exile is larger than the inheritance of the princes of old.

It is well known that Homer had one slave, that Plato had three, and that Zeno, who first taught the stern and masculine doctrine of the Stoics, had none: yet could any one say that they lived wretchedly without himself being thought a most pitiable wretch by all men? Menenius Agrippa, by whose mediation the patricians and plebeians were reconciled, was buried by public subscription. Attilius Regulus, while he was engaged in scattering the Carthaginians in Africa, wrote to the Senate that his hired servant had left him, and that consequently his farm was deserted: whereupon it was decreed that as long as Regulus was absent, it should be cultivated at the expense of the state. Was it not worth his while to have no slave, if thereby he obtained the Roman people for his farm-bailiff?

Scipio's daughters received their dowries from the Treasury, because their father had left them none: by Hercules, it was right for the Roman people to pay tribute to Scipio for once, since he had exacted it for ever from Carthage. O how happy were those girls' husbands, who had the Roman people for their father-in-law. Can you think that those whose daughters dance in the ballet, and marry with a settlement of a million sesterces, are happier than Scipio, whose children received their dowry of old-fashioned brass money from their guardian the Senate? Can any one despise

poverty, when she has such a noble descent to boast of? can an exile be angry at any privation, when Scipio could not afford a portion for his daughters, Regulus could not afford a hired labourer, Menenius could not afford a funeral? when all these men's wants were supplied in a manner which rendered them a source of additional honour?

Poverty, when such men as these plead its cause, is not only harmless, but positively attractive.

## XIII.

To this one may answer: "Why do you thus ingeniously divide what can indeed be endured if taken singly, but which all together are overwhelming? Change of place can be borne if nothing more than one's place be changed: poverty can be borne if it be without disgrace, which is enough to cow our spirits by itself." If any one were to endeavour to frighten me with the number of my misfortunes, I should answer him as follows: If you have enough strength to resist any one part of your ill-fortune, you will have enough to resist it all. If virtue has once hardened your mind, it renders it impervious to blows from any quarter: if avarice, that greatest pest of the human race, has left it, you will not be troubled by ambition: if you regard the end of your days not as a punishment, but as an ordinance of nature, no fear of anything else will dare to enter the breast which has cast out the fear of death.

If you consider sexual passion to have been bestowed on mankind not for the sake of pleasure, but for the continuance of the race, all other desires will pass harmlessly by one who is safe even from this secret plague, implanted in our very bosoms. Reason does not conquer vices one by one, but all together: if reason is defeated, it is utterly defeated once for all. Do you suppose that any wise man, who relies entirely upon himself, who has set himself free from the ideas of the common herd, can be wrought upon by disgrace? A disgraceful death is worse even than disgrace: yet Socrates bore the same expression of countenance with which he had rebuked thirty tyrants, when he entered the prison and thereby took away the infamous character of the place; for the place which contained Socrates could not be regarded as a prison.

Was any one ever so blind to the truth as to suppose that Marcus Cato was disgraced by his double defeat in his candidature for the praetorship and the consulship? that disgrace fell on the praetorship and consulship which Cato honoured by his candidature. No one is despised by others unless he be previously despised by himself: a grovelling and abject mind may fall an easy prey to such contempt: but he who stands up against the most cruel misfortunes, and overcomes those evils by which others would have been crushed—such a man, I say, turns his misfortunes into badges of honour, because we are so constituted as to admire nothing so much as a man who bears adversity bravely. At Athens, when Aristides was being led to execution, every one who met him cast down his eyes and groaned, as though not merely a just man but justice herself was being put to death.

Yet one man was found who spat in his face: he might have been disturbed at this, since he knew it could only be a foul-mouthed fellow that would have the heart to do so; he, however, wiped his face, and with a smile asked the magistrate who accompanied him to warn that man not to open his mouth so rudely again. To act

thus was to treat contumely itself with contempt. I know that some say that there is nothing more terrible than disgrace, and that they would prefer death. To such men I answer that even exile is often accompanied by no disgrace whatever: if a great man falls, he remains a great man after his fall, you can no more suppose that he is disgraced than when people tread upon the walls of a ruined temple, which the pious treat with as much respect as when they were standing.

## XIV.

Since, then, my dearest mother, you have no reason for endless weeping on my account, it follows that your tears must flow on your own: there are two causes for this, either your having lost my protection, or your not being able to bear the mere fact of separation. The first of these I shall only touch upon lightly, for I know that your heart loves nothing belonging to your children except themselves. Let other mothers look to that, who make use of their sons' authority with a woman's passion, who are ambitious through their sons because they cannot bear office themselves, who spend their sons' inheritance, and yet are eager to inherit it, and who weary their sons by lending their eloquence to others: you have always rejoiced exceedingly in the successes of your sons, and have made no use of them whatever: you have always set bounds to our generosity, although you set none to your own: you, while a minor under the power of the head of the family, still used to make presents to your wealthy sons: you managed our inheritances with as much care as if you were working for your own, yet refrained from touching them as scrupulously as if they belonged to strangers: you have spared to use our influence, as though you enjoyed other means of your own, and you have taken no part in the public offices to which we have been elected beyond rejoicing in our success and paying our expenses: your indulgence has never been tainted by any thought of profit, and you cannot regret the loss of your son for a reason which never had any weight with you before his exile.

## XV.

All my powers of consolation must be directed to the other point, the true source of your maternal grief. You say, "I am deprived of the embraces of my darling son, I cannot enjoy the pleasure of seeing him and of hearing him talk. Where is he at whose sight I used to smooth my troubled brow, in whose keeping I used to deposit all my cares? Where is his conversation, of which I never could have enough? his studies, in which I used to take part with more than a woman's eagerness, with more than a mother's familiarity? Where are our meetings? the boyish delight which he always showed at the sight of his mother?" To all this you add the actual places of our merrymakings and conversation, and, what must needs have more power to move you than anything else, the traces of our late social life, for Fortune treated you with the additional cruelty of allowing you to depart on the very third day before my ruin, without a trace of anxiety, and not fearing anything of the kind.

It was well that we had been separated by a vast distance: it was well that an absence of some years had prepared you to bear this blow: you came home, not to take any pleasure in your son, but to get rid of the habit of longing for him. Had you been absent long before, you would have borne it more bravely, as the very length of your absence would have moderated your longing to see me: had you never gone away, you would at any rate have gained one last advantage in seeing your son for two days longer: as it was, cruel Fate so arranged it that you were not present with me during my good fortune, and yet have not become accustomed to my absence.

But the harder these things are to bear, the more virtue you must summon to your aid, and the more bravely you must struggle as it were with an enemy whom you know well, and whom you have already often conquered. This blood did not flow from a body previously unhurt: you have been struck through the scar of an old wound.

## XVI.

You have no grounds for excusing yourself on the ground of being a woman, who has a sort of right to weep without restraint, though not without limit. For this reason our ancestors allotted a space of ten months' mourning for women who had lost their husbands, thus settling the violence of a woman's grief by a public ordinance. They did not forbid them to mourn, but they set limits to their grief: for while it is a foolish weakness to give way to endless grief when you lose one of those dearest to you, yet it shows an unnatural hardness of heart to express no grief at all: the best middle course between affection and hard common sense is both to feel regret and to restrain it.

You need not look at certain women whose sorrow, when once begun, has been ended only by death: you know some who after the loss of their sons have never laid aside the garb of mourning: you are constitutionally stronger than these, and from you more is required. You cannot avail yourself of the excuse of being a woman, for you have no womanish vices. Unchastity, the greatest evil of the age, has never classed you with the majority of women; you have not been tempted either by gems or by pearls; riches have not allured you into thinking them the greatest blessing that man can own; respectably brought up as you were in an old-fashioned and strict household, you have never been led astray by that imitation of others which is so full of danger even to virtuous women.

You have never been ashamed of your fruitfulness as though it were a reproach to your youth: you never concealed the signs of pregnancy as though it were an unbecoming burden, nor did you ever destroy your expected child within your womb after the fashion of many other women, whose attractions are to be found in their beauty alone. You never defiled your face with paints or cosmetics: you never liked clothes which showed the figure as plainly as though it were naked: your sole ornament has been a consummate loveliness which no time can impair, your greatest glory has been your modesty. You cannot, therefore, plead your womanhood as an excuse for your grief, because your virtues have raised you above it: you ought to be as superior to womanish tears as you are to womanish vices.

Even women would not allow you to pine away after receiving this blow, but would bid you quickly and calmly go through the necessary amount of mourning, and then to arise and shake it off: I mean, if you are willing to take as your models those women whose eminent virtue has given them a place among even great men. Misfortune reduced the number of Cornelia's children from twelve to two: if you count the number of their deaths, Cornelia had lost ten: if you weigh them, she had lost the Gracchi: nevertheless, when her friends were weeping around her and using

too bitter imprecations against her fate, she forbade them to blame fortune for having deprived her of her sons the Gracchi.

Such ought to have been the mother of him who, when speaking in the Forum, said, "Would you speak evil of the mother who bore me?" The mother's speech seems to me to show a far greater spirit: the son set a high value on the birth of the Gracchi; the mother set an equal value on their deaths. Rutilia followed her son Cotta into exile, and was so passionately attached to him that she could bear exile better than absence from him; nor did she return home before her son did so: after he had been restored, and had been raised to honour in the republic, she bore his death as bravely as she had borne his exile.

No one saw any traces of tears upon her cheeks after she had buried her son: she displayed her courage when he was banished, her wisdom when he died: she allowed no considerations either to interfere with her affection, or to force her to protract a useless and foolish mourning. These are the women with whom I wish you to be numbered: you have the best reasons for restraining and suppressing your sorrow as they did, because you have always imitated their lives.

## XVII.

I am aware that this is a matter which is not in our power, and that none of the passions, least of all that which arises from grief, are obedient to our wishes; indeed, it is overbearing and obstinate, and stubbornly rejects all remedies: we sometimes wish to crush it, and to swallow our emotion, but, nevertheless, tears flow over our carefully arranged and made-up countenance. Sometimes we occupy our minds with public spectacles and shows of gladiators; but during the very sights by which it is amused, the mind is wrung by slight touches of sorrow. It is better, therefore, to conquer it than to cheat it; for a grief which has been deceived and driven away either by pleasure or by business rises again, and its period of rest does but give it strength for a more terrible attack; but a grief which has been conquered by reason is appeased for ever.

I shall not, then, give you the advice which so many, I know, adopt, that you should distract your thoughts by a long journey, or amuse them by a beautiful one; that you should spend much of your time in the careful examination of accounts, and the management of your estate, and that you should keep constantly engaging in new enterprises: all these things avail but little, and do not cure, but merely obstruct our sorrow. I had rather it should be brought to an end than that it should be cheated: and, therefore, I would fain lead you to the study of philosophy, the true place of refuge for all those who are flying from the cruelty of Fortune: this will heal your wounds and take away all your sadness: to this you would now have to apply yourself, even though you had never done so before; but as far as my father's old-fashioned strictness permitted, you have gained a superficial, though not a thorough knowledge of all liberal studies.

Would that my father, most excellent man that he was, had been less devoted to the customs of our ancestors, and had been willing to have you thoroughly instructed in the elements of philosophy, instead of receiving a mere smattering of it! I should not now need to be providing you with the means of struggling against Fortune, but you would offer them to me: but he did not allow you to pursue your studies far, because some women use literature to teach them luxury instead of wisdom. Still, thanks to your keen intellectual appetite, you learned more than one could have expected in the time: you laid the foundations of all good learning: now return to them: they will render you safe, they will console you, and charm you.

If once they have thoroughly entered into your mind, grief, anxiety, the distress of vain suffering will never gain admittance thither: your breast will not be open to any of these; against all other vices it has long been closed. Philosophy is your most trustworthy guardian, and it alone can save you from the attacks of Fortune.

## XVIII.

Since, however, you require something to lean upon until you can reach that haven of rest which philosophy offers to you, I wish in the meantime to point out to you the consolations which you have. Look at my two brothers—while they are safe, you have no grounds for complaint against Fortune; you can derive pleasure from the virtues of each of them, different as they are; the one has gained high office by attention to business, the other has philosophically despised it. Rejoice in the great place of one of your sons, in the peaceful retirement of the other, in the filial affection of both. I know my brothers' most secret motives: the one adorns his high office in order to confer lustre upon you, the other has withdrawn from the world into his life of quiet and contemplation, that he may have full enjoyment of your society.

Fortune has consulted both your safety and your pleasure in her disposal of your two sons: you may be protected by the authority of the one, and delighted by the literary leisure of the other. They will vie with one another in dutiful affection to you, and the loss of one son will be supplied by the love of two others. I can confidently promise that you will find nothing wanting in your sons except their number. Now, then, turn your eyes from them to your grandchildren; to Marcus, that most engaging child, whose sight no sorrow can withstand. No grief can be so great or so fresh in any one's bosom as not to be charmed away by his presence.

Where are the tears which his joyousness could not dry? whose heart is so nipped by sorrow that his animation would not cause it to dilate? who would not be rendered mirthful by his playfulness? who would not be attracted and made to forget his gloomy thoughts by that prattle to which no one can ever be weary of listening? I pray the gods that he may survive us: may all the cruelty of fate exhaust itself on me and go no further; may all the sorrow destined for my mother and my grandmother fall upon me; but let all the rest flourish as they do now: I shall make no complaints about my childlessness or my exile, if only my sacrifice may be received as a sufficient atonement, and my family suffer nothing more.

Hold in your bosom Novatilla, who soon will present you with great-grandchildren, she whom I had so entirely adopted and made my own, that, now that she has lost me, she seems like an orphan, even though her father is alive. Love her for my sake as well as for her own: Fortune has lately deprived her of her mother: your affection will be able to prevent her really feeling the loss of the mother whom she mourns. Take this opportunity of forming and strengthening her principles; nothing sinks so deeply into the mind as the teaching which we receive in our earliest years; let her become accustomed to hearing your discourses; let her character be moulded

according to your pleasure: she will gain much even if you give her nothing more than your example.

This continually recurring duty will be a remedy in itself: for when your mind is full of maternal sorrow, nothing can distract it from its grief except either philosophic argument or honourable work. I should count your father among your greatest consolations, were he not absent: as it is, judge from your affection for me what his affection is for you, and then you will see how much more just it is that you should be preserved for him than that you should be sacrificed to me. Whenever your keenest paroxysms of grief assail you and bid you give way to them, think of your father. By giving him so many grandchildren and great-grandchildren you have made yourself no longer his only daughter; but you alone can crown his prosperous life by a happy end: as long as he is alive it is impiety for you to regret having been born.

## XIX.

I have hitherto said nothing of your chief source of consolation, your sister, that most faithful heart which shares all your sorrows as fully as your own, and who feels for all of us like a mother. With her you have mingled your tears, on her bosom you have tasted your first repose: she always feels for your troubles, and when I am in the case she does not grieve for you alone. It was in her arms that I was carried into Rome: by her affectionate and motherly nursing I regained my strength after a long period of sickness: she enlarged her influence to obtain the office of quaestor for me, and her fondness for me made her conquer a shyness which at other times made her shrink from speaking to, or loudly greeting her friends.

Neither her retired mode of life, nor her country-bred modesty, at a time when so many women display such boldness of manner, her placidity, nor her habits of solitary seclusion prevented her from becoming actually ambitious on my account. Here, my dearest mother, is a source from which you may gain true consolation: join yourself, as far as you are able, to her, bind yourself to her by the closest embraces. Those who are in sorrow are wont to flee from those who are dearest to them, and to seek liberty for the indulgence of their grief: do you let her share your every thought: if you wish to nurse your grief, she will be your companion, if you wish to lay it aside she will bring it to an end.

If, however, I rightly understand the wisdom of that most perfect woman, she will not suffer you to waste your life in unprofitable mourning, and will tell you what happened in her own instance, which I myself witnessed. During a sea-voyage she lost a beloved husband, my uncle, whom she married when a maiden; she endured at the same time grief for him and fear for herself, and at last, though shipwrecked, nevertheless rescued his body from the vanquished tempest. How many noble deeds are unknown to fame! If only she had had the simple-minded ancients to admire her virtues, how many brilliant intellects would have vied with one another in singing the praises of a wife who forgot the weakness of her sex, forgot the perils of the sea, which terrify even the boldest, exposed herself to death in order to lay him in the earth, and who was so eager to give him decent burial that she cared nothing about whether she shared it or no.

All the poets have made the wife famous who gave herself to death instead of her husband: my aunt did more when she risked her life in order to give her husband a tomb: it shows greater love to endure the same peril for a less important end. After this, no one need wonder that for sixteen years, during which her husband governed the province of Egypt, she was never beheld in public, never admitted any of the natives to her house, never begged any favour of her husband, and never allowed anyone to beg one of her. Thus it came to pass that a gossiping province, ingenious

in inventing scandal about its rulers, in which even the blameless often incurred disgrace, respected her as a singular example of uprightness, never made free with her name,—a remarkable piece of self-restraint among a people who will risk everything rather than forego a jest,—and that at the present time it hopes for another governor's wife like her, although it has no reasonable expectation of ever seeing one.

It would have been greatly to her credit if the province had approved her conduct for a space of sixteen years: it was much more creditable to her that it knew not of her existence. I do not remind you of this in order to celebrate her praises, for to take such scanty notice of them is to curtail them, but in order that you may understand the magnanimity of a woman who has not yielded either to ambition or to avarice, those twin attendants and scourges of authority, who, when her ship was disabled and her own death was impending, was not restrained by fear from keeping fast hold of her husband's dead body, and who sought not how to escape from the wreck, but how to carry him out of it with her.

You must now show a virtue equal to hers, recall your mind from grief, and take care that no one may think that you are sorry that you have borne a son.

## XX.

However, since it is necessary, whatever you do, that your thoughts should sometimes revert to me, and that I should now be present to your mind more often than your other children, not because they are less dear to you, but because it is natural to lay one's hands more often upon a place that pains one; learn how you are to think of me: I am as joyous and cheerful as in my best days: indeed these days are my best, because my mind is relieved from all pressure of business and is at leisure to attend to its own affairs, and at one time amuses itself with lighter studies, at another eagerly presses its inquiries into its own nature and that of the universe: first it considers the countries of the world and their position: then the character of the sea which flows between them, and the alternate ebbings and flowings of its tides; next it investigates all the terrors which hang between heaven and earth, the region which is torn asunder by thunderings, lightnings, gusts of wind, vapour, showers of snow and hail.

Finally, having traversed every one of the realms below, it soars to the highest heaven, enjoys the noblest of all spectacles, that of things divine, and, remembering itself to be eternal, reviews all that has been and all that will be for ever and ever.

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