CONSOLATION TO APOLLONIUS.

1. As soon, Apollonius, as I heard the news of the untimely death of your son, who was very dear to us all, I fell sick of the same grief with you, and shared your misfortune with all the tenderness of sympathy. For he was a sweet and modest young man, devout towards the Gods, obedient to his parents, and obliging to his friends; indeed doing all things that were just. But when the tears of his funeral were scarcely dry, I thought it a time very improper to call upon you and put you in mind that you should bear this accident like a man; for when this unexpected afflic tion made you languish both in body and mind, I considered then that compassion was more seasonable than advice. For the most skilful physicians do not put a sudden stop to a flux of humors, but give them time to settle, and then foment the swelling by softening and bringing it to a head with medicines outwardly applied.

2. So now that a competent time is past — time which brings all things to maturity — since the first surprise of your calamity, I believed I should do an acceptable piece of friendship, if I should now comfort you with those reasons which may lessen your grief and silence your complaints.

> Soft words alleviate a wounded heart,
> If you in time will mitigate the smart.*

* Aesch. Prom. 378.

Euripides hath said wisely to this purpose: —

> Our applications should suited be
> Unto the nature of the malady;
> Of sorrow we should wipe the tender eyes,
> But the immoderate weeper should chastise.

For of all the passions which move and afflict the mind of man, sorrow in its nature is the most grievous; in some they say it hath produced madness, others have contracted incurable diseases, and some out of the vehemence of it have laid violent hands upon themselves.

3. Therefore to be sad, even to an indisposition, for the death of a son proceeds from a principle of nature, and it is out of our power to prevent it. I dislike those who boast so much of hard and inflexible temper which they call apathy, it being a disposition which never happens and never could be of use to us; for it would extinguish that sociable love we ought to have for one another, and which it is so necessary above all things to preserve. But to mourn excessively and to accumulate grief I do affirm to be altogether unnatural, and to result from a depraved opinion we have of things; therefore we ought to shun it as destructive in itself, and unworthy of a virtuous man; but to be moderately affected by grief we cannot condemn. It were to be wished, saith Crantor the Academic, that we could not be sick at all; but when a distemper seizeth us, it is requisite we should have sense and feeling in case any of our members be plucked or cut off. For that talked-of apathy can never happen to a man without great detriment; for as now the body, so soon the very mind would be wild and savage.

4. Therefore in such accidents, it is but reasonable that they who are in their right senses should avoid both extremes, of being without any passion at all and of having too much; for as the one argues a mind that is obstinate and fierce, so the other doth one that is soft and effeminate.

He therefore hath cast up his accounts the best, who, confining himself within due bounds, hath such ascendant over his temper, as to bear prosperous and adverse fortune with the same equality, whichsoever it is that happens to him in this life. He puts on those resolutions as if he were in a popular government where magistracy is decided by lot; if it luckily falls to his share, he obeys his fortune, but if it passeth him, he doth not repine at it. So we must submit to the dispensation of human affairs, without being uneasy and querulous. Those who cannot do this want prudence and steadiness of mind to bear more happy circumstances; for amongst other things which are prettily said, this is one remarkable precept of Euripides: —

If Fortune prove extravagantly kind,
Above its temper do not raise thy mind;
If she disclaims thee like a jilting dame,
Be not dejected, but be still the same,
Like gold unchanged amidst the hottest flame.

For it is the part of a wise and well-educated man, not to be transported beyond himself with any prosperous events, and so, when the scene of fortune changeth, to observe still the comeliness and decency of his morals. For it is the business of a man that lives by rule, either to prevent an evil that threatens him, or, when it is come, to qualify its malignity and make it as little as he can, or put on a masculine brave spirit and so resolve to endure it. For there are four ways that prudence concerns herself about any thing that is good; she is either industrious to acquire or careful to preserve, she either augments or useth it well. These are the measures of prudence, and consequently those of all other virtues, by which we ought to square ourselves in either fortune.

For no man lives who always happy is.*

And, by Jove, you should not hinder what ought to be done, —

* From the Stheneboea of Euripides, Frag. 662.

Those things which in their nature ought to be.*

5. For, as amongst trees some are very thick with fruit, and some bear none at all; amongst living creatures some are very prolific, and some barren; and as in the sea there is alternate vicissitude of calms and tempests, so in human life there are many and various circumstances which distract a man into divers changes of fortune. One considering this matter hath not said much from the purpose: —

Think not thyself, O Atreus' son, forlorn;
Thou always to be happy wast not born.
Even Agamemnon's self must be a shade,
For thou of frail materials art made.
Sorrow and joy alternately succeed;
'Spite of thy teeth, the Gods have so decreed.†

These verses are Menander's.

If thou, O Trophimus, of all mankind,
Uninterrupted happiness couldst find;
If when thy mother brought thee forth with pain,
Didst this condition of thy life obtain,
That only prosperous gales thy sails should fill,
And all things happen 'cording to thy will;
If any of the Gods did so engage,
Such usage justly might provoke thy rage,
Matter for smart resentment might afford,
For the false Deity did break his word.
But if thou unexcepted saw'st the light,
Without a promise of the least delight,
I say to thee (gravely in tragic style)
Thou ought to be more patient all the while.
In short, — and to say more there's no one can, —
Which is a name of frailty, thou'rt a man;
A creature more rejoicing is not found,
None more dejected creeps upon the ground.
Though weak, yet he in politics refines,
Involves himself in intricate designs;
With nauseous business he himself doth cloy,
And so the pleasure of his life destroy.
In great pursuits thou never hast been cross'd
No disappointments have thy projects lost;
Nay, such hath been the mildness of thy fate,
Hast no misfortune had of any rate;
If Fortune is at any time severe,
Serene and undisturbed thou must appear.

* From Euripides.

† Eurip. Iph. Aul. 29.

But though this be the state of all sublunary things, yet such is the extravagant pride and folly of some men, that if they are raised above the common by the greatness of their riches or functions of magistracy, or if they arrive to any eminent charge in the commonwealth, they presently swell with the titles of their honor, and threaten and insult over their inferiors; never considering what a treacherous Goddess Fortune is, and how easy a revolution it is for things that are uppermost to be thrown down from their height and for humble things to be exalted, and that these changes of Fortune are performed quickly and in the swiftest moments of time. To seek for any certainty therefore in that which is uncertain is the part of those who judge not aright of things: —

Like to a wheel that constantly goes round,
One part is up whilst t'other's on the ground.

6. But the most sovereign remedy against sorrow is our reason, and out of this arsenal we may arm ourselves with defence against all the casualties of life; for every one ought to lay down this as a maxim, that not only is he himself mortal in his nature, but life itself decays, and things are easily changed into quite the contrary to what they are; for our bodies are made up of perishing ingredients. Our fortunes and our passions too are subject to the same mortality; indeed all things in this world are in perpetual flux, —

Which no man can avoid with all his care.*

It is an expression of Pindar, that we are held to the dark bottom of hell by necessities as hard as iron. And Euripides says: —

No worldly wealth is firm and sure;
But for a day it doth endure.†

And also: —

From small beginnings our misfortunes grow,
And little rubs our feet do overthrow;
A single day is able down to cast
Some things from height, and others raise as fast.‡

* Il. XII. 327 † Eurip. Phoeniss. 558. ‡ From the Ino of Euripides.

Demetrius Phalereus affirms that this was truly said, but that the poet had been more in the right if for a single day he had put only a moment of time.

> For earthly fruits and mortal men's estate
> Turn round about in one and selfsame rate;
> Some live, wax strong, and prosper day by day,
> While others are cast down and fade away.*

And Pindar hath it in another place,

> What are we, what are we not?
> Man is but a shadow's dream.†

He used an artificial and very perspicuous hyperbole to draw human life in its genuine colors; for what is weaker than a shadow? Or what words can be found out whereby to express a shadow's dream? Crantor hath something consonant to this, when, condoling Hippocles upon the loss of his children, he speaks after this manner: —

"These are the things which all the old philosophers talk of and have instructed us in; which though we do not agree to in every particular, yet this hath too sharp a truth in it, that our life is painful and full of difficulties; and if it doth not labor with them in its own nature, yet we ourselves have infected it with that corruption. For the inconstancy of Fortune joined us at the beginning of our journey, and hath accompanied us ever since; so that it can produce nothing that is sound or comfortable unto us; and the bitter potion was mingled for us as soon as we were born. For the principles of our nature being mortal is the cause that our judgment is depraved, that diseases, cares, and all those fatal inconveniences afflict mankind."

But what need of this digression? Only that we may be made sensible that it is no unusual thing if a man be unfortunate; but we are all subject to the same calamity. For as Theophrastus saith, Fortune surpriseth us unawares, robs us of those things we have got by the sweat of our

* From the Ino of Euripides. † Pindar, Pyth. VIII. 135.

industry, and spoils the gaudy appearance of a prosperous condition; and this she doth when she pleaseth, not being stinted to any periods of time. These and things of the like nature it is easy for a man to ponder with himself, and to hearken to the sayings of ancient and wise men; among whom divine Homer is the chief, who sung after this manner: —

> Of all that breathes or grovelling creeps on earth,
> Most man is vain! calamitous by birth:
> To-day, with power elate, in strength he blooms;
> The haughty creature on that power presumes:
> Anon from Heaven a sad reverse he feels;
> Untaught to bear, 'gainst Heaven the wretch rebels.
> For man is changeful, as his bliss or woe;
> Too high when prosperous, when distress'd too low.*

And in another place: —

> What or from whence I am, or who my sire
> (Replied the chief), can Tydeus' son enquire?
> Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
> Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
> Another race the following spring supplies;
> They fall successive, and successive rise.
> So generations in their course decay;
> So flourish these, when those are past away.†

How prettily he managed this image of human life appears from what he hath said in another place: —

> For what is man? Calamitous by birth,
> They owe their life and nourishment to earth;
> Like yearly leaves, that now with beauty crown'd,
> Smile on the sun, now wither on the ground.‡

When Pausanias the king of Sparta was frequently bragging of his performances, and bidding Simonides the lyric poet in raillery to give him some wise precept, he, knowing the vain-glory of him that spoke, admonished him to remember that he was a man. Philip the king of Macedon, when he had received three despatches of good news at the same time, of which the first was that his chariots

* Odyss. XVIII. 130.
† Il. VI. 145.
‡ Il. XXI. 463.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT

The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our **Website :**
www.Brainfly.net
or
by sending **$64.95** in check or money order to :
Brainfly Inc.
5100 Garfield Ave. #46
Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us $55.95** and we will send you a full copy of ***Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature*** **AND our** ***5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))*** **plus our** ***Wholesale price list.***

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net