

OF THE LOVE OF WEALTH.

1. HIPPOMACHUS, a master of the exercises, when some were commending a tall man that had long hands as one that promised fair to be good at fisticuffs, replied, A fit man indeed, if the victor's laurel were to be hanged up aloft, and should be his that could best reach it and take it down. We may say the same to those that esteem so extravagantly and repute it so great a felicity to possess fair fields, stately mansion-houses, and a great deal of money lying by them, — that they were in the right, if happiness were to be bought and sold. You may see indeed many persons that choose rather to be rich and at the same time very miserable, than to part with their money and become happy. But, alas! indolency and repose of spirit, magnanimity, constancy, resolution, and contentment of mind, — these are not a money-purchase. Being wealthy is not despising wealth; nor is possessing things superfluous the same as not needing things superfluous.

2. From what other evils then can riches free us, if they deliver us not even from an inordinate desire of them? It is true, indeed, that by drinking men allay their thirst after drink, and by eating they satisfy their longings after food; and he that said,

Bestow a coat, of your good will,
On poor Hipponax cold and chill

if more clothes had been heaped on than he needed, would have thrown them off, as being ill at ease. But the

love of money is not abated by having silver and gold ;
neither do covetous desires cease by possessing still more.
But one may say to wealth, as to an insolent quack,

Thy physic's nought, and makes my illness worse.

When this distemper seizes a man that wants only bread and a house to put his head in, ordinary raiment and such victuals as come first to hand, it fills him with eager desires after gold and silver, ivory and emeralds, hounds and horses ; thus taking off the appetite, and carrying it from things that are necessary after things that are troublesome and unusual, hard to come by, and unprofitable when obtained. For no man is poor as to what nature requires and what suffices it ; no man takes up money on use to buy meal or cheese, bread or olives ; but you may see one man run into debt for the purchase of a sumptuous house, another for an adjoining olive-yard, another for corn-fields or vineyards, another for Galatian mules, and another by a vain expense,

For horses fitly paired, with prancing feet
To draw the empty chariots through the street,*

has been plunged over head and ears into contracts and use-money, pawns and mortgages. Moreover, as they that use to drink after they have quenched their thirst, and to eat after their hunger is satisfied, vomit up even what they took when they were athirst or hungry ; so they that covet things useless and superfluous, enjoy not even those that are necessary. This is the character of these men.

3. As for those that spend nothing although they possess much, and yet are always craving more, they may still more increase our wonder at their folly, especially when one calls to mind that of Aristippus, who was wont to say, that when a man eats and drinks liberally and yet is never the nearer

* II. XV. 453.

being filled, he presently goes to the physician and enquires what is his disease and his indisposition and how he may get rid of it; but if one that has five beds desires ten, and having ten tables is for purchasing as many more, and having land and money in good store is not at all filled, but still is bent, even breaking his natural rest, upon getting more, and when he has never so much never has enough, this man thinks he has no need of a physician to cure him and to show him from what cause his distemper arises. Indeed, when a man is athirst that hath not drunk at all, we expect that upon his drinking his thirstiness should cease; but as for him that drinks and drinks and so goes on without giving over, we do not think such a one needs further repletion, but evacuation; and we advise him by all means to vomit, as knowing that his trouble proceeds not from the want of any thing, but from some sharp humor or preternatural heat that is within him.

Among those persons, therefore, that are for increasing their substance and getting more, he that is poor and indigent may perhaps give over his cares when he has got a house or found a treasure, or, by a friend's help, has paid his debts and his creditors have discharged him. But as for him that, having more than enough, yet still desires to have more, it is not gold nor silver, not horses, sheep, or oxen, that can cure him of this disease, but he needs evacuation and purgation. For his distemper is not penury and want, but an insatiable desire and thirst after riches, proceeding from a depraved and inconsiderate judgment of things, which if it be not plucked out of men's minds, like a thing twisting across and contracting them, they will always be in want of superfluities, that is, be craving things they have no need of.

4. When a physician visits a patient that has thrown himself upon his bed and lies there groaning and refusing to eat, he feels his pulse and asks him some questions;

and finding that he is not at all feverish, he tells him it is his mind that is distempered, and goes his way. When we see therefore a man pining away for more means and sighing sadly at any expenses, forbearing no sordid or painful course that brings him gain, when yet he hath houses and lands, herds and slaves, and clothes enough, what shall we call this man's disease but poverty of mind? For as for want of money, one friend, as Menander says, by being a benefactor to him can cure it; but as to this other of the mind, all a man's friends, living or dead, cannot satisfy it. It was therefore a good saying of Solon concerning such persons:

Those men that after wealth aspire
Set no fixed bounds to their desire.

To those indeed that are wise, the riches that Nature requires are limited, and confined within the compass of their real needs, as within a circle drawn from a centre at a certain distance.

There is also this particular mischief in the love of wealth, that this desire hinders and opposes its own satisfaction, which other desires do procure. For no man abstains from a good morsel because he loves dainties, nor from wine because he thirsts after wine, as these men abstain from using money because they love money. Does it not look like madness and a piteous distemper, for a man not to make use of a garment because he shakes with cold, to refuse to eat bread because he is ready to famish with hunger, and not to use wealth because he is greedy of getting it? This is the evil case that Thrasonides describes: "I have such a thing within by me, I have it in my power, and I will this thing (like those that are madly in love), but I do it not. When I have locked and sealed up all, or have told out so much to the usurers and tradesmen, I scrape together and hunt after more; I quarrel

and contend with the servants, the ploughmen and debtors. O Apollo, hast thou ever seen a more wretched man, or any lover more miserable?"

5. Sophocles being asked by one whether he was able yet to company with a woman; Heavens defend, said he, I have got my liberty, and by means of my old age have escaped those mad and furious masters. For it is very fit and becoming that, when our pleasures leave us, those desires should do so too, which, as Alcaeus says,

'Twas never any man's good hap
Nor woman's wholly to escape.

But it is otherwise in the love of wealth, which, like a hard and severe mistress, compels us to get what it forbids us to enjoy, and excites an appetite but denies the pleasure of its gratification. Stratonicus wittily abused the Rhodians for their profuseness, when he said that they builded their houses as if they were immortal, but provided for their tables as if they were to live but a little while. So covetous men seem to be profuse by what they possess, when they are sordid wretches if you consider what they use and enjoy; for they endure labor, but taste no pleasure.

Demades once came to Phocion's house and surprised him as he was at dinner; and when he saw his frugal and slender diet, I much wonder, Phocion, says he, that you should manage state affairs, and can dine as you do. For this orator himself pleaded causes and harangued the people only for his gut; and looking upon Athens as affording too little a supply for his luxury, he fetched his provisions from Macedonia. For which cause Antipater, seeing him when he was an old man, compared him to a sacrifice when all was over and there remained nothing of the beast but only the tongue and the stomach. But who would not wonder at thee, O wretched man, who, being able to live as thou dost, — so sordidly, so unlike a man,

bestowing nothing on anybody, being currish to thy friends, and without any ambition to serve the public, — yet afflictest thyself and watchest whole nights, hirest out thy labors, liest at catch for inheritances, crouchest to every one, when thou art so well provided by thy sordid parsimony to live at ease?

It is reported of a certain Byzantine, that, surprising a whoremaster with his wife that was very hard-favored, he cried out, O wretch, what compelled thee to do this? — for her dowry is my solace. It is necessary for kings, for procurators under them, for those that covet pre-eminence and rule over cities, that they should heap up treasure; they are forced through ambition, pride, and vain-glory to make feasts, to gratify friends, to maintain a retinue, to send presents, to feed armies, to purchase gladiators. But thou hast so much business lying upon thy hand, tormentest thyself, tumblest up and down, and all this while livest the life of a snail in thy shell through parsimony, and endurest all hardships, receiving no advantage at all; just like the bath-keeper's ass, that carries the wood and fuel for the fires and is always filled with the smoke and ashes of the stove, but itself is neither bathed nor warmed, washed nor cleansed there.

6. I have said enough of this sort of covetousness, which makes a man live the life of an ass or ant. But there is another sort of it which is more savage, that calumniates and gets inheritance by bad arts, that pries into other men's affairs, that is full of thoughtfulness and cares, counting how many of their friends are yet alive, and after all enjoying nothing of what by all these arts has been heaped up.

As therefore we have a greater aversion and hatred against vipers, poisonous flies, and spiders than against bears and lions, because they kill and destroy men, but serve themselves no farther of their carcasses, which they

do not feed upon as those other wild beasts do ; so they that become bad and ill men through sordidness and parsimony deserve more of our abhorrence than those that prove such by luxurious living and excess, for they deprive others of what they are neither able nor inclined to make use of themselves. Hence it is that the luxurious, when they are rich and well provided, give some truce to their debaucheries ; as Demosthenes said to some that were of opinion that Demades ceased to be an ill man. Now, says he, you see him full and glutted, like lions, that then hunt not after prey. But as for the others, who in the management of affairs propose no end to themselves either of pleasure or profit, their covetous desires have no truce or cessation, they being always empty and standing in need of all things.

7. But some perhaps may plead on their behalf, that these men keep and hoard up their wealth for their children and heirs, — to whom they part with nothing whilst they are alive ; but, like those mice that live in mines and pick up and eat the golden sands and ore, you cannot come by any of that gold, till you anatomize them to find it after they are dead. But to what end, I pray, would they leave such a deal of money and a great estate to their children and heirs ? That they forsooth may preserve it also for others, and those others in like manner shall hand it down to their children (just like those earthen pipes the potters make for a water-course, which retain none of the water themselves, but one pipe only conveys it to the next), till some informing false accuser or tyrant appears and cuts off this keeper in trust, and when his breath is stopped, derives and diverts the course of his wealth into another channel ; or, as they say, till some one that is the most wicked of the race devours and consumes all that those who went before him had preserved. For not only, as Euripides says,

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