

## BOOK I

### I

I who once composed with eager zest  
Am driven by grief to shelter in sad songs;  
All torn the Muses' cheeks who spell the words  
For elegies that wet my face with tears.  
No terror could discourage them at least  
From coming with me on my way.  
They were the glory of my happy youth  
And still they comfort me in hapless age.  
Old age came suddenly by suffering sped,  
And grief then bade her government begin:  
My hair untimely white upon my head,  
And I a worn out bone-bag hung with flesh.  
Death would be happy if it spared the glad  
But heeded invocations from the wretch.  
But now Death's ears are deaf to hopeless cries,  
His hands refuse to close poor weeping eyes.  
First fickle Fortune gave me wealth short-lived,  
Then in a moment all but ruined me.  
Since Fortune changed her trustless countenance,  
Small welcome to the days prolonging life.  
Foolish the friends who called me happy then  
Whose fall shows how my foothold was unsure.

WHILE I was quietly thinking these thoughts over to myself and giving vent to my sorrow with the help of my pen, I became aware of a woman standing over me. She was of awe-inspiring appearance, her eyes burning and keen beyond the usual power of men. She was so full of years that I could hardly think of her as of my own generation, and yet she possessed a vivid colour and undiminished vigour. It was difficult to be sure of her height, for sometimes she was of average human size, while at other times she seemed to touch

the very sky with the top of her head, and when she lifted herself even higher, she pierced it and was lost to human sight. Her clothes were made of imperishable material, of the finest thread woven with the most delicate skill. (Later she told me that she had made them with her own hands.) Their colour, however, was obscured by a kind of film as of long neglect, like statues covered in dust. On the bottom hem could be read the embroidered Greek letter Pi, and on the top hem the Greek letter Theta.<sup>1</sup> Between the two a ladder of steps rose from the lower to the higher letter. Her dress had been torn by the hands of marauders who had each carried off such pieces as he could get. There were some books in her right hand, and in her left hand she held a sceptre.

At the sight of the Muses of Poetry at my bedside dictating words to accompany my tears, she became angry.

'Who,' she demanded, her piercing eyes alight with fire, 'has allowed these hysterical sluts to approach this sick man's bedside? They have no medicine to ease his pains, only sweetened poisons to make them worse. These are the very women who kill the rich and fruitful harvest of Reason with the barren thorns of Passion. They habituate men to their sickness of mind instead of curing them. If as usual it was only some ordinary man you were carrying off a victim of your blandishments, it would matter little to me – there would be no harm done to my work. But this man has been nourished on the philosophies of Zeno and Plato. Sirens is a better name for you and your deadly enticements: be gone, and leave him for my own Muses to heal and cure.'

These rebukes brought blushes of shame into the Muses' cheeks, and with downcast eyes they departed in a dismal

1. In the first commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* or *Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle* Boethius says there are two kinds of philosophy, practical and speculative or contemplative, the Greek names for which begin with the letters Pi and Theta respectively. The former would seem to include moral philosophy and ethics, the latter theology, metaphysics and natural science or physics. In *Porphy. Dial. I*, Migne, LXIV, 112.

company. Tears had partly blinded me, and I could not make out who this woman of such imperious authority was. I could only fix my eyes on the ground overcome with surprise and wait in silence for what she would do next. She came closer and sat down on the edge of my bed. I felt her eyes resting on my face, downcast and lined with grief. Then sadly she began to recite the following lines about my confusion of mind.

## II

'So sinks the mind in deep despair  
And sight grows dim; when storms of life  
Blow surging up the weight of care,  
It banishes its inward light  
And turns in trust to the dark without.  
This was the man who once was free  
To climb the sky with zeal devout  
To contemplate the crimson sun,  
The frozen fairness of the moon –  
Astronomer once used in joy  
To comprehend and to commune  
With planets on their wandering ways.  
This man, this man sought out the source  
Of storms that roar and rouse the seas;  
The spirit that rotates the world,  
The cause that translocates the sun  
From shining East to watery West;  
He sought the reason why spring hours  
Are mild with flowers manifest,  
And who enriched with swelling grapes  
Ripe autumn at the full of year.  
Now see that mind that searched and made  
All Nature's hidden secrets clear  
Lie prostrate prisoner of night.  
His neck bends low in shackles thrust,  
And he is forced beneath the weight  
To contemplate – the lowly dust.

'But it is time for healing, not lamenting,' she went on. Then, fixing her eyes intently upon me, she said, 'You are the man, are you not, who was brought up on the milk of my learning and fed on my own food until you reached maturity? I gave you arms to protect you and keep your strength unimpaired, but you threw them away. Surely you recognize me? And yet you do not speak. Is it shame or is it astonishment that keeps you silent? I should prefer it to be shame, but I see that it is not.'

When she saw that it was not that I would not speak, but that, dumbstruck, I could not, she gently laid her hand on my breast and said, 'It is nothing serious, only a touch of amnesia that he is suffering, the common disease of deluded minds. He has forgotten for a while who he is, but he will soon remember once he has recognized me. To make it easier for him I will wipe a little of the blinding cloud of worldly concern from his eyes.'

As she spoke she gathered her dress into a fold and wiped from my eyes the tears that filled them.

## III

The night was put to flight, the darkness fled,  
 And to my eyes their former strength returned:  
 Like when the wild west wind accumulates  
 Black clouds and stormy darkness fills the sky:  
 The sun lies hid before the hour the stars  
 Should shine, and night envelops all the earth:  
 But should the North wind forth from his Thracian cave  
 Lash at the darkness and loose the prisoner day,  
 Out shines the sun with sudden light suffused  
 And dazzles with its rays the blinking eye.

In the same way the clouds of my grief dissolved and I drank in the light. With my thoughts recollected I turned to examine the face of my physician. I turned my eyes and fixed my gaze upon her, and I saw that it was my nurse in whose

Lady of P.

house I had been cared for since my youth - Philosophy. I asked her why she had come down from the heights of heaven to my lonely place of banishment.

'Is it to suffer false accusation along with me?' I asked. <sup>just his position</sup>

'Why, my child,' she replied, 'should I desert you? Why should I not share your labour and the burden you have been saddled with because of the hatred of my name? Should I be frightened by being accused? Or cower in fear as if it were something unprecedented? This is hardly the first time wisdom has been threatened with danger by the forces of evil. In olden times, too, before the time of my servant Plato, I fought many a great battle against the reckless forces of folly. And then, in Plato's own lifetime, his master Socrates was unjustly put to death - a victorious death won with me at his side. After that the mobs of Epicureans and Stoics and the others each did all they could to seize for themselves the inheritance of wisdom that he left. As part of their plunder they tried to carry me off, but I fought and struggled, and in the fight the robe was torn which I had woven with my own hands. They tore off little pieces from it and went away in the fond belief that they had obtained the whole of philosophy. The sight of traces of my clothing on them gained them the reputation among the ignorant of being my familiars, and as a result many of them became corrupted by the ignorance of the uninitiated mob.'

'But even if you do not know the stories of the foreign philosophers, how Anaxagoras was banished from Athens, how Socrates was put to death by poisoning, and how Zeno was tortured, you do know of Romans like Canius, Seneca and Soranus, whose memory is still fresh and celebrated. The sole cause of their tragic sufferings was their obvious and complete contempt of the pursuits of immoral men which my teaching had instilled in them. It is hardly surprising if we are driven by the blasts of storms when our chief aim on this sea of life is to displease wicked men. And though their numbers are great, we can afford to despise them because they

have no one to lead them and are carried along only by ignorance which distracts them at random first one way then another. When their forces attack us in superior numbers, our general conducts a tactical withdrawal of his forces to a strong point, and they are left to encumber themselves with useless plunder. Safe from their furious activity on our ramparts above, we can smile at their efforts to collect all the most useless booty: our citadel cannot fall to the assaults of folly.'

## IV

'Let men compose themselves and live at peace,  
Set haughty fate beneath their feet,  
And look unmoved on fortune good and bad,  
And keep unchanging countenance:  
Unmoved they'll stand before the ocean's rage  
Which churns up waves from deep below,  
Unmoved by restless Mount Vesuvius,  
Her furnace burst and hurling flames,  
Unmoved by fiery thunderbolts in flight  
Which sweep in ruin towers on high.  
Why then are miserable men in awe  
When tyrants rage impotently?  
If first you rid yourself of hope and fear  
You have disarmed the tyrant's wrath:  
But whosoever quakes in fear or hope,  
Drifting and losing mastery,  
Has cast away his shield, has left his place,  
And binds the chain with which he will be bound.

'Do you understand this,' she went on, 'and have my words penetrated your mind? - or are you like the proverbial donkey, deaf to the lyre? Tell me why you are weeping and why your eyes are full of tears. As Homer says,<sup>2</sup>

Speak out and hide it not within.

If you want the doctor's help, you must reveal the wound.'  
I collected my thoughts and replied with vigour, 'Surely

2. *Iliad*, I, 363.

the severity of Fortune's attack on me needs no further mention; it is self evident. Look at the mere appearance of this place. Is it the library of my house which you chose yourself as a place of sure repose and where you so often used to sit with me discussing all the topics of philosophy?<sup>3</sup> Are my clothes the same and my face the same as when I used to probe the secrets of nature with you, and you used to describe the various paths of the planets with your stick and relate human ethics and the whole of human life to the patterns of the celestial order?

'This, then, is how you reward your followers. And yet it was no one but you who commended Plato's opinion that commonwealths would be blessed if they should be ruled by philosophers or if their rulers should happen to have studied philosophy.<sup>4</sup> You took your cue from him and said that the reason why it was necessary for philosophers to take part in government was to prevent the reins of government falling into the hands of wicked and unprincipled men to the ruin and destruction of the good. And it was upon this authority that I decided to transfer to public administration what I had learned from you in the course of our private leisure. You and God, who has sowed you in the minds of wise men, are my witnesses that the only consideration to impel me to any office was a general desire for good. This was the reason why I had no alternative but grimly to resist evil and why in the struggle to defend justice I have always been indifferent to the hatred I inspired in men who wielded greater power than mine - an indifference inspired by the knowledge that I had freely followed my conscience. I have countless times opposed the attacks of Cunigast on the fortunes of some defenceless person, or stopped Triguilla, the Prefect of the Palace, from

3. Boethius speaks specifically of 'matters human and divine' by which he means the two traditional divisions of philosophy into morals and natural science. See note p. 36.

4. See Plato's *Republic*, 473d. Penguin Classics version, p. 233.

some injustice he had begun or already carried through. And I have countless times interposed my authority to protect wretched men from danger when they were hounded by the endless false accusations of the barbarians in their continuous and unpunished lust for wealth. I have never been moved <sup>wh!</sup> from justice to injustice by anything. I have ached with as much pain as the provinces themselves to see their fortunes ruined by private plundering and public taxation. When the terrible famine came and a ruinous and inexplicable measure of forced sale of food supplies was announced which seemed calculated to crush the province of Campania with poverty, I took up the cudgels against the Pretorian Prefect in the interest of the common good, and although the king knew of my actions, I succeeded in the struggle to block the sale.

'Again, in their hope and ambition the palace jackals had already swallowed up the wealth of an ex-consul called Paulinus, when I snatched him from their very jaws. Another ex-consul, Albinus, had been presumed guilty and I had to set myself against the hatred of the Public Prosecutor,<sup>5</sup> Cyprian, to save him from punishment. You must surely agree that the opposition I provoked against me was considerable. But I ought to have been the safer among the rest, as my love of justice led me to keep no reserve of favour among the courtiers for my greater safety. Yet who were the informers who struck me down? One was Basilius. He had previously been dismissed from the royal service and was forced into impeaching me by his debts. Two others were Opilio and Gaudentius. A royal decree had sentenced them to banishment because of their countless frauds, and to avoid complying they had protected themselves by seeking sanctuary. When the news

5. To translate the Latin title *referendarius* as I have done as 'Public Prosecutor' is perhaps true to Boethius' attitude to his accuser, but not strictly accurate. No one English word corresponds to the Latin: the *referendarius* was 'an officer whose duty it was to prepare cases that were to come before the King's Consistorium and to make a clear and impartial statement of the cases in the presence of the court' (Helen M. Barrett, *Boethius*, p. 52).

reached the king he made a proclamation that unless they had left the city of Ravenna by the appointed day they would be driven out with their foreheads branded. There could scarcely be greater severity than that. Yet the very same day they laid information against me and the denunciation was accepted. Surely my actions didn't deserve that? And surely the fact that my conviction was prejudged didn't make just men of my accusers? Fortune should have blushed at the sight of innocence accused, or at least at the depravity of my accusers.

'But you want to know the nub of the charge against me. I am accused of having desired the safety of the Senate. And as for the manner, I am accused of having prevented an informer from delivering certain papers with which he intended to show the Senate guilty of treason. My Lady, tell me what your advice is: am I to deny the charge to avoid causing you shame? But the fact is that I did desire the safety of the Senate and will never cease to. Perhaps I should confess, except that my attempt to prevent the informer was not continued. Should I count it a crime to have desired the safety of the Senate? They at any rate by their own decrees about me have made it a crime. Imprudence may deceive itself, but it cannot alter the true value of things, and the ruling of Socrates that it is quite wrong to assent to falsehood and conceal truth forbids me either to hide truth or be party to untruth.<sup>6</sup> But I leave it to you and to the wise to judge of these events which I have committed to writing to ensure that they are remembered, and to preserve for posterity the true sequence of events.<sup>7</sup>

'As for the forged letters cited as evidence that I had hoped for the freedom of Rome, there is little purpose in speaking of them. It would have been obvious that they were forgeries

6. Boethius is thinking either of Plato's *Theaetetus*, 151d or the *Republic*, 485c, Penguin Classics translation, p. 245.

7. Unfortunately this account, if it was ever completed, is now lost.

had I been allowed to make use of what carries the greatest weight in all such matters – the confession of the very informers.

‘But there is no freedom left to hope for. If only there were, I would have replied with the same retort as Canius made to the Emperor Caligula when he was accused of being involved in a plot against him. “If I had known of it,” he said, “you would not.”’

‘Grief has not so dulled my wits in all this as to make me complain that the wicked have piled up their crimes against virtue; but what does fill me with wonder is that they have brought their hopes to fruition. It may be part of human weakness to have evil wishes, but it is nothing short of monstrous that God should look on while every criminal is allowed to achieve his purpose against the innocent. If this is so, it was hardly without reason that one of your household<sup>8</sup> asked where evil comes from if there is a god, and where good comes from if there isn’t.

‘Even supposing there may have been some justice in that the evil men who are out for the blood of all good men and of all the Senate also sought my own death when they saw me championing them, surely I did not deserve the same treatment from the members of the Senate themselves? You remember, I am sure, since you were always present to give me your guidance when I was preparing a speech or some course of action – you remember how at Verona a charge of treason was made against Albinus and how in his eagerness to see the total destruction of the Senate the king tried to extend the charge to them all in spite of their universal innocence; and you remember how I defended them with complete indifference to any danger, and you know that I am telling the truth and have never boasted of any merit of mine. For as often as a

man receives the reward of fame for his boasting, the conscience that indulges in self congratulation loses something of its secret merit.

‘And now you see the outcome of my innocence – instead of reward for true goodness, punishment for a crime I did not commit. Yet no confession however clear-cut of any crime has ever found a jury so united in their agreement on the severest penalty that some were not softened either by the thought of human weakness or the universal uncertainty of human fortune. If I had been charged with planning to burn down churches, or plotting the sacrilegious murder of priests, or aiming to massacre all men of worth, I would still have been brought into court and either have confessed or been convicted before the sentence was carried out. But here I am, nearly five hundred miles away, condemned to death and to have my property confiscated, silenced, and with no opportunity to offer a defence, all because of a somewhat too willing support of the Senate. How they deserve that no one should ever be convicted on a similar charge!

‘Even those who laid the information against me could see the dignity the charge conferred, and in order to obscure it by the addition of some other charge, they lyingly alleged that in my ambition for high office I had stained my conscience with acts of sacrilege. But you had taken up your dwelling within me and used to drive from my mind every thought of human advancement and there could be no place for sacrilege beneath your gaze. You used daily to instill in my ears and thoughts that Pythagorean maxim, “Follow God”. And since you were there lifting me up to such a pitch of excellence as to make me like a god, it was scarcely fitting that I should angle for the help of the vilest of spirits. Then there is the blameless life in my home, my friendship with the most honourable of men, and the sanctity of Symmachus, my father-in-law, a man worthy of the same veneration as yourself; all these guarantee me against suspicion of this charge. But the wicked-

8. The philosopher in question appears to have been Epicurus (fr. 374 quoted by Lactantius, *De Ira Dei* 13, 21, *Opera Omnia* II i, ed. S. Brandt and G. Laubman, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna, 1893).

ness of it is that it is from you yourself that they obtain their trust in this great accusation. For the very fact that I am steeped in your teaching and trained in your morality seems to them to prove that I have been engaged in evil practice. It is not enough that my devotion to you has not helped me at all, but you are now made the victim of the hatred that should be directed at me alone. Over and above all this, another weight is added to my load of ills in that the world does not judge actions on their merit, but on their chance results, and they consider that only those things which are blessed with a happy outcome have been undertaken with sound advice. It is always the unfortunate who are first to be deserted by the goodwill of men.

'I have no mind to recall all the rumours that are circulating and the discord of their multifarious opinions. I will just say that the final burden which adversity heaps on her victims, is that when some accusation is made against them, they are believed to have deserved all that they suffer. And so, stripped of every possession, thrust from my offices, and with my reputation in ruins, for doing a favour I have received a punishment. I seem to see the wicked haunts of criminals overflowing with happiness and joy; I seem to see all the most desperate of men threatening new false denunciations; I seem to see good men lying prostrate with fear at the danger I am in while all abandoned villains are encouraged to attempt every crime in the expectation of impunity or even in the hope of reward for its accomplishment; and I seem to see the innocent deprived of peace and safety and even of all chance of self defence.'

## V

'Creator of the starry heavens,  
Lord on thy everlasting throne,  
Thy power turns the moving sky  
And makes the stars obey fixed laws.

Thou makest lesser stars grow dim  
Before the Moon's reflected rays  
When opposite her kinsman bright:  
Then closer to the Sun she moves  
And loses all her borrowed light.  
Thou the Evening Star dost make  
Rise cold and clear in early night,  
And change, as Morning Star, his reins  
To pale before the new sun's light.  
When Winter's cold has stripped the trees  
Thou holdest day in confines tight:  
When Summer comes with torrid heat  
Thou givest swifter hours to night.  
Thy power rules the changing year:  
The tender leaves the North wind stole  
The Spring West wind makes reappear;  
The seeds that Winter saw new sown  
The Summer burns as crops full-grown.  
All things obey their ancient law  
And all perform their proper tasks;  
All things thou holdest in strict bounds, -  
To human acts alone denied  
Thy fit control as Lord of all.  
Why else does slippery Fortune change  
So much, and punishment more fit  
For crime oppress the innocent?  
~~Corrupted men sit throned on high;~~  
By strange reversal evilness  
Downtreads the necks of holy men.  
Bright virtue lies in dark eclipse  
By clouds obscured, and unjust men  
Heap condemnation on the just;  
No punishment for perjury  
Or lies adorned with speciousness.  
They use their power when whimsy bids,  
And love to subjugate great kings  
Whose sway holds countless men in fear.  
O Thou who bindest bonds of things

Look down on all earth's wretchedness;  
 Of this great work is man so mean  
 A part, by Fortune to be tossed?  
 Lord, hold the rushing waves in check,  
 And with the bond thou rul'st the stars,  
 Make stable all the lands of earth.'

Throughout this long and noisy display of grief, Philosophy remained unperturbed. When I had finished she looked at me calmly and said:

'The moment I saw your sad and tear-stained looks, they told me that you had been reduced to the misery of banishment; but unless you had told me, I would still not have known how far you had been banished. However, it is not simply a case of your having been banished far from your home; you have wandered away yourself, or if you prefer to be thought of as having been banished, it is you yourself that have been the instrument of it. No one else could ever have done it. For if you remember the country you came from, it is not governed by majority rule like Athens of old, but, if I may quote Homer,<sup>9</sup>

One is its lord and one its king;

and rather than having them banished, He prefers to have a large body of subjects. Submitting to His governance and obeying His laws is freedom. You seem to have forgotten the oldest law of your community, that any man who has chosen to make his dwelling there has the sacred right never to be banished. So there can be no fear of exile for any man within its walls and moat. On the other hand, if anyone stops wanting to live there, he automatically stops deserving it.

'And so it is not the sight of this place which gives me concern but your own appearance, and it is not the walls of your library with their glass and ivory decoration that I am looking for, but the seat of your mind. That is the place where

9. *Iliad*, 2, 204.

I once stored away – not my books, but – the thing that makes them have any value, the philosophy they contain.

'As for what you said about your services to the common good, it was but scant measure considering the great number of things you have done. Then your talk about the truth or untruth of the charges against you is only what is known to many. And you were right in thinking that the crimes and deceits of your accusers needed but cursory mention since they are the continual talk of the people who are more richly and better acquainted with their every detail. Then you spoke with considerable vehemence about the Senate's unjust behaviour and spoke with grief of my inclusion in the accusations and wept tears at the damage done to my injured reputation. And last of all, with your anger flaring up against Fortune, and the bitter complaint that reward is not measured out according to desert, in your final angry verses you prayed that the same peace that rules in the heavens should rule on earth.

'In your present state of mind, while this great tumult of emotion has fallen upon you and you are torn this way and that by alternating fits of grief, wrath and anguish, it is hardly time for the more powerful remedies. I will use gentler medicines. It is as if you had become swollen and calloused under the influence of these disturbing passions, and by their more gentle action they will temper you ready to receive the strength of a sharper medicament.'

## VI

'If when summer solstice brings  
 The Crab with parching heat,  
 In furrows that refuse the seed  
 The farmer sows his wheat,  
 No crops will spring to glad his hopes  
 And acorns he shall eat.  
 You would not search the woodside gay  
 To pick a springtime flower

When all the shuddering country groans  
 Before the North Wind's power.  
 Nor would you seek with greedy hand  
 To pluck your vines in May;  
 The wine god gives his gift of grapes  
 When Autumn's on the way.  
 For God has fixed the seasons' tasks  
 And each receives its own:  
 No power is free to disarray  
 The order God has shown.  
 Should then some being precipitate  
 Aspire to quit its place,  
The Lord would not allow success  
Its mutiny to grace.

'Will you first then let me discover your state of mind and test it with a few simple questions? That way I can discover the best method of curing you.'

'Ask what you like,' I replied, 'and I will answer.'

'Do you believe that this life consists of haphazard and chance events, or do you think it is governed by some rational principle?'

'I could never believe that events of such regularity are due to the haphazards of chance. In fact I know that God the Creator watches over His creation. The day will never come that sees me abandon the truth of this belief.'

'It is true,' she said, 'and indeed it is the very thing you were singing of just now when you were deploring the fact that only mankind is outside God's care. It was your firm conviction that all other things were governed by reason. So how you can be sick when you hold so healthy a belief is quite beyond my understanding. However, let us carry our examination deeper. I feel there is something missing somewhere. Tell me, then, since you have no doubts that the world is governed by God, what are the means by which you think He guides it?'

'I can't answer the question,' I replied, 'because I don't understand what it means.'

'I was right, then,' she said, 'in thinking that something was missing. Your defences have been breached and your mind has been infiltrated by the fever of emotional distraction. So tell me, do you remember what is the end and purpose of things and the goal to which the whole of Nature is directed?'

'I did hear it once,' I said, 'but my memory has been blunted by grief.'

'Well, do you know the source from which all things come?'

'Yes,' I replied, and said that it was God.

'How can it be then, that you know the beginning of things but don't know their end? The peculiarity of these disturbances is that they have just enough power to move a man from his usual position, but can't quite throw him over and totally uproot him. I want you to answer this too: do you remember that you are a man?'

'Why shouldn't I?' I said.

'Can you, then, tell me what man is?'

'Are you asking me if I know whether man is a rational and mortal animal? I do know it and I acknowledge that that is what I am.'

'Are you sure you are not something more?'

'Quite sure.'

'Now I know the other cause, or rather the major cause of your illness: you have forgotten your true nature. And so I have found out in full the reason for your sickness and the way to approach the task of restoring you to health. It is because you are confused by loss of memory that you wept and claimed you had been banished and robbed of all your possessions. And it is because you don't know the end and purpose of things that you think the wicked and the criminal have power and happiness. And because you have forgotten the means by which the world is governed you believe these ups and downs of fortune happen haphazardly. These are

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grave causes and they lead not only to illness but even death. Thanks, however, to the Author of all health, nature has not quite abandoned you. In your true belief about the world's government – that it is subject to divine reason and not the haphazards of chance – there lies our greatest hope of rekindling your health. You need have no fears then, now that this tiny spark has blazed with the fire of life. Still, as it is not yet time for stronger medicine, and as it is the accepted opinion that the nature of the mind is such that for every true belief it rejects, it assumes a false one from which the fog of distraction rises to blot out its true insight, I will try to lessen this particular fog little by little by applying gentle remedies of only medium strength. In this way the darkness of the ever treacherous passions may be dispelled, and you will be able to see the resplendent light of truth.'

### VII

'In dark clouds  
Hidden  
The stars can shed  
No light.  
If boisterous winds  
Stir the sea  
Causing a storm,  
Waves once crystal  
Like days serene  
Soon turn opaque  
And thick with mud  
Prevent the eye  
Piercing the water.  
Streams that wander  
From tall hills  
Down descending  
Often dash  
Against a rock  
Torn from the hillside.

## BOOK I

If you desire  
To look on truth  
And follow the path  
With unswerving course,  
Rid yourself  
Of joy and fear,  
Put hope to flight,  
And banish grief.  
The mind is clouded  
And bound in chains  
Where these hold sway.'