

THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY OF BOETHIUS.

Translated into English Prose and Verse BY

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Quantumlibet igitur sæviant mali, sapienti tamen corona non decidet, non
arescet.

Melioribus animum conformaveris, nihil opus est iudice præmium deferente,
tu te ipse excellentioribus addidisti; studium ad pejora deflexeris, extra ne
quæsieris ultorem, tu te ipse in deteriora trusisti.

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1897.

PREFACE.

The book called 'The Consolation of Philosophy' was throughout the Middle Ages, and down to the beginnings of the modern epoch in the sixteenth century, the scholar's familiar companion. Few books have exercised a wider influence in their time. It has been translated into every European tongue, and into English nearly a dozen times, from King Alfred's paraphrase to the translations of Lord Preston, Causton, Ridpath, and Duncan, in the eighteenth century. The belief that what once pleased so widely must still have some charm is my excuse for attempting the present translation. The great work of Boethius, with its alternate prose and verse, skilfully fitted together like dialogue and chorus in a Greek play, is unique in literature, and has a pathetic interest from the time and circumstances of its composition. It ought not to be forgotten. Those who can go to the original will find their reward. There may be room also for a new translation in English after an interval of close on a hundred years.

Some of the editions contain a reproduction of a bust purporting to represent Boethius. Lord Preston's translation, for example, has such a portrait, which it refers to an original in marble at Rome. This I have been unable to trace, and suspect that it is apocryphal. The Hope Collection at Oxford contains a completely different portrait in a print, which gives no authority. I have ventured to use as a frontispiece a reproduction from a plaster-cast in the Ashmolean Museum, taken from an ivory diptych preserved in the Bibliotheca Quiriniana at Brescia, which represents Narius Manlius Boethius, the father of the philosopher. Portraiture of this period is so rare that it seemed that, failing a likeness of the author himself, this authentic representation of his father might have interest, as giving the consular dress and insignia of the time, and also as illustrating the decadence of contemporary art. The consul wears a richly embroidered cloak; his right hand holds a staff surmounted by the Roman eagle, his left the *mappa circensis*, or napkin used for starting the races in the circus; at his feet are palms and bags of money—prizes for the victors in the games. For permission to use this cast my thanks are due to the authorities of the Ashmolean Museum, as also to Mr. T.W. Jackson, Curator of the Hope Collection, who first called my attention to its existence.

I have to thank my brother, Mr. L. James, of Radley College, for much valuable help and for correcting the proof-sheets of the translation. The text used is that of Peiper, Leipsic

PROEM.

Anicus Manlius Severinus Boethius lived in the last quarter of the fifth century A.D., and the first quarter of the sixth. He was growing to manhood, when Theodoric, the famous Ostrogoth, crossed the Alps and made himself master of Italy. Boethius belonged to an ancient family, which boasted a connection with the legendary glories of the Republic, and was still among the foremost in wealth and dignity in the days of Rome's abasement. His parents dying early, he was brought up by Symmachus, whom the age agreed to regard as of almost saintly character, and afterwards became his son-in-law. His varied gifts, aided by an excellent education, won for him the reputation of the most accomplished man of his time. He was orator, poet, musician, philosopher. It is his peculiar distinction to have handed on to the Middle Ages the tradition of Greek philosophy by his Latin translations of the works of Aristotle. Called early to a public career, the highest honours of the State came to him unsought. He was sole Consul in 510 A.D., and was ultimately raised by Theodoric to the dignity of Magister Officiorum, or head of the whole civil administration. He was no less happy in his domestic life, in the virtues of his wife, Rusticiana, and the fair promise of his two sons, Symmachus and Boethius; happy also in the society of a refined circle of friends. Noble, wealthy, accomplished, universally esteemed for his virtues, high in the favour of the Gothic King, he appeared to all men a signal example of the union of merit and good fortune. His felicity seemed to culminate in the year 522 A.D., when, by special and extraordinary favour, his two sons, young as they were for so exalted an honour, were created joint Consuls and rode to the senate-house attended by a throng of senators, and the acclamations of the multitude. Boethius himself, amid the general applause, delivered the public speech in the King's honour usual on such occasions. Within a year he was a solitary prisoner at Pavia, stripped of honours, wealth, and friends, with death hanging over him, and a terror worse than death, in the fear lest those dearest to him should be involved in the worst results of his downfall. It is in this situation that the opening of the 'Consolation of Philosophy' brings Boethius before us. He represents himself as seated in his prison distraught with grief, indignant at the injustice of his misfortunes, and seeking relief for his melancholy in writing verses descriptive of his condition. Suddenly there appears to him the Divine figure of Philosophy, in the guise of a woman of superhuman dignity and beauty, who by a succession of discourses convinces him of the vanity of regret for the lost gifts of fortune, raises his mind once more to the contemplation of the true good, and makes clear to him the mystery of the world's moral government.

BOOK I.

THE SORROWS OF BOETHIUS.

SUMMARY.

Boethius' complaint (Song I.).—CH. I. Philosophy appears to Boethius, drives away the Muses of Poetry, and herself laments (Song II.) the disordered condition of his mind.— CH. II. Boethius is speechless with amazement. Philosophy wipes away the tears that have clouded his eyesight.—CH. III. Boethius recognises his mistress Philosophy. To his wondering inquiries she explains her presence, and recalls to his mind the persecutions to which Philosophy has oftentimes from of old been subjected by an ignorant world. CH. IV. Philosophy bids Boethius declare his griefs. He relates the story of his unjust accusation and ruin. He concludes with a prayer (Song V.) that the moral disorder in human affairs may be set right.—CH. V. Philosophy admits the justice of Boethius' self vindication, but grieves rather for the unhappy change in his mind. She will first tranquillize his spirit by soothing remedies.—CH. VI. Philosophy tests Boethius' mental state by certain questions, and discovers three chief causes of his soul's sickness: (1) He has forgotten his own true nature; (2) he knows not the end towards which the whole universe tends; (3) he knows not the means by which the world is governed.

BOOK I.

SONG I.

BOETHIUS' COMPLAINT.

Who wrought my studious numbers
Smoothly once in happier days,
Now perforce in tears and sadness
Learn a mournful strain to raise.
Lo, the Muses, grief-dishevelled,
Guide my pen and voice my woe;
 Down their cheeks unfeigned the tear drops To my sad
 complaining flow!
These alone in danger's hour
Faithful found, have dared attend
On the footsteps of the exile
To his lonely journey's end.
These that were the pride and pleasure
Of my youth and high estate
Still remain the only solace
Of the old man's mournful fate.
Old? Ah yes; swift, ere I knew it,
By these sorrows on me pressed
Age hath come; lo, Grief hath bid me
Wear the garb that fits her best.
O'er my head untimely sprinkled
These white hairs my woes proclaim,
And the skin hangs loose and shrivelled
On this sorrow-shrunken frame.
Blest is death that intervenes not
In the sweet, sweet years of peace,
But unto the broken-hearted,
When they call him, brings release!
Yet Death passes by the wretched,
Shuts his ear and slumbers deep;
Will not heed the cry of anguish,
Will not close the eyes that weep.
For, while yet inconstant Fortune
Poured her gifts and all was bright,

Death's dark hour had all but whelmed me
In the gloom of endless night.
Now, because misfortune's shadow
Hath o'erclouded that false face,
Cruel Life still halts and lingers,
Though I loathe his weary race.
Friends, why did ye once so lightly
Vaunt me happy among men?
Surely he who so hath fallen
Was not firmly founded then.

I.

While I was thus mutely pondering within myself, and recording my sorrowful complainings with my pen, it seemed to me that there appeared above my head a woman of a countenance exceeding venerable. Her eyes were bright as fire, and of a more than human keenness; her complexion was lively, her vigour showed no trace of enfeeblement; and yet her years were right full, and she plainly seemed not of our age and time. Her stature was difficult to judge. At one moment it exceeded not the common height, at another her forehead seemed to strike the sky; and whenever she raised her head higher, she began to pierce within the very heavens, and to baffle the eyes of them that looked upon her. Her garments were of an imperishable fabric, wrought with the finest threads and of the most delicate workmanship; and these, as her own lips afterwards assured me, she had herself woven with her own hands. The beauty of this vesture had been somewhat tarnished by age and neglect, and wore that dingy look which marble contracts from exposure. On the lower-most edge was inwoven the Greek letter Π [Greek: P], on the topmost the letter θ [Greek: Th],^[A] and between the two were to be seen steps, like a staircase, from the lower to the upper letter. This robe, moreover, had been torn by the hands of violent persons, who had each snatched away what he could clutch.^[B] Her right hand held a note-book; in her left she bore a staff. And when she saw the Muses of Poesie standing by my bedside, dictating the words of my lamentations, she was moved awhile to wrath, and her eyes flashed sternly. 'Who,' said she, 'has allowed yon play acting wantons to approach this sick man—these who, so far from giving medicine to heal his malady, even feed it with sweet poison? These it is who kill the rich crop of reason with the barren thorns of passion, who accustom men's minds to disease, instead of setting them free. Now, were it some common

man whom your allurements were seducing, as is usually your way, I should be less indignant. On such a one I should not have spent my pains for naught. But this is one nurtured in the Eleatic and Academic philosophies. Nay, get ye gone, ye sirens, whose sweetness lasteth not; leave him for my muses to tend and heal!' At these words of upbraiding, the whole band, in deepened sadness, with downcast eyes, and blushes that confessed their shame, dolefully left the chamber.

But I, because my sight was dimmed with much weeping, and I could not tell who was this woman of authority so commanding—I was dumfounded, and, with my gaze fastened on the earth, continued silently to await what she might do next. Then she drew near me and sat on the edge of my couch, and, looking into my face all heavy with grief and fixed in sadness on the ground, she bewailed in these words the disorder of my mind:

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Π (P) stands for the Political life, the life of action; θ (Th) for the Theoretical life, the life of thought.

[B] The Stoic, Epicurean, and other philosophical sects, which Boethius regards as heterodox. See also below, ch. iii., [p. 14](#).

SONG II. HIS DESPONDENCY.

Alas! in what abyss his mind
Is plunged, how wildly tossed!
Still, still towards the outer night
She sinks, her true light lost,
As oft as, lashed tumultuously
By earth-born blasts, care's waves rise high.

Yet once he ranged the open heavens,
The sun's bright pathway tracked;
Watched how the cold moon waxed and waned;
Nor rested, till there lacked
To his wide ken no star that steers
Amid the maze of circling spheres.

The causes why the blustering winds
Vex ocean's tranquil face,
Whose hand doth turn the stable globe,
Or why his even race
From out the ruddy east the sun
Unto the western waves doth run:

What is it tempers cunningly
The placid hours of spring,
So that it blossoms with the rose
For earth's engarlanding:
Who loads the year's maturer prime
With clustered grapes in autumn time:

All this he knew—thus ever strove
Deep Nature's lore to guess.
Now, reft of reason's light, he lies,
And bonds his neck oppress;
While by the heavy load constrained,
His eyes to this dull earth are chained.

II.

'But the time,' said she, 'calls rather for healing than for lamentation.' Then, with her eyes bent full upon me, 'Art thou that man,' she cries, 'who, erstwhile fed with the milk and reared upon the nourishment which is mine to give, had grown up to the full vigour of a manly spirit? And yet I had bestowed such armour on thee as would have proved an invincible defence, hadst thou not first cast it away. Dost thou know me? Why art thou silent? Is it shame or amazement that hath struck thee dumb? Would it were shame; but, as I see, a stupor hath seized upon thee.' Then, when she saw me not only answering nothing, but mute and utterly incapable of speech, she gently touched my breast with her hand, and said: 'There is no danger; these are the symptoms of lethargy, the usual sickness of deluded minds. For awhile he has forgotten himself; he will easily recover his memory, if only he first recognises me. And that he may do so, let me now wipe his eyes that are clouded with a mist of mortal things.' Thereat, with a fold of her robe, she dried my eyes all swimming with tears.

SONG III.
THE MISTS DISPELLED.

Then the gloom of night was scattered,
Sight returned unto mine eyes.
So, when haply rainy Caurus
Rolls the storm-clouds through the skies,
Hidden is the sun; all heaven
Is obscured in starless night.
But if, in wild onset sweeping,
Boreas frees day's prisoned light,
All suddenly the radiant god outstreams,
And strikes our dazzled eyesight with his beams.

III.

Even so the clouds of my melancholy were broken up. I saw the clear sky, and regained the power to recognise the face of my physician. Accordingly, when I had lifted my eyes and fixed my gaze upon her, I beheld my nurse, Philosophy, whose halls I had frequented from my youth up.

'Ah! why,' I cried, 'mistress of all excellence, hast thou come down from on high, and entered the solitude of this my exile? Is it that thou, too, even as I, mayst be persecuted with false accusations?'

'Could I desert thee, child,' said she, 'and not lighten the burden which thou hast taken upon thee through the hatred of my name, by sharing this trouble? Even forgetting that it were not lawful for Philosophy to leave companionless the way of the innocent, should I, thinkest thou, fear to incur reproach, or shrink from it, as though some strange new thing had befallen? Thinkest thou that now, for the first time in an evil age, Wisdom hath been assailed by peril? Did I not often in days of old, before my servant Plato lived, wage stern warfare with the rashness of folly? In his lifetime, too, Socrates, his master, won with my aid the victory of an unjust death. And when, one after the other, the Epicurean herd, the Stoic, and the rest, each of them as far as in them lay, went about to seize the heritage he left, and were dragging me off protesting and resisting, as their booty, they tore in pieces the garment which I had woven with my own hands, and, clutching the torn pieces, went off, believing that the whole of me had passed into their possession. And some of them, because some traces of my vesture were seen upon them, were destroyed through the mistake of the lewd multitude, who falsely deemed them to be my disciples. It may be thou knowest not of the banishment of Anaxagoras, of the poison

draught of Socrates, nor of Zeno's torturing, because these things happened in a distant country; yet mightest thou have learnt the fate of Arrius, of Seneca, of Soranus, whose stories are neither old nor unknown to fame. These men were brought to destruction for no other reason than that, settled as they were in my principles, their lives were a manifest contrast to the ways of the wicked. So there is nothing thou shouldst wonder at, if on the seas of this life we are tossed by storm-blasts, seeing that we have made it our chiefest aim to refuse compliance with evil-doers. And though, maybe, the host of the wicked is many in number, yet is it contemptible, since it is under no leadership, but is hurried hither and thither at the blind driving of mad error. And if at times and seasons they set in array against us, and fall on in overwhelming strength, our leader draws off her forces into the citadel while they are busy plundering the useless baggage. But we from our vantage ground, safe from all this wild work, laugh to see them making prize of the most valueless of things, protected by a bulwark which aggressive folly may not aspire to reach.'

SONG IV.

NOTHING CAN SUBDUE VIRTUE.

Whoso calm, serene, sedate,
Sets his foot on haughty fate;
Firm and steadfast, come what will,
Keeps his mien unconquered still;
Him the rage of furious seas,
Tossing high wild menaces,
Nor the flames from smoky forges
That Vesuvius disgorges,
Nor the bolt that from the sky
Smites the tower, can terrify.
Why, then, shouldst thou feel affright
At the tyrant's weakling might?

Dread him not, nor fear no harm,
And thou shall his rage disarm;
But who to hope or fear gives way—
Lost his bosom's rightful sway—
He hath cast away his shield,
Like a coward fled the field;
He hath forged all unaware
Fetters his own neck must bear!

IV.

'Dost thou understand?' she asks. Do my words sink into thy mind? Or art thou dull "as the ass to the sound of the lyre"? Why dost thou weep? Why do tears stream from thy eyes?

"Speak out, hide it not in thy heart."

If thou lookest for the physician's help, thou must needs disclose thy wound.'

Then I, gathering together what strength I could, began: 'Is there still need of telling? Is not the cruelty of fortune against me plain enough? Doth not the very aspect of this place move thee? Is this the library, the room which thou hadst chosen as thy constant resort in my home, the place where we so often sat together and held discourse of all things in heaven and earth? Was my garb and mien like this when I explored with thee nature's hid secrets, and thou didst trace for me with thy wand the courses of the stars, moulding the while my character and the whole conduct of my life after the pattern of the celestial order? Is this the recompense of my obedience? Yet thou hast enjoined by Plato's mouth the maxim, "that states would be happy, either if philosophers ruled them, or if it should so befall that their rulers would turn philosophers." By his mouth likewise thou didst point out this imperative reason why philosophers should enter public life, to wit, lest, if the reins of government be left to unprincipled and profligate citizens, trouble and destruction should come upon the good. Following these precepts, I have tried to apply in the business of public administration the principles which I learnt from thee in leisured seclusion. Thou art my witness and that divinity who hath implanted thee in the hearts of the wise, that I brought to my duties no aim but zeal for the public good. For this cause I have become involved in bitter and irreconcilable feuds, and, as happens inevitably, if a man holds fast to the independence of conscience, I have had to think nothing of giving offence to the powerful in the cause of justice. How often have I encountered and balked Conigastus in his assaults on the fortunes of the weak? How often have I thwarted Triguilla, steward of the king's household, even when his villainous schemes were as good as accomplished? How often have I risked my position and influence to protect poor wretches from the false charges innumerable with which they were for ever being harassed by the greed and license of the barbarians? No one has ever drawn me aside from justice to oppression. When ruin was overtaking the fortunes of the provincials through the combined pressure of private rapine and public taxation, I grieved no less than the

sufferers. When at a season of grievous scarcity a forced sale, disastrous as it was unjustifiable, was proclaimed, and threatened to overwhelm Campania with starvation, I embarked on a struggle with the prætorian prefect in the public interest, I fought the case at the king's judgment-seat, and succeeded in preventing the enforcement of the sale. I rescued the consular Paulinus from the gaping jaws of the court bloodhounds, who in their covetous hopes had already made short work of his wealth. To save Albinus, who was of the same exalted rank, from the penalties of a prejudged charge, I exposed myself to the hatred of Cyprian, the informer.

'Thinkest thou I had laid up for myself store of enmities enough? Well, with the rest of my countrymen, at any rate, my safety should have been assured, since my love of justice had left me no hope of security at court. Yet who was it brought the charges by which I have been struck down? Why, one of my accusers is Basil, who, after being dismissed from the king's household, was driven by his debts to lodge an information against my name. There is Opilio, there is Gaudentius, men who for many and various offences the king's sentence had condemned to banishment; and when they declined to obey, and sought to save themselves by taking sanctuary, the king, as soon as he heard of it, decreed that, if they did not depart from the city of Ravenna within a prescribed time, they should be branded on the forehead and expelled. What would exceed the rigour of this severity? And yet on that same day these very men lodged an information against me, and the information was admitted. Just Heaven! had I deserved this by my way of life? Did it make them fit accusers that my condemnation was a foregone conclusion? Has fortune no shame—if not at the accusation of the innocent, at least for the vileness of the accusers? Perhaps thou wonderest what is the sum of the charges laid against me? I wished, they say, to save the senate. But how? I am accused of hindering an informer from producing evidence to prove the senate guilty of treason. Tell me, then, what is thy counsel, O my mistress. Shall I deny the charge, lest I bring shame on thee? But I did wish it, and I shall never cease to wish it. Shall I admit it? Then the work of thwarting the informer will come to an end. Shall I call the wish for the preservation of that illustrious house a crime? Of a truth the senate, by its decrees concerning me, has made it such! But blind folly, though it deceive itself with false names, cannot alter the true merits of things, and, mindful of the precept of Socrates, I do not think it right either to keep the truth concealed or allow falsehood to pass. But this, however it may be, I leave to thy judgment and to the verdict of the discerning. Moreover, lest the course of events and the true facts should be hidden from posterity, I have myself committed to writing an account of the transaction.

'What need to speak of the forged letters by which an attempt is made to prove that I hoped for the freedom of Rome? Their falsity would have been manifest,

if I had been allowed to use the confession of the informers themselves, evidence which has in all matters the most convincing force. Why, what hope of freedom is left to us? Would there were any! I should have answered with the epigram of Canius when Caligula declared him to have been cognisant of a conspiracy against him. "If I had known," said he, "thou shouldst never have known." Grief hath not so blunted my perceptions in this matter that I should complain

because impious wretches contrive their villainies against the virtuous, but at their achievement of their hopes I do exceedingly marvel. For evil purposes are, perchance, due to the imperfection of human nature; that it should be possible for scoundrels to carry out their worst schemes against the innocent, while God beholdeth, is verily monstrous. For this cause, not without reason, one of thy disciples asked, "If God exists, whence comes evil? Yet whence comes good, if He exists not?" However, it might well be that wretches who seek the blood of all honest men and of the whole senate should wish to destroy me also, whom they saw to be a bulwark of the senate and all honest men. But did I deserve such a fate from the Fathers also? Thou rememberest, methinks—since thou didst ever stand by my side to direct what I should do or say—thou rememberest, I say, how at Verona, when the king, eager for the general destruction, was bent on implicating the whole senatorial order in the charge of treason brought against Albinus, with what indifference to my own peril I maintained the innocence of its members, one and all. Thou knowest that what I say is the truth, and that I have never boasted of my good deeds in a spirit of self-praise. For whenever a man by proclaiming his good deeds receives the recompense of fame, he diminishes in a measure the secret reward of a good conscience. What issues have overtaken my innocency thou seest. Instead of reaping the rewards of true virtue, I undergo the penalties of a guilt falsely laid to my charge—nay, more than this; never did an open confession of guilt cause such unanimous severity among the assessors, but that some consideration, either of the mere frailty of human nature, or of fortune's universal instability, availed to soften the verdict of some few. Had I been accused of a design to fire the temples, to slaughter the priests with impious sword, of plotting the massacre of all honest men, I should yet have been produced in court, and only punished on due confession or conviction. Now for my too great zeal towards the senate I have been condemned to outlawry and death, unheard and undefended, at a distance of near five hundred miles away.^[C] Oh, my judges, well do ye deserve that no one should hereafter be convicted of a fault like mine!

'Yet even my very accusers saw how honourable was the charge they brought against me, and, in order to overlay it with some shadow of guilt, they falsely asserted that in the pursuit of my ambition I had stained my conscience with

sacrilegious acts. And yet thy spirit, indwelling in me, had driven from the chamber of my soul all lust of earthly success, and with thine eye ever upon me, there could be no place left for sacrilege. For thou didst daily repeat in my ear and instil into my mind the Pythagorean maxim, "Follow after God." It was not likely, then, that I should covet the assistance of the vilest spirits, when thou wert moulding me to such an excellence as should conform me to the likeness of God. Again, the innocency of the inner sanctuary of my home, the company of friends of the highest probity, a father-in-law revered at once for his pure character and his active beneficence, shield me from the very suspicion of sacrilege. Yet—atrocious as it is—they even draw credence for this charge from *thee*; I am like to be thought implicated in wickedness on this very account, that I am imbued with *thy* teachings and stablished in *thy* ways. So it is not enough that my devotion to thee should profit me nothing, but thou also must be assailed by reason of the odium which I have incurred. Verily this is the very crown of my misfortunes, that men's opinions for the most part look not to real merit, but to the event; and only recognise foresight where Fortune has crowned the issue with her approval. Whereby it comes to pass that reputation is the first of all things to abandon the unfortunate. I remember with chagrin how perverse is popular report, how various and discordant men's judgments. This only will I say, that the most crushing of misfortune's burdens is, that as soon as a charge is fastened upon the unhappy, they are believed to have deserved their sufferings. I, for my part, who have been banished from all life's blessings, stripped of my honours, stained in repute, am punished for well-doing.

'And now methinks I see the villainous dens of the wicked surging with joy and gladness, all the most recklessly unscrupulous threatening a new crop of lying informations, the good prostrate with terror at my danger, every ruffian incited by impunity to new daring and to success by the profits of audacity, the guiltless not only robbed of their peace of mind, but even of all means of defence. Wherefore I would fain cry out:

FOOTNOTES:

[C] The distance from Rome to Pavia, the place of Boethius' imprisonment, is 455 Roman miles.

SONG V.
BOETHIUS' PRAYER.

'Builder of yon starry dome,
Thou that whirlest, throned eternal,
Heaven's swift globe, and, as they roam,
Guid'st the stars by laws supernal:
So in full-sphered splendour dight
Cynthia dims the lamps of night,
But unto the orb fraternal
Closer drawn, ^[D] doth lose her light.

'Who at fall of eventide,
Hesper, his cold radiance showeth,
Lucifer his beams doth hide,
Paling as the sun's light groweth,
Brief, while winter's frost holds sway,
By thy will the space of day;
Swift, when summer's fervour gloweth,
Speed the hours of night away.

'Thou dost rule the changing year:
When rude Boreas oppresses,
Fall the leaves; they reappear,
Wooed by Zephyr's soft caresses.
Fields that Sirius burns deep grown
By Arcturus' watch were sown:
Each the reign of law confesses,
Keeps the place that is his own.

'Sovereign Ruler, Lord of all!
Can it be that Thou disdainest
Only man? 'Gainst him, poor thrall,
Wanton Fortune plays her vainest.
Guilt's deserved punishment
Falleth on the innocent;
High uplifted, the profanest
On the just their malice vent.

'Virtue cowers in dark retreats,
Crime's foul stain the righteous beareth,
Perjury and false deceits
Hurt not him the wrong who dareth;
But whene'er the wicked trust
In ill strength to work their lust,
Kings, whom nations' awe declareth
Mighty, grovel in the dust.

'Look, oh look upon this earth,
Thou who on law's sure foundation
Framedst all! Have we no worth,
We poor men, of all creation?
Sore we toss on fortune's tide;
Master, bid the waves subside!
And earth's ways with consummation
Of Thy heaven's order guide!'

FOOTNOTES:

[D] The moon is regarded as farthest from the sun at the full, and, as she wanes, approaching gradually nearer.

V.

When I had poured out my griefs in this long and unbroken strain of lamentation, she, with calm countenance, and in no wise disturbed at my complainings, thus spake:

'When I saw thee sorrowful, in tears, I straightway knew thee wretched and an exile. But how far distant that exile I should not know, had not thine own speech revealed it. Yet how far indeed from thy country hast thou, not been banished, but rather hast strayed; or, if thou wilt have it banishment, hast banished thyself! For no one else could ever lawfully have had this power over thee. Now, if thou wilt call to mind from what country thou art sprung, it is not ruled, as once was the Athenian polity, by the sovereignty of the multitude, but "one is its Ruler, one its King," who takes delight in the number of His citizens, not in their banishment; to submit to whose governance and to obey whose ordinances is perfect freedom. Art thou ignorant of that most ancient law of this thy country, whereby it is decreed that no one whatsoever, who hath chosen to fix there his dwelling, may be sent into exile? For truly there is no

fear that one who is encompassed by its ramparts and defences should deserve to be exiled. But he who has ceased to wish to dwell therein, he likewise ceases to deserve to do so. And so it is not so much the aspect of this place which moves me, as thy aspect; not so much the library walls set off with glass and ivory which I miss, as the chamber of thy mind, wherein I once placed, not books, but that which gives books their value, the doctrines which my books contain. Now, what thou hast said of thy services to the commonweal is true, only too little compared with the greatness of thy deservings. The things laid to thy charge whereof thou hast spoken, whether such as redound to thy credit, or mere false accusations, are publicly known. As for the crimes and deceits of the informers, thou hast rightly deemed it fitting to pass them over lightly, because the popular voice hath better and more fully pronounced upon them. Thou hast bitterly complained of the injustice of the senate. Thou hast grieved over my calumination, and likewise hast lamented the damage to my good name. Finally, thine indignation blazed forth against fortune; thou hast complained of the unfairness with which thy merits have been recompensed. Last of all thy frantic muse framed a prayer that the peace which reigns in heaven might rule earth also. But since a throng of tumultuous passions hath assailed thy soul, since thou art distraught with anger, pain, and grief, strong remedies are not proper for thee in this thy present mood. And so for a time I will use milder methods, that the tumours which have grown hard through the influx of disturbing passion may be softened by gentle treatment, till they can bear the force of sharper remedies.'

SONG VI.
ALL THINGS HAVE THEIR NEEDFUL ORDER.

He who to th' unwilling furrows
Gives the generous grain,
When the Crab with baleful fervours
Scorches all the plain;
He shall find his garner bare,
Acorns for his scanty fare.

Go not forth to cull sweet violets
From the purpled steep,
While the furious blasts of winter
Through the valleys sweep;
Nor the grape o'erhasty bring
To the press in days of spring.

For to each thing God hath given
Its appointed time;
No perplexing change permits He
In His plan sublime.
So who quits the order due
Shall a luckless issue rue.

VI.

'First, then, wilt thou suffer me by a few questions to make some attempt to test the state of thy mind, that I may learn in what way to set about thy cure?'

'Ask what thou wilt,' said I, 'for I will answer whatever questions thou chooseth to put.'

Then said she: 'This world of ours—thinkest thou it is governed haphazard and fortuitously, or believest thou that there is in it any rational guidance?'

'Nay,' said I, 'in no wise may I deem that such fixed motions can be determined by random hazard, but I know that God, the Creator, presideth over His work, nor will the day ever come that shall drive me from holding fast the truth of this belief.'

'Yes,' said she; 'thou didst even but now affirm it in song, lamenting that men alone had no portion in the divine care. As to the rest, thou wert unshaken in the belief that they were ruled by reason. Yet I marvel exceedingly how, in spite of thy firm hold on this opinion, thou art fallen into sickness. But let us probe more deeply: something or other is missing, I think. Now, tell me, since thou doubttest not that God governs the world, dost thou perceive by what means He rules it?'

'I scarcely understand what thou meanest,' I said, 'much less can I answer thy question.'

'Did I not say truly that something is missing, whereby, as through a breach in the ramparts, disease hath crept in to disturb thy mind? But, tell me, dost thou remember the universal end towards which the aim of all nature is directed?'

'I once heard,' said I, 'but sorrow hath dulled my recollection.'

'And yet thou knowest whence all things have proceeded.'

'Yes, that I know,' said I, 'and have answered that it is from God.'

'Yet how is it possible that thou knowest not what is the end of existence, when thou dost understand its source and origin? However, these disturbances of mind have force to shake a man's position, but cannot pluck him up and root him altogether out of himself. But answer this also, I pray thee: rememberest thou that thou art a man?'

'How should I not?' said I.

'Then, canst thou say what man is?'

'Is this thy question: Whether I know myself for a being endowed with reason and subject to death? Surely I do acknowledge myself such.'

Then she: 'Dost know nothing else that thou art?'

'Nothing.'

'Now,' said she, 'I know another cause of thy disease, one, too, of grave moment. Thou hast ceased to know thy own nature. So, then, I have made full discovery both of the causes of thy sickness and the means of restoring thy health. It is because forgetfulness of thyself hath bewildered thy mind that thou hast bewailed thee as an exile, as one stripped of the blessings that were his; it is because thou knowest not the end of existence that thou deemest abominable and wicked men to be happy and powerful; while, because thou hast forgotten by what means the earth is governed, thou deemest that

fortune's changes ebb and flow without the restraint of a guiding hand. These are serious enough to cause not sickness only, but even death; but, thanks be to the Author of our health, the light of nature hath not yet left thee utterly. In thy true judgment concerning the world's government, in that thou believest it subject, not to the random drift of chance, but to divine reason, we have the divine spark from which thy recovery may be hoped. Have, then, no fear; from these weak embers the vital heat shall once more be kindled within thee. But seeing that it is not yet time for strong remedies, and that the mind is manifestly so constituted that when it casts off true opinions it straightway puts on false, wherefrom arises a cloud of confusion that disturbs its true vision, I will now try and disperse these mists by mild and soothing application, that so the darkness of misleading passion may be scattered, and thou mayst come to discern the splendour of the true light.'

SONG VII.
THE PERTURBATIONS OF PASSION.

Stars shed no light
Through the black night,
When the clouds hide;
And the lashed wave,
If the winds rave
O'er ocean's tide,—

Though once serene
As day's fair sheen,—
Soon fouled and spoiled
By the storm's spite,
Shows to the sight
Turbid and soiled.

Oft the fair rill,
Down the steep hill
Seaward that strays,
Some tumbled block
Of fallen rock
Hinders and stays.

Then art thou fain
Clear and most plain
Truth to discern,
In the right way
Firmly to stay,
Nor from it turn?

Joy, hope and fear
Suffer not near,
Drive grief away:
Shackled and blind
And lost is the mind
Where these have sway.

About the Cover:

Unknown to scholars until its reappearance at auction a few decades ago, this monumental canvas of *Boethius Consoled by Philosophy* by Mattia Preti is, according to Dr. John Spike, "by any standard, one of the masterpieces of Preti's last years, and indeed of his entire career."¹ Painted in Malta around 1680, it is imbued with the drama, theatricality and tenebrism that characterizes his output from his mature period. Its earliest known history is referenced in the 1713 inventory of the collection of Fra Andrea di Giovanni, a Knight of the Order of Malta, for whom it was likely painted.

