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The Tenth Declamation of (Pseudo) Quintilian

A LECTURE

DELIVERED IN THE HALL OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE
ON THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1911

BY

ROBINSON ELLIS, M.A.

CORPUS PROFESSOR OF LATIN LITERATURE

LONDON

HENRY FROWDE

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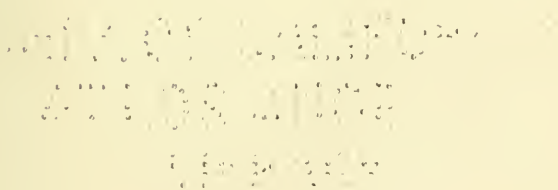
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PREFATORY NOTE

Two motives have induced me to turn into English and deliver as a public lecture one of the 19 larger Declamations ascribed to Quintilian, but now believed to be the work of a much later date. The Xth of these rhetorical exercitations occupies a prominent place in the collection owing to its subject, the (supposed) return from the grave and appearance to his mother of a young man on the evening of the day on which he had been cremated and several evenings following. In other words, the declamation is interesting *spiritualistically*. I do not suppose any ghost story has ever been recorded so circumstantially, and this is my chief reason for selecting it.

A subordinate motive may be found, as an Oxford friend has reminded me, in its resemblance to one of Wordsworth's more famous poems, *The Affliction of Margaret*, especially stanza 9:—

I look for ghosts; but none will force
Their way to me: 'tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Between the living and the dead;
For, surely, then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.

I may observe that in the same poem the preceding stanza (8):—

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
Or thou upon a desert thrown
Inheritest the lion's den.

points in my opinion to our great poet's familiarity with the 19 declamations as a whole: for in these the cruelties inflicted by pirates on those who fell into their hands are one

Harvet 1926.

of the most constantly recurring topics from first to last. And even if the Latin of the *Declamations* is sufficiently difficult to make it doubtful whether they were studied by the English poet, it is not impossible that the English translation by Mr. John Warr (1686) was accessible to him, the more so that its homely and simple style might perhaps give it an additional recommendation.

The work is entitled in the MSS. *Sepulcrum incantatum*, the tomb laid under a spell. The story is as follows:—

A young man, the only son of his parents, is seized by a severe illness and dies. On the evening of the day on which his body has been burnt, he appears in all his beauty and perfection of form to his mother, who, at first incredulous that it can be her son, is at last convinced and remains talking with him till he retires at the approach of dawn. The visit is repeated for several successive nights, during which time the mother keeps silence as to what she has seen. At last she makes a confession to her husband, who, unwilling that his house should be haunted by such apparitions, calls in an adept of the magic art, who lays the tomb in which the young man is buried under a solemn incantation, accompanied by magic rites, with iron bars and clamps to make it impossible for the shade to escape from his confinement. The mother, deprived in this way of the consolatory presence of her son, brings an action for cruelty (*malae tractationis*) against her husband.

QVINTILIANI DECLAMATIO

X

ALTHOUGH, judges, among those who, left forlorn by the death of their children, have seen all their vows, all the hopes they had stored up in preparation for old age, disappear rapidly before them, this saddest form of conflicting rivalry is usual—I mean, that each one of them believes his sorrows and tears receive an accession of dignity if he is thought the miserablest of men; still, the lady before you, calling as she does for pity by a kind of sorrow which is neither well known nor ordinary, is acting no immodest part if in the throng of mothers, who like her have lost a loving son that was either an only child or still young, she claims a pre-eminence, and, so to speak, a first place among mourners by the strange novelty of her misfortune. Alone of all women, she has had the incredible unhappiness of enduring a double bereavement in the loss of a single son. The first bereavement (her son's death) as shared with the rest of mankind and inseparable from our allotted destiny, she bore with such fortitude as she could. Not only had she lost no part of her son's company except the hours of daylight, she had besides ceased to fear any possibility of death coming to him of whose society she was in full possession. I hope to give no offence if I say she was over sparing of her tears and lamentations, sorrow not even allowing itself to mourn for one whose arrival was assured.

But now she has lost her solace, and finds herself disappointed in her belief. So long as she fancied that if she was able to see her son, he could not be dead, she played the ungrateful part of robbing that son of a new title to the name. The hapless youth, but for his con-

finement, would by this time have returned from the dead to his father as well. On her side the unhappy lady claims one thing and one only: you are not to think her private grief out of proportion to the real gravity of her loss. It was no phantom of an empty imagination, no creation of a mourner's fancy, that returned from the dead, no fleeting semblance disturbed her broken sleep. It was not even a countenance defaced by the ashes of the (funeral) pyre or a head darkened to a cinderous hue,¹ that was making its rounds on the nights when it was permitted to roam; it was a son, such as he had at one time been, young and beautiful of mien, who, not satisfied with being looked at or gazed upon, if you may believe the longings of his unhappy mother (for no one else saw him), embraced and kissed her, and lived a second life as long as the darkness lasted.

C. 2.

If this was really permitted to her, it was much the unhappy mother lost, and not much less if she only *believed* it to be so. Whereas now, lying awake by the side of her sleeping husband, and all² but abandoned to herself, she measures out the hours of blank darkness and the nights so tedious to a mourner. It was no creation of longing fancy, no shape coloured by imagination, nor such as lying dreams present to the eye; fact proved to her that the man does not wholly die, and therefore she looks for the arrival of that part which flames do not burn, ashes do not quench, cinerary urns and tombs are not able to confine. At this time her thoughts are of the soul locked in its prison-house, of her son struggling against the magician's iron bars. Unhappiest of all mothers known, she believes her son to be something more than a mere ghost, ever since it was found that he might be kept close in his grave; nor is it her own punishment, her own suffering, that consumes her in her desolation and

¹ *infuruum* or *infectum*, for *infernum* of MSS.

² *tantum non* for *tantum*.

tears open the wound the love of her child inflicted ; it is her deeper anguish that her son is not allowed to come to her despite his own wish. At this time throughout the night hours he is knocking against the earth, which a barbaric incantation has made heavy, and his ghost is wondering that it cannot roll away the sepulchre that lies upon it, that ghost which before used to disperse the very powers of the inferno. I pity him, shut in as he is, not by words of incantation alone—through these he might possibly have made his way—but because he has been brought back again to the state of the dead by solid fastenings and chains of iron.

C. 3.

Imagine the dismalness of his imprisonment, when even the wish to complain could not make him come back. I pity the woman to jealousy of whom the whole shameful deed is set down. For, in confining his son's ghost, the father acted on the plea that the mother complained of her repose being broken by his visits. Let no one therefore, judges, be surprised to find that the ghost declines to visit a father so cruel, so remorseless. It knew where the tears and sobs were to be found, which of the two parents most missed their son. The father had a breast of iron, a heart of flint ; he could feel no emotion at the loss of his child. Where indeed shall we look for cruelty, for inhumanity beyond his ? He grudged the mother of his son the enjoyment of her son's society. And this he did, not because he preferred to see him himself ; for even when he was alive and in no danger he never showed him any such dues of tenderness as to be thought likely when he was dead to retain any affectionate feeling now that his son was in his grave.

All the more unrestrained was the mother, as discharging her own and her husband's duty successively. She it was who blanched most at the apprehension of danger, was most ready to make vows for her son's recovery, never for a moment to forget her fears either by day or night. And the

unhappy youth knew which of his parents showed the readier and prompter affection. This was why he clung to this woman's kisses and hung on her neck. As it would be tedious to discuss when they are over kind offices which are the dues of parental affection, in that very illness by which her son lost his frail and perishable body, think with what distracted, what admirable fondness, the woman would at one time be hanging over his death-pale features and tearing her woe-begone eyes, at another complaining that it was all in vain that her breast had been drained to suckle him, then again would aim blows at the womb which could survive the death of its offspring. In his dying hour he noted all this and instructed his departing spirit which of his parents it was that was to be advantaged by his death.¹ Show me now the man who bids us stop our tears, who disapproves of lingering out the time of mourning. The shade repaid his mother's fondness. I am well assured that when the dead body is lying surrounded by mourners, when it seems to have bid adieu to every care, it still retains some feeling, some perception, still passes judgement on its kin. I would say with all earnestness to those who have lost their children, be freer in your tears, more lavish in your conduct of the funeral, never believe that death has finally set in. If there be any father to whom his son's ghost does not appear, it is a sign that the ghost is angry [and therefore retains its feelings after death].

C. 4.

By this time the body had chilled and the sluggish blood in it had tightened all the veins for death and the last gleam of brightness in the unsteady eyes was disappearing, the father had begun to believe the assurance of the physicians that the case was beyond hope, yet still the mother thought her son was breathing, and if her kisses had withdrawn the chill from any part of his body, piteously protested the vital warmth had returned. The

¹ See note at the end. *Cui* seems here to be used for *utri*.

death flames, the funeral pyre, were a loathing to her, she would have the body put aside for a time, the limbs kept as they were. And still the unhappy mother feels a more consuming regret that her son was buried, since after burial he was permitted to return.

I need not tell you, judges, how laboriously the day of the funeral was lengthened out, how long she clung to her son's body when the flames were playing about it. How indeed could she possibly hope to be allowed another sight of him? to have eyes which tears for the loss of a son could not blind? Such was her misery, she was already looking out for an adept to evoke her son's shade.

The rest of the story it should have been for you, unhappy mother, to tell the judges; and were it not that your words were changed to groans by your loss and by the tears you shed, far better were it to bemoan those nights of sorrow in your own words. I will, however, complete the task as best I can.

Satiate thyself to the full, unhappy lady, with the memory, if with nothing besides, of that day when we formed a funeral procession to thy only son's grave.

I had ceased, she says, by this time to mourn or weep, and was rejoicing that the hours of unbroken darkness were setting in. Tired out, the condolences of kinsmen had ceased, the lamentations of the household had given way to profound sleep.

C. 5.

Let no one, I implore, put such an affront upon my motherly feelings as to assert that it was in sleep I saw my son. Miserable as I was, what could have made sleep possible in that hour? Of my husband's absence I have no cause to complain. He would have been severely punished if he had consented to share my tears through the weary hours of night. Then he would at least have seen him, not as unsubstantial semblances of things assume a body to our thought, when illusory ideas take shape in the absence of the soul; rather you would have

seen your very child, as he was in his most winning form, such as, if he be allowed to leave his confinement, I still hope to see him again. In a moment the darkness opened and he stood before me, not the pallid figure of my memory, not exhausted with a distressing malady, not as he was seen upon the funeral pyre and the flames, but in vigorous youth, and of a presence undoubtedly beautiful.

All traces of death he had left in some region unknown: his hair was not singed by the fire, his face was not blackened with the ashes of the funeral, the fire had not left its unsightly traces on the still new ghost, whose embers were only just laid to rest (in the urn). An unhappy mother might well have raised a cry of joy, even if the sight of a son so blooming had been only momentary.

At first the shade merely stood still, allowing itself to be recognized. Then it was that my astonishment was at its height, I did not venture to kiss or embrace him. In my fear that he might escape, I lost the first happy night of reunion. Husband, do you think this a fancy, a delusion of my melancholy mood? Be assured, whatever charm a son possesses, is never so potent with the mother as when it is at the point to disappear. Would you, in few words, know what it was you forced your wife to lose? From a dead son she has nothing left to hope for.

C. 6.

Another night had come and with the first approach of darkness my son was in attendance, not, as on the day before, at some distance and only visible to the sight, but more boldly and nearer and, as it were, an actual body coming close up to his mother's hands.

Henceforward it was only in settled daylight and when the stars had disappeared that he vanished reluctantly from my eyes, halting repeatedly, often looking back and with the mien of one who promised to return on the following evening. All occasion for mourning was now over; the woman saw her son by night, could hope to see him by day.

Why recount each particular? So long as I said nothing

about it, guilty creature that I was, no evening brought its disappointment. I took my fill of kisses, of embraces, I conversed with him, I listened to his voice. Have pity on me, I lost more than I can tell, even if no one believes what I say. Unfeeling husband, I was beginning to plead for you, and was asking the youth to present himself for a joyous interview to his father's eyes as he had to mine.

For half the night, ungrateful man that you are, I was ready to give way to you. He for his part was ready to promise he would come. It was this reliance on what he said that led me to the fatal step of confessing.

Tell me, could there be anything more proper in a woman, in a mother? Rejoice, husband, rejoice: you have a chance of seeing your son to-morrow night, that son whom you burnt on the cruel pyre, of whom ashes and bones alone remain, you shall see still young, and perhaps may hope to meet even by day. I, at any rate, with each return of night, am his mother: I see him, enjoy his society, aye, tell the story to yourself. You ask, judges, what was the outcome of the father's affection. He was afraid to see his son.

C. 7.

Thus it was that, unknown to the mother, this contriver of a double death called in an adept whose hideous muttering and commanding spells torture the gods in heaven and the world of spirits, not with any purpose of drawing ghosts from their graves, not to evoke the shade by nocturnal shrieks and force it to hasten from its confinement wherever it might be, but believing that a grave was not enough to hold him down, or that the weight of a tomb was too light.

My son's death, said he, is not quite as complete as it should have been; he still participates in the bright light of the stars and shares the night of us the living. For when day wanes he puts an end to his dying, returns to his home, and scares his mother from her sleep. You must find, I say you must find, some words of incantation to

bind him, and this by the whole resources of your art, the whole expenditure of your toil. It will be a high distinction to yourself if you can keep in his grave a son who even after he is dead comes back to his mother.

The deadly incantation was drawn round the tomb. Then it was that the mouth of the urn was closed up with words of dread, then this unhappy son for the first time passed into the state of death and the condition of a shade. Believe now, if you can, that the mother's consolations had been unreal. If she had seen her son merely as a creature of thought and empty delusion, she would be seeing him still. But, O! think how severe was her punishment on the very first night after the incantation. The whole mansion and household were sunk in their first sleep, and the silent darkness had brought the hour most welcome to the mother's heart. Sleepless, restless she lay, saying, 'In a moment he will present himself, will be here; and yet he never came so slowly before. Woe's me! last night, my son, you were already here. See, the stars have half finished their circuits. I am enraged and angry. Only one thing can you do to make amends; if you have been with your father. Alas! the sky begins to brighten with the unfriendly light of dawn. When will you come? By this time you ought to have been with me again.'

C. 8.

But when the forlorn lady had passed a second and third night in ineffectual lamentation, then it was that a deeper sadness, a real mourning set in, then she found a greater pleasure in robes of mourning, then her shoulders, which were recovering their healthy condition, ran with blood under renewed blows. I know no unhappiness so great as the unhappiness of a mother who having first buried her son has afterwards found in him something to lose again (i. e. the power of seeing him after death). But when she discovered the young man had lost his hours of meeting her by the magic constraint of iron bars laid under a spell, how wildly did she beat with

her naked hands the clamped enclosure of his tomb, with what tears drench the sepulchre! with what groaning summon up—but in vain—the spirit that perhaps was in hearing and longed to come forth! Alas for nature's cruelty! To think that an expert in magic should have more power than a mother! Where now are those who used to complain of the bitter constraints of death, of fate's iron ordinances, of the laws of the spirit world of shadows, that no grief can alter? Unhappy lady, it was not the earth laid over the dead that shut in thy son, not the dense gloom of eternal night that held him confined, not the Stygian pool so rife with the fables that poets love, nor Phlegethon's far-fained torrents of arching fire; these he passed and repassed, these he traversed by night, making his death a lighter thing to bear than if he had absented himself for some journey abroad. And at this moment he would be in less suffering if he did not know and feel the change. If he comes back no more, it is that he has been transferred from his tomb to a kind of dungeon, and has to endure the witchcrafts practised on the living. It seems, therefore, that there are heavy chains which fetter ghosts, and which, however volatile and fleeting the phantom may be, bind it to the dead and tie up the soul as if it were the body of a condemned criminal.

Yet to confine with iron and stones, or fasten the shade itself at one time with chains, at another with enclosing bars, on the same plan by which we strengthen gates against warlike attack, is as cruel as it is monstrous and wicked, at least if it be done by one who believes that his son will be conscious of his act. And now the unhappy mother is persuaded that these iron spikes have penetrated into his body and limbs.

C. 9.

O hard-hearted and cruel magician, thou adept in evoking our tears, I could wish thou hadst given a less painful specimen of thy art. Thou hast roused our indignation, and we must needs flatter thee notwithstanding. Whilst thou

were locking the ghost in, we could not but be aware that thou alone hadst the power to evoke it again.

I see then that the unhappy lady is thought to go beyond the bounds of a dignified sorrow when she brings into Court such shrewish complaints; I might say such affectations of sorrow, as belong to a spoilt lady of position. She makes no attempt to find gay dresses, or gold ornaments, or finery. Her bereaved condition is satisfied with its own garb of mourning. Nor is she constrained by any vexation at a rival's success; she makes no complaint of her husband's silent pleasures, with the petulance, the dissimulation natural to her sex. Nor yet is it the case of a wife considering herself slighted and vilipended, and revenging the neglect and desertion of her marriage bed. Far, very far from this is the distress her nights bring. Have no fear. Profound sorrow has a majesty of its own: unhappy as she is, she complains of nothing but what consorts with her bereaved situation, nothing but what becomes a mother, and might well exhaust the eyes of a whole weeping people, or call for tears even from a stranger.

Perhaps you wish to know the extent of the wrong she has had to endure from her husband. She is the one only mother who has lost her son by death, yet cannot reproach death with his loss. So, judges, before you learn the nature of her grief, her mourning, or how her indignation broke out so passionately that, woman as she was, she forgot for once the welcome darkness, and endured in open Court and surrounded with the forms of law the glaring brightness of broad day and the light which was hateful even in the privacy of home, thus making a spectacle of herself, and dragged, one might say, from the tombs,—you are, I doubt not, judges, assured that no imputation of shamelessness or immodesty or wish to show off ever yet attached to the outeries of the unhappy. How very real are the sighs of distress! how rarely are the groans of the unfortunate counterfeit or without solid cause! When a woman holds up to her judge arms that are running with blood, if she is brought into Court with torn and mangled cheeks, or

with breasts discoloured by beating, it is violent grief which forces her to do so, instead of kissing the ashes of the dead and embracing his urn. The grief of a parent that has lost a child by death is its own irrefragable attestation.

C. 10.

And now, before I enter on the peculiar wrong to which she has been unjustly submitted, I turn to the husband and ask, if she was mother by you of the son she has lost, why is it that she finds any cause for complaint? Mercilessly you strike at her forlorn situation with yet a second blow; and as if the loss of her only child were not more than sufficient to make her pine, you forbid her soul to give itself up to its natural tears—you, the husband whose duty it is to offer her your bosom, your society, your embrace. O how truly wretched is the woman who murmurs against the very thing that should console her.

You say she does not show any large forbearance to her husband's own regrets: still, I would have you do nothing severe, nothing at which she could murmur. It is the special prerogative of an unhappy mother to have her deep wounds dressed by soft touches and mild fomentations. If a sore admits of still being lanced, it is as a surface wound light and not reaching deep.

It may well be that a man's sex is in some degree more sturdy and fights longer against grief than the weak soul of a woman. And therefore all we mean by 'mourning' specially belongs to women, and when the woman's feeble breast is once assailed by a sense of her childlessness, the heart which follows the prompting of its sorrow begins to feel the luxury of tears. Husband, let your wife, I conjure you, have free licence to weep, to satisfy her desolate heart with laments, to cry all she would. I hate a father who having lost a son himself thinks that son's mother extravagant in her tears.

C. 11.

What then, he asks, is it of which she complains? Of this, first. Unnatural father, do you mourn over your

son's death as a parent should? Nay, you bear your loss with much equanimity, discourse on his liability to die, explain that the flames of the pyre are the last of his history. Your wife stands by you crying and lamenting, but your eyes are dry: she keeps up a funereal wailing night after night, you enjoy a sound sleep and undisturbed repose. Unfeeling, forgetful father, what other charge would you have us bring against you?

Not once, since you lost your son, has your sorrow been strong enough to recall his image to your sight. I say nothing of your robbing the mother of her solace, false and imaginary as perhaps it is. Judges, I would not have any one of you reproach her. How great that solace was, you would know if you were to experience a grief like her own. Nothing more shameful can be imagined than your claim to be believed about something you never saw.¹

By all means allow the thing to be a delusion and treat it with the forbearance it merits; a bereaved mother is not sorry to be deluded. Fallacious arguments support overwhelming griefs, because misfortune gives free play to its delusions. The smaller anything is that belongs to the miserable, the greater is the cruelty of taking it away. And so it is that the unhappy mother exclaims and exclaims again.

Had you taken from me a mere likeness of my son either in childhood or adolescence or last of all when he was a young man, I should notwithstanding have treated it as a real body, should have embraced it eagerly, should cling with tears to that likeness, those eyes, that dear face, that open smile so exactly represented, those features sketched by an artist hand. But now I have lost my son, that son from whom the likeness, the portrait, the consolation, were all alike drawn.

C. 12.

Son, I have lost to-day more than on the day when you were buried, for I saw you after you were dead. In truth,

¹ [i. e. The husband, who did *not* see the ghost, expects us to believe his assurance that the whole thing was a delusion.]

if some one had attempted to rob me of any familiar piece of apparel which my only child used to wear, I should have said, 'Hasten, help me to support my loss.' Everything here is as good as part of my son's body. I will kiss, embrace, weep over it. 'Irrational,' you will (perhaps) say. That means, when reason is overpowered, feeling asserts its sway. Nothing so vile as a parent who reasons prudentially on his son's death, [instead of giving way to his grief and allowing his emotions to have full play].

'What you tell us,' says he, 'has little in it, very little indeed. You say, 'I saw my son.' What freak of chance was it, what special prescription of nature, that allowed you such a privilege? Your son's death could not shut out what your eyes saw. In your maternal fondness you had reached the point of believing your son absented himself only in the daytime. Death has lost its chief bitterness when it is possible to see as living one you have lost as dead. So then it was your special fortune to see his face, appearance, body, gesture. I should not believe, were you not conscious, that you have lost what you saw. In fact, you and Death had shared times with each other, you were admitted to the living presence of your son with each return of darkness, [Death was master of your son by day.] The greatness of your loss you may estimate in this way. If fortune had not put this in your way, you would never have been bold enough to wish for it.

O triumph of affection! A man buried and laid in his grave, the mere embers and ashes left from the rest of his body, assumed notwithstanding a body in the night hours and returning to the solid consistency of living flesh presented himself to his mother's eyes in such perfection, you would suppose he would never retire. Nor could we complain of daylight.

All he could do by way of coming, he did. You saw him, therefore, lady, and were admitted to his presence. 'Yes,' she says, 'I saw him and was admitted to his presence. And whose business was it, I ask, if I *was* deluded?'

But why do I appeal, lady, to *you* as my witness? It is

the magician I trust ; he affirms that you did see your son at first, and that you do not see him now.

C. 13.

But you, unhappy woman, apprehended no cruelty that your husband could inflict so much as his not believing what you said to be true. ' Let no one discredit the evidence of my eyes. Son, my young and most loving son, I have seen you, seen you more than once. It is a certainty, a thing unalterable, a fact not to be gainsaid. This I say because your father is unnatural enough to aim at taking even this from you, and denying me my right of believing that you did really come. And this appearance I did not blazon loudly or foolishly abroad. I reported your visits to no one except him who ought to have wished that they were possible. To your father only, yes, to your father—pardon the fond illusion—I made the confession, when I asked him whether he also had seen you.'

Thus it is, unhappy woman, that you were cruelly, over-cruelly punished ; the magician's interference prevented you from seeing your son and left with you nothing but the memory of what you saw. However, tell us, unhappy lady, if you can, the whole story of those visits of consolation, and in the first place confess candidly whether it was not the overpowering weight of sleep and the illusion produced by unconsciousness that were to blame. In my judgement at least you were a sufficiently wretched, sufficiently unhappy mother, even if what you thus lost had been a mere dream. ' Be merciful,' she says, ' take a kinder view of my feelings. Worn out with lamentation I did not observe that night had come ; sleepless as they were, my eyes might fairly *expect* to see my son ; but alarm, not grief, was uppermost when the ghost first stepped suddenly before me.

' O heavens ! what joy, what happiness did I see ! The darkness was dispelled and my son stood before me ; I pray that such may be his departure whenever it happens. In an instant I sprang forward and approached him : look, hair,

face were in full view. It was my very son. How joyous, how blithe was his demeanour; how completely he won me to believe that I could not trust the appearance of death.

C. 14.

Wicked father, thou canst not know how closely this son whom thou didst shut in his tomb resembled the living original. My eyes travelled over his entire body: nowhere did I find any trace of what the fire had done. Ever and anon I exclaimed, Is this the son I buried; this the man I laid on the funeral pyre, from whose remains I gathered the bones and embers? If he is such as I see, what cause have I for mourning? That my son was dead I argued by one fact and one alone: I could not show him to his father as he had been shown to myself. I will make a confession; despite what I saw I did not trust the first night's evidence, and was angry with my eyes, as if their vision was overpowered, and reddened in my unhappy consciousness that it might all be a dream, when, behold, the young man came a second time, by degrees came every day.

'How am I to explain this? That which happens always is true if anything can be. He ended with coming no longer as a mere phantom; nay, he sat by me, embraced me: while I, for my own part, was not unconscious and gave him free admittance. Every time the house lay stretched in the sweet forgetfulness of sleep, he was present in such form as friendly gods assume when they offer themselves to mortal eyes, and with the serenest look of a divine being when it allows itself to be seen: just as, when the world of men is silent and the profane have withdrawn from every part of a sacred enclosure, all sanctities in temples or graves are reported to take advantage of the solitude, and come forth from the images which enclose them; so it was that my youthful visitor played his part of son with each return of darkness and was in free possession of his paternal house and household gods; gentle and mild, and smiling favourably on his mother, he seemed like some god or divine being to glide down from the stars,

and to come from a region of clear and pure sky. What ought I to imprecate on his most nefarious father? His design was this: we must put the ghost to proof!

C. 15.

Pity my case, judges, and treat this outrage with the indignation it merits, an outrage more heinous than parricide, more heinous than if he had demolished to its foundations his son's tomb, broken the cinerary urn, and scattered the stones which death had consecrated, and the bones which were reposing in a religious peace. He called to his aid a man whose (very) profession is to contravene nature. This miscreant's foul lips had no sooner muttered their unintelligible jargon, than they forced the gods above to attend, the gods below to listen, the earth to tremble, producing the same effect on each which rumour reports on the recorded experiments of which we are told.¹

Then it was that by the tomb of the unhappy youth death stood in a more assured shape. 'Now,' I imagine the magician saying,² 'I call on darkness to help my³ Paelignian rites of mystery, now, to each divine power accessible, and all religious obligations which I impose on this dead man, to draw nearer, to lend their aid. I have before me a task more laborious than when stars are torn down from heaven; than when the flow of rivers in winter is arrested or serpents yield to a spell of unusual potency, and split asunder on the approach of the organs of my craft. A watch must be set on the youth; runaway as he is, he must be made over to the world of the dead, and shut close in darkness denser than before. How very much easier would my task have been if I had been recalling the ghost to life! After this—so they say—he fell forward on the urn itself, adding certain

¹ Reading 'qui . . . simul intonuit [ita fecit] fauere superos, audire inferos, tremere terras, ut experimentis loquentium fama est'. *Ita fecit* corresponds to *ut fama est*, 'wrought upon the gods in the same way as rumour reports.'

² I read *nunc, opinor inquit, not nunc, opinor, inquit.*

³ Reading *Paeligna* for *me digna.*

words which he shut in amid the bones and ashes of the dead. Looking back, however, from time to time, he acknowledged that the shade resisted. Therefore, said he, I am dissatisfied with incantations; let us close up firmly every side of the tomb and bind the stones with copious clamps of iron. At last, all is well: death has at last set in: he cannot be seen any more, nor come out. The coming night will prove whether what I say is true or false.'

Surely wherever a parent is to be found, at any rate a parent who has lost his child by death, he should have flown at this man's eyes and made an onslaught on his face.

C. 16.

Could you dare to shut in your son so cruelly, just as if you were dealing with a guilty soul called back to the world of the dead, such souls as, wandering uncertainly in some sick household or in plague-stricken homes, are allured by magic juggling to return to their confine? Had he strangled himself, as a condemned felon? Had he driven through his bowels the sword of the criminal? Had some evil complicity induced him to anticipate death by poison, and was the only way he could be brought back to his grave to be shut in by an incantation? When was he known to scare your house or yourself by his ghastly look of death? O cruelest of all recorded fathers! you have turned your own child into a malignant phantom. What do you suppose are the reflections at this moment of your most unhappy wife? what the belief that lacerates her maternal heart? 'At this time my son is lying in the place whence he used to come, bound, confined, impatient for release. He complains that the earth has suddenly become heavier, at least, whenever he is conscious of the return of night, the hour at which happier ghosts are allowed to rejoin their mothers. And yet if spirits can hold converse with each other, as I believe they may, I am assured some one among them will tell my dear youth, 'How little your friends made of you! how willingly they submitted to lose you! Nay, that very mother

whom you used to visit requited your kindness with these fetters, these chains.' Thus it is that the most unfortunate of all women, even if the magician should be withdrawn, still has to face this grave risk: her son may believe that his visits were not welcome to his mother.

At this point the husband meets us with a graver, profounder, more scientific argument, as might be expected from a man beyond the reach of grief. He says spirits have no existence, asserts that death is the extinction of the whole being, and that sensation does not return from the funeral pyre still possessed of life: ghosts are not so much seen as imagined by thought, the eyes believing what their sorrow shows them. If this is so, why did he call in the magician? Shame on you, O worst of parents that bury their children, contentedly weeping just enough to be able¹ at the same time to come back from the burning dry-eyed.²

C. 17.

He declares that our lamentations do not reach the ghosts of the departed: he insists that tears, that sobs go for nothing. Alas for the wickedness of the man, if any such there be, that weeps and yet is afraid he may be wasting his tears!

Misled then by a foolish delusion were the sages who said that men consisted and were made up of two elemental parts, body and soul; the body frail, perishable, earthy, in which dry conflicts with damp, hot with cold, soluble with rigid, some part of it susceptible to pains, or ready to yield to old age and the last years of existence; whereas the soul,³ a flame-like energy, drawing its force and sustained existence not from our terrene fire, but from that fire by which the stars fly and the divine axes of the world wheel, comes from the same source from which we derive the spirit that is the founder and father of all things existing. It does not die, is not dissolved or touched by any fate that affects mortality; but each time it has

¹ *obiter* seems to mean *codem tempore*.

² Reading '[ita] flere contenti ut obiter ab rogo siccis oculis reuertantur'.

³ Or perhaps draws the force of its fiery energy.

forced open the prison-gates of the human breast that immures it, and freed from the encumbrance of mortal limbs has purified itself by a gentle fire, seeks an abode with the stars till purged by time it passes into a new and different fate, after which it remembers the body it had occupied before. Thence it is that spirits come forth on a summons, thence that they receive a body and a countenance and all that meets our eye, that they present themselves to their friends as beloved images, sometimes become oracular and give warning by nocturnal instructions, know what death-offerings we send them, are sentient of the honour we show them in tombs. I appeal to you to say whether it is not better to believe this when any of us loses his son?

Yet it was to secure your repose, he replies, that I did this, that you might not be disturbed by frenzied alarms, and pass each successive night in anxiety and doubt.

Is it thus, miscreant, that you have made me the participant of your guilt, and take credit for the fact that we have both ceased to see the ghost of our son?

In earlier times our only wish was to sleep and to repose undisturbed. Cruel father, *now* you have robbed the mother of her rest, and scared her repose with affright; *now* the charm of my nights is over.

C. 18.

Could you possibly think the ghost of our son was a cause for alarm, a cause for abject terror? What more joyous than that countenance, what more winning than those features? what more flattering to the view? what sight more acceptable to weeping eyes? The ghost of a son is no more alarming than his lifeless body. The apparition of one dead, if he be a stranger, cannot but cause a shudder. But it may be that the phantoms which terrify the mind belong to a different class, and we call them spectres of the lower world when we do not recognize them. They are well advised therefore if they visit none but friends. But if any one after seeing the spirit of his dead son recalls

the fact of his burial (and make it a grave reason for preventing a repetition of such ghostly visits), he it is who is the truly wicked, truly god-forsaken father. 'You were frightened,' says he, 'and were disturbed by nights of alarm.' Is it possible, husband, you are so unfeeling? Suppose your son had visited *you*, would you have immured him in his grave even then?

But, says he, there was *no* immuring of a ghost performed by a magician; he merely relieved your mistaken fancy. The real reason of your believing our son came to you no more, is that he did not come at first, and that nothing happened to disturb you.

This very argument supplies the mother with a ground for self-gratulation. 'On this showing,' it is his own argument, 'the ghost is not held in durance, is not weighed heavily down, was not shut in by any incantation, any clamp of iron.'

Put aside therefore, judges, the whole statement, and I will ask you a question: Was it I that was wicked in believing so readily? Was he so peremptorily forbidden to visit me, free and unfettered as he was? Should he not have hurried to greet my eyes, share my embraces? For, tell me, was there any time when the dear youth did not himself find me in tears, or in which he did not see my breast beaten to a livid hue, and my shoulders dripping with blood? Was there any time when he would not have blushed to frighten his mother? No: it is art magic that shuts him miserably down, art magic that arrests his escape. What is there beyond this that you could wish effected by incantations? They have performed all they undertook to do. Henceforward you have no cause to blush that you are unvisited by your son, (for the magician's spells have produced their effect and the ghost cannot come out of his grave).

But thou meanwhile, in obedience to whose dictation the gods above and the world of spirits are tormented, whose hideous shrieks by night rouse the earth's hollow to its lowest deep—thou that art at one time the evoker of subject

souls or again at another a cruel and inexorable jailer, listen at last to a mother's, as thou hast before listened to a father's prayer. Stipulate for any sum thou wilt, ask the entire income of the mourner, not that thou mayst labour at thy task, not that thou mayst busy thyself with thy hideous incantation, but that thou mayst unfasten thy iron clamps, break up thy spells, undo all thou hast done; only discharge him, and thy magical evocation is complete. No part of what thou didst enact was cruelty of thine: it was his father, I am well assured, whom thou didst obey: yet be lenient also to a mother's tears, a mother's lamentations; spare thy own good fame. Accursed and odious thou wilt make thy name of magician by too readily allowing thyself to immure my son.

In thy turn I warn thee, husband, not to fear the revengeful ghost may startle thee with illusory alarms or any fancied presentment: our son will be allowed to rest in peace: he knows who is she to whom, dismissed from his prison-house, he ought to come. O youth most duteous, most fond, that hast never been thy mother's haunting shade or phantom of the tomb, if only the magician permit thee to shake off the spell that weighs on thee and those words of power that are mightier than any affright, pity me and hasten to share the nights of my sorrow, and thy own tears, hasten to those embraces, that for me are ever-living; I understand what it was which hurt, which tormented me. Only let me share thy company and I will make no confessions.

NOTE

p. 6, *mandabatque suae Morti*.

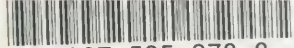
Professor Geldart sends me the following:—

‘This is the passage of Gaius: ii. 103 “namque olim familiae emptor [a trustee to whom the testator’s property was transferred in order that it might be distributed by him], id est qui a testatore familiam accipiebat mancipio, heredis locum obtinebat, et ob id ei mandabat testator, quid cuique post mortem suam dari vellet”: i. e. instructed him as to the distribution which the testator wished to be made: direct institution of a *heres* by will not yet having been recognized in such a case. There seem not to be many instances of *mandare* with an indirect interrogation. In Cic. *Fam.* iii. 4. 1¹ there is a similar use, where the instructions are also as to the *wishes* of the person who *mandat*. I see no instance where it refers to a mere matter of stating or recording a fact.

In the passage of Pseudo-Quintilian I think *Mors* is both personified and individualized, so as to be almost equivalent to *Manibus suis*. I should translate “he instructed his Death, to whom when dead he should belong”: as if he was giving himself or his spirit as a legacy. *perire alicui*, “to belong to some one in death” seems to me a phrase rhetorically formed on the analogy of *vivere alicui* = “to be some one’s in life”.

¹ But in that passage perhaps *quae* is relative.

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