

## BOOK VI

## LIBER VI

### PROOEMIUM

HAEC, Marcelle Victori, ex tua voluntate maxime ingressus, tum si qua ex nobis ad iuvenes bonos pervenire posset utilitas, novissime paene etiam necessitate quadam officii delegati mihi sedulo laborabam; respiciens tamen illam curam meae voluptatis, quod filio, cuius eminentis ingenium sollicitam quoque parentis diligentiam merebatur, hanc optimam partem relicturus hereditatis videbar ut, si me, quod aequum et optabile fuit, fata interceptissent, praec<sup>2</sup>eptore tamen patre uteretur. At me fortuna id agentem diebus ac noctibus festinantemque metu meae mortalitatis ita subito prostravit, ut laboris mei fructus ad neminem minus quam ad me pertineret. Illum enim, de quo summa conceperam et in quo spem unicum senectutis reponebam, repetito vulnere<sup>3</sup> orbitatis amisi. Quid nunc agam? aut quem ultra

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<sup>1</sup> *cp. Proem, Bk. I.*

<sup>2</sup> *cp. Proem, Bk. IV.*

## BOOK VI

### PREFACE

I UNDERTOOK my present task, Marcellus Victorius, mainly to gratify your request,<sup>1</sup> but also with a view to assist the more earnest of our young men as far as lay in my power, while latterly the energy with which I have devoted myself to my labours has been inspired by the almost imperative necessity imposed by the office conferred on me,<sup>2</sup> though all the while I have had an eye to my own personal pleasure. For I thought that this work would be the most precious part of the inheritance that would fall to my son, whose ability was so remarkable that it called for the most anxious cultivation on the part of his father. Thus if, as would have been but just and devoutly to be wished, the fates had torn me from his side, he would still have been able to enjoy the benefit of his father's instruction. Night and day I pursued<sup>2</sup> this design, and strove to hasten its completion in the fear that death might cut me off with my task unfinished, when misfortune overwhelmed me with such suddenness, that the success of my labours now interests no one less than myself. A second bereavement has fallen upon me, and I have lost him of whom I had formed the highest expectations, and in whom I reposed all the hopes that should solace my old age. What is there left for me to do? Or<sup>3</sup>

## QUINTILIAN

esse usum mei, diis repugnantibus, credam? Nam ita forte accidit, ut eum quoque librum, quem de causis corruptae eloquentiae emisi, iam scribere aggressus ictu simili ferirer. Nonne igitur optimum fuit, infaustum opus et quidquid hoc est in me infelicitium litterarum super immaturum funus consumpturis viscera mea flammis iniicere neque hanc impiam  
4 vivacitatem novis insuper curis fatigare? Quis enim mihi bonus parens ignoscat, si studere amplius possum, ac non oderit hanc animi mei firmitatem, si quis in me alius usus vocis, quam ut incusem deos superstes omnium meorum, nullam in terras despiciere providentiam tester, si non meo casu, cui tamen nihil obiici, nisi quod vivam, potest, at illorum certe, quos utique immeritos mors acerba damnavit, erepta prius mihi matre eorundem, quae nondum expleto aetatis undevicesimo anno duos enixa filios, quamvis  
5 acerbissimis rapta fatis, non infelix decessit? Ego vel hoc uno malo sic eram adfflictus, ut me iam nulla fortuna posset efficere felicem. Nam cum omni virtute, quae in feminas cadit, functa insanabilem attulit marito dolorem, tum aetate tam puellari, praesertim meae comparata, potest et ipsa numerari  
6 inter vulnera orbitatis. Liberis tamen superstitibus et, quod nefas erat, sed optabat ipsa, me salvo maxi-

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what further use can I hope to be on earth, when heaven thus frowns upon me? For it so chances that just at the moment when I began my book on the causes of the decline of eloquence, I was stricken by a like affliction. Better had I thrown that ill-omened work and all my ill-starred learning upon the flames of that untimely pyre that was to consume the darling of my heart, and had not sought to burden my unnatural persistence in this wicked world with the fatigue of fresh labours! For what father with a spark of proper feeling would pardon me for having the heart to pursue my researches further, and would not hate me for my insensibility, had I other use for my voice than to rail against high heaven for having suffered me to outlive all my nearest and dearest, and to testify that providence deigns not at all to watch over this earth of ours? If this is not proved by my own misfortune (and yet my only fault is that I still live), it is most surely manifest in theirs, who were cut off thus untimely; their mother was taken from me earlier still, she had borne me two sons ere the completion of her nineteenth year; but for her, though she too died most untimely, death was a blessing. Yet for me her death alone was such a blow that thereafter no good fortune could bring me true happiness. For she had every virtue that is given to woman to possess, and left her husband a prey to irremediable grief; nay, so young was she when death took her, that if her age be compared with mine, her decease was like the loss not merely of a wife, but of a daughter. Still her children survived her, and I, too, lived on by some unnatural ordinance of fate, which for all *its perversity* was what she herself desired; and

## QUINTILIAN

mos cruciatus praecipiti via effugit. Mihi filius minor  
quintum egressus annum prior alterum ex duobus  
7 eruit lumen. Non sum ambitiosus in malis nec  
augere lacrimarum causas volo, utinamque esset ratio  
minuendi. Sed dissimulare qui possum, quid ille  
gratiae in vultu, quid iucunditatis in sermone, quos  
ingenii igniculos, quam substantiam placidae et (quod  
scio vix posse credi) iam tum altae mentis ostenderit;  
qualis amorem quicumque alienus infans mereretur.  
8 Illud vero insidiantis, quo me validius cruciaret,  
fortunae fuit, ut ille mihi blandissimus me suis nutri-  
cibus, me aviae educanti, me omnibus, qui sollicitare  
9 illas aetates solent, anteferret. Quapropter illi do-  
lori, quem ex matre optima atque omnem laudem  
supergressa paucos ante menses ceperam, gratulor.  
Minus enim est, quod flendum meo nomine quam  
quod illius gaudendum est.

Una post haec Quintiliani mei spe ac voluptate  
10 nitebar, et poterat sufficere solacio. Non enim flos-  
culos, sicut prior, sed iam decimum aetatis ingressus  
annum, certos ac deformatos fructus ostenderat.  
Iuro per mala mea, per infelicem conscientiam, per  
illos manes, numina mei doloris, eas me in illo  
vidisse virtutes ingenii, non modo ad percipiendas  
disciplinas, quo nihil praestantius cognovi plurima  
expertus, studiique iam tum non coacti (sciunt prae-

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thus by her swift departure from this life she escaped the worst of tortures. My youngest boy was barely five, when he was the first to leave me, robbing me as it were of one of my two eyes. I have no desire 7 to flaunt my woes in the public gaze, nor to exaggerate the cause I have for tears; would that I had some means to make it less! But how can I forget the charm of his face, the sweetness of his speech, his first flashes of promise, and his actual possession of a calm and, incredible though it may seem, a powerful mind. Such a child would have captivated my affections, even had he been another's. Nor was 8 this all; to enhance my agony the malignity of designing fortune had willed that he should devote all his love to me, preferring me to his nurses, to his grandmother who brought him up, and all those who, as a rule, win the special affection of infancy. I am, therefore, grateful to the grief that came to 9 me some few months before his loss in the death of his mother, the best of women, whose virtues were beyond all praise. For I have less reason to weep my own fate than to rejoice at hers.

After these calamities all my hopes, all my delight were centred on my little Quintilian, and he might have sufficed to console me. For his gifts were not 10 merely in the bud like those of his brother: as early as his ninth birthday he had put forth sure and well-formed fruit. By my own sorrows, by the testimony of my own sad heart, by his departed spirit, the deity at whose shrine my grief does worship, I swear that I discerned in him such talent, not merely in receiving instruction, although in all my wide experience I have never seen his like, nor in his power of spontaneous application, to which his

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