

Seneca



*Of Consolation
to Helvia*

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THE ELEVENTH BOOK OF THE DIALOGUES OF L. ANNAEUS SENECA,

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ADDRESSED TO HIS MOTHER, HELVIA.
OF CONSOLATION.

I.

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MY best of mothers, I have often felt eager to console you, and have as often checked that impulse. Many things urged me to make the attempt: in the first place, I thought that if, though I might not be able to restrain your tears, yet that if I could even wipe them away, I should set myself free from all my own sorrows: then I was quite sure that I should rouse you from your grief with more authority if I had first shaken it off myself. I feared, too, lest Fortune, though overcome by me, might nevertheless overcome some one of my family. Then I endeavoured to crawl and bind up your wounds in the best way I could, holding my hand over my own wound; but then again other considerations occurred to me which held me back: I knew that I must not oppose your grief during its first transports, lest my very attempts at consolation might irritate it, and add fuel to it: for in diseases, also, there is nothing more hurtful than medicine applied too soon. I waited, therefore, until it exhausted itself by its own violence, and being weakened by time, so that it was able to bear remedies, would allow itself to be handled and