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FUNERAL ORATION  
ON THE  
DEATH OF JOSEPH SCALIGER

BY  
DANIEL HIBINSIUS

TRANSLATED BY  
GEORGE W. ROBINSON



JAMES K. MOFFITT

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FUNERAL ORATION  
ON THE  
DEATH OF JOSEPH SCALIGER

BY  
DANIEL HEINSIUS

DELIVERED IN THE HALL OF THEOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LEYDEN,  
IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE OBSEQUIES, 25 JANUARY, 1609

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME, FROM THE  
FIRST EDITION, EX OFFICINA PLANTINIANA  
RAPHELENGII, MDCVIII

BY  
GEORGE W. ROBINSON  
SECRETARY OF THE HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
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1915

GIFT

FUNERAL ORATION  
ON THE  
DEATH OF JOSEPH SCALIGER

THAT all created things perish, and that there is nothing immortal in the world, save the power of mind and the works of the understanding, are the particular lessons of this day. To earth, to earth we have committed Joseph Scaliger's poor emaciated body, the narrow house in which that great spirit, prince of letters, tarried sixty-eight years as a distinguished guest: in which he produced so many splendid works, so many divine monuments, so many writings that shall ever live with all posterity. Though by this death I feel myself so broken in spirit and maimed, that if voice by tears, mind by very anguish oppressed become dumb, I believe that I deserve all men's indulgence: yet I fear lest some great and honorable men, who in all lands are wont to employ the name of Scaliger, not as that of a learned man, but as the appellation of learning itself, may accuse me of unadulterated rashness and presumption. Their charge I neither reject, nor am able to evade: so far from it, that I perceive I have no defence left against them, except piety. Must an oration on Scaliger be delivered? I see many of my colleagues, men of distinction, none who is not my

superior in learning. Must it be adequate to his dignity? Then indeed I fear that all must be silent! But since also of heavenly things many speak daily, not trying to add praise unto them, which is either superfluous or impertinent, but leaving the admiration of them free to all: so for us the mere mention of his virtues shall suffice, but we shall leave the commendation in detail to those who are prodigal of their judgment, or who have less accurately compared the weakness of their own powers with his greatness. If he had set great store on noble birth, he was of the blood of kings and princes: if on the deeds of his ancestors, none could have numbered more trophies, more victories in the same race; if, finally, he had wished to be esteemed for the lofty spirit which was conspicuous in the stock of the Scaligers, he had as witnesses all histories, all annals; nor could he turn his eyes to any place, where he did not find the praise of his house. But indeed the spirit above fortune, the mind eager for immortality, the understanding fit for all sciences, the unresting nights and days were vexed by the desire for eternal fame: which by a fatal and secret law draws the power of the understanding to itself, away from the pursuit of perishable things, away from the dust and dirt of human life. To such fame he was led, not by some pedagogue, not by a common schoolmaster, not by a hireling, but by him whose name I cannot mention without veneration and awe, by the incomparable and divine hero, Julius Scaliger: that he might have the same man as the author of his nobility, of his life,

and of his reputation. For when that grand old man, oppressed by poverty and the envy of his folk, saw nothing left except the splendor of race, a hard load for unfortunate men, he resolved to close accounts with the harshness of the fates, and, living quietly, to preserve only the consciousness of that noble birth which he could no longer support. Though he had made many campaigns, and in youth had not been able to ripen quietly at home, without constant action, that untamed courage which nature implants in heroes, at last he devoted himself wholly to those arts which he taught his son in a manner worthy of himself. Of this work and labor he received such great reward, that when he considered the talents of the boy, he could never restrain his tears. For the very sight of the child admonished him of the ruin of his race, to which Fortune, when she had struck her hardest, had left greatness of understanding and loftiness of spirit rather for pain than for consolation. For as fire by transfer is not quenched, but commonly blazes fiercer: so in those two men the deprivation of rank, the loss of ancestral wealth and dominion, quickened the generous flame. So that even then our Joseph seemed to design a new principality: which indeed, I will say, no matter what prince hears me, he has at length obtained.

In the nineteenth year of his age he went to Paris, and in that city he bound his spirit by a most audacious vow. For perceiving that the sciences have certain metes and bounds, but judging it to be the mark of a narrow spirit to tarry within a single science, first

since the memory of man he undertook to range through all disciplines together with languages. But as he had learned that Greece is the mother, and as it were the fountain head of all sciences, he wholly neglected the pursuit of pleasure and speedily mastered that language. Such was his eagerness, such was his swiftness in acquirement, that, neglecting the trifles of the grammarians, except as he formed his own grammar from the reading of the poets, he learned Homer complete in twenty-one days, the rest of the poets within four months, and the other writers within the space of two years. This heavy task performed, he began the sacred tongue. I remember to have often heard from his lips, that when he lived in Paris, at the time when that famous and shocking massacre was raging, he sat so intent upon his Hebrew that for some time he heard neither the clash of arms, nor the groans of children, nor the wailing women, nor the shouting men. Allured by the marvellous sweetness of these languages, while continually, like a fire, his ardor for learning grew, he acquired in succession Chaldean, Arabic, Phoenician, Ethiopic, Persian, and especially Syriac. Similarly he directed himself with great spirit to philosophy and mathematics. At this period the name of Cujacius excelled in weight and fame; all acknowledged his primacy in the law. With him Scaliger dwelt five years, in such wise that he wholly blotted out from his spirit the enjoyment of literature, and with his teacher, who became his friend, clave undividedly to the comparison of laws. And lest anything

should be wholly lacking, while he diligently studied the writings of the theologians, and particularly of the ancient ones, he staid a long time at Geneva because of Theodore Beza. What shall I say of great Hippocrates, some of whose treatises, formerly printed at Paris, he illustrated with notes;<sup>1</sup> whose Aphorisms, imitating Celsus, he translated into Latin?<sup>2</sup>

Equipped with this erudition, with learning so unprecedented in a single man, as soon as he began to unfurl the sails of understanding and to display that omniscient memory of his, and to make trial of fame with favorable breeze, at first all were astounded, nor did they speak longer as of a man, but as of some new monster. Theologians, lawyers, physicians, but especially those acquainted with the best literature, applauded vehemently, clung to him, and seemed unable to praise him enough, either for their own satisfaction or for his deserts. Some called him "bottomless pit of erudition," others "sea of sciences"; some "the sun of the learned," others "the divine offspring of a divine father," others "the child of the gods"; some "perpetual dictator of letters," others "the greatest work and miracle of nature," some "nature's last effort," some one thing, some another: whose selected testimonies, in concise form, we shall publish together, that the jealous may perceive the unanimity of the learned. At last, by too great merit, and, as he himself judged, by the immoderate praises of others, he began

<sup>1</sup> See Bernays, *Scaliger*, pp. 239, 284.

<sup>2</sup> I have not yet found this translation.

to earn the dislike of the wicked. But indeed, — let them rage, let them be angry, let them mingle heaven and earth, the ignorant who know not to judge of such great erudition, or the malevolent who cannot bear it, — he has left no more certain mark of his merit than envy. For if we consider the Scaliger princes, his ancestors; whose family, as all bear witness, stood twelve hundred years, who in power, victories, martial renown, superiority of spirit and body, surpassed even their peers: none among them all endured envy so great, as our philologist (for so the facetious term him) and unfortunate antiquarian sustained. There was never a wicked man who could bear his virtue, or an ignorant man who could endure his knowledge; and (to repeat) that he provoked the wicked, that he boldly scorned the ignorant, are alike proofs of his divine and extraordinary superiority. For as glory from virtue, so from glory, jealousy and envy must be expected. And if anyone so fears envy, as to think that he must forsake the royal road of virtue lest he might displease any of the wicked, he is a traitor to his colors and a deserter. And indeed he is on the road to deserve universal contempt, who dares not bravely uphold the praise of the good: which one must renounce once for all, or else with unconquerable spirit wage war against the powers of evil. He who is not able to do this, let him prepare to depart unto some solitary spot, where he need not even behold the sight of any great man; and let him spend the remainder of his life in the pursuit of pleasure alone. There let him have his thoughts,

there his spirit, there all the hope of his life. In the bosom and embraces of harlots, among drunkards himself more drunken, let him pass all his days heavy with intoxication or surfeit: but let him not expect malice and envy; not without reason did God and nature make these things inconsistent. For as in battle he who throws away his shield and gives divorcement to valor, is in a little while trampled on by men and beasts, and perishes under feet: so he who cannot bear envy, must bear contempt, which succeeds without delay to the place of virtue. To me indeed jealousy and malice seem the meat and viands of great souls, and as it were a kind of sustenance; and often I have admired our poets, the first authors of wisdom. For whenever I behold their Hercules, who is put forward by them as a perfect example of merit; whenever I consider that back which they are wont to bestow upon him, those sinews, that chest, those muscles: truly I judge that the men were divine, who, that he might become such a one, designated Envy as his nurse: by whose frequent blows he might be hardened as in a school of exercise; by whom irritated as long as he lived, at length, having obtained immortality, he mounted to heaven. Indeed as the wind, if it wander in open air, perishes by that liberty and is diffused; but if it be confined within the bowels of the earth, it moves earth itself and escapes with violence: so they in whose hearts that generous blood has glowed prefer, in Envy's presence, to burst a passage to eternity, rather than to journey quietly. Nor does there seem

a better way for heroes to rise to heaven than on the shoulders of scoundrels. If this ever chanced to any, assuredly it was to our hero: whose understanding, picked from the purest fire, could not return to its source without the aid of these calumnious blasts. Before he went, he owed the world many works: which, whenever he joined conflict with wickedness, and gave rein to his most righteous anger, he wrote with a spirit greater because provoked. Often by calumnies, often by falsehoods he had to be reminded of his own character: that from the bitterness of hatred he might understand his greatness, and reflect upon his race; from which, when he lost the rest, he retained nothing, save Envy, greater than a private citizen's lot. That pledge of most noble stock, this inheritance he received from princes and kings; this inheritance he preserved with unconquerable spirit even to the last breath; this pledge at last, by the fame of his name, by the integrity of his life, he extorted from wickedness itself.

I will not speak here of his moral character. I will pass by his remarkable continence, temperance, sobriety. But who does not admire in our hero the matchless and divine constancy of spirit? When once he had joined this party,<sup>1</sup> he could not be prevailed upon by any prayers of adversaries, by any promises, by any honors, even so far as to be willing to give any one a hope of his conversion: lest even by the least suspicion he might seem to have failed in the duty of a pious man or an honorable citizen. Be assured, most

<sup>1</sup> The Protestants.

illustrious auditors, that there is nothing more powerful than ambition, especially when it has invaded an elevated and lofty spirit. It ruins everything, it destroys everything, it storms the bulwarks of the mind more strongly than all artillery and engines; nor is it wont to regard anything except itself. And as they say that bull's blood softens adamant, so the firmest counsels totter at ambition's touch. But Scaliger bore a mind absolutely free from the power and dominion of this quality. What now shall I say of his contempt for riches? Most of us who are here know, some even saw, that the illustrious and most noble man, Pierre Jeanin, president of the Parlement of Dijon, counsellor to the king of the French, and now ambassador to the Netherlanders, true glory of the toga, and patron of the Muses, when he had twice ordered in vain that a great sum of money be offered him, at length came to this city a few days before his death, and added his own authority and entreaties to the gift: and yet he did not obtain that our old man should permit, even when asked, that which others are wont to desire. By this high deed, it seems to me, he dealt a staggering blow to Fortune herself, and drove from his house and gates that fickle jade, who had merited so ill of his ancestors, and vigorously ordered her to mind her own business. I think that he wished before his death, then already close at hand, to leave to friends some illustrious example of his merit, which could be calumniated more easily than imitated by adversaries: of whom there is none so perfectly wise, that he does not prefer to con-

temn the glory of Scaliger, rather than to copy his virtues. I should have more to say, did I not know there are some who cannot listen undisturbed even to what I have spoken.

Something must now be said of his services to the University. Nearly sixteen years have passed, since the illustrious fathers, curators, and consuls of our city, amid the arms by which they were then beset, amid unparalleled and unremitting struggles for liberty, snatched her Palladium from France, and called to this city, at a liberal salary, the foremost name in Europe (for so they rightly judged). That day seems to me, as our former curator, Janus Dousa, wisely said, the second founding of our University. For the liberal disciplines and their students had lost their leader, Justus Lipsius, a man of an eloquence most pleasant indeed, but inimitable, and, as he himself judged, not even to be attempted by others; while most of the students, carried away by unhappy emulation of the distinguished Lipsius, and now abandoned by their teacher, — whose writings they preferred to imitate feebly, rather than to believe his just warning, — foolishly desired to follow models which they could not successfully copy; and from these causes the study of literature had entered upon a great crisis. If any one wished to write in Latin, dead words were fetched from as far back as Pacuvius and Ennius; sentences danced along; a lean and jejune speech, juiceless and meagre, broken by some short phrases and plays on words, or by abrupt clauses and short questions, occasioned nausea

and disgust. You would have said it was stage players, or an unfortunate train of the halt, who, while the choregus is busy within, entertain the spectators to the accompaniment of a flutist, and when sometimes, with the greatest effort, they attempt to jump, are more likely to fall than to go. If any one had emended a single passage of Nonius or Festus, had restored a letter or syllable in one place, ejected one in another, and had valiantly performed this trifling play without solid knowledge of facts, he appeared to have captured Troy. And yet — please gods and men! — they called these Critics. That great Apollo staid this contagion and pestilence by the mere impression of his arrival. By unaffected dignity, speech masculine and strong, a majesty of style his own and, as it were, hereditary, he inspired the poor wanderers with shame. He united so many arts, languages, disciplines, and sciences, that if a philologist must know all those things, truly I can affirm to you that no one after him will be a philologist; and indeed that the rest, all who despise letters, know far fewer things. To pass by all lesser works, he published in this very city the book which he wrote on the Emendation of Chronology (for the former edition was nothing to the second).<sup>1</sup> Of this work no one was ever competent to judge without assistance. An old man, near his end, he published that immense and Herculean work,<sup>2</sup> in which he revises the Chronicle of

<sup>1</sup> *De Emendatione Temporum* (1st ed., Lutetiae, 1583, repeated, Francofurti, 1593; 2d ed., Lugduni Batavorum, 1598: "Castigatius et multis partibus auctius, ut novum videri possit").

<sup>2</sup> *Thesaurus Temporum* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1606).

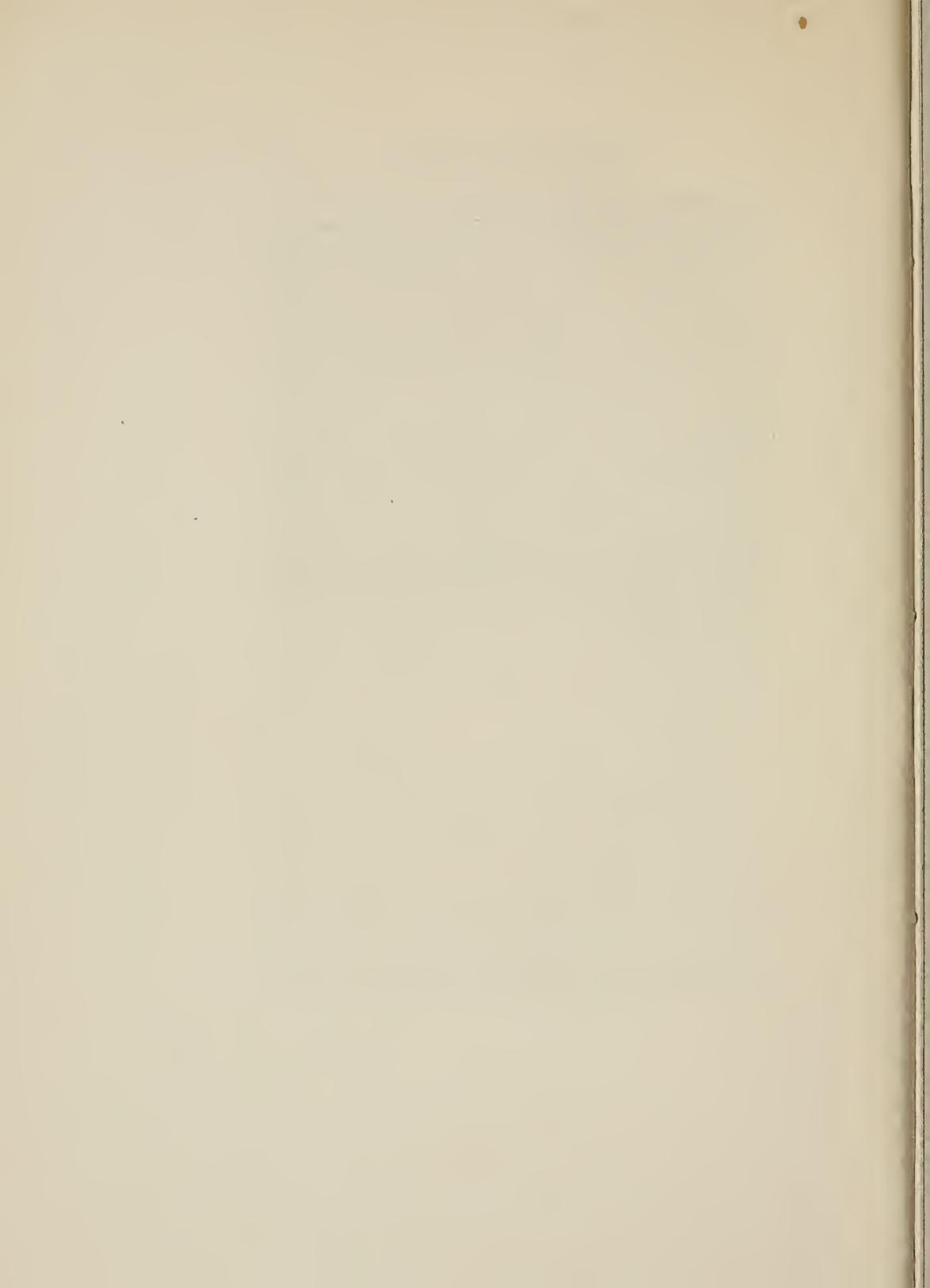
Eusebius, notes the errors of all historians and chronographers, illustrates all ecclesiastical and profane antiquity. We have seen the illustrious and venerable old man so intent upon this work, that often, when I had visited him in the morning, I would discover him at evening in the same spot. Neither food nor drink, and sometimes not even sleep, could in any way recall the attention of his mind from his purpose. If he had aimed at nothing but glory, he could have given cart-loads of notes on all authors. These notes, scattered at random and dispersed, he did not even deign to collect, and shared with his friends without reserve. And some are found, who dare to blame him because he delivered no lectures from the platform; as if indeed there are not also some among us who wrote nothing. Now a lecture is heard by the audience and presently perishes; while writings are perused by the whole world, and, if genius and painstaking are added, never die. No one can fail to know that his house was as it were a kind of oracle and shrine, to which all were wont to come, who were uncertain about words or facts. Men of all ranks, of all ages used to come: except those who preferred to contemn merit rather than to admire it. Whom can the wicked or slothful blame, if Scaliger could not teach them the things which they were not willing to learn from him? Or why do they demand from the innocence of the illustrious man the punishment of their own negligence? Why should I recount the heavy burden of letters, and labor of writing, by which almost alone he often complained that his day

was destroyed? Frenchmen, or Germans, or Italians, or Englishmen sent him some question every day, to which he had to reply. For no one doubted that there was one man in this city, who without any trouble could make clear matters of which all men throughout the world were ignorant. There was, there was that time, when in a single house of this city one man was master of more languages than any one in Europe. There was, there was that time, when the house of one man in this city was the Museum of the whole world: when distant Maronites and Arabs, Syrians and Ethiopians, Persians and some of the Indians had in this city the man to whom they could unfold their thoughts through the interpretation of language. All these things, except his name, are now quenched, overthrown, destroyed: nor is any solace left, save from his kindly liberality. For since he could serve the University no more by his presence, he left to it all his foreign manuscripts. Having these, we now challenge all libraries in this department. But, great hero, the more splendid we all acknowledge this gift of thine to be, the more do we recognize our weakness. For as none was able even to move the weapons of Achilles slain, so all shall behold thy armory of wisdom, perhaps no man will ever use it all. But that too shall be a token of thy greatness. For we shall look upon all volumes there left as spoils from human ignorance and envy, and in their contemplation the secret memory of thy great name shall inflame our mind and spirit: and they who are unwilling to proclaim thy praises shall still be compelled to admire thy erudition.

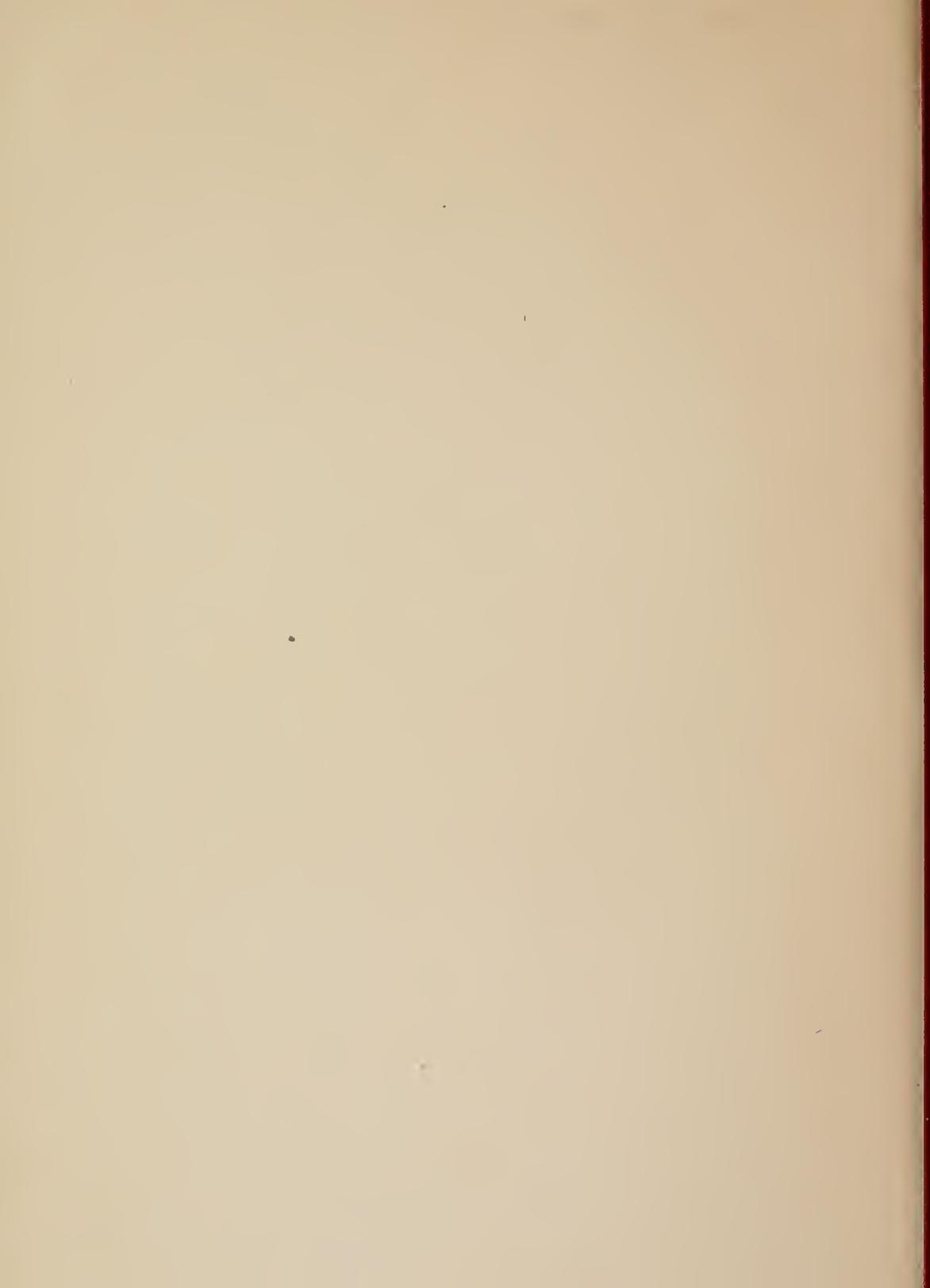
But thou, O lofty soul, who, free from thy weaker part, now dost triumph over malice, over fortune, and finally over death itself, which, with unmoved countenance, with great courage, without moans or lamentation, thou didst bravely look upon during its long approach, and at last endure; who with utmost delight didst steal away that spirit of thine, derived from kings and princes, from a world ungrateful, and unable to bear the majesty of thy race in thy condition: now liberated unto thy dignity, thou wanderest through the immeasurable spaces of the air; now the glory which men preferred to envy the living, they will at least yield to the dead. Whatever of thee anyone could hate, a part the power of disease gradually consumed; what remained from disease, earth now holds. Thou shalt be on the lips, in the mind of all: and the greatness of thy name shall be bounded by the whole world; the duration of thy fame, by the vast profundity of time. Farewell, true and last offspring of the Scaligers! Farewell, blood of heroes! Farewell, prince of letters! Farewell, victor over Envy! Farewell, conqueror of monsters! Farewell, farewell, and adieu forever! But if anything of human thoughts is left in thee, if thou still cherishest regard for thy friends, if of him who has ever honored thee as parent and teacher, whom thou art wont to call the first-born of thy sons, to whom from thy most sacred inheritance, which uprightness did not allow to be greater, thou didst wish some part to come, to whom thou didst commit thy writings, that is, the orphans of thy understanding; if

of him thou, established in light, amid the rejoicings of thy kin, yielding thy whole being to the embraces of thy Julius, — if of me, of me, I say, thou canst still have memory, O father, accept this last gift, which I offer thee with sorrow of my life, with tears, with mourning and lamentation. As for me, orphaned of the best of parents, robbed of my teacher, deprived of the most delightful witness and patron of all studies, I shall go on, amid enemies of letters, and disgraces to the human race, to wallow in the mire of calumnies and malignity, until I am united with thee and with eternity itself. And ye, noble, illustrious, distinguished men, and ye, excellent and chosen youths, never in this hall shall ye see the august countenance of Scaliger. When ye see this place empty of his body, reflect that the University is empty of all his sciences and virtues.

I have spoken.











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