

# Epicurean Prescriptions For Dealing With Troubled Times

Post by “Cassius” of November 4, 2020 at 10:33 PM

More!

Here's a passage that's always been one of my favorites, from the opening of Book 3, this time from the Rolfe Humphries translation, which I will always hear in my mind in the voice of Charlton Griffin, from the Audible.com reading of the poem:

If you would like to know

What a man really is, the time to learn

Comes when he stands in danger or in doubt.

That's when the words of truth come from his heart,

The mask is torn aside, reality

Remains for all to see. But avarice

And blind desire for honors urge men on

To trespass on the areas which the law

Forbids them, and they struggle night and day

As criminal accomplices to win

Toward heights of wealth - such vital wounds as these

Are aggravated by the fear of death.

Men seem to think that bitter poverty

And the contempt a low position brings

Are far from sweet and reassuring life,

Are hangers-on around the doors of death.

So a false panic harries them; they long

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1756-epicurean-prescriptions-for-dealing-with-troubled-times/?postID=9748#post9748>

Too late for flight, for far-off distances;  
Seek, through the blood of fellow-citizens,  
A way to prosper; they amass estates  
In avarice, pile one murder on another,  
Rejoice when a brother dies, and hate and fear  
The table of a kindly relative.  
In the same way compulsive envy, born  
Of the same fear, can make them waste away  
Seeing a man blest with renown or power  
Before their very eyes, while they are held,  
Or so they mutter, in darkness and in muck.  
Some die for lack of statues or a name;  
It goes so far, sometimes, that fear of death  
Induces hate of life and light, and men  
Are so depressed that they destroy themselves  
Having forgotten that this very fear  
Was the first source and cause of all their woe.  
As children tremble and fear everything  
In the dark shadows, we, in the full light,  
Fear things that really are not one bit more awful  
That what poor babies shudder at in darkness,  
The horrors they imagine to be coming.  
Our terrors and our darkneses of mind  
Must be dispelled then, not by sunshine's rays, -  
Not by those shining arrows of the light,  
But by insight into nature, and a scheme

of systematic contemplation.