

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

LXXIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Errare mihi videntur, qui existimant philosophiae fideliter deditos contumaces esse ac refractarios, contemptores magistratum aut regum eorumve, per quos publica administrantur. Ex contrario enim nulli adversus illos gratiores sunt; nec inmerito. Nullis enim plus praestant quam quibus frui tranquillo
- 2 otio licet. Itaque ii, quibus multum¹ ad propositum bene vivendi confert securitas publica, necesse est auctorem huius boni ut parentem colant, multo quidem magis quam illi inquieti et in medio positi, qui multa principibus debent, sed multa et inputant, quibus numquam tam plene occurrere ulla liberalitas potest, ut cupiditates illorum, quae crescunt, dum implentur, exsatiet. Quisquis autem de accipiendo cogitat, oblitus accepti est; nec ullum habet malum
- 3 cupiditas maius, quam quod ingrata est. Adice nunc, quod nemo eorum, qui in re publica versantur, quot vincat, sed a quibus vincatur, aspicit. Et illis non tam iucundum est multos post se videre quam grave aliquem ante se. Habet hoc vitium omnis ambitio; non respicit. Nec ambitio tantum instabilis est, verum cupiditas omnis, quia incipit semper a fine.
- 4 At ille vir sincerus ac purus, qui reliquit et curiam et forum et omnem administrationem rei publicae,

¹ *multum* Haase; *altum* VPb.

^a This letter is especially interesting because of its autobiographical hints, and its relation to Seneca's own efforts to be rid of court life and seek the leisure of the sage. See the Introduction to Vol. I. pp. viii f.

^b Cf. Horace, *Sat.* i. l. 115 f.—

Instat equis auriga suos vincentibus, illum
Praeteritum temnens extremos inter euntem.

EPISTLE LXXIII.

LXXIII. ON PHILOSOPHERS AND KINGS ^a

It seems to me erroneous to believe that those who have loyally dedicated themselves to philosophy are stubborn and rebellious, scorers of magistrates or kings or of those who control the administration of public affairs. For, on the contrary, no class of man is so popular with the philosopher as the ruler is; and rightly so, because rulers bestow upon no men a greater privilege than upon those who are allowed to enjoy peace and leisure. Hence, those who are greatly profited, as regards their purpose of right living, by the security of the State, must needs cherish as a father the author of this good; much more so, at any rate, than those restless persons who are always in the public eye, who owe much to the ruler, but also expect much from him, and are never so generously loaded with favours that their cravings, which grow by being supplied, are thoroughly satisfied. And yet he whose thoughts are of benefits to come has forgotten the benefits received; and there is no greater evil in covetousness than its ingratitude. Besides, no man in public life thinks of the many whom he has outstripped; he thinks rather of those by whom he is outstripped. And these men find it less pleasing to see many behind them than annoying to see anyone ahead of them.^b That is the trouble with every sort of ambition; it does not look back. Nor is it ambition alone that is fickle, but also every sort of craving, because it always begins where it ought to end.

But that other man, upright and pure, who has left the senate and the bar and all affairs of state, that

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ut ad ampliora secederet, diligit eos, per quos hoc ei facere tuto licet solusque¹ illis gratuitum testimonium reddit et magnam rem nescientibus debet. Quemadmodum praeceptores suos veneratur ac suspicit, quorum beneficio illis inviis exît, sic et hos,² sub quorum
5 tutela positus exercet artes bonas. “Verum alios quoque³ rex viribus suis protegit.” Quis negat? Sed quemadmodum Neptuno plus debere se iudicat ex is, qui eadem tranquillitate usi sunt, qui plura et pretiosiora illo mari vexit, animosius a mercatore quam a vectore solvitur votum, et ex ipsis mercatoribus effusius gratus est, qui odores ac purpuras et auro pensanda portabat quam qui vilissima quaeque et saburrae loco futura congesserat; sic huius pacis beneficium ad omnes pertinentis altius ad eos pervenit, qui illa bene utuntur.

6 Multi enim sunt ex his togatis, quibus pax operosior bello est. An idem existimas pro pace debere eos, qui illam ebrietati aut libidini inpendunt aut aliis vitiis, quae vel bello rumpenda sunt? Nisi forte tam iniquum putas esse sapientem, ut nihil viritim se debere pro communibus bonis iudicet. Soli lunaeque plurimum debeo, et non uni mihi oriuntur. Anno temperantique annum deo privatim obligatus

¹ *solusque* Muretus; *solumque* VPb.

² *hos* later MSS.; *his* VPb.

³ *alios quoque* later MSS.; *quoque alios* VPb.

^a For an interesting account of philosophy and its relation to Roman history see E. V. Arnold, *Roman Stoicism*, chap. xvi. This subject is discussed fully by Cicero, *De Off.* i. 71 f., and by Seneca, *Ep.* xc.

EPISTLE LXXIII.

he may retire to nobler affairs,^a cherishes those who have made it possible for him to do this in security; he is the only person who returns spontaneous thanks to them, the only person who owes them a great debt without their knowledge. Just as a man honours and reveres his teachers, by whose aid he has found release from his early wanderings, so the sage honours these men, also, under whose guardianship he can put his good theories into practice. But you answer: "Other men too are protected by a king's personal power." Perfectly true. But just as, out of a number of persons who have profited by the same stretch of calm weather, a man deems that his debt to Neptune is greater if his cargo during that voyage has been more extensive and valuable, and just as the vow is paid with more of a will by the merchant than by the passenger, and just as, from among the merchants themselves, heartier thanks are uttered by the dealer in spices, purple fabrics, and objects worth their weight in gold, than by him who has gathered cheap merchandise that will be nothing but ballast for his ship; similarly, the benefits of this peace, which extends to all, are more deeply appreciated by those who make good use of it.

For there are many of our toga-clad citizens to whom peace brings more trouble than war. Or do those, think you, owe as much as we do for the peace they enjoy, who spend it in drunkenness, or in lust, or in other vices which it were worth even a war to interrupt? No, not unless you think that the wise man is so unfair as to believe that as an individual he owes nothing in return for the advantages which he enjoys with all the rest. I owe a great debt to the sun and to the moon; and yet they do not rise for me alone. I am personally beholden to the seasons

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

sum, quamvis nihil in meum honorem¹ discripta
 7 sint. Stulta avaritia mortalium possessionem proprietatemque discernit nec quicquam suum credit esse, quod publicum est. At ille sapiens nihil iudicat suum magis quam cuius illi cum humano genere consortium est. Nec enim essent ita communia, nisi pars illorum pertineret ad singulos; socium efficit
 8 etiam quod ex minima portione commune est. Adice nunc, quod magna et vera bona non sic dividuntur, ut exiguum in singulos cadat; ad unumquemque tota perveniunt. Ex congiario tantum ferunt homines, quantum in capita promissum est. Epulum et visceratio et quicquid² aliud manu capitur, discedit in partes. At haec individua bona, pax et libertas, et³ tam omnium tota quam singulorum sunt.

9 Cogitat itaque, per quem sibi horum usus fructusque contingat, per quem non ad arma illum nec ad servandas vigiliis nec ad tuenda moenia et multiplex belli tributum publica necessitas vocet, agitque gubernatori suo gratias. Hoc docet philosophia praecipue, bene debere⁴ beneficia, bene solvere;
 10 interdum autem solutio est ipsa confessio. Confitebitur ergo multum se debere ei, cuius administratione ac providentia contingit illi pingue otium et arbitrium

¹ Hense suggests the possibility of *tempora* after *honorem*.

² *et quicquid* later MSS.; *quid* or *quicquid* VPb.

³ *et* later MSS.; *ea* VP.

⁴ *debere* later MSS.; *dedere* VPb.

^a For this figure *cf.* *Ep.* lxxii. 7 and note; see also the similar language of lxxxviii. 12 *hoc, quod tenes, quod tuum dicis, publicum est et quidem generis humani.*

^b During certain festivals, either cooked or raw meat was distributed among the people.

EPISTLE LXXIII.

and to the god who controls them, although in no respect have they been apportioned for my benefit. The foolish greed of mortals makes a distinction between possession and ownership,^a and believes that it has ownership in nothing in which the general public has a share. But our philosopher considers nothing more truly his own than that which he shares in partnership with all mankind. For these things would not be common property, as indeed they are, unless every individual had his quota; even a joint interest based upon the slightest share makes one a partner. Again, the great and true goods are not divided in such a manner that each has but a slight interest; they belong in their entirety to each individual. At a distribution of grain men receive only the amount that has been promised to each person; the banquet and the meat-dole,^b or all else that a man can carry away with him, are divided into parts. These goods, however, are indivisible,—I mean peace and liberty,—and they belong in their entirety to all men just as much as they belong to each individual.

Therefore the philosopher thinks of the person who makes it possible for him to use and enjoy these things, of the person who exempts him when the state's dire need summons to arms, to sentry duty, to the defence of the walls, and to the manifold exactions of war; and he gives thanks to the helmsman of his state. This is what philosophy teaches most of all,—honourably to avow the debt of benefits received, and honourably to pay them; sometimes, however, the acknowledgment itself constitutes payment. Our philosopher will therefore acknowledge that he owes a large debt to the ruler who makes it possible, by his management and foresight,

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

sui temporis et inperturbata publicis occupationibus quies.

O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit :
Namque erit ille mihi semper deus.

- 11 Si illa quoque otia multum auctori suo debent, quorum munus hoc maximum est :

Ille meas errare boves, ut cernis, et ipsum
Ludere quae vellem calamo permisit agresti ;

- 12 quanti aestimamus hoc otium, quod inter deos agitur, quod deos facit? Ita dico, Lucili, et te in caelum compendiario voco.

- Solebat Sextius dicere Iovem plus non posse quam bonum virum. Plura Iuppiter habet, quae praestet hominibus, sed inter duos bonos non est melior, qui locupletior, non magis quam inter duos, quibus par scientia regendi gubernaculum est, meliorem dixeris, cui maius speciosiusque navigium est. Iuppiter quo antecedit virum bonum? Diutius bonus est; sapiens nihilo se minoris existimat, quod virtutes eius spatio brevior cluduntur. Quemadmodum ex duobus sapientibus qui senior decessit, non est beatior eo, cuius intra pauciores annos terminata virtus est, sic deus non vincit sapientem felicitate, etiam si vincit aetate. Non est virtus maior, quae longior. Iuppiter omnia habet, sed nempe aliis tradidit habenda; ad

^a Vergil, *Eclogue*, i. 6 f. Vergil owes a debt to the Emperor, and regards him as a "god" because of the bestowal of earthly happiness; how much greater is the debt of the philosopher, who has the opportunity to study heavenly things!

^b Vergil, *Eclogue*, i. 9 f.

^c In the Christian religion, God is everything; among the Stoics, the wise man is equal to the gods. Cf., for example, *Ep.* xli. 4.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :

www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :

Brainfly Inc.

5100 Garfield Ave. #46

Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net