

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

non repeto, non exigo. Profuisse tutum sit. Nullum est odium perniciosius quam e beneficii violati pudore.
VALE.

LXXXII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Desii iam de te esse sollicitus. "Quem," inquis, "deorum sponsorem accepisti?" Eum scilicet, qui neminem fallit, animum recti ac boni amatorem. In tuto pars tui melior est. Potest fortuna tibi iniuriam facere; quod ad rem magis pertinet, non timeo, ne tu facias tibi. I, qua ire coepisti et in isto te vitae 2 habitu compone placide, non molliter. Male mihi esse malo quam molliter; male¹ nunc sic excipe, quemadmodum a populo solet dici: dure, aspere, laboriose. Audire solemus sic quorundam vitam laudari, quibus invidetur: "molliter vivit"; hoc dicunt: "mollis est." Paulatim enim effeminatur animus atque in similitudinem otii sui et pigritiae, in qua iacet, solvitur. Quid ergo? Viro non vel obrigescere satius est? Deinde idem delicati timent,² cui vitam suam fecere similem. Multum interest

¹ male added by Muretus.

² morti after timent deleted by Madvig.

^a The words are put into the mouth of an imaginary benefactor who fears for his own life.

^b Cf. Tac. Agric. 42 *proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris*.

^c One who incurs liability by taking upon himself the debt of another. It is part of the process known as *intercessio*.

^d Rather than *mollis*.

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have received; I do not ask it back; I do not demand it. Let it be safe to have conferred a favour." ^a There is no worse hatred than that which springs from shame at the desecration of a benefit. ^b Farewell.

LXXXII. ON THE NATURAL FEAR OF DEATH

I have already ceased to be anxious about you. "Whom then of the gods," you ask, "have you found as your voucher?" ^c A god, let me tell you, who deceives no one,—a soul in love with that which is upright and good. The better part of yourself is on safe ground. Fortune can inflict injury upon you; what is more pertinent is that I have no fears lest you do injury to yourself. Proceed as you have begun, and settle yourself in this way of living, not luxuriously, but calmly. I prefer to be in trouble rather than in luxury; and you had better interpret the term "in trouble" as popular usage is wont to interpret it: living a "hard," "rough," "toilsome" life. We are wont to hear the lives of certain men praised as follows, when they are objects of unpopularity: "So-and-So lives luxuriously"; but by this they mean: "He is softened by luxury." For the soul is made womanish by degrees, and is weakened until it matches the ease and laziness in which it lies. Lo, is it not better for one who is really a man even to become hardened ^d? Next, these same dandies fear that which they have made their own lives resemble. Much difference is there between

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3 inter otium et conditivum. "Quid ergo?" inquis, "non satius est vel sic iacere quam in istis officiorum verticibus volutari?" Utraque res detestabilis est, et contractio et torpor. Puto, aequi qui in odoribus iacet, mortuus est quam qui rapitur unco.

4 Otium sine litteris mors est et hominis vivi sepultura. Quid deinde prodest secessisse? Tamquam non trans maria nos sollicitudinum causae persequantur! Quae latebra est, in quam non intret metus mortis? Quae tam emunita et in altum subducta vitae quies, quam non dolor territet? Quacumque te abdideris, mala humana circumstrepent. Multa extra sunt, quae circumeunt nos, quo aut¹ fallant aut urgeant, multa intus, quae in media solitudine exaestuunt.

5 Philosophia circumdanda est, inexpugnabilis murus, quem fortuna multis machinis lacessitum non transit. In insuperabili loco stat animus, qui externa deseruit, et arce se sua vindicat; infra illum omne telum cadit. Non habet, ut putamus, fortuna longas manus; nemi-
6 nem occupat nisi haerentem sibi. Itaque quantum possumus, ab illa resiliamus; quod sola praestabit sui naturaeque cognitio.² Sciat, quo iturus sit, unde ortus, quod illi bonum, quod malum sit, quid petat, quid evitet, quae sit illa ratio, quae adpetenda ac

¹ *quo aut* later MSS. ; *quae aut* VPb.

² *cognitio* later MSS. ; *conditio* Vb ; *condicio* p.

^a *Conditivum* (more frequently and properly *conditorium*) is a grim jest. The word is mostly found in an adjectival sense applying to fruits and grain *stored* for later use.

^b Compare Arnold's nineteenth-century definition of culture.

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lying idle and lying buried ^a! “But,” you say, “is it not better even to lie idle than to whirl round in these eddies of business distraction?” Both extremes are to be deprecated—both tension and sluggishness. I hold that he who lies on a perfumed couch is no less dead than he who is dragged along by the executioner’s hook.

Leisure without study is death; it is a tomb for the living man. What then is the advantage of retirement? As if the real causes of our anxieties did not follow us across the seas! What hiding-place is there, where the fear of death does not enter? What peaceful haunts are there, so fortified and so far withdrawn that pain does not fill them with fear? Wherever you hide yourself, human ills will make an uproar all around. There are many external things which compass us about, to deceive us or to weigh upon us; there are many things within which, even amid solitude, fret and ferment.

Therefore, gird yourself about with philosophy, an impregnable wall. Though it be assaulted by many engines, Fortune can find no passage into it. The soul stands on unassailable ground, if it has abandoned external things; it is independent in its own fortress; and every weapon that is hurled falls short of the mark. Fortune has not the long reach with which we credit her; she can seize none except him that clings to her. Let us then recoil from her as far as we are able. This will be possible for us only through knowledge of self and of the world ^b of Nature. The soul should know whither it is going and whence it came, what is good for it and what is evil, what it seeks and what it avoids, and what is that Reason which distinguishes between the desirable and the undesirable, and thereby tames

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fugienda discernat, qua cupiditatum mansuescit insania, timorum saevitia conpescitur.

- 7 Haec quidam¹ putant ipsos etiam sine philosophia repressisse. Sed, cum securos aliquis casus expertus est, exprimitur sera confessio. Magna verba excidunt, cum tortor poposcit manum, cum mors propius² accessit. Possis illi dicere: facile provocabas mala absentia; ecce dolor, quem tolerabilem esse dicebas, ecce mors, quam contra multa animose locutus es; sonant flagella, gladius micat:

Nunc animis opus, Aenea, nunc pectore firmo.

- 8 Faciet autem illud firmum adsidua meditatio, si non verba exercueris, sed animum, si contra mortem te praeparaveris, adversus quam non exhortabitur nec adtollet, qui cavillationibus tibi persuadere temptaverit mortem malum non esse. Libet enim, Lucili virorum optime, ridere ineptias Graecas, quas nondum, 9 quamvis mirer, excussi. Zenon noster hac collectione utitur: "nullum malum gloriosum est; mors autem gloriosa est; mors ergo non est malum." Profecisti; liberatus sum metu; post hoc non dubitabo porrigere cervicem. Non vis severius loqui nec morituro risum

¹ *quidam* later MSS.; *quidem* VPb.

² *propius* later MSS.; *potius* VPb.

^a Vergil, *Aeneid*, vi. 261.

^b Frag. 196 von Arnim.

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the madness of our desires and calms the violence of our fears.

Some men flatter themselves that they have checked these evils by themselves even without the aid of philosophy; but when some accident catches them off their guard, a tardy confession of error is wrung from them. Their boastful words perish from their lips when the torturer commands them to stretch forth their hands, and when death draws nearer! You might say to such a man: "It was easy for you to challenge evils that were not near-by; but here comes pain, which you declared you could endure; here comes death, against which you uttered many a courageous boast! The whip cracks, the sword flashes:

Ah now, Aeneas, thou must needs be stout
And strong of heart!"^a

This strength of heart, however, will come from constant study, provided that you practise, not with the tongue but with the soul, and provided that you prepare yourself to meet death. To enable yourself to meet death, you may expect no encouragement or cheer from those who try to make you believe, by means of their hair-splitting logic, that death is no evil. For I take pleasure, excellent Lucilius, in poking fun at the absurdities of the Greeks, of which, to my continual surprise, I have not yet succeeded in ridding myself. Our master Zeno^b uses a syllogism like this: "No evil is glorious; but death is glorious; therefore death is no evil." A cure, Zeno! I have been freed from fear; henceforth I shall not hesitate to bare my neck on the scaffold. Will you not utter sterner words instead of rousing a dying man to laughter? Indeed, Lucilius, I could

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- movere? Non mehercules facile tibi dixerim, utrum ineptior fuerit, qui se hac interrogatione iudicavit mortis metum extinguere, an qui hoc, tamquam ad
- 10 rem pertineret, conatus est solvere. Nam et ipse interrogationem contrariam opposuit ex eo natam, quod mortem inter indifferentia ponimus, quae ἀδιάφορα Graeci vocant. "Nihil," inquit, "indifferens gloriosum est; mors autem gloriosum est; ergo mors non est indifferens." Haec interrogatio vides ubi obrepat: mors non est gloriosa, sed fortiter mori gloriosum est. Et cum dicis: "indifferens nihil gloriosum est," concedo tibi ita, ut dicam nihil gloriosum esse nisi circa indifferentia. Tamquam indifferentia esse dico, id est nec bona nec mala, morbum, dolorem, paupertatem, exilium, mortem.
- 11 Nihil horum per se gloriosum est, nihil tamen sine his. Laudatur enim non paupertas, sed ille, quem paupertas¹ non summittit nec² incurvat. Laudatur non exilium, sed ille qui in exilium ivit tanquam³ misisset. Laudatur non dolor, sed ille, quem nihil coegit dolor. Nemo mortem laudat, sed eum, cuius
- 12 mors ante abstulit animum quam conturbavit. Omnia ista per se non sunt honesta nec gloriosa, sed quicquid ex illis virtus adiit tractavitque, honestum et gloriosum facit; illa in medio posita sunt; interest, utrum malitia illis an virtus manum admoverit. Mors enim illa, quae in Catone gloriosa est, in Bruto statim

¹ Pb and V¹ omit *sed . . . paupertas*.

² *nec* later MSS.; *sed* VPb.

³ *sed ille qui in exilium ivit tanquam* Madvig; . . . *ut quam* MSS.

^a Defined by the Greeks as "things which have no direct connexion either with happiness or with unhappiness." See Cicero, *De Finibus*, iii. 50 ff.

^b *i.e.*, are "indifferent" (*cf.* § 14 *indifferentia ac media dicuntur*).

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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