

# THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

## II.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Ex iis quae mihi scribis, et ex iis quae audio, bonam spem de te concipio; non discurreis nec locorum mutationibus inquietaris. Aegri animi ista iactatio est. Primum argumentum compositae mentis  
2 existimo posse consistere et secum morari. Illud autem vide, ne ista lectio auctorum multorum et omnis generis voluminum habeat aliquid vagum et instabile. Certis ingeniis inmorari et innutriri oportet, si velis aliquid trahere, quod in animo fideliter sedeat. Nusquam est, qui ubique est. Vitam in peregrinatione exigentibus hoc evenit, ut multa hospitia habeant, nullas amicitias. Idem accidat necesse est iis, qui nullius se ingenio familiariter applicant, sed  
3 omnia cursim et properantes transmittunt. Non prodest cibus nec corpori accedit, qui statim sumptus emittitur; nihil aequae sanitatem impedit quam remediorum crebra mutatio; non venit vulnus ad cicatricem, in quo medicamenta temptantur; non conualescit planta, quae saepe transfertur. Nihil tam utile est, ut in transitu prosit. Distringit librorum multitudo.

Itaque cum legere non possis, quantum habueris,  
4 satis est habere, quantum legas. "Sed modo," inquis, "hunc librum evolvere volo, modo illum." Fastidientis stomachi est multa degustare; quae ubi  
6

## EPISTLE II.

### II. ON DISCURSIVENESS IN READING

Judging by what you write me, and by what I hear, I am forming a good opinion regarding your future. You do not run hither and thither and distract yourself by changing your abode; for such restlessness is the sign of a disordered spirit. The primary indication, to my thinking, of a well-ordered mind is a man's ability to remain in one place and linger in his own company. Be careful, however, lest this reading of many authors and books of every sort may tend to make you discursive and unsteady. You must linger among a limited number of master-thinkers, and digest their works, if you would derive ideas which shall win firm hold in your mind. Everywhere means nowhere. When a person spends all his time in foreign travel, he ends by having many acquaintances, but no friends. And the same thing must hold true of men who seek intimate acquaintance with no single author, but visit them all in a hasty and hurried manner. Food does no good and is not assimilated into the body if it leaves the stomach as soon as it is eaten; nothing hinders a cure so much as frequent change of medicine; no wound will heal when one salve is tried after another; a plant which is often moved can never grow strong. There is nothing so efficacious that it can be helpful while it is being shifted about. And in reading of many books is distraction.

Accordingly, since you cannot read all the books which you may possess, it is enough to possess only as many books as you can read. "But," you reply, "I wish to dip first into one book and then into another." I tell you that it is the sign of an over-nice appetite to toy with many dishes; for when

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varia sunt et diversa, inquinant, non alunt. Probato  
itaque semper lege, et si quando ad alios deverti  
libuerit, ad priores redi. Aliquid cotidie adversus  
paupertatem, aliquid adversus mortem auxilii com-  
para, nec minus adversus ceteras pestes; et cum  
multa percurreris, unum excerpe, quod illo die con-  
5 coquas. Hoc ipse quoque facio; ex pluribus, quae  
legi, aliquid adprehendo.

Hodiernum hoc est, quod apud Epicurum nactus  
sum; soleo enim et in aliena castra transire, non  
6 tamquam transfuga, sed tamquam explorator. "Ho-  
nesta," inquit, "res est laeta paupertas." Illa vero  
non est paupertas, si laeta est. Non qui parum  
habet, sed qui plus cupit, pauper est. Quid enim  
refert, quantum illi in arca, quantum in horreis  
iaceat, quantum pascat aut feneret, si alieno imminet,  
si non acquisita sed adquirenda computat? Quis  
sit divitiarum modus, quaeris? Primus habere quod  
necesse est, proximus quod sat est. VALE.

### III.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Epistulas ad me perferendas tradidisti, ut scribis,  
amico tuo; deinde admones me, ne omnia cum eo ad  
te pertinentia communicem, quia non soleas ne ipse  
quidem id facere; ita in<sup>1</sup> eadem epistula illum et

<sup>1</sup> ita in Gertz; ita AL.

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<sup>a</sup> Frag. 475 Usener.

## EPISTLES II., III.

they are manifold and varied, they cloy but do not nourish. So you should always read standard authors; and when you crave a change, fall back upon those whom you read before. Each day acquire something that will fortify you against poverty, against death, indeed against other misfortunes as well; and after you have run over many thoughts, select one to be thoroughly digested that day. This is my own custom; from the many things which I have read, I claim some one part for myself.

The thought for to-day is one which I discovered in Epicurus<sup>a</sup>; for I am wont to cross over even into the enemy's camp,—not as a deserter, but as a scout. He says: "Contented poverty is an honourable estate." Indeed, if it be contented, it is not poverty at all. It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor. What does it matter how much a man has laid up in his safe, or in his warehouse, how large are his flocks and how fat his dividends, if he covets his neighbour's property, and reckons, not his past gains, but his hopes of gains to come? Do you ask what is the proper limit to wealth? It is, first, to have what is necessary, and, second, to have what is enough. Farewell.

### III. ON TRUE AND FALSE FRIENDSHIP

You have sent a letter to me through the hand of a "friend" of yours, as you call him. And in your very next sentence you warn me not to discuss with him all the matters that concern you, saying that even you yourself are not accustomed to do this; in other words, you have in the same letter affirmed

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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