

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

observavit illum, an ex formula sua viveret. Platon et Aristoteles et omnis in diversum itura sapientium turba plus ex moribus quam ex verbis Socratis traxit; Metrodorum et Hermarchum et Polyaeum magnos viros non schola Epicuri sed contubernium fecit. Nec in hoc te accerso tantum, ut proficias, sed ut prosis; plurimum enim alter alteri conferemus.

- 7 Interim quoniam diurnam tibi mercedulam debeo, quid me hodie apud Hecatonem delectaverit dicam. "Quaeris," inquit, "quid profecerim? Amicus esse mihi coepi." Multum profecit; numquam erit solus. Scito hunc amicum omnibus esse. VALE.

VII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Quid tibi vitandum praecipue existimes, quaeris? Turbam. Nondum illi tuto committeris. Ego certe confitebor inbecillitatem meam; numquam mores, quos extuli, refero. Aliquid ex eo, quod composui, turbatur; aliquid ex iis, quae fugavi, redit. Quod aegris evenit, quos longa inbecillitas usque eo adfecit, ut nusquam sine offensa proferantur, hoc

^a Frag. 26 Fowler.

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hidden purposes, and watched him to see whether he lived according to his own rules. Plato, Aristotle, and the whole throng of sages who were destined to go each his different way, derived more benefit from the character than from the words of Socrates. It was not the class-room of Epicurus, but living together under the same roof, that made great men of Metrodorus, Hermarchus, and Polyænus. Therefore I summon you, not merely that you may derive benefit, but that you may confer benefit; for we can assist each other greatly.

Meanwhile, I owe you my little daily contribution; you shall be told what pleased me to-day in the writings of Hecato^a; it is these words: "What progress, you ask, have I made? I have begun to be a friend to myself." That was indeed a great benefit; such a person can never be alone. You may be sure that such a man is a friend to all mankind. Farewell.

VII. ON CROWDS

Do you ask me what you should regard as especially to be avoided? I say, crowds; for as yet you cannot trust yourself to them with safety. I shall admit my own weakness, at any rate; for I never bring back home the same character that I took abroad with me. Something of that which I have forced to be calm within me is disturbed; some of the foes that I have routed return again. Just as the sick man, who has been weak for a long time, is in such a condition that he cannot be taken out of

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accidit nobis, quorum animi ex longo morbo re-
2 ficiuntur. Inimica est multorum conversatio; nemo
non aliquod nobis vitium aut commendat aut inprimit
aut nescientibus adlinit. Utique quo maior est
populus, cui miscemur, hoc periculi plus est.

Nihil vero tam damnosum bonis moribus quam in
aliquo spectaculo desiderere. Tunc enim per volup-
3 tatem facilius vitia subrepunt. Quid me existimas
dicere? Avarior redeo, ambitiosior, luxuriosior, im-
mo vero crudelior et inhumanior, quia inter homines
fui. Casu in meridianum spectaculum incidi lusus
expectans et sales et aliquid laxamenti, quo hominum
oculi ab humano cruore adquiescant; contra est.
Quicquid ante pugnatum est, misericordia fuit. Nunc
omissis nugis mera homicidia sunt. Nihil habent quo
tegantur, ad ictum totis corporibus expositi numquam
4 frustra manum mittunt. Hoc plerique ordinariis pari-
bus et postulaticiis praeferunt. Quidni praeferant?
Non galea, non scuto repellitur ferrum. Quo muni-
menta? Quo artes? Omnia ista mortis morae sunt.
Mane leonibus et ursis homines, meridie spectatoribus
suis obiciuntur. Interfectores interfecturis iubent
obici et victorem in aliam detinent caedem. Exitus
pugnantium mors est; ferro et igne res geritur. Haec
5 fiunt, dum vacat harena. "Sed latrocinium fecit

^a During the luncheon interval condemned criminals were often driven into the arena and compelled to fight, for the amusement of those spectators who remained throughout the day.

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the house without suffering a relapse, so we ourselves are affected when our souls are recovering from a lingering disease. To consort with the crowd is harmful; there is no person who does not make some vice attractive to us, or stamp it upon us, or taint us unconsciously therewith. Certainly, the greater the mob with which we mingle, the greater the danger.

But nothing is so damaging to good character as the habit of lounging at the games; for then it is that vice steals subtly upon one through the avenue of pleasure. What do you think I mean? I mean that I come home more greedy, more ambitious, more voluptuous, and even more cruel and inhuman,—because I have been among human beings. By chance I attended a mid-day exhibition, expecting some fun, wit, and relaxation,—an exhibition at which men's eyes have respite from the slaughter of their fellow-men. But it was quite the reverse. The previous combats were the essence of compassion; but now all the trifling is put aside and it is pure murder.^a The men have no defensive armour. They are exposed to blows at all points, and no one ever strikes in vain. Many persons prefer this programme to the usual pairs and to the bouts "by request." Of course they do; there is no helmet or shield to deflect the weapon. What is the need of defensive armour, or of skill? All these mean delaying death. In the morning they throw men to the lions and the bears; at noon, they throw them to the spectators. The spectators demand that the slayer shall face the man who is to slay him in his turn; and they always reserve the latest conqueror for another butchering. The outcome of every fight is death, and the means are fire and sword. This sort of thing goes on while the arena is empty. You

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aliquis, occidit hominem." Quid ergo?¹ Quia occidit ille, meruit ut hoc pateretur; tu quid meruisti miser, ut hoc spectes? "Occide, verbera, ure! Quare tam timide incurrit in ferrum? Quare parum audacter occidit? Quare parum libenter moritur? Plagis agatur² in vulnera, mutuos ictus nudis et obviis pectoribus excipiant." Intermissum est spectaculum: "interim iugulentur homines, ne nihil agatur."

Age, ne hoc quidem intellegitis, mala exempla in eos redundare, qui faciunt? Agite dis immortalibus gratias, quod eum docetis esse crudelem, qui non potest discere. Subducendus populo est tener animus et parum tenax recti; facile transitur ad plures. Socrati et Catoni et Laelio excutere morem suum dissimilis multitudo potuisset; adeo nemo nostrum, qui cum maxime concinnamus ingenium, ferre impetum vitiorum tam magno comitatu venientium potest. Unum exemplum luxuriae aut avaritiae multum mali facit; convictor delicatus paulatim enervat et emollit, vicinus dives cupiditatem inritat, malignus comes quamvis candido et simplici rubiginem suam adfricuit. Quid tu accidere his moribus credis, in quos publice factus est impetus? Necessesse est aut imiteris aut oderis.

¹ So Hense; *quid ergo occidit hominem* MSS.

² *agatur* Rossbach; *agitur* MSS.

* The remark is addressed to the brutalized spectators.

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may retort: "But he was a highway robber; he killed a man!" And what of it? Granted that, as a murderer, he deserved this punishment, what crime have you committed, poor fellow, that you should deserve to sit and see this show? In the morning they cried "Kill him! Lash him! Burn him! Why does he meet the sword in so cowardly a way? Why does he strike so feebly? Why doesn't he die game? Whip him to meet his wounds! Let them receive blow for blow, with chests bare and exposed to the stroke!" And when the games stop for the intermission, they announce: "A little throat-cutting in the meantime, so that there may still be something going on!"

Come now; do you ^a not understand even this truth, that a bad example reacts on the agent? Thank the immortal gods that you are teaching cruelty to a person who cannot learn to be cruel. The young character, which cannot hold fast to righteousness, must be rescued from the mob; it is too easy to side with the majority. Even Socrates, Cato, and Laelius might have been shaken in their moral strength by a crowd that was unlike them; so true it is that none of us, no matter how much he cultivates his abilities, can withstand the shock of faults that approach, as it were, with so great a retinue. Much harm is done by a single case of indulgence or greed; the familiar friend, if he be luxurious, weakens and softens us imperceptibly; the neighbour, if he be rich, rouses our covetousness; the companion, if he be slanderous, rubs off some of his rust upon us, even though we be spotless and sincere. What then do you think the effect will be on character, when the world at large assaults it! You must either imitate or loathe the world.

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8 Utrumque autem devitandum est; neve similis malis fias, quia multi sunt, neve inimicus multis, quia dissimiles sunt. Recede in te ipsum, quantum potes. Cum his versare, qui te meliorem facturi sunt. Illos admitte, quos tu potes facere meliores. Mutuo ista
9 fiunt, et homines, dum docent, discunt. Non est quod te gloria publicandi ingenii producat in medium, ut recitare istis velis aut disputare; quod facere te vellem, si haberes isti populo idoneam mercem; nemo est, qui intellegere te possit. Aliquis fortasse, unus aut alter incidet, et hic ipse formandus tibi erit instituendusque ad intellectum tui. "Cui ergo ista didici?" Non est quod timeas, ne operam perdidideris; tibi¹ didicisti.

10 Sed ne soli mihi hodie didicerim, communicabo tecum, quae occurrerunt mihi egregie dicta circa eundem fere sensum tria; ex quibus unum haec epistula in debitum solvet, duo in antecessum accipe. Democritus ait: "Unus mihi pro populo est, et populus
11 pro uno." Bene et ille, quisquis fuit, ambigitur enim de auctore, cum quaereretur ab illo, quo tanta diligentia artis spectaret ad paucissimos perventurae, "Satis sunt," inquit, "mihi pauci, satis est unus, satis est nullus." Egregie hoc tertium Epicurus, cum uni

¹ *tibi b, Hense; si tibi LP.*

^a Frag. 302^a Diels².

^b Frag. 208 Usener.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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