

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ex consortibus studiorum suorum scriberet: "Haec," inquit, "ego non multis, sed tibi; satis enim magnum
12 alter alteri theatrum sumus." Ista, mi Lucili, condenda in animum sunt, ut contemnas voluptatem ex plurium adsensione venientem. Multi te laudant. Ecquid¹ habes, cur placeas tibi, si is es, quem intelligant multi? Introrsus bona tua spectent. VALE.

VIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 "Tu me," inquis, "vitare turbam iubes, secedere et conscientia esse contentum? Ubi illa praecepta vestra, quae imperant in actu mori?" Quod ego tibi videor interim suadere, in hoc me recondidi et fores clusi, ut prodesse pluribus possem. Nullus mihi per otium dies exit. Partem noctium studiis vindico. Non vaco somno sed succumbo, et oculos vigilia fati-
2 gatos cadentesque in opere detineo. Secessi non tantum ab hominibus, sed a rebus, et inprimis a meis rebus; posterorum negotium ago; illis aliqua, quae possint prodesse, conscribo. Salutares admonitiones, velut medicamentorum utilium compositiones, litteris mando, esse illas efficaces in meis ulceribus expertus, quae etiam si persanata non sunt, serpere desierunt.

¹ *ecquid* Erasmus; *et quid* MSS.

^a As contrasted with the general Stoic doctrine of taking part in the world's work.

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written to one of the partners of his studies: "I write this not for the many, but for you; each of us is enough of an audience for the other." Lay these words to heart, Lucilius, that you may scorn the pleasure which comes from the applause of the majority. Many men praise you; but have you any reason for being pleased with yourself, if you are a person whom the many can understand? Your good qualities should face inwards. Farewell.

VIII. ON THE PHILOSOPHER'S SECLUSION

"Do you bid me," you say, "shun the throng, and withdraw from men, and be content with my own conscience? Where are the counsels of your school, which order a man to die in the midst of active work?" As to the course^a which I seem to you to be urging on you now and then, my object in shutting myself up and locking the door is to be able to help a greater number. I never spend a day in idleness; I appropriate even a part of the night for study. I do not allow time for sleep but yield to it when I must, and when my eyes are wearied with waking and ready to fall shut, I keep them at their task. I have withdrawn not only from men, but from affairs, especially from my own affairs; I am working for later generations, writing down some ideas that may be of assistance to them. There are certain wholesome counsels, which may be compared to prescriptions of useful drugs; these I am putting into writing; for I have found them helpful in ministering to my own sores, which, if not wholly cured, have at any rate ceased to spread.

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- 3 Rectum iter, quod sero cognovi et lassus errando, aliis monstro. Clamo: "Vitate, quaecumque vulgo placent, quae casus adtribuit. Ad omne fortuitum bonum suspiciosi pavidique subsistite; et fera et piscis spe aliqua oblectante decipitur. Munera ista fortunae putatis? Insidiae sunt. Quisquis vestrum tutam agere vitam volet, quantum plurimum potest, ista viscata beneficia devitet, in quibus hoc quoque miserrimi fallimur; habere nos putamus, haeremus.
- 4 In praecipitia cursus iste deducit. Huius eminentis vitae exitus cadere est. Deinde ne resistere quidem licet, cum coepit transversos agere felicitas, aut saltim rectis aut semel ruere; non evertit¹ fortuna, sed cernulat et allidit.
- 5 Hanc ergo sanam ac salubrem formam vitae tenete, ut corpori tantum indulgeatis, quantum bonae validitudo satis est. Durius tractandum est, ne animo male pareat. Cibis famem sedet, potio sitim extinguat, vestis arceat frigus, domus munimentum sit adversus infesta corporis. Hanc utrum caespes erexerit an varius lapis gentis alienae, nihil interest; scitote tam bene hominem culmo quam auro tegi. Contemnite omnia, quae supervacuum labor velut ornamentum ac decus ponit. Cogitate nihil praeter

¹ *evertit* the edition of Mentelin; *vertit* MSS.

^a See *Ep.* lxxxv. 33 for the famous saying of the Rhodian pilot.

^b *cernulat*, equivalent to the Greek *ἀναχακίζω*, of a horse which throws a rider over its head.

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I point other men to the right path, which I have found late in life, when wearied with wandering. I cry out to them: "Avoid whatever pleases the throng: avoid the gifts of Chance! Halt before every good which Chance brings to you, in a spirit of doubt and fear; for it is the dumb animals and fish that are deceived by tempting hopes. Do you call these things the 'gifts' of Fortune? They are snares. And any man among you who wishes to live a life of safety will avoid, to the utmost of his power, these lined twigs of her favour, by which we mortals, most wretched in this respect also, are deceived; for we think that we hold them in our grasp, but they hold us in theirs. Such a career leads us into precipitous ways, and life on such heights ends in a fall. Moreover, we cannot even stand up against prosperity when she begins to drive us to leeward; nor can we go down, either, 'with the ship at least on her course,' or once for all^a; Fortune does not capsize us,—she plunges our bows under^b and dashes us on the rocks.

"Hold fast, then, to this sound and wholesome rule of life; that you indulge the body only so far as is needful for good health. The body should be treated more rigorously, that it may not be disobedient to the mind. Eat merely to relieve your hunger; drink merely to quench your thirst; dress merely to keep out the cold; house yourself merely as a protection against personal discomfort. It matters little whether the house be built of turf, or of variously coloured imported marble; understand that a man is sheltered just as well by a thatch as by a roof of gold. Despise everything that useless toil creates as an ornament and an object of beauty. And reflect that nothing except the soul is worthy

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animum esse mirabile, cui magno nihil magnum est."

6 Si haec mecum, si haec cum posteris loquor, non videor tibi plus prodesse, quam cum ad vadimonium advocatus descenderem, aut tabulis testamenti anulum inprimerem, aut in senatu candidato vocem et manum commodarem? Mihi crede, qui nihil agere videntur, maiora agunt; humana divinaque simul tractant.

7 Sed iam finis faciendus est et aliquid, ut institui, pro hac epistula dependendum. Id non de meo fiet; adhuc Epicurum complicamus, cuius hanc vocem hodierno die legi: "Philosophiae servias oportet, ut tibi contingat vera libertas." Non differtur in diem, qui se illi subiecit et tradidit; statim circumagitur. Hoc enim ipsum philosophiae servire libertas est.

8 Potest fieri, ut me interrogos, quare ab Epicuro tam multa bene dicta referam potius quam nostrorum. Quid est tamen, quare tu istas Epicuri voces putes esse, non publicas? Quam multi poetae dicunt, quae philosophis aut dicta sunt aut dicenda! Non adtingam tragicos nec togatas nostras. Habent enim hae quoque aliquid severitatis et sunt inter comoedias ac tragoedias mediae. Quantum disertissimorum versuum inter mimos iacet! Quam multa Publilii non excalceatis, sed coturnatis dicenda sunt!

9 Unum versum eius, qui ad philosophiam pertinet et

^a Cf. the Stoic precept "nil admirandum."

^b Frag. 199 Usener.

^c Literally "spun round" by the master and dismissed to freedom. Cf. Persius, v. 75 f.

^d *Fabulae togatae* are plays which dealt with Roman subject matter, as contrasted with adaptations from the Greek, called *palliatae*. The term, in the widest sense, includes both comedy and tragedy.

^e *i. e.*, comedians or mimes.

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of wonder; for to the soul, if it be great, naught is great." ^a

When I commune in such terms with myself and with future generations, do you not think that I am doing more good than when I appear as counsel in court, or stamp my seal upon a will, or lend my assistance in the senate, by word or action, to a candidate? Believe me, those who seem to be busied with nothing are busied with the greater tasks; they are dealing at the same time with things mortal and things immortal.

But I must stop, and pay my customary contribution, to balance this letter. The payment shall not be made from my own property; for I am still conning Epicurus.^b I read to-day, in his works, the following sentence: "If you would enjoy real freedom, you must be the slave of Philosophy." The man who submits and surrenders himself to her is not kept waiting; he is emancipated^c on the spot. For the very service of Philosophy is freedom.

It is likely that you will ask me why I quote so many of Epicurus's noble words instead of words taken from our own school. But is there any reason why you should regard them as sayings of Epicurus and not common property? How many poets give forth ideas that have been uttered, or may be uttered, by philosophers! I need not touch upon the tragedians and our writers of national drama^d; for these last are also somewhat serious, and stand half-way between comedy and tragedy. What a quantity of sagacious verses lie buried in the mime! How many of Publilius's lines are worthy of being spoken by buskin-clad actors, as well as by wearers of the slipper^e! I shall quote one verse of his, which concerns philosophy, and particularly that phase

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ad hanc partem, quae modo fuit in manibus, referam, quo negat fortuita in nostro habenda :

Alienum est omne, quicquid optando evenit.

10 Hunc sensum¹ a te dici non paulo melius et² adstrictius memini :

Non est tuum, fortuna quod fecit tuum.

Illud etiam nunc melius dictum a te non praeteribo :

Dari bonum quod potuit, auferri potest.

Hoc non inputo in solutum ; dedi³ de tuo tibi.

IX.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 An merito reprehendat in quadam epistula Epicurus eos, qui dicunt sapientem se ipso esse contentum et propter hoc amico non indigere, desideras scire. Hoc obicitur Stilboni ab Epicuro et iis quibus summum bonum visum est animus inpatiens.
- 2 In ambiguitatem incidendum est, si exprimere *ἀπάθειαν* uno verbo cito voluerimus et inpatientiam dicere. Poterit enim contrarium ei, quod significare volumus, intellegi. Nos eum volumus dicere, qui respuat omnis mali sensum ; accipietur is, qui nullum

¹ *sensum* Buecheler ; *versum* MSS.

² *et* Muretus ; *sed* MSS.

³ *dedi* inserted by Hense.

^a *Syri Sententiae*, p. 309 Ribbeck².

^b *Com. Rom. Frag.* p. 394 Ribbeck².

^c *ibidem*.

^d *Frag.* 174 Usener.

^e *i. e.*, the Cynics.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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