

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

vivamus et omnia tamquam illo vidente faciamus.”  
9 Hoc, mi Lucili, Epicurus praecepit. Custodem nobis  
et paedagogum dedit, nec inmerito. Magna pars  
peccatorum tollitur, si peccaturis testis adsistit. Ali-  
quem habeat animus, quem vereatur, cuius auctori-  
tate etiam secretum suum sanctius faciat. O felicem  
illum, qui non praesens tantum, sed etiam cogitatus  
emendat! O felicem, qui sic aliquem vereri potest,  
ut ad memoriam quoque eius se componat atque  
10 verendus. Elige itaque Catonem. Si hic tibi videtur  
nimis rigidus, elige remissioris animi virum Laelium.  
Elige eum, cuius tibi placuit et vita et oratio et ipse  
animum ante se ferens vultus; illum tibi semper  
ostende vel custodem vel exemplum. Opus est,  
inquam, aliquo, ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant;  
nisi ad regulam prava non corriges. VALE.

## XII.

### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Quocumque me verti, argumenta senectutis meae  
video. Veneram in suburbanum meum et querebar  
de inpensis aedificii dilabentis. Ait vilicus mihi non  
esse neglegentiae suae vitium, omnia se facere, sed  
villam veterem esse. Haec villa inter manus meas  
crevit; quid mihi futurum est, si tam putria sunt

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<sup>a</sup> Frag. 210 Usener.

<sup>b</sup> The figure is taken from the *ἁγίον*, the Holy of Holies  
in a temple. Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid*, vi. 10 *secreta Sibyllas*.

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you, and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them." Such, my dear Lucilius, is the counsel of Epicurus<sup>a</sup>; he has quite properly given us a guardian and an attendant. We can get rid of most sins, if we have a witness who stands near us when we are likely to go wrong. The soul should have someone whom it can respect,—one by whose authority it may make even its inner shrine more hallowed.<sup>b</sup> Happy is the man who can make others better, not merely when he is in their company, but even when he is in their thoughts! And happy also is he who can so revere a man as to calm and regulate himself by calling him to mind! One who can so revere another, will soon be himself worthy of reverence. Choose therefore a Cato; or, if Cato seems too severe a model, choose some Laelius, a gentler spirit. Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern. For we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters; you can never straighten that which is crooked unless you use a ruler. Farewell.

## XII. ON OLD AGE

Wherever I turn, I see evidences of my advancing years. I visited lately my country-place, and protested against the money which was spent on the tumble-down building. My bailiff maintained that the flaws were not due to his own carelessness; "he was doing everything possible, but the house was old." And this was the house which grew under my own hands! What has the future in store for

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- 2 aetatis meae saxa? Iratus illi proximam occasionem stomachandi arripio. "Apparet," inquam, "has platanos neglegi; nullas habent frondes. Quam nodosi sunt et retorridi rami, quam tristes et squalidi trunci! Hoc non accideret, si quis has circumfoderet, si inrigaret." Iurat per genium meum se omnia facere, in nulla re cessare curam suam, sed illas vetulas esse. Quod intra nos sit, ego illas
- 3 posueram, ego illarum primum videram folium. Conuersus ad ianuam "Quis est iste?" inquam, "iste decrepitus et merito ad ostium admotus? Foras enim spectat. Unde istunc nactus es? Quid te delectavit alienum mortuum tollere?" At ille "Non cognoscis me?" inquit. "Ego sum Felicio, cui solebas sigillaria adferre. Ego sum Philositi vilici filius, deliciolum tuum." "Perfecte," inquam, "iste delirat. Pupulus etiam delicium meum factus est? Prorsus potest fieri; dentes illi cum maxime cadunt."
- 4 Debeo hoc suburbano meo, quod mihi senectus mea, quocumque adverteram, apparuit. Conplectamur illam et amemus; plena est voluptatis, si illa scias uti. Gratissima sunt poma, cum fugiunt; pueritiae maximus in exitu decor est; deditos vino potio extrema delectat, illa quae mergit, quae ebrietati
- 5 summam manum inponit. Quod in se iucundissimum omnis voluptas habet, in finem sui differt. Iucundissima est aetas devexa iam, non tamen praeceps. Et

<sup>a</sup> A jesting allusion to the Roman funeral; the corpse's feet pointed to the door.

<sup>b</sup> His former owner should have kept him and buried him.

<sup>c</sup> Small figures, generally of terra-cotta, were frequently given to children as presents at the Saturnalia. Cf. Macrobius, i. 11. 49 *sigilla . . . pro se atque suis piaculum*.

<sup>d</sup> *i. e.*, the old slave resembles a child in that he is losing his teeth (but for the second time).

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me, if stones of my own age are already crumbling? I was angry, and I embraced the first opportunity to vent my spleen in the bailiff's presence. "It is clear," I cried, "that these plane-trees are neglected; they have no leaves. Their branches are so gnarled and shrivelled; the boles are so rough and unkempt! This would not happen, if someone loosened the earth at their feet, and watered them." The bailiff swore by my protecting deity that "he was doing everything possible, and never relaxed his efforts, but those trees were old." Between you and me, I had planted those trees myself, I had seen them in their first leaf. Then I turned to the door and asked: "Who is that broken-down dotard? You have done well to place him at the entrance; for he is outward bound.<sup>a</sup> Where did you get him? What pleasure did it give you to take up for burial some other man's dead?<sup>b</sup>" But the slave said: "Don't you know me, sir? I am Felicio; you used to bring me little images.<sup>c</sup> My father was Philositus the steward, and I am your pet slave." "The man is clean crazy," I remarked. "Has my pet slave become a little boy again? But it is quite possible; his teeth are just dropping out."<sup>d</sup>

I owe it to my country-place that my old age became apparent whithersoever I turned. Let us cherish and love old age; for it is full of pleasure if one knows how to use it. Fruits are most welcome when almost over; youth is most charming at its close; the last drink delights the toper,—the glass which souses him and puts the finishing touch on his drunkenness. Each pleasure reserves to the end the greatest delights which it contains. Life is most delightful when it is on the downward slope, but has not yet reached the abrupt decline. And I myself believe that the period which stands, so to

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illam quoque in extrema tegula<sup>1</sup> stantem iudico habere suas voluptates. Aut hoc ipsum succedit in locum voluptatum, nullis egere. Quam dulce est  
 6 cupiditates fatigasse ac reliquisse! "Molestum est," inquis, "mortem ante oculos habere." Primum ista tam seni ante oculos debet esse quam iuveni. Non enim citamur ex censu. Deinde nemo tam senex est, ut inprobe unum diem speret. Unus autem dies gradus vitae est.

Tota aetas partibus constat et orbis habet circumductos maiores minoribus. Est aliquis, qui omnis complectatur et cingat; hic pertinet a natali ad diem extremum. Est alter, qui annos adulescentiae cludit.<sup>2</sup> Est qui totam pueritiam ambitu suo adstringit. Est deinde per se annus in se omnia continens tempora, quorum multiplicatione vita componitur. Mensis artiore praecingitur circulo. Angustissimum habet dies gyrum, sed et hic ab initio ad  
 7 exitum venit, ab ortu ad occasum. Ideo Heraclitus, cui cognomen fecit orationis obscuritas, "Unus," inquit, "dies par omni est." Hoc alius aliter exceptit.<sup>3</sup> Dixit enim parem esse horis, nec mentitur; nam si dies est tempus viginti et quattuor horarum, necesse est omnes inter se dies pares esse, quia nox habet, quod dies perdidit. Alius ait parem esse unum diem omnibus similitudine; nihil enim habet longissimi temporis spatium, quod non et in uno die invenias, lucem et

<sup>1</sup> *tegula* MSS., retained by Hense; *regula*, "horizon-line," Summers; *specula*, "summit," Madvig.

<sup>2</sup> *cludit* C. Brakman; *excludit* MSS.

<sup>3</sup> *exceptit* MSS.; *cepit* Hense.

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<sup>4</sup> *i. e.*, *seniores* as contrasted with *iuniores*.

<sup>5</sup> ὁ σκοτεινός, "The Obscure," Frag. 106 Diels<sup>2</sup>.

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speak, on the edge of the roof, possesses pleasures of its own. Or else the very fact of our not wanting pleasures has taken the place of the pleasures themselves. How comforting it is to have tired out one's appetites, and to have done with them! "But," you say, "it is a nuisance to be looking death in the face!" Death, however, should be looked in the face by young and old alike. We are not summoned according to our rating on the censor's list.<sup>a</sup> Moreover, no one is so old that it would be improper for him to hope for another day of existence. And one day, mind you, is a stage on life's journey.

Our span of life is divided into parts; it consists of large circles enclosing smaller. One circle embraces and bounds the rest; it reaches from birth to the last day of existence. The next circle limits the period of our young manhood. The third confines all of childhood in its circumference. Again, there is, in a class by itself, the year; it contains within itself all the divisions of time by the multiplication of which we get the total of life. The month is bounded by a narrower ring. The smallest circle of all is the day; but even a day has its beginning and its ending, its sunrise and its sunset. Hence Heraclitus, whose obscure style gave him his surname,<sup>b</sup> remarked: "One day is equal to every day." Different persons have interpreted the saying in different ways. Some hold that days are equal in number of hours, and this is true; for if by "day" we mean twenty-four hours' time, all days must be equal, inasmuch as the night acquires what the day loses. But others maintain that one day is equal to all days through resemblance, because the very longest space of time possesses no element which cannot be found in a single day,—namely, light and

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noctem, et in aeternum dies vices plures facit istas,  
 8 non alias contractior,<sup>1</sup> alias productior. Itaque sic  
 ordinandus est dies omnis, tamquam cogat agmen  
 et consummet atque expleat vitam.

Pacuvius, qui Syriam usu suam fecit, cum vino et  
 illis funebribus epulis sibi parentaverat, sic in cubi-  
 culum ferebatur a cena, ut inter plausus exoletorum  
 hoc ad symphoniam caneretur: *βεβίωται, βεβίωται.*  
 9 Nullo non se die extulit. Hoc, quod ille ex mala  
 conscientia faciebat, nos ex bona faciamus et in  
 somnum ituri laeti hilaresque dicamus :

Vixi et quem dederat cursum fortuna, peregi.

Crastinum si adiecerit deus, laeti recipiamus. Ille  
 beatissimus est et securus sui possessor, qui crastinum  
 sine sollicitudine expectat. Quisquis dixit "vixi,"  
 cotidie ad lucrum surgit.

10 Sed iam debeo epistulam includere. "Sic," inquis,  
 "sine ullo ad me peculio veniet?" Noli timere;  
 aliquid secum fert. Quare aliquid dixi? Multum.  
 Quid enim hac voce praeclarius, quam illi trado ad  
 te perferendam? "Malum est in necessitate vivere;  
 sed in necessitate vivere necessitas nulla est."  
 Quidni nulla sit? Patent undique ad libertatem

<sup>1</sup> *et in aeternum dies vices plures facit istas non alias con-*  
*tractior* Capps; *et in alternas mundi vices plura facit ista non*  
*alias contractior* MSS.; *non alia . . . alius contractior* etc.  
 Hense.

<sup>a</sup> *i. e.*, of light and darkness.

<sup>b</sup> *Usus* was the mere enjoyment of a piece of property;  
*dominium* was the exclusive right to its control. Possession  
 for one, or two, years conferred ownership. See Leage,  
*Roman Private Law*, pp. 133, 152, and 164. Although  
 Pacuvius was governor so long that the province seemed  
 to belong to him, yet he knew he might die any day.

<sup>c</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, iv. 653.

<sup>d</sup> Epicurus, *Sprüche*, 9 Wotke.

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