

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

XIV.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Fateor insitam esse nobis corporis nostri caritatem; fateor nos huius gerere tutelam. Non nego indulgendum illi; serviendum nego. Multis enim serviet, qui corpori servit, qui pro illo nimium timet, qui ad
2 illud omnia refert. Sic gerere nos debemus, non tamquam propter corpus vivere debeamus, sed tamquam non possimus sine corpore. Huius nos nimius amor timoribus inquietat, sollicitudinibus onerat, contumeliis obicit. Honestum ei vile est, cui corpus nimis carum est. Agatur eius diligentissime cura, ita tamen, ut cum exiget ratio, cum dignitas, cum fides, mittendum in ignes sit.
- 3 Nihilominus, quantum possumus, evitemus incommoda quoque, non tantum pericula, et in tutum nos reducamus excogitantes subinde, quibus possint timenda depelli. Quorum tria, nisi fallor, genera sunt: timetur inopia, timentur morbi, timentur quae
4 per vim potentioris eveniunt. Ex his omnibus nihil nos magis concutit, quam quod ex aliena potentia impendet. Magno enim strepitu et tumultu venit. Naturalia mala quae rettuli, inopia atque morbus, silentio subeunt nec oculis nec auribus quicquam terroris incutiunt. Ingens alterius mali pompa est.
- 84

EPISTLE XIV.

XIV. ON THE REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING FROM THE WORLD

I confess that we all have an inborn affection for our body; I confess that we are entrusted with its guardianship. I do not maintain that the body is not to be indulged at all; but I maintain that we must not be slaves to it. He will have many masters who makes his body his master, who is over-fearful in its behalf, who judges everything according to the body. We should conduct ourselves not as if we ought to live for the body, but as if we could not live without it. Our too great love for it makes us restless with fears, burdens us with cares, and exposes us to insults. Virtue is held too cheap by the man who counts his body too dear. We should cherish the body with the greatest care; but we should also be prepared, when reason, self-respect, and duty demand the sacrifice, to deliver it even to the flames.

Let us, however, in so far as we can, avoid discomforts as well as dangers, and withdraw to safe ground, by thinking continually how we may repel all objects of fear. If I am not mistaken, there are three main classes of these: we fear want, we fear sickness, and we fear the troubles which result from the violence of the stronger. And of all these, that which shakes us most is the dread which hangs over us from our neighbour's ascendancy; for it is accompanied by great outcry and uproar. But the natural evils which I have mentioned,—want and sickness,—steal upon us silently with no shock of terror to the eye or to the ear. The other kind of evil comes,

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

Ferrum circa se et ignes habet et catenas et turbam
5 ferarum, quam in viscera inmittat humana. Cogita
hoc loco carcerem et cruces et eculeos et uncum et
adactum per medium hominem, qui per os emergeret,
stipitem et distracta in diversum actis curribus mem-
bra, illam tunicam alimentis ignium et inlitam et
textam, et quicquid aliud praeter haec commenta
6 saevitia est. Non est itaque mirum, si maximus
huius rei timor est, cuius et varietas magna et appa-
ratus terribilis est. Nam quemadmodum plus agit
tortor, quo plura instrumenta doloris exposuit (specie
enim vincuntur qui patientia restitissent); ita ex iis,
quae animos nostros subigunt et domant, plus pro-
ficiunt, quae habent quod ostendant. Illae pestes
non minus graves sunt, famem dico et sitim et prae-
cordiorum subpurationes et febrem viscera ipsa
torrentem. Sed latent, nihil habent quod intentent,
quod praeferant; haec ut magna bella aspectu
apparatuque vicerunt.

7 Demus itaque operam, abstineamus offensis.
Interdum populus est, quem timere debeamus;
interdum si ea civitatis disciplina est, ut plurima per
senatum transignantur, gratiosi in eo viri; interdum
singuli, quibus potestas populi et in populum data
est. Hos omnes amicos habere operosum est, satis

^a Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 44, describing the tortures practised upon the Christians.

EPISTLE XIV.

so to speak, in the form of a huge parade. Surrounding it is a retinue of swords and fire and chains and a mob of beasts to be let loose upon the disembowelled entrails of men. Picture to yourself under this head the prison, the cross, the rack, the hook, and the stake which they drive straight through a man until it protrudes from his throat. Think of human limbs torn apart by chariots driven in opposite directions, of the terrible shirt smeared and interwoven with inflammable materials, and of all the other contrivances devised by cruelty, in addition to those which I have mentioned! It is not surprising, then, if our greatest terror is of such a fate; for it comes in many shapes and its paraphernalia are terrifying. For just as the torturer accomplishes more in proportion to the number of instruments which he displays,—indeed, the spectacle overcomes those who would have patiently withstood the suffering,—similarly, of all the agencies which coerce and master our minds, the most effective are those which can make a display. Those other troubles are of course not less serious; I mean hunger, thirst, ulcers of the stomach, and fever that parches our very bowels. They are, however, secret; they have no bluster and no heralding; but these, like huge arrays of war, prevail by virtue of their display and their equipment.

Let us, therefore, see to it that we abstain from giving offence. It is sometimes the people that we ought to fear; or sometimes a body of influential oligarchs in the Senate, if the method of governing the State is such that most of the business is done by that body; and sometimes individuals equipped with power by the people and against the people. It is burdensome to keep the friendship of all such

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

est inimicos non habere. Itaque sapiens numquam potentium iras provocabit, immo declinabit,¹ non
 8 aliter quam in navigando procellam. Cum peteres Siciliam, traiecisti fretum. Temerarius gubernator contempsit austri minas, ille est enim, qui Siculum pelagus exasperet et in vertices cogat; non sinistrum petit litus, sed id, a quo² propior Charybdis maria convolvit. At ille cautior peritos locorum rogat, quis aestus sit, quae signa dent nubes; longe ab illa regione verticibus infami cursum tenet. Idem facit sapiens; nocituram potentiam vitat, hoc primum cavens, ne vitare videatur. Pars enim securitatis et in hoc est, non ex professo eam petere, quia, quae quis fugit, damnat.

9 Circumspiciendum ergo nobis est, quomodo a vulgo tuti esse possimus. Primum nihil idem concupiscamus; rixa est inter competitores. Deinde nihil habeamus, quod cum magno emolumento insidiantis eripi possit. Quam minimum sit in corpore tuo spoliolum. Nemo ad humanum sanguinem propter ipsum venit, aut admodum pauci. Plures computant quam oderunt. Nudum latro trans-
 10 mittit; etiam in obsessa via pauperi pax est. Tria deinde ex praecepto veteri praestanda sunt ut vitentur: odium, invidia, contemptus. Quomodo hoc fiat, sapientia sola monstrabit. Difficile enim tem-

¹ *declinabit* L³b; *nec declinabit* pL¹.

² *sed id, a quo* Hense, Thomas; *sed ita quo* MSS.

^a Scylla was a rock on the Italian side of the Straits. Charybdis was a whirlpool on the Sicilian side. Servius on Vergil, *Aeneid*, iii. 420 defines the *dextrum* as the shore "to the right of those coming from the Ionian sea."

^b Cf. Juvenal x. 22 *cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*.

EPISTLE XIV.

persons ; it is enough not to make enemies of them. So the wise man will never provoke the anger of those in power ; nay, he will even turn his course, precisely as he would turn from a storm if he were steering a ship. When you travelled to Sicily, you crossed the Straits. The reckless pilot scorned the blustering South Wind,—the wind which roughens the Sicilian Sea and forces it into choppy currents ; he sought not the shore on the left,^a but the strand hard by the place where Charybdis throws the seas into confusion. Your more careful pilot, however, questions those who know the locality as to the tides and the meaning of the clouds ; he holds his course far from that region notorious for its swirling waters. Our wise man does the same ; he shuns a strong man who may be injurious to him, making a point of not seeming to avoid him, because an important part of one's safety lies in not seeking safety openly ; for what one avoids, one condemns.

We should therefore look about us, and see how we may protect ourselves from the mob. And first of all, we should have no cravings like theirs ; for rivalry results in strife. Again, let us possess nothing that can be snatched from us to the great profit of a plotting foe. Let there be as little booty as possible on your person. No one sets out to shed the blood of his fellow-men for the sake of bloodshed,—at any rate very few. More murderers speculate on their profits than give vent to hatred. If you are empty-handed, the highwayman passes you by ; even along an infested road, the poor may travel in peace.^b Next, we must follow the old adage and avoid three things with special care : hatred, jealousy, and scorn. And wisdom alone can show you how this may be done. It is hard to

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

peramentum est, verendumque, ne in contemptum nos invidiae¹ timor transferat ne dum calcare nolumus, videamur posse calcari. Multis timendi attulit causas timeri posse. Undique nos reducamus; non minus contemni quam suspici nocet.

- 11 Ad philosophiam ergo confugiendum est; hae litterae, non dico apud bonos, sed apud mediocriter malos, infularum loco sunt. Nam forensis eloquentia et quaecumque alia populum movet, adversarios habet; haec quieta et sui negotii contemni non potest, cui ab omnibus artibus etiam apud pessimos honor est. Numquam in tantum conualescet nequitia, numquam sic contra virtutes coniurabitur, ut non philosophiae nomen venerabile et sacrum maneat.

- Ceterum philosophia ipsa tranquille modesteque
12 tractanda est. "Quid ergo?" inquis, "Videtur tibi M. Cato modeste philosophari, qui bellum civile sententia reprimat? Qui furentium principum armis medius intervenit? Qui aliis Pompeium offendend-
13 tibus aliis Caesarem simul lacessit duos?" Potest aliquis disputare an illo tempore capessenda fuerit sapienti res publica. "Quid tibi vis, Marce Cato? Iam non agitur de libertate; olim pessumdata est. Quaeritur, utrum Caesar an Pompeius possideat rem publicam; quid tibi cum ista contentione? Nullae

¹ *invidiae* Muretus; *invidia* et MSS.

^a Cf. the proverb *neesse est multos timeat quem multi timent*, which is found in Seneca, *de Ira*, ii. 11. 4 and often elsewhere.

^b Literally, "is as good as a (priest's) fillet."

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :
www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :
Brainfly Inc.
5100 Garfield Ave. #46
Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net