

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

et quicquid ars ulla luxuriae elaboravit; maiora cupere ab his disces.

- 9 Naturalia desideria finita sunt; ex falsa opinione nascentia ubi desinant, non habent. Nullus enim terminus falso est. Viam eunti aliquid extremum est; error immensus est. Retrahe ergo te a vanis, et cum voles scire, quod petes, utrum naturalem habeat an caecam cupiditatem, considera, num possit alicubi consistere. Si longe progresso semper aliquid longius restat, scito id naturale non esse. VALE.

XVII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Proice omnia ista, si sapis, immo ut sapias, et ad bonam mentem magno cursu ac totis viribus tende. Si quid est, quo teneris, aut expedi aut incide. "Moratur," inquis, "me res familiaris; sic illam disponere volo, ut sufficere nihil agenti possit, ne aut
2 paupertas mihi oneri sit aut ego alicui." Cum hoc dicis, non videris vim ac potentiam eius, de quo cogitas, boni nosse. Et summam quidem rei pervides, quantum philosophia prosit, partes autem nondum satis subtiliter dispicis, necdum scis, quantum ubique nos adiuvet, quemadmodum et in maximis,

^a Perhaps from the *Hortensius*; see Müller, *Frag.* 98, p. 326.

EPISTLES XVI., XVII.

whatever any art has devised for the satisfaction of luxury; you will only learn from such things to crave still greater.

Natural desires are limited; but those which spring from false opinion can have no stopping-point. The false has no limits. When you are travelling on a road, there must be an end; but when astray, your wanderings are limitless. Recall your steps, therefore, from idle things, and when you would know whether that which you seek is based upon a natural or upon a misleading desire, consider whether it can stop at any definite point. If you find, after having travelled far, that there is a more distant goal always in view, you may be sure that this condition is contrary to nature. Farewell.

XVII. ON PHILOSOPHY AND RICHES

Cast away everything of that sort, if you are wise; nay, rather that you may be wise; strive toward a sound mind at top speed and with your whole strength. If any bond holds you back, untie it, or sever it. "But," you say, "my estate delays me; I wish to make such disposition of it that it may suffice for me when I have nothing to do, lest either poverty be a burden to me, or I myself a burden to others." You do not seem, when you say this, to know the strength and power of that good which you are considering. You do indeed grasp the all-important thing, the great benefit which philosophy confers, but you do not yet discern accurately its various functions, nor do you yet know how great is the help we receive from philosophy in everything, everywhere,—how, (to use Cicero's language,^a) it

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ut Ciceronis utar verbo, opituletur et in minima descendat. Mihi crede, advoca illam in consilium; 3 suadebit tibi, ne ad calculos sedeas. Nempe hoc quaeris et hoc ista dilatione vis consequi, ne tibi paupertas timenda sit; quid si adpetenda est? Multis ad philosophandum obstitere divitiae; paupertas expedita est, secura est. Cum classicum cecinit, scit non se peti; cum aqua conclamata¹ est, quomodo exeat, non quid efferat, quaerit; si² navigandum est, non strepitat³ portus nec unius comitatu inquieta sunt litora. Non circumstat illum turba servorum, ad quos pascendos transmarinarum regionum est op- 4 tanda fertilitas. Facile est pascere paucos ventres et bene institutos et nihil aliud desiderantes quam impleri. Parvo fames constat, magno fastidium. Paupertas contenta est desideriiis instantibus satis facere.

Quid est ergo, quare hanc recuses contubernalem, 5 cuius mores sanus dives imitatur? si vis vacare animo, aut pauper sis oportet aut pauperi similis. Non potest studium salutare fieri sine frugalitatis cura; frugalitas autem paupertas voluntaria est. Tolle itaque istas excusationes: "Nondum habeo, quantum satis est; si ad illam summam pervenero, tunc me totum philosophiae dabo." Atqui nihil prius quam hoc parandum est, quod tu differs et post cetera paras; ab hoc incipiendum est. "Parare," inquis, "unde vivam

¹ *aqua conclamata* Gertz and Buecheler; *aliqua conclamata* MSS.

² *ut (aut) si* MSS.; *ut* del. Hense.

³ *strepitat* Hense; *strepit at p*; *strepunt* LPb.

* Literally, "Water!"

EPISTLE XVII.

not only succours us in the greatest matters but also descends to the smallest. Take my advice; call wisdom into consultation; she will advise you not to sit for ever at your ledger. Doubtless, your object, what you wish to attain by such postponement of your studies, is that poverty may not have to be feared by you. But what if it is something to be desired? Riches have shut off many a man from the attainment of wisdom; poverty is unburdened and free from care. When the trumpet sounds, the poor man knows that he is not being attacked; when there is a cry of "Fire,"^a he only seeks a way of escape, and does not ask what he can save; if the poor man must go to sea, the harbour does not resound, nor do the wharves bustle with the retinue of one individual. No throng of slaves surrounds the poor man,—slaves for whose mouths the master must covet the fertile crops of regions beyond the sea. It is easy to fill a few stomachs, when they are well trained and crave nothing else but to be filled. Hunger costs but little; squeamishness costs much. Poverty is contented with fulfilling pressing needs.

Why, then, should you reject Philosophy as a comrade? Even the rich man copies her ways when he is in his senses. If you wish to have leisure for your mind, either be a poor man, or resemble a poor man. Study cannot be helpful unless you take pains to live simply; and living simply is voluntary poverty. Away, then, with all excuses like: "I have not yet enough; when I have gained the desired amount, then I shall devote myself wholly to philosophy." And yet this ideal, which you are putting off and placing second to other interests, should be secured first of all; you should begin with it. You

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

volo." Simul et para et ¹ disce ; si quid te vetat bene
 6 vivere, bene mori non vetat. Non est quod nos
 paupertas a philosophia revocet, ne egestas quidem.
 Toleranda est enim ad hoc properantibus vel fames.
 Quam toleravere quidam in obsidionibus, et quod
 aliud erat illis patientiae praemium quam in arbitrium
 non cadere victoris ? Quanto hic ² maius est quod pro-
 mittitur : perpetua libertas, nullius nec hominis nec
 dei timor. Et quidem vel esurienti ad ista veniendum
 7 est. Perpessi sunt exercitus inopiam omnium rerum,
 vixerunt herbarum radicibus et dictu foedis tulerunt
 famem. Haec omnia passi sunt pro regno, quo magis
 mireris, alieno. Dubitabit aliquis ferre paupertatem,
 ut animum furoribus liberet ?

Non est ergo prius acquirendum ; licet ad philo-
 8 sophiam etiam sine viatico pervenire. Ita est. Cum
 omnia habueris, tunc habere et sapientiam voles ?
 Haec erit ultimum vitae instrumentum et, ut ita
 dicam, additamentum ? Tu vero, sive aliquid habes,
 iam philosophare,—unde enim scis, an iam nimis
 habeas ?—sive nihil, hoc prius quaere quam quic-
 9 quam. "At necessaria deerunt." Primum deesse
 non poterunt, quia natura minimum petit, naturae

¹ *para et* Madvig ; *parare* MSS. ; *et te parare* Haase.

² *hic* Madvig ; *hoc* MSS.

EPISTLE XVII.

retort: "I wish to acquire something to live on." Yes, but learn while you are acquiring it; for if anything forbids you to live nobly, nothing forbids you to die nobly. There is no reason why poverty should call us away from philosophy,—no, nor even actual want. For when hastening after wisdom, we must endure even hunger. Men have endured hunger when their towns were besieged, and what other reward for their endurance did they obtain than that they did not fall under the conqueror's power? How much greater is the promise of the prize of everlasting liberty, and the assurance that we need fear neither God nor man! Even though we starve, we must reach that goal. Armies have endured all manner of want, have lived on roots, and have resisted hunger by means of food too revolting to mention. All this they have suffered to gain a kingdom, and,—what is more marvellous,—to gain a kingdom that will be another's. Will any man hesitate to endure poverty, in order that he may free his mind from madness?

Therefore one should not seek to lay up riches first; one may attain to philosophy, however, even without money for the journey. It is indeed so. After you have come to possess all other things, shall you then wish to possess wisdom also? Is philosophy to be the last requisite in life,—a sort of supplement? Nay, your plan should be this: be a philosopher now, whether you have anything or not,—for if you have anything, how do you know that you have not too much already?—but if you have nothing, seek understanding first, before anything else. "But," you say, "I shall lack the necessities of life." In the first place, you cannot lack them; because nature demands but little, and the wise man

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

autem se sapiens accommodat. Sed si necessitates ultimae inciderunt, iamdudum exhibit e vita et molestus sibi esse desinet. Si vero exiguum erit et angustum, quo possit vita produci, id boni consulet nec ultra necessaria sollicitus aut anxius ventri et scapulis suum reddet et occupationes divitum concursationesque ad divitias euntium securus laetusque
10 ridebit ac dicet: "Quid in longum ipse te differs? Expectabisne fenoris quaestum aut ex merce compendium aut tabulas beati senis, cum fieri possis statim dives? Repraesentat opes sapientia, quas cuicumque fecit supervacuas, dedit." Haec ad alios pertinent; tu locupletibus propior es. Saeculum muta, nimis habes. Idem est¹ autem omni saeculo, quod sat est.

11 Poteram hoc loco epistulam claudere, nisi te male instituissem. Reges Parthorum² non potest quisquam salutare sine munere; tibi valedicere non licet gratis. Quid istic? Ab Epicuro mutuam sumam: "Multis parasse divitias non finis miseriarum fuit, sed mutatio."

12 Nec hoc miror. Non est enim in rebus vitium, sed in ipso animo. Illud, quod paupertatem nobis gravem fecerat, et divitias graves fecit. Quemadmodum nihil refert, utrum aegrum in ligneo lecto an in aureo conloces,—quocumque illum transtuleris, morbum secum suum transferet,—sic nihil refert, utrum

¹ *idem est* Gertz; *id est* or *idem* MSS.

² *Parthorum* Gertz; *parthos* MSS.

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