

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- 16 Percepit sapientiam, si quis tam securus morietur quam nascitur; nunc vero trepidamus, cum periculum accessit, non animus nobis, non color constat; lacrimae nihil profuturae cadunt. Quid est turpius quam in ipso limine securitatis esse sollicitum?
- 17 Causa autem haec est, quod inanes omnium bonorum sumus, vitae iactura<sup>1</sup> laboramus. Non enim apud nos pars eius ulla subsedit; transmissa est et effluxit. Nemo quam bene vivat, sed quam diu, curat, cum omnibus possit contingere, ut bene vivant, ut diu, nulli. VALE.

### XXIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Putas me tibi scripturum, quam humane nobiscum hiemps egerit, quae et remissa fuit et brevis, quam malignum ver sit, quam praeposterum frigus, et alias ineptias verba quaerentium? Ego vero aliquid, quod et mihi et tibi prodesse possit, scribam. Quid autem id erit, nisi ut te exhorter ad bonam mentem? Huius fundamentum quod sit quaeris? Ne gaudeas vanis. Fundamentum hoc esse dixi; culmen est.
- 2 Ad summa pervenit, qui scit, quo gaudeat, qui felicitatem suam in aliena potestate non posuit; sollicitus est et incertus sui, quem spes aliqua

<sup>1</sup> Hense inserts *iactura* after *vitalis*.

## EPISTLES XXII., XXIII.

A man has caught the message of wisdom, if he can die as free from care as he was at birth; but as it is, we are all a-flutter at the approach of the dreaded end. Our courage fails us, our cheeks blanch; our tears fall, though they are unavailing. But what is baser than to fret at the very threshold of peace? The reason, however, is, that we are stripped of all our goods, we have jettisoned our cargo of life and are in distress; for no part of it has been packed in the hold; it has all been heaved overboard and has drifted away. Men do not care how nobly they live, but only how long, although it is within the reach of every man to live nobly, but within no man's power to live long. Farewell.

### XXIII. ON THE TRUE JOY WHICH COMES FROM PHILOSOPHY

Do you suppose that I shall write you how kindly the winter season has dealt with us,—a short season and a mild one,—or what a nasty spring we are having,—cold weather out of season,—and all the other trivialities which people write when they are at a loss for topics of conversation? No; I shall communicate something which may help both you and myself. And what shall this “something” be, if not an exhortation to soundness of mind? Do you ask what is the foundation of a sound mind? It is, not to find joy in useless things. I said that it was the foundation; it is really the pinnacle. We have reached the heights if we know what it is that we find joy in and if we have not placed our happiness in the control of externals. The man who is goaded ahead by hope of anything, though it be

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

proritat, licet ad manum sit, licet non ex difficili petatur, licet numquam illum sperata deceperint.

3 Hoc ante omnia fac, mi Lucili: discere gaudere.

Existimas nunc me detrahere tibi multas voluptates, qui fortuita summoveo, qui spes, dulcissima oblectamenta, devitandas existimo? Immo contra nolo tibi unquam deesse laetitiam. Volo illam tibi domi nasci; nascitur, si modo intra te ipsum sit. Ceterae hilaritates non implent pectus, frontem remittunt, leves sunt, nisi forte tu iudicas eum gaudere, qui ridet. Animus esse debet alacer et fidens et super omnia erectus.

4 Mihi crede, verum gaudium res severa est. An tu existimas quemquam soluto vultu et, ut isti delicati locuntur, hilariculo mortem contemnere, paupertati domum aperire, voluptates tenere sub freno, meditari dolorum patientiam? Haec qui apud se versat, in magno gaudio est, sed parum blando. In huius gaudii possessione esse te volo; numquam deficiet,  
5 cum semel unde petatur inveneris. Levium metallorum fructus in summo est; illa opulentissima sunt, quorum in alto latet vena adsidue plenius responsura fodienti. Haec, quibus delectatur vulgus, tenuem habent ac perfusoriam voluptatem, et quodcumque invectivium gaudium est, fundamento caret. Hoc, de quo loquor, ad quod te conor perducere, solidum est

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<sup>4</sup> Death, poverty, temptation, and suffering.

### EPISTLE XXIII.

within reach, though it be easy of access, and though his ambitions have never played him false, is troubled and unsure of himself. Above all, my dear Lucilius, make this your business: learn how to feel joy.

Do you think that I am now robbing you of many pleasures when I try to do away with the gifts of chance, when I counsel the avoidance of hope, the sweetest thing that gladdens our hearts? Quite the contrary; I do not wish you ever to be deprived of gladness. I would have it born in your house; and it is born there, if only it be inside of you. Other objects of cheer do not fill a man's bosom; they merely smooth his brow and are inconstant,—unless perhaps you believe that he who laughs has joy. The very soul must be happy and confident, lifted above every circumstance.

Real joy, believe me, is a stern matter. Can one, do you think, despise death with a care-free countenance, or with a "blithe and gay" expression, as our young dandies are accustomed to say? Or can one thus open his door to poverty, or hold the curb on his pleasures, or contemplate the endurance of pain? He who ponders these things<sup>a</sup> in his heart is indeed full of joy; but it is not a cheerful joy. It is just this joy, however, of which I would have you become the owner; for it will never fail you when once you have found its source. The yield of poor mines is on the surface; those are really rich whose veins lurk deep, and they will make more bountiful returns to him who delves unceasingly. So too those baubles which delight the common crowd afford but a thin pleasure, laid on as a coating, and every joy that is only plated lacks a real basis. But the joy of which I speak, that to which I am endeavouring to lead you, is something solid, dis-

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

6 et quod plus pateat introrsus. Fac, oro te, Luchi carissime, quod unum potest praestare felicem: dissice et conculca ista, quae extrinsecus splendent, quae tibi promittuntur ab alio vel ex alio, ad verum bonum specta et de tuo gaude. Quid est autem hoc "de tuo"? Te ipso et tui optima parte. Corpusculum quoque, etiam si nihil fieri sine illo potest, magis necessariam rem crede quam magnam; vanas suggerit voluptates, breves, paenitendas, ac nisi magna moderatione temperentur, in contrarium abituras. Ita dico: in praecipiti voluptas ad dolorem vergit, nisi modum tenuit.

Modum autem tenere in eo difficile est, quod bonum esse credideris. Veri boni aviditas tuta est. 7 Quid sit istud, interrogas, aut unde subeat? Dicam: ex bona conscientia, ex honestis consiliis, ex rectis actionibus, ex contemptu fortuitorum, ex placido vitae et continuo tenore unam prementis viam. Nam illi, qui ex aliis propositis in alia transiliunt aut ne transiliunt quidem, sed casu quodam transmittuntur, quomodo habere quicquam certum mansurumve 8 possunt suspensi et vagi? Pauci sunt, qui consilio se suaque disponant, ceteri eorum more, quae fluminibus innatant, non eunt, sed feruntur. Ex quibus alia lenior unda detinuit ac mollius vexit, alia vehe-

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<sup>a</sup> By the various sects which professed to teach how happiness is to be obtained.

## EPISTLE XXIII.

closing itself the more fully as you penetrate into it. Therefore I pray you, my dearest Lucilius, do the one thing that can render you really happy: cast aside and trample under foot all those things that glitter outwardly and are held out to you<sup>a</sup> by another or as obtainable from another; look toward the true good, and rejoice only in that which comes from your own store. And what do I mean by "from your own store"? I mean from your very self, that which is the best part of you. The frail body, also, even though we can accomplish nothing without it, is to be regarded as necessary rather than as important; it involves us in vain pleasures, short-lived, and soon to be regretted, which, unless they are reined in by extreme self-control, will be transformed into the opposite. This is what I mean: pleasure, unless it has been kept within bounds, tends to rush headlong into the abyss of sorrow.

But it is hard to keep within bounds in that which you believe to be good. The real good may be coveted with safety. Do you ask me what this real good is, and whence it derives? I will tell you: it comes from a good conscience, from honourable purposes, from right actions, from contempt of the gifts of chance, from an even and calm way of living which treads but one path. For men who leap from one purpose to another, or do not even leap but are carried over by a sort of hazard,—how can such wavering and unstable persons possess any good that is fixed and lasting? There are only a few who control themselves and their affairs by a guiding purpose; the rest do not proceed; they are merely swept along, like objects afloat in a river. And of these objects, some are held back by sluggish waters and

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

mentior rapuit, alia proxima ripae cursu languescente deposuit, alia torrens impetus in mare eiecit. Ideo constituendum est, quid velimus, et in eo perseverandum.

- 9 Hic est locus solvendi aeris alieni. Possum enim tibi vocem Epicuri tui reddere et hanc epistulam liberare: "Molestum est semper vitam incohare." Aut si hoc modo magis sensus potest exprimi: "Male
- 10 vivunt, qui semper vivere incipiunt." "Quare?" inquis, desiderat enim explanationem ista vox. Quia semper illis imperfecta vita est. Non potest autem stare paratus ad mortem, qui modo incipit vivere. Id agendum est, ut satis vixerimus. Nemo
- 11 hoc putat, qui orditur cum maxime vitam. Non est quod existimes paucos esse hos; propemodum omnes sunt. Quidam vero tunc incipiunt, cum desinendum est. Si hoc iudicas mirum, adiciam quod magis admireris: quidam ante vivere desierunt quam inciperent. VALE.

### XXIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Sollicitum esse te scribis de iudicii eventu, quod tibi furor inimici denuntiat, existimas me suasurum, ut meliora tibi ipse proponas et adquiescas spei blandae. Quid enim necesse est mala accersere,

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<sup>a</sup> Frag. 493 Usener.

<sup>b</sup> Seneca's theme is suggested by the fear which possesses Lucilius as to the issue of a lawsuit. This fear is taken as typical of all fears, and Seneca devotes most of his letter to the greatest fear of all,—fear of death.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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