

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

XXVIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Hoc tibi soli putas accidisse et admiraris quasi rem novam, quod peregrinatione tam longa et tot locorum varietatibus non discussisti tristitiam gravitatemque mentis? Animum debes mutare, non caelum. Licet vastum traieceris mare, licet, ut ait Vergilius noster,

Terraeque urbesque recedant,

2 sequentur te, quocumque perveneris, vitia. Hoc idem querenti cuidam Socrates ait: "Quid miraris nihil tibi peregrinationes prodesse, cum te circumferas? Premit te eadem causa, quae expulit." Quid terrarum iuvare novitas potest? Quid cognitio urbium aut locorum? In inritum cedit ista iactatio. Quaeris quare te fuga ista non adiuvet? Tecum fugis. Onus animi deponendum est; non ante tibi
3 ullus placebit locus. Talem nunc esse habitum tuum cogita, qualem Vergilius noster vatis inducit iam concitatae et instigatae multumque habentis in se spiritus non sui:

Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit
Excussisse deum.

Vadis huc illuc, ut excutias insidens pondus, quod

^a Cf. Horace, *Ep.* i. 11. 27 *caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*

^b *Aeneid*, iii. 72.

^c *Aeneid*, vi. 78 f.

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XXVIII. ON TRAVEL AS A CURE FOR DISCONTENT

Do you suppose that you alone have had this experience? Are you surprised, as if it were a novelty, that after such long travel and so many changes of scene you have not been able to shake off the gloom and heaviness of your mind? You need a change of soul rather than a change of climate.^a Though you may cross vast spaces of sea, and though, as our Vergil^b remarks,

Lands and cities are left astern,

your faults will follow you whithersoever you travel. Socrates made the same remark to one who complained; he said: "Why do you wonder that globe-trotting does not help you, seeing that you always take yourself with you? The reason which set you wandering is ever at your heels." What pleasure is there in seeing new lands? Or in surveying cities and spots of interest? All your bustle is useless. Do you ask why such flight does not help you? It is because you flee along with yourself. You must lay aside the burdens of the mind; until you do this, no place will satisfy you. Reflect that your present behaviour is like that of the prophetess whom Vergil describes:^c she is excited and goaded into fury, and contains within herself much inspiration that is not her own:

The priestess raves, if haply she may shake
The great god from her heart.

You wander hither and yon, to rid yourself of the

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ipsa iactatione incommodius fit, sicut in navi onera inmota minus urgent, inaequaliter convoluta citius eam partem, in quam incubuere, demergunt. Quicquid facis, contra te facis et motu ipso nocet tibi; aegrum enim concutis.

- 4 At cum istud exemeris malum, omnis mutatio loci iucunda fiet; in ultimas expellaris terras licebit, in quolibet barbariae angulo conloceris, hospitalis tibi illa qualiscumque sedes erit. Magis quis veneris quam quo, interest, et ideo nulli loco addicere debemus animum. Cum hac persuasione vivendum est: "Non sum uni angulo natus, patria mea totus
- 5 hic mundus est." Quod si liqueret tibi, non admirareris nil adiuvari te regionum varietatibus, in quas subinde priorum taedio migras. Prima enim quaeque placuisset, si omnem tuam crederes. Nunc non¹ peregrinaris, sed erras et ageris ac locum ex loco mutas, cum illud, quod quaeris, bene vivere, omni
- 6 loco positum sit. Num quid tam turbidum fieri potest quam forum? Ibi quoque licet quiete vivere, si necesse sit. Sed si liceat disponere se, conspectum quoque et viciniam fori procul fugiam. Nam ut loca gravia etiam firmissimam validitudinem temptant, ita bonae quoque menti necdum adhuc perfectae et convalescenti sunt aliqua parum salubria.

¹ *nunc non* Schweighäuser; *nunc* pL; *non* other MSS.

^a *i. e.*, had you been able to say *patria mea totus mundus est*.

^b Cf. Horace, *Ep.* i. 11. 28—

navibus atque

Quadrigis petimus bene vivere; quod petis, hic est.

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burden that rests upon you, though it becomes more troublesome by reason of your very restlessness, just as in a ship the cargo when stationary makes no trouble, but when it shifts to this side or that, it causes the vessel to heel more quickly in the direction where it has settled. Anything you do tells against you, and you hurt yourself by your very unrest; for you are shaking up a sick man.

That trouble once removed, all change of scene will become pleasant; though you may be driven to the uttermost ends of the earth, in whatever corner of a savage land you may find yourself, that place, however forbidding, will be to you a hospitable abode. The person you are matters more than the place to which you go; for that reason we should not make the mind a bondsman to any one place. Live in this belief: "I am not born for any one corner of the universe; this whole world is my country." If you saw this fact clearly, you would not be surprised at getting no benefit from the fresh scenes to which you roam each time through weariness of the old scenes. For the first would have pleased you in each case, had you believed it wholly yours.^a As it is, however, you are not journeying; you are drifting and being driven, only exchanging one place for another, although that which you seek,—to live well,—is found everywhere.^b Can there be any spot so full of confusion as the Forum? Yet you can live quietly even there, if necessary. Of course, if one were allowed to make one's own arrangements, I should flee far from the very sight and neighbourhood of the Forum. For just as pestilential places assail even the strongest constitution, so there are some places which are also unwholesome for a healthy mind which is not yet quite sound, though recover-

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- 7 Dissentio ab his, qui in fluctus medios eunt et tumultuosam probantes vitam cotidie cum difficultatibus rerum magno animo conluctantur. Sapiens feret ista, non eliget, et malet in pace esse quam in pugna. Non multum prodest vitia sua proiecisse, si
- 8 cum alienis rixandum est. "Triginta," inquit,¹ "tyranni Socraten circumsteterunt nec potuerunt animum eius infringere." Quid interest, quot domini sint? Servitus una est. Hanc qui contempsit, in quantalibet turba dominantium liber est.
- 9 Tempus est desinere, sed si prius portorium solvero. "Initium est salutis notitia peccati." Egregie mihi hoc dixisse videtur Epicurus. Nam qui peccare se nescit, corrigi non vult; deprehendas
- 10 te oportet, antequam emendes. Quidam vitiis gloriantur; tu existimas aliquid de remedio cogitare, qui mala sua virtutum loco numerant? Ideo quantum potes, te ipse coargue, inquire in te; accusatoris primum partibus fungere, deinde iudicis, novissime deprecatoris. Aliquando te offende. VALE.

XXIX.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 De Marcellino nostro quaeris et vis scire, quid agat. Raro ad nos venit, non ulla alia ex causa quam quod audire verum timet, a quo periculo iam abest.

¹ *inquit p; inquis LPb.*

^a Frag. 522 Usener.

^b *i. e.,* refuse your own intercession.

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ing from its ailment. I disagree with those who strike out into the midst of the billows and, welcoming a stormy existence, wrestle daily in hardihood of soul with life's problems. The wise man will endure all that, but will not choose it; he will prefer to be at peace rather than at war. It helps little to have cast out your own faults if you must quarrel with those of others. Says one: "There were thirty tyrants surrounding Socrates, and yet they could not break his spirit"; but what does it matter how many masters a man has? "Slavery" has no plural; and he who has scorned it is free,—no matter amid how large a mob of over-lords he stands.

It is time to stop, but not before I have paid duty. "The knowledge of sin is the beginning of salvation." This saying of Epicurus^a seems to me to be a noble one. For he who does not know that he has sinned does not desire correction; you must discover yourself in the wrong before you can reform yourself. Some boast of their faults. Do you think that the man has any thought of mending his ways who counts over his vices as if they were virtues? Therefore, as far as possible, prove yourself guilty, hunt up charges against yourself; play the part, first of accuser, then of judge, last of intercessor. At times be harsh with yourself.^b Farewell.

XXIX. ON THE CRITICAL CONDITION OF MARCELLINUS

You have been inquiring about our friend Marcellinus and you desire to know how he is getting along. He seldom comes to see me, for no other reason than that he is afraid to hear the truth, and at present he

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