

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

non piget mori, cum iuuet vivere. Quae est enim virtus cum eiciaris exire? Tamen est et hic virtus; eicior quidem, sed tanquam exeam. Et ideo nunquam eicitur sapiens, quia eici est inde expelli, unde invitus recedas; nihil invitus facit sapiens, necessitatem effugit, quia vult quod coactura est. VALE.

### LV.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 A gestatione cum maxime venio non minus fatigatus, quam si tantum ambulassem, quantum sedi. Labor est enim et diu ferri, ac nescio an eo maior, quia contra naturam est, quae pedes dedit, ut per nos ambulemus, oculos, ut per nos videremus. Debilitatem nobis indixere deliciae, et quod diu nolimus, posse desimus. Mihi tamen necessarium erat concutere corpus, ut sive bilis insederat faucibus, discuteretur, sive ipse ex aliqua causa spiritus densior erat, extenuaret illum iactatio, quam profuisse mihi sensi. Ideo diutius vehi perseveravi invitante ipso litore, quod inter Cumas et Servili Vataiae villam curvatur et hinc mari, illinc lacu velut angustum iter cluditur. Erat enim a recenti tempestate spis-

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<sup>a</sup> Cumae was on the coast about six miles north of Cape Misenum. Lake Acheron (see § 6) was a salt-water pool between those two points, separated from the sea by a sandbar; it lay near Lake Avernus and probably derived its name from that fact. The Vatia mentioned here is unknown; he must not be confused with Isauricus.

## EPISTLES LIV., LV.

irk to die, though he takes pleasure in living. For what virtue is there in going away when you are thrust out? And yet there is virtue even in this: I am indeed thrust out, but it is as if I were going away willingly. For that reason the wise man can never be thrust out, because that would mean removal from a place which he was unwilling to leave; and the wise man does nothing unwillingly. He escapes necessity, because he wills to do what necessity is about to force upon him. Farewell.

### LV. ON VATIA'S VILLA

I have just returned from a ride in my litter; and I am as weary as if I had walked the distance, instead of being seated. Even to be carried for any length of time is hard work, perhaps all the more so because it is an unnatural exercise; for Nature gave us legs with which to do our own walking, and eyes with which to do our own seeing. Our luxuries have condemned us to weakness; we have ceased to be able to do that which we have long declined to do. Nevertheless, I found it necessary to give my body a shaking up, in order that the bile which had gathered in my throat, if that was my trouble, might be shaken out, or, if the very breath within me had become, for some reason, too thick, that the jolting, which I have felt was a good thing for me, might make it thinner. So I insisted on being carried longer than usual, along an attractive beach, which bends between Cumae and Servilius Vatia's country-house,<sup>a</sup> shut in by the sea on one side and the lake on the other, just like a narrow path. It was packed firm under foot, because of a recent

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sum. Fluctus autem illud, ut scis, frequens et concitatus exaequat, longior tranquillitas solvit, cum harenis, quae umore alligantur, sucus abscessit.

- 3 Ex consuetudine tamen mea circumspicere coepi, an aliquid illic invenirem, quod mihi posset bono esse, et derexi<sup>1</sup> oculos in villam, quae aliquando Vataiae fuit. In hac ille praetorius dives, nulla alia re quam otio notus, consenuit et ob hoc unum felix habebatur. Nam quotiens aliquos amicitiae Asinii Galli, quotiens Seiani odium, deinde amor merserat, aequae enim offendisse illum quam amasse periculosum fuit, exclamabant homines: "O Vatia, solus scis vivere."
- 4 At ille latere sciebat, non vivere. Multum autem interest, utrum vita tua otiosa sit an ignava. Numquam aliter hanc villam Vatia vivo praeteribam, quam ut dicerem: "Vatia hic situs est."

Sed adeo, mi Lucili, philosophia sacrum quiddam est et venerabile, ut etiam, si quid illi simile est, mendacio placeat. Otiosum enim hominem seductum existimat vulgus et securum et se contentum, sibi viventem, quorum nihil ulli contingere nisi sapienti  
5 potest. Ille sollicitus scit sibi vivere?<sup>2</sup> Ille enim, quod est primum, scit vivere? Nam qui res et homines fugit, quem cupiditatum suarum infelicitas

<sup>1</sup> *derexi* Hense; *direxi* MSS.

<sup>2</sup> This and the next sentence are punctuated according to Summers; Hense takes them as declarations, but suggests *solus non sollicitus*, since *solus* is added above the line in V, and in P *sollicitus* has been corrected to *solus*.

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<sup>a</sup> Son of Asinius Pollio; his frankness got him into trouble and he died of starvation in a dungeon in A.D. 33. Tacitus, *Ann.* i. 13. 2, quotes Augustus, discussing his own successor, as saying of Gallus *avidus et minor*. Sejanus was overthrown and executed in A.D. 31.

<sup>b</sup> *i. e.*, after his fall.

## EPISTLE LV.

storm; since, as you know, the waves, when they beat upon the beach hard and fast, level it out; but a continuous period of fair weather loosens it, when the sand, which is kept firm by the water, loses its moisture.

As my habit is, I began to look about for something there that might be of service to me, when my eyes fell upon the villa which had once belonged to Vatia. So this was the place where that famous praetorian millionaire passed his old age! He was famed for nothing else than his life of leisure, and he was regarded as lucky only for that reason. For whenever men were ruined by their friendship with Asinius Gallus,<sup>a</sup> whenever others were ruined by their hatred of Sejanus, and later <sup>b</sup> by their intimacy with him,—for it was no more dangerous to have offended him than to have loved him,—people used to cry out: “O Vatia, you alone know how to live!” But what he knew was how to hide, not how to live; and it makes a great deal of difference whether your life be one of leisure or one of idleness. So I never drove past his country-place during Vatia’s lifetime without saying to myself: “Here lies Vatia!”

But, my dear Lucilius, philosophy is a thing of holiness, something to be worshipped, so much so that the very counterfeit pleases. For the mass of mankind consider that a person is at leisure who has withdrawn from society, is free from care, self-sufficient, and lives for himself; but these privileges can be the reward only of the wise man. Does he who is a victim of anxiety know how to live for himself? What? Does he even know (and that is of first importance) how to live at all? For the man who has fled from affairs and from men, who has been banished to seclusion by the unhappiness which his own

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relegavit, qui alios feliciores videre non potuit, qui velut timidum atque iners animal metu oblituit, ille sibi non vivit, sed, quod est turpissimum, ventri, somno, libidini. Non continuo sibi vivit, qui nemini. Adeo tamen magna res est constantia et in proposito suo perseverantia, ut habeat auctoritatem inertia quoque pertinax.

- 6 De ipsa villa nihil tibi possum certi scribere. Frontem enim eius tantum novi et exposita, quae ostendit etiam transeuntibus. Speluncae sunt duae magni operis, cuivis<sup>1</sup> laxo atrio pares, manu factae, quarum altera solem non recipit, altera usque in occidentem tenet. Platanona medius rivus et a mari et ab Acherusio lacu receptus euripi modo dividit, alendis piscibus, etiam si adsidue exhauriatur, sufficiens. Sed illi, cum mare patet, parcitur; cum tempestas piscatoribus dedit ferias, manus
- 7 ad parata porrigitur. Hoc tamen est commodissimum in villa, quod Baias trans parietem habet; incommodis illarum caret, voluptatibus fruitur. Has laudes eius ipse novi; esse illam totius anni credo. Occurrit enim favonio et illum adeo excipit, ut Bais neget. Non stulte videtur elegisse hunc locum

<sup>1</sup> *cuius* Lipsius; *cuius* MSS.

<sup>a</sup> *i. e.*, imposes on us.

<sup>b</sup> Literally, "like a Euripus," referring to the narrow strait which divides Euboea from Boeotia at Chalcis. Its current is swift.

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desires have brought upon him, who cannot see his neighbour more happy than himself, who through fear has taken to concealment, like a frightened and sluggish animal,—this person is not living for himself; he is living for his belly, his sleep, and his lust,—and that is the most shameful thing in the world. He who lives for no one does not necessarily live for himself. Nevertheless, there is so much in steadfastness and adherence to one's purpose that even sluggishness, if stubbornly maintained, assumes an air of authority<sup>a</sup> with us.

I could not describe the villa accurately; for I am familiar only with the front of the house, and with the parts which are in public view and can be seen by the mere passer-by. There are two grottoes, which cost a great deal of labour, as big as the most spacious hall, made by hand. One of these does not admit the rays of the sun, while the other keeps them until the sun sets. There is also a stream running through a grove of plane-trees, which draws for its supply both on the sea and on Lake Acheron; it intersects the grove just like a race-way,<sup>b</sup> and is large enough to support fish, although its waters are continually being drawn off. When the sea is calm, however, they do not use the stream, only touching the well-stocked waters when the storms give the fishermen a forced holiday. But the most convenient thing about the villa is the fact that Baiae is next door, it is free from all the inconveniences of that resort, and yet enjoys its pleasures. I myself understand these attractions, and I believe that it is a villa suited to every season of the year. It fronts the west wind, which it intercepts in such a way that Baiae is denied it. So it seems that Vatia was no fool when he selected this place as the best in which to

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Vatia, in quem otium suum pigrum iam et senile conferret.

8 Sed non multum ad tranquillitatem locus confert ;  
animus est, qui sibi commendet omnia. Vidi ego in  
villa hilari et amoena maestos, vidi in media solitudine  
occupatis similes. Quare non est quod existimes  
ideo parum bene compositum esse te, quod in Cam-  
pania non es. Quare autem non es ? Huc usque  
9 cogitationes tuas mitte. Conversari cum amicis ab-  
sentibus licet, et quidem quotiens velis, quamdiu  
velis. Magis hac voluptate, quae maxima est, fruimur,  
dum absumus. Praesentia enim nos delicatos facit,  
et quia aliquando una loquimur, ambulamus, con-  
sedimus, cum diducti sumus, nihil de is,<sup>1</sup> quos modo  
10 vidimus, cogitamus. Et ideo aequo animo ferre de-  
bemus absentiam, quia nemo non multum etiam  
praesentibus abest. Pone hic primum noctes sepa-  
ratas, deinde occupationes utrique diversas, deinde  
studia secreta, suburbanas profectioes ; videbis non  
11 multum esse, quod nobis peregrinatio eripiat. Amicus  
animo possidendus est ; hic autem numquam abest.  
Quemcumque vult, cotidie videt.

Itaque mecum stude, mecum cena, mecum ambula.  
In angusto vivebamus, si quicquam esset cogitationi-  
bus clusum. Video te, mi Lucili ; cum maxime

<sup>1</sup> *de is* Hense ; *deis* or *de his* MSS.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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