

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- 2 converso. Cum me amicis dedi non tamen mihi abduco, nec cum illis moror, quibus me tempus aliquod congregavit aut causa ex officio nata civili,¹ sed cum optimo quoque sum; ad illos, in quocumque loco, in quocumque saeculo fuerunt, animum meum mitto.
- 3 Demetrium, virorum optimum, mecum circumfero et relictis conchyliatis cum illo seminudo loquor, illum admiror. Quidni admirer? Vidi nihil ei deesse. Contemnere aliquis omnia potest, omnia habere nemo potest. Brevissima ad divitias per contemptum divitiarum via est. Demetrius autem noster sic vivit, non tamquam contempserit omnia, sed tamquam aliis habenda permiserit. VALE.

LXIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Molesto fero decessisse Flaccum, amicum tuum, plus tamen aequo dolere te nolo. Illud, ut non doleas, vix audebo exigere; et esse melius scio. Sed cui ista firmitas animi continget nisi iam multum supra fortunam elato? Illum quoque ista res vellicabit, sed tantum vellicabit. Nobis autem ignosci potest prolapsis ad lacrimas, si non nimiae decucurrerunt, si ipsi illas repressimus. Nec sicci sint oculi

¹ *civili* late MSS.; *civi* the rest, followed by Hense.

^a Demetrius of Sunium, the Cynic philosopher, who taught in Rome in the reign of Caligula and was banished by Nero.

^b *i. e.*, he has achieved the Stoic ideal of independence of all external control; he is a king and has all things to bestow upon others, but needs nothing for himself.

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wholesome thought. When I give myself to my friends, I do not withdraw from my own company, nor do I linger with those who are associated with me through some special occasion or some case which arises from my official position. But I spend my time in the company of all the best; no matter in what lands they may have lived, or in what age, I let my thoughts fly to them. Demetrius,^a for instance, the best of men, I take about with me, and, leaving the wearers of purple and fine linen, I talk with him, half-naked as he is, and hold him in high esteem. Why should I not hold him in high esteem? I have found that he lacks nothing. It is in the power of any man to despise all things, but of no man to possess all things. The shortest cut to riches is to despise riches. Our friend Demetrius, however, lives not merely as if he has learned to despise all things, but as if he has handed them over for others to possess.^b Farewell.

LXIII. ON GRIEF FOR LOST FRIENDS

I am grieved to hear that your friend Flaccus is dead, but I would not have you sorrow more than is fitting. That you should not mourn at all I shall hardly dare to insist; and yet I know that it is the better way. But what man will ever be so blessed with that ideal steadfastness of soul, unless he has already risen far above the reach of Fortune? Even such a man will be stung by an event like this, but it will be only a sting. We, however, may be forgiven for bursting into tears, if only our tears have not flowed to excess, and if we have checked them by our own efforts. Let not the eyes be dry when

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amisso amico nec fluant. Lacrimandum est, non plorandum.

- 2 Duram tibi legem videor ponere, cum poetarum Graecorum maximus ius flendi dederit in unum dumtaxat diem, cum dixerit etiam Niobam de cibo cogitasse? Quaeris, unde sint lamentationes, unde inmodici fletus? Per lacrimas argumenta desiderii quaerimus et dolorem non sequimur, sed ostendimus. Nemo tristis sibi est. O infelicem stultitiam! Est aliqua et doloris ambitio.
- 3 "Quid ergo?" inquis, "Obliviscar amici?" Brevem illi apud te memoriam promittis, si cum dolore mansura est; iam istam frontem ad risum quaelibet fortuita res transferet. Non differo in longius tempus, quo desiderium omne mulcetur, quo etiam acerrimi luctus residunt. Cum primum te observare desieris, imago ista tristitiae discedet; nunc ipse custodis dolorem tuum. Sed custodienti quoque elabitur eoque citius, quo est acrior, desinit.
- 4 Id agamus, ut iucunda nobis amissorum fiat recordatio. Nemo libenter ad id redit, quod non sine tormento cogitaturus est. Sic et¹ illud fieri necesse est, ut cum aliquo nobis morsu amissorum, quos amavimus, nomen occurrat. Sed hic quoque morsus
- 5 habet suam voluptatem. Nam, ut dicere solebat Attalus noster, "sic amicorum defunctorum memoria

¹ sic et Hense; sic ut pLV; sic Pb.

^a Homer, *Iliad*, xix. 229 and xxiv. 602.

^b The teacher of Seneca, often mentioned by him.

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we have lost a friend, nor let them overflow. We may weep, but we must not wail.

Do you think that the law which I lay down for you is harsh, when the greatest of Greek poets has extended the privilege of weeping to one day only, in the lines where he tells us that even Niobe took thought of food ^a? Do you wish to know the reason for lamentations and excessive weeping? It is because we seek the proofs of our bereavement in our tears, and do not give way to sorrow, but merely parade it. No man goes into mourning for his own sake. Shame on our ill-timed folly! There is an element of self-seeking even in our sorrow.

"What," you say, "am I to forget my friend?" It is surely a short-lived memory that you vouchsafe to him, if it is to endure only as long as your grief; presently that brow of yours will be smoothed out in laughter by some circumstance, however casual. It is to a time no more distant than this that I put off the soothing of every regret, the quieting of even the bitterest grief. As soon as you cease to observe yourself, the picture of sorrow which you have contemplated will fade away; at present you are keeping watch over your own suffering. But even while you keep watch it slips away from you, and the sharper it is, the more speedily it comes to an end.

Let us see to it that the recollection of those whom we have lost becomes a pleasant memory to us. No man reverts with pleasure to any subject which he will not be able to reflect upon without pain. So too it cannot but be that the names of those whom we have loved and lost come back to us with a sort of sting; but there is a pleasure even in this sting. For, as my friend Attalus ^b used to say: "The remembrance of lost friends is pleasant in the same

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iucunda est, quomodo poma quaedam sunt suaviter aspera, quomodo in vino nimis veteri ipsa nos amaritudo delectat; cum vero intervenit spatium, omne, quod angebat, extinguitur et pura ad nos
6 voluptas venit." Si illi credimus, " Amicos incolumes cogitare melle ac placenta frui est; eorum, qui fuerunt, retractatio non sine acerbitate quadam iuvat. Quis autem negaverit haec acria quoque et habentia
7 austeritatis aliquid stomachum excitare?" Ego non idem sentio, mihi amicorum defunctorum cogitatio dulcis ac blanda est. Habui enim illos tamquam amissurus, amisi tamquam habeam.

Fac ergo, mi Lucili, quod aequitatem tuam decet, desine beneficium fortunae male interpretari; abs-
8 tulit, sed dedit. Ideo amicis avide fruamur, quia quamdiu contingere hoc possit, incertum est. Cogitemus, quam saepe illos reliquerimus in aliquam peregrinationem longinquam exituri, quam saepe eodem morantes loco non viderimus; intellegemus plus nos
9 temporis in vivis perdidisse. Feras autem hos, qui negligentissime amicos habent, miserrime lugent, nec amant quemquam, nisi perdiderunt? Ideoque tunc effusius maerent, quia verentur, ne dubium sit, an
10 amaverint; sera indicia adfectus sui quaerunt. Si habemus alios amicos, male de iis et meremur et
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way that certain fruits have an agreeably acid taste, or as in extremely old wines it is their very bitterness that pleases us. Indeed, after a certain lapse of time, every thought that gave pain is quenched, and the pleasure comes to us unalloyed." If we take the word of Attalus for it, "to think of friends who are alive and well is like enjoying a meal of cakes and honey; the recollection of friends who have passed away gives a pleasure that is not without a touch of bitterness. Yet who will deny that even these things, which are bitter and contain an element of sourness, do serve to arouse the stomach?" For my part, I do not agree with him. To me, the thought of my dead friends is sweet and appealing. For I have had them as if I should one day lose them; I have lost them as if I have them still.

Therefore, Lucilius, act as befits your own serenity of mind, and cease to put a wrong interpretation on the gifts of Fortune. Fortune has taken away, but Fortune has given. Let us greedily enjoy our friends, because we do not know how long this privilege will be ours. Let us think how often we shall leave them when we go upon distant journeys, and how often we shall fail to see them when we tarry together in the same place; we shall thus understand that we have lost too much of their time while they were alive. But will you tolerate men who are most careless of their friends, and then mourn them most abjectly, and do not love anyone unless they have lost him? The reason why they lament too unrestrainedly at such times is that they are afraid lest men doubt whether they really have loved; all too late they seek for proofs of their emotions. If we have other friends, we surely deserve ill at their hands and think ill of them, if

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existimamus, qui parum valent in unius elati solacium; si non habemus, maiorem iniuriam ipsi nobis fecimus quam a fortuna accepimus; illa unum abstulit, nos,
11 quemcumque non fecimus. Deinde ne unum quidem nimis amavit, qui plus quam unum amare non potuit. Si quis despoliatus amissa unica conplorare se malit quam circumspicere, quomodo frigus effugiat et aliquid inveniat, quo tegat scapulas, nonne tibi videatur stultissimus?

Quem amabas, extulisti; quaere, quem ames.
12 Satius est amicum reparare quam flere. Scio pertritum iam hoc esse, quod adiecturus sum, non ideo tamen praetermittam, quia ab omnibus dictum est: finem dolendi etiam qui consilio non fecerat, tempore invenit. Turpissimum autem est in homine prudente remedium maeroris lassitudo maerendi. Malo relinquas dolorem quam ab illo relinquaris, et quam primum id facere desiste, quod etiam si voles, diu facere non
13 poteris. Annum feminis ad lugendum constituere maiores, non ut tam diu lugerent, sed ne diutius; viris nullum legitimum tempus est, quia nullum honestum. Quam tamen mihi ex illis mulierculis dabis vix retractis a rogo, vix a cadavere revulsis, cui lacrimae in totum mensem duraverint? Nulla res

^a The reason is, as Lipsius observed, that friendship is essentially a social virtue, and is not confined to one object. The pretended friendship for one and only one is a form of self-love, and is not unselfish love.

^b According to tradition, from the time of Numa Pompilius.

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