

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ipsum hic unus usus pertinet, quod utendi omnibus causa est. Sapiens tam aequo animo omnia apud alios videt contemnitque quam Iuppiter et hoc se magis suspicit, quod Iuppiter uti illis non potest, 15 sapiens non vult. Credamus itaque Sextio monstranti pulcherrimum iter et clamanti: "hac 'itur ad astra,' hac secundum frugalitatem, hac secundum temperantiam, hac secundum fortitudinem."

Non sunt di fastidiosi, non invidi; admittunt et 16 ascendentibus manum porrigunt. Miraris hominem ad deos ire? Deus ad homines venit, immo quod est propius, in homines venit; nulla sine deo mens bona est. Semina in corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt, quae si bonus cultor excipit, similia origini prodeunt et paria iis, ex quibus orta sunt, surgunt; si malus, non aliter quam humus sterilis ac palustris necat ac deinde creat purgamenta pro frugibus. VALE.

LXXIV.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Epistula tua delectavit me et marcentem excitavit, memoriam quoque meam, quae iam mihi segnīs ac lenta est, evocavit.

Quidni tu, mi Lucili, maximum putes instrumentum

^a Vergil, *Aeneid*, ix. 641.

^b Cf. *Ep.* xli. §§ 1 f. *prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est.*

EPISTLES LXXIII., LXXIV.

them to others ; the only use of them which belongs to him is this : he is the cause of their use to all men. The wise man surveys and scorns all the possessions of others as calmly as does Jupiter, and regards himself with the greater esteem because, while Jupiter cannot make use of them, he, the wise man, does not wish to do so. Let us therefore believe Sextius when he shows us the path of perfect beauty, and cries : "This is 'the way to the stars'^a ; this is the way, by observing thrift, self-restraint, and courage !"

The gods are not disdainful or envious ; they open the door to you ; they lend a hand as you climb. Do you marvel that man goes to the gods ? God comes to men ; nay, he comes nearer,—he comes into men.^b No mind that has not God, is good. Divine seeds are scattered throughout our mortal bodies ; if a good husbandman receives them, they spring up in the likeness of their source and of a parity with those from which they came. If, however, the husbandman be bad, like a barren or marshy soil, he kills the seeds, and causes tares to grow up instead of wheat. Farewell.

LXXIV. ON VIRTUE AS A REFUGE FROM WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS

Your letter has given me pleasure, and has roused me from sluggishness. It has also prompted my memory, which has been for some time slack and nerveless.

You are right, of course, my dear Lucilius, in deeming the chief means of attaining the happy life

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

beatae vitae hanc persuasionem, unum bonum esse, quod honestum est? Nam qui alia bona iudicat, in fortunae venit potestatem, alieni arbitrii fit; qui omne bonum honesto circumscipit, intra se est felix.¹

2 Hic amissis liberis maestus, hic sollicitus aegris, hic turpibus et aliquam passis infamiam tristis. Illum videbis alienae uxoris amore cruciari, illum suae. Non deerit quem repulsa distorqueat; erunt quos ipse

3 honor vexet. Illa vero maxima ex omni mortalium populo turba miserorum, quam expectatio mortis exagitat undique inpendens. Nihil enim est, unde non subeat. Itaque ut in hostili regione versantibus huc et illuc circumspiciendum est et ad omnem strepitum circumagenda cervix; nisi hic timor e pectore eiectus est, palpitantibus praecordiis vivitur.

4 Occurrent acti in exilium et evoluti bonis. Occurrent, quod genus egestatis gravissimum est, in divitiis inopes. Occurrent naufragi similiave naufragis passi, quos aut popularis ira aut invidia, perniciosum optimis telum, inopinantes securosque disiecit procellae more, quae in ipsa sereni fiducia solet emergere, aut fulminis

¹ *intra se est felix* Hense; *intra se felix* VPb; *intra se felix est* later MSS.

^a A doctrine often expressed in the Letters; cf., for example, lxxi. 4.

^b Cf. Horace, *Carm.* iii. 16. 28 *magnas inter opes inops*.

^c For the same thought cf. *Ep.* iv. 7 *Neminem eo fortuna provexit, ut non tantum illi minaretur, quantum permiserat. Noli huic tranquillitati confidere; momento mare evertitur. Eodem die ubi luserunt navigia, sorbentur.*

EPISTLE LXXIV.

to consist in the belief that the only good lies in that which is honourable.^a For anyone who deems other things to be good, puts himself in the power of Fortune, and goes under the control of another; but he who has in every case defined the good by the honourable, is happy with an inward happiness.

One man is saddened when his children die; another is anxious when they become ill; a third is embittered when they do something disgraceful, or suffer a taint in their reputation. One man, you will observe, is tortured by passion for his neighbour's wife, another by passion for his own. You will find men who are completely upset by failure to win an election, and others who are actually plagued by the offices which they have won. But the largest throng of unhappy men among the host of mortals are those whom the expectation of death, which threatens them on every hand, drives to despair. For there is no quarter from which death may not approach. Hence, like soldiers scouting in the enemy's country, they must look about in all directions, and turn their heads at every sound; unless the breast be rid of this fear, one lives with a palpitating heart. You will readily recall those who have been driven into exile and dispossessed of their property. You will also recall (and this is the most serious kind of destitution) those who are poor in the midst of their riches.^b You will recall men who have suffered shipwreck, or those whose sufferings resemble shipwreck; for they were untroubled and at ease, when the anger or perhaps the envy of the populace,—a missile most deadly to those in high places,^c—dismantled them like a storm which is wont to rise when one is most confident of continued calm, or like a sudden stroke of lightning which even causes

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

subiti, ad cuius ictum etiam vicina tremuerunt. Nam ut illic quisquis ab igne propior stetit, percusso similis obstipuit, sic in his per aliquam vim accidentibus unum calamitas opprimit, ceteros metus, paremque passis tristitiam facit pati posse.

- 5 Omnium animos mala aliena ac repentina sollicitant. Quemadmodum aves etiam inanis fundae sonus territat, nos ita non ad ictum tantum exagitamur, sed ad crepitum. Non potest ergo quisquam beatus esse, qui huic se opinioni credidit. Non enim beatum est, nisi quod intrepidum; inter suspecta male vivitur.
- 6 Quisquis se multum fortuitis dedit, ingentem sibi materiam perturbationis et inexplicabilem fecit; una haec via est ad tuta vadenti, externa despiciere et honesto contentum esse. Nam qui aliquid virtute melius putat aut ullum praeter illam bonum, ad haec, quae a fortuna sparguntur, sinum expandit et
- 7 sollicitus missilia eius expectat. Hanc enim imaginem animo tuo propone, ludos facere fortunam et in hunc mortalium coetum honores, divitias, gratiam excutere, quorum alia inter diripientium manus scissa sunt, alia infida societate divisa, alia magno detrimento eorum, in quos devenerant, presa. Ex quibus quaedam aliud agentibus inciderunt, quaedam, quia nimis

^a *i.e.*, engaged upon something else. Cf. *Ep.* i. 1.

EPISTLE LXXIV.

the region round about it to tremble. For just as anyone who stands near the bolt is stunned and resembles one who is struck, so in these sudden and violent mishaps, although but one person is overwhelmed by the disaster, the rest are overwhelmed by fear, and the possibility that they may suffer makes them as downcast as the actual sufferer.

Every man is troubled in spirit by evils that come suddenly upon his neighbour. Like birds, who cower even at the whirr of an empty sling, we are distracted by mere sounds as well as by blows. No man therefore can be happy if he yields himself up to such foolish fancies. For nothing brings happiness unless it also brings calm; it is a bad sort of existence that is spent in apprehension. Whoever has largely surrendered himself to the power of Fortune has made for himself a huge web of disquietude, from which he cannot get free; if one would win a way to safety, there is but one road,—to despise externals and to be contented with that which is honourable. For those who regard anything as better than virtue, or believe that there is any good except virtue, are spreading their arms to gather in that which Fortune tosses abroad, and are anxiously awaiting her favours. Picture now to yourself that Fortune is holding a festival, and is showering down honours, riches, and influence upon this mob of mortals; some of these gifts have already been torn to pieces in the hands of those who try to snatch them, others have been divided up by treacherous partnerships, and still others have been seized to the great detriment of those into whose possession they have come. Certain of these favours have fallen to men while they were absent-minded^a; others have been lost to their seekers because they were snatching too eagerly for

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

captabantur, amissa et, dum avide rapiuntur, expulsa sunt. Nulli vero etiam cui rapina feliciter cessit, gaudium rapti duravit in posterum.

Itaque prudentissimus quisque cum primum induci videt munuscula, a theatro fugit et scit magno parva constare. Nemo manum conserit cum recedente,
 8 nemo exeuntem ferit ; circa praemium rixa est. Idem in his evenit, quae fortuna desuper iactat : aestuamus miseri, dstringimur, multas habere cupimus manus, modo in hanc partem,¹ modo in illam respicimus. Nimis tarde nobis mitti videntur, quae cupiditates nostras iritant, ad paucos perventura, expectata
 9 omnibus. Ire obviam cadentibus cupimus. Gaudemus, si quid invasimus, invadendique² aliquos spes vana delusit ; vilem praedam magno aliquo incommodo luimus aut destituti fallimur.³ Secedamus itaque ab istis ludis et demus raptoribus locum ; illi spectent bona ista pendentia et ipsi magis pendeant.
 10 Quicumque beatus esse constituet, unum esse bonum putet, quod honestum est. Nam si ullum aliud esse existimat, primum male de providentia

¹ *modo in hanc partem* VPb omit. The words are found in certain inferior MSS.

² *invadendique* later MSS. ; *invidendique* V ; *incidentique* P.

³ *aut destituti fallimur* Buecheler ; *aut de^{fr}audamur fallimur* V ; *aut de . aut fallimus* P ; *aut inde fallimur* b.

^a A distribution of coins, etc., at the public games. Food was also doled out to the populace on similar occasions.

^b This figure of the dole as applied to Fortune is sustained to an extent which is unusual with Seneca.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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