

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

diu cogitando. Audimus aliquando voces imperitorum dicentium: "sciebam<sup>1</sup> hoc mihi restare"; sapiens scit sibi omnia restare. Quicquid factum est, dicit: "sciebam." VALE.

### LXXVII.

#### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Subito nobis hodie Alexandrinae naves appa-  
ruerunt, quae praemitti solent et nuntiare secuturæ  
classis adventum; tabellarias vocant. Gratus illarum  
Campaniæ aspectus est; omnis in pilis Puteolorum  
turba consistit et ex ipso genere velorum Alexan-  
drinas quamvis in magna turba navium intellegit.  
Solis enim licet siparum intendere, quod in alto omnes  
2 habent naves. Nulla enim res aequè adiuvat cursum  
quam summa pars veli; illinc maxime navis urgetur.  
Itaque quotiens ventus increbruit maiorque est quam  
expedit, antemna summittitur; minus habet virium  
flatus ex humili. Cum intravere Capreas et promun-  
tarium, ex quo

Alta procelloso speculatur vertice Pallas,

ceterae velo iubentur esse contentae; siparum  
Alexandrinarum insigne est.<sup>2</sup>

- 3 In hoc omnium discursu properantium ad litus mag-  
nam ex pigritia mea sensi voluptatem, quod epistulas  
meorum accepturus non properavi scire, quis illic esset

<sup>1</sup> The old editors read *nesciebam*, which seems more in  
accord with the argument.

<sup>2</sup> *indicium* before *est* deleted by Muretus.

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<sup>a</sup> Puteoli, in the bay of Naples, was the head-quarters in  
Italy of the important grain-trade with Egypt, on which the  
Roman magistrates relied to feed the populace.

<sup>b</sup> Author unknown.

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others lighten by long endurance. We sometimes hear the inexperienced say: "I knew that this was in store for me." But the wise man knows that all things are in store for him. Whatever happens, he says: "I knew it." Farewell.

### LXXVII. ON TAKING ONE'S OWN LIFE

Suddenly there came into our view to-day the "Alexandrian" ships,—I mean those which are usually sent ahead to announce the coming of the fleet; they are called "mail-boats." The Campanians are glad to see them; all the rabble of Puteoli<sup>a</sup> stand on the docks, and can recognize the "Alexandrian" boats, no matter how great the crowd of vessels, by the very trim of their sails. For they alone may keep spread their topsails, which all ships use when out at sea, because nothing sends a ship along so well as its upper canvas; that is where most of the speed is obtained. So when the breeze has stiffened and becomes stronger than is comfortable, they set their yards lower; for the wind has less force near the surface of the water. Accordingly, when they have made Capreae and the headland whence

Tall Pallas watches on the stormy peak,<sup>b</sup>

all other vessels are bidden to be content with the mainsail, and the topsail stands out conspicuously on the "Alexandrian" mail-boats.

While everybody was bustling about and hurrying to the water-front, I felt great pleasure in my laziness, because, although I was soon to receive letters from my friends, I was in no hurry to know how my affairs

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rerum mearum status, quid adferrent; olim iam nec perit quicquam mihi nec acquiritur. Hoc, etiam si senex non essem, fuerat sentiendum; nunc vero multo magis. Quantulumcumque haberem, tamen plus iam mihi superesset viatici quam viae, praesertim cum eam viam simul<sup>1</sup> ingressi, quam peragere non est necesse.

4 Iter imperfectum erit, si in media parte aut citra petitum locum steteris; vita non est imperfecta, si honesta est. Ubi cumque desines, si bene desines, tota est. Saepe autem et fortiter desinendum est et non ex maximis causis; nam nec eae<sup>2</sup> maximae sunt, quae nos tenent.

5 Tullius Marcellinus, quem optime noveras, adulescens quietus<sup>3</sup> et cito senex, morbo et non insanabili correptus sed longo et molesto et multa imperante, coepit deliberare de morte. Convocavit complures amicos. Unusquisque aut quia timidus erat, id illi suadebat, quod sibi suasisset, aut quia adulator et blandus, id consilium dabat, quod de liberanti gratius fore suspicabatur; amicus noster Stoicus, homo egregius et, ut verbis illum, quibus laudari dignus est, laudem, vir fortis ac strenuus, videtur mihi optime illum cohortatus. Sic enim coepit: "Noli, mi Marcelline, torqueri, tamquam de

<sup>1</sup> *simus* later MSS.; *sumus* VPb.

<sup>2</sup> *nec eae* O. Roszbach; *nec et* VPb.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. Duff would read, with Kron., *vietus*, "old," "withered."

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<sup>a</sup> This thought, found in *Ep.* xii. 6 and often elsewhere, is a favourite with Seneca.

<sup>b</sup> It is not likely that this Marcellinus is the same person as the Marcellinus of *Ep.* xxix., because of their different views on philosophy (Summers). But there is no definite evidence for or against.

<sup>c</sup> A Roman compliment; the Greeks would have used *καλὸς κάγαθός*; cf. Horace, *Ep.* i. 7. 46

Strenuus et fortis causisque Philippus agendis  
Clarus.

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were progressing abroad, or what news the letters were bringing; for some time now I have had no losses, nor gains either. Even if I were not an old man, I could not have helped feeling pleasure at this; but as it is, my pleasure was far greater. For, however small my possessions might be, I should still have left over more travelling-money than journey to travel, especially since this journey upon which we have set out is one which need not be followed to the end. An expedition will be incomplete if one stops half-way, or anywhere on this side of one's destination; but life is not incomplete if it is honourable. At whatever point you leave off living, provided you leave off nobly, your life is a whole.<sup>a</sup> Often, however, one must leave off bravely, and our reasons therefore need not be momentous; for neither are the reasons momentous which hold us here.

Tullius Marcellinus,<sup>b</sup> a man whom you knew very well, who in youth was a quiet soul and became old prematurely, fell ill of a disease which was by no means hopeless; but it was protracted and troublesome, and it demanded much attention; hence he began to think about dying. He called many of his friends together. Each one of them gave Marcellinus advice,—the timid friend urging him to do what he had made up his mind to do; the flattering and wheedling friend giving counsel which he supposed would be more pleasing to Marcellinus when he came to think the matter over; but our Stoic friend, a rare man, and, to praise him in language which he deserves, a man of courage and vigour,<sup>c</sup> admonished him best of all, as it seems to me. For he began as follows: "Do not torment yourself, my dear Marcellinus, as if the question which you are

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re magna deliberes. Non est res magna vivere; omnes servi tui vivunt, omnia animalia; magnum est honeste mori, prudenter, fortiter. Cogita, quamdiu iam idem facias: cibus, somnus, libido, per hunc circulum curritur. Mori velle non tantum prudens aut fortis aut miser, etiam fastidiosus potest."

- 7 Non opus erat suasore illi, sed adiutore; servi parere volebant. Primum detraxit illis metum et indicavit tunc familiam periculum adire, cum incertum esset, an mors domini voluntaria fuisset; alioqui tam mali exempli esse occidere dominum
- 8 quam prohibere. Deinde ipsum Marcellinum admonuit non esse inhumanum, quemadmodum cena peracta reliquiae circumstantibus dividantur, sic peracta vita aliquid porrigi iis, qui totius vitae ministri fuissent. Erat Marcellinus facilis animi et liberalis, etiam cum de suo fieret. Minutas itaque summulas distribuit fientibus servis et illos ultro
- 9 consolatus est. Non fuit illi opus ferro, non sanguine; triduo abstinuit et in ipso cubiculo poni tabernaculum iussit. Solum deinde inlatum est, in quo diu iacuit et calda subinde suffusa paulatim defecit, ut aiebat, non sine quadam voluptate, quam adferre solet lenis dissolutio non inexperta nobis, quos aliquando liquit animus.

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<sup>a</sup> For this frequent "banquet of life" simile see *Ep.* xcvi. 15 *ipse vitae plenus est*, etc.

<sup>b</sup> So that the steam might not escape. One thinks of Seneca's last hours: Tac. *Ann.* xv. 64 *stagnum calidae aquae introiit . . . exin balneo inlatus et vapore eius exanimatus*.

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weighing were a matter of importance. It is not an important matter to live; all your slaves live, and so do all animals; but it is important to die honourably, sensibly, bravely. Reflect how long you have been doing the same thing: food, sleep, lust,—this is one's daily round. The desire to die may be felt, not only by the sensible man or the brave or unhappy man, but even by the man who is merely surfeited."

Marcellinus did not need someone to urge him, but rather someone to help him; his slaves refused to do his bidding. The Stoic therefore removed their fears, showing them that there was no risk involved for the household except when it was uncertain whether the master's death was self-sought or not; besides, it was as bad a practice to kill one's master as it was to prevent him forcibly from killing himself. Then he suggested to Marcellinus himself that it would be a kindly act to distribute gifts to those who had attended him throughout his whole life, when that life was finished, just as, when a banquet is finished,<sup>a</sup> the remaining portion is divided among the attendants who stand about the table. Marcellinus was of a compliant and generous disposition, even when it was a question of his own property; so he distributed little sums among his sorrowing slaves, and comforted them besides. No need had he of sword or of bloodshed; for three days he fasted and had a tent put up in his very bedroom.<sup>b</sup> Then a tub was brought in; he lay in it for a long time, and, as the hot water was continually poured over him, he gradually passed away, not without a feeling of pleasure, as he himself remarked,—such a feeling as a slow dissolution is wont to give. Those of us who have ever fainted know from experience what this feeling is.

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- 10 In fabellam excessi non ingratham tibi. Exitum enim amici tui cognosces non difficilem nec miserum. Quamvis enim mortem sibi consciverit, tamen mollissime excessit et vita elapsus est. Sed ne inutilis quidem haec fabella fuerit. Saepe enim talia exempla necessitas exigit. Saepe debemus mori nec
- 11 volumus, morimur nec volumus. Nemo tam imperitus est, ut nesciat quandoque moriendum; tamen cum prope accessit, tergiversatur, tremit, plorat. Nonne tibi videbitur stultissimus omnium, qui flevit, quod ante annos mille non vixerat? Aeque stultus est, qui flet, quod post annos mille non vivet. Haec paria sunt; non eris nec fuisti. Utrumque tempus
- 12 alienum est. In hoc punctum coniectus es, quod ut extendas, quo usque extends? Quid fles? Quid optas? Perdis operam.

Desine fata deum flecti sperare precando.

- Rata et fixa sunt et magna atque aeterna necessitate ducuntur. Eo ibis, quo omnia eunt. Quid tibi novi est? Ad hanc legem natus es. Hoc patri tuo accidit, hoc matri, hoc maioribus, hoc omnibus ante te, hoc omnibus post te. Series invicta et nulla
- 13 mutabilis ope inligavit ac trahit cuncta. Quantus te populus moriturorum sequetur? Quantus comita-

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<sup>a</sup> For the same thought cf. *Ep.* xlix. 3 *punctum est quod vivimus et adhuc puncto minus.*

<sup>b</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, vi. 376.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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