

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

LXXX.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Hodierno die non tantum meo beneficio mihi vaco, sed spectaculi, quod omnes molestos ad sphaeromachian avocavit. Nemo inrumpet, nemo cogitationem meam impedit, quae hac ipsa fiducia procedit audacius. Non crepuit subinde ostium, non adlevabitur velum; licebit tuto vadere,¹ quod magis necessarium est per se eunti et suam sequenti viam. Non ergo sequor priores? Facio, sed permitto mihi et invenire aliquid et mutare et relinquere. Non servio illis, sed adsentior.
- 2 Magnum tamen verbum dixi, qui mihi silentium promittebam et sine interpellatore secretum. Ecce ingens clamor ex stadio perfertur et me non excutit mihi, sed in huius ipsius rei contentionem transfert. Cogito mecum, quam multi corpora exerceant, ingenia quam pauci; quantus ad spectaculum non fidele et lusorium fiat concursus, quanta sit circa artes bonas solitudo; quam inbecilli animo sint, quorum lacertos
- 3 numerosque miramur. Illud maxime revolvo mecum: si corpus perduci exercitatione ad hanc patientiam potest, qua et pugnos pariter et calces non unius hominis ferat, qua solem ardentissimum in ferventissimo pulvere sustinens aliquis et sanguine suo madens

¹ *tuto vadere* Hense; *uno vadere* MSS.

^a Probably a contest in which the participants attached leaden weights to their hands in order to increase the force of the blows.

^b Compare Pliny's "den" (*Ep.* ii. 17. 21): *quae specularibus et velis obductis reductisque modo adicitur cubiculo modo auferitur.*

^c Compare the ideas expressed in *Ep.* xv. 2 f.

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LXXX. ON WORLDLY DECEPTIONS

To-day I have some free time, thanks not so much to myself as to the games, which have attracted all the bores to the boxing-match.^a No one will interrupt me or disturb the train of my thoughts, which go ahead more boldly as the result of my very confidence. My door has not been continually creaking on its hinges nor will my curtain be pulled aside;^b my thoughts may march safely on,—and that is all the more necessary for one who goes independently and follows out his own path. Do I then follow no predecessors? Yes, but I allow myself to discover something new, to alter, to reject. I am not a slave to them, although I give them my approval.

And yet that was a very bold word which I spoke when I assured myself that I should have some quiet, and some uninterrupted retirement. For lo, a great cheer comes from the stadium, and while it does not drive me distracted, yet it shifts my thought to a contrast suggested by this very noise. How many men, I say to myself, train their bodies, and how few train their minds!^c What crowds flock to the games,—spurious as they are and arranged merely for pastime,—and what a solitude reigns where the good arts are taught! How feather-brained are the athletes whose muscles and shoulders we admire! The question which I ponder most of all is this: if the body can be trained to such a degree of endurance that it will stand the blows and kicks of several opponents at once, and to such a degree that a man can last out the day and resist the scorching sun in the midst of the burning dust, drenched all the while

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diem ducat ; quanto facilius animus conroboreari possit, ut fortunae ictus invictus excipiat, ut proiectus, ut conculcatus exurgat.

Corpus enim multis eget rebus, ut valeat ; animus ex se crescit, se ipse alit, se exercet. Illis multo cibo, multa portione opus est, multo oleo, longa denique opera ; tibi continget virtus sine apparatu, sine inpensa. Quicquid facere te potest bonum, 4 tecum est. Quid tibi opus est, ut sis bonus ? Velle. Quid autem melius potes velle quam eripere te huic servituti, quae omnes premit, quam mancipia quoque condicionis extremas et in his sordibus nata omni modo exuere conantur ? Peculium suum, quod comparaverunt ventre fraudato, pro capite numerant ; tu non concupisces quanticumque ad libertatem 5 pervenire, qui te in illa putas natum ? Quid ad arcam tuam respicis ? Emi non potest. Itaque in tabulas vanum coicitur nomen libertatis, quam nec qui emerunt, habent nec qui vendiderunt. Tibi des oportet istud bonum, a te petas.

Libera te primum metu mortis : illa nobis iugum 6 inponit ; deinde metu paupertatis. Si vis scire, quam nihil in illa mali sit, compara inter se pauperum et divitum vultus ; saepius pauper et fidelius ridet ;

^a For this figure see the " lucellum," " diurna mercedula," etc., of the opening letters of the correspondence (Vol. I.).

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with his own blood,—if this can be done, how much more easily might the mind be toughened so that it could receive the blows of Fortune and not be conquered, so that it might struggle to its feet again after it has been laid low, after it has been trampled under foot?

For although the body needs many things in order to be strong, yet the mind grows from within, giving to itself nourishment and exercise. Yonder athletes must have copious food, copious drink, copious quantities of oil, and long training besides; but you can acquire virtue without equipment and without expense. All that goes to make you a good man lies within yourself. And what do you need in order to become good? To wish it. But what better thing could you wish for than to break away from this slavery,—a slavery that oppresses us all, a slavery which even chattels of the lowest estate, born amid such degradation, strive in every possible way to strip off? In exchange for freedom they pay out the savings which they have scraped together by cheating their own bellies; shall *you* not be eager to attain liberty at any price, seeing that you claim it as your birthright? Why cast glances toward your strong-box? Liberty cannot be bought. It is therefore useless to enter in your ledger^a the item of "Freedom," for freedom is possessed neither by those who have bought it nor by those who have sold it. You must give this good to yourself, and seek it from yourself.

First of all, free yourself from the fear of death, for death puts the yoke about our necks; then free yourself from the fear of poverty. If you would know how little evil there is in poverty, compare the faces of the poor with those of the rich; the poor

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nulla sollicitudo in alto est; etiam si qua incidit
 cura, velut nubes levis transit. Horum, qui felices
 vocantur, hilaritas ficta est at¹ gravis et subpurata
 tristitia, eo quidem gravior, quia interdum non licet
 palam esse miseros, sed inter aerumnas cor ipsum
 7 exedentes necesse est agere felicem. Saepius hoc
 exemplo mihi utendum est, nec enim ullo efficacius
 exprimitur hic humanae vitae mimus, qui nobis partes,
 quas male agamus, adsignat. Ille, qui in scaena latus
 incedit et haec resupinus dicit

En impero Argis; regna mihi liquit Pelops,
 Qua ponto ab Helles atque ab Ionio mari
 Urgetur Isthmos,

servus est, quinque modios accipit et quinque de-
 8 narios; ille qui superbus atque inpotens et fiducia
 virium tumidus ait:

Quod nisi quieris, Menelae, hac dextra occides,

diurnum accipit, in centunculo dormit. Idem de
 istis licet omnibus dicas, quos supra capita hominum
 supraque turbam delicatos lectica suspendit; omnium
 istorum personata felicitas est. Contemnes illos, si
 despoliaveris.

9 Equum empturus solvi iubes stratum, detrahis
 vestimenta venalibus, ne qua vitia corporis lateant;

¹ at Madvig; aut MSS.

^a Authors unknown; Ribbeck, *Frag. Trag.* pp. 289 and
 276. The first passage (with one change) is also quoted by
 Quintilian, ix. 4. 140. See, however, Tyrrell, *Latin Poetry*,
 p. 39, who calls this passage the beginning of Attius's *Atreus*.

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man smiles more often and more genuinely; his troubles do not go deep down; even if any anxiety comes upon him, it passes like a fitful cloud. But the merriment of those whom men call happy is feigned, while their sadness is heavy and festering, and all the heavier because they may not meanwhile display their grief, but must act the part of happiness in the midst of sorrows that eat out their very hearts. I often feel called upon to use the following illustration, and it seems to me that none expresses more effectively this drama of human life, wherein we are assigned the parts which we are to play so badly. Yonder is the man who stalks upon the stage with swelling port and head thrown back, and says:

Lo, I am he whom Argos hails as lord,
Whom Pelops left the heir of lands that spread
From Hellespont and from th' Ionian sea
E'en to the Isthmian straits.^a

And who is this fellow? He is but a slave; his wage is five measures of grain and five denarii. Yon other who, proud and wayward and puffed up by confidence in his power, declaims:

Peace, Menelaus, or this hand shall slay thee!^a

receives a daily pittance and sleeps on rags. You may speak in the same way about all these dandies whom you see riding in litters above the heads of men and above the crowd; in every case their happiness is put on like the actor's mask. Tear it off, and you will scorn them.

When you buy a horse, you order its blanket to be removed; you pull off the garments from slaves that are advertised for sale, so that no bodily flaws may escape your notice; if you judge a man, do you

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hominem involutum aestimas? Mangones quicquid est, quod displiceat, aliquo lenocinio abscondunt, itaque ementibus ornamenta ipsa suspecta sunt. Sive crus alligatum sive brachium aspiceres, nudari iuberet
10 et ipsum tibi corpus ostendi. Vides illum Scythiae Sarmatiaeve regem insigni capitis decorum? Si vis illum aestimare totumque scire, qualis sit, fasciam solve; multum mali sub illa latet. Quid de aliis loquor? Si perpendere te voles, sepone pecuniam, domum, dignitatem, intus te ipse considera. Nunc qualis sis, aliis credis. VALE

LXXXI.

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1 Quereris incidisse te in hominem ingratum. Si hoc nunc primum, age aut fortunae aut diligentiae tuae gratias. Sed nihil facere hoc loco diligentia potest nisi te malignum. Nam si hoc periculum vitare volueris, non dabis beneficia; ita ne apud alium pereant, apud te peribunt.

Non respondeant potius quam non dentur. Est post malam segetem serendum est; saepe quicquid perierat adsidua infelicis soli sterilitate, unius anni
2 restituit ubertas. Est tanti, ut gratum invenias, experiri et ingratos. Nemo habet tam certam in

^a A favourite trick; cf. Quintil. ii. 15. 25 mangones, qui colorem fuco et verum robur inani sagina mentiuntur.

^b The reader will be interested to compare this letter with the treatise (or essay) *Of Benefits*, translated by Thomas Lodge in 1614 from Seneca's work *De Beneficiis*, which was dedicated to Aebutius Liberalis, the subject of *Ep. xci.*

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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