

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

lingua non constat, quid est, quare illum existimes
in parte sobrium esse, in parte ebrium? VALE.

LXXXIV.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Itinera ista, quae segnitiam mihi excutiunt, et
valitudini meae prodesse iudico et studiis. Quare
valitudinem adiuvent, vides: cum pigrum me¹ et
neglegentem corporis litterarum amor faciat, aliena
opera exerceor; studio quare prosint, indicabo: a
lectionibus nihil² recessi. Sunt autem, ut existimo,
necessariae, primum ne sim me uno contentus;
deinde ut, cum ab aliis quaesita cognovero, tum et de
inventis iudicem et cogitem de inveniendis. Alit
lectio ingenium et studio fatigatum, non sine studio
2 tamen, reficit. Nec scribere tantum nec tantum
legere debemus; altera res contristabit vires et
exhauriet, de stilo dico, altera solvet ac diluet.
Invicem hoc et illo commeandum est et alterum
altero temperandum, ut quicquid lectione collectum
est, stilus redigat in corpus.
- 3 Apes, ut aiunt, debemus imitari, quae vagantur et
flores ad mel faciendum idoneos carpunt, deinde
quicquid attulere, disponunt ac per favos digerunt et,
ut Vergilius noster ait,

¹ *me* later MSS. ; *viae* VPb.

² *nihil* added by Buecheler, omitted by VPb.

^a A considerable part of this letter is found in the preface
to the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, without any acknowledg-
ment of indebtedness.

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and his tongue is unsteady, what reason have you for believing that he is half sober and half drunk? Farewell.

LXXXIV. ON GATHERING IDEAS^a

The journeys to which you refer—journeys that shake the laziness out of my system—I hold to be profitable both for my health and for my studies. You see why they benefit my health: since my passion for literature makes me lazy and careless about my body, I can take exercise by deputy; as for my studies, I shall show you why my journeys help them, for I have not stopped my reading in the slightest degree. And reading, I hold, is indispensable—primarily, to keep me from being satisfied with myself alone, and besides, after I have learned what others have found out by their studies, to enable me to pass judgment on their discoveries and reflect upon discoveries that remain to be made. Reading nourishes the mind and refreshes it when it is wearied with study; nevertheless, this refreshment is not obtained without study. We ought not to confine ourselves either to writing or to reading; the one, continuous writing, will cast a gloom over our strength, and exhaust it; the other will make our strength flabby and watery. It is better to have recourse to them alternately, and to blend one with the other, so that the fruits of one's reading may be reduced to concrete form by the pen.

We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in; these bees, as our *Vergil* says,

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liquentia mella

Stipant et dulci distendunt nectare cellas.

4 De illis non satis constat, utrum sucum ex floribus ducant, qui protinus mel sit, an quae collegerunt, in hunc saporem mixtura quadam et proprietate spiritus sui mutant. Quibusdam enim placet non faciendi mellis scientiam esse illis, sed colligendi. Aiunt inveniri apud Indos mel in arundinum foliis, quod aut ros illius caeli aut ipsius arundinis umor dulcis et pinguior gignat. In nostris quoque herbis vim eandem, sed minus manifestam et notabilem poni, quam persequatur et contrahat animal huic rei genitum. Quidam existimant conditura et dispositione in hanc qualitatem verti, quae ex tenerrimis virentium florentiumque decerpserint, non sine quodam, ut ita dicam, fermento, quo in unum diversa coalescunt.

5 Sed ne ad aliud quam de quo agitur abducatur,¹ nos quoque has apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diversa lectione congegimus, separare, melius enim distincta servantur, deinde adhibita ingenii nostri cura et facultate in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit, unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est, appareat. Quod in corpore nostro videmus sine
6 ulla opera nostra facere naturam: alimenta, quae

¹ *abducatur* Erasmus; *adducatur* VPb.

^a *Aeneid*, i. 432 f.

^b Cf. *mel in harundinibus collectum* (from India) in Pliny, *N.H.* xii. 33 (Summers).

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pack close the flowing honey,
And swell their cells with nectar sweet.^a

It is not certain whether the juice which they obtain from the flowers forms at once into honey, or whether they change that which they have gathered into this delicious object by blending something therewith and by a certain property of their breath. For some authorities believe that bees do not possess the art of making honey, but only of gathering it; and they say that in India honey has been found on the leaves of certain reeds, produced by a dew peculiar to that climate, or by the juice of the reed itself, which has an unusual sweetness and richness.^b And in our own grasses too, they say, the same quality exists, although less clear and less evident; and a creature born to fulfil such a function could hunt it out and collect it. Certain others maintain that the materials which the bees have culled from the most delicate of blooming and flowering plants is transformed into this peculiar substance by a process of preserving and careful storing away, aided by what might be called fermentation,—whereby separate elements are united into one substance.

But I must not be led astray into another subject than that which we are discussing. We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us,—in other words, our natural gifts,—we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came. This is what we see nature doing in our own bodies without any labour

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accepimus, quamdiu in sua qualitate perdurant et solida innatant stomacho, onera sunt; at cum ex eo, quod erant, mutata sunt, tum demum in vires et in sanguinem transeunt. Idem in his, quibus aluntur ingenia, praestemus, ut quaecumque hausimus, non
 7 patiamur integra esse, ne aliena sint. Concoquamus illa; alioqui in memoriam ibunt, non in ingenium. Adsentiamur illis fideliter et nostra faciamus, ut unum quiddam fiat ex multis, sicut unus numerus fit ex singulis, cum minores summas et dissidentes computatio una comprehendit. Hoc faciat animus noster: omnia, quibus est adiutus, abscondat, ipsum
 8 tantum ostendat, quod effecit. Etiam si cuius in te comparebit similitudo, quem admiratio tibi altius fixerit, similem esse te volo quomodo filium, non quomodo imaginem; imago res mortua est.

“Quid ergo? Non intelletur, cuius imiteris orationem, cuius argumentationem, cuius sententias?” Puto aliquando ne intellegi quidem posse, si imago vera sit; haec enim¹ omnibus, quae ex quo velut exemplari traxit, formam suam impressit, ut in unitatem illa competant.² Non vides, quam multorum vocibus chorus constet? Unus tamen ex omnibus redditur; aliqua illic acuta est, aliqua gravis, aliqua

¹ *si imago vera sit; haec enim* Madvig; *si magni viri nec enim* VPb.

² *competant* later MSS.; *comparavit* or *competat* MSS.

^a The same figure is used with reference to reading, in *Ep. ii. 2 f.*, *non prodest cibus nec corpori accedit, qui statim sumptus emittitur*, etc.

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on our part; the food we have eaten, as long as it retains its original quality and floats in our stomachs as an undiluted mass, is a burden;^a but it passes into tissue and blood only when it has been changed from its original form. So it is with the food which nourishes our higher nature,—we should see to it that whatever we have absorbed should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us. We must digest it; otherwise it will merely enter the memory and not the reasoning power. Let us loyally welcome such foods and make them our own, so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements, just as one number is formed of several elements whenever, by our reckoning, lesser sums, each different from the others, are brought together. This is what our mind should do: it should hide away all the materials by which it has been aided, and bring to light only what it has made of them. Even if there shall appear in you a likeness to him who, by reason of your admiration, has left a deep impress upon you, I would have you resemble him as a child resembles his father, and not as a picture resembles its original; for a picture is a lifeless thing.

“What,” you say, “will it not be seen whose style you are imitating, whose method of reasoning, whose pungent sayings?” I think that sometimes it is impossible for it to be seen who is being imitated, if the copy is a true one; for a true copy stamps its own form upon all the features which it has drawn from what we may call the original, in such a way that they are combined into a unity. Do you not see how many voices there are in a chorus? Yet out of the many only one voice results. In that chorus one voice takes the tenor, another the bass,

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media. Accedunt viris feminae, interponuntur tibiae.

10 Singulorum illic latent voces, omnium apparent. De choro dico, quem veteres philosophi noverant; in commissionibus nostris plus cantorum est quam in theatri olim spectatorum fuit. Cum omnes vias ordo canentium inplevit et cavea aenatoribus¹ cincta est et ex pulpito omne tiliarum genus organorumque consonuit, fit concentus ex dissonis.

Talem animum nostrum esse volo; multae in illo artes, multa praecepta sint, multarum aetatum
11 exempla, sed in unum conspirata. "Quomodo," inquis, "hoc effici poterit?" Adsidua intentione; si nihil egerimus nisi ratione suadente. Hanc si audire volueris, dicet tibi: relinque ista iamdudum, ad quae discurritur. Relinque divitias, aut periculum possidentium aut onus. Relinque corporis atque animi voluptates; molliunt et enervant. Relinque ambitum; tumida res est, vana, ventosa, nullum habet terminum, tam sollicita est, ne quem ante se videat, quam ne quem post se.² Laborat invidia et quidem duplici; vides autem, quam miser sit, si is cui invidetur et invidet.

12 Intueris illas potentium domos, illa tumultuosa rixa salutantium limina? Multum habent contu-

¹ *aenatoribus* Buecheler; *aeneatoribus* VPb; *cantoribus* Arg. b; *a venatoribus* later MSS.

² *ne quem post se* Hense; *ne se* VPb; *ne post se* later MSS.

^a *Commissio* means an entertainment, or a concert; cf. Pliny, *Panegyric* 54, *ludis et commissionibus*.

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