THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

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

LXXXIV.

SENeca LVCILIO SVO SALVEM

1 Itinera ista, quae segnitiab mih exequiunt, et
valigudini meae prodesse iudico et studiis. Quare
valigudinem adiunvent, vides: cum pigrum me\textsuperscript{1} et
neglegentem corporis litterarum amor faciat, aliena
opera exerceror; studio quare prosint, indicabo: a
lectionibus nihil\textsuperscript{2} 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 cogerem de inveniendis. Alit
lectio ingenium et studio fatigatum, non sine studio
tamen, reficit. Nec scribere tantum nec tantum
legere debemus; altera res contristabit vires et
exhauriet, de stilo dico, altera solvet ac diluet.
Inviciem hoc et illo comenandum est et alterum
altero temperandum, ut quicquid lectione collectum
est, stilus redigat in corpus.

8 Apecs, 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,

\textsuperscript{1} me later MSS.; viae VPb.

\textsuperscript{2} nihil added by Buccheler, omitted by VPb.

\* A considerable part of this letter is found in the preface
to the Saturnalia of Macrobius, without any acknowledgment
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

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 colleverunt, in
hunc saporem mixtura quadam et proprietate spiritus
sui mutent. Quibusdam enim placet non faciendi
mellis scientiam esse illis, sed colligendi. Aiunt
inveniri apud Indos mel in arundinum foliis, quod
aut rosi illius caeli aut ipsius arundinis umor dulcis
et pinguior gignat. In nostris quoque herbis vim
eandem, sed minus manifestam et notabilem poni,
quam perseveratur et contrahat animal huic rei
genitum. Quidam existimant conditura et dis-
positione in hanc qualitatem verti, quae ex tenerinis
virentium florentiumque decerperint, non sine quo-
dam, ut ita, dicam, fermento, quo in unum diversa
coaescunt.

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

¹ abducar Erasmus; adducar VPb.

⁴ Aeneid, i. 432 f.
⁵ Cf. mel in arundinibus collectum (from India) in Pliny,
N.H. xii. 39 (Summers).
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pack close the flowing honey,
And swell their cells with nectar sweet.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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, quamdui in sua qualitate perdurant et
solida innatat 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 quae cumque haudimus, 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 quidam fiat ex multis, sicut unus numerus
fit ex singulis, cum minores summas et dissidentes
computatione una comprehendit. Hoc faciat animus
noster: omnia, quibus est adiutus, abscondat, ipsum
8 tantum ostendat, quod efficit. Etiam si cuius in te
comparebit similitudo, quem admiratio tibi altius
fixerit, similis esse te volo quomodo filium, non
quomodo imaginem; imago res mortua est.

"Quid ergo? Non intellegetur, cuius imitteris orationem, cuius argumentationem, cuius sententias?"
Puto aliquando ne intellegi quidem posse, si imago
vera sit; haec enim omnibus, quae ex quo velut
exemplar traxit, formam suam ingressit, ut in uni-
9 tatem illa competat.\(^1\) 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.

\(^*\) The same figure is used with reference to reading, in
Ep. ii. 9 f., non prodest nubes nec corpori accedit, qui statim
sumptus emultetur, 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; 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,
media. Accedunt viris feminae, interponuntur tibiae.
10 Singulorum illie latent voces, omnium apparent. De
choro dico, quem veteres philosophi noverant; in
commissionibus nostris plus cantorum est quam in
theatris olim spectatorum fuit. Cum omnes vias ordo
canentium inplevit et cavea aenatoribus\(^1\) cincta est
et ex pulpite omne tibiarium 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,” in-
quis, “hoc effici poterit?” Adsidua intentione; si
nihil egerimus nisi ratione suadente. Hanc si audire
volueris, dicet tibi: relinque ista iamdudum, ad quae
discurratur. Relinque divitas, aut periculum possi-
dentium aut onus. Relinque corporis atque animi
voluptates; mollitant et enervant. Relinque am-
bitum; 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 invidet-
tur et invidet.
12 Intueris illas potentium domos, illa tumultuosa
rixa salutantium limina? Multum habent contu-

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\(^1\) aenatoribus Buecheler; aenatoribus VPb; cantoribus Arg.b; a venatoribus later MSS.
\(^2\) ne quem post se Hense; ne se VPb; ne post se later MSS.

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\(a\) Commissio means an entertainment, or a concert; cf. Pliny, Panegyrict 5A, ludis et commissionibus.
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