

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

XI.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Locutus est mecum amicus tuus bonae indolis, in quo quantum esset animi, quantum ingenii, quantum iam etiam profectus, sermo primus ostendit. Dedit nobis gustum, ad quem respondebit. Non enim ex praeparato locutus est, sed subito deprehensus. Ubi se colligebat, verecundiam, bonum in adolescente signum, vix potuit excutere; adeo illi ex alto suffusus est rubor. Hic illum, quantum suspicor, etiam cum se confirmaverit et omnibus vitiis exuerit, sapientem quoque sequetur. Nulla enim sapientia naturalia corporis¹ vitia ponuntur. Quicquid infixum et in-

2 genitum est, lenitur arte, non vincitur. Quibusdam etiam constantissimis in conspectu populi sudor erumpit, non aliter quam fatigatis et aestuantibus solet, quibusdam tremunt genua dicturis, quorundam dentes colliduntur, lingua titubat, labra concurrunt. Haec nec disciplina nec usus unquam excutit, sed

3 natura vim suam exercet et illo² vitio sui etiam robustissimos admonet. Inter haec esse et ruborem scio, qui gravissimis quoque viris subitus adfunditur. Magis quidem in iuvenibus apparet, quibus et plus caloris est et tenera frons; nihilominus et veteranos et senes tangit. Quidam numquam magis, quam cum erubuerint, timendi sunt, quasi omnem vere-

4 cundiam effuderint. Sulla tunc erat violentissimus,

¹ *aut animi* after *corporis* deleted by Madvig.

² *illo* Schweighäuser; *illos* MSS.

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XI. ON THE BLUSH OF MODESTY

Your friend and I have had a conversation. He is a man of ability; his very first words showed what spirit and understanding he possesses, and what progress he has already made. He gave me a foretaste, and he will not fail to answer thereto. For he spoke not from forethought, but was suddenly caught off his guard. When he tried to collect himself, he could scarcely banish that hue of modesty, which is a good sign in a young man; the blush that spread over his face seemed so to rise from the depths. And I feel sure that his habit of blushing will stay with him after he has strengthened his character, stripped off all his faults, and become wise. For by no wisdom can natural weaknesses of the body be removed. That which is implanted and inborn can be toned down by training, but not overcome. The steadiest speaker, when before the public, often breaks into a perspiration, as if he had wearied or over-heated himself; some tremble in the knees when they rise to speak; I know of some whose teeth chatter, whose tongues falter, whose lips quiver. Training and experience can never shake off this habit; nature exerts her own power and through such a weakness makes her presence known even to the strongest. I know that the blush, too, is a habit of this sort, spreading suddenly over the faces of the most dignified men. It is, indeed more prevalent in youth, because of the warmer blood and the sensitive countenance; nevertheless, both seasoned men and aged men are affected by it. Some are most dangerous when they redden, as if they were letting all their sense of shame escape. Sulla, when

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- cum faciem eius sanguis invaserat. Nihil erat mollius ore Pompei; numquam non coram pluribus rubuit, utique in contionibus. Fabianum, cum in senatum testis esset inductus, erubuisse memini, et hic illum
5 mire pudor decuit. Non accidit hoc ab infirmitate mentis, sed a novitate rei, quae inexercitatos, etiamsi non concutit, movet naturali in hoc facilitate corporis pronos. Nam ut quidam boni sanguinis sunt, ita quidam incitati et mobilis et cito in os prodeuntis.
- 6 Haec, ut dixi, nulla sapientia abigit; alioquin haberet rerum naturam sub imperio, si omnia eraderet vitia. Quaecumque adtribuit condicio nascendi et corporis temperatura, cum multum se diuque animus composuerit, haerebunt. Nihil horum vetari potest,
7 non magis quam accersi. Artifices scaenici, qui imitantur adfectus, qui metum et trepidationem exprimunt, qui tristitiam repraesentant, hoc indicio imitantur verecundiam: deiciunt enim vultum, verba submittunt, figunt in terram oculos et deprimunt. Ruborem sibi exprimere non possunt; nec prohibetur hic nec adducitur. Nihil adversus haec sapientia promittit, nihil proficit; sui iuris sunt, iniussa veniunt, iniussa discedunt.
- 8 Iam clausulam epistula poscit. Accipe, et quidem¹ utilem ac salutarem, quam te affigere animo volo: "Aliquis vir bonus nobis diligendus est ac semper ante oculos habendus, ut sic tamquam illo spectante

¹ *et quidem* Erasmus; *equidem* MSS.

^a Epicurus, Frag. 210 Usener.

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the blood mantled his cheeks, was in his fiercest mood. Pompey had the most sensitive cast of countenance; he always blushed in the presence of a gathering, and especially at a public assembly. Fabianus also, I remember, reddened when he appeared as a witness before the senate; and his embarrassment became him to a remarkable degree. Such a habit is not due to mental weakness, but to the novelty of a situation; an inexperienced person is not necessarily confused, but is usually affected, because he slips into this habit by natural tendency of the body. Just as certain men are full-blooded, so others are of a quick and mobile blood, that rushes to the face at once.

As I remarked, Wisdom can never remove this habit; for if she could rub out all our faults, she would be mistress of the universe. Whatever is assigned to us by the terms of our birth and the blend in our constitutions, will stick with us, no matter how hard or how long the soul may have tried to master itself. And we cannot forbid these feelings any more than we can summon them. Actors in the theatre, who imitate the emotions, who portray fear and nervousness, who depict sorrow, imitate bashfulness by hanging their heads, lowering their voices, and keeping their eyes fixed and rooted upon the ground. They cannot, however, muster a blush; for the blush cannot be prevented or acquired. Wisdom will not assure us of a remedy, or give us help against it; it comes or goes unbidden, and is a law unto itself.

But my letter calls for its closing sentence. Hear and take to heart this useful and wholesome motto^a:
“Cherish some man of high character, and keep him ever before your eyes, living as if he were watching

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vivamus et omnia tamquam illo vidente faciamus.”
9 Hoc, mi Lucili, Epicurus praecepit. Custodem nobis
et paedagogum dedit, nec inmerito. Magna pars
peccatorum tollitur, si peccaturis testis adsistit. Ali-
quem habeat animus, quem vereatur, cuius auctori-
tate etiam secretum suum sanctius faciat. O felicem
illum, qui non praesens tantum, sed etiam cogitatus
emendat! O felicem, qui sic aliquem vereri potest,
ut ad memoriam quoque eius se componat atque
10 verendus. Elige itaque Catonem. Si hic tibi videtur
nimis rigidus, elige remissioris animi virum Laelium.
Elige eum, cuius tibi placuit et vita et oratio et ipse
animum ante se ferens vultus; illum tibi semper
ostende vel custodem vel exemplum. Opus est,
inquam, aliquo, ad quem mores nostri se ipsi exigant;
nisi ad regulam prava non corriges. VALE.

XII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Quocumque me verti, argumenta senectutis meae
video. Veneram in suburbanum meum et querebar
de inpensis aedificii dilabentis. Ait vilicus mihi non
esse neglegentiae suae vitium, omnia se facere, sed
villam veterem esse. Haec villa inter manus meas
crevit; quid mihi futurum est, si tam putria sunt

^a Frag. 210 Usener.

^b The figure is taken from the *ἁγίον*, the Holy of Holies
in a temple. Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid*, vi. 10 *secreta Sibyllas*.

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you, and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them." Such, my dear Lucilius, is the counsel of Epicurus^a; he has quite properly given us a guardian and an attendant. We can get rid of most sins, if we have a witness who stands near us when we are likely to go wrong. The soul should have someone whom it can respect,—one by whose authority it may make even its inner shrine more hallowed.^b Happy is the man who can make others better, not merely when he is in their company, but even when he is in their thoughts! And happy also is he who can so revere a man as to calm and regulate himself by calling him to mind! One who can so revere another, will soon be himself worthy of reverence. Choose therefore a Cato; or, if Cato seems too severe a model, choose some Laelius, a gentler spirit. Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern. For we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters; you can never straighten that which is crooked unless you use a ruler. Farewell.

XII. ON OLD AGE

Wherever I turn, I see evidences of my advancing years. I visited lately my country-place, and protested against the money which was spent on the tumble-down building. My bailiff maintained that the flaws were not due to his own carelessness; "he was doing everything possible, but the house was old." And this was the house which grew under my own hands! What has the future in store for

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