

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

aeger animus in divitiis an in paupertate ponatur.
Malum illum suum sequitur. VALE.

XVIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 December est mensis ; cum maxime civitas sudat. Ius luxuriae publicae datum est. Ingenti apparatu sonant omnia, tanquam quicquam inter Saturnalia intersit et dies rerum agendarum. Adeo nihil interest, ut non videatur¹ mihi errasse, qui dixit olim mensem Decembrem fuisse, nunc annum.
- 2 Si te hic haberem, libenter tecum conferrem, quid existimares esse faciendum : utrum nihil ex cotidiana consuetudine movendum an, ne dissidere videremur cum publicis moribus, et hilarius cenandum et exuendam togam. Nam quod fieri nisi in tumultu et tristi tempore civitatis non solebat, voluptatis causa
- 3 ac festorum dierum vestem mutavimus. Si te bene novi, arbitri partibus functus nec per omnia nos similes esse pilleatae turbae voluisses nec per omnia dissimiles ; nisi forte his maxime diebus animo imperandum est, ut tunc voluptatibus solus abstineat, cum in illas omnis turba procubuit ; certissimum enim argumentum firmitatis suae capit, si ad blanda et in
- 4 luxuriam trahentia nec ita nec abducitur. Hoc multo

¹ *ut non videatur* later MSS. ; *ut videatur* pLPb.

^a *i.e.*, the whole year is a Saturnalia.

^b For a dinner dress.

^c The *pilleus* was worn by newly freed slaves and by the Roman populace on festal occasions.

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stowed upon riches or upon poverty. His malady goes with the man. Farewell.

XVIII. ON FESTIVALS AND FASTING

It is the month of December, and yet the city is at this very moment in a sweat. Licence is given to the general merrymaking. Everything resounds with mighty preparations,—as if the Saturnalia differed at all from the usual business day! So true it is that the difference is nil, that I regard as correct the remark of the man who said: “Once December was a month; now it is a year.”^a

If I had you with me, I should be glad to consult you and find out what you think should be done,—whether we ought to make no change in our daily routine, or whether, in order not to be out of sympathy with the ways of the public, we should dine in gayer fashion and doff the toga.^b As it is now, we Romans have changed our dress for the sake of pleasure and holiday-making, though in former times that was only customary when the State was disturbed and had fallen on evil days. I am sure that, if I know you aright, playing the part of an umpire you would have wished that we should be neither like the liberty-capped^c throng in all ways, nor in all ways unlike them; unless, perhaps, this is just the season when we ought to lay down the law to the soul, and bid it be alone in refraining from pleasures just when the whole mob has let itself go in pleasures; for this is the surest proof which a man can get of his own constancy, if he neither seeks the things which are seductive and allure him to luxury, nor is led into them. It shows much

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fortius est, ebrio ac vomitante populo siccum ac sobrium esse, illud temperatius, non excerpere se nec insigniri nec misceri omnibus et eadem, sed non eodem modo, facere. Licet enim sine luxuria agere festum diem.

- 5 Ceterum adeo mihi placet temptare animi tui firmitatem, ut ex praecepto magnorum virorum tibi quoque praecipiam: interponas aliquot dies, quibus contentus minimo ac vilissimo cibo, dura atque horrida
- 6 veste dicas tibi: "Hoc est quod timebatur?" In ipsa securitate animus ad difficilia se praeparet et contra iniurias fortunae inter beneficia firmetur. Miles in media pace decurrit, sine ullo hoste vallum iacit et supervacuo labore lassatur, ut sufficere necessario possit. Quem in ipsa re trepidare nolueris, ante rem exerceas. Hoc secuti sunt, qui omnibus mensibus paupertatem imitati prope ad inopiam accesserunt, ne umquam expavescerent quod saepe didicissent.
- 7 Non est nunc quod existimes me dicere Timoneas cenas et pauperum cellas, et quicquid aliud est, per quod luxuria divitiarum taedio ludit; grabatus ille verus sit et sagum et panis durus ac sordidus. Hoc triduo et quadriduo fer, interdum pluribus diebus, ut non lusus sit, sed experimentum; tunc, mihi crede,

^a The Epicureans. Cf. § 9 and Epicurus, Frag. 158 Usener.

^b Cf. *Ep.* c. 6 and Martial, iii. 48.

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more courage to remain dry and sober when the mob is drunk and vomiting; but it shows greater self-control to refuse to withdraw oneself and to do what the crowd does, but in a different way,—thus neither making oneself conspicuous nor becoming one of the crowd. For one may keep holiday without extravagance.

I am so firmly determined, however, to test the constancy of your mind that, drawing from the teachings of great men, I shall give you also a lesson: Set aside a certain number of days, during which you shall be content with the scantiest and cheapest fare, with coarse and rough dress, saying to yourself the while: "Is this the condition that I feared?" It is precisely in times of immunity from care that the soul should toughen itself beforehand for occasions of greater stress, and it is while Fortune is kind that it should fortify itself against her violence. In days of peace the soldier performs manœuvres, throws up earthworks with no enemy in sight, and wearies himself by gratuitous toil, in order that he may be equal to unavoidable toil. If you would not have a man flinch when the crisis comes, train him before it comes. Such is the course which those men^a have followed who, in their imitation of poverty, have every month come almost to want, that they might never recoil from what they had so often rehearsed.

You need not suppose that I mean meals like Timon's, or "paupers' huts,"^b or any other device which luxurious millionaires use to beguile the tedium of their lives. Let the pallet be a real one, and the coarse cloak; let the bread be hard and grimy. Endure all this for three or four days at a time, sometimes for more, so that it may be a test of yourself instead of a mere hobby. Then, I assure

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Lucili, exultabis dipondio satur et intelleges ad securitatem non opus esse fortuna; hoc enim, quod necessitati sat est, dat et¹ irata.

8 Non est tamen quare tu multum tibi facere videaris. Facies enim, quod multa milia servorum, multa milia pauperum faciunt; illo nomine te suspice, quod facies non coactus, quod tam facile erit tibi illud pati semper quam aliquando experiri. Exerceamur ad palum. Et ne inparatos fortuna deprehendat, fiat nobis paupertas familiaris. Securius divites erimus, si scierimus, quam non sit grave pauperes esse.

9 Certos habebat dies ille magister voluptatis Epicurus, quibus maligne famem extingueret, visurus, an aliquid deesset ex plena et consummata voluptate, vel quantum deesset et an dignum quod quis magno labore pensaret. Hoc certe in his epistulis ait, quas scripsit Charino magistratu ad Polyænum. Et quidem gloriatur non toto asse se² pasci, Metrodorum, qui nondum tantum profecerit, toto. In hoc tu victu saturitatem putas esse? Et voluptas est. Voluptas autem non illa levis et fugax et subinde reficienda, sed stabilis et certa. Non enim iucunda res est aqua et polenta aut frustum hordeacei panis, sed summa

¹ *dat et Schweighäuser; debet MSS.*

² *se added by Muretus.*

^a The post which gladiators used when preparing themselves for combats in the arena.

^b Usually, identified with Chaerimus, 308-7 B.C. But Wilhelm, *Öster. Jahreshfte*, V. 136, has shown that there is probably no confusion of names. A Charinus was archon at Athens in 290-89; see Johnson, *Class. Phil.* ix. p. 256.

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you, my dear Lucilius, you will leap for joy when filled with a pennyworth of food, and you will understand that a man's peace of mind does not depend upon Fortune; for, even when angry she grants enough for our needs.

There is no reason, however, why you should think that you are doing anything great; for you will merely be doing what many thousands of slaves and many thousands of poor men are doing every day. But you may credit yourself with this item,—that you will not be doing it under compulsion, and that it will be as easy for you to endure it permanently as to make the experiment from time to time. Let us practise our strokes on the “dummy”^a; let us become intimate with poverty, so that Fortune may not catch us off our guard. We shall be rich with all the more comfort, if we once learn how far poverty is from being a burden.

Even Epicurus, the teacher of pleasure, used to observe stated intervals, during which he satisfied his hunger in niggardly fashion; he wished to see whether he thereby fell short of full and complete happiness, and, if so, by what amount he fell short, and whether this amount was worth purchasing at the price of great effort. At any rate, he makes such a statement in the well known letter written to Polyænus in the archonship of Charinus.^b Indeed, he boasts that he himself lived on less than a penny, but that Metrodorus, whose progress was not yet so great, needed a whole penny. Do you think that there can be fulness on such fare? Yes, and there is pleasure also,—not that shifty and fleeting pleasure which needs a fillip now and then, but a pleasure that is steadfast and sure. For though water, barley-meal, and crusts of barley-bread, are

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voluptas est posse capere etiam ex his voluptatem et ad id se deduxisse, quod eripere nulla fortunae iniquitas possit. Liberaliora¹ alimenta sunt carceris, sepositos ad capitale supplicium non tam anguste, qui occisurus est, pascit. Quanta est animi magnitudo ad id sua sponte descendere, quod ne ad extrema quidem decretis timendum sit! Hoc est praeoccupare tela fortunae.

12 Incipe ergo, mi Lucili, sequi horum consuetudinem et aliquos dies destina, quibus secedas a tuis rebus minimoque te facias familiarem; incipe cum paupertate habere commercium.

Aude, hospes, contemnere opes et te quoque dignum Finge deo.

13 Nemo alius est deo dignus quam qui opes contempsit. Quarum possessionem tibi non interdico, sed efficere volo, ut illas intrepide possideas; quod uno consequeris modo, si te etiam sine illis beate victurum persuaseris tibi, si illas tamquam exituras semper aspexeris.

14 Sed iam incipiamus epistolam complicare. "Prius," inquis, "redde quod debes." Delegabo te ad Epicurum; ab illo fiet numeratio: "Inmodica ira gignit insaniam." Hoc quam verum sit, necesse est scias, cum habueris et servum et inimicum. In omnes personas hic exardescit affectus; tam ex amore

¹ *liberaliora* Muretus; *liberiora* MSS.; *uberiora* Buecheler.

* Vergil, *Aeneid*, viii. 364 f.

^b Frag. 484 Usener.

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