

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

nascitur quam ex odio, non minus inter seria quam inter lusus et iocos. Nec interest, ex quam magna causa nascatur, sed in qualem perveniat animum. Sic ignis non refert quam magnus, sed quo incidat. Nam etiam maximum solida non receperunt; rursus arida et corripit facilia scintillam quoque fovit usque in incendium. Ita est, mi Lucili, ingentis irae exitus furor est, et ideo ira vitanda est non moderationis causa, sed sanitatis. VALE.

XIX.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Exulto, quotiens epistulas tuas accipio. Inplent enim me bona spe et iam non promittunt de te, sed spondent. Ita fac, oro atque obsecro. Quid enim habeo melius, quod amicum rogem, quam quod pro ipso rogaturus sum? Si potes, subduc te istis occupationibus; si minus, eripe. Satis multum temporis sparsimus; incipiamus vasa in senectute colligere.
- 2 Numquid invidiosum est? In freto viximus, moriamur in portu. Neque ego suaserim tibi nomen ex otio petere, quod nec iactare debes nec abscondere. Numquam enim usque eo te abigam generis humani furore damnato, ut latebram tibi aliquam parari et oblivionem¹ velim; id age, ut otium tuum non emineat,

¹ *et oblivionem* Lb; *oblivione* p and Hense; *oblivionem* P,

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itself not less in serious matters than in jest and sport. And it makes no difference how important the provocation may be, but into what kind of soul it penetrates. Similarly with fire; it does not matter how great is the flame, but what it falls upon. For solid timbers have repelled a very great fire; conversely, dry and easily inflammable stuff nourishes the slightest spark into a conflagration. So it is with anger, my dear Lucilius; the outcome of a mighty anger is madness, and hence anger should be avoided, not merely that we may escape excess, but that we may have a healthy mind. Farewell.

XIX. ON WORLDLINESS AND RETIREMENT

I leap for joy whenever I receive letters from you. For they fill me with hope; they are now not mere assurances concerning you, but guarantees. And I beg and pray you to proceed in this course; for what better request could I make of a friend than one which is to be made for his own sake? If possible, withdraw yourself from all the business of which you speak; and if you cannot do this, tear yourself away. We have dissipated enough of our time already; let us in old age begin to pack up our baggage. Surely there is nothing in this that men can begrudge us. We have spent our lives on the high seas; let us die in harbour. Not that I would advise you to try to win fame by your retirement; one's retirement should neither be paraded nor concealed. Not concealed, I say, for I shall not go so far in urging you as to expect you to condemn all men as mad and then seek out for yourself a hiding-place and oblivion; rather make this your business, that your

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3 sed appareat. Deinde videbunt de isto, quibus integra sunt et prima consilia, an velint vitam per obscurum transmittere; tibi liberum non est. In medium te protulit ingenii vigor, scriptorum elegantia, clarae et nobiles amicitiae. Iam notitia te invasit. Ut in extrema mergaris ac penitus recondaris, tamen
4 priora monstrabunt. Tenebras habere non potes; sequetur, quocumque fugeris, multum pristinae lucis.

Quietem potes vindicare sine ullius odio, sine desiderio aut morsu animi tui. Quid enim relinques, quod invitus relictum a te possis cogitare? Clientes? Quorum nemo te ipsum sequitur, sed aliquid ex te. Amicitia olim petebatur, nunc praeda; mutabunt testamenta destituti senes, migrabit ad aliud limen saluator. Non potest parvo res magna constare; aestima, utrum te relinquere an aliquid ex tuis malis.
5 Utinam quidem tibi senescere contigisset intra natalium tuorum modum, nec te in altum fortuna misisset! Tulit te longe a conspectu vitae salubris rapida felicitas, provincia et procuratio, et quicquid ab istis promittitur; maiora deinde officia te excipient
6 et ex aliis alia. Quis exitus erit? Quid expectas,

^a See the Introduction, p. ix.

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retirement be not conspicuous, though it should be obvious. In the second place, while those whose choice is unhampered from the start will deliberate on that other question, whether they wish to pass their lives in obscurity, in your case there is not a free choice. Your ability and energy have thrust you into the work of the world; so have the charm of your writings and the friendships you have made with famous and notable men. Renown has already taken you by storm. You may sink yourself into the depths of obscurity and utterly hide yourself; yet your earlier acts will reveal you. You cannot keep lurking in the dark; much of the old gleam will follow you wherever you fly.

Peace you can claim for yourself without being disliked by anyone, without any sense of loss, and without any pangs of spirit. For what will you leave behind you that you can imagine yourself reluctant to leave? Your clients? But none of these men courts you for yourself; they merely court something from you. People used to hunt friends, but now they hunt pelf; if a lonely old man changes his will, the morning-caller transfers himself to another door. Great things cannot be bought for small sums; so reckon up whether it is preferable to leave your own true self, or merely some of your belongings. Would that you had had the privilege of growing old amid the limited circumstances of your origin, and that fortune had not raised you to such heights! You were removed far from the sight of wholesome living by your swift rise to prosperity, by your province, by your position as procurator,^a and by all that such things promise; you will next acquire more important duties and after them still more. And what will be the result? Why wait until there is nothing left for

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donec desinas habere, quod cupias? Numquam erit id tempus.¹ Qualem dicimus seriem esse causarum, ex quibus nectitur fatum, talem esse² cupiditatum; altera ex fine alterius nascitur. In eam demissus es vitam, quae numquam tibi terminum miseriarum ac servitutis ipsa factura sit. Subduc cervicem iugo tritam; semel illam incidi quam semper premi satius
7 est. Si te ad privata rettuleris, minora erunt omnia, sed affatim implebunt; at nunc plurima et undique ingesta non satiant. Utrum autem mavis ex inopia saturitatem an in copia famem? et avida felicitas est et alienae aviditati exposita. Quamdiu tibi satis nihil fuerit, ipse aliis non eris.

8 “Quomodo,” inquis, “exibo?” Utcumque. Cogita, quam multa temere pro pecunia, quam multa laboriose pro honore temptaveris; aliquid et pro otio audendum est, aut in ista sollicitudine procurationum et deinde urbanorum officiorum senescendum in tumultu ac semper novis fluctibus, quos effugere nulla modestia, nulla vitae quiete contigit. Quid enim ad rem pertinet, an tu quiescere velis? Fortuna tua non vult. Quid si illi etiam nunc permiseris crescere? Quantum ad successus accesserit, accedet ad metus.

9 Volo tibi hoc loco referre dictum Maecenatis vera in

¹ *erit id tempus* Buecheler; *erit tempus* MSS.

² Madvig would insert *scias* or *puta*.

^a The *procurator* did the work of a quaestor in an imperial province. Positions at Rome to which Lucilius might succeed were such as *praefectus annonae*, in charge of the grain supply, or *praefectus urbi*, Director of Public Safety, and others.

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you to crave? That time will never come. We hold that there is a succession of causes, from which fate is woven; similarly, you may be sure, there is a succession in our desires; for one begins where its predecessor ends. You have been thrust into an existence which will never of itself put an end to your wretchedness and your slavery. Withdraw your chafed neck from the yoke; it is better that it should be cut off once for all, than galled for ever. If you retreat to privacy, everything will be on a smaller scale, but you will be satisfied abundantly; in your present condition, however, there is no satisfaction in the plenty which is heaped upon you on all sides. Would you rather be poor and sated, or rich and hungry? Prosperity is not only greedy, but it also lies exposed to the greed of others. And as long as nothing satisfies you, you yourself cannot satisfy others.

“But,” you say, “how can I take my leave?” Any way you please. Reflect how many hazards you have ventured for the sake of money, and how much toil you have undertaken for a title! You must dare something to gain leisure, also,—or else grow old amid the worries of procuratorships^a abroad and subsequently of civil duties at home, living in turmoil and in ever fresh floods of responsibilities, which no man has ever succeeded in avoiding by unobtrusiveness or by seclusion of life. For what bearing on the case has your personal desire for a secluded life? Your position in the world desires the opposite! What if, even now, you allow that position to grow greater? But all that is added to your successes will be added to your fears. At this point I should like to quote a saying of Maecenas, who spoke the truth when he stood on the very

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ipso culmine¹ elocuti: "Ipsa enim altitudo attonat summa." Si quaeris, in quo libro dixerit; in eo, qui Prometheus inscribitur. Hoc voluit dicere, attonita habet summa. Est ergo tanti ulla potentia, ut sit tibi tam ebrius sermo? Ingeniosus ille vir fuit, magnum exemplum Romanae eloquentiae daturus, nisi illum enervasset felicitas, immo castrasset. Hic te exitus manet, nisi iam contrahes vela, nisi, quod ille sero voluit, terram leges.

- 10 Poteram tecum hac Maecenatis sententia parem facere rationem. Sed movebis mihi controversiam, si novi te, nec voles quod debeo in aspero et inprobo accipere. Ut se res habet, ab Epicuro versura facienda est. "Ante," inquit, "circumspiciendum est, cum quibus edas et bibas, quam quid edas e bibas. Nam sine amico visceratio leonis ac lupi vita
- 11 est." Hoc non continget tibi, nisi secesseris; alioqui habebis convivas, quos ex turba salutantium nomenclator digesserit. Errat autem, qui amicum in atrio quaerit, in convivio probat. Nullum habet maius malum occupatus homo et bonis suis obsessus, quam quod amicos sibi putat, quibus ipse non est, quod beneficia sua efficacia iudicat ad conciliandos amicos,

¹ *in ipso culmine* Capps; *in ipso eculeo* MSS.

^a And therefore could speak with authority on this point.

^b Perhaps a tragedy, although Seneca uses the word *liber* to describe it. Maecenas wrote a *Symposium*, a work *De cultu suo*, *Octavia*, some stray verse, and perhaps some history. See Seneca, *Epp.* xcii. and ci.

^c Seneca whimsically pretends to assume that eccentric literary style and high political position go hand in hand. See also the following sentence.

^d Epicurus, Frag. 542 Usener.

^e A slave kept by every prominent Roman to identify the master's friends and dependants.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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