

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

12 cum quidam, quo plus debent, magis oderint. Leve  
aes alienum debitorem facit, grave inimicum. "Quid  
ergo? Beneficia non parant amicitias?" Parant,  
si accepturos licuit eligere, si conlocata, non sparsa  
sunt.

Itaque dum incipis esse mentis tuae, interim hoc  
consilio sapientium utere, ut magis ad rem existimes  
pertinere, quis, quam quid acceperit. VALE.

### XX.

#### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Si vales et te dignum putas, qui aliquando fias  
tuus, gaudeo. Mea enim gloria erit, si te istinc, ubi  
sine spe exeundi fluctuaris, extraxero. Illud autem  
te, mi Lucili, rogo atque hortor, ut philosophiam in  
praecordia ima demittas et experimentum profectus  
tui capias non oratione nec scripto, sed animi firmi-  
tate, cupiditatum deminutione; verba rebus proba.

2 Aliud propositum est declamantibus et adsen-  
sionem coronae captantibus, aliud his, qui iuvenum  
et otiosorum aures disputatione varia aut volubili  
detinent; facere docet philosophia, non dicere, et  
hoc exigit, ut ad legem suam quisque vivat, ne  
orationi vita dissentiat, ut ipsa intra se vita unius sit  
omnium actionum sine dissensione coloris.<sup>1</sup> Maxi-  
mum hoc est et officium sapientiae et indicium, ut

<sup>1</sup> *intra . . . coloris* Haupt; *inter se vita . . . his sit  
omnium actio dissertationum color sit p, unus or una* L<sup>3</sup> Pb,  
*coloris* later MSS.

## EPISTLES XIX., XX.

case of certain men, the more they owe, the more they hate. A trifling debt makes a man your debtor; a large one makes him an enemy. "What," you say, "do not kindnesses establish friendships?" They do, if one has had the privilege of choosing those who are to receive them, and if they are placed judiciously, instead of being scattered broadcast.

Therefore, while you are beginning to call your mind your own, meantime apply this maxim of the wise: consider that it is more important who receives a thing, than what it is he receives. Farewell.

## XX. ON PRACTISING WHAT YOU PREACH

If you are in good health and if you think yourself worthy of becoming at last your own master, I am glad. For the credit will be mine, if I can drag you from the floods in which you are being buffeted without hope of emerging. This, however, my dear Lucilius, I ask and beg of you, on your part, that you let wisdom sink into your soul, and test your progress, not by mere speech or writings, but by stoutness of heart and decrease of desire. Prove your words by your deeds.

Far different is the purpose of those who are speech-making and trying to win the approbation of a throng of hearers, far different that of those who allure the ears of young men and idlers by many-sided or fluent argumentation; philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak; it exacts of every man that he should live according to his own standards, that his life should not be out of harmony with his words, and that, further, his inner life should be of one hue and not out of harmony with all his activities. This, I say, is the highest duty and the highest proof of

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

verbis opera concordent, ut ipse ubique par sibi idemque sit.

“Quis hoc praestabit?” Pauci, aliqui tamen. Est enim difficile hoc; nec hoc dico, sapientem uno  
3 semper iturum gradu, sed una via. Observa te<sup>1</sup> itaque, numquid vestis tua domusque dissentiant, numquid in te liberalis sis, in tuos sordidus, numquid cenes frugaliter, aedifices luxuriose. Unam semel ad quam vivas regulam prende et ad hanc omnem vitam tuam exaequa. Quidam se domi contrahunt, dilatant foris et extendunt; vitium est haec diversitas et signum vacillantis animi ac nondum habentis te-  
4 norem suum. Etiamnunc dicam, unde sit ista inconstantia et dissimilitudo rerum consiliorumque: nemo proponit sibi, quid velit, nec si proposuit, perseverat in eo, sed transilit; nec tantum mutat, sed redit et  
5 in ea, quae deseruit ac damnavit, revolvitur. Itaque ut relinquam definitiones sapientiae veteres et totum conplectar humanae vitae modum, hoc possum contentus esse: Quid est sapientia? Semper idem velle atque idem nolle. Licet illam exceptiunculam non adicias, ut rectum sit, quod velis; non potest enim cuiquam idem semper placere nisi rectum.

6 Nesciunt ergo homines, quid velint, nisi illo momento, quo volunt; in totum nulli velle aut

<sup>1</sup> *observa te* Hense; *observare* MSS.

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<sup>a</sup> Seneca applies to wisdom the definition of friendship, Sallust, *Catiline*, 20. <sup>4</sup> *idem velle atque idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est.*

## EPISTLE XX.

wisdom,—that deed and word should be in accord, that a man should be equal to himself under all conditions, and always the same.

“But,” you reply, “who can maintain this standard?” Very few, to be sure; but there are some. It is indeed a hard undertaking, and I do not say that the philosopher can always keep the same pace. But he can always travel the same path. Observe yourself, then, and see whether your dress and your house are inconsistent, whether you treat yourself lavishly and your family meanly, whether you eat frugal dinners and yet build luxurious houses. You should lay hold, once for all, upon a single norm to live by, and should regulate your whole life according to this norm. Some men restrict themselves at home, but strut with swelling port before the public; such discordance is a fault, and it indicates a wavering mind which cannot yet keep its balance. And I can tell you, further, whence arise this unsteadiness and disagreement of action and purpose; it is because no man resolves upon what he wishes, and, even if he has done so, he does not persist in it, but jumps the track; not only does he change, but he returns and slips back to the conduct which he has abandoned and abjured. Therefore, to omit the ancient definitions of wisdom and to include the whole manner of human life, I can be satisfied with the following: “What is wisdom? Always desiring the same things, and always refusing the same things.”<sup>a</sup> You may be excused from adding the little proviso, —that what you wish, should be right; since no man can always be satisfied with the same thing, unless it is right.

For this reason men do not know what they wish, except at the actual moment of wishing; no man

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

nolle decretum est. Variatur cotidie iudicium et in contrarium vertitur ac plerisque agitur vita per lusum. Preme ergo quod coepisti, et fortasse perduceris aut ad summum aut eo, quod summum nondum esse solus intellegas.

7 “Quid fiet,” inquis, “huic turbæ familiarium sine<sup>1</sup> re familiari?” Turba ista cum a te pasci desierit, ipsa se pascet, aut quod tu beneficio tuo non potes scire, paupertatis scies. Illa veros certosque amicos retinebit; discedet quisquis non te, sed aliud sequetur. Non est autem vel ob hoc unum amanda paupertas, quod a quibus ameris ostendet? O quando ille veniet dies, quo nemo in honorem tuum men-

8 tiatur! Huc ergo cogitationes tuæ tendant, hoc cura, hoc opta, omnia alia vota deo remissurus, ut contentus sis temet ipso et ex te nascentibus bonis. Quæ potest esse felicitas propior? Redige te ad parva, ex quibus cadere non possis, idque ut libentius facias, ad hoc pertinebit tributum huius epistolæ, quod statim conferam.

9 Invidias licet, etiam nunc libenter pro me dependet Epicurus. “Magnificentior, mihi crede, sermo tuus in grabato videbitur et in panno. Non enim dicentur tantum illa, sed probabuntur.” Ego certe

<sup>1</sup> *sine* Hense; *sive* MSS.

## EPISTLE XX.

ever decided once and for all to desire or to refuse. Judgment varies from day to day, and changes to the opposite, making many a man pass his life in a kind of game. Press on, therefore, as you have begun; perhaps you will be led to perfection, or to a point which you alone understand is still short of perfection.

“But what,” you say, “will become of my crowded household without a household income?” If you stop supporting that crowd, it will support itself; or perhaps you will learn by the bounty of poverty what you cannot learn by your own bounty. Poverty will keep for you your true and tried friends; you will be rid of the men who were not seeking you for yourself, but for something which you have. Is it not true, however, that you should love poverty, if only for this single reason,—that it will show you those by whom you are loved? O when will that time come, when no one shall tell lies to compliment you! Accordingly, let your thoughts, your efforts, your desires, help to make you content with your own self and with the goods that spring from yourself; and commit all your other prayers to God’s keeping! What happiness could come closer home to you? Bring yourself down to humble conditions, from which you cannot be ejected; and in order that you may do so with greater alacrity, the contribution contained in this letter shall refer to that subject; I shall bestow it upon you forthwith.

Although you may look askance, Epicurus<sup>a</sup> will once again be glad to settle my indebtedness: “Believe me, your words will be more imposing if you sleep on a cot and wear rags. For in that case you will not be merely saying them; you will be demonstrating their truth.” I, at any rate, listen in

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- aliter audio, quae dicit Demetrius noster, cum illum vidi nudum, quanto minus quam<sup>1</sup> stramentis, incurram; non praeceptor veri, sed testis est. “Quid ergo? Non licet divitias in sinu positas contemnere?” Quidni liceat? Et ille ingentis animi est, qui illas circumfusas sibi, multum diuque miratus, quod ad se venerint, ridet suasque audit magis esse quam sentit. Multum est non corrumpi divitiarum contubernio; magnus ille, qui in divitiis pauper est.
- 11 “Nescio,” inquis, “quomodo paupertatem iste laturus sit, si in illam inciderit.” Nec ego, Epicure, an tuus<sup>2</sup> iste pauper contempturus sit divitias, si in illas inciderit; itaque in utroque mens aestimanda est inspiciendumque, an ille paupertati indulgeat, an hic divitiis non indulgeat. Alioquin leve argumentum est bonae voluntatis grabatus aut pannus, nisi apparuit aliquem illa non necessitate pati, sed malle.
- 12 Ceterum magnae indolis est ad ista non properare tamquam meliora, sed praeparari tamquam ad facilia. Et sunt, Lucili, facilia; cum vero multo ante medietas accesseris, iucunda quoque; inest enim illis, 13 sine qua nihil est iucundum, securitas. Necessarium ergo iudico, id quod tibi scripsi magnos viros saepe

<sup>1</sup> *quam in MSS.; in del. Haupt.*

<sup>2</sup> *an tuus P. Thomas; angulus si pL.*

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<sup>a</sup> *i.e., the life of voluntary poverty.*

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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