

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- 7 Dissimilem te fieri multis oportet. Dum tibi tutum non est <sup>1</sup> ad te recedere, circumspice singulos; nemo est, cui non satius sit cum quolibet esse quam secum. "Tunc praecipue in te ipse secede, cum esse cogeris in turba"; si bonus vir, si quietus, si temperans. Alioquin in turbam tibi a te recedendum est; istic malo viro propius es. VALE.

### XXVI.

#### SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Modo dicebam tibi, in conspectu esse me senectutis; iam vereor, ne senectutem post me reliquerim. Aliud iam his annis, certe huic corpori, vocabulum convenit, quoniam quidem senectus lassae aetatis, non fractae, nomen est; inter decrepitos me numera et extrema tangentis.
- 2 Gratias tamen mihi apud te ago; non sentio in animo aetatis iniuriam, cum sentiam in corpore. Tantum vitia et vitiorum ministeria senuerunt; viget animus et gaudet non multum sibi esse cum corpore. Magnam partem oneris sui posuit. Exultat et mihi facit controversiam de senectute. Hunc ait esse
- 3 florem suum. Credamus illi; bono suo utatur. Ire in cogitationem iubet et dispicere, quid ex hac

<sup>1</sup> *est* Muretus; *sit* MSS.

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<sup>a</sup> Because "solitude prompts to evil," § 5.

<sup>b</sup> See the twelfth letter. Seneca was by this time at least sixty-five years old, and probably older.

## EPISTLES XXV., XXVI.

You ought to make yourself of a different stamp from the multitude. Therefore, while it is not yet safe to withdraw into solitude,<sup>a</sup> seek out certain individuals; for everyone is better off in the company of somebody or other,—no matter who,—than in his own company alone. “The time when you should most of all withdraw into yourself is when you are forced to be in a crowd.” Yes, provided that you are a good, tranquil, and self-restrained man; otherwise, you had better withdraw into a crowd in order to get away from your self. Alone, you are too close to a rascal. Farewell.

### XXVI. ON OLD AGE AND DEATH

I was just lately telling you that I was within sight of old age.<sup>b</sup> I am now afraid that I have left old age behind me. For some other word would now apply to my years, or at any rate to my body; since old age means a time of life that is weary rather than crushed. You may rate me in the worn-out class,—of those who are nearing the end.

Nevertheless, I offer thanks to myself, with you as witness; for I feel that age has done no damage to my mind, though I feel its effects on my constitution. Only my vices, and the outward aids to these vices, have reached senility; my mind is strong and rejoices that it has but slight connexion with the body. It has laid aside the greater part of its load. It is alert; it takes issue with me on the subject of old age; it declares that old age is its time of bloom. Let me take it at its word, and let it make the most of the advantages it possesses. The mind bids me do some thinking and consider how much of this

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tranquillitate ac modestia morum sapientiae debeam, quid aetati, et diligenter excutere, quae non possim facere, quae nolim †prodesse habiturus ad qui si nolim quidquid non posse me gaudeo†.<sup>1</sup> Quae enim querella est, quod incommodum, si quidquid debebat<sup>2</sup>  
 4 desinere, defecit? “Incommodum summum est,” inquis, “minui et deperire et, ut proprie dicam, liquescere. Non enim subito impulsus ac prostratus sumus; carpimur. Singuli dies aliquid subtrahunt viribus.”

Ecquis<sup>3</sup> exitus est melior quam in finem suum natura solvente dilabi? Non quia aliquid mali est<sup>4</sup> ictus et e vita repentinus excessus, sed quia lenis haec est via, subduci. Ego certe, velut adpropinquet experimentum et ille laturus sententiam de omnibus annis meis dies venerit, ita me observo et adloquor:  
 5 “Nihil est,” inquam, “adhuc, quod aut rebus aut verbis exhibuimus. Levia sunt ista et fallacia pig-nora animi multisque involuta lenociniis; quid profecerim, morti crediturus sum. Non timide itaque conponor ad illum diem, quo remotis strophis ac fucis de me iudicaturus sum, utrum loquar fortia an sentiam, numquid simulatio fuerit et mimus, quicquid contra fortunam iactavi verborum contumacium.  
 6 Remove existimationem hominum; dubia semper est et in partem utramque dividitur. Remove studia

<sup>1</sup> This passage is hopelessly corrupt. The course of the argument requires something like this: For it is just as much to my advantage not to be able to do what I do not want to do, as it is to be able to do whatever gives me pleasure.

<sup>2</sup> *debebat* Fickert and Madvig; *debeat* MSS.

<sup>3</sup> *ecquis* Madvig; *hec quis* and *et quis* MSS.

<sup>4</sup> *aliquid mali ictus* pL; *est*, found in a few less important MSS., is inserted by Hense.

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peace of spirit and moderation of character I owe to wisdom and how much to my time of life; it bids me distinguish carefully what I cannot do and what I do not want to do. . . . For why should one complain or regard it as a disadvantage, if powers which ought to come to an end have failed? "But," you say, "it is the greatest possible disadvantage to be worn out and to die off, or rather, if I may speak literally, to melt away! For we are not suddenly smitten and laid low; we are worn away, and every day reduces our powers to a certain extent."

But is there any better end to it all than to glide off to one's proper haven, when nature slips the cable? Not that there is anything painful in a shock and a sudden departure from existence; it is merely because this other way of departure is easy,—a gradual withdrawal. I, at any rate, as if the test were at hand and the day were come which is to pronounce its decision concerning all the years of my life, watch over myself and commune thus with myself: "The showing which we have made up to the present time, in word or deed, counts for nothing. All this is but a trifling and deceitful pledge of our spirit, and is wrapped in much charlatanism. I shall leave it to Death to determine what progress I have made. Therefore with no faint heart I am making ready for the day when, putting aside all stage artifice and actor's rouge, I am to pass judgment upon myself,—whether I am merely declaiming brave sentiments, or whether I really feel them; whether all the bold threats I have uttered against fortune are a pretence and a farce. Put aside the opinion of the world; it is always wavering and always takes both sides. Put aside the studies which you have pursued throughout your life;

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tota vita tractata; mors de te pronuntiatura est. Ita dico: disputationes et litterata conloquia et ex praeceptis sapientium verba collecta et eruditus sermo non ostendunt verum robur animi. Est enim oratio etiam timidissimis audax. Quid egeris, tunc apparebit, cum animam ages. Accipio condicionem, non reformido iudicium." Haec mecum loquor, sed tecum quoque me locutum puta. Iuvenior es; quid refert? Non dinumerantur anni. Incertum est, quo loco te mors expectet; itaque tu illam omni loco expecta.

- 8 Desinere iam volebam et manus spectabat ad clausulam; sed conficienda sunt sacra et huic epistulae viaticum dandum est. Puta me non dicere, unde sumpturus sum mutuam; scis cuius arca utar. Expecta me pusillum, et de domo fiet numeratio; interim commodabit Epicurus, qui ait: "Meditare mortem" vel si commodius sit "transire ad deos<sup>1</sup>."
- 9 Hic patet sensus: egregia res est mortem condiscere. Supervacuum forsitan putas id discere, quod semel utendum est. Hoc est ipsum, quare meditari debemus; semper discendum est, quod an sciamus,
- 10 experiri non possumus. "Meditare mortem"; qui hoc dicit, meditari libertatem iubet. Qui mori didicit, servire deditic; supra omnem potentiam est, certe extra omnem. Quid ad illum carcer et custodia et claustra? Liberum ostium habet. Una

<sup>1</sup> *ad deos* Rossbach; *at (ad) nos* MSS.

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<sup>a</sup> *i. e.*, the money will be brought from home,—the saying will be one of Seneca's own.

<sup>b</sup> Epicurus, Frag. 205 Useneri.

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Death will deliver the final judgment in your case. This is what I mean: your debates and learned talks, your maxims gathered from the teachings of the wise, your cultured conversation,—all these afford no proof of the real strength of your soul. Even the most timid man can deliver a bold speech. What you have done in the past will be manifest only at the time when you draw your last breath. I accept the terms; I do not shrink from the decision.” This is what I say to myself, but I would have you think that I have said it to you also. You are younger; but what does that matter? There is no fixed count of our years. You do not know where death awaits you; so be ready for it everywhere.

I was just intending to stop, and my hand was making ready for the closing sentence; but the rites are still to be performed and the travelling money for the letter disbursed. And just assume that I am not telling where I intend to borrow the necessary sum; you know upon whose coffers I depend. Wait for me but a moment, and I will pay you from my own account; <sup>a</sup> meanwhile, Epicurus will oblige me with these words: <sup>b</sup> “Think on death,” or rather, if you prefer the phrase, on “migration to heaven.” The meaning is clear,—that it is a wonderful thing to learn thoroughly how to die. You may deem it superfluous to learn a text that can be used only once; but that is just the reason why we ought to think on a thing. When we can never prove whether we really know a thing, we must always be learning it. “Think on death.” In saying this, he bids us think on freedom. He who has learned to die has unlearned slavery; he is above any external power, or, at any rate, he is beyond it. What terrors have prisons and bonds and bars for him? His way

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est catena, quae nos alligatos tenet, amor vitae, qui ut non est abiciendus, ita minuendus est, ut si quando res exiget, nihil nos detineat nec inpediat, quo minus parati simus, quod quandoque faciendum est, statim facere. VALE.

### XXVII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

I "Tu me," inquis, "mones? Iam enim te ipse monuisti, iam correxisti? Ideo aliorum emendationi vacas?" Non sum tam improbus, ut curationes aeger òbeam, sed tamquam in eodem valitudinario iaceam, de communi tecum malo conloquor et remedia comunico. Sic itaque me audi, tamquam mecum loquar. In secretum te meum admitto et te adhibito mecum  
2 exigo. Clamo mihi ipse: "Numera annos tuos, et pudebit<sup>1</sup> eadem velle, quae volueras puer, eadem parare. Hoc denique tibi circa mortis diem praesta: moriantur ante te vitia. Dimitte istas voluptates turbidas, magno luendas<sup>2</sup>; non venturae tantum, sed praeteritae nocent. Quemadmodum scelera etiam si non sint deprehensa cum fierent, sollicitudo non cum ipsis abit; ita improbarum voluptatum etiam post ipsas paenitentia est. Non sunt solidae, non sunt

<sup>1</sup> After *pudebit* Thomas and Hense<sup>2</sup> insert *te*.

<sup>2</sup> *luendas* Pincianus; *lepandas* or *leundas* or *leuaturas* MSS.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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