

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ex qua prodierunt ac mox processura sunt, recon-
duntur, consumi; desinunt ista, non pereunt. Et
mors, quam pertimescimus ac recusamus, intermittit
vitam, non eripit; veniet iterum, qui nos in lucem
reponat dies, quem multi recusarent, nisi oblitos
reduceret.

- 11 Sed postea diligentius docebo omnia, quae videntur
perire, mutari. Aequo animo debet rediturus exire.
Observa orbem rerum in se remeantium; videbis
nihil in hoc mundo extingui, sed vicibus descendere
ac surgere. Aestas abít, sed alter illam annus
adducet; hiemps cecidit,¹ referent illam sui menses;
solem nox obruit, sed ipsam statim dies abiget.
Stellarum iste discursus quicquid praeterít repetit;
- 12 pars caeli levatur assidue, pars mergitur. Denique
finem faciam, si hoc unum adiecero, nec infantes nec²
pueros nec mente lapsos timere mortem et esse
turpissimum, si eam securitatem nobis ratio non
praestat, ad quam stultitia perducit. VALE.

XXXVII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Quod maximum vinculum est ad bonam mentem,
promisisti virum bonum, sacramento rogatus es.
Deridebit te, si quis tibi dixerit mollem esse militiam

¹ *cecidit* MSS. ; Hense would read *cecidit, sed.*

² Hense, following Madvig, would delete *nec.*

not concern either the living or the dead; for to the living
it has no existence, and the dead do not themselves exist.”
Lucretius uses this argument, concluding it with (iii. 830):
Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum.

^a For example, in *Ep.* lxxvii.

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world of things, from which they have come forth and are soon to come forth again, is annihilated; they merely end their course and do not perish. And death, which we fear and shrink from, merely interrupts life, but does not steal it away; the time will return when we shall be restored to the light of day; and many men would object to this, were they not brought back in forgetfulness of the past.

But I mean to show you later,^a with more care, that everything which seems to perish merely changes. Since you are destined to return, you ought to depart with a tranquil mind. Mark how the round of the universe repeats its course; you will see that no star in our firmament is extinguished, but that they all set and rise in alternation. Summer has gone, but another year will bring it again; winter lies low, but will be restored by its own proper months; night has overwhelmed the sun, but day will soon rout the night again. The wandering stars retrace their former courses; a part of the sky is rising unceasingly, and a part is sinking. One word more, and then I shall stop; infants, and boys, and those who have gone mad, have no fear of death, and it is most shameful if reason cannot afford us that peace of mind to which they have been brought by their folly. Farewell.

XXXVII. ON ALLEGIANCE TO VIRTUE

You have promised to be a good man; you have enlisted under oath; that is the strongest chain which will hold you to a sound understanding. Any man will be but mocking you, if he declares that this is an effeminate and easy kind of soldiering. I

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- et facilem. Nolo te decipi. Eadem honestissimi huius et illius turpissimi auctoramenti verba sunt:
- 2 "Uri, vinciri ferroque necari." Ab illis, qui manus harenae locant et edunt ac bibunt, quae per sanguinem reddant, cavetur, ut ista vel inviti patiantur; a te, ut volens libensque patiaris. Illis licet arma summittere, misericordiam populi temptare; tu neque summittes nec vitam rogabis. Recto tibi invictoque moriendum est. Quid porro prodest paucos dies aut annos lucrificare? Sine missione nascimur.
- 3 "Quomodo ergo," inquis, "me expediam?" Effugere non potes necessitates, potes vincere.

Fit via vi.¹

Et hanc tibi viam² dabit philosophia. Ad hanc te confer, si vis salvus esse, si securus, si beatus, denique si vis esse, quod est maximum, liber. Hoc contingere
4 aliter non potest. Humilis res est stultitia, abiecta, sordida, servilis, multis affectibus et saevissimis subiecta. Hos tam graves dominos, interdum alternis imperantes, interdum pariter, dimittit a te sapientia, quae sola libertas est. Una ad hanc fert via, et quidem recta; non aberrabis. Vade certo gradu; si vis omnia tibi subicere, te subice rationi; multos reges si ratio te rexerit. Ab illa disces, quid

¹ vi, omitted from the Seneca MSS., supplied from Vergil.

² viam pPb; unam L; viam una Gertz.

^a He refers to the famous oath which the gladiator took when he hired himself to the fighting-master; *uri, vinciri, verberari, ferroque necari patior*; cf. Petronius, *Sat.* 117. The oath is abbreviated in the text, probably by Seneca himself, who paraphrases it in *Ep.* lxxi. 23.

^b Awaiting the signal of "thumbs up" or "thumbs down." Cp. Juvenal, iii. 36 *verso pollice, vulgus Quem iubet, occidunt populariter.* ^c Vergil, *Aeneid*, ii. 494.

^a In the language of Stoicism, ἀμαθία, *stultitia*, "folly," is the antithesis of σοφία, *sapientia*, "wisdom."

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will not have you deceived. The words of this most honourable compact are the same as the words of that most disgraceful one, to wit ^a: "Through burning, imprisonment, or death by the sword." From the men who hire out their strength for the arena, who eat and drink what they must pay for with their blood, security is taken that they will endure such trials even though they be unwilling; from you, that you will endure them willingly and with alacrity. The gladiator may lower his weapon and test the pity of the people; ^b but you will neither lower your weapon nor beg for life. You must die erect and unyielding. Moreover, what profit is it to gain a few days or a few years? There is no discharge for us from the moment we are born.

"Then how can I free myself?" you ask. You cannot escape necessities, but you can overcome them.

By force a way is made.^c

And this way will be afforded you by philosophy. Betake yourself therefore to philosophy if you would be safe, untroubled, happy, in fine, if you wish to be, —and that is most important,—free. There is no other way to attain this end. Folly ^d is low, abject, mean, slavish, and exposed to many of the cruellest passions. These passions, which are heavy task-masters, sometimes ruling by turns, and sometimes together, can be banished from you by wisdom, which is the only real freedom. There is but one path leading thither, and it is a straight path; you will not go astray. Proceed with steady step, and if you would have all things under your control, put yourself under the control of reason; if reason becomes your ruler, you will become ruler over many.

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et quemadmodum adgredi debeas ; non incidēs
5 rebus. Neminem mihi dabis, qui sciat, quomodo
quod vult, coeperit velle ; non consilio adductus illo,
sed inpetu in tactus est. Non minus saepe fortuna
in nos incurrit quam nos in illam. Turpe est non
ire, sed ferri et subito in medio turbine rerum
stupentem quaerere : “ Huc ego quemadmodum
veni ? ” VALE.

XXXVIII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 Merito exigis, ut hoc inter nos epistularum com-
mercium frequentemus. Plurimum proficit sermo,
quia minutatim inrepat animo. Disputationes prae-
paratae et effusae audiente populo plus habent
strepitus, minus familiaritatis. Philosophia bonum
consilium est ; consilium nemo clare dat.¹ Aliquando
utendum est et illis, ut ita dicam, contionibus, ubi
qui dubitat, impellendus est ; ubi vero non hoc
agendum est, ut velit discere, sed ut discat, ad haec
submissiora verba veniendum est. Facilius intrans
et haerent ; nec enim multis opus est, sed efficacibus.
- 2 Seminis modo spargenda sunt, quod quamvis sit
exiguum, cum occupavit idoneum locum, vires suas
explicat et ex minimo in maximos auctus diffunditur.

¹ Georges conjectures *clamitat* for *clare dat*, perhaps
rightly.

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You will learn from her what you should undertake, and how it should be done; you will not blunder into things. You can show me no man who knows how he began to crave that which he craves. He has not been led to that pass by forethought; he has been driven to it by impulse. Fortune attacks us as often as we attack Fortune. It is disgraceful, instead of proceeding ahead, to be carried along, and then suddenly, amid the whirlpool of events, to ask in a dazed way: "How did I get into this condition?" Farewell.

XXXVIII. ON QUIET CONVERSATION

You are right when you urge that we increase our mutual traffic in letters. But the greatest benefit is to be derived from conversation, because it creeps by degrees into the soul. Lectures prepared beforehand and spouted in the presence of a throng have in them more noise but less intimacy. Philosophy is good advice; and no one can give advice at the top of his lungs. Of course we must sometimes also make use of these harangues, if I may so call them, when a doubting member needs to be spurred on; but when the aim is to make a man learn, and not merely to make him wish to learn, we must have recourse to the low-toned words of conversation. They enter more easily, and stick in the memory; for we do not need many words, but, rather, effective words.

Words should be scattered like seed; no matter how small the seed may be, if it has once found favourable ground, it unfolds its strength and from an insignificant thing spreads to its greatest growth.

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