THE EPISTLES OF SENeca

audio. Adeo tecum sum, ut dubitem, an incipiam
non epistulas, sed codicillos tibi scribere. VALE.

LVI.

SENECA LYCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Pereum, si est tam necessarium quam videtur si-
lentium in studia seposito. Ecce undique me varius
clamor circumsonat. Supra ipsum balneum habito.
Propone nunc tibi omnia genera vocum, quae in
odium possunt aures adducere: cum fortiores exer-
centur et manus plumbo graves iactant, cum aut
laborant aut laborantem imitantur, gemitus audio,
quotiens retentum spiritum remiserunt, sibilos et
acerbissimas respirationes; cum in aliquem inertem
et lac plebeia unctione contentum incidi, audio
crepitum inlisaem manus umeris, quae prout plana per-
venit aut concava, ita sonum mutat. Si vero pil-
crepus supervenit et numerare coepit pilas, actum est.

2 Adice nunc scordalum et furem deprensum et illum,
cui vox suae in balineo placet. Adice nunc eos, qui
in piscinam cum ingenti impulsae aquae sono saliunt.
Praeter istos, quorum, si nihil aliquid, rectae voce
sunt, alipilum cogita tenuem et stridulum vocem,
quo sit notabilior, subinde exprimentem nec umquam

---

a Pilcrepus probably means "ball-counter,"—one who
keeps a record of the strokes. Compare our "billiard-
marker."

2 This was especially true of poets, cf. Horace, Sat. i. 4.
76 quae locus voci resonat conclus, and Martial, iii. 44.
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and at this very moment I hear you; I am with you
to such an extent that I hesitate whether I should
not begin to write you notes instead of letters.
Farewell.

LVI. ON QUIET AND STUDY

Beshrew me if I think anything more requisite
than silence for a man who excludes himself in order
to study! Imagine what a variety of noises reverberates about my ears! I have lodgings right over
a bathing establishment. So picture to yourself
the assortment of sounds, which are strong enough
to make me hate my very powers of hearing! When
your strenuous gentleman, for example, is exercising
himself by flourishing leaden weights; when he is
working hard, or else pretends to be working hard,
I can hear him grunt; and whenever he releases
his imprisoned breath, I can hear him panting in
wheezy and high-pitched tones. Or perhaps I
notice some lazy fellow, content with a cheap rub-
down, and hear the crack of the pummeling hand on
his shoulder, varying in sound according as the hand
is laid on flat or hollow. Then, perhaps, a profes-
sional comes along, shouting out the score; that
is the finishing touch. Add to this the arresting of
an occasional roysterer or pickpocket, the racket of
the man who always likes to hear his own voice in
the bathroom, or the enthusiast who plunges into
the swimming-tank with unconscionable noise and
splashing. Besides all those whose voices, if nothing
else, are good, imagine the hair-plucker with his
penetrating, shrill voice,—for purposes of advertise-
ment,—continually giving it vent and never holding
THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

tacentem, nisi dum vellit alas et alium pro se clamare cogit. Iam libari \textsuperscript{1} varias exclamationes et botularium et crustularium et omnes popinarum instiiores mercem sua quadam et insignitam modulatione venientis.

3 "O te," inquis, "ferreum aut surdum, cui mens inter tot clamores tam varios, tam dissonos constat, cum Chrysippum nostrum adsidua salutatio perducat ad mortem." At mehercules ego istum fremitum non magis euro quam fluctum aut deiectum aquae, quamvis audiam cuidam genti hanc unam suisse causam urbem suam transferendi, quod fragorem Nili cadentis ferre non potuit. Magis mihi videtur vox avocare quam crepitus. Illa enim animum adducit, hic tantum aures implet ac verberat. In his, quae me sine avocatione circumstreptum, essedas transcurrentes pono et fabrum inquinum et serrarium vicinum, ant hunc, qui ad Metam Sudantem tubulas \textsuperscript{2} experitur et tibias, nec cantat, sed exclamat.

5 Etiamnunc molestior est mihi sonus, qui intermittitur subinde quam qui continuatur. Sed iam me sic ad omnia ista duravi, ut audire vel pausarium possim voce acerbissima remigibus modos dantem. Animum enim cogo sibi intentum esse nec avocari ad

\textsuperscript{1} libari Caelius Rhodiginus; \textit{liberarii} PLV; \textit{liberarii} Pb. \textsuperscript{2} tubulas Gruter; \textit{tubulas} PLV; Summers conj. \textit{tubulos}.

\textsuperscript{a} It is nowhere else related of the famous Stoic philosopher Chrysippus that he objected to the salutations of his friends; and, besides, the morning salutation was a Roman, not a Greek, custom. Lipsius, therefore, was probably right when he proposed to read here, for Chrysippus, Crito, one of Seneca's friends; \textit{cf. Epigr. 6.}

\textsuperscript{b} The same story is told in \textit{Naturales Quaestiones}, iv. 2. 5.
EPISTLE LVI.

his tongue except when he is plucking the armpits and making his victim yell instead. Then the cake-seller with his varied cries, the sausageman, the confectioner, and all the vendors of food hawking their wares, each with his own distinctive intonation.

So you say: "What iron nerves or deadened ears you must have, if your mind can hold out amid so many noises, so various and so discordant, when our friend Chrysippus is brought to his death by the continual good-morrows that greet him!" But I assure you that this racket means no more to me than the sound of waves or falling water; although you will remind me that a certain tribe once moved their city merely because they could not endure the din of a Nile cataract. Words seem to distract me more than noises; for words demand attention, but noises merely fill the ears and beat upon them. Among the sounds that din round me without distracting, I include passing carriages, a machinist in the same block, a saw-sharpener near by, or some fellow who is demonstrating with little pipes and flutes at the Trickling Fountain, shouting rather than singing.

Furthermore, an intermittent noise upsets me more than a steady one. But by this time I have toughened my nerves against all that sort of thing, so that I can endure even a boatswain marking the time in high-pitched tones for his crew. For I force my mind to concentrate, and keep it from straying to

* A cone-shaped fountain, resembling a turning-post (meta) in the circus, from which the water spouted through many jets; hence the term "sweating" (sudans). Its remains may still be seen now not far from the Colosseum on the Velia.
externa; omnia licet foris resonent, dum intus nihil tumultus sit, dum inter se non rixentur cupiditas et timor, dum avaritia luxuriaque non dissidente nec altera alteram vexet. Nam quid prodest totius regionis silentium, si affectus fremunt?

6 Omnia noctis erant placida composta quiete.

Falsum est. Nulla placida est quies, nisi qua\(^1\) ratio consopuit. Nox exhibet molestiam, non tollit, et sollicitudines mutat. Nam dormientium quoque insomnia tam turbulenta sunt quam dies. Illa tranquillitas vera est, in quam bona mens explicatur.

7 Aspice illum, cujus somnus laxae domus silentio quaeritur, cujus aures nequis agitet sonus, omnis servorum turba conticuit et suspensum accedentium propius vestigium ponitur; hue nempe versatur atque illuc,

8 somnum inter aegritudines levem captans. Quae non audit, audisse se queritur. Quid in causa putas esse? Animus illi obstrept. Hic placandus est, huius conspicenda seditio est, quem non est quod existimes placidum, si iacet corpus. Interdum quies inquieta est.

Et ideo ad rerum actus excitandi ac tractatione bonarum artium occupandi sumus, quotiens nos male

9 habet inertia sui inpatiens. Magni imperatores, cum male parere militem vident, aliquo labore conspescunt

\(^1\) quaGemoll; quam MSS.

\(^a\) A fragment from the Argonautica of Varro Atacinus,

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things outside itself; all outdoors may be bedlam, provided that there is no disturbance within, provided that fear is not wrangling with desire in my breast, provided that meanness and lavishness are not at odds, one harassing the other. For of what benefit is a quiet neighbourhood, if our emotions are in an uproar?

"Twas night, and all the world was lulled to rest.*

This is not true; for no real rest can be found when reason has not done the lulling. Night brings our troubles to the light, rather than banishes them; it merely changes the form of our worries. For even when we seek slumber, our sleepless moments are as harassing as the daytime. Real tranquillity is the state reached by an unperverted mind when it is relaxed. Think of the unfortunate man who courts sleep by surrendering his spacious mansion to silence, who, that his ear may be disturbed by no sound, bids the whole retinue of his slaves be quiet and that whoever approaches him shall walk on tiptoe; he tosses from this side to that and seeks a fitful slumber amid his frettings! He complains that he has heard sounds, when he has not heard them at all. The reason, you ask? His soul is in an uproar; it must be soothed, and its rebellious murmuring checked. You need not suppose that the soul is at peace when the body is still. Sometimes quiet means disquiet.

We must therefore rouse ourselves to action and busy ourselves with interests that are good, as often as we are in the grasp of an uncontrollable sluggishness. Great generals, when they see that their men are mutinous, check them by some sort of labour
et expeditionibus detinent; numquam vacat lascivire
districtis nihilque tam certum est quam otii vitia
negotio discuti. Saepe videmur taedio rerum civilium
et infeliciis atque ingratae stationis paenitentia secess-
sisse, tamen in illa latebra, in quam nos timor ac
lassitudo coniecit, interdum recurvadis ambitio. Non
enim excisa desit, sed fatigata aut etiam obirata
rebus parum sibi cedentibus. Idem de luxuria dico,
quaes videbant aliquando cessisse, deinde frugalitatem
professos sollicitutatem atque in media parsimonia volup-
tates non damnatas, sed relictas petit, et quidem eo
vehementius, quo occultius. Omnia enim vitia in
aperto leniora sunt; morbi quoque tunc ad sanitatem
inclinat, cum ex abdito erumpunt ac vim suam pro-
ferunt. Et avaritiam itaque et ambitionem et cetera
mala mentis humanae tunc perniciosissima scias esse,
cum simulata sanitate subsidunt.

Otiosi videmur, et non sumus. Nam si bona fide
sumus, si receptui cecinimus, si speciosa contemni-
mus, ut paulo ante dicebam, nulla res nos avocabit,
nullus hominum aviumque concentus interrumpet
cogitationes bonas, solidasque iam et certas. Leve
illud ingenium est nec sese adhuc reduxit introrsus,
quo ad vocem et accidentia erigitur. Habet
intus aliquum sollicitudinis et habet aliquum concepi

\textsuperscript{a} See Introduction, page viii. \textsuperscript{b} § 4 of this letter.
\textsuperscript{c} An allusion to the Sirens and Ulysses, cf. § 15 below.

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