

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

Parvo illa dimittitur. Non fames nobis ventris nostri
4 magno constat, sed ambitio. Hos itaque, ut ait
Sallustius, "ventri oboedientes" animalium loco
numeremus, non hominum, quosdam vero ne anima-
lium quidem, sed mortuorum. Vivit is, qui multis
usui est, vivit is, qui se utitur; qui vero latitant et
torpent, sic in domo sunt, quomodo in conditivo.
Horum licet in limine ipso nomen marmori inscribas,
mortem suam antecesserunt. VALE.

LXI.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Desinamus, quod voluimus, velle. Ego certe id
ago: senex ea desii velle¹ quae puer volui. In hoc
unum eunt dies, in hoc noctes, hoc opus meum est,
haec cogitatio: inponere veteribus malis finem. Id
ago, ut mihi instar totius vitae dies sit. Nec meher-
cules tamquam ultimum rapio, sed sic illum aspicio,
2 tamquam esse vel ultimus possit. Hoc animo tibi
hanc epistulam scribo, tamquam me cum maxime
scribentem mors evocatura sit. Paratus exire sum
et ideo fruar vita, quia quam diu futurum hoc sit,
non nimis pendeo.

Ante senectutem curavi, ut bene viverem, in
senectute, ut bene moriar; bene autem mori est

¹ *senex; ea desii velle* Schultess; *senex eadem velle*
pLVPb; *senex ne eadem velle videar* later MSS; *senex ne*
eadem velim Hense after Madvig.

^a *Catiline*, i. 1.

^b *i.e.*, like animals.

^c *i.e.*, you may put an epitaph upon his dwelling as if it
were a tomb.

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little will send her away contented. It is not the natural hunger of our bellies that costs us dear, but our solicitous cravings. Therefore those who, as Sallust^a puts it, "hearken to their bellies," should be numbered among the animals, and not among men; and certain men, indeed, should be numbered, not even among the animals, but among the dead. He really lives who is made use of by many; he really lives who makes use of himself. Those men, however, who creep into a hole and grow torpid^b are no better off in their homes than if they were in their tombs. Right there on the marble lintel of the house of such a man you may inscribe his name,^c for he has died before he is dead. Farewell.

LXI. ON MEETING DEATH CHEERFULLY

Let us cease to desire that which we have been desiring. I, at least, am doing this: in my old age I have ceased to desire what I desired when a boy. To this single end my days and my nights are passed; this is my task, this the object of my thoughts,—to put an end to my chronic ills. I am endeavouring to live every day as if it were a complete life. I do not indeed snatch it up as if it were my last; I do regard it, however, as if it might even be my last. The present letter is written to you with this in mind,—as if death were about to call me away in the very act of writing. I am ready to depart, and I shall enjoy life just because I am not over-anxious as to the future date of my departure.

Before I became old I tried to live well; now that I am old, I shall try to die well; but dying

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libenter mori. Da operam, ne quid umquam invitus
3 facias. Quicquid necesse futurum est repugnanti,
volenti necessitas non est. Ita dico: qui imperia
libens excipit, partem acerbissimam servitutis effugit,
facere quod nolit. Non qui iussus aliquid facit, miser
est, set qui invitus facit. Itaque sic animum compona-
mus, ut quicquid res exiget, id velimus et in primis
4 ut finem nostri sine tristitia cogitemus. Ante ad
mortem quam ad vitam praeparandi sumus. Satis
instructa vita est, sed nos in instrumenta eius avidi
sumus; deesse aliquid nobis videtur et semper vide-
bitur. Ut satis vixerimus, nec anni nec dies faciunt,
sed animus. Vixi, Lucili carissime, quantum satis
erat; mortem plenus exspecto. VALE.

LXII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Mentiuntur, qui sibi obstare ad studia liberalia
turbam negotiorum videri volunt; simulant occupa-
tiones et augent et ipsi se occupant. Vaco, Lucili,
vaco et ubicumque sum, ibi meus sum. Rebus enim
me non trado, sed commodo, nec consector perdendi
temporis causas. Et quocumque constitui loco, ibi
cogitationes meas tracto et aliquid in animo salutare

^a A reminiscence of Lucretius, iii. 938 f. *Cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis Aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem?* Cf. also Horace, *Sat. i. l. 118 f. vita Cedat uti conviva satur.*

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well means dying gladly. See to it that you never do anything unwillingly. That which is bound to be a necessity if you rebel, is not a necessity if you desire it. This is what I mean: he who takes his orders gladly, escapes the bitterest part of slavery,—doing what one does not want to do. The man who does something under orders is not unhappy; he is unhappy who does something against his will. Let us therefore so set our minds in order that we may desire whatever is demanded of us by circumstances, and above all that we may reflect upon our end without sadness. We must make ready for death before we make ready for life. Life is well enough furnished, but we are too greedy with regard to its furnishings; something always seems to us lacking, and will always seem lacking. To have lived long enough depends neither upon our years nor upon our days, but upon our minds. I have lived, my dear friend Lucilius, long enough. I have had my fill^a; I await death. Farewell.

LXII. ON GOOD COMPANY

We are deceived by those who would have us believe that a multitude of affairs blocks their pursuit of liberal studies; they make a pretence of their engagements, and multiply them, when their engagements are merely with themselves. As for me, Lucilius, my time is free; it is indeed free, and wherever I am, I am master of myself. For I do not surrender myself to my affairs, but loan myself to them, and I do not hunt out excuses for wasting my time. And wherever I am situated, I carry on my own meditations and ponder in my mind some

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