

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

ubique horrenda, cum ad hunc pervenere, mansueta sunt. VALE.

LXXXVI.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

- 1 In ipsa Scipionis Africani villa iacens haec tibi scribo adoratis manibus eius et ara, quam sepulchrum esse tanti viri suspicor. Animum quidem eius in caelum, ex quo erat, redisse persuadeo mihi, non quia magnos exercitus duxit, hos enim et Cambyses furiosus ac furore feliciter usus habuit, sed ob egregiam moderationem pietatemque, quam magis in illo admirabilem iudico, cum reliquit patriam, quam cum defendit; aut Scipio Romae esse debebat aut Roma
- 2 in libertate. "Nihil," inquit, "volo derogare legibus, nihil institutis. Aequum inter omnes cives ius sit. Utere sine me beneficio meo, patria. Causa tibi libertatis fui, ero et argumentum; exeo, si plus quam tibi expedit, crevi."
- 3 Quidni ego admirer hanc magnitudinem animi, qua in exilium voluntarium secessit et civitatem exoneravit? Eo perducta res erat, ut aut libertas Scipioni aut Scipio libertati faceret iniuriam. Neutrum fas erat. Itaque locum dedit legibus et se

^a See *Ep.* li. 11.

^b Cf. Livy xxxviii. 53 *morientem rure eo ipso loco sepeliri se iussisse ferunt monumentumque ibi aedificari.*

^c Herodotus iii. 25 *ἐμμανὴς τε ἔων καὶ οὐ φρενήρης.*

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feared; but when they encounter the wise man, they are tamed. Farewell.

LXXXVI. ON SCIPIO'S VILLA

I am resting at the country-house which once belonged to Scipio Africanus^a himself; and I write to you after doing reverence to his spirit and to an altar which I am inclined to think is the tomb^b of that great warrior. That his soul has indeed returned to the skies, whence it came, I am convinced, not because he commanded mighty armies—for Cambyses also had mighty armies, and Cambyses was a mad-man^c who made successful use of his madness—but because he showed moderation and a sense of duty to a marvellous extent. I regard this trait in him as more admirable after his withdrawal from his native land than while he was defending her; for there was the alternative: Scipio should remain in Rome, or Rome should remain free. “It is my wish,” said he, “not to infringe in the least upon our laws, or upon our customs; let all Roman citizens have equal rights. O my country, make the most of the good that I have done, but without me. I have been the cause of your freedom, and I shall also be its proof; I go into exile, if it is true that I have grown beyond what is to your advantage!”

What can I do but admire this magnanimity, which led him to withdraw into voluntary exile and to relieve the state of its burden? Matters had gone so far that either liberty must work harm to Scipio, or Scipio to liberty. Either of these things was wrong in the sight of heaven. So he gave way

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Liternum recepit tam suum exilium rei publicae in-
putaturus quam Hannibalis.

- 4 Vidi villam exstructam lapide quadrato, murum circumdatum silvae, turres quoque in propugnaculum villae utrimque subrectas, cisternam aedificiis ac viridibus subditam, quae sufficere in usum vel exercitus posset, balneolum angustum, tenebricosum ex consuetudine antiqua; non videbatur maioribus nostris caldum nisi obscurum. Magna ergo me voluptas
5 subiit contemplantem mores Scipionis ac nostros. In hoc angulo ille Carthaginiis horror, cui Roma debet, quod tantum semel capta est, abluebat corpus laboribus rusticis fessum. Exercebat enim opere se terramque, ut mos fuit priscis, ipse subigebat. Sub hoc ille tecto tam sordido stetit, hoc illum pavementum tam vile sustinuit.

- 6 At nunc quis est, qui sic lavari sustineat? Pauper sibi videtur ac sordidus, nisi parietes magnis et pretiosis orbibus refulserunt, nisi Alexandrina marmora Numidicis crustis distincta sunt, nisi illis undique operosa et in picturae modum variata circumlitio praetexitur, nisi vitro absconditur camera, nisi Thasius lapis, quondam rarum in aliquo spectaculum templo, piscinas nostras circumdedit, in quas multa sudatione corpora exinanita¹ demittimus, nisi aquam argentea

¹ *exinanita* edd.; *exsaniata* Hense, with MSS.

^a Livy's account (see above) dwells more on the unwillingness of Scipio and his friends to permit the great conqueror to suffer the indignities of a trial.

^b A phrase frequent in the Roman literature; see Lucretius iii. 1034 *Scipiadas, belli fulmen, Carthaginiis horror*.

^c Porphyry, basalt, etc.

^d *i.e.*, the so-called *giallo antico*, with red and yellow tints predominating.

^e A white variety, from Thasos, an island off the Thracian coast.

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to the laws and withdrew to Liternum, thinking to make the state a debtor for his own exile no less than for the exile of Hannibal.^a

I have inspected the house, which is constructed of hewn stone; the wall which encloses a forest; the towers also, buttressed out on both sides for the purpose of defending the house; the well, concealed among buildings and shrubbery, large enough to keep a whole army supplied; and the small bath, buried in darkness according to the old style, for our ancestors did not think that one could have a hot bath except in darkness. It was therefore a great pleasure to me to contrast Scipio's ways with our own. Think, in this tiny recess the "terror of Carthage,"^b to whom Rome should offer thanks because she was not captured more than once, used to bathe a body wearied with work in the fields! For he was accustomed to keep himself busy and to cultivate the soil with his own hands, as the good old Romans were wont to do. Beneath this dingy roof he stood; and this floor, mean as it is, bore his weight.

But who in these days could bear to bathe in such a fashion? We think ourselves poor and mean if our walls are not resplendent with large and costly mirrors; if our marbles from Alexandria^c are not set off by mosaics of Numidian stone,^d if their borders are not faced over on all sides with difficult patterns, arranged in many colours like paintings; if our vaulted ceilings are not buried in glass; if our swimming-pools are not lined with Thasian marble,^e once a rare and wonderful sight in any temple—pools into which we let down our bodies after they have been drained weak by abundant perspiration; and finally, if the water has not poured from silver

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- 7 epitonia fuderunt. Et adhuc plebeias fistulas loquor; quid, cum ad balnea libertinorum pervenero? Quantum statuarum, quantum columnarum est nihil sustinentium, sed in ornamentum positarum impensae causa! Quantum aquarum per gradus cum fragore labentium! Eo deliciarum pervenimus, ut nisi gemmas calcare nolimus.
- 8 In hoc balneo Scipionis minimae sunt rimae magis quam fenestrae muro lapideo exsectae, ut sine iniuria munimenti lumen admitterent; at nunc blattaria vocant balnea, si qua non ita aptata sunt, ut totius diei solem fenestris amplissimis recipiant, nisi et lavantur simul et colorantur, nisi ex solio agros ac maria prospiciunt. Itaque quae concursum et admirationem habuerant, cum dedicarentur, devitantur et in¹ antiquorum numerum reiciuntur, cum aliquid novi luxuria
9 commenta est, quo ipsa se obrueret. At olim et pauca erant balnea nec ullo cultu exornata. Cur enim exornaretur res quadrantaria et in usum, non in oblectamentum reperta? Non suffundebatur aqua nec recens semper velut ex calido fonte currebat, nec referre credebant, in quam perlucida sordes
10 deponerent. Sed, di boni, quam iuvat illa balinea intrare obscura et gregali tectorio inducta, quae scires

¹ *dedicarentur, devitantur et in Hense; dedicarentur et in VPb.*

^a *Cf. Pliny, Ep. ii. 17. 12 piscina, ex qua natantes mares aspiciunt.*

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spigots. I have so far been speaking of the ordinary bathing-establishments; what shall I say when I come to those of the freedmen? What a vast number of statues, of columns that support nothing, but are built for decoration, merely in order to spend money! And what masses of water that fall crashing from level to level! We have become so luxurious that we will have nothing but precious stones to walk upon.

In this bath of Scipio's there are tiny chinks—you cannot call them windows—cut out of the stone wall in such a way as to admit light without weakening the fortifications; nowadays, however, people regard baths as fit only for moths if they have not been so arranged that they receive the sun all day long through the widest of windows, if men cannot bathe and get a coat of tan at the same time, and if they cannot look out from their bath-tubs over stretches of land and sea.^a So it goes; the establishments which had drawn crowds and had won admiration when they were first opened are avoided and put back in the category of venerable antiques as soon as luxury has worked out some new device, to her own ultimate undoing. In the early days, however, there were few baths, and they were not fitted out with any display. For why should men elaborately fit out that which costs a penny only, and was invented for use, not merely for delight? The bathers of those days did not have water poured over them, nor did it always run fresh as if from a hot spring; and they did not believe that it mattered at all how perfectly pure was the water into which they were to leave their dirt. Ye gods, what a pleasure it is to enter that dark bath, covered with a common sort of roof, knowing that therein your hero Cato,

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Catonem tibi aedilem aut Fabium Maximum aut ex Corneliis aliquem manu sua temperasse? Nam hoc quoque nobilissimi aediles fungebantur officio intrandi ea loca, quae populum receptabant, exigendique munitias et utilem ac salubrem temperaturam, non hanc, quae nuper inventa est similis incendio, adeo quidem, ut convictum in aliquo scelere servum vivum lavari oporteat. Nihil mihi videtur iam interesse, ardeat balineum an caleat.

- 11 Quantae nunc aliqui rusticitatis damnant Scipionem, quod non in caldarium suum latis specularibus diem admiserat, quod non in multa luce decoquebatur et expectabat,¹ ut in balneo concoqueret. O hominem calamitosum! Nesciit² vivere. Non saccata aqua lavabatur, sed saepe turbida et, cum plueret vehementius, paene lutulenta. Nec multum eius intererat, an³ sic lavaretur; veniebat enim ut
- 12 sudorem illic ablueret, non ut unguentum. Quas nunc quorundam voces futuras credis? "Non invideo Scipioni; vere in exilio vixit, qui sic lavabatur." Immo, si scias, non cotidie lavabatur. Nam, ut aiunt, qui priscos mores urbis tradiderunt, brachia et crura cotidie abluebant, quae scilicet sordes opere collegerant, ceterum toti nudinis lavabantur. Hoc loco dicit aliquis: "olim⁴ liquet mihi immundissimos fuisse. Quid putas illos oluisse?" Militiam, laborem,

¹ *expectabat* later MSS. ; *spectabat* VPb.

² *nesciit* Gothofredus ; *nescit* VPb.

³ *an* later MSS. ; *ac* VPb.

⁴ *aliquis* : *olim* Hense ; *aliquotis*, *aliquo*, *aliquis* MSS.

^a *e.g.*, Varro, in the *Catus* : *balneum non cotidianum*.

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