

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

Nam de illis extraordinariis, quae licet differre, licet castigare et opprimere, hoc unum commonefaciam: ista voluptas naturalis est, non necessaria; huic nihil debes; si quid inpendis, voluntarium est. Venter praecepta non audit; poscit, appellat. Non est tamen molestus creditor; parvo dimittitur, si modo das illi, quod debes, non quod potes. VALE.

### XXII.

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Iam intellegis educendum esse te ex istis occupationibus speciosis et malis. Sed quo modo id consequi possis quaeris. Quaedam non nisi a praesente monstrantur. Non potest medicus per epistulas cibi aut balinei tempus eligere; vena tangenda est. Vetus proverbium est gladiatorem in harena capere consilium; aliquid adversarii vultus, aliquid manus mota, aliquid ipsa inclinatio corporis intuentem  
2 monet. Quid fieri soleat, quid oporteat, in univ-  
sum et mandari potest et scribi; tale consilium non tantum absentibus, etiam posteris datur. Illud alterum, quando fieri debeat aut quemadmodum, ex longinquo nemo suadebit, cum rebus ipsis delibe-

---

<sup>a</sup> The first question, "Shall I withdraw from the world?" has been answered, apparently by Lucilius himself. The second was, "How can I accomplish this?" Seneca pretends to answer it, although he feels that this should be done in personal conference rather than by writing.

## EPISTLES XXI., XXII.

bribed to cease. For in regard to the exceptional desires, which may be postponed, which may be chastened and checked, I have this one thought to share with you: a pleasure of that sort is according to our nature, but it is not according to our needs; one owes nothing to it; whatever is expended upon it is a free gift. The belly will not listen to advice; it makes demands, it importunes. And yet it is not a troublesome creditor; you can send it away at small cost, provided only that you give it what you owe, not merely all you are able to give. Farewell.

### XXII. ON THE FUTILITY OF HALF-WAY MEASURES

You understand by this time that you must withdraw yourself from those showy and depraved pursuits; but you still wish to know how this may be accomplished. There are certain things which can be pointed out only by someone who is present. The physician cannot prescribe by letter the proper time for eating or bathing; he must feel the pulse. There is an old adage about gladiators,—that they plan their fight in the ring; as they intently watch, something in the adversary's glance, some movement of his hand, even some slight bending of his body, gives a warning. We can formulate general rules and commit them to writing, as to what is usually done, or ought to be done; such advice may be given, not only to our absent friends, but also to succeeding generations. In regard, however, to that second "question,—when or how your plan is to be carried out,—no one will advise at long range;

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

3 randum est. Non tantum praesentis, sed vigilantis est occasionem observare properantem. Itaque hanc circumspecte, hanc si videris, prende et toto impetu, totis viribus id age, ut te istis officiis exuas.

Et quidem quam sententiam feram, adtende. Censeo aut ex ista vita tibi aut e vita exeundum. Sed idem illud existimo, leni eundum via, ut quod male implicuisti, solvas potius quam abrumpas, dummodo si alia solvendi ratio non erit, vel abrumpas. Nemo tam timidus est, ut malit semper pendere quam semel  
4 cadere. Interim, quod primum est, impedire te noli. Contentus esto negotiis, in quae descendisti, vel quod videri mavis, incidisti. Non est quod ad ulteriora nitaris; aut perdes excusationem et apparebit te non incidisse. Ista enim, quae dici solent, falsa sunt: "Non potui aliter. Quid, si nollem? Necesses erat." Nulli necesse est felicitatem cursu  
5 nec instare fortunae ferenti. Numquid offenderis, si in consilium non venio tantum, sed advoco, et quidem prudentiores quam ipse sum, ad quos soleo  
150

## EPISTLE XXII.

we must take counsel in the presence of the actual situation. You must be not only present in the body, but watchful in mind, if you would avail yourself of the fleeting opportunity. Accordingly, look about you for the opportunity; if you see it, grasp it, and with all your energy and with all your strength devote yourself to this task,—to rid yourself of those business duties.

Now listen carefully to the opinion which I shall offer; it is my opinion that you should withdraw either from that kind of existence, or else from existence altogether. But I likewise maintain that you should take a gentle path, that you may loosen rather than cut the knot which you have bungled so badly in tying,—provided that if there shall be no other way of loosening it, you may actually cut it. No man is so faint-hearted that he would rather hang in suspense for ever than drop once for all. Meanwhile,—and this is of first importance,—do not hamper yourself; be content with the business into which you have lowered yourself, or, as you prefer to have people think, have tumbled. There is no reason why you should be struggling on to something further; if you do, you will lose all grounds of excuse, and men will see that it was not a tumble. The usual explanation which men offer is wrong: “I was compelled to do it. Suppose it was against my will; I had to do it.” But no one is compelled to pursue prosperity at top speed; it means something to call a halt,—even if one does not offer resistance,—instead of pressing eagerly after favouring fortune. Shall you then be put out with me, if I not only come to advise you, but also call in others to advise you,—wiser heads than my own, men before whom I am wont to lay any problem upon

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

deferre, si quid delibero? Epicuri epistulam ad hanc rem pertinentem lege, Idoneneo quae inscribitur,<sup>1</sup> quem rogat, ut quantum potest fugiat et properet, antequam aliqua vis maior interveniat et auferat  
6 libertatem recedendi. Idem tamen subicit nihil esse temptandum, nisi cum apte poterit tempestiveque temptari. Sed cum illud tempus captatum diu venerit, exiliendum ait. Dormitare de fuga cogitantem vetat et sperat salutarem etiam ex difficillimis exitum, si nec properemus ante tempus nec cessemus in tempore.

7 Puto, nunc et Stoicam sententiam quaeris. Non est quod quisquam illos apud te temeritatis infamet; cautiores quam fortiores sunt. Expectas forsitan, ut tibi haec dicant: "Turpe est cedere oneri. Lucrare cum officio, quod semel recepisti. Non est vir fortis ac strenuus qui laborem fugit, nisi crescit illi  
8 animus ipsa rerum difficultate." Dicentur tibi ista, si operae pretium habebit perseverantia, si nihil indignum bono viro faciendum patiendumve erit; alioqui sordido se et contumelioso labore non conteret nec in negotiis erit negotii causa. Ne illud quidem, quod existimas facturum eum, faciet, ut ambitiosis rebus implicitus semper aestus earum ferat. Sed cum viderit gravia, in quibus volutabatur, incerta, ancipitia, referet pedem, non vertet terga, sed sen-

<sup>1</sup> *inscribitur* Haase; *scribitur* MSS.

<sup>a</sup> See the preceding letter of Seneca.

<sup>b</sup> *Frag.* 133 *Usener.*

## EPISTLE XXII.

which I am pondering? Read the letter of Epicurus<sup>a</sup> which bears on this matter; it is addressed to Idomencus. The writer asks him to hasten as fast as he can, and beat a retreat before some stronger influence comes between and takes from him the liberty to withdraw. But he also adds that one should attempt nothing except at the time when it can be attempted suitably and seasonably. Then, when the long-sought occasion comes, let him be up and doing. Epicurus forbids<sup>b</sup> us to doze when we are meditating escape; he bids us hope for a safe release from even the hardest trials, provided that we are not in too great a hurry before the time, nor too dilatory when the time arrives.

Now, I suppose, you are looking for a Stoic motto also. There is really no reason why anyone should slander that school to you on the ground of its rashness; as a matter of fact, its caution is greater than its courage. You are perhaps expecting the sect to utter such words as these: "It is base to flinch under a burden. Wrestle with the duties which you have once undertaken. No man is brave and earnest if he avoids danger, if his spirit does not grow with the very difficulty of his task." Words like these will indeed be spoken to you, if only your perseverance shall have an object that is worth while, if only you will not have to do or to suffer anything unworthy of a good man; besides, a good man will not waste himself upon mean and discreditable work or be busy merely for the sake of being busy. Neither will he, as you imagine, become so involved in ambitious schemes that he will have continually to endure their ebb and flow. Nay, when he sees the dangers, uncertainties, and hazards in which he was formerly tossed about, he will withdraw,—not turn-

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

9 sim recedet in tutum. Facile est autem, mi Lucili, occupationes evadere, si occupationum pretia contempseris. Illa sunt, quae nos morantur et detinent: “Quid ergo? Tam magnas spes relinquam? Ab ipsa messe discedam? Nudum erit latus, incomitata lectica, atrium vacuum?”

Ab his ergo inviti homines recedunt et mercedem  
10 miseriarum amant, ipsas execrantur. Sic de ambitione quomodo de amica queruntur; id est, si verum adfectum eorum inspicias, non oderunt, sed litigant. Excute istos, qui, quae cupiere, deplorant et de earum rerum locuntur fuga, quibus carere non possunt; videbis voluntariam esse illis in eo moram,  
11 quod aegre ferre ipsos et misere locuntur. Ita est, Lucili; paucos servitus, plures servitutem tenent.

Sed si deponere illam in animo est et libertas bona fide placuit, in hoc autem unum advectionem petis, ut sine perpetua sollicitudine id tibi facere contingat, quidni tota te cohors Stoicorum probatura sit? Omnes Zenones et Chrysippi moderata, honesta,  
12 tua suadebunt. Sed si propter hoc tergiversaris, ut circumspecias, quantum feras tecum et quam magna  
154

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:  
**Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature**  
which can be purchased on our Website :  
[www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :  
**Brainfly Inc.**  
**5100 Garfield Ave. #46**  
**Sacramento CA 95841-3839**

## **TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:**

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website ([www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

[webcomments@brainfly.net](mailto:webcomments@brainfly.net)