

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

quoque, antequam erudias, virtutis materia, non virtus est. VALE.

### XCI

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Liberalis noster nunc tristis est nuntiato incendio, quo Lugdunensis colonia exusta est. Movere hic casus quemlibet posset, nedum hominem patriae suae amantissimum. Quae res effecit, ut firmitatem animi sui quaerat, quam videlicet ad ea, quae timeri posse putabat, exercuit. Hoc vero tam inopinatum malum et paene inauditum non miror si sine metu fuit, cum esset sine exemplo. Multas enim civitates incendium vexavit, nullam abstulit. Nam etiam ubi hostili manu in tecta<sup>1</sup> ignis inmissus est, multis locis deficit,<sup>2</sup> et quamvis subinde excitetur, raro tamen sic cuncta depascitur, ut nihil ferro relinquat. Terrarum quoque vix unquam tam gravis et perniciosus fuit motus, ut tota oppida everteret. Numquam denique tam infestum ulli exarsit incendium, ut nihil alteri  
2 superesset incendio. Tot pulcherrima opera, quae singula inlustrare urbes singulas possent, una nox stravit, et in tanta pace quantum ne bello quidem timeri potest accidit. Quis hoc credat? Ubique

<sup>1</sup> *in tecta* Erasmus; *iniecta* MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *deficit* later MSS.; *defecit* BA.

---

<sup>a</sup> In spite of the *centesimus annus* of § 14 (*g.v.*), the most probable date of this letter, based on Tac. *Ann.* xvi. 13 and other general evidence, is July–September 64 A.D. 58 A.D. would be too early for many reasons—among them that “peace all over the world” would not be a true statement until January of 62. (See the monographs of Jonas, O. Binder, Peiper, and Schultess.)

## EPISTLES XC., XCI.

and even in the best of men, before you refine them by instruction, there is but the stuff of virtue, not virtue itself. Farewell.

### XCI. ON THE LESSON TO BE DRAWN FROM THE BURNING OF LYONS<sup>a</sup>

Our friend Liberalis<sup>b</sup> is now downcast; for he has just heard of the fire which has wiped out the colony of Lyons. Such a calamity might upset anyone at all, not to speak of a man who dearly loves his country. But this incident has served to make him inquire about the strength of his own character, which he has trained, I suppose, just to meet situations that he thought might cause him fear. I do not wonder, however, that he was free from apprehension touching an evil so unexpected and practically unheard of as this, since it is without precedent. For fire has damaged many a city, but has annihilated none. Even when fire has been hurled against the walls by the hand of a foe, the flame dies out in many places, and although continually renewed, rarely devours so wholly as to leave nothing for the sword. Even an earthquake has scarcely ever been so violent and destructive as to overthrow whole cities. Finally, no conflagration has ever before blazed forth so savagely in any town that nothing was left for a second. So many beautiful buildings, any single one of which would make a single town famous, were wrecked in one night. In time of such deep peace an event has taken place worse than men can possibly fear even in time of war. Who can believe

<sup>b</sup> Probably Aebutius Liberalis, to whom the treatise *De Beneficiis* was dedicated.

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

armis quiescentibus, cum toto orbe terrarum diffusa securitas sit, Lugudunum, quod ostendebatur in Gallia, quaeritur.

Omnibus fortuna, quos publice adflixit, quod passuri erant, timere permisit. Nulla res magna non aliquod habuit ruinae suae spatium; in hac una nox interfuit inter urbem maximam et nullam. Denique diutius illam tibi perisse quam perit narro.

3 Haec omnia Liberalis nostri adfectum inclinant<sup>1</sup> adversus sua firmum et erectum. Nec sine causa concussus est; inexpectata plus adgravant; novitas adicit calamitatibus pondus, nec quisquam mortalium non magis quod etiam miratus est, doluit.

4 Ideo nihil nobis improvisum esse debet. In omnia praemittendus<sup>2</sup> animus cogitandumque non quidquid solet, sed quicquid potest fieri. Quid enim est, quod non fortuna, cum voluit, ex florentissimo detrahat? Quod non eo magis adgrediatur et quatiat, quo speciosius fulget? Quid illi arduum quidve difficile  
5 est? Non una via semper, ne tota quidem incurrit, modo nostras in nos manus advocat, modo suis contenta viribus invenit pericula sine auctore. Nullum tempus exceptum est; in ipsis voluptatibus causae

<sup>1</sup> *inclinant* cod. Harl.; *inclinandum* BA.

<sup>2</sup> *praemittendus* later MSS.; *permittendus* BA.

---

<sup>a</sup> That Lyons, situated at the junction of the Arar and the Rhone, was of especial prominence in Gaul, may be also gathered from the fact that it boasted a government mint and the *Ara Augusti*—a shrine established for the annual worship of all the Gallic states. Moreover, the Emperor Claudius delivered his famous address in that city (see Tac. *Ann.* xi. 23 f.).

## EPISTLE XCI.

it? When weapons are everywhere at rest, and when peace prevails throughout the world, Lyons, the pride of Gaul,<sup>a</sup> is missing!

Fortune has usually allowed all men, when she has assailed them collectively, to have a foreboding of that which they were destined to suffer. Every great creation has had granted to it a period of reprieve before its fall; but in this case, only a single night elapsed between the city at its greatest and the city non-existent. In short, it takes me longer to tell you it has perished than it took for the city to perish.

All this has affected our friend Liberalis, bending his will, which is usually so steadfast and erect in the face of his own trials. And not without reason has he been shaken; for it is the unexpected that puts the heaviest load upon us. Strangeness adds to the weight of calamities, and every mortal feels the greater pain as a result of that which also brings surprise.

Therefore, nothing ought to be unexpected by us. Our minds should be sent forward in advance to meet all problems, and we should consider, not what is wont to happen, but what can happen. For what is there in existence that Fortune, when she has so willed, does not drag down from the very height of its prosperity? And what is there that she does not the more violently assail the more brilliantly it shines? What is laborious or difficult for her? She does not always attack in one way, or even with her full strength; at one time she summons our own hands against us; at another time, content with her own powers, she makes use of no agent in devising perils for us. No time is exempt; in the midst of our very pleasures there spring up causes of suffering.

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

doloris oriuntur. Bellum in media pace consurgit et auxilia securitatis in metum transeunt; ex amico inimicus, hostis ex socio. In subitas tempestates hibernisque maiores agitur aestiva tranquillitas. Sine hoste patimur hostilia, et cladis causas, si alia deficiunt, nimia sibi felicitas invenit. Invadit temperantissimos morbus, validissimos phthisis, innocentissimos poena, secretissimos tumultus.

Eligit aliquid novi casus, per quod velut oblitis  
 6 vires suas ingerat. Quidquid longa series multis laboribus, multa deum indulgentia struxit, id unus dies spargit ac dissipat. Longam moram dedit malis properantibus, qui diem dixit; hora<sup>1</sup> momentumque temporis evertendis imperiis sufficit. Esset aliquod inbecillitatis nostrae solacium rerumque nostrarum, si tam tarde perirent<sup>2</sup> cuncta quam fiunt<sup>3</sup>; nunc incrementa lente exeunt, festinatur in damnum.  
 7 Nihil privatim, nihil publice stabile est; tam hominum quam urbium fatavolvuntur. Inter placidissima terror existit nihilque extra tumultuantibus causis mala, unde minime expectabantur, erumpunt. Quae domesticis bellis steterant regna, quae externis, impellente nullo ruunt. Quota quaeque felicitatem civitas pertulit?

Cogitanda ergo sunt omnia et animus adversus ea,

<sup>1</sup> hora Gruter; horam BA.

<sup>2</sup> tam tarde perirent later MSS.; tanta reperirent BA.

<sup>3</sup> fiunt later MSS.; finiunt BA.

---

<sup>a</sup> Cf. Ep. iv. 7, esp. the words *noli huic tranquillitati confidere; momento mare evertitur.*

## EPISTLE XCI.

War arises in the midst of peace, and that which we depended upon for protection is transformed into a cause of fear; friend becomes enemy, ally becomes foeman. The summer calm is stirred into sudden storms, wilder than the storms of winter.<sup>a</sup> With no foe in sight we are victims of such fates as foes inflict, and if other causes of disaster fail, excessive good fortune finds them for itself. The most temperate are assailed by illness, the strongest by wasting disease, the most innocent by chastisement, the most secluded by the noisy mob.

Chance chooses some new weapon by which to bring her strength to bear against us, thinking we have forgotten her. Whatever structure has been reared by a long sequence of years, at the cost of great toil and through the great kindness of the gods, is scattered and dispersed by a single day. Nay, he who has said "a day" has granted too long a postponement to swift-coming misfortune; an hour, an instant of time, suffices for the overthrow of empires! It would be some consolation for the feebleness of our selves and our works, if all things should perish as slowly as they come into being; but as it is, increases are of sluggish growth, but the way to ruin is rapid. Nothing, whether public or private, is stable; the destinies of men, no less than those of cities, are in a whirl. Amid the greatest calm terror arises, and though no external agencies stir up commotion, yet evils burst forth from sources whence they were least expected. Thrones which have stood the shock of civil and foreign wars crash to the ground though no one sets them tottering. How few the states which have carried their good fortune through to the end!

We should therefore reflect upon all contingencies,

## THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

8 quae possunt evenire, firmandus. Exilia, tormenta morbi,<sup>1</sup> bella, naufragia meditare.<sup>2</sup> Potest te patriae, potest patriam tibi casus eripere, potest te in solitudines abigere,<sup>3</sup> potest hoc ipsum, in quo turba suffocatur, fieri solitudo. Tota ante oculos sortis humanae condicio ponatur, nec quantum frequenter evenit, sed quantum plurimum potest evenire, praesumamus animo, si nolumus opprimi nec illis inusitatis velut novis obstupescere; in plenum cogitanda fortuna est.

9 Quotiens Asiae, quotiens Aethiopiae urbes uno tremore ceciderunt? Quot oppida in Syria, quot in Macedonia devorata sunt? Cyprum quotiens vastavit haec clades? Quotiens in se Paphos corruit? Frequenter nobis nuntiati sunt totarum urbium interitus, et nos inter quos ista frequenter nuntiantur, quanta pars omnium sumus?

10 Consurgamus itaque adversus fortuita et quicquid inciderit, sciamus non esse tam magnum quam rumore iactetur. Civitas arsit opulenta ornamentumque provinciarum, quibus et inserta erat et excepta, uni tamen inposita et huic non latissimo<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *morbi* BA; *morbos* later MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *meditare* later MSS.; *meditari* BA.

<sup>3</sup> *abigere* Matthiae; *abicere* BA.

<sup>4</sup> *latissimo* Buecheler; *altissimo* BA.

---

<sup>a</sup> The passage bears a striking resemblance to the words of Theseus in an unknown play of Euripides (Nauck, Frag. 964) quoted by Cicero, *Tusc.* iii. 14. 29, and by Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius*, 112 d.

<sup>b</sup> Seneca (*N. Q.* vi. 26) speaks of Paphos (on the island of Cyprus) as having been more than once devastated. We know of two such accidents—one under Augustus and another under Vespasian. See the same passage for other earthquake shocks in various places.

<sup>c</sup> Lyons held an exceptional position in relation to the

# 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)