

LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY

SENECA
EPISTLES 1–65



Translated by
RICHARD M. GUMMERE

SENECA

EPISTLES

1965
江苏工业学院图书馆

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

RICHARD M. GUMMERE

藏书章



HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

LONDON, ENGLAND

First published 1917
Reprinted 1925, 1934, 1953, 1961, 1967, 1979,
1989, 1996, 2002, 2006

LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY® is a registered trademark
of the President and Fellows of Harvard College

ISBN 0-674-99084-6

Printed on acid-free paper and bound by
Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, Michigan

THE LOEB CLASSICAL LIBRARY

FOUNDED BY JAMES LOEB 1911

EDITED BY

JEFFREY HENDERSON

SENECA

IV

LCL 75

INTRODUCTION

AMONG the personalities of the early Roman Empire there are few who offer to the readers of to-day such dramatic interest as does Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the author of the *Epistles* which are translated in this volume. Born in a province, educated at Rome, prominent at the bar, a distinguished exile, a trusted minister of State, and a doomed victim of a capricious emperor, Seneca is so linked with the age in which he lived that in reading his works we read those of a true representative of the most thrilling period of Roman history.

Seneca was born in the year 4 B.C., a time of great opportunity, at Corduba, in Spain, son of the talented rhetorician, Annaeus Seneca. We gather that the family moved to Rome during the boyhood of Lucius, that he was educated for the bar, and that he was soon attracted by the Stoic philosophy, the stern nurse of heroes during the first century of the Empire. That his social connexions were distinguished we infer from the prominence and refinement of his brother Gallio,—the Gallio of the New Testament,—from the fact that he himself was noticed and almost condemned to death by the Emperor Caligula soon after he began to speak in public, and especially because his aunt, whom he

INTRODUCTION

visited in Egypt, was the wife of the governor of that country.

Up to the year 41 he prospered. He makes mention of his children, of his mother who, like the mother of Goethe, seems to have imbued him with idealism and a certain amount of mysticism, and of many valued friends. But during that year, as a result of court intrigue, he was banished to the island of Corsica. The charge against him was a too great intimacy with Iulia Livilla, unfortunate sister of the late emperor, and the arch-foe of Messalina, whose husband, Claudius, had recalled the princess from exile. We may discount any crime on Seneca's part because even the gossip-laden Suetonius says: "The charge was vague and the accused was given no opportunity to defend himself."

The eight years of exile were productive of much literary work. The tragedies, which have had such influence on later drama, are the fruit of this period, besides certain essays on philosophic subjects, and a rather cringing letter to Polybius, a rich freedman at the court of Claudius. In 49, however, Fortune, whom Seneca as a Stoic so often ridicules, came to his rescue. Agrippina had him recalled and appointed tutor to her young son, later to become the Emperor Nero. Holding the usual offices of state, and growing in prominence, Seneca administered the affairs of the prince, in partnership with Burrus, the praetorian. Together they maintained the balance of power between throne and Senate until the death of Burrus in the year 62. After that time, a philosopher without the support of military power was unable to cope with the vices and whims of the monster on the throne.

The last two years of Seneca's life were spent in

INTRODUCTION

travelling about southern Italy, composing essays on natural history and relieving his burdened soul by correspondence with his friend Lucilius. In the year 65 came his suicide, anticipating an act of violence on the Emperor's part; in this deed of heroism he was nobly supported by his young wife Paulina. The best account of these dark days is given in Tacitus.

These letters are all addressed to Lucilius. From internal evidence we gather that the native country of this Lucilius was Campania, and his native city Pompeii or Naples. He was a Roman knight, having gained that position, as Seneca tells us, by sheer industry. Prominent in the civil service, he had filled many important positions and was, at the time when the *Letters* were written, procurator in Sicily. He seems to have had Epicurean tendencies, like so many men from this part of Italy; the author argues and tries to win him over to Stoicism, in the kindest manner. Lucilius wrote books, was interested in philosophy and geography, knew intimately many persons in high places, and is thought by some to be the author of the extant poem *Aetna*.

When their friendship began we cannot say. The *Naturales Quaestiones* and the *Letters* are the work of Seneca's closing years. Both are addressed to Lucilius. The essay *De Providentia*, which was also dedicated to him, is of doubtful date, and may be fixed at any time between the beginning of the exile in Corsica and the period when the *Letters* were written.

In spite of the many problems which confront us, it may be safely said that the years 63-65 constitute the period of the *Letters*. We find possible allusions

INTRODUCTION

to the Campanian earthquake of 63, a reference to the conflagration at Lyons, which took place either in 64 or in 65, and various hints that the philosopher was travelling about Italy in order to forget politics.

The form of this work, as Bacon says, is a collection of essays rather than of letters. The recipient is often mentioned by name; but his identity is secondary to the main purpose. The language at the beginning of the seventy-fifth letter, for example, might lead one to suppose that they were dashed off in close succession: "You complain that you receive from me letters which are rather carelessly written;" but the ingenious juxtaposition of effective words, the balance in style and thought, and the continual striving after point, indicate that the language of the diatribe had affected the informality of the epistle.¹

The structure of each letter is interesting. A concrete fact, such as the mention of an illness, a voyage by sea or land, an incident like the adventure in the Naples tunnel, a picnic party, or an assemblage of friends who discuss questions from Plato, or Aristotle, or Epicurus,—these are the elements which serve to justify the reflections which follow. After such an introduction, the writer takes up his theme; he deals with abstract subjects, such as the contempt of death, the stout-heartedness of the sage, or the quality of the Supreme Good. We shall not mention the sources of all these topics in footnotes, but shall aim only to explain that which is obscure in meaning or unusual in its import. Plato's Theory of Ideas, Aristotle's Categories, Theophrastus on

¹ How Seneca came by this "pointed" style will be evident to one who reads the sample speeches given in the handbook of the Elder Seneca.

INTRODUCTION

Friendship, Epicurus on Pleasure, and all the countless doctrinal shades of difference which we find in the Stoic leaders, are at least sketched in outline.

But we must give full credit to the philosopher's own originality. In these letters, it is impossible to ignore the advance from a somewhat stiff and Ciceronian point of view into the attractive and debatable land of what one may fairly call modern ideas. The style of the Epistles is bold, and so is the thought.

Considered *en masse*, the letters form a fruitful and helpful handbook, of the very widest scope and interest. The value of intelligent reading and the studies which make for culture is presented to Lucilius with frequency, notably in Nos. II. and LXXXVIII. Seneca agrees with the definition of higher studies as "those which have no reference to mere utility." The dignity of the orator's profession (XL. and CXIV.) is brought to the attention of a young self-made merchant who seems inclined towards platform display. The modern note is struck when the author protests against the swinish and debasing effects of slavery or gladiatorial combats (XLVII. and LXX.); preaches against the degeneracy of drunkenness (LXXXIII.); portrays the charms of plain living and love of nature (LVII., LXVII., LXXIX., LXXXVI., LXXXVII., XC., XCIV.); recommends retirement (XVIII., LI., LVI., LXXX., CXXII.); or manifests a Baconian interest in scientific inventions (LVII., LXXIX.). Most striking of all is the plea (XCIV.) for the equality of the sexes and for conjugal fidelity in the husband, to be interpreted no less strictly than honour on the part of the wife. The craze for athletics is also analyzed and rebuked (XV.).

INTRODUCTION

The Epistles contain also, of course, the usual literary types which every Roman epistolographer would feel bound to introduce. There is the *consolatio*; there is the theme of friendship; there are second-hand lectures on philosophy taken from Plato and Aristotle and Theophrastus, as we have indicated above; and several characteristically Roman laudations of certain old men (including the author himself) who wrestle with physical infirmities. But the Stoic doctrine is interpreted better, from the Roman point of view, by no other Latin writer. The facts of Seneca's life prove the sincerity of his utterances, and blunt the edge of many of the sneers which we find in Dio Cassius, regarding the fabulous sums which he had out at interest and the costly tables purchased for the palace of a millionaire.

Finally, in no pagan author, save perhaps Vergil, is the beauty of holiness (XLI.) so sincerely presented from a Roman standpoint. Although his connexion with the early Church has been disproved, Seneca shows the modern, the Christian, spirit. Three of the ideals mentioned above, the hatred of combats in the arena, the humane treatment of slaves, and the sanctity of marriage, draw us towards Seneca as towards a teacher like Jeremy Taylor.

There is no pretence of originality in the Latin text; the translator has adopted, with very few deviations, that of O. Hense's second edition. This text he has found to be excellent, and he has also derived assistance from the notes accompanying the Selected Letters of W. C. Summers.

RICHARD M. GUMMERE.

HAVERFORD COLLEGE, *May*, 1916.

THE TEXT

The manuscripts of the *Letters* fall into two clearly defined parts; from I. to LXXXVIII. inclusive, and from LXXXIX. to CXXIV. They are divided into books; but in this translation we shall number them only by letters. For a more detailed description the reader is referred to Hense's preface to the 1914 Teubner edition.

MSS. available for the first part of the *Letters* are—

- (1) Two Paris MSS. of the 10th century, p and P.
- (2) Another Paris MS. of the 11th century, b.
- (3) The *codex Laurentianus*, of the 9th or 10th century, containing letters I.-LXV. This is designated as L.
- (4) The *codex Venetus*, of the same date, containing Nos. LIII.-LXXXVIII. V.
- (5) The *codex Metensis*, of the 11th century, known as M.
- (6) The *codex Gudianus*, of the 10th century, which contains scraps of the earliest letters. Designated as g.

For the second part of the *Letters*, LXXXIX.-CXXIV., there is a more limited choice. The best MS. is—

Codex Bambergensis, of the 9th century, known as B.

Codex Argentoratensis, A, which was destroyed in the siege of Strassburg, of the 9th or 10th century.

Other MSS., either of less importance or of later date, may be found in Hense's preface.¹

¹ Where the testimony of these later MSS. seems sound, the translator has omitted Hense's brackets; the headings of the books into which the *Letters* were originally divided are also omitted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Editions :

- 1475 Editio Princeps, Naples. In this were included most of the philosopher's works, together with several by the elder Seneca. The *Epistles* were published separately, in the same year, at Paris, Rome, and Strassburg.
- 1515 Erasmus, Basel.
- 1605 Lipsius, Antwerp.
- 1649-1658 J. F. Gronovius (with the elder Seneca), Leiden.
- 1797-1811 F. E. Ruhkopf, Leipzig.
- 1842 C. R. Fickert, Leipzig.
- 1852 F. Haase, Leipzig.
- 1898, 1914² O. Hense (Teubner), Leipzig.
- 1910 W. C. Summers, *Select Letters* (with extensive introduction and annotations), Macmillan.
- 1921 O. Hense, *Supplementum Quinirianum* (Teubner), Leipzig.
- 1931 A. Beltrami, 2 vols, Rome.
- 1945- F. Préchac (Fr. trans. by H. Noblot), Budé, Paris.
- 1965 L. D. Reynolds, *O.C.T.*, 2 vols, Oxford 1965.

Manuscripts :

There are two separate traditions, one for Letters 1-88, another for 89-124. A full and excellent account is given in L. D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters*, Oxford 1965.

Textual Studies :

- W. H. Alexander, "Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*, The Text Emended and Explained," *Univ. Calif. Publ.* Vol. 12, pp. 57-88 ; 135-164.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bertil Axelson, *Der Codex Argentoratensis C.VI.5*, Lund 1937.
- Bertil Axelson, "Neue Senecastudien, Textkrit. Beiträge zu Senecas *Epistulae Morales*," *Lunds Univ. Årsskr.* 36, 1 (1939).
- Otto Foerster, *Handschriftliche Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae Morales . . .*, Stuttgart 1936.
- Einar Löfstedt, "Zu Senecas Briefen," *Eranos* 14 (1915), 142-164.
- G. Maurach, *Der Bau von Senecas Epistulae Morales*, Heidelberg 1970.

Biographical :

- A. Bourgery, *Sénèque prosateur*, Paris 1922.
- Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, Oxford 1965.
- P. Grimal, *Sénèque, sa vie, son œuvre, sa philosophie*, Paris 1948, 1957².
- Anna Lydia Motto, *Seneca Sourcebook: Guide to the Thought of . . .* (arranged by subject in alphabetical order), Amsterdam 1970. See also her bibliographical surveys in *Classical World* 54 (1960) and 64 (1971).
- René Waltz, *Vie de Sénèque*, Paris 1909.
(G. P. G., 1979)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	vii
--------------	-----

EPISTLES

1. SAVING TIME	2
2. DISCURSIVENESS IN READING	6
3. TRUE AND FALSE FRIENDSHIP	8
4. THE TERRORS OF DEATH	12
5. THE PHILOSOPHER'S MEAN	20
6. SHARING KNOWLEDGE	24
7. CROWDS	28
8. THE PHILOSOPHER'S SECLUSION	36
9. PHILOSOPHY AND FRIENDSHIP	42
10. LIVING TO ONESELF	56
11. THE BLUSH OF MODESTY	60
12. OLD AGE	64
13. GROUNDLESS FEARS	72
14. WITHDRAWING FROM THE WORLD	84
15. BRAWN AND BRAINS	94
16. PHILOSOPHY, THE GUIDE OF LIFE	102

CONTENTS

17. PHILOSOPHY AND RICHES	108
18. FESTIVALS AND FASTING	116
19. WORLDLINESS AND RETIREMENT	124
20. PRACTISING WHAT YOU PREACH	132
21. THE RENOWN MY WRITINGS WILL BRING	140
22. THE FUTILITY OF HALF-WAY MEASURES	148
23. THE JOY WHICH COMES FROM PHILOSOPHY	158
24. DESPISING DEATH	164
25. REFORMATION	182
26. OLD AGE AND DEATH	186
27. THE GOOD WHICH ABIDES	192
28. TRAVEL AS A CURE FOR DISCONTENT	198
29. MARCELLINUS' CONDITION	202
30. CONQUERING THE CONQUEROR	210
31. SIREN SONGS	222
32. PROGRESS	228
33. THE FUTILITY OF LEARNING MAXIMS	232
34. A PROMISING PUPIL	240
35. THE FRIENDSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS	242
36. THE VALUE OF RETIREMENT	246
37. ALLEGIANCE TO VIRTUE	252
38. QUIET CONVERSATION	256
39. NOBLE ASPIRATIONS	258

CONTENTS

40. THE PROPER STYLE FOR A PHILOSOPHER'S DISCOURSE	262
41. THE GOD WITHIN US	272
42. VALUES	278
43. THE RELATIVITY OF FAME	284
44. PHILOSOPHY AND PEDIGREES	286
45. SOPHISTICAL ARGUMENTATION	290
46. A NEW BOOK BY LUCILIUS	298
47. MASTER AND SLAVE	300
48. QUIBBLING UNWORTHY OF THE PHILOSOPHER	312
49. THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE	322
50. OUR BLINDNESS AND ITS CURE	330
51. BAIÆ AND MORALS	336
52. CHOOSING OUR TEACHERS	344
53. THE FAULTS OF THE SPIRIT	352
54. ASTHMA AND DEATH	360
55. VATIA'S VILLA	364
56. QUIET AND STUDY	372
57. THE TRIALS OF TRAVEL	382
58. BEING	386
59. PLEASURE AND JOY	408
60. HARMFUL PRAYERS	422
61. MEETING DEATH CHEERFULLY	424

CONTENTS

62. GOOD COMPANY	426
63. GRIEF FOR LOST FRIENDS	428
64. THE PHILOSOPHER'S TASK	438
65. THE FIRST CAUSE	444
INDEX	461