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SENECA THE YOUNGER, *Epistles*

LCL 76: 102-103

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- spem venturi hiat. Idem evenit nobis; quicquid expectantibus fortuna proiecit, id sine ulla voluptate demittimus statim, ad rapinam alterius erecti et adtoniti.” Hoc
- 9 sapienti non evenit; plenus est. Etiam si quid obvenit, secure excipit ac reponit. Laetitia fruitur maxima, continua, sua. Habet aliquis bonam voluntatem, habet profectum, sed cui multum desit a summo; hic deprimitur alternis et extollitur ac modo in caelum adlevatur, modo defertur ad terram. Imperitis¹ ac rudibus nullus
- 10 praecipitationis finis est; in Epicureum illud chaos decidunt, inane, sine termino. Est adhuc genus tertium eorum, qui sapientiae adludunt, quam non quidem contigerunt, in conspectu tamen et, ut ita dicam, sub ictu habent; hi non concutiuntur, ne defluunt quidem. Nondum in sicco, iam in portu sunt.
- 11 Ergo cum tam magna sint inter summos imosque discrimina, cum medios quoque sequatur fluctus² suus, sequatur ingens periculum ad deteriora redeundi, non debemus occupationibus indulgere. Excludendae sunt; si semel intraverint, in locum suum alias substituent. Principiis illarum obstemus. Melius non incipient, quam desinent. VALE.

EPISTLE LXXII.

opens his jaws in the hope of something more. So it is with ourselves; we stand expectant, and whatever Fortune has thrown to us we forthwith bolt, without any real pleasure, and then stand alert and frantic for something else to snatch.” But it is not so with the wise man; he is satisfied. Even if something falls to him, he merely accepts it carelessly and lays it aside. The happiness that he enjoys is supremely great, is lasting, is his own. Assume that a man has good intentions, and has made progress, but is still far from the heights; the result is a series of ups and downs; he is now raised to heaven, now brought down to earth. For those who lack experience and training, there is no limit to the downhill course; such a one falls into the Chaos^a of Epicurus,—empty and boundless. There is still a third class of men,—those who toy with wisdom; they have not indeed touched it, but yet are in sight of it, and have it, so to speak, within striking distance. They are not dashed about, nor do they drift back either; they are not on dry land, but are already in port.

Therefore, considering the great difference between those on the heights and those in the depths, and seeing that even those in the middle are pursued by an ebb and flow peculiar to their state, and pursued also by an enormous risk of returning to their degenerate ways, we should not give ourselves up to matters which occupy our time. They should be shut out; if they once gain an entrance, they will bring in still others to take their places. Let us resist them in their early stages. It is better that they shall never begin than that they shall be made to cease. Farewell.

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