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Type and Technique of the Illustrative Story in Seneca's Moral Essays

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Type and Technique of the Illustrative Story in Seneca's Moral Essays

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1. General Characteristics of Silver Age Latin

Among the personalities of the early Roman Empire, there are few who offer to the readers of today such dramatic interest as does L. Annaeus Seneca. "The jungle of literature which has grown up around Seneca testifies to the manifold inquiries stimulated by his personality and works. The bare enumeration of representative treatises or essays on Senecan subjects becomes oppressive. In Latin and in many modern languages they have dealt with problems of his life, with the chronology of his writings, with his theology, philosophy, and cosmology, so that what he thought of God, man, and the world, has been scrutinized in relation to Stoicism as well as to those eclectic modifications which were always typical of the practical Roman." (3:196-97.) Likewise since, by his works, Seneca gives us information as to the ordinary life in Italy under Nero, throws light on the colloquial Latin, which still lives in French, Italian, and Spanish, and since he has exercised a literary influence on later generations which only a great writer can, he and the period in which he writes should have a strong claim on our attention, and his works should not be judged as demoralizing classical Latin composition. (16:viii.)
The period in which Seneca writes is termed the "Silver Age of Latin Literature." The emperors who ruled during this time did not appreciate or esteem literature; they suspiciously watched all signs of literary life, and some even felt jealous of the literary success of others. Simple and natural composition was considered insipid; the style was to be brilliant, piquant, and interesting. Since men could no longer write freely with ease and spontaneity, they wrote under restraint and having nothing important to write about, they aimed at writing over cleverly. This same aim was attained in different ways; one author, as Seneca, dallied with brief, cut-up sentences, the other with antique roughness or with artificial obscurity; now effect was sought after by epigrammatic points, now by glaring colors; some cultivated outward polish, even at the cost of contents; others again endeavored to give the impression of profound thought. Manner supplanted style, and bombastic pathos succeeded to the place of quiet power.

With all of this there came a distinctive new prose, or poetry was mixed with prose; synonyms lost their distinct use, the dictionary was disgraced with the births of arbitrary fancy, some particles were even given up, in consequence of the relaxed form of construction, and some
were used in a sense very different from their original pur-
port. (17:2 Sec. 267.)
II. Style of Seneca's Prose, Especially in the "Epistulae Morales"

In reference to Seneca's style in the "Epistulae Morales," he pleads guilty to many of the above charges, although he himself remarks more than once, and with emphasis, that literary style is of no importance in a philosophical treatise; "non delectent verba nostra, sed prosint," he says in Ep. 75.5; and in 100.2, he defends Fabianus from Lucilius' charge of dullness with the words "mores ille, non verba, composit, et animis scirpsit ista non auribus," adding in Sec. 4, "oratio sollicita philosophum non decet." In his own works, however, he was careful enough as regards the style; and indeed in the letter just quoted, he lets slip a sentence which practically abandons the position he has just taken up; "si me interrogas, maior ille est qui iudicium abstulit quam qui meruit." (16:viii.)

"Though infested with the rhetorical vices of the age, Seneca's treatises are full of striking and often gorgeous eloquence, and in their combination of high thought with deep feeling, have rarely, if at all, been surpassed. The rhetorical manner was so essentially part of Seneca's nature that the warm coloring and perpetual mannerism of his language do not imply any insincerity or want of earnest-
ness. In spite of the labored style, there is no failure either in lucidity or in force, and even when the rhetoric is most profuse, it seldom is without a solid basis of thought." (9:174.)

These are some of the characteristics of Silver Age Latin which are peculiar to Seneca. There is a great frequency of colloquial words in the prose of Seneca. Although the purely literary authors avoided the language of ordinary life, with us moderns Seneca needs no defense on the score of his vocabulary; we realize how vivid a picture of the everyday life of his time he is giving us, we note how he complains that the mimes, whose very essence lay in the accurate delineation of scenes from ordinary life, are hardly true enough to nature, and we should feel it an unfortunate weakness if he shrank from the "verba ex cotidiano usu repetita." (16:xliii.)

We also find a great many words which there is no strong reason to believe to have belonged to the colloquial sphere, but which we do not meet in prose until the post-Augustan period. They fall into two classes according as they do or do not occur previously to that period. In the case of those that do not, it may sometimes be a mere accident that no earlier examples are found, but there cannot,
I think, be much doubt that most of them are new words, due to the various causes which in all living languages lead to word-creation. The words of the other class, however, owe their appearance in prose to a distinctly Roman tendency. The works of the poets, especially Vergil, were studied with great thoroughness at school, and the declaimers constantly drew upon them for points and descriptions. With ideas went of necessity a good deal of phraseology. (16:11.)

Seneca's ornaments of style were many. The most important of these are "urbanitas," mannerisms, metaphor, and personification, oxymoron, variety of construction, word-play, and brevity.

To tell a story in clear terse language was an essential part of the quality to which the Romans gave the name "urbanitas." This is one of the most attractive features of the "Epistulæ Morales." It would be hard to surpass his stories of Calvisius and Papinius in Epp. 27 and 122.

Seneca's passion for point and epigram urged him to make use of different mannerisms. He employs "Tropes", as metaphor, personification, and oxymoron. His metaphors come mostly from the spheres whence he derives his illustrations. Although Livy greatly enlarged the sphere of per-
sonification, yet Seneca far outruns him. The figure is conducive to brevity.

Oxymoron, a special form of antithesis, is a favorite with Seneca. In the figures of word-play and word-contrast, we have two of the most prominent characteristics of the Senecan style. In most cases of word-play we have to do with a pair of words inter-connected in some way or other and both equally expressed. Occasionally Seneca goes beyond this limit, imitating the sound of two words by a single one, or leaving one of the pair to be inferred from the context. There is hardly a page of Seneca that does not contain an example of word-contrast. In Letter 1.4 "omnes ignoscunt, nemo succurrit, 2.2 "nusquam est, qui ubique est", 5.3 "nihil imitari velint, ne imitanda sint omnia," there is a number contrast; 28.4 "magis quis veneris quam quo interest," 35.2 "non tantum quam velis, sed qualem velis" are examples of contrast of interrogative particles; 4.5 "vivere volunt, mori nesciunt," 9.5 "non ut velit, sed ut possit," 21.11 "das quod debes, non quod potes," illustrate a contrast of verbs. (16:liv.ff.)
III. General Tenor of Roman Philosophy

Due to the fact that most of the illustrative stories in Seneca's "Epistulæ Morales" are used for no other purpose than to make clear his philosophic viewpoint on matters of everyday life, it will be necessary here, before taking up the matter proper, to touch upon the attitude of the Romans in general toward philosophy and the main trend or tenor of Roman philosophy.

"Philosophy at the time of Seneca had for upwards of a hundred years been cultivated at Rome and had already gained a foothold. However, most of the philosophical doctrines were imparted by declamation, and if there were written works previous to Cicero, the language used was Greek." (4:176-77.)

Nevertheless, the study of philosophy, on account of the somewhat abstract nature of the subject, was never popular with the average matter-of-fact Roman. (Il:v.) "Not being metaphysically inclined, they did not take naturally to protracted discussions on abstract themes which involved much recondite learning and often led to no practical value or satisfactory results. The Roman philosopher had to make of philosophy a matter of everyday living. He had to naturalize it by the introduction of illustrations from Roman life.
and history and by the application of its teachings to the activities and conduct of his fellow citizens. Cicero, the first to take upon himself the task of revealing to his countrymen the great treasure of philosophy, presented his works with much rhetorical adornment and many historical illustrations so that the practical Roman was compelled to hear his message. (13:xx.) Of the succeeding writers, Horace aided in popularizing philosophy among the Romans. Horace by means of the Epistles, especially those of Book I., avoided the pretension of a set philosophical discourse, and he enabled himself to apply the different aspects of his philosophy to different circumstances and to individual cases. (14:97.) In the more formal Epistles, he taught the true and wise regulation of life and the value of acting on character from within. Persius, a philosophical writer contemporary with Seneca, in his Satires made use of the illustrative story in order to convey his moral.

"The Stoic doctrine seemed to be the most congenial for the Roman temperament, because Stoicism was always a practical philosophy which intentionally squared itself with society and everyday life. The Epicurean doctrine, that pleasure is the highest good, was popular only with those who wished to devote themselves to selfish and physical en-
joyment, for the higher aspects of the doctrines of Epicurus were not understood." (4:49.)

With a Roman's instinct for the practical and dislike of the abstract discussion carried on merely for its own sake, Seneca was attracted to Stoicism, which dealt most directly and authoritatively with man's duties.

"The Stoic philosophy, passing beyond the limits of the schools to become at once a religious creed and practical code of morals for everyday use, penetrated deeply into the life of Rome. At first associated with the aristocratic opposition to the imperial government, it passed through a period of attempted suppression which only strengthened and consolidated its growth. The final struggle took place under Domitian, whose edict of the year 94, expelled all philosophers from Rome. Two years afterwards he was assassinated, and Stoicism was again established, and for upwards of eighty years, the government was imbued with its principles." (9:171-72.)

Of those who popularized Stoicism by their writings, the earliest and most distinguished was L. Annaeus Seneca. He is a figure of great importance in the history of human thought from the work he did in the exposition of the new creed. As the exponent of morals, he stands with Plutarch,
high in the ranks of Greek and Roman writers in that field.

Since Seneca, the most complete exponent of the Stoic system as it developed at Rome, thoroughly exemplified the Stoic doctrines, by means of the illustrative story in the "Epistulae Morales," it will not be amiss to discuss here some principles of the Stoic doctrine.

"The Stoic system made large demands for the subjugation to reason of the individual's will and desire: by conceiving man's highest duty and chief good to be the adaptation of his life to the rational order of nature, by calling on man to live in accordance with nature, i.e., in agreement with the rational cosmos of which man himself is a rational part, the disciples of Zeno opened the way for a rigorous self-discipline, and tended to force men to resist their natural affections and passions. In the developed system, virtue was held to consist in absolute mastery over pain, passion, and desire, and in the complete independence of the philosopher, who, possessing true knowledge of the relations of things, and complete moral perception, is therefore endowed with perfection. It is this perfection which secures him from want, fear, passion, or weakness; it assures him alone possession of all goods and freedom. In practice, it was by no means extreme; it rather aimed at a practical
process of moral edification. When Seneca's detractors charged that his life did not correspond with his teachings, he made the sensible and noble reply: 'This is enough for me, to take away each day something from my faults, to rebuke my errors. I have not attained complete moral health, nor shall I ever attain it.' (15:118-19.)

The Stoics maintained that in spite of all the doubts and uncertainties of human experience a calm and contented life was possible. Their common goal was in the exemplification of the happy life and the exposition of the principles which render the realization of this possible for all. In fulfillment of this purpose, they maintained that it was a man's nature to do good, to cooperate with others, to wish them well. The mass of men grew up with perverted views, so that instruction was necessary. Virtue was essentially simple and resided in man's own nature and yet at the same time, it was only to be attained by continual toil, effort, and self-discipline. Morality was something close at hand, something which was really willed and often unconsciously practiced. Philosophy was a means to a deeper knowledge of that with which all men were already familiar without special instruction.

Ordinary men were inconsistent. Some things they
judged disgraceful; other things no less shameful they wrong-
fully refused to term so. Such a partial or superficial
virtue was of no great value. It was no true virtue, since
it did not rest on a right view of life. Yet it was a start-
ing point for moral instructions. Seneca, Ep. 94.31, says,
"The capacity for virtue is found in all, though in some to
a greater degree than others. Even in the bad, this natural
dowment is not extinct, though weighed down and obscured."

No one sinned of his own free will, you had only to will and
you were good. Your will had to be exercised and the thing
was done, it was set right; as on the other hand, if your
vigilance was relaxed all was lost, for from within came
ruin and from within came help. To the Stoic, sin, like
truth and right, admitted of no degrees. The paradox that
all sins were equal, meant that a perverted direction of the
will was manifest in every action, however trivial.

The conception of progress dominates the writings of
Seneca. Seneca declares, in Ep. 89.8, that this progress on
the way to virtue, which it is the aim of all instruction to
promote, is virtue itself. The road cannot be dissevered
from the goal. Stoics regard the life of progress as one
continual struggle in which nothing short of the utmost
effort, vigilance, and insight conjoined with courage,
patience, and endurance can insure the victory.

Seneca acquaints us with a scheme of classification by which those who are in progress toward virtue were arranged in three classes, Ep. 75.8. The principle of the division is the more or less complete eradication of vicious emotions. The lowest class includes those who have broken with some of their sins but not with all. Above them are ranked in the second class men, who dissatisfied with this inconsistency, have resolved to renounce evil passion in general though they are still liable to occasional relapses. Those in the highest class approximate to wisdom and perfect virtue. Nor is it easy to see where they fall short of it. They are said to have got beyond the possibility of relapse but to lack confidence in themselves and the consciousness of their own wisdom. (7:116 ff.)

There are three subjects in which a man ought to exercise himself, if he would be wise and good. The first deals with the desires and aversions, and its object is that we may not fail to get what we desire and may never fall into that which we would fain avoid. The second deals with the impulses or movements toward things or away from things and generally with the performance of what is suitable. Its object is that our conduct may be regular, reasonable, and not care-
less. The third deals with the elimination of deception and rash judgment and with assent generally. Of these subjects the chief and most urgent is the first, which deals with vicious passions, for their sole cause is our failing to obtain what we desire and falling into that which we would fain avoid. Hence come perturbations, tumults, discomfitures, sorrows, lamentations, envyings, all of which prevent us from hearing the voice of reason. The second subject is the suitable or duty. I ought not to be unfeeling like a statue, but I ought to cherish my relationships, whether natural or voluntarily formed, as a pious man, as a son, as a brother, as a father, as a citizen. The third subject begins to be encumbent when some progress has been attained. Its aim is to make the other two secure, so that even in sleep or intoxication we may not let any presentation pass untested. (7:122-23.)

As regards civic duties the position of the Stoics was peculiar. They were at once conservative and radical. Patriotism, they maintained, an active participation in public life, is a duty. But the duty is conditioned by the assumption that external circumstances conform to reason, which as a matter of fact, they seldom do. Seneca urged that when they draw back, it was not that they shrank from
the trouble of political activity, but that they feared to lose their self-respect, owing to the corruption of the times. The Stoic was irresistibly impelled to measure his reverence for existing laws by the degree to which they approximated to law universal. (7:140.) Roman Stoicism was made to conform largely with Roman deeply-implanted ideals of patriotism.

The system of morality which the Stoics enforced by precept and example possessed considerable merits which no inquirer can afford to disregard. In this system happiness depended solely on the will, and the value of the act was estimated by the intention; vice or sin was misery and carried its own punishment with it; virtue consisted not in performing such and such actions, but rather in the right view of life, the attitude in shaping the whole conduct in conformity with right reason or which comes to the same thing, with God's will; nothing external could dishonor a man, and the true nobility of virtue was within the reach of the slave. Morality was an affair of the inner life. Such philosophy could not fail to make all who accepted it and followed its teachings independent of external conditions and sudden changes of fortune. It would develop whatever native excellence there was in human character. It was the philosophy of the practical man who thought more of duty than of
theory. (7:151.)

"Seneca is not so much a speculative thinker as a giver of practical advice for the conduct of life. Like most all the Roman stoics, he is a preacher and teacher, and as such he is of the highest importance." (4:182.)

"In trying to present the Stoic doctrines in the 'Epistulae Morales,' Seneca advanced from a somewhat stiff and Ciceronian point of view into the attractive and debatable land of what one may fairly term modern ideas. He strikes the note of the modern preacher when he protests against the swinish and debasing effects of slavery or gladiatorial combats." (5:xi.) In the "Epistulae Morales" 47, Seneca says, "Kindly remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself, breathes, lives, and dies. It is just as possible for you to see in him a free-born man as for him to see in you a slave. As a result of the massacres in Marius's day, many a man of distinguished birth, who was taking the first steps toward senatorial rank by service in the army, was humbled by fortune, one becoming a shepherd, another a caretaker of a country cottage. Despise, then, if you dare, those to whose estate you may at any time descend, even when you are despising them."
"I do not wish to involve myself in too large a question and to discuss the treatment of slaves, towards whom we Romans are excessively haughty, cruel and insulting. But this is the kernel of my advice: Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters."

He preaches against the degeneracy of drunkenness, Ep. 83.27. "Therefore you should state why the wise man ought not to get drunk. Explain by facts and not by mere words, the hideousness of the thing, and its haunting evils. Do that which is easiest of all—namely, demonstrate that what men call pleasures are punishments as soon as they have exceeded due bonds. For if you try to prove that the wise man can souse himself with much wine and yet keep his course straight, even though he be in his cups, you may go on to infer by syllogisms that he will not die if he swallows poison, that he will not sleep if he takes a sleeping-potion, that he will not vomit and reject the matter which clogs his stomach when you give him hellebore. But, when a man's feet totter and his tongue is unsteady, what reason have you for believing that he is half sober and half drunk?"

He portrays the charm of plain living and love of nature, Epp. 57, 67, 79, 86, 87, 90 and 94, and recommends retirement in 18 and 51. Most striking of all is the plea,
Ep. 94, for the equality of the sexes and conjugal fidelity in the husband, to be interpreted no less strictly than honor on the part of the wife. The craze for athletics is also analyzed and rebuked, Ep. 15.1-2.

"Without philosophy the mind is sickly, and the body, too, though it may be very powerful, is strong only as that of a madman or lunatic is strong. This, then, is the sort of health you should primarily cultivate; the other kind of health comes second, and will involve little effort, if you wish to be well physically. It is indeed foolish, my dear Lucillus, and very unsuitable for a cultivated man, to work hard over developing the muscles and broadening the shoulders and strengthening the lungs. For although your heavy feeding produce good results and your sinews grow solid, you can never be a match either in strength or weight, for a first-class bull."¹

¹These and all subsequent translations are from Cummere, R. M., Seneca's Epistulæ Morales. I. II. III.
IV. Selection of the Illustrative Stories from the "Epistulae Morales"

A striking characteristic of the "Epistulae Morales," that of introducing the illustrative story, wherein concrete facts of the daily life of the Romans are set forth, with the aim of justifying the results that follow, has already been mentioned. However, it seems that it will be a subject of great interest to enter more deeply into the matter, noting in what part of the letter Seneca introduces the story, conjecturing his purpose in so doing, determining the sources from which he derives the stories, grouping the stories under respective headings, showing what point they teach about contemporary Roman life, and stating how each one helps to convey a certain moral.

Seneca understood full well the practicality of the Roman mind and its tendency to avoid abstract themes; therefore, he made a forceful and effective appeal to interest by means of stories—stories which, although the most of them consist of not more than eight or ten lines, cover a wide range of subjects. The topics employed in them came under the observation of every individual, no matter in what rank he classed himself. There are the illustrations from the deeds of prominent men, such as Caesar, Pompey, Scipio, Cato;
in war, in politics, or in private life; the examples bearing on the relations existing between slave and master; stories relative to the public games and holidays or festivals; those treating of pleasure resorts, and those giving a general idea of what the Romans thought of sickness and suicide.

A list of the stories showing in what part of the story they occur is given below:

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As far as can be judged, it seems that Seneca had no definite aim in view when he introduced the story in the beginning, middle or end. He seems to have used it where it was most opportune. However, a glance at the above list will show that the majority of the stories make their appearance in the earlier part of the letter, a smaller number occurring at the end, and the smallest number is in the middle. Taking
into consideration that the majority of the stories occur at
the beginning of the letter, it seems plausible that Seneca,
keeping in mind the practical, knew that he could not begin
directly with deep moralizing if he wished to achieve suc-
cess in his efforts. Hence, his first appeal was to interest,
and consequently, the story is at the beginning. It is evi-
dent, too, that in most of the letters where the story is
first, the moral that is to be conveyed continues throughout
the entire story, for instance, the story of Harpaste, the
blind clown, in Ep. 50, or Ep. 7, the example of the harm
that consorting with the crowd at the public games does.

A running synopsis of Ep. 50 may bring before us the
fact that the moral runs throughout the story.

In Ep. 50, Seneca first states the moral that the
faults which are attributed to circumstances and which we
are apt to ascribe to the place or the time are in the very
nature of the person, and will follow one no matter how he
changes his place. This is followed by the story of Har-
paste, a female clown, a burden incurred from a legacy. She
suddenly became blind. However, she did not know that she
was blind, and kept asking her attendants to change her
apartments, for, she claimed they were too dark. Then an
application is made to life, by saying that no one under-
stands that he is greedy, self-seeking, or extravagant, yet, to live at Rome demanded of one to be a self-seeker, and to have a great outlay. It is difficult to attain soundness since we do not know that we are ill.

When Seneca states that when the disease is ascertained, a physician should be called in immediately, in order to check the complaint in its earliest stages, and that a tender and inexperienced mind will follow the advice of the physician if he points out the right way, it seems that he has Harpaste with her application to those who have evil in their very nature in mind, for if her evil had been checked in the very beginning it would not have been difficult to convince her that she was blind. He sums up the preceding paragraphs by saying, that no man finds it difficult to return to nature except the man who has deserted nature.

Continuing, Seneca says: "Mould and reconstruct your souls before they are hardened by sin. As the natural shape of wood or curved beams can be artificially fashioned, so our souls permit of being shaped."

There is no man to whom a good mind comes before an evil one. The evil mind gets hold of us so that learning virtue means unlearning vice. Therefore, free yourself from faults because good is an everlasting possession and not un-
learned. Qualities which come to a place which is rightfully theirs, abide faithfully. Virtue is difficult of approach, for it is a characteristic of a weak and diseased mind to fear that which is unfamiliar. A beginning must therefore first be made, from then on the medicine is not bitter. One enjoys other cures only after health is restored. If Harpasta had understood that she was blind, health of mind, the first cure, would have been restored to her and she would have been able to enjoy being in almost any room, however dark it might have been.

It is noticeable, that in the Epistles where the stories occur in the middle, there are other stories either in the beginning or at the end, as in Epp. 70, 77, 114 and 95. Possibly, the moral was one that was difficult of comprehension, or one that Seneca wished to stress more, it being one of more frequent discussion among learned Romans; therefore, the more frequent use of the story. The use of the story at the end causes the point conveyed to sink in more deeply and to convey a more lasting impression.

The moral in Ep. 70 is not difficult of comprehension, but it seems that the topic of "How to Die" must have been of frequent discussion, and thus we find Seneca enrich-
ing Epistles treating on this topic with various examples. In Ep. 70 he wishes in a special manner to lay stress on these points of Stoic teaching; that a noble purpose or indeed almost any reason justified suicide, that dying well meant escape from living ill, and that the eternal law ordained one entrance but many exits to life. He does not accord at all with those who maintain that one should not offer violence to one's own life but should wait for the end decreed by nature.

The story with which he begins Ep. 70 is a very appropriate one for a topic of this kind for it relates of his visiting Pompeii, a city in which he had lived in the days of his youth. It brought to his mind the rapidity with which time flies and how one, hardly realizing it, passed from boyhood to youth, from youth to manhood and middle age, and then on to old age during which the bourne of the race of man is sighted.

The next story used is that of the Rhodian. This person was thrown into a cage by his tyrant, and fed there like some wild animal. A certain man advised him to end his life by fasting and he replied that a man may hope for anything while he has life. Seneca considers this very unmanly, thus stressing the moral that suicide in this case was justi-
liable and that dying well meant escape from living ill.

The reference to Socrates, whose conduct he knows all praise, brings out this same point. For he states that although Socrates could have died by fasting rather than by poison, yet he stayed thirty days in prison awaiting death, not with the idea "everything may happen," or "so long an interval has room for many a hope," but in order that he might show himself submissive to the laws and make the last moments of himself an edification to his friends.

Seneca lauds the conduct of Drusus Libo, who, when he had been carried away ill from the senate-house in his litter, with only a few followers, was considering whether he should commit suicide. He was advised by his Aunt Scribonia not to do so. However, he laid violent hands on himself. Drusus, according to Seneca, was dying well and escaping ill, a fact which he wishes to stress. The example of Cato, a man of great repute, dragging forth his spirit with his own hand, is regarded as worthy of renown but not of imitation.

The example of the German gladiator, who, when making ready for the morning exhibition, seized the stick of wood tipped with a sponge, which was devoted to the vilest uses, stuffed it down his throat, thus blocking his windpipe and
choking the breath from his body, Seneca commends very highly, saying that the foulest death is preferable to the cleanest slavery.

The gladiator, who, when being conveyed in a cart to the morning exhibition, nodding as if he were heavy with sleep, let his head fall over so far that it was caught in the spokes, and then kept his body in position long enough to break his neck by the revolution of the wheel, has the praise of Seneca.

The story of the barbarian, who sank deep in his own throat the spear which had been given to him for use against his foe, Seneca says teaches that dying is more honorable than killing.

From Seneca's praise or censure of the deeds of the individuals mentioned in these stories we learn that he wished in particular to stress the idea that life keeps no one against his will and that if one death is accompanied by torture and another is simple and easy, the latter may be taken. In short, he wished to express the Stoic teachings on what they judged to be the proper time to die.

The moral of Ep. 77 is very similar to that of Ep. 70. It is with life as it is with a play,—it matters not how long the action is spun out but how good the acting is.
There is no definite number of years which must be completed. One should not be a slave to business or to life, but be courageous enough to die or commit suicide when it seems most fit.

The story of the arrival of the Alexandrian mail boats, Sec. 1-2, again is used merely as an introduction to the main topic. People were gathered about the dock in eager anticipation to know their gains or losses, while Seneca lazily stood back, for he said that he had had no gains or losses of late. As an old man he said his pleasure was great for he did not need to complete his journey, by which he meant life. This leads on to the main topic that life, no matter when it is ended, is not incomplete, if it is honorable. The next story, Sec. 6-9, stresses this point for it speaks of Marcellinus, a man who had become old prematurely and had fallen ill of a protracted and troublesome disease, which disease demanded much attention. Various ones gave him advice in reference to what he should do. However, he took the advice of the Stoic and committed suicide, which Seneca judged as the proper thing to do. The story of the Spartan lad, Sec. 14, who took his own life rather than be a slave, intensifies the preceding point.

Style in writing was another favorite topic of con-
versation among the Romans. The frequent use of illustrations in Ep. 114 places before us this feature. The moral of Ep. 114 is that "man's speech is just like his life." Faults in writing are due sometimes to the man and sometimes to the epoch. The effeminacy of the well-known Maecenas in dress, in walk, in his bearing toward his wife and attendants in public functions is reflected in his writings. The stories in Sections 4, 6, 8, prove the point that an individual's character speaks in his writing. Just as some individual makes vices fashionable, just so in literature one author controls the eloquence of the day and the rest follow his lead and communicate the bad habit to each other. L. Arruntius, imitating Sallust, Sec. 17 and 19, is given as an example.

It can be stated, without much doubt, that Seneca when writing these letters, had in view not only Lucilius, his immediate correspondent, but the future generations to whom these letters would be handed down, for in 21.5, he promises Lucilius a literary immortality through the publication of the correspondence, and keeps his own eye firmly fixed on posterity. Looking at Roman life in its various phases and aspects, he had an abundance of material on which to draw. He has used this variety of material in order that
the illustrative stories might make an appeal and be intelligible to all classes; the parasitical menials, ragged plebeians and gladiators, as well as the emperor and patricians of high rank. The sources from which the stories are derived are very commonplace; they are everyday occurrences. The characters spoken of are those with whom all the Romans are well acquainted, either through personal contact or through a constant repetition of their deeds.

One of the most common sources is the lives of the great men of Greece and Rome. In general, the incidents are taken from the lives of men of former times. From the life of the much-talked-of and revered Cato, Seneca has taken happenings pertaining to his political, his military and his private life. Each instance, however, seems to convey a different moral. Ep. 14.12-13, Seneca intends Cato's conduct to show how to conduct one's self in politics; Ep. 24.6, an instance giving Cato's behavior on the last days before his death, is an example which Seneca judges worthy of imitation. Ep. 67.7, illustrating the manner in which Cato tore open his own wound, thereby causing his own death, is intended to teach the endurance of suffering; in Ep. 81.8, the citation from Cato's life is given to prove that evil fortune is overcome and good fortune is controlled by virtue;
Ep. 95.72, Seneca presents to display the unflinching steadfastness and courage of Cato in the face of imminent danger in order to uphold his basic principle. Next in frequency, are the examples selected from the lives of Pompey and Caesar, likewise men of prominence and renown. Ep. 4.7, treats of the fate of Pompey, Gaius Caesar, and Lepidus; Ep. 11.4, relates Pompey's sensitive cast of countenance and tendency to blush in the presence of a public assembly; Ep. 14.12-13, we have an illustration from the political life of Pompey and Caesar, and in Ep. 71.9-10, there are facts relative to the military life of Pompey.

Other names that were constantly on the lips of the Romans are Sulla, Epicurus, Stilbo, Tubero, Tutilius, Socrates, Metellus, Regulus, Sextus, Laelius, Alexander, Scipio, Maecenas, Fabianus, Mark Antony, Leonidas, and Calpurnius. The facts of the lives of these men were almost part and parcel of every Roman. Seneca has used illustrations from the lives of all these men. But, note how in order to deviate somewhat from the stories which had been droned over and over again, he took incidents from the lives of a simple Spartan lad, Ep. 77.14, of a German gladiator, Ep. 70.20, of another gladiator, Ep. 70.23, of a friend of Seneca, Ep. 96.3-5, of Tullius Marcellinus, an acquaintance,
Ep. 77.5-9.

Seneca has drawn quite heavily on his own personal experience. Often he speaks of his ill health and its results. Ep. 54.1-3 tells of his chronic asthma; Ep. 78.1-4, deals with his being subject to chronic catarrh. He also relates much concerning his travels from one place to another and the sentiments with which he was impressed on the various trips. In Ep. 53.1-6, there is an amusing incident of his travelling on a rough sea from Puteoli to Parthenope which resulted in his becoming sea-sick; Ep. 57 gives his trip from Baiae to Naples; 70.1, a visit to Pompeii; 86.1-5, a drive to the country home of Scipio. There are also examples which speak of the life of Seneca in his country home. There is an illustration stating how he employed his leisure hours in 83.3-5; a remark on his diet in 108.22-23; the narration of his witnessing a sumptuous banquet and its impression made upon him 110.14-16, an incident illustrating his experience in vine growing 112.1-4.

Amusements and festivals also play their part as sources for the derivation of the illustrations. The pleasure-loving Roman found his interest touched upon when the public games, an almost vital thing in the life of a Roman, were used as a source. This occurs in Ep. 7.3-5 and 80.1-3.
There are likewise allusions to an attendance at a Neapolitan theatre in 76.4, and a celebration of the feast of the Saturnalia Ep. 18.1. The free public baths, an absolute necessity to all, are made mention of in 56.1-3 and 86.8-10. An example which would immediately strike home is that of the much-frequented pleasure resort, Baiae, Ep. 51.1-6. The commonplace facts of how a dog snaps for food Ep. 72.8; of death in the family of a friend, 99.1-3; of the style of dress of individuals 114.4-8; of the conspicuous family life of particular parties 104.27-30; of the relationship between master and slave, and of the misfortune of the unexpected burning of cities 91.1-2; are all incidents which share in being sources from which Seneca obtains the illustrative story, and which come under the observation of each one some time or another, or rather, frequently in his daily life.

Other Latin authors have used the illustrative story to make clear some philosophic doctrine, but it seems few have used it with such frequency and so interestingly as Seneca.

Parallels to Seneca's stories may be found in the Tusculan Disputations, Book One, paragraph 37. There are illustrations from the lives of great men which are employed to prove that death is no evil and hence should not be
feared.

"How often have not only our generals, but whole armies, rushed on certain death! But if it had been a thing to be feared, L. Brutus would have never fallen in fight, to prevent the return of that tyrant whom he had expelled; nor would Decius, the father, have been slain in fighting with the Latins; nor would his son, when engaged with the Etruscans, nor his grandson with Pyrrhus, have exposed themselves to the enemy's darts. Spain would never have seen, in one campaign, the Scipios fall in fighting for their country; nor would the plains of Cannae have witnessed the death of Paulus and Geminus; or Venusia, that of Marcellus; nor the Lucanians, that of Gracchus. But are any of these miserable now? Nay, they were not so even at the first moment after they had breathed their last; nor can any one be miserable after he has lost all sensation."

These illustrations are very similar to those in Ep. 70, in which the manner in which the Rhodian, Section 7, Cato and the gladiators, Sections 20 and 23, met death is told and is commented on.

The story of Maecenas, Ep. 101.10-13, who, because he feared death, begged to bear all kinds of suffering, if only the breath of life might be prolonged, is employed to
show that it is cowardly to fear death, and that death is a blessing, the end of punishment and the balm of troubles.

Cicero in Book I, paragraph 35, employs the following story to teach the same lesson: "The case of our friend Pompey was something better: once when he had been very ill at Naples, the Neapolitans on his recovery put crowns on their heads; as did those of Puteoli; the people flocked from the country to congratulate him;--it is a Grecian custom and a foolish one; still it is a sign of good fortune. But the question is, had he died, would he have been taken from good, or from evil? Certainly from evil." Then Cicero continues, stating all the misfortunes and losses which befell Pompey after this event--all of which would have been avoided if he had died.

Book I, paragraph 15, Themistocles and Epaminondas are mentioned as having sacrificed their lives for the good of their country, because they were convinced of the immortality of the soul; and Phidias, as having included a likeness of himself in the shield of Minerva, because he wished to be famous after death.

The stories, with few exceptions, fall under the one common classification, "Incidents from the Lives of the Romans or Greeks." However, Seneca, in the various stories,
has slighted no rank or caste of society. The emperor, the senator, the warrior, the politician, the literary writer, the correspondent, the athlete, the pleasure seeker, the more serious-minded, the traveler, the slave and the gladiator, each in turn found in the stories a portrayal, if not of his own personal life, still, of the life of one who represented his standard of living. Speech and action are brought more into prominence by the citations from the lives of specific individuals. Since this is a fact, a more detailed classification of the stories is necessary. The following classifications are broad enough and still definite enough to include within their range all the stories dealing with the different aspects of life:

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### Nature and Peculiarities of Individuals

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The aim of the modern philosopher is to make his subject as attractive and appealing as it is possible. We notice this even in the titles of the books, for instance, *Arm Chair Philosophy*. Hard, bare, intellectual facts, requiring deep thought, and difficult of comprehension are couched in some form which makes an appeal to the emotions. The concrete rather than the abstract is worked with, the human side of the individual is taken strongly into consideration. Seneca, in respect to philosophy, was very similar to our modern philosophers. There are many who perhaps even in their first perusal of the "Epistulæ Morales," take par-
ticular note of the light which the stories contained in them throw on contemporary Roman life. It is this point which intensifies the human appeal of the "Epistulae Morales." An investigation and analysis of the points treating on contemporary Roman life will help better to appreciate this fact.

The following passages, taken from Epp. 7 and 80, place before us the loathsome and inhuman butchery exhibited at the gladiatorial games, give evident proof that the Roman spectators of the games were highly brutalized, clearly manifest that their sole enjoyment and excitement was found in danger and blood, and show that the life of the gladiator or condemned criminal was valued at naught. They further add the fact that games were conducted throughout the entire day, even during luncheon intermission.

Ep. 7: "By chance I attended a mid-day exhibition, expecting some fun, wit and relaxation,—an exhibition at which men's eyes have respite from the slaughter of their fellow-men. But it was quite the reverse. The previous combats were the essence of compassion; but now all the trifling is put aside and it is pure murder. The men have no defensive armor. They are exposed to blows at all points, and no one ever strikes in vain. Many persons prefer this programme to the usual pairs and to the bouts by request. Of course,
they do; there is no helmet or shield to deflect the weapon. What is the need of defensive armor or of skill? All these mean delaying death. In the morning they throw men to the lions and the bears; at noon, they throw them to the spectators. The spectators demand that the slayer shall face the man who is to slay him in turn; and they always reserve the latest conqueror for another butchering. The outcome of every fight is death, and the means are fire and sword. This sort of thing goes on while the arena is empty. You may retort: 'But he was a highway robber, he killed a man!' And what of it? Granted that, as a murderer, he deserved this punishment, what crime have you committed, poor fellow, that you should deserve to sit and see this show? In the morning they cried 'Kill him! Lash him! Burn him! Why does he meet the sword in so cowardly a way? Why does he strike so feebly? Why doesn't he die game? Whip him to meet his wounds! Let them receive blow for blow, with chests bare and exposed to the stroke!' And when the games stop for intermission, they announce: 'A little throat-cutting in the meantime, so that there may still be something going on!'"

Ep. 80: How feather-brained are the athletes whose muscles and shoulders we admire! The question which I ponder most of all is this: If the body can be trained to such a
degree of endurance that it will stand the blows and kicks of several opponents at once, and to such a degree that man can last out the day and resist the scorching sun in the midst of the burning dust, drenched all the while with his own blood—if this can be done, how much more easily might the mind be toughened!"

That during the Empire there were training schools maintained at public expense, under the direction of state officials not only in Rome where there were four at least of these schools, but also in other cities of Italy, where exhibitions were frequently given; that gladiators were in charge of competent training masters; that they were subject to the strictest discipline and were considered as the lowest class of Romans—§:247)—points which closely link with the ones inferred from the first two quotations; can be gathered from Ep. 70.

"But I shall now prove to you that the virtue of which I speak is found as frequently in the gladiator's training-school as among the leaders of a civil war. Lately a gladiator, who had been sent forth to the morning exhibition, was being conveyed in a cart along with the other prisoners; nodding as if he were in a deep sleep, he let his head fall over so far that it was caught in the spokes; he
then kept his body in position long enough to break his neck by the revolution of the wheel."

Since Rome had special schools for the training of gladiators maintained at public expense, the conclusion can be readily drawn that the games were popular. Yes, the games were indescribably popular. The passion which the Romans had for the public games and contests can be somewhat appreciated by our American sport-loving nation, but no baseball or football of our era can so monopolize the popular mind. Everybody in Rome attended them. Few were the masters that risked the unpopularity of refusing to let their familia frequent at least the more famous contests. In truth, half of Rome existed only from one chariot or gladiator exhibition to another. (1:375-77.)

Seemingly, during Seneca's time the games held their customary attraction, for in Ep. 80, he states that the boxing-match has attracted all the bores and consequently his thoughts can run along smoothly since there is no one who will constantly interrupt him.

Another point of contemporary Roman life that is verified in the "Epistulae Morales" is that never in after ages have the blessings of country against city life been better appreciated than under the Roman Empire. (1:453.)

The country seats were selected with great care, the
purchaser having regard to their proximity to the city or other resorts of fashion, their healthfulness, and the natural beauty of their scenery. They were maintained on the most extravagant scale. (8:96.)

There are many references to different villas and resorts. Ep. 12: "I visited lately my country place and protested against the money which was spent on the tumble-down building;" Ep. 51: "You over there have Etna, that lofty and most celebrated mountain of Sicily. As for myself, I do the best I can. I have had to be satisfied with Baiae; and I left it the day after I reached it, for Baiae is a place to be avoided, because, though it has certain natural advantages, luxury has claimed it for her exclusive resort." Farther on in the same Ep. we read: "Therefore, if he is contemplating withdrawal from the world, he will not select Canopus (although Canopus does not keep any man from living simply), nor does Baiae either; for both places have begun to be resorts of vice. At Canopus luxury pampers itself to the utmost degree; at Baiae it is even more lax, as if the place itself demanded a certain amount of license." Ep. 55: "As my habit is, I began to look about for something there that might be of service to me, when my eyes fell upon the villa which had once belonged to Vatia. So this was the
place where the famous praetorian millionaire passed his old age! He was famed for nothing else than his life of leisure;" Ep. 86: "I am resting at the country house which belonged at one time to Scipio Africanus;" Ep. 104: "I have run off to my villa at Nomentum, for what purpose, do you suppose? To escape the city? No. To shake off a fever which was surely working its way into my system."

Very readily can the conclusion be drawn that many of the well-frequented fashionable seaside resorts were places of ill repute and that they had a seductive influence on the people. Baiae not far from Naples, and Canopus at the mouth of the Nile, seem to have been the most prominent places for their laxity of morals. This passage concerning Baiae, plainly proves the above statement. Ep. 51: "Just as I do not care to live in a place of torture, neither do I care to live in a cafe. To witness persons wandering drunk along the beach, the riotous revelling of sailing parties, the lakes -din with choral song, and all the other ways in which luxury, when it is so to speak, released from the restraints of law not merely sins, but blazons its sins abroad—why must witness all this?"

Here are a few lines from which an estimate may be formed of the number and variety of the crowd that frequent-
the public baths. From them it may also be concluded that the public baths supplied the needs of both a clubhouse and a cafe; that the noise arising from the great bath halls was terrific—shouting, laughing, splashing, running and exercising going on continuously; that at the same time that the baths were being conducted, there were races, wrestling matches, the expounding of philosophical doctrines and the recitation of poetry. (1:361-62.)

Ep. 56: "Imagine what a variety of noises reverberates about my ears! I have lodgings right over a bathing establishment. So picture to yourself the assortment of sounds, which are strong enough to make me hate my very powers of hearing! When your strenuous gentleman, for example, is exercising himself by flourishing leaden weights; when he is working hard, or else pretends to be working hard, I can hear him grunt; or whenever he releases his imprisoned breath, I can hear him panting in wheezy and high-pitched tones. Or perhaps I notice some lazy fellows, content with a cheap rub-down, and hear the crack of the pummeling hand on his shoulders, varying in sound according as the hand is laid on flat or hollow. Then, perhaps, a professional comes along, shouting out the score; that is the finishing touch. Add to this the arresting of an occasional roysterer or pick-
pocket, the racket of the man who always likes to hear his own voice in the bathroom, or the enthusiast, who plunges into the swimming tank with unconscionable noise and splashing. Besides all those whose voices, if nothing else, are good, imagine the hair-picker with his penetrating, shrill voice—for the purpose of advertisement—continually giving vent and never holding his tongue except when he is plucking the armpits and making his victim yell instead. Then the cakeseller with his varied cries, the sausageman, the confectioner, and all the vendors of food hawking their wares, each with his own distinctive intonation."

Here, too, Seneca has given proof to the statement of William S. Davis, in "A Day in Old Rome:" "Close by the entrance are numerous restaurants of more than ordinary elegance. Here slaves could be sent for sweet cakes, slices of toasted honey bread, sausages, eggs, and like viands, and in the great frigidarium and tepidarium the peddlers from these restaurants were always going about with trays for such food, crying their wares and making ordinary bedlam so much the greater." (1:367-88.)

Other excerpts from Ep. 86, treating likewise of the public baths recall to our mind the extravagant magnificence of the buildings in general and the sensuous luxury of the
hot baths.

"We think ourselves poor and mean if our walls are not resplendent with large and costly mirrors; if our marbles from Alexandria are not set off by mosaic of Numidian stone, if their borders are not faced on all sides with difficult patterns, arranged in many colors like paintings; if our vaulted ceilings are not buried in glass; if our swimming pools are not lined with Thasian marble, once a rare and wonderful sight in any temple—pools into which we let down our bodies after they have been drained weak by abundance of perspiration; and finally, if the water has not poured from silver spigots. I have so far been speaking of the ordinary bathing establishments; what shall I say when I come to those of the freedman? 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 on!"

It was customary for some of the Romans, especially the nobles, to travel with overpowering magnificence and sumptuous luxury. Thus they had about them very many unnecessary slaves, and a great amount of burdensome paraphernalia. This is significant from Ep. 87, in which Seneca
speaks of the pleasure of travelling light. He says: "My friend Maximus and I have been spending a most happy period of two days taking with us very few slaves—one carriage-load—and no paraphernalia except what we wore on our persons. The mattress lies on the ground, and I upon the mattress. There are two rugs—one to spread beneath us and one to cover us. Nothing could have been subtracted from our luncheon; it took not more than an hour to prepare, and we were nowhere without dried figs, never without writing tablets. The vehicle in which I have taken my seat is a farmer's cart. Only by walking do the mules show that they are alive. The driver is barefoot, and not because it is summer, either. I can scarcely force myself to wish that others shall think this cart mine. ...Whenever we meet a more sumptuous party, I blush in spite of myself."

These last two statements present to us the fact that it was contrary to custom to travel in such poor manner. Ep. 110 also gives us an instance of luxury exhibited at one of the banquets which were conducted during the time of Seneca. It offers material for thought on the ostentatious display by the Romans of slaves, furniture, plate and food.

Note can be taken that the Romans, like all other nations, had special days which were set aside for public
feasting and merry-making. The religious festival of the Saturnalia which lasted seven days, beginning the seventeenth of December—although Seneca in this particular passage shows that it must have been prolonged—was a time when the whole city abandoned itself to carnival mirth, when slaves for a brief and happy interval put on the tall pilleus, the liberty cap, were allowed to be very pert to their masters, and indulged in all kinds of pranks and liberties, and when people exchanged with all their friends semi-comic gifts of wax tapers and amusing little terra cotta images, or other gifts of real value. But the slave said: "Don't you know me, sir? I am Felicio; you used to bring me little images." Ep. 12:3

Small figures, generally of terra cotta, were frequently given to children as presents at the Saturnalia.

More decorous was the ensuing holiday on the Kalends of January, when ceremonious official calls were paid on every magnate from the Emperor downward, and more gifts were exchanged. (1:437.)

What further proof could there be that these festivals were still celebrated during the time of Seneca in the manner described by Wm. S. Davis than Seneca's own words, Ep. 18?

"It is the month of December, and yet the city is at
this very moment in a sweat! License is given to the general merry-making. Everything resounds with mighty preparations, as if the Saturnalia differed at all from the usual! So true it is that the difference is nil, that I regard as correct the remark of the man who said: 'once December was a month, now it is a year'.

Ep. 87: "I have bread, I use figs as a relish; if not, I regard figs as a substitute for bread. Hence they bring me a New Year feast every day, and I make the New Year happy and prosperous by good thought and greatness of soul."

The remarks on style in various letters are instructive and illustrate that the opinion of many educated Romans at the time was, that there is a very close connection between style and morals, and that the general luxury of the age along with the fact that base occupations paid better and the law of nature 'after perfection the decline', were greatly influential in bringing about the decay of literature.

Citations from Ep. 114 best show this point:

How Maecenas lived is too well known for present comment. We know how he walked, how effeminate he was, and how he desired to display himself; also how unwilling he was that his vices should escape notice. What, then? Does not the looseness of his speech match his ungirt attire? Are
his habits, his attendants, his house, his wife, any less clearly marked than his words? He would have been a man of great powers, had he not shrunk from making himself understood, had he not been so loose in his style of speech also. You will, therefore, see that his eloquence was that of an intoxicated man—twisting, turning, unlimited in its slackness.

What is more unbecoming than the words: "A stream and a bank covered with long-tressed woods'? And see how men plough the channel with boats and, turning up the shallows, leave gardens behind them.' Or 'he curls his ladylocks and bills and coos and starts a-sighing like a forest lord who offers prayers with downbent neck.' Or 'an unregenerate crew, they search our people at feasts and assail households with the wine cup and by hope, exact death.' Or 'a genius could hardly bear witness to his own festival.' Or 'threads of tiny tapers and crackling meal'; 'mothers or wives clothing the hearth.'

"Can you not at once imagine, on reading through these words, that this was a man who always paraded through the city with a flowing tunic [this was a mark of slackness]? For even if he was discharging the absent emperor's duties, he was always in undress when they asked him for the countersign. Or that this was the man, who was judge on the bench,
or as an orator, or at any public function, who appeared
with his cloak wrapped about his head, leaving only the ears
exposed [a mark of slovenliness] like the millionaire runa-
way slaves in a farce? Or that this was the man who at the
very time when the state was embroiled in civil strife, when
the city was in difficulties, and under martial law, was at-
tended in public by two eunuchs—both of them more men than
himself?"

During Seneca's time, as well as in all times, there
were in Rome those who, mostly on account of their wealth,
wished to distinguish themselves in a particular manner from
others in their dress, in the elegance of their carriages,
and in their peculiar way of dividing up the hours of their
day. They did not wish to be wicked in the conventional
way for they wished for notoriety as a reward of their wick-
edness. In Ep. 122, Seneca makes great game of these brain-
less pleasure-seekers, the human 'antipodes' who turned night
into day. In Ep. 27, he also makes sport of an outrageous-
ly vulgar parvenu freedman, who purchased highly educated
slaves to enable him to parade learning by proxy.

There are many anecdotes throughout the Letters which
give us the prevailing idea of the Roman Stoics concerning
suicide, more prominently, Epp. 24, 70 and 77. The right of
 sane man voluntarily to surrender his life was undoubted.
Suicide was desirable if it was entered upon discreetly and not as a cowardly means of escaping the duties of life.

Drunkenness did not seem to degrade the offender in the eyes of the public, for we read of some of the men of the highest rank employing as assistants those who were habitually addicted to drink. Ep. 83.

Various other points concerning peculiar customs of the Romans on different occasions can be found scattered throughout the stories. Ep. 12: "You have done well to place him at the entrance; for he is outward bound"—throws light on the Roman custom of placing the body of the dead on a couch with the feet towards the door; Ep. 56; "So you say 'What iron nerves or deadened ears you must have, if your mind can hold out amid so many noises, so various and so discordant, when our friend Chrysippus is brought to his death by the continual good-morrows that greet him!" and Ep. 101, "Senecio had, as usual, called upon me early in the morning;" make us aware of the fact that the custom of clients, arrayed in toga assembled early in the morning to exchange greetings with the great men when they first appeared, was still existing at Seneca's time. Ep. 57: "On that day I had to endure the full fate of an athlete; the annihil-
ing with which we began was followed by the sand-sprinkle in the Naples tunnel," calls to our mind the odd custom of sprinkling the wrestler with sand after anointing, so that the opponent's hand might not slip.

Looking over the above passages, it will not be necessary to argue as to whether the illustrative stories throw much light on Roman contemporary life. "It is evident that they place before us the loathsome butchery at the gladiatorial shows, Ep. 7; the seductions of a seaside resort, Ep. 51; the arrival of mailboats from Alexandria, Ep. 77; the treatment of runaway slaves, Ep. 107; the pleasure of traveling light in contrast to the overpowering magnificence of some travelers, Ep. 87; the love of the Romans for country homes, 12, 55, 86, 104; the luxurious and well-frequented baths, 56, 86; the practice of public celebration of special feasts, 18, 87; the brainless pleasure-seekers in Rome, who turned night into day, 122; the loose and undisciplined compositions of Maecenas, which Seneca claimed reflected the morals of the times." (3:225.) Thus from the extracts from the various letters it would be almost possible to write an account of the actions and of many of the reflections of an average Roman throughout the day. Because of this human appeal and because of the enlivening personal appeal, Seneca
brings himself nearer to his readers and increases his hold over them. A reader of the Epistles does not experience a remote and repellent attitude toward the deep and serious doctrines of the Stoic philosophy.

The stories, with the exception of those treating of the deeds of the ancient Greeks and Romans, are a true representation of the ordinary life in Italy under Nero, a representative of one of the most thrilling periods of Roman history. There are pictures of extravagant opulence and voluptuousness, in regard to banquets, public baths, pleasure resorts, festivals, and travelling. Seneca, indeed, made no mistake in picturing the luxuriousness of the times, nor are the pictures the workings of his imagination, for in almost any history an account can be found to verify these statements; for instance, Merivale "History of the Romans" Vol. V.-VI., states "Nero never travelled, it is asserted, with less than a thousand carriages in his train. His banquets were those of the noble debauchees of the day on a still waster scale of expense; in the height of his extravagance, he would equip his actors with masks or wands covered with genuine pearls: he would stake four hundred sesterces on a single cast of dice: he bathed in unguents, and stimulated his friends to expend four millions on the perfumes alone
of a single supper." (10:248-49.)

The stories, dealing with the gladiators and gladiatorial combats, in which Seneca gives expression to his disgust and abhorrence for the titanic depravity and cruelty which was exhibited at them, illustrate completely the pitiless spirit and carelessness of human life lurking behind the pomp, glitter, and cultural pretentions of the imperial age of Nero. There is no exaggeration in representing the cruelty displayed at the games for it is stated in "A Day in Old Rome"—"The very best emperors arranged elaborate series of combats—perhaps with a sigh in their hearts, as colossal and bloody bribes which must be thrown constantly to the mob." (1:389.) If this was true of the best emperors, how much more so can it be said of Nero? Furthermore, J. W. Duff says, "To Seneca's credit stand Nero's promising quinquennium, a policy of toleration in religion, and an endeavor to lessen cruelty in gladiatorial shows." This last statement stands as proof that cruelty respecting gladiatorial games had in no way been diminished during Nero's time.

The laxity of morals as represented at the pleasure resorts of Baisæ and Canopus was characteristic of the time of Seneca, particularly among the wealthier class. This may also be judged from the many stories in which Seneca sets
before the minds of the readers illustrations of virility and virtue in the lives of men of former times, as a plea to the people of his time for a return to them.

Country homes and the attractive life around them were a great source of pleasure to the Romans. Every one, even of moderate means, possessed villas. We need no clearer proof of this than that Seneca himself in several stories makes mention of his retreat to his own villas. A visit to these country homes occasioned much travel, of which the Romans were very fond. "All Romans, especially the wealthy, had an intense desire to get away from their turbulent city for a large part of the year." (1:453.)

We may conjecture rightly when we say that the personal trips of Seneca were realities.

The remarks that Seneca passes on style in the various illustrations are very instructive, proving to us that the topic of literary style must have been one which was frequently discussed by all men of learning. The stories in Ep. 100, in which writing for the soul is contrasted with writing for the ear, and in which a distinction is made between the prose of Fabianus and the artificially inverted prose of the day; and Ep. 114, wherein decadence in style, which is explicable on the hypothesis that it is a mirror
of morals, gives us an idea of how much luxury had spread over Rome, and how owing to this fact, the style of the writers had been swayed by fashion and eccentricity. Evidence for this statement can be found in almost any history of Roman literature treating of the "Silver Age."

Early morning salutations, the grant of general license and indulgence during the Feast of the Saturnalia, instances of literary activity being delegated by a parvenu freedman to slaves, the taking over and the encouragement of foreign rites, all of which points are exemplified in one story or another, are events which actually occurred, not only once, but almost daily during the lifetime of Seneca.

Seneca with his faith in the enduring and inestimable value of philosophy had as the prevailing object in these stories the consideration of philosophical points, and permanent ethical instruction. In order to fulfill his main object he had to depart from the traditional lines, he had to neglect logical method and become pleasantly discursive, he had to compose readable tracts on ethical questions mainly Stoic. The introduction of the stories helped him greatly to attain his main object, ethical instruction, for by wonderful fertility in examples he illuminated deep philosophical points. By discovering material for comment everywhere—
vegetarianism, study in rowdy surroundings, slops for an invalid, the invasion of a dining-room by kitchen appliances to keep dainties hot, Ep. 108, 56, 78.23–25, he found human touches which added to interest. So, too, the stories aided him to drop the philosophic mantle and give us vivid pictures like that of his picnic with a friend, Ep. 53, or a tissue of exaggerations in satirizing the luxury of the day: "We have reached such a pitch of luxury that we decline to tread on anything but precious stones." Sometimes, they even add a touch of humor as when he speaks of his sea-sickness, he remarks facetiously that if he had regularly to be put ashore, as he was after one brief trip on the Bay of Naples, then a voyage anywhere would take him twice as long as Ulysses's wanderings lasted and with mock seriousness he affects to think that we owe the elaborate Odyssey ultimately to the hero's sea-sickness.

The stories in the "Epistulae Morales" are, indeed, well worthy of consideration, both as to content and as to style, for they prove to us that the seriousness of philosophical treatises can be made more appealing by the human touch which the story brings; and they teach us many things about contemporary Roman life, political, military, and social, which perhaps historians have already made use of.
"In respect to style, Seneca does not demoralize classical Latin, but it is to the credit of his good sense, as it certainly adds to his interest, that though the stories primarily subserve the purpose of permanent ethical instruction, yet they are by no means wanting in 'small talk' and humor." (3:233.)
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REFEREES' REPORTS

It is the practice of the Graduate School to have theses read by three referees. If the first two votes are favorable, the third reading is sometimes omitted. The Graduate Council regularly recommends for the degree all students who have a majority of favorable votes.

Students are frequently required to rewrite portions of their theses because of the referees' criticisms. This will explain why references to pages are sometimes inaccurate and why shortcomings concerning which comment is made in the reports are found not to exist.
TYPE AND TECHNIQUE OF THE ILLUSTRATIVE STORY
IN SENECA'S MORAL ESSAYS

Sister Mary Vincentia Brown, O.S.F.

The thesis is not strikingly original, though a good deal of effort has been spent in the gathering up of instances from the Letters of Seneca. This collecting and arranging process represents the candidate's chief personal work on the subject, and here she has displayed some skill. The thesis may impress the reader as a bit brief, perhaps, but the tables of classification express in brief scope a good deal of work. The expression of the thesis is good, and the arrangement of material is satisfactory.

I should recommend the acceptance of the thesis.

William C. Korfamacher
The "Type and Technique of the Illustrative Story in Seneca's Moral Essays" submitted by Sister Mary Vincentia Brown, O.S.F. is very splendid and shows an intimate knowledge not only of Seneca but of the history of the time in which he lived. There can be no doubt that the paper required a vast amount of painstaking study. The knowledge acquired in this study is not confused but clear and well digested. All in all, the writer is to be congratulated on her fine effort.

A word of commendation is also due to the get up of the thesis, the typing and the general appearance of the paper is pleasing, a reflection of the care bestowed upon the whole work.

John J. Keefe, S.J.