



LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA, statesman, philosopher, advocate and man of letters, was born at Cordoba in Spain around 4 B.C. Despite his relatively undistinguished background and ever-recurrent ill health, he rose rapidly to prominence at Rome, pursuing the double career in the courts and political life for which he had been trained. He began also quickly to acquire celebrity as an author of tragedies and of polished essays, moral, literary and scientific. Sentenced to death by successive emperors (Caligula in A.D. 37 and Claudius in A.D. 41), he spent eight years in exile on the island of Corsica, allegedly for an affair with Caligula's sister. Recalled in A.D. 49, he was made praetor, and was appointed tutor to the boy who was to become, in A.D. 54, the emperor Nero. On Nero's succession Seneca acted for some eight years as an unofficial chief minister. The early part of this reign was remembered as a period of sound imperial government, for which, according to our sources, the main credit must be given to Seneca. His control over an increasingly cruel emperor declined as enemies turned Nero against him with representations that his popularity made him a danger, or with accusations of immorality or excessive wealth ill assorting with the noble Stoic principles he professed. Retiring from public life he devoted his last three years to philosophy and writing, particularly the *Letters from a Stoic*. In A.D. 65, following the discovery of a plot against the emperor, which might have resulted in Seneca's elevation to the throne, he and many others were compelled by Nero to commit suicide. His fame as an essayist and dramatist

lasted until two or three centuries ago when, unaccountably, he passed into literary oblivion.

ROBIN CAMPBELL lives in Islington, London. An exiled Scot, now a barrister, he decided that Seneca was overdue for discovery while at Wadham College, Oxford, where he was an Open Classical Scholar and gained a First in Honour Mods. He served in Kenya and Uganda with African troops as a subaltern in a Highland Regiment, and after a year at Cambridge learning another African language (Chinyanja), he returned to Africa for three years as a District Officer. This was followed after Zambia's independence by a year as a Magistrate, trying witch-doctors, hearing appeals from tribal courts over a vast area and revising this translation at intervals of leisure in the bush. His practice at the bar in Gray's Inn tends to be concerned with action by local authorities. He holds strong views on the importance and difficulties of good translation.

SENECA

LETTERS FROM A STOIC

Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium

SELECTED AND
TRANSLATED WITH AN
INTRODUCTION
BY ROBIN CAMPBELL

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