

**Seneca**



*Of Clemency*

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# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE DIALOGUE OF L. ANNAEUS SENECA,

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ADDRESSED TO NERO CAESAR.

OF CLEMENCY.

I.

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I HAVE determined to write a book upon clemency, Nero Caesar, in order that I may as it were serve as a mirror to you, and let you see yourself arriving at the greatest of all pleasures. For although the true enjoyment of good deeds consists in the performance of them, and virtues have no adequate reward beyond themselves, still it is worth your while to consider and investigate a good conscience from every point of view, and afterwards to cast your eyes upon this enormous mass of mankind — quarrelsome, factious, and passionate as they are; likely, if they could throw off the yoke of your government, to take pleasure alike in the ruin of themselves and of one another — and thus to commune with yourself: — "Have I of all mankind been chosen and thought fit to perform the office of a god upon earth? I am the arbiter of life and death to mankind: it rests with me to decide what lot and position in life each man possesses: fortune makes use of my mouth to announce what she bestows on each man: cities and nations are moved to joy by my words: no region anywhere can flourish without my favour and good will: all these