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On Clemency Book I

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

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Contents

Introduction	3
I.	5
II.	7
III.	8
IV.	9
V.	10
VI.	12
VII.	13
VIII.	14
IX.	15
X.	17
XI.	18
XII.	19
XIII.	20
XIV.	21
XV.	22
XVI.	23
XVII.	24
XVIII.	25
XIX.	26
XX.	28
XXI.	29
XXII.	30
XXIII.	31
XXIV.	32
XXV.	33

Introduction

The first book of Seneca's *On Clemency* is a sustained examination of political power and the moral character required to exercise it well. Written for the young Emperor Nero, the work presents clemency as the virtue that should govern a ruler's response to wrongdoing, opposition and personal injury. Seneca addresses a situation in which one person possesses extraordinary authority over the lives of others. His central argument is that such power becomes admirable only when it is restrained by reason and directed towards preservation rather than destruction.

Seneca begins by offering Nero a moral mirror. He describes an ideal ruler who understands the enormous reach of imperial decisions but refuses to be driven by anger, vanity or youthful impulse. This praise has a practical purpose. By presenting clemency as already characteristic of Nero, Seneca encourages him to adopt it as a permanent standard of conduct. The emperor is invited to see himself as the guardian of the population entrusted to him and to recognise that the ability to spare life is a greater distinction than the ability to take it.

Throughout Book I, clemency is shown to benefit both ruler and subjects. A humane ruler creates confidence, loyalty and stability. People protect a leader whom they regard as concerned for their welfare, whereas cruelty surrounds a tyrant with fear, hostility and the constant threat of retaliation. Seneca repeatedly contrasts secure authority based on goodwill with unstable domination maintained through terror. The ruler who restrains himself does not surrender power; he places it on a stronger foundation.

The work also asks what punishment is meant to achieve. Seneca considers correction of the offender, improvement of others through example and protection of the community. Punishment should therefore be purposeful and proportionate. Excessive penalties can destroy the possibility of reform, make violence familiar and weaken the moral force of the law. Clemency does not mean pardoning everyone without distinction. Seneca warns that indiscriminate leniency can be as harmful as universal severity. The task is to distinguish those capable of improvement from those who remain dangerous, while choosing the more humane course whenever judgement is uncertain.

Several historical examples develop this argument. Seneca compares rulers who mastered their anger with those whose cruelty made them hated and vulnerable. His account of Augustus and Cinna shows political mercy transforming a suspected enemy into a loyal supporter. Other figures demonstrate the destructive effects of vengeance, torture and repeated execution. These examples make clemency a practical art of government rather than an abstract moral ideal.

The Stoic background of the work is especially important. Seneca treats self-command as the foundation of legitimate command over others. A ruler unable to govern his anger is not truly powerful, however many people must obey him. Clemency expresses rational control over emotion and over the opportunities for retaliation created by high office. It also reflects the Stoic understanding of human beings as social creatures whose capacities should serve the wider community.

Some aspects of Seneca's political language belong to the Roman imperial world and require critical reading. He assumes that the emperor functions as the directing mind of the state, and he uses images of paternal authority that do not correspond to modern democratic government. His praise of Nero is also complicated by Nero's later reign. Nevertheless, the ethical questions raised by the book extend beyond monarchy. They concern judges, officials and institutions wherever one party has the power to impose serious consequences on another.

Book I ultimately argues that the highest use of authority is not to display how much suffering it can cause, but to determine how little suffering justice requires. Clemency preserves the possibility of correction, protects the public from unnecessary violence and prevents the powerful from becoming morally deformed by their own position. For Seneca, the ruler who saves lives achieves a form of greatness unavailable to the ruler who merely inspires fear.

I.

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 thousands of swords now restrained by my authority, would be drawn at a sign from me: it rests with me to decide which tribes shall be utterly exterminated, which shall be moved into other lands, which shall receive and which shall be deprived of liberty, what kings shall be reduced to slavery and whose heads shall be crowned, what cities shall be destroyed and what new ones shall be founded. In this position of enormous power I am not tempted to punish men unjustly by anger, by youthful impulse, by the recklessness and insolence of men, which often overcomes the patience even of the best regulated minds, not even that terrible vanity, so common among great sovereigns, of displaying my power by inspiring terror. My sword is sheathed, nay, fixed in its sheath: I am sparing of the blood even of the lowest of my subjects: a man who has nothing else to recommend him, will nevertheless find favour in my eyes because he is a man. I keep harshness concealed, but I have clemency always at hand: I watch myself as carefully as though I had to give an account of my actions to those laws which I have brought out of darkness and neglect into the light of day. I have been moved to compassion by the youth of one culprit, and the age of another: I have spared one man because of his great place, another on account of his insignificance: when I could find no reason for showing mercy, I have had mercy upon myself. I am prepared this day, should the gods demand it, to render to them an account of the human race.” You, Caesar, can boldly say that everything which has come into your charge has been kept safe, and that the state has neither openly nor secretly suffered any loss at your hands. You have coveted a glory which is most rare, and which has been obtained by no emperor before you, that of innocence. Your remarkable goodness is not thrown away, nor is it ungratefully or spitefully undervalued. Men feel gratitude towards you: no one person ever was so dear to another as you are to the people of Rome, whose great and enduring benefit you are.

You have, however, taken upon yourself a mighty burden: no one any longer speaks of the good times of the late Emperor Augustus, or the first years of the reign of Tiberius, or proposes for your imitation any model outside yourself: yours is a pattern reign. This would have been difficult had your goodness of heart not been innate, but merely adopted for a time; for no one can wear a mask for long, and fictitious qualities soon give place to true ones. Those which are founded upon truth, and which, so to speak, grow out of a solid basis, only become greater and better as time goes on. The Roman people were in a state of great hazard as long as it was uncertain how your generous disposition would turn out; now, however, the prayers of the community are sure of an answer, for there is no fear that you should suddenly forget your own character. Indeed, excess of happiness makes men greedy, and our desires are never so moderate as to be bounded by what they have obtained: great successes become the stepping-stones to greater ones, and those who have obtained more than they hoped, entertain even more extravagant hopes than before; yet by all your countrymen we hear it admitted that they are now happy, and moreover, that nothing can be added to the blessings that they enjoy, except that they should be eternal. Many circumstances force this admission from them, although it is the one which men are least willing to make: we enjoy a profound and prosperous peace, the power of the law has been openly asserted in the sight of all men, and raised beyond the reach of any violent interference: the form of our government is so happy, as to contain all the essentials of liberty except the power of destroying itself. It is nevertheless your clemency which is most especially admired by the high and low alike: every man enjoys or hopes to enjoy the other blessings of your rule according to the measure of his own personal good fortune, whereas from your clemency all hope alike: no one has so much confidence in his own innocence, as not to feel glad that in your presence stands a clemency which is ready to make allowance for human errors.

II.

I know, however, that there are some who imagine that clemency only saves the life of every villain, because clemency is useless except after conviction, and alone of all the virtues has no function among the innocent. But in the first place, although a physician is only useful to the sick, yet he is held in honour among the healthy also; and so clemency, though she be invoked by those who deserve punishment, is respected by innocent people as well. Next, she can exist also in the person of the innocent, because sometimes misfortune takes the place of crime; indeed, clemency not only succours the innocent, but often the virtuous, since in the course of time it happens that men are punished for actions which deserve praise. Besides this, there is a large part of mankind which might return to virtue if the hope of pardon were not denied them. Yet it is not right to pardon indiscriminately; for when no distinction is made between good and bad men, disorder follows, and all vices break forth; we must therefore take care to distinguish those characters which admit of reform from those which are hopelessly depraved. Neither ought we to show an indiscriminate and general, nor yet an exclusive clemency; for to pardon every one is as great cruelty as to pardon none; we must take a middle course; but as it is difficult to find the true mean, let us be careful, if we depart from it, to do so upon the side of humanity.

III.

But these matters will be treated of better in their own place. I will now divide this whole subject into three parts. The first will be of gentleness of temper: the second will be that which explains the nature and disposition of clemency; for since there are certain vices which have the semblance of virtue, they cannot be separated unless you stamp upon them the marks which distinguish them from one another: in the third place we shall inquire how the mind may be led to practise this virtue, how it may strengthen it, and by habit make it its own. That clemency, which is the most humane of virtues, is that which best befits a man, is necessarily an axiom, not only among our own sect, which regards man as a social animal, born for the good of the whole community, but even among those philosophers who give him up entirely to pleasure, and whose words and actions have no other aim than their own personal advantage. If man, as they argue, seeks for quiet and repose, what virtue is there which is more agreeable to his nature than clemency, which loves peace and restrains him from violence? Now clemency becomes no one more than a king or a prince; for great power is glorious and admirable only when it is beneficent; since to be powerful only for mischief is the power of a pestilence. That man's greatness alone rests upon a secure foundation, whom all men know to be as much on their side as he is above them, of whose watchful care for the safety of each and all of them they receive daily proofs, at whose approach they do not fly in terror, as though some evil and dangerous animal had sprung out from its den, but flock to him as they would to the bright and health-giving sunshine. They are perfectly ready to fling themselves upon the swords of conspirators in his defence, to offer their bodies if his only path to safety must be formed of corpses: they protect his sleep by nightly watches, they surround him and defend him on every side, and expose themselves to the dangers which menace him. It is not without good reason that nations and cities thus agree in sacrificing their lives and property for the defence and the love of their king whenever their leader's safety demands it; men do not hold themselves cheap, nor are they insane when so many thousands are put to the sword for the sake of one man, and when by so many deaths they save the life of one man alone, who not unfrequently is old and feeble. Just as the entire body is commanded by the mind, and although the body be so much larger and more beautiful while the mind is impalpable and hidden, and we are not certain as to where it is concealed, yet the hands, feet, and eyes work for it, the skin protects it; at its bidding we either lie still or move restlessly about; when it gives the word, if it be an avaricious master, we scour the sea in search of gain, or if it be ambitious we straightway place our right hand in the flames like Mucius, or leap into the pit like Curtius, so likewise this enormous multitude which surrounds one man is directed by his will, is guided by his intellect, and would break and hurl itself into ruin by its own strength, if it were not upheld by his wisdom.

IV.

Men therefore love their own safety, when they draw up vast legions in battle on behalf of one man, when they rush to the front, and expose their breasts to wounds, for fear that their leader's standards should be driven back. He is the bond which fastens the commonwealth together, he is the breath of life to all those thousands, who by themselves would become merely an encumbrance and a source of plunder if that directing mind were withdrawn:— Bees have but one mind, till their king doth die, But when he dies, disorderly they fly. Such a misfortune will be the end of the peace of Rome, it will wreck the prosperity of this great people; the nation will be free from this danger as long as it knows how to endure the reins: should it ever break them, or refuse to have them replaced if they were to fall off by accident, then this mighty whole, this complex fabric of government will fly asunder into many fragments, and the last day of Rome's empire will be that upon which it forgets how to obey. For this reason we need not wonder that princes, kings, and all other protectors of a state, whatever their titles may be, should be loved beyond the circle of their immediate relatives; for since right-thinking men prefer the interests of the state to their own, it follows that he who bears the burden of state affairs must be dearer to them than their own friends. Indeed, the emperor long ago identified himself so thoroughly with the state, that neither of them could be separated without injury to both, because the one requires power, while the other requires a head.

V.

My argument seems to have wandered somewhat far from the subject, but, by Hercules, it really is very much to the point. For if, as we may infer from what has been said, you are the soul of the state, and the state is your body, you will perceive, I imagine, how necessary clemency is; for when you appear to spare another, you are really sparing yourself. You ought therefore to spare even blameworthy citizens, just as you spare weakly limbs; and when blood-letting becomes necessary, you must hold your hand, lest you should cut deeper than you need. Clemency therefore, as I said before, naturally befits all mankind, but more especially rulers, because in their case there is more for it to save, and it is displayed upon a greater scale. Cruelty in a private man can do but very little harm; but the ferocity of princes is war. Although there is a harmony between all the virtues, and no one is better or more honourable than another, yet some virtues befit some persons better than others. Magnanimity befits all mortal men, even the humblest of all; for what can be greater or braver than to resist ill fortune? Yet this virtue of magnanimity occupies a wider room in prosperity, and shows to greater advantage on the judgment seat than on the floor of the court. On the other hand, clemency renders every house into which it is admitted happy and peaceful; but though it is more rare, it is on that account even more admirable in a palace. What can be more remarkable than that he whose anger might be indulged without fear of the consequences, whose decision, even though a harsh one, would be approved even by those who were to suffer by it, whom no one can interrupt, and of whom indeed, should he become violently enraged, no one would dare to beg for mercy, should apply a check to himself and use his power in a better and calmer spirit, reflecting: "Any one may break the law to kill a man, no one but I can break it to save him"? A great position requires a great mind, for unless the mind raises itself to and even above the level of its station, it will degrade its station and draw it down to the earth; now it is the property of a great mind to be calm and tranquil and to look down upon outrages and insults with contempt. It is a womanish thing to rage with passion; it is the part of wild beasts, and that, too, not of the most noble ones, to bite and worry the fallen. Elephants and lions pass by those whom they have struck down; inveteracy is the quality of ignoble animals. Fierce and implacable rage does not befit a king, because he does not preserve his superiority over the man to whose level he descends by indulging in rage; but if he grants their lives and honours to those who are in jeopardy and who deserve to lose them, he does what can only be done by an absolute ruler; for life may be torn away even from those who are above us in station, but can never be granted save to those who are below us. To save men's lives is the privilege of the loftiest station, which never deserves admiration so much as when it is able to act like the gods, by whose kindness good and bad men alike are brought into the world. Thus a prince, imitating the mind of a god, ought to look with pleasure on some of his countrymen

because they are useful and good men, while he ought to allow others to remain to fill up the roll; he ought to be pleased with the existence of the former, and to endure that of the latter.

VI.

Look at this city of Rome, in which the widest streets become choked whenever anything stops the crowds which unceasingly pour through them like raging torrents, in which the people streaming to three theatres demand the roads at the same time, in which the produce of the entire world is consumed, and reflect what a desolate waste it would become if only those were left in it whom a strict judge would acquit. How few magistrates are there who ought not to be condemned by the very same laws which they administer? How few prosecutors are themselves faultless? I imagine, also, that few men are less willing to grant pardon, than those who have often had to beg it for themselves. We have all of us sinned, some more deeply than others, some of set purpose, some either by chance impulse or led away by the wickedness of others; some of us have not stood bravely enough by our good resolutions, and have lost our innocence, although unwillingly and after a struggle; nor have we only sinned, but to the very end of our lives we shall continue to sin. Even if there be any one who has so thoroughly cleansed his mind that nothing can hereafter throw him into disorder or deceive him, yet even he has reached this state of innocence through sin.

VII.

Since I have made mention of the gods, I shall state the best model on which a prince may mould his life to be, that he deal with his countrymen as he would that the gods may deal with himself. Is it then desirable that the gods should show no mercy upon sins and mistakes, and that they should harshly pursue us to our ruin? In that case what king will be safe? Whose limbs will not be torn asunder and collected by the soothsayers? If, on the other hand, the gods are placable and kind, and do not at once avenge the crimes of the powerful with thunderbolts, is it not far more just that a man set in authority over other men should exercise his power in a spirit of clemency and should consider whether the condition of the world is more beauteous and pleasant to the eyes on a fine calm day, or when everything is shaken with frequent thunder-claps and when lightning flashes on all sides! Yet the appearance of a peaceful and constitutional reign is the same as that of the calm and brilliant sky. A cruel reign is disordered and hidden in darkness, and while all shake with terror at the sudden explosions, not even he who caused all this disturbance escapes unharmed. It is easier to find excuses for private men who obstinately claim their rights; possibly they may have been injured, and their rage may spring from their wrongs; besides this, they fear to be despised, and not to return the injuries which they have received looks like weakness rather than clemency; but one who can easily avenge himself, if he neglects to do so, is certain to gain praise for goodness of heart. Those who are born in a humble station may with greater freedom exercise violence, go to law, engage in quarrels, and indulge their angry passions; even blows count for little between two equals; but in the case of a king, even loud clamour and unmeasured talk are unbecoming.

VIII.

You think it a serious matter to take away from kings the right of free speech which the humblest enjoy. "This," you say, "is to be a subject, not a king." What, do you not find that we have the command, you the subjection? Your position is quite different to that of those who lie hid in the crowd which they never leave, whose very virtues cannot be manifested without a long struggle, and whose vices are shrouded in obscurity; rumour catches up your acts and sayings, and therefore no persons ought to be more careful of their reputation than those who are certain to have a great one, whatsoever one they may have deserved. How many things there are that you may not do which, thanks to you, we may do! I am able to walk alone without fear in any part of Rome whatever, although no companion accompanies me, though there is no guard at my house no sword by my side. You must live armed in the peace which you maintain. You cannot stray away from your position; it besets you, and follows you with mighty pomp wherever you go. This slavery of not being able to sink one's rank belongs to the highest position of all; yet it is a burden which you share with the gods. They too are held fast in heaven, and it is no more possible for them to come down than it is safe for you; you are chained to your lofty pinnacle. Of our movements few persons are aware; we can go forth and return home and change our dress without its being publicly known; but you are no more able to hide yourself than the sun. A strong light is all around you, the eyes of all are turned towards it. Do you think you are leaving your house? nay, you are dawning upon the world. You cannot speak without all nations everywhere hearing your voice; you cannot be angry, without making everything tremble, because you can strike no one without shaking all around him. Just as thunderbolts when they fall endanger few men but terrify all, so the chastisement inflicted by great potentates terrify more widely than they injure, and that for good reasons; for in the case of one whose power is absolute, men do not think of what he has done, so much as of what he may do. Add to this that private men endure wrongs more tamely, because they have already endured others; the safety of kings on the other hand is more surely founded on kindness, because frequent punishment may crush the hatred of a few, but excites that of all. A king ought to wish to pardon while he has still grounds for being severe; if he acts otherwise, just as lopped trees sprout forth again with numberless boughs, and many kinds of crops are cut down in order that they may grow more thickly, so a cruel king increases the number of his enemies by destroying them; for the parents and children of those who are put to death, and their relatives and friends, step into the place of each victim.

IX.

I wish to prove the truth of this by an example drawn from your own family. The late Emperor Augustus was a mild prince, if in estimating his character one reckons from the era of his reign; yet he appealed to arms while the state was shared among the triumvirate. When he was just of your age, at the end of his twenty-second year, he had already hidden daggers under the clothes of his friends, he had already conspired to assassinate Marcus Antonius, the consul, he had already taken part in the proscription. But when he had passed his sixtieth year, and was staying in Gaul, intelligence was brought to him that Lucius Cinna, a dull man, was plotting against him: the plot was betrayed by one of the conspirators, who told him where, when, and in what manner Cinna meant to attack him. Augustus determined to consult his own safety against this man, and ordered a council of his own friends to be summoned. He passed a disturbed night, reflecting that he would be obliged to condemn to death a youth of noble birth, who was guilty of no crime save this one, and who was the grandson of Gnaeus Pompeius. He, who had sat at dinner and heard M. Antonius read aloud his edict for the proscription, could not now bear to put one single man to death. With groans he kept at intervals making various inconsistent exclamations:—"What! shall I allow my assassin to walk about at his ease while I am racked by fears? Shall the man not be punished who has plotted not merely to slay but actually to sacrifice at the altar" (for the conspirators intended to attack him when he was sacrificing), "now when there is peace by land and sea, that life which so many civil wars have sought in vain, which has passed unharmed through so many battles of fleets and armies?" Then, after an interval of silence, he would say to himself in a far louder, angrier tone than he had used to Cinna, "Why do you live, if it be to so many men's advantage that you should die? Is there no end to these executions? to this bloodshed? I am a figure set up for nobly-born youths to sharpen their swords on. Is life worth having, if so many must perish to prevent my losing it?" At last his wife Livia interrupted him, saying: "Will you take a woman's advice? Do as the physicians do, who, when the usual remedies fail, try their opposites. Hitherto you have gained nothing by harsh measures: Salvidienus has been followed by Lepidus, Lepidus by Muraena, Muraena by Caepio, and Caepio by Egnatius, not to mention others of whom one feels ashamed of their having dared to attempt so great a deed. Now try what effect clemency will have: pardon Lucius Cinna. He has been detected, he cannot now do you any harm, and he can do your reputation much good." Delighted at finding some one to support his own view of the case, he thanked his wife, straightway ordered his friends, whose counsel he had asked for, to be told that he did not require their advice, and summoned Cinna alone. After ordering a second seat to be placed for Cinna, he sent every one else out of the room, and said:—"The first request which I have to make of you is, that you will not interrupt me while I am speaking to you: that you will not cry out in the

middle of my address to you: you shall be allowed time to speak freely in answer to me. Cinna, when I found you in the enemy's camp, you who had not become but were actually born my enemy, I saved your life, and restored to you the whole of your father's estate. You are now so prosperous and so rich, that many of the victorious party envy you, the vanquished one: when you were a candidate for the priesthood I passed over many others whose parents had served with me in the wars, and gave it to you: and now, after I have deserved so well of you, you have made up your mind to kill me." When at this word the man exclaimed that he was far from being so insane, Augustus replied, "You do not keep your promise, Cinna; it was agreed upon between us that you should not interrupt me. I repeat, you are preparing to kill me." He then proceeded to tell him of the place, the names of his accomplices, the day, the way in which they had arranged to do the deed, and which of them was to give the fatal stab. When he saw Cinna's eyes fixed upon the ground, and that he was silent, no longer because of the agreement, but from consciousness of his guilt, he said, "What is your intention in doing this? is it that you yourself may be emperor? The Roman people must indeed be in a bad way if nothing but my life prevents your ruling over them. You cannot even maintain the dignity of your own house: you have recently been defeated in a legal encounter by the superior influence of a freedman: and so you can find no easier task than to call your friends to rally round you against Caesar. Come, now, if you think that I alone stand in the way of your ambition; will Paulus and Fabius Maximus, will the Cossi and the Servilii and all that band of nobles, whose names are no empty pretence, but whose ancestry really renders them illustrious—will they endure that you should rule over them?" Not to fill up the greater part of this book by repeating the whole of his speech—for he is known to have spoken for more than two hours, lengthening out this punishment, which was the only one which he intended to inflict—he said at last: "Cinna, I grant you your life for the second time: when I gave it you before you were an open enemy, you are now a secret plotter and parricide. From this day forth let us be friends: let us try which of us is the more sincere, I in giving you your life, or you in owing your life to me." After this he of his own accord bestowed the consulship upon him, complaining of his not venturing to offer himself as a candidate for that office, and found him ever afterwards his most grateful and loyal adherent. Cinna made the emperor his sole heir, and no one ever again formed any plot against him.

X.

Your great-great-grandfather spared the vanquished: for whom could he have ruled over, had he not spared them? He recruited Sallustius, the Cocoeii, the Deillii, and the whole inner circle of his court from the camp of his opponents. Soon afterwards his clemency gave him a Domitius, a Messala, an Asinius, a Cicero, and all the flower of the state. For what a long time he waited for Lepidus to die: for years he allowed him to retain all the insignia of royalty, and did not allow the office of pontifex maximus to be conferred upon himself until after Lepidus's death; for he wished it to be called a honourable office rather than a spoil stripped from a vanquished foe. It was this clemency which made him end his days in safety and security: this it was which rendered him popular and beloved, although he had laid his hands on the neck of the Romans when they were still unused to bearing the yoke: this gives him even at the present day a reputation such as hardly any prince has enjoyed during his own lifetime. We believe him to be a god, and not merely because we are bidden to do so. We declare that Augustus was a good emperor, and that he was well worthy to bear his parent's name, for no other reason than because he did not even show cruelty in avenging personal insults, which most princes feel more keenly than actual injuries; because he smiled at scandalous jests against himself, because it was evident that he himself suffered when he punished others, because he was so far from putting to death even those whom he had convicted of intriguing with his daughter, that when they were banished he gave them passports to enable them to travel more safely. When you know that there will be many who will take your quarrel upon themselves, and will try to gain your favour by the murder of your enemies, you do indeed pardon them if you not only grant them their lives but ensure that they shall not lose them.

XI.

Such was Augustus when an old man, or when growing old: in his youth he was hasty and passionate, and did many things upon which he looked back with regret. No one will venture to compare the rule of the blessed Augustus to the mildness of your own, even if your youth be compared with his more than ripe old age: he was gentle and placable, but it was after he had dyed the sea at Actium with Roman blood; after he had wrecked both the enemy's fleet and his own at Sicily; after the holocaust of Perusia and the proscriptions. But I do not call it clemency to be wearied of cruelty; true clemency, Caesar, is that which you display, which has not begun from remorse at its past ferocity, on which there is no stain, which has never shed the blood of your countrymen: this, when combined with unlimited power, shows the truest self-control and all-embracing love of the human race as of one's self, not corrupted by any low desires, any extravagant ideas, or any of the bad examples of former emperors into trying, by actual experiment, how great a tyranny you would be allowed to exercise over his countrymen, but inclining rather to blunting your sword of empire. You, Caesar, have granted us the boon of keeping our state free from bloodshed, and that of which you boast, that you have not caused one single drop of blood to flow in any part of the world, is all the more magnanimous and marvellous because no one ever had the power of the sword placed in his hands at an earlier age. Clemency, then, makes princes safer as well as more respected, and is a glory to empires besides being their most trustworthy means of preservation. Why have legitimate sovereigns grown old on the throne, and bequeathed their power to their children and grandchildren, while the sway of despotic usurpers is both hateful and shortlived? What is the difference between the tyrant and the king—for their outward symbols of authority and their powers are the same—except it be that tyrants take delight in cruelty, whereas kings are only cruel for good reasons and because they cannot help it.

XII.

“What, then,” say you, “do not kings also put men to death?” They do, but only when that measure is recommended by the public advantage: tyrants enjoy cruelty. A tyrant differs from a king in deeds, not in title: for the elder Dionysius deserves to be preferred before many kings, and what can prevent our styling Lucius Sulla a tyrant, since he only left off slaying because he had no more enemies to slay? Although he laid down his dictatorship and resumed the garb of a private citizen, yet what tyrant ever drank human blood as greedily as he, who ordered seven thousand Roman citizens to be butchered, and who, on hearing the shrieks of so many thousands being put to the sword as he sat in the temple of Bellona, said to the terror-stricken Senate, “Let us attend to our business, Conscript Fathers; it is only a few disturbers of the public peace who are being put to death by my orders.” In saying this he did not lie: they really seemed few to Sulla. But we shall speak of Sulla presently, when we consider how we ought to feel anger against our enemies, at any rate when our own countrymen, members of the same community as ourselves, have been torn away from it and assumed the name of enemies: in the meanwhile, as I was saying, clemency is what makes the great distinction between kings and tyrants. Though each of them may be equally fenced around by armed soldiers, nevertheless the one uses his troops to safeguard the peace of his kingdom, the other uses them to quell great hatred by great terror: and yet he does not look with any confidence upon those to whose hands he entrusts himself. He is driven in opposite directions by conflicting passions: for since he is hated because he is feared, he wishes to be feared because he is hated: and he acts up to the spirit of that odious verse, which has cast so many headlong from their thrones— “Why, let them hate me, if they fear me too!”— not knowing how frantic men become when their hatred becomes excessive: for a moderate amount of fear restrains men, but a constant and keen apprehension of the worst tortures rouses up even the most grovelling spirits to deeds of reckless courage, and causes them to hesitate at nothing. Just so a string stuck full of feathers will prevent wild beasts escaping: but should a horseman begin to shoot at them from another quarter, they will attempt to escape over the very thing that scared them, and will trample the cause of their alarm underfoot. No courage is so great as that which is born of utter desperation. In order to keep people down by terror, you must grant them a certain amount of security, and let them see that they have far more to hope for than to fear: for otherwise, if a man is in equal peril whether he sits still or takes action, he will feel actual pleasure in risking his life, and will fling it away as lightly as though it were not his own.

XIII.

A calm and peaceful king trusts his guards, because he makes use of them to ensure the common safety of all his subjects, and his soldiers, who see that the security of the state depends upon their labours, cheerfully undergo the severest toil and glory in being the protectors of the father of their country: whereas your harsh and murderous tyrant must needs be disliked even by his own janissaries. No man can expect willing and loyal service from those whom he uses like the rack and the axe, as instruments of torture and death, to whom he casts men as he would cast them to wild beasts. No prisoner at the bar is so full of agony and anxiety as a tyrant; for while he dreads both gods and men because they have witnessed, and will avenge his crimes, he has at the same time so far committed himself to this course of action that he is not able to alter it. This is perhaps the very worst quality of cruelty: a man must go on exercising it, and it is impossible for him to retrace his steps and start in a better path; for crimes must be safeguarded by fresh crimes. Yet who can be more unhappy than he who is actually compelled to be a villain? How greatly he ought to be pitied: I mean, by himself, for it would be impious for others to pity a man who has made use of his power to murder and ravage, who has rendered himself mistrusted by every one at home and abroad, who fears the very soldiers to whom he flees for safety, who dare not rely upon the loyalty of his friends or the affection of his children: who, whenever he considers what he has done, and what he is about to do, and calls to mind all the crimes and torturings with which his conscience is burdened, must often fear death, and yet must often wish for it, for he must be even more hateful to himself than he is to his subjects. On the other hand, he who takes an interest in the entire state, who watches over every department of it with more or less care, who attends to all the business of the state as well as if it were his own, who is naturally inclined to mild measures, and shows, even when it is to his advantage to punish, how unwilling he is to make use of harsh remedies; who has no angry or savage feelings, but wields his authority calmly and beneficially, being anxious that even his subordinate officers shall be popular with his countrymen, who thinks his happiness complete if he can make the nation share his prosperity, who is courteous in language, whose presence is easy of access, who looks obligingly upon his subjects, who is disposed to grant all their reasonable wishes, and does not treat their unreasonable wishes with harshness—such a prince is loved, protected, and worshipped by his whole empire. Men talk of such a one in private in the same words which they use in public: they are eager to bring up families under his reign, and they put an end to the childlessness which public misery had previously rendered general: every one feels that he will indeed deserve that his children should be grateful to him for having brought them into so happy an age. Such a prince is rendered safe by his own beneficence; he has no need of guards, their arms serve him merely as decorations.

XIV.

What, then, is his duty? It is that of good parents, who sometimes scold their children goodnaturedly, sometimes threaten them, and sometimes even flog them. No man in his senses disinherits his son for his first offence: he does not pass this extreme sentence upon him unless his patience has been worn out by many grievous wrongs, unless he fears that his son will do something worse than that which he punishes him for having done; before doing this he makes many attempts to lead his son's mind into the right way while it is still hesitating between good and evil and has only taken its first steps in depravity; it is only when its case is hopeless that he adopts this extreme measure. No one demands that people should be executed until after he has failed to reform them. This which is the duty of a parent, is also that of the prince whom with no unmeaning flattery we call "The Father of our Country." Other names are given as titles of honour: we have styled some men "The Great," "The Fortunate," or "The August," and have thus satisfied their passion for grandeur by bestowing upon them all the dignity that we could: but when we style a man "The Father of his Country" we give him to understand that we have entrusted him with a father's power over us, which is of the mildest character, for a father takes thought for his children and subordinates his own interests to theirs. It is long before a father will cut off a member of his own body: even after he has cut it off he longs to replace it, and in cutting it off he laments and hesitates much and long: for he who condemns quickly is not far from being willing to condemn; and he who inflicts too great punishment comes very near to punishing unjustly.

XV.

Within my own recollection the people stabbed in the forum with their writing-styles a Roman knight named Tricho, because he had flogged his son to death: even the authority of Augustus Caesar could hardly save him from the angry clutches of both fathers and sons: but every one admired Tarius, who, on discovering that his son meditated parricide, tried him, convicted him, and was then satisfied with punishing him by exile, and that, too, to that pleasant place of exile, Marseilles, where he made him the same yearly allowance which he had done while he was innocent: the result of this generosity was that even in a city where every villain finds some one to defend him, no one doubted that he was justly condemned, since even the father who was unable to hate him, nevertheless had condemned him. In this very same instance I will give you an example of a good prince, which you may compare with a good father. Tarius, when about to sit in judgement on his son, invited Augustus Caesar to assist in trying him: Augustus came into his private house, sat beside the father, took part in another man's family council, and did not say, "Nay, let him rather come to my house," because if he had done so, the trial would have been conducted by Caesar and not by the father. When the cause had been heard, after all that the young man pleaded in his own defence and all that was alleged against him had been thoroughly discussed, the emperor begged that each man would write his sentence (instead of pronouncing it aloud), in order that they might not all follow Caesar in giving sentence: then, before the tablets were opened, he declared that if Tarius, who was a rich man, made him his heir, he would not accept the bequest. One might say "It showed a paltry mind in him to fear that people would think that he condemned the son in order to enable himself to inherit the estate." I am of a contrary opinion—any one of us ought to have sufficient trust in the consciousness of his own integrity to defend him against calumny, but princes must take great pains to avoid even the appearance of evil. He swore that he would not accept the property. On that day Tarius lost two heirs to his estate, but Caesar gained the liberty of forming an unbiassed judgement: and when he had proved that his severity was disinterested, a point of which a prince should never lose sight, he gave sentence that the son should be banished to whatever place the father might choose. He did not sentence him to the sack and the snakes, or to prison, because he thought, not of who it was upon whom he was passing sentence, but of who it was with whom he was sitting in judgement: he said that a father ought to be satisfied with the mildest form of punishment for his stripling son, who had been seduced into a crime which he had attempted so faintheartedly as to be almost innocent of it, and that he ought to be removed from Rome and out of his father's sight.

XVI.

How worthy was he to be invited by fathers to join their family councils: how worthy to be made co-heir with innocent children! This is the sort of clemency which befits a prince; wherever he goes, let him make every one more charitable. In the king's sight, no one ought to be so despicable that he should not notice whether he lives or dies: be his character what it may, he is a part of the empire. Let us take examples for great kingdoms from smaller ones. There are many forms of royalty: a prince reigns over his subjects, a father over his children, a teacher over his scholars, a tribune or centurion over his soldiers. Would not he, who constantly punished his children by beating them for the most trifling faults, be thought the worst of fathers? Which is worthier to impart a liberal education: he who flays his scholars alive if their memory be weak, or if their eyes do not run quickly along the lines as they read, or he who prefers to improve and instruct them by kindly warnings and moral influence? If a tribune or a centurion is harsh, he will make men deserters, and one cannot blame them for desertion. It is never right to rule a human being more harshly and cruelly than we rule dumb animals; yet a skilled horse-breaker will not scare a horse by frequent blows, because he will become timid and vicious if you do not soothe him with pats and caresses. So also a huntsman, both when he is teaching puppies to follow the tracks of wild animals, and when he uses dogs already trained to drive them from their lairs and hunt them, does not often threaten to beat them, for, if he does, he will break their spirit, and make them stupid and currish with fear; though, on the other hand, he will not allow them to roam and range about unrestrained. The same is the case with those who drive the slower draught cattle, which, though brutal treatment and wretchedness is their lot from their birth, still, by excessive cruelty may be made to refuse to draw.

XVII.

No creature is more self-willed, requires more careful management, or ought to be treated with greater indulgence than man. What, indeed, can be more foolish than that we should blush to show anger against dogs or beasts of burden, and yet wish one man to be most abominably ill-treated by another? We are not angry with diseases, but apply remedies to them: but this also is a disease of the mind, and requires soothing medicine and a physician who is anything but angry with his patient. It is the part of a bad physician to despair of effecting a cure: he, to whom the care of all men's well-being is entrusted, ought to act like a good physician, and not be in a hurry to give up hope or to declare that the symptoms are mortal: he should wrestle with vices, withstand them, reproach some with their distemper, and deceive others by a soothing mode of treatment, because he will cure his patient more quickly and more thoroughly if the medicines which he administers escape his notice: a prince should take care not only of the recovery of his people, but also that their scars should be honourable. Cruel punishments do a king no honour: for who doubts that he is able to inflict them? but, on the other hand, it does him great honour to restrain his powers, to save many from the wrath of others, and sacrifice no one to his own.

XVIII.

It is creditable to a man to keep within reasonable bounds in his treatment of his slaves. Even in the case of a human chattel one ought to consider, not how much one can torture him with impunity, but how far such treatment is permitted by natural goodness and justice, which prompts us to act kindly towards even prisoners of war and slaves bought for a price (how much more towards free-born, respectable gentlemen?), and not to treat them with scornful brutality as human chattels, but as persons somewhat below ourselves in station, who have been placed under our protection rather than assigned to us as servants. Slaves are allowed to run and take sanctuary at the statue of a god, though the laws allows a slave to be ill-treated to any extent, there are nevertheless some things which the common laws of life forbid us to do to a human being. Who does not hate Vedius Pollio more even than his own slaves did, because he used to fatten his lampreys with human blood, and ordered those who had offended him in any way to be cast into his fish-pond, or rather snake-pond? That man deserved to die a thousand deaths, both for throwing his slaves to be devoured by the lampreys which he himself meant to eat, and for keeping lampreys that he might feed them in such a fashion. Cruel masters are pointed at with disgust in all parts of the city, and are hated and loathed; the wrong-doings of kings are enacted on a wider theatre: their shame and unpopularity endures for ages: yet how far better it would have been never to have been born than to be numbered among those who have been born to do their country harm!

XIX.

Nothing can be imagined which is more becoming to a sovereign than clemency, by whatever title and right he may be set over his fellow citizens. The greater his power, the more beautiful and admirable he will confess his clemency to be: for there is no reason why power should do any harm, if only it be wielded in accordance with the laws of nature. Nature herself has conceived the idea of a king, as you may learn from various animals, and especially from bees, among whom the king's cell is the roomiest, and is placed in the most central and safest part of the hive; moreover, he does no work, but employs himself in keeping the others up to their work. If the king be lost, the entire swarm disperses: they never endure to have more than one king at a time, and find out which is the better by making them fight with one another: moreover the king is distinguished by his statelier appearance, being both larger and more brilliantly coloured than the other bees. The most remarkable distinction, however, is the following: bees are very fierce, and for their size are the most pugnacious of creatures, and leave their stings in the wounds which they make, but the king himself has no sting: nature does not wish him to be savage or to seek revenge at so dear a rate, and so has deprived him of his weapon and disarmed his rage. She has offered him as a pattern to great sovereigns: for she is wont to practise herself in small matters, and to scatter abroad tiny models of the hugest structures. We ought to be ashamed of not learning a lesson in behaviour from these small creatures, for a man, who has so much more power of doing harm than they, ought to show a correspondingly greater amount of self-control. Would that human beings were subject to the same law, and that their anger destroyed itself together with its instrument, so that they could only inflict a wound once, and would not make use of the strength of others to carry out their hatreds: for their fury would soon grow faint if it carried its own punishment with it, and could only give rein to its violence at the risk of death. Even as it is, however, no one can exercise it with safety, for he must needs feel as much fear as he hopes to cause, he must watch every one's movements, and even when his enemies are not laying violent hands upon him he must bear in mind that they are plotting to do so, and he cannot have a single moment free from alarm. Would any one endure to live such a life as this, when he might enjoy the privileges of his high station to the general joy of all men, without injuring any one, and for that very reason have no one to fear? for it is a mistake to suppose that the king can be safe in a state where nothing is safe from the king: he can only purchase a life without anxiety for himself by guaranteeing the same for his subjects. He need not pile up lofty citadels, escarp steep hills, cut away the sides of mountains, and fence himself about with many lines of walls and towers: clemency will render a king safe even upon an open plain. The one fortification which cannot be stormed is the love of his countrymen. What can be more glorious than a life which every one spontaneously and without official pressure hopes may

last long? to excite men's fears, not their hopes, if one's health gives way a little? to know that no one holds anything so dear that he would not be glad to give it in exchange for the health of his sovereign? "O, may no evil befall him!" they would cry: "he must live for his own sake, not only for ours: his constant proofs of goodness have made him belong to the state instead of the state belonging to him." Who would dare to plot any danger to such a king? Who would not rather, if he could, keep misfortune far from one under whom justice, peace, decency, security and merit flourish, under whom the state grows rich with an abundance of all good things, and looks upon its ruler in the same spirit of adoration and respect with which we should look upon the immortal gods, if they allowed us to behold them as we behold him? Why! does not that man come very close to the gods who acts in a god-like manner, and who is beneficent, open-handed, and powerful for good? Your aim and your pride ought to lie in being thought the best, as well as the greatest of mankind.

XX.

A prince generally inflicts punishment for one of two reasons: he wishes either to assert his own rights or those of another. I will first discuss the case in which he is personally concerned, for it is more difficult for him to act with moderation when he acts under the impulse of actual pain than when he merely does so for the sake of the example. It is unnecessary in this place to remind him to be slow to believe what he hears, to ferret out the truth, to show favour to innocence, and to bear in mind that to prove it is as much the business of the judge as that of the prisoner; for these considerations are connected with justice, not with clemency: what we are now encouraging him to do is not to lose control over his feelings when he receives an unmistakeable injury, and to forego punishing it if he possibly can do so with safety, if not, to moderate the severity of the punishment, and to show himself far more unwilling to forgive wrongs done to others than those done to himself: for, just as the truly generous man is not he who gives away what belongs to others, but he who deprives himself of what he gives to another, so also I should not call a prince clement who looked goodnaturedly upon a wrong done to someone else, but one who is unmoved even by the sting of a personal injury, who understands how magnanimous it is for one whose power is unlimited to allow himself to be wronged, and that there is no more noble spectacle than that of a sovereign who has received an injury without avenging it.

XXI.

Vengeance effects two purposes: it either affords compensation to the person to whom the wrong was done, or it ensures him against molestation for the future. A prince is too rich to need compensation, and his power is too evident for him to require to gain a reputation for power by causing any one to suffer. I mean, when he is attacked and injured by his inferiors, for if he sees those who once were his equals in a position of inferiority to himself he is sufficiently avenged. A king may be killed by a slave, or a serpent, or an arrow: but no one can be saved except by some one who is greater than him whom he saves. He, therefore, who has the power of giving and of taking away life ought to use such a great gift of heaven in a spirited manner. Above all, if he once obtains this power over those who he knows were once on a level with himself, he has completed his revenge, and done all that he need to towards the punishment of his adversary: for he who owes his life to another must have lost it, and he who has been cast down from on high and lies at his enemy's feet with his kingdom and his life depending upon the pleasure of another, adds to the glory of his preserver if he be allowed to live, and increases his reputation much more by remaining unhurt than if he were put out of the way. In the former case he remains as an everlasting testimony to the valour of his conqueror; whereas if led in the procession of a triumph he would have soon passed out of sight. If, however, his kingdom also may be safely left in his hands and he himself replaced upon the throne from which he has fallen, such a measure confers an immense increase of lustre on him who scorned to take anything from a conquered king beyond the glory of having conquered him. To do this is to triumph even over one's own victory, and to declare that one has found nothing among the vanquished which it was worth the victor's while to take. As for his countrymen, strangers, and persons of mean condition, he ought to treat them with all the less severity because it costs so much less to overcome them. Some you would be glad to spare, against some you would disdain to assert your rights, and would forbear to touch them as you would to touch little insects which defile your hands when you crush them: but in the case of men upon whom all eyes are fixed, whether they be spared or condemned, you should seize the opportunity of making your clemency widely known.

XXII.

Let us now pass on to the consideration of wrongs done to others, in avenging which the law has aimed at three ends, which the prince will do well to aim at also: they are, either that it may correct him whom it punishes, or that his punishment may render other men better, or that, by bad men being put out of the way, the rest may live without fear. You will more easily correct the men themselves by a slight punishment, for he who has some part of his fortune remaining untouched will behave less recklessly; on the other hand, no one cares about respectability after he has lost it: it is a species of impunity to have nothing left for punishment to take away. It is conducive, however, to good morals in a state, that punishment should seldom be inflicted: for where there is a multitude of sinners men become familiar with sin, shame is less felt when shared with a number of fellow-criminals, and severe sentences, if frequently pronounced, lose the influence which constitutes their chief power as remedial measures. A good king establishes a good standard of morals for his kingdom and drives away vices if he is long-suffering with them, not that he should seem to encourage them, but to be very unwilling and to suffer much when he is forced to chastise them. Clemency in a sovereign even makes men ashamed to do wrong: for punishment seems far more grievous when inflicted by a merciful man.

XXIII.

Besides this, you will find that sins which are frequently punished are frequently committed. Your father sewed up more parricides in sacks during five years, than we hear of in all previous centuries. As long as the greatest of crimes remained without any special law, children were much more timid about committing it. Our wise ancestors, deeply skilled in human nature, preferred to pass over this as being a wickedness too great for belief, and beyond the audacity of the worst criminal, rather than teach men that it might be done by appointing a penalty for doing it: parricides, consequently, were unknown until a law was made against them, and the penalty showed them the way to the crime. Filial affection soon perished, for since that time we have seen more men punished by the sack than by the cross. Where men are seldom punished innocence becomes the rule, and is encouraged as a public benefit. If a state thinks itself innocent, it will be innocent: it will be all the more angry with those who corrupt the general simplicity of manners if it sees that they are few in number. Believe me, it is a dangerous thing to show a state how great a majority of bad men it contains.

XXIV.

A proposal was once made in the Senate to distinguish slaves from free men by their dress: it was then discovered how dangerous it would be for our slaves to be able to count our numbers. Be assured that the same thing would be the case if no one's offence is pardoned: it will quickly be discovered how far the number of bad men exceeds that of the good. Many executions are as disgraceful to a sovereign as many funerals are to a physician: one who governs less strictly is better obeyed. The human mind is naturally self-willed, kicks against the goad, and sets its face against authority; it will follow more readily than it can be led. As well-bred and high-spirited horses are best managed with a loose rein, so mercy gives men's minds a spontaneous bias towards innocence, and the public think that it is worth observing. Mercy, therefore, does more good than severity.

XXV.

Cruelty is far from being a human vice, and is unworthy of man's gentle mind: it is mere bestial madness to take pleasure in blood and wounds, to cast off humanity and transform oneself into a wild beast of the forest. Pray, Alexander, what is the difference between your throwing Lysimachus into a lion's den and tearing his flesh with your own teeth? it is you that have the lion's maw, and the lion's fierceness. How pleased you would be if you had claws instead of nails, and jaws that were capable of devouring men! We do not expect of you that your hand, the sure murderer of your best friends, should restore health to any one; or that your proud spirit, that inexhaustible source of evil to all nations, should be satisfied with anything short of blood and slaughter: we rather call it mercy that your friend should have a human being chosen to be his butcher. The reason why cruelty is the most hateful of all vices is that it goes first beyond the ordinary limits, and then beyond those of humanity; that it devises new kinds of punishments, calls ingenuity to aid it in inventing devices for varying and lengthening men's torture, and takes delight in their sufferings: this accursed disease of the mind reaches its highest pitch of madness when cruelty itself turns into pleasure, and the act of killing a man becomes enjoyment. Such a ruler is soon cast down from his throne; his life is attempted by poison one day and by the sword the next; he is exposed to as many dangers as there are men to whom he is dangerous, and he is sometimes destroyed by the plots of individuals, and at others by a general insurrection. Whole communities are not roused to action by unimportant outrages on private persons; but cruelty which takes a wider range, and from which no one is safe, becomes a mark for all men's weapons. Very small snakes escape our notice, and the whole country does not combine to destroy them; but when one of them exceeds the usual size and grows into a monster, when it poisons fountains with its spittle, scorches herbage with its breath, and spreads ruin wherever it crawls, we shoot at it with military engines. Trifling evils may cheat us and elude our observation, but we gird up our loins to attack great ones. One sick person does not so much as disquiet the house in which he lies; but when frequent deaths show that a plague is raging, there is a general outcry, men take to flight and shake their fists angrily at the very gods themselves. If a fire breaks out under one single roof, the family and the neighbours pour water upon it; but a wide conflagration which has consumed many houses must be smothered under the ruins of a whole quarter of a city.

XXVI.

The cruelty even of private men has sometimes been revenged by their slaves in spite of the certainty that they will be crucified: whole kingdoms and nations when oppressed by tyrants or threatened by them, have attempted their destruction. Sometimes their own guards have risen in revolt, and have used against their master all the deceit, disloyalty, and ferocity which they have learned from him. What, indeed, can he expect from those whom he has taught to be wicked? A bad man will not long be obedient, and will not do only as much evil as he is ordered. But even if the tyrant may be cruel with safety, how miserable his kingdom must be: it must look like a city taken by storm, like some frightful scene of general panic. Everywhere sorrow, anxiety, disorder; men dread even their own pleasures; they cannot even dine with one another in safety when they have to keep watch over their tongues even when in their cups, nor can they safely attend the public shows when informers are ready to find grounds for their impeachment in their behaviour there. Although the spectacles be provided at an enormous expense, with royal magnificence and with world-famous artists, yet who cares for amusement when he is in prison? Ye gods! what a miserable life it is to slaughter and to rage, to delight in the clanking of chains, and to cut off one's countrymen's heads, to cause blood to flow freely wherever one goes, to terrify people, and make them flee away out of one's sight! It is what would happen if bears or lions were our masters, if serpents and all the most venomous creatures were given power over us. Even these animals, devoid of reason as they are, and accused by us of cruel ferocity, spare their own kind, and wild beasts themselves respect their own likeness: but the fury of tyrants does not even stop short at their own relations, and they treat friends and strangers alike, only becoming more violent the more they indulge their passions. By insensible degrees he proceeds from the slaughter of individuals to the ruin of nations, and thinks it a sign of power to set roofs on fire and to plough up the sites of ancient cities: he considers it unworthy of an emperor to order only one or two people to be put to death, and thinks that his cruelty is unduly restrained if whole troops of wretches are not sent to execution together. True happiness, on the other hand; consists in saving many men's lives, in calling them back from the very gates of death, and in being so merciful as to deserve a civic crown. No decoration is more worthy or more becoming to a prince's rank than that crown "for saving the lives of fellow-citizens": not trophies torn from a vanquished enemy, not chariots wet with their savage owner's blood, not spoils captured in war. This power which saves men's lives by crowds and by nations, is godlike: the power of extensive and indiscriminate massacre is the power of downfall and conflagration.

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