

EXAMEN. CHAP. V.

ACCORDING to Machiavel, *there is no certain way to secure the possession of a free State newly conquered, but to ruin it.* To be sure it is an effectual method to prevent revolts. An Englishman, who was mad enough to kill himself some years ago at London, left a billet upon his table, in which he endeavoured to justify the fact, by saying, he had done it to get out of the reach of pain and sickness [n]. Is not this exactly the case of a Prince who ruins a State to prevent the loss of it? I shall not betray the cause of virtue by entering into a dispute with Machiavel, in defence of Humanity: it is easy enough to refute him from his own principles, from the tenets of self-interest, that constant topic and marrow of his writings, that Idol of his iniquitous Politics.

As to his maxim, “that a Prince ought to ruin a free State which is newly conquered, in order to secure possession of it effectually,”

[n] His Majesty is here supposed to allude to a Fact, which is thus related by Dr. Smollet, in his History of England: “The most remarkable incident that distinguished this year (1732) in England, was a very uncommon instance of Suicide; an act of despair, so frequent amongst the English, that in other Countries, it is objected to them as a national reproach. Though it may be generally termed the effect of Lunacy, proceeding from natural causes operating upon the human body; yet it seems in some few instances to have been the result of cool deliberation—Richard Smith, a Bookbinder, and prisoner for debt within the Liberties of the King’s Bench, persuaded his Wife to follow his example, in making away with herself, after they had murdered their little infant. This wretched pair was in the month of April, found hanging in their bed-chamber, at about a yard’s distance from each other; and in a separate apartment, the child lay dead in a cradle. They left two papers, inclosed in a short Letter to their Landlord, whose kindness they implored in favour of their dog and cat. They even left money to pay the porter who should carry the inclosed papers to the person they were addressed to. In one of these, the husband thanked that person for the marks of friendship he had received at his hands, and complained of the ill offices he had undergone from a different quarter. The other Paper, subscribed both by the husband and wife, contained the reasons which induced them to act such a tragedy on themselves and their offspring. This letter was altogether surprizing, for the calm resolution, the good humour, and propriety with which it was written. They declared, that they withdrew themselves from poverty and rags; evils which, through a train of unlucky accidents, were become inevitable. They appealed to their neighbours for the industry with which they had endeavoured to earn a livelyhood: they justified the murder of their child, by saying, it was less cruelty to take her with them, than to leave her friendless in the world, exposed to ignorance and misery: they professed their belief in an Almighty God, the Fountain of Goodness and Beneficence, who could not possibly take delight in the misery of his creatures: they therefore resigned up their lives to him, without any terrible apprehensions; submitting themselves to what in his goodness he should appoint them after their death.—These two unfortunate Suicides had always been industrious and frugal, invincibly honest, and remarkable for conjugal affection.