

C H A P. VII.

Of new Principalities that have been acquired either by the forces and assistance of others, or by good fortune.

THOSE that ascend from a private condition to the dignity of Princes by the favour of fortune alone, meet with few impediments in the acquisition, but many and very great ones in the maintenance of that rank: as the passage is open and nothing to obstruct them, they commonly soar to the throne at one flight; but when they are once seated upon it, they begin to find themselves surrounded with difficulties and dangers. These Princes are chiefly such as either buy their dominions, or receive them as gifts from others; as several did in different parts of Greece, in the cities of Ionia and upon the Hellespont, who were invested with that power by Darius for his own security and glory: or as others did who from private men became Emperors by corrupting the Soldiery. But such Princes depend for their support merely upon the good will and fortune of those that advanced them; which is a very weak and uncertain foundation. Besides, they have neither experience nor strength sufficient to maintain themselves in their States for any considerable time: for in the first place, except they are men of uncommon virtue and abilities, how can it be expected that they should know in what manner to govern other people, who have always been used to live in a private station themselves? and in the next, they cannot well be supposed to have sufficient strength, as they have no troops in whose fidelity and affection they can put any confidence. It must likewise be considered, that new raised States (like all other things of sudden rise and growth) have neither had time to strike their roots deep enough, nor to fortify themselves with proper connexions: so that they must necessarily be in danger of being blown down by the first gust of adversity; except (as I said before) the Princes that have been thus suddenly exalted, are men of such virtue and wisdom as will enable them to make due provision in time for the conservation of what fortune has thrown into their hands; and afterwards to lay such foundations for their establishment as others have done before they were Princes.

To confirm what I have said concerning the acquisition of Dominion either by virtue and merit, or by good fortune, I will cite two instances