

C H A P. VIII.

Of such as have arrived at Dominion by wicked and unjustifiable means.

BUT as there are two other methods by which a private man may likewise be exalted to dominion, without being altogether obliged either to good fortune or his own Virtue, it may not be amiss to say something of both in this place; though perhaps I may speak more at large concerning one of them when I come to treat of Republics. One of these ways is when a man is advanced to Sovereignty by unjust and nefarious means; the other, when from a private condition he becomes Prince of his Country by the favour and concurrence of his Fellow-citizens or Subjects.

I shall speak chiefly of the first in this chapter, and prove what I say by two examples, the one of ancient, the other of modern date, without entering any further into the merits of the cause, as I think they will be sufficient for any man that has occasion to follow them. Agathocles the Sicilian became King of Syracuse, not only from a private, but from the lowest and most abject condition; for his father was a common Potter. This man was remarkably dissolute and wicked in all the different Stations of his life: yet (notwithstanding his vices) his courage and activity which were very great, inclined him to follow a Military life; and he succeeded so well in it, that he rose through the several gradations of that profession to be Prætor of Syracuse. When he had thoroughly established himself in this Office, he formed a design of making himself Prince, and resolved to maintain that power by force and independently of every one else, which he had obtained as a reward of his Services. For this purpose, he entered into a correspondence with Hamilcar, who then commanded the Carthaginian forces in Sicily; and having communicated his Scheme to him, he called the People and Senate of Syracuse together one morning, as if he had wanted to consult them in some matter of importance to the Common-wealth. But as soon as they were assembled, his Soldiers, upon a Signal before agreed upon, immediately dispatched all the Senators and principal Citizens; after whose death, he both seized upon the Government of that State, and supported himself in it without any obstruction or molestation. And tho' he was afterwards defeated in two engagements with the Carthaginians and besieged by them in Syracuse, he not only found means to defend that City, but leaving one part of his forces for its security,

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