

It may seem strange, perhaps, that Agathocles and some others of the same stamp, should be able not only to support their power so long at home, but to defend themselves against the attempts of foreign Enemies, and were never in any danger from conspiracies amongst their own Citizens, after they had been guilty of so many acts of perfidy and violence: whilst the cruelties of others have been the sole cause that they could not maintain themselves in their Governments even in peaceable times, much less when they were embroiled in wars.

This I take to have happened accordingly as their cruelty was well or ill applied: I say *well* applied (if it ever can be allowable to speak well of what is evil in itself) and it may be called so, when exercised but once, and that too only when it is absolutely necessary for self-preservation; but never repeated afterwards, and even then converted as much as possible to the benefit of the Subject. But it is ill applied, when, though practised with caution and reserve at first, it increases instead of diminishing with time. The proceedings of the former have sometimes been suffered to prosper both by God and man; of which Agathocles may serve as an instance: but in the latter case, it is impossible to support one's self. From whence I conclude, that whosoever Usurps the Government of a State, must exercise what cruelties he shall find necessary at once: that so he may not be obliged to renew them every day, but have it in his power to ingratiate himself with the people, after those severities are discontinued, and to gain them over to his interests by favours and benefactions [c]. But if he takes the other course, either out of timidity, or from bad advice, he must have an Executioner constantly at his elbow, and can never depend upon his Subjects; as they will put no confidence in him when they are daily provoked to rebel by fresh injuries. Matters of severity therefore, should be finished at one blow; that so they may give the less distaste and be the sooner forgotten: but favours and benefactions, on the contrary, should be frugally dispensed, and by little and little at a time, in order to make the remembrance of them continue fresh, and the relish more durable.

In the last place, a Prince ought to make it his chief care to be upon such a footing with his Subjects, that no change of fortune may oblige him to alter his behaviour towards them: otherwise, if he falls into adversity, he will no longer have it in his power to help

[c] As Augustus did, "Qui posito triumviri nomine, militem donis, populum annonâ, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit." Tacit. *Annal.* i. "Et quæ triumviratu gesserat, abolevit." *Ann.* iii.

himself: