

doubt there is a sort of contagious Enthusiasm in particular modes both of thinking and acting. Charles XII. of Sweden, that extraordinary man who overstrained all his Virtues to such a degree that they at last degenerated into so many vices, carried the Life of Alexander the Great about with him from his childhood : and it has been affirmed by several persons who were best acquainted with this Alexander of the North, that it was owing to Quintus Curtius that he ravaged Poland and made Stanislaus a King, as Alexander had done Abdolonymus, and that the battle of Arbella [*f*] was the occasion of his defeat at Pultowa.

[But I wish Machiavel had quoted no worse examples than that of Alexander. He proposes Agathocles and Oliverotto da Fermo as models of prudence and success ; men who supported themselves in the possession of their power, according to him, by a proper application of cruelty] [*g*]. Now by *prudence and a proper application of cruelty*, he means the commission of every kind of violence and wickedness that may be thought necessary for the accomplishment of one's designs : but it must be done *all at once and at one stroke*, and then there is an end of the matter. Dispatch every man you suspect, as well as your open enemies : but be quick, and don't do things by halves.

In this manner he recommends such exploits as the Sicilian Vespers, and the execrable massacre at Paris on St. Bartholomew's day ; the very remembrance of which is enough to make any other man tremble. But he seems to make a joke of such horrible deeds, provided they are executed in such a manner as will only strike a tran-

[*f*] The place where Darius was utterly routed. *Quint. Curt. lib. iv. in init. & cap. 9.*

[*g*] Instead of what is included betwixt the two crotchets above, the text runs thus in the first edition : " Me feroit il permis de descendre d'un aussi grand exemple à de moindres ? Il me semble que lorsqu'il s'agit de l'histoire de l'esprit humain, que la difference des conditions & des etats disparoissent : les Rois ne sont que des hommes, & tous les hommes sont egaux ; il ne s'agit que des impressions ou des modifications en general, qu' ont produit de certaines causes exterieures sur l'esprit humain. Toute l'Angleterre sait ce qui arriva a Londres il y a quelques annees. On y representa une assez mediocre comedie sous le titre des *Voleurs & des tours de Gueux*, ou, *The Beggar's Opera*. Le sujet de cette piece etoit l'imitation de quelques tours de souplesse & de filouteries de voleurs. Il se trouve que beaucoup de personnes s'apperçurent, au sortir de ces representations, de la perte de leurs bagues, de leurs tabatieres, & de leurs montres, & l'auteur se fit si promptement des disciples, qu'ils pratiquoient ses leçons dans le Parterre même. Ceci prouve assez, ce me semble, combien il est pernicieux de citer de mauvais exemples. La premiere reflexion de Machiavel sur Agatocles & sur Oliverotto da Fermo roule sur les raisons qui les soutinrent dans leurs petits etats, malgré leurs cruantez. L'auteur l'attribue a ce qu'ils avoient commis ces cruantez a propos, &c.