

C H A P. XVII.

Of Cruelty and Clemency, and whether it is better for a Prince to be feared or beloved.

TO proceed in due order to the other qualities abovementioned, I say, that a Prince should desire to be esteemed merciful. Nevertheless he ought to take great care how he exercises his clemency. Cæsar Borgia was accounted cruel; but his cruelty not only thoroughly reformed and united Romagna, but settled it in peace, and kept it firm in allegiance to him. Which being duly considered, he will appear much more merciful than the Florentines, who, to avoid the reproach of cruelty, suffered Pistoia to be destroyed [*n*].—A Prince therefore should not regard the imputation of cruelty, provided it is necessary to keep his subjects united and in obedience: since by making a few examples, he will prove himself more merciful in the end, than he who, by too much indulgence, suffers such disorders to arise, as commonly terminate in murder and rapine [*o*]: for these enormities injure and disturb the peace of a whole community; whereas legal executions extend only to particular persons. But for a new Prince it is almost impossible to avoid the charge of cruelty, as he must naturally be surrounded with dangers on every side [*p*]. Hence Virgil, in the first book of

[*n*] By not exterminating the two families of Panciatici and Cancellieri, who divided that City into two factions, and threw every thing into disorder and confusion by their quarrels. See Machiavel's *Political Discourses*, Book III. Chap. 27.

[*o*] Thus Tacitus says of Corbulo, that his severity was of great service, by restoring military discipline to its ancient vigour; as the indulgence of former Generals had almost ruined their armies by pardoning deserters, &c. “*Quia duritatem cæli militiæque multi abnuebant, deferebantque, remedium severitate quæsitum est idque usu salubre, & misericordiâ melius apparuit; quippe pauciores illa castra deseruere, quam ea, in quibus ignoscebantur.*” *Annal.* 13.

[*p*] Every new Prince, says Tacitus, stands upon a tottering foundation, and is exposed to a thousand accidents and dangers, “*novum & nutantem Principem.*” *Annal.* 1. “*ad omnes principatûs novi eventus casusque.*” *Hist.* 5. He adds, that people often rise against a new Prince, even when he gives them no occasion so to do; only because the change of a Prince furnishes them with an opportunity of throwing things into confusion, and tempts men of turbulent Spirits to hope they shall succeed better, and mend their fortunes in civil wars. “*Seditio incessit nullis novis causis, nisi quod mutatus Princeps licentiam turbarum & ex civili bello spem præmiorum ostendebat.*” *Annal.* 1. Lewis XI. of France therefore used to say, “that if he had not acted with rigour in the beginning of his reign, he should have been numbered amongst the *unfortunate Princes* spoken of by Boccace.” Another thing which makes it a very difficult matter for new Princes to refrain from severe measures, is, that their Subjects commonly take too great freedoms with them, knowing that they sit but loose upon their thrones at first, and