

I conclude then, that a cruel Prince is much more exposed to treason and other dangers, than one that is tender and merciful: for cruelty is insupportable, and people soon grow tired of fear: but goodness is always amiable, and subjects are never weary of being affectionate.—It is much to be wished, therefore, for the happiness of mankind, that all Princes were good, without being too indulgent: that so their lenity might always be regarded as a virtue, rather than despised as a weakness.

C H A P. XVIII.

How far Princes are obliged to observe their Engagements.

HOW honourable and praise-worthy it is in a Prince to act with integrity and good faith, rather than to have recourse to artifice and collusion, every one must be sensible. Nevertheless, experience has shewn us that those Princes of our own times, who have made the least account of their word and honour, have done the greatest things; and that by dint of craft and circumvention, they have for the most part got the better of others, who proceeded with sincerity and regard to their engagements.—It must be observed then that there are two ways of deciding any contest, the one by Laws, the other by force; the former is proper to men, the latter to beasts. But as laws are not always sufficient to end the difference, it becomes necessary sometimes to make use of force. A Prince therefore ought to know how to resemble a beast as well as a man, upon occasion: and this is obscurely hinted to us by ancient writers, who relate that Achilles, and several other Princes in former times, were sent to be educated by Chiron the Centaur; that as their Preceptor was half-man and half-beast, they might be taught to imitate both natures, since one cannot long support itself without the other. Now, because it is so necessary for a Prince to learn how to act the part of a beast sometimes, he should make the Lion and the Fox his patterns: for the Lion has not cunning enough of himself to keep out of Snares and toils; nor the Fox alone sufficient strength to cope with a Wolf: so that he must be a Fox to enable him to find out the snares, and a Lion in order to terrify the Wolves; and he that copies the Lion *only* is wanting to himself.—A wise Prince therefore, ought not to regard his word when the keeping it will be to his prejudice, and the causes no longer subsist which obliged him to give it. This is a maxim, indeed, which should not be inculcated, if the generality of mankind were good; but as they are far otherwise, and will not perform their engagements to you, you are not obliged