

EXAMEN. CHAP. XIX.

THE rage of Systems is a Species of madness not peculiar to Philosophers only: Politicians are likewise infected with it; and Machiavel in particular. He endeavours to prove, that a Prince ought to be wicked and knavish: these are the Sacramental parts of his Religion. He is as great a Monster as Hercules ever destroyed, though not so strong; and therefore there is no occasion for a club like his to demolish him. For what can be more suitable, more natural, and necessary to Princes, than equity and goodness? — But why should we throw away arguments to prove this? the Politician sufficiently bewilders and confutes himself by asserting the contrary. For in laying it down as a rule, that a Prince, who is lawfully settled upon his throne, ought to be cruel and perfidious, he only instructs him how to ruin himself: and in recommending the practice of these vices to one who has advanced himself to Royalty, in order to establish his usurpation, he gives him such advice, as will necessarily excite all Sovereigns and Republics to rise in arms against him: for how can any private man exalt himself to Sovereignty, without dispossessing some rightful Prince or Republic of their dominions? and what Prince would not endeavour to prevent such an attempt? If Machiavel had composed a System of Villainy for the practice of Highwaymen only, he would not have been so blame-worthy.

I shall take some notice, however, of his manner of reasoning, in this Chapter. — He says, that a Prince makes himself odious to his subjects, chiefly by unjustly seizing upon their properties, or violating the chastity of their wives or daughters. It is certain, that a rapacious, unjust, violent, and cruel Prince, will always be detested by his people: but the same cannot be said in regard to Gallantry. Julius Cæsar, who was said to be every man's woman, and every woman's man, Lewis XIV. of France, and Augustus the late King of Poland, were all extremely addicted to women; yet they were not hated upon the account of their amours: and if Cæsar was assassinated, if the Patriots of Rome plunged their daggers into his heart, it was because he was an Usurper, and not the effect of an amorous disposition. The expulsion of Kings at Rome, occasioned by the outrage committed upon Lucretia, may be alledged perhaps in confirmation of Machiavel's position. In answer to which, I say, that it was not young Tarquin's passion for Lucretia, but his violent manner of gratifying it, which caused that revolution: for as that act of violence awakened the remembrance of other enormities which the Tarquins had been guilty of, the