

faithful to him [g]. But when they are otherwise, it gives people room to entertain but a mean opinion of his judgment, from the badness of his choice, which is the first error he can be guilty of. — Every one that knew Antonio da Venafro, who was prime Minister to Pandolpho Petrucci, Lord of Siena, thought Pandolpho a wise man, for making choice of such a Minister. In the capacities of mankind, there are three sorts or degrees: one man understands things by his own light; another understands things when they are explained to him; and a third neither can understand them of himself, nor when they are explained to him by others. The first are rare and excellent; the second have their merit [b], but the last are good for nothing. It is certain then, that if Pandolpho was not one of the first rank, he was at least of the second: for whenever a Prince has judgment enough to discern what is good or bad in the words and actions of others, people will naturally say, “if he is not a man of the highest abilities himself, he is sufficiently capable however, of distinguishing when his Minister does well or ill, and knows how to reward him for one, and correct him for the other;” so that when the Minister finds it is not in his power to deceive him, he is under a necessity of being a good man, and doing his Duty [i].

But the question is, how a Prince may know whether his Minister is a good one or not: and for this there is an infallible rule. When you see he thinks more of himself than of you, and that all his actions tend to his own private interest and advantage, he is a bad Minister, and you ought not to trust him upon any occasion [k]. For he that has the

[g] For as a man cannot judge properly of the skill of a Painter, a Statuary, or a Sculptor, without being of the same profession: so no one can distinguish wisdom in another, except he is wise himself, “Ut enim de Pictore, Sculptore, fictore, nemo nisi artifex judicare; ita nisi sapiens non potest perspicere sapientem.” *Plin. Epist. 10. lib. 1.*

[b] According to the Poet,

Laudatissimus est, qui per se cuncta videbit:
Sed laudandus & is, qui paret recta monenti.

[i] For this reason, Sejanus, who was well acquainted with the penetration and abilities of Tiberius, gave him good counsel at the beginning of his Ministry. “Sejanus, adhuc incipiente potentia, bonis consiliis notescere volebat.” *Annal. 4.*

[k] After Sejanus had sav'd the life of Tiberius, in the Grotto of Spelunca, Tacitus says, that Tiberius put an entire confidence in him, as a man that had a greater regard for his Prince's safety than his own. “Major ex eo, & ut non fui anxius, cum fide audiebatur.” *Annal. 4.* And Tigellinus, in order to supplant his rivals, told Nero, that he did not act like Burrhus, who had private views of his own; that his only ambition was to watch over the safety of his Prince. “Non se ut Burrhum diversas spes, sed solam incolumitatem Neronis spectare.” *Annal. 14.* Most Ministers talk in this style; but their heart and actions often belye their lips.

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