

Of Faction

MANY have an opinion not wise, that for a prince to govern his estate, or for a great person to govern his proceedings, according to the respect of factions, is a principal part of policy; whereas contrariwise, the chiefest wisdom, is either in ordering those things which are general, and wherein men of several factions do nevertheless agree; or in dealing with correspondence to particular persons, one by one. But I say not that the considerations of factions, is to be neglected. Mean men, in their rising, must adhere; but great men, that have strength in themselves, were better to maintain themselves indifferent, and neutral. Yet even in beginners, to adhere so moderately, as he be a man of the one faction, which is most passable with the other, commonly giveth best way. The lower and weaker faction, is the firmer in conjunction; and it is often seen, that a few that are stiff, do tire out a greater number, that are more moderate. When one of the factions is extinguished, the remaining subdivideth; as the faction between Lucullus, and the rest of the nobles of the senate (which they called Optimates) held out awhile, against the faction of Pompey and Caesar; but when the senate's authority was pulled down, Caesar and Pompey soon after brake. The faction or party of Antonius and Octavianus Caesar, against Brutus and Cassius, held out likewise for a time; but when Brutus and Cassius were overthrown, then soon after, Antonius and Octavianus brake and subdivided. These examples are of wars, but the same holdeth in private factions. And therefore, those that are seconds in factions, do many times, when the faction subdivideth, prove principals; but many times also, they prove ciphers and cashiered; for many a man's strength is in opposition; and when that faileth, he groweth out of use. It is commonly seen, that men, once placed, take in with the contrary faction, to that by which they enter: thinking belike, that they have the first sure, and now are ready for a new purchase. The traitor in faction, lightly goeth away with it; for when matters have stuck long in balancing, the winning of some one man casteth them, and he getteth all the thanks. The even carriage between two factions, proceedeth not always of moderation, but of a trueness to a man's self, with end to make use of both. Certainly in Italy, they hold it a little suspect in popes, when they have often in their mouth Padre commune: and take it to be a sign of one, that meaneth to refer all to the greatness of his own house. Kings had need beware, how they side themselves, and make themselves as of a faction or party; for leagues within the state, are ever pernicious to monarchies: for they raise an obligation, paramount to obligation of sovereignty, and make the king *tanquam unus ex nobis*; as was to be seen in the League of France. When factions are carried too high and too violently, it is a sign of weakness in princes; and much to the prejudice, both of their authority and business. The motions of factions under kings ought to be, like the motions (as the astronomers speak) of the inferior orbs, which may have their proper motions, but yet still are quietly carried, by the higher motion of *primum mobile*.

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