

Of Suitors

MANY ill matters and projects are undertaken; and private suits do putrefy the public good. Many good matters, are undertaken with bad minds; I mean not only corrupt minds, but crafty minds, that intend not performance. Some embrace suits, which never mean to deal effectually in them; but if they see there may be life in the matter, by some other mean, they will be content to win a thank, or take a second reward, or at least to make use, in the meantime, of the suitor's hopes. Some take hold of suits, only for an occasion to cross some other; or to make an information, whereof they could not otherwise have apt pretext; without care what become of the suit, when that turn is served; or, generally, to make other men's business a kind of entertainment, to bring in their own. Nay, some undertake suits, with a full purpose to let them fall; to the end to gratify the adverse party, or competitor. Surely there is in some sort a right in every suit; either a right of equity, if it be a suit of controversy; or a right of desert, if it be a suit of petition. If affection lead a man to favor the wrong side in justice, let him rather use his countenance to compound the matter, than to carry it. If affection lead a man to favor the less worthy in desert, let him do it, without depraving or disabling the better deserver. In suits which a man doth not well understand, it is good to refer them to some friend of trust and judgment, that may report, whether he may deal in them with honor: but let him choose well his referendaries, for else he may be led by the nose. Suitors are so distasted with delays and abuses, that plain dealing, in denying to deal in suits at first, and reporting the success barely, and in challenging no more thanks than one hath deserved, is grown not only honorable, but also gracious. In suits of favor, the first coming ought to take little place: so far forth, consideration may be had of his trust, that if intelligence of the matter could not otherwise have been had, but by him, advantage be not taken of the note, but the party left to his other means; and in some sort recompensed, for his discovery. To be ignorant of the value of a suit, is simplicity; as well as to be ignorant of the right thereof, is want of conscience. Secrecy in suits, is a great mean of obtaining; for voicing them to be in forwardness, may discourage some kind of suitors, but doth quicken and awake others. But timing of the suit is the principal. Timing, I say, not only in respect of the person that should grant it, but in respect of those, which are like to cross it. Let a man, in the choice of his mean, rather choose the fittest mean, than the greatest mean; and rather them that deal in certain things, than those that are general. The reparation of a denial, is sometimes equal to the first grant; if a man show himself neither dejected nor discontented. *Iniquum petas ut aequum feras* is a good rule, where a man hath strength of favor: but otherwise, a man were better rise in his suit; for he, that would have ventured at first to have lost the suitor, will not in the conclusion lose both the suitor, and his own former favor. Nothing is thought so easy a request to a great person, as his letter; and yet, if it be not in a good cause, it is so much out of his reputation. There are no worse instruments, than these general contrivers of suits; for they are but a kind of poison, and infection, to public proceedings.

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