

Monarchs

SAINT CHRYSOSTOM has this very acute observation on *kings*: many monarchs are infected with a strange wish that their successors may turn out bad princes. Good kings desire it, as they imagine, continues this pious politician, that their glory will appear the more splendid by the contrast; and the bad desire it, as they consider such kings will serve to countenance their own misdemeanors.

Princes, says Gracian, are willing to be *aided*, but not *surpassed*; which maxim is thus illustrated.

A Spanish lord having frequently played at chess with Philip II. and won all the games, perceived, when his majesty rose from play, that he was much ruffled with chagrin. The lord, when he returned home, said to his family,—“My children, we have nothing more to do at court: there we must expect no favour; for the king is offended at my having won of him every game of chess.”—As chess entirely depends on the genius of the players, and not on fortune, King Philip the chess-player conceived he ought to suffer *no rival*.

This appears still clearer by the anecdote told of the Earl of Sunderland, minister to George I., who was partial to the game of chess. He once played with the Laird of Cluny, and the learned Cunningham, the editor of

Horace. Cunningham, with too much skill and too much sincerity, beat his lordship. “The earl was so fretted at his superiority and surliness, that he dismissed him without any reward. Cluny allowed himself sometimes to be beaten; and by that means got his pardon, with something handsome besides.”

In the Criticon of Gracian, there is a singular anecdote relative to kings.

A Polish monarch having quitted his companions when he was hunting, his courtiers found him, a few days after, in a market-place, disguised as a porter, and lending out the use of his shoulders for a few pence. At this they were as much surprised, as they were doubtful at first whether the *porter* could be his *majesty*. At length they ventured to express their complaints that so great a personage should debase himself by so vile an employment. His majesty having heard them, replied, “Upon my honour, gentlemen, the load which I quitted is by far heavier than the one you see me carry here: the weightiest is but a straw, when compared to that world under which I laboured. I have slept more in four nights than I have during all my reign. I begin to live, and to be king of myself. Elect whom you choose. For me, who am so well, it were madness to return to

court.” Another Polish king, who succeeded this philosophic *monarch* and *porter*, when they placed the sceptre in his hand, exclaimed,—“I had rather manage an oar!” The vacillating fortunes of the Polish monarchy present several of these anecdotes; their monarchs appear to have frequently been philosophers; and, as the world is made, an excellent philosopher proves but an indifferent king.

Two observations on kings were made to a courtier with great *naïveté* by that experienced politician the Duke of Alva.—“Kings who affect to be familiar with their companions make use of men as they do of oranges; they take oranges to extract their juice; and when they are well sucked they throw them away. Take care the king does not do the same to you; be careful that he does not read all your thoughts; otherwise he will throw you aside to the back of his chest, as a book of which he has read enough.” “The squeezed orange,” the king of Prussia applied in his dispute with Voltaire.

When it was suggested to Dr. Johnson that kings must be unhappy because they are deprived of the greatest of all satisfactions, easy and unreserved society, he observed that this was an ill-founded notion. “Being a king does not exclude a man from such society. Great kings have always been social. The king of Prussia, the

only great king at present (this was THE GREAT Frederic), is very social. Charles the Second, the last king of England who was a man of parts, was social; our Henries and Edwards were all social.”

The Marquis of Halifax in his character of Charles II, has exhibited a *trait* in the Royal character of a good-natured monarch; that *trait*, is *sauntering*. I transcribe this curious observation which introduces us into a levee.

“There was as much of laziness as of love in all those hours which he passed amongst his mistresses, who served only to fill up his seraglio, while a bewitching kind of pleasure, called SAUNTERING was the sultana queen he delighted in.

“The thing called SAUNTERING is a stronger temptation to princes than it is to others.—The being galled with importunities, pursued from one room to another with asking faces; the dismal sound of unreasonable complaints and ill-grounded pretences; the deformity of fraud ill-disguised:—all these would make any man run away from them, and I used to think it was the motive for making him walk so fast.”