

A
F R A G M E N T

Out of the

S I X T H - B O O K

O F

P O L Y B I U S,

Containing a Dissertation upon GOVERNMENT in general, particularly applied to that of the Romans, together with a Description of the several Powers of the CONSULS, SENATE, and PEOPLE of Rome,

Translated from the Greek with Notes.

To which is prefixed a Preface, wherein the System of POLYBIUS is applied to the Government of *England*: And, to the above-mentioned Fragment concerning the Powers of the Senate, is annexed a Dissertation upon the Constitution of it.

Ita demum liberam Civitatem fore—si sua quisque jura ordo, suam Majestatem teneat.
Liv. B. iii. c. 63.

Ἀρχὴν καὶ ἀρχεσθαι.

THE translation of this fragment of *Polybius* with the preface, and the dissertation on the *Roman* senate annexed to the translation, was published by me in 1743; which I mention to the end that, if the reader finds the same quotations, and the same consequences drawn from them in *Dr. Middleton's Treatise on the Roman Senate*, and *Dr. Chapman's Essay*, both on the same subject, and both published several years after mine, he may acquit me of plagiarism. I had, then, my reasons for not putting my name to the book, though my bookseller thought fit to affix my name, or something like my name, to what he called a second edition, without my knowledge, and to add to it a most impertinent title page of his own.

I have inserted this little book, which has been many years out of print, in my translation of *Dionysius*, because I look upon it that the description of the several powers of the consuls, senate, and people of *Rome*, given by so great an author as *Polybius*, will very much tend to explain, and confirm many passages in this history.

THE
P R E F A C E.

Several considerations led me to lay before the public a translation of the following fragment of POLYBIUS: The principal of which was, the very great satisfaction I received, as an Englishman, in finding the whole reasoning of that excellent author as applicable to our own constitution, as to That, for which it was intended.

*The great advantages flowing from the happy temper, and equal mixture of the three orders, for which he so justly celebrates the Roman government, are all to be found in our own; with this circumstance in our favor, that our situation, as an island, forbids us either to fear, or aim at, conquests; by the gaining, as well as the suffering of which, that political harmony is in danger of being destroyed. By the spoils of conquered nations Cæsar was enabled to corrupt the Roman people, and bribe them to be the instruments of their own ruin, by erecting an absolute monarchy in his favor; which, growing, afterwards, wanton for want of a check from the other two orders, and weak for want of their assistance, became, at last, a prey to
a bar-*

a barbarous invader, often vanquished, and always despised, while the ballance of all three was preserved.

If my countrymen will attentively consider every argument, made use of by POLYBIUS, to shew the excellence of a government founded on an equal mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, they will, I dare say, have the same satisfaction I enjoyed; that is, they will find the system of policy, laid down by that great man, in the following dissertation on the constitution of the Romans, to be a description of the advantages enjoyed under That of England.

I would not be thought to say this in flattery to the government, under which I was born, and hope to pass the remainder of my life; not only my own reason, but, what is of much greater weight, even to myself, the authority of the greatest men of antiquity, convinces me that a government mixed like Those of Sparta, Rome, and England, is, of all others, the easiest, the securest, and the happiest to live under. If any of us are insensible of the blessings we enjoy, I must think it owing to our being accustomed to them. Custom, I know, can both deaden the sense of the greatest misfortunes, and pall the enjoyment of the greatest blessings; and custom may, possibly, make us view that state with indifference, which all other nations look upon with envy. But this indifference is far from being epidemical; the fears, the jealousies of innovations, all pardonable in a free state,
however

however groundless, are to me a proof, beyond contradiction, that we love what we so much fear to lose: and how general must those fears be, when it is popular only to pretend to fear?

In all free governments there ever were, and ever will be, parties: we find that Sparta, Rome, Athens, and all the Greek colonies in Asia Minor had their aristocratical, and democratical parties; while the only contest among the subjects of the kings of Persia was, who should be the greatest slaves. The truth is, different understandings, different educations, and different attachments must necessarily produce different ways of thinking every where; but these will shew themselves in free governments only, because there only they can shew themselves with impunity. However, it was not the existence of the two parties I have mentioned, that destroyed the liberties of any of those cities, but the occasional extinction of one of them, by the superiority the other had gained over it: and, if ever we should be so unhappy as to have the ballance between the three orders destroyed; and that any one of the three should utterly extinguish the other two, the name of a party would, from that moment, be unknown in England, and we should unanimously agree in being slaves to the conqueror.

Parties, therefore, are not only the effect, but the support, of liberty: I do not at all wonder that they are perpetually exclaimed at by Those in power: they may have, sometimes, rea-

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son to be dissatisfied with the parties themselves, but have much more to be so with the heads of them; for These are properly their rivals: the bulk of the party aims, generally, at no more than a reformation of what they think an abuse of power; the others, at the power itself, without considering the abuse, unless it be to continue it: The party quarrels with things, and the leaders with persons; consequently, a change of measures may appease the first; but nothing less than a change of ministers can satisfy the last. However, in one respect, these leaders often give some ease to ministers without designing it; for, as they generally attack them upon personal, rather than national points, their followers are unconcerned in the contest; and, considering themselves as spectators, rather than parties, do not think it incumbent on them to go great lengths for the choice of ministers; especially, since by the indifference their leaders shew for national points, when they are aiming at power (which is the season for giving hopes, as the gaining it is for disappointing them) their followers have but little reason to expect they will shew a greater warmth for them, when they have attained the possession of it.

But, whatever may be the success of the opposers, the public reaps great benefit from the opposition; since This keeps ministers upon their guard, and, often, prevents them from pursuing bold measures, which an uncontrolled power might, otherwise,

tempt them to engage in: they must act with caution, as well as fidelity, when they consider the whole nation is attentive to every step they take, and that the errors they may commit, will not only be exposed, but aggravated: in the mean time, a thirst of power, irritated by disappointment, animates the application of the opposers of public affairs, infinitely more than the languid impulse of national considerations: By this means, they grow able statesmen, and when they come to be ministers, are not only capable of defending bad schemes, but, when they please, of forming good ones.

Another great advantage, that accrues to the people from this opposition, is, that each party, by appealing to them upon all occasions, constitutes them judges of every contest; and, indeed, to whom should they appeal, but to those, whose welfare is the design, or pretence, of every measure? And for whose happiness the majesty of kings, the dignity of peers, and the power of the commons were finally instituted. This is, undoubtedly, the end of their institution, and this end it is their glory, as well as duty, to accomplish: For, what greater honor can be done to the three orders, of which our government is so happily composed, than to look upon them as they really are, that is, as the channels, through which ease, plenty, and security are derived to millions of people?

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END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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