

*Several Discourses by way of
Essays, in Verse and Prose*

1. *Of Liberty.*

THE Liberty of a people consists in being governed by Laws which they have made themselves, under whatsoever form it be of Government. The Liberty of a private man in being Master of his own Time and Actions, as far as may consist with the Laws of God and of his Country. Of this latter only we are here to discourse, and to enquire what estate of Life does best seat us in the possession of it. This Liberty of our own Actions is such a Fundamental Priviledge of human Nature, that God himself notwithstanding all his infinite power and right over us, permits us to enjoy it, and that too after a Forfeiture made by the Rebellion of *Adam*. He takes so much care for the intire preservation of it to us, that he suffers neither his Providence nor Eternal Decree to break or infringe it. Now for our Time, the same God, to whom we are but Tenants-at-will for the whole, requires but the seventh part to be paid to him as a small Quit-Rent in acknowledgment of his Title. It is man only that has the impudence to demand our whole time, though he neither gave it, nor can restore it, nor is able to pay any considerable vales for the least part of it. This Birth-right of mankind above all other creatures, some

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are forced by hunger to sell, like *Esau*, for Bread and Broth, but the greatest part of men make such a Bargain for the delivery up of themselves, as *Thamar* did with *Judah*, instead of a Kid, the necessary provisions for humane life, they are contented to do it for Rings and Bracelets. The great dealers in this world may be divided into the Ambitious, the Covetous, and the Voluptuous, and that all these men sell themselves to be slaves, though to the vulgar it may seem a Stoical Paradox, will appear to the wise so plain and obvious that they will scarce think it deserves the labour of Argumentation. Let us first consider the Ambitious, and those both in their progress to Greatness, and after the attaining of it. There is nothing truer than what *Salust* saies, *Dominationis in alios servitium suum Mercedem dant*, They are content to pay so great a price as their own Servitude to purchase the domination over others. The first thing they must resolve to sacrifice, is their whole time, they must never stop, nor ever turn aside whilst they are in the race of Glory, no not like *Atalanta* for Golden Apples. Neither indeed can a man stop himself if he would when he's in this Career. *Fertur equis Auriga neque audit Currus habenas.*

Pray, let us but consider a little, what mean servil things men do for this Imaginary Food. We cannot fetch a greater example of it, then from the chief men of that Nation which boasted most of Liberty. To what pitiful baseness did the noblest *Romans* submit themselves for the obtaining of a Prætorship, or the Consular dignity: they put on the Habit of Suppliants,

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and ran about on foot, and in dürt, through all the Tribes to beg voices, they flattered the poorest Artisans, and carried a *Nomenclator* with them, to whisper in their ear every mans name, least they should mistake it in their salutations: they shook the hand, and kist the cheek of every popular Tradesman; they stood all day at every Market in the publick places to shew and ingratiate themselves to the rout; they employ'd all their friends to sollicite for them, they kept open Tables in every street, they distributed wine and bread and money, even to the vilest of the people. *En Romanos rerum Dominos! Behold the Masters of the World begging from door to door.* This particular humble way to Greatness is now out of fashion, but yet every Ambitious person is still in some sort a *Roman Candidate*. He must feast and bribe, and attend and flatter, and adore many Beasts, though not the Beast with many heads. *Catiline* who was so proud that he could not content himself with a less power than *Sylla's*, was yet so humble for the attaining of it, as to make himself the most contemptible of all Servants, to be a publique Bawd, to provide whores, and something worse, for all the young Gentlemen of *Rome*, whose hot lusts and courages, and heads he thought he might make use of. And since I happen here to propose *Catiline* for my instance (though there be thousand of Examples for the same thing) give me leave to transcribe the Character which *Cicero* gives of this noble Slave, because it is a general description of all Ambitious men, and which *Machiavil* perhaps would say ought to be the rule of their life and actions. This man (saies

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he, as most of you may well remember) had many artificial touches and strokes that look'd like the beauty of great Virtues, his intimate conversation was with the worst of men, and yet he seem'd to be an Admirer and Lover of the best, he was furnish't with all the nets of Lust and Luxury, and yet wanted not the Arms of Labour and Industry: neither do I believe that there was ever any monster in nature, composed out of so many different and disagreeing parts. Who more acceptable, sometimes, to the most honorable persons, who more a favourite to the most Infamous? who, sometimes, appear'd a braver Champion, who at other times, a bolder Enemy to his Country? who more dissolute in his pleasures, who more patient in his toiles? who more rapacious in robbing, who more profuse in giving? Above all things, this was remarkable and admirable in him, The arts he had to acquire the good opinion and kindness of all sorts of men, to retain it with great complaisance, to communicate all things to them, to watch and serve all the occasions of their fortune, both with his money and his interest, and his industry; and if need were, not by sticking at any wickedness whatsoever that might be useful to them, to bend and turn about his own Nature and lavec with every wind, to live severely with the melancholy, merrily with the pleasant, gravely with the aged, wantonly with the young, desperately with the bold, and debauchedly with the luxurious: with this variety and multiplicity of his nature, as he had made a collection of friendships with all the most wicked and reckless of all Nations, so by the artificial simulation

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of some vertues, he made a shift to ensnare some honest and eminent persons into his familiarity; neither could so vast a design as the destruction of this Empire have been undertaken by him, if the immanity of so many vices had not been covered and disguised by the appearances of some excellent qualities.

I see, methinks, the Character of an *Anti-Paul*, who became all things to all men, that he might destroy all; who only wanted the assistance of Fortune to have been as great as his Friend *Cæsar* was a little after him. And the ways of *Cæsar* to compass the same ends (I mean till the Civil War, which was but another manner of setting his Country on Fire) were not unlike these, though he used afterward his unjust Dominion with more moderation then I think the other would have done. *Salust* therefore who was well acquainted with them both, and with many such like Gentlemen of his time, saies, That it is the nature of Ambition (*Ambitio multos mortales falsos fieri coegit &*) to make men Lyers and Cheaters, to hide the Truth in their breasts, and show, like juglers, another thing in their Mouths, to cut all friendships and enmities to the measure of their own Interest, and to make a good Countenance without the help of good will. And can there be Freedom with this perpetual constraint? What is it but a kind of Rack that forces men to say what they have no mind to? I have wondred at the extravagant and barbarous stratagem of *Zopirus*, and more at the praises which I finde of so deformed an action; who though he was one of the seven Grandees of *Persia*, and the Son of *Megabises*, who had freed before

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his Country from an ignoble Servitude, slit his own Nose and Lips, cut off his own Ears, scourged and wounded his whole body, that he might, under pretence of having been mangled so inhumanly by *Darius*, be received into *Babylon* (then besieged by the *Persians*) and get into the command of it by the recommendation of so cruel a Sufferance, and their hopes of his endeavouring to revenge it. It is great pity the *Babylonians* suspected not his falshood, that they might have cut off his hands too, and whipt him back again. But the design succeeded, he betrayed the City, and was made Governour of it. What brutish master ever punished his offending Slave with so little mercy as Ambition did this *Zopirus*? and yet how many are there in all nations who imitate him in some degree for a less reward? who though they indure not so much corporal pain for a small preferment or some honour (as they call it) yet stick not to commit actions, by which they are more shamefully and more lastingly stigmatized? But you may say, Though these be the most ordinary and open waies to greatness, yet there are narrow, thorney, and little-trodden paths too, through which some men finde a passage by vertuous industry. I grant, sometimes they may; but then that Industry must be such, as cannot consist with Liberty, though it may with Honesty.

Thou'rt careful, frugal, painful; we commend a Servant so, but not a Friend.

Well then, we must acknowledg the toil and drudgery which we are forced to endure in this Ascent, but we are Epicures and Lords when once we are

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gotten up into the High Places. This is but a short Apprentiship after which we are made free of a Royal Company. If we fall in love with any beautiful woman, we must be content that they should be our Mistresses whilst we woo them, as soon as we are wedded and enjoy, 'tis we shall be the Masters.

I am willing to stick to this similitude in the case of Greatness; we enter into the Bonds of it, like those of Matrimony; we are bewitched with the outward and painted Beauty, and take it for Better or worse, before we know its true nature and interiour Inconveniences. A great Fortune (saies *Seneca*) is a great servitude, But many are of that Opinion which *Brutus* imputes (I hope untruly) even to that Patron of Liberty, his Friend *Cicero*, We fear (saies he to *Atticus*) Death, and Banishment, and Poverty, a great deal too much. *Cicero*, I am afraid, thinks these to be the worst of evils, and if he have but some persons, from whom he can obtain what he has a mind to, and others who will flatter and worship him, seems to be well enough contented with an honorable servitude, if any thing indeed ought to be called honorable, in so base and contumelious a condition. This was spoken as became the bravest man who was ever born in the bravest Commonwealth: But with us generally, no condition passes for servitude, that is accompanied with great riches, with honors, and with the service of many Inferiours. This is but a Deception of the sight through a false medium, for if a Groom serve a Gentleman in his chamber, that Gentleman a Lord, and that Lord a Prince; The Groom, the Gentleman, and the Lord, are as much servants

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one as the other: the circumstantial difference of the ones getting only his Bread and wages, the second a plentiful, and the third a superfluous estate, is no more intrinſical to this matter then the difference between a plain, a rich and gaudy Livery. I do not ſay, That he who ſells his whole time, and his own will for one hundred thouſand, is not a wiſer Merchant than he who does it for one hundred pounds, but I will ſwear, they are both Merchants, and that he is happier than both, who can live contentedly without ſelling that eſtate to which he was born. But this Dependance upon Superiours is but one chain of the Lovers of Power, *Amatorem Trecentæ Pirithoum cohibent catenæ*. Let's begin with him by break of day: For by that time he's beſieged by two or three hundred Suitors; and the Hall and Antichambers (all the Outworks) poſſeſt by the Enemy as ſoon as his Chamber opens, they are ready to break into that, or to corrupt the Guards, for entrance. This is ſo eſſential a part of Greatneſs, that whoſoever is without it, looks like a Fallen Favorite, like a perſon diſgraced, and condemned to do what he pleaſe all the morning. There are ſome who rather than want this, are contented to have their rooms fill'd up every day with murmuring and cursing Creditors, and to charge bravely through a Body of them to get to their Coach. Now I would fain know which is the worſt duty, that of any one particular perſon who waits to ſpeak with the Great man, or the Great mans, who waits every day to ſpeak with all the company. *Aliena negotia centum Per caput & circum ſaliunt latus*, A hundred buſineſſes

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of other men (many unjust and most impertinent) fly continually about his Head and Ears, and strike him in the Face like Dorres; Let's contemplate him a little at another special Scene of Glory, and that is, his Table. Here he seems to be the Lord of all Nature: The Earth affords him her best Metals for his dishes, her best Vegetables and Animals for his food; the Air and Sea supply him with their choicest Birds and Fishes: and a great many men who look like Masters, attend upon him, and yet when all this is done, even all this is but Table d'Hoste, 'Tis crowded with people for whom he cares not, for with many Parasites, and some Spies, with the most burdensome sort of Guests, the Endeavourers to be witty.

But every body pays him great respect, every body commends his Meat, that is, his Mony; every body admires the exquisite dressing & ordering of it, that is, his Clark of the kitchin, or his Cook; every body loves his Hospitality, that is, his Vanity. But I desire to know why the honest In-keeper who provides a publick Table for his Profit, should be but of a mean profession; and he who does it for his Honour, a munificent Prince, You'l say, Because one sels, and the other gives: Nay, both sell, though for different things, the one for plain Money, the other for I know not what Jewels, whose value is in Custom and in Fancy. If then his Table be made a Snare (as the Scripture speakes) to his Liberty, where can he hope for Freedom, there is alwaies, and every where some restraint upon him. He's guarded with Crowds, and shackled with Formalities. The half hat, the whole hat,

the half smile, the whole smile, the nod, the embrace, the Positive parting with a little bow, the Comparative at the middle of the room, the Superlative at the door; and if the person be *Pan huper sebastus*, there's a *Hipersuperlative* ceremony then of conducting him to the bottome of the stairs, or to the very gate: as if there were such Rules set to these *Leviathans* as are to the Sea, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further. Perditur hæc inter miseros Lux*, Thus wretchedly the precious day is lost.

How many impertinent Letters and Visits must he receive, and sometimes answer both too as impertinently? he never sets his foot beyond his Threshold, unless, like a Funeral, he have a train to follow him, as if, like the dead Corps, he could not stir, till the Bearers were all ready. My life, (sayes *Horace*, speaking to one of these *Magnifico's*) is a great deal more easie and commodious then thine, In that I can go into the Market and cheapen what I please without being wondred at; and take my Horse and ride as far as *Tarentum*, without being mist. 'Tis an unpleasant constraint to be alwayes under the sight and observation, and censure of others; as there may be Vanity in it, so methinks, there should be Vexation too of spirit: And I wonder how Princes can endure to have two or three hundred men stand gazing upon them whilst they are at dinner, and taking notice of every bit they eat. Nothing seems greater and more Lordly then the multitude of Domestick Servants; but, even this too, if weighed seriously, is a piece of Servitude; unless you will be a Servant to them (as many men are) the