

Landesbibliothek Oldenburg

Digitalisierung von Drucken

Vermischte Aufsätze in englischer Prose

Ebeling, Christoph Daniel

Hamburg, 1777

VD18 13177109

Character of The Emperor Charles V.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-15506

CHARACTER OF THE EMPEROR CHARLES V. *)

As *Charles* was the first prince of the age in rank and dignity, the part which he acted, whether we consider the greatness, the variety, or the success of his undertakings, was the most conspicuous. It is from an attentive observation of his conduct, not from the exaggerated praises of the Spanish historians, or the undistinguishing censure of the French, that a just idea of *Charles's* genius and abilities is to be collected. He possessed qualities so peculiar, as strongly mark his character, and not only distinguish him from the princes who were his contemporaries, but account for that superiority over them which he so long maintained. In forming his schemes, he was, by nature, as well as by habit, cautious and considerate.

Born with talents, which unfolded themselves slowly, and were late in attaining maturity, he was accustomed to ponder every subject that demanded his consideration with a careful and deliberate attention. He bent the whole force of his mind towards it, and dwelling upon it with a serious application, undiverted by pleasure, and hardly relaxed by any amusement, he revolved it, in silence, in his own breast.

He then communicated the matter to his ministers, and after hearing their opinions, took his resolution with a decisive firmness, which seldom follows such slow consultations. In consequence of this, *Charles's* measures, instead of resembling the desultory and irregular sallies of *Henry VIII.* or *Francis I.* had the appearance of a consistent system, in which all the parts were arranged, the effects were foreseen, and the accidents were provided for. His promptitude in execution was no less remarkable than his patience in deliberation. He consulted with phlegm, but he acted with vigour; and did not discover greater sagacity in his choice of the measures which it was proper to pursue, than fertility of genius in finding out the means for rendering his pursuit of them successful. Though he had naturally so little of the martial turn, that during the most ardent and bustling period of life, he remained in the cabinet inactive, yet when he chose at length to appear at the head of his army, his mind was so formed for vigorous exertions in every direction, that he acquired such knowledge

*) Robertson's History &c.

ledge in the art of war, and such talents for command, as rendered him equal in reputation and success to the most able generals of the age. But *Charles* possessed, in the most eminent degree, the science which is of greatest importance to a monarch, that of knowing men, and of adapting their talents to the various departments which he allotted to them. From the death of *Chievres* to the end of his reign, he employed no general in the field, no minister in the cabinet, no ambassador to a foreign court, no governor of a province, whose abilities were inadequate to the trust reposed in them. Though destitute of that bewitching affability of manners, which gained *Francis* the hearts of all who approached his person, he was no stranger to the virtues which secure fidelity and attachment. He placed unbounded confidence in his generals; he rewarded their services with munificence; he neither envied their fame, nor discovered any jealousy of their power. Almost all the generals who conducted his armies may be placed on a level with those illustrious personages, who have attained the highest eminence of military glory; and his advantages over his rivals are to be ascribed so manifestly to the superior abilities of the commanders whom he set in opposition to them, that this might seem to detract, in some degree, from his own merit, if the talent of discovering and employing such instruments were not the most undoubted proof of a capacity for government.

There were, nevertheless, defects in his political character which must considerably abate the admiration due to his extraordinary talents. *Charles's* ambition was insatiable, and though there seems to be no foundation for an opinion prevalent in his own age, that he had formed the chimerical project of establishing an universal monarchy in Europe, it is certain that his desire of being distinguished as a conqueror involved him in continual wars, which exhausted and oppressed his subjects, and left him little leisure for giving attention to the interior police and improvement of his kingdoms, the great objects of every prince who makes the happiness of his people the end of his government. *Charles*, at a very early period of life, having added the imperial crown to the kingdoms of Spain, and to the hereditary dominions of the houses of Austria and Burgundy, this opened to him a vast field of enterprize, and engaged him in schemes so complicated as well as arduous, that feeling

his power to be unequal to the execution of these, he had often recourse to low artifices unbecoming his superior talents, and sometimes ventured on such deviations from integrity as were dishonourable in a great prince. His insidious and fraudulent policy appeared more conspicuous, and was rendered more odious, by a comparison with the open and undefining character of his contemporaries Francis I. and Henry VIII. This difference, though occasioned chiefly by the diversity of their tempers, must be ascribed, in some degree to such an opposition in the principles of their political conduct as affords some excuse for this defect in *Charles's* behaviour, though it cannot serve as a justification of it. *Francis* and *Henry* seldom acted but from the impulse of their passions, and rushed headlong towards the object in view. *Charles's* measures being the result of cool reflection, were disposed into a regular system, and carried on upon a concerted plan. Persons who act in the former manner naturally pursue the end in view without assuming any disguise, or displaying much address. Such as hold the latter course, are apt, in forming as well as in executing their designs, to employ such refinements, as always lead to artifice in conduct, and often degenerate into deceit.

A SATIRICAL DESCRIPTION OF LONDON AND BATH. *)

In *London* I am pent up in frowzy lodgings, where there is not room enough to swing a cat; and I breath the steams of endless putrefaction; and these would, undoubtedly, produce a pestilence, if they were not qualified by the gross acid of sea-coal, wich is itself a pernicious nuisance to lungs of any delicacy of texture: but even this boasted corrector cannot prevent those languid, fallow looks, that distinguish the inhabitants of *London* from those ruddy swains that lead a country-life — I go to bed after midnight, jaded and restless from the dissipations of the day — I start every hour from my sleep, at the horrid noise of the watchman bawling the hour through every street, and thundering at door; a set of useles fellows, who serve no other purpose but that of disturbing the repose of the inhabitants; and by five o'clock I start out of bed, in consequence of the still more dread-

*) The Expedition of Humphry Clinker by the Author of *Roderici Random*, (*Dr. Smollet*) Lond. 1771. 3 Vol. 12.