

At what tyme Cromwell was so highly favoured of his prince, and advanced to such dignitie as is aforesaid, Francesco Freecobald (as in many tymes happeneth unto Merchants) was by many misfortunes and great losses, cast backe and become very poore. For according to conscience and equite, he payd whatsoever was due to any other first himself, but such debts as were owing unto him, he could by no means obtaine: yet calling further to remembrance that in England by certaine merchants there was due to him the summe of 10000. Ducates, he was perswaded with him self, that if he could recover that money, he would well content himself, and no longer deale in the trade of merchants but quietly passe over the rest of his dayes.

All things prepared for his journey, he setting forthward towards England, at last arrived at London, having utterly forgotten what curtesie long before he had shewed to Cromwell, which is the property alwayes of a good nature, for a man to forget what benefices he hath shewed to other, but to keepe in mind continually what he hath received of other. Freecobald thus being now at London, and there travelling earnestly about his businesse, it chanced him by the way to meete with this noble man, as he was riding toward the court. Whome, as soone as the sayd lord Cromwell had espied, and had earnestly beheld, he besought with himselfe that he should be the man of Florence, at whose hands in tymes past he had received so gentle entertainment, and thereupon suddenly alighting to the great admiration of those that were with him, in hys armes he gently embraced the stranger, and with a broken voice scarce able to restrain teares, he demanded if he were not Francesco Freecobald the Florentine. Yea sir (he answered) and your humble servant. My servant (quoth Cromwell) no, as you have not bene my servant in tymes past, so will I not now account you other wayes then my great and especial friend, assuring you that I have just reason to be joye, that you knowing what I am, or at the least what I should be) will not let me understand of your arriving in this land, which known unto me, truly I should have payd part of that debt which I conceive to owe you: but thanked be God I have yet tyme, well sir, in conclusion, you are hartely welcome. But having now waighte affaires in my pinesse cause, you must hold me excused, that I can no longer tary with you. Therefore at this tyme I take my leave, desiring you with the faithfull mynde of a friend, that you forget not this day to come to my house to dinner, and then in remounting on his horse, he passed to the Court. Freecobald greatly increasing with himselfe who this Lord should be, at last after some paine, hys remembrance better called home, he knewe hym to be the same, whome long before (as you have heard) he had received in Florence, and thereat not a little joyed, especially considering how that by his means he should the better recover his duty.

The houre of dinner drawing nere, he repayed to the house of his honourable Countenour, where walking a while in his baks Court, he attended his company. The Lord shortly returned from the Court, and no sooner discerned, but he againe embraced this Gentleman with so friendly a countenance, that both the Lord Admirall and all the other noble men of the Court being then in his company, did note a little marvell thereat.

Which thing when the Lord Cromwell perceived, he turning towards them, and holding Freecobald fast by the hand; do ye not marvelle my Lordes (quoth he) that I seeme so glad of this man? This is he by whose means I have recovered the debt of his my present calling; and because ye shall not be ignorant of hys curtesie when I greatly neede, I shall tell it you; and so there declared unto them every thing in order, according as before hath bene recited unto you. His tale finished, holding him still by the hand, he entered his house, and coming into the Chamber where his dinner was prepared, he late hym downe to the Table, placing his best welcomed guest next unto him.

The dinner ended, and the Lordes departed, he would know what occasion had brought Freecobald to London. Whences in few wordes opened his cause, truly relying, that from great wealth he was fallen into poverty, and that his only position to maintaine the rest of his life, was by thousand Ducates which were owing him in England and two thousand in Spaine, returned unto the lord Cromwell answering againe, sayd, touching the things that after Freecobald that he already past, although it can not now be knowne by mans power, nor by policee called a gayne, which hath happened unto you by the visible condition and meritabilitie of this world according to and too: yet is not your favour to perill to yourselfe alone, but that by the bond of mutual love, I must also be waded with

you this your state and condition, which state and condition of yours, though it may worke in your minde of mischances, yet notwithstanding, to the issue you may receive in this your heavy distress some consolation for your old curtesie shewed to me in tymes past, the lyke curtesie now requeryth of me againe, that I likewise should repay some portion of that debt wherof I stand bound unto you according as the part of a thankfull man bethought me to do in requeryng your benefices on my part heretofore received. And this further I added in the word of a true friend that during this life and state of mine, I will never faile to do for you, wherby my ambition may prevaile to imply your lacke and necessitie. And so let the fewe wordes suffice to give you knowlege of my friendly meaning. But let me delay the tyme no longer.

Then taking him by the hand, he led him into his chamber, whence, after that every man by his commandment was departed, he locked the doore. The opening a casket full heaped with treasure, he first took one silken Ducates, and delivering them to Freecobald, he sayde here (my friend) is your money which you lent me at my departure from Florence, and here other tenne which you bestowed in my awayall, with ten more that you bestowed for the boye I did away off. But choosing you to be a merchant, it seemed to me not honest to receive your money without some consideration for the long detayning of it. Take you therefore these 400. bags, and in every of them is 400. Ducates, these you shall receive, and enjoy from the hands of your assured friend.

Freecobald, although from great wealth he was brought to a lowe ebbe, and (almost) an utter decay, yet expressing the vertue of a modest mynde, after gentle thanks given to the Lord Cromwell for his exceeding benedictive lycence, curiously would have refused that which was offered, had not the other enforced him against his will to receive it.

This done, he caused Freecobald to give him a note of the names of all his debtors, and the summe that from every of them was owing him. This he could he delivered to one of his servants, unto whom he gave charge diligently to search out such men whose names therein was contained, if they were within anye part of the realme, & then straightly to charge them to make payment of those summes within silken dayes, or els to abide the hazard of hys displeasure. The servant so well performed his maisters commandment, that in very short tyme they made payment of the whole summe: and if it had byked Freecobald so to have demanded, they should have answered to the uttermost such commodities, as the life of his money in so many yerres would have given him profit: but he contented with his principall, would demand no further. By which means he gate both hartly love and great estimation, and the more, for that he was loathe to deare to the Lord Cromwell, and so highly esteemed of him.

And during all this tyme, Freecobald continually lodged in the house of the lord Cromwell, who ever gave hym such entertainment as he had right well deserved, and oftentimes moved him to abide in England, offering him the lone of 60000. Ducates, for the space of 4. yeare, if he would continue and make his banke in London. But Freecobald, who desired to returne into his country, and there quietly to continue the rest of his life, with the great favour of the Lord Cromwell, after many thanks for his high and noble entertainment, departed towards bys desired home, where richly arriving, he gave benedictive thanks to hys prince. But this wealth he small tyme enjoyed, for in the first yeare of his returne he dyed.

So plentifull was the life of this man in such finnes full of singular gentrie and curtesie, that to rehearse all, it would require too long a tractation. Yet one example may enough manifestly either may not overpass, whereby we may evidently consider or rather marvelle at the lowly minde of such a person, in so high a state and place of honor. For as he coming with other of the Lordes of the Counteys and Commissioners, to the house of Shene, about the examination of certaine shonkes which they denied by hys supremacy, after the examination done was there sitting at dinner, it chanced him to spee a farr off, a certayn pover man which there desired to receive their Selis and cloister, and to ring the bells, whome when the Lord Cromwell had well advised, he sent for the pover man to come unto him, and before all the table most humbly and friendly, calling him by his name, took him by the hand, and asked how he did, with many other good wordes, and turning therewith to the Lordes: My Lordes (quoth he) for you this pover man, whis mans father had bene a great friend to mee in my needes, and hath given me now a meales meat. When said he unto the pover man, come bene in and

An Italian Ducate as much to our English crowne.

The wordes of the Lord Cromwell to the Italian Marchant.

Old friendship remembered.

The curtesie of the Lord Cromwell in restoring his old debt.

Example of a faithfull debter.

The Lord Cromwells duty.

Kindnes required with kindness.

Medellie in an Italian.

The Ducates after the Italian court, came much more to our English crownes.

Another example of the same and lowly minde of the Lord Cromwell.