The Prince

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI
1469–1527

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Il Principe

Translated from the Italian with AI (Claude) and edited



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The Prince · Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527)

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INTRODUCTION

In 1513, out of office, tortured and exiled to his farm outside Florence, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote a short handbook on how to gain and keep political power, and dedicated it to the Medici family in hopes of a job.

The Prince broke with centuries of advice books that told rulers to be good. Machiavelli asks instead what actually works: whether it is better to be loved or feared, when to break your word, how to use cruelty "well", and how much of our fate is in our own hands and how much belongs to Fortune. It has been condemned, admired and argued over ever since.

It was published only in 1532, five years after his death.

Dedication

To Lorenzo de' Medici
Machiavelli offers Lorenzo his knowledge of great men's deeds as a gift, hoping for favor.

Ded.1 Those who want to win a prince's favor usually come before him bearing the things they value most among their possessions, or the things they see delight him most. So we often see princes presented with horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones and similar ornaments worthy of their greatness. Wishing, then, to offer myself to Your Magnificence with some token of my devotion to you, I have found nothing among my belongings that I hold so dear or value so highly as my knowledge of the actions of great men. I learned it through long experience of modern affairs and continual study of ancient ones. Having long and carefully pondered and examined it, and now reduced it to one small volume, I send it to Your Magnificence.[1] I judge this work unworthy of your presence. Still, I am confident that in your kindness you will accept it, since I could give you no greater gift than the means to understand, in a very short time, everything I have learned and understood over so many years and through so many hardships and dangers. I have not decked this work out or stuffed it with sweeping periods, or with pompous and magnificent words, or with any of the other allurements and outward ornaments with which many writers like to describe and embellish their subjects. For I wanted it either to have no distinction at all, or to be made welcome only by the

1 The dedication is addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici (1492–1519), grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent and ruler of Florence from 1513.

truth of its matter and the weight of its subject. Nor do I want it thought presumptuous that a man of low and humble station should dare to discuss the government of princes and lay down rules for it. Those who draw maps of the land place themselves low on the plain to study the nature of mountains and high places, and high on the mountains to study the low ones. In the same way, to know the nature of peoples well one must be a prince, and to know the nature of princes well one must be one of the people. Take this little gift, then, Your Magnificence, in the spirit in which I send it. If you read and consider it carefully, you will find in it my deepest wish: that you may rise to the greatness that Fortune and your other qualities promise you. And if Your Magnificence, from the summit of your height, should ever turn your eyes down to these low places, you will see how undeservedly I endure a great and unrelenting malice of Fortune.

Chapter I

How many kinds of principality there are, and how they are acquired
Machiavelli sorts states into republics and principalities, and principalities into hereditary and new.

1.1 All states, all dominions that have held and now hold power over men, have been and are either republics or principalities. Principalities are either hereditary, where the prince's family has long ruled, or they are new. The new ones are either entirely new, as Milan was to Francesco Sforza, or they are like limbs grafted onto the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them, as the Kingdom of Naples is to the King of Spain. Dominions acquired in this way are either used to living under a prince or accustomed to being free. And they are acquired either with the arms of others or with one's own, either by Fortune or by *virtù*.[1]

1 Francesco Sforza (1401–1466), a mercenary captain, made himself Duke of Milan in 1450; the King of Spain is Ferdinand of Aragon (1452–1516). *Virtù* is Machiavelli's key term: ability, energy, prowess—not moral virtue. "State" (stato) often means a ruler's hold on power as much as the political entity.

Chapter II

Of hereditary principalities
Hereditary princes keep their states easily, since subjects are used to their family's rule.

2.1 I will leave aside any discussion of republics, since I have discussed them at length elsewhere. I will turn only to principalities, and, weaving together the threads laid out above, I will argue how they can be governed and kept. I say, then, that hereditary states, accustomed to their prince's family, are much less difficult to keep than new ones. It is enough not to depart from the ways of one's ancestors, and then to adapt to events as they come. So if such a prince has ordinary diligence, he will always keep his state, unless some extraordinary and overwhelming force deprives him of it. And even if he is deprived of it, he will win it back at the usurper's first setback.[1] In Italy we have, for example, the Duke of Ferrara, who withstood the attacks of the Venetians in '84 and those of Pope Julius in '10 for no other reason than that his family was long established in that dominion. For the natural prince has fewer reasons and less need to give offense, and so he is bound to be better loved. Unless extraordinary vices make him hated, it is reasonable that his subjects should naturally be well disposed toward him. And in the antiquity and continuity of his rule, the memories and

1 Probably a reference to his *Discourses on Livy*.

causes of innovation die away. For one change always leaves a toothing-stone for building the next.[2]

2 The dukes of Ferrara were the Este: Ercole I faced Venice in 1484 and his son Alfonso I faced Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere, pope 1503–1513) in 1510. A toothing-stone is a stone left projecting from a wall so that a later wall can be bonded to it.

Chapter III

Of mixed principalities
New conquests are hard to hold; Louis XII of France shows the mistakes to avoid.

3.1 But it is in the new principality that the difficulties lie. First, if it is not entirely new but a limb added on, so that the whole may be called a mixed principality, its upheavals arise first from a natural difficulty found in all new principalities. Men gladly change their ruler in the belief that they will better themselves, and this belief makes them take up arms against the one who rules. In this they deceive themselves, for they later see by experience that they have made things worse. This follows from another natural and ordinary necessity: a new prince must always offend those he has come to rule, both with his soldiers and with the countless other injuries that a new conquest brings in its train. So you find you have as enemies all those you have offended in seizing that principality. And you cannot keep as friends those who put you there, because you cannot satisfy them in the way they had expected, and you cannot use strong medicine against them, since you are obliged to them. For however strong one's armies may be, one always needs the goodwill of the inhabitants to enter a province. For these reasons Louis XII, King of France, took Milan quickly and lost it just as quickly, and the first time Ludovico's own forces were enough to take it from him. For the people who had opened the gates to him, finding themselves deceived in their hopes and in the future good they had counted on, could not bear the burdens of the new prince. It is certainly true that when rebellious lands are

conquered a second time, they are lost with more difficulty. For the ruler, taking the rebellion as his opportunity, has fewer scruples about securing himself by punishing offenders, exposing suspects and shoring up his weakest points.[1] So if the first time a Duke Ludovico rumbling on the borders was enough to make France lose Milan, to make it lose Milan the second time the whole world had to be ranged against it, and its armies destroyed or driven out of Italy. This came about for the reasons given above. Nevertheless, it was taken from France both the first time and the second. The general causes of the first loss have been discussed. It remains now to look at the causes of the second, and to say what remedies the King had, and what remedies someone in his position might have, to hold on to his conquest better than the King of France did.[2] I say, therefore, that the states which, when acquired, are added to the old state of the one who acquires them are either of the same province and the same language, or they are not. When they are, it is very easy to hold them, especially when they are not used to living in freedom. To possess them securely, it is enough to have wiped out the line of the prince who ruled them. For in everything else, as long as their old conditions are preserved and there is no difference in customs, men live quietly. We have seen this in Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony and Normandy, which have been with France for so long. And although there is some difference of language, their customs are similar, and they can easily get along with one another. Whoever acquires such lands and wants to keep them must take care of two things: first, that the bloodline of their old prince is extinguished; second, that neither their laws nor their taxes are changed. In this way, in a very short time, they become one body with his old principality. But when states are acquired in a province that differs in language, customs and institutions, that is where the difficulties are, and

1 Louis XII (1462–1515) seized Milan in 1499; Ludovico Sforza, "il Moro," the duke he drove out, briefly retook it in 1500.

2 The second loss came in 1512–13, when the Holy League of Pope Julius II, Spain, Venice, England and the Swiss drove the French out.

holding them takes great good fortune and great diligence. One of the best and most effective remedies would be for the conqueror to go and live there in person.

3.2 This would make the possession more secure and more lasting, as the Turk has done with Greece. Despite all the other institutions he maintained to hold that state, he could not have held it if he had not gone to live there. For when you are on the spot, you see disorders as they arise and can quickly remedy them. When you are not, you hear of them only when they have grown large and there is no longer any remedy. Besides this, the province is not plundered by your officials. The subjects are satisfied by having ready recourse to the prince, and so they have more reason to love him if they mean to be good, and to fear him if they mean to be otherwise. Any outsider who might want to attack that state is more wary of doing so. So as long as the prince lives there, he can lose it only with the greatest difficulty.[3] The other and better remedy is to send colonies to one or two places that serve as keys to that state. For it is necessary either to do this or to keep a large force of cavalry and infantry there. Colonies do not cost the prince much. He can send and maintain them at little or no expense, and he offends only those whose fields and houses he takes to give to the new settlers, who are a tiny part of that state. Those he offends, left scattered and poor, can never harm him. All the others, on the one hand, remain unharmed and so are easily quieted; on the other hand, they are afraid of making a mistake, lest what happened to those who were dispossessed should happen to them. I conclude that these colonies cost nothing, are more loyal and give less offense, and that those offended, being poor and scattered, cannot do harm, as I have said. For it must be noted that men must be either pampered or crushed. They avenge themselves for slight injuries; for serious ones they cannot. So any injury done to a man must be of a kind that leaves no fear of revenge. But if the prince keeps soldiers there instead of colonies, he spends a

3 "The Turk" is the Ottoman sultan; Mehmed II took Constantinople in 1453 and made it his capital.

great deal more, since he must consume all the revenues of that state on its garrison. So the conquest turns into a loss. And it gives much more offense, because it harms the whole state as the army moves from one billet to another. Everyone feels this hardship, and everyone becomes his enemy—enemies who can do him harm, since they remain, though beaten, in their own homes. In every respect, then, such a garrison is as useless as colonies are useful. Moreover, whoever is in a province that differs from his own, as I have said, must make himself the leader and defender of his less powerful neighbors, and contrive to weaken the more powerful ones. And he must take care that no foreigner as powerful as himself gets a foothold there by any chance. Such a foreigner will always be brought in by those in the province who are discontented, whether out of too much ambition or out of fear. So we saw the Aetolians bring the Romans into Greece; and in every other province the Romans entered, they were brought in by the inhabitants.[4] And the way of things is this: as soon as a powerful foreigner enters a province, all the less powerful people in it side with him, moved by envy of whoever has held power over them. So with regard to these lesser powers he need take no trouble at all to win them over, because at once they all willingly throw in their lot with the state he has acquired there. He has only to see that they do not gain too much strength and too much authority. Then, with his own forces and their support, he can easily bring down those who are powerful, and remain sole arbiter of that province. Whoever does not manage this well will soon lose what he has acquired, and while he holds it he will face countless difficulties and troubles within it.

3.3 The Romans, in the provinces they took, observed these points well. They sent colonies; they kept the less powerful friendly without increasing their power; they brought down the powerful; and they did not let powerful foreigners gain standing there. I will let the province of Greece alone serve as an

4 The Aetolian League, a federation in central Greece, allied with Rome against Philip V of Macedon in 211 BC.

example. The Romans kept the Achaeans and the Aetolians friendly; they brought down the kingdom of Macedon; they drove out Antiochus. Yet the services of the Achaeans or the Aetolians never made the Romans allow them to enlarge their states; the persuasions of Philip never induced them to be his friends without first humbling him; and the power of Antiochus could never make them consent to his holding any state in that province.[5] For the Romans did in these cases what all wise princes must do. They must attend not only to present troubles but to future ones, and use every effort to guard against them. For when trouble is foreseen from afar, it can easily be remedied; but if you wait until it is upon you, the medicine comes too late, because the disease has become incurable. It is with this as physicians say of consumptive fever: in the beginning it is easy to cure and hard to diagnose, but in the course of time, if it has been neither recognized nor treated at the start, it becomes easy to diagnose and hard to cure. So it is in affairs of state. If the ills that arise in a state are recognized from afar—a gift granted only to the prudent—they are quickly cured. But when, for want of being recognized, they are allowed to grow until everyone recognizes them, there is no longer any remedy. The Romans, therefore, seeing trouble from afar, always found a remedy for it. They never let it run its course in order to avoid a war, because they knew that war is not avoided but only postponed to the advantage of others. So they chose to make war on Philip and Antiochus in Greece, so as not to have to fight them in Italy. They could have avoided both wars for the time being, but they did not want to. Nor did they ever like what is always on the lips of the wise men of our day, "Enjoy the benefits of time." They preferred to enjoy the benefits of their own *virtù* and prudence. For time sweeps everything before it, and can bring good as well as evil, and evil as well as good.

5 Philip V of Macedon (238–179 BC) was defeated by Rome in 197 BC; Antiochus III, Seleucid king of Syria, was driven from Greece in 191 BC.

THE ERRORS OF LOUIS XII

Louis XII won much of Italy but lost it by breaking every rule for holding conquests.

3.4 But let us return to France and examine whether it did any of the things I have described. I will speak of Louis and not of Charles, since Louis held possessions in Italy longer and so his conduct can be seen more clearly. And you will see that he did the opposite of what must be done to hold a state in a province unlike one's own. King Louis was brought into Italy by the ambition of the Venetians, who wanted to win half of Lombardy through his coming.[6] I do not mean to blame the King's coming, or the decision he made. Wanting to get a foothold in Italy, and having no friends in the province—on the contrary, finding every door shut against him because of King Charles's conduct—he was forced to take whatever friendships he could. And his well-laid plan would have succeeded if he had made no mistakes in his other dealings. Once the King had acquired Lombardy, then, he at once regained the reputation Charles had lost him. Genoa yielded; the Florentines became his friends; the Marquis of Mantua, the Duke of Ferrara, the Bentivogli, the Lady of Forlì, the lords of Faenza, Pesaro, Rimini, Camerino and Piombino, the people of Lucca, Pisa and Siena—every one of them came to meet him and seek his friendship.[7] Then the Venetians could see the rashness of the course they had taken: to gain two towns in Lombardy, they had made the King master of two-thirds of Italy. Consider now how easily the King could have kept his standing in Italy if he had observed the rules given above, and kept all those friends of his secure and defended. They were numerous, weak, and afraid, some of the Church and some of the Venetians, and so they were always obliged to stand by him; and through them he could easily have secured himself against who-

6 Charles VIII of France (1470–1498) invaded Italy in 1494 and briefly took Naples.
7 The Bentivogli ruled Bologna; the Lady of Forlì was Caterina Sforza (c. 1463–1509).

ever remained powerful. But no sooner was he in Milan than he did the opposite, helping Pope Alexander to seize the Romagna.[8] Nor did he realize that by this decision he was making himself weak, stripping himself of his friends and of those who had thrown themselves into his lap, and making the Church great by adding so much temporal power to the spiritual power that gives it so much authority. And having made a first mistake, he was forced to go on making others. In the end, to put a stop to Alexander's ambition and to keep him from becoming master of Tuscany, he was forced to come into Italy himself. And it was not enough for him to have made the Church great and to have stripped himself of friends: wanting the Kingdom of Naples, he divided it with the King of Spain. Where before he had been the arbiter of Italy, he brought in a partner, so that the ambitious men of that province and those discontented with him had somewhere to turn. And where he could have left in that kingdom a king who was his pensioner, he pulled him out in order to put in someone who could drive out Louis himself. It is truly a very natural and ordinary thing to want to acquire. When men who can do so do it, they will always be praised, not blamed. But when they cannot, and want to do it anyway, there lies the blame and the error.[9] If France, then, could attack Naples with its own forces, it should have done so. If it could not, it should not have divided it. And if the division of Lombardy that it made with the Venetians deserved to be excused, because it gave France a foothold in Italy, this one deserved blame, because it could not be excused by that necessity.

3.5 Louis, then, had made these five errors: he wiped out the lesser powers; he increased the power of a power already great in Italy; he brought in a very powerful foreigner; he did not come to live there; he did not plant colonies. Even so, these errors might not have harmed him in his lifetime, had he not

8 Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia, 1431–1503), father of Cesare Borgia.
9 By the Treaty of Granada (1500), Louis XII and Ferdinand of Aragon agreed to partition Naples, deposing its king, Frederick; Spain later drove the French out entirely (1503–04).

made a sixth: taking the Venetians' state away from them. Had he not made the Church great or brought Spain into Italy, it would have been quite reasonable and necessary to bring the Venetians down. But having taken those first courses, he should never have consented to their ruin. For as long as they were powerful, they would always have kept the others away from any enterprise against Lombardy. The Venetians would not have allowed it unless they themselves became its masters; the others would not have wanted to take Lombardy from France only to hand it to Venice; and they would not have had the nerve to take on both of them.[10] And if someone should say that King Louis ceded the Romagna to Alexander and the Kingdom of Naples to Spain to avoid a war, I answer, for the reasons given above, that one must never let a disorder run its course in order to avoid a war. For the war is not avoided, only postponed to your disadvantage. And if others should point to the pledge the King had given the Pope to carry out that enterprise for him in return for the annulment of his marriage and the cardinal's hat for Rouen, I answer with what I will say below about the faith of princes and how it should be kept.[11]

3.6 King Louis, then, lost Lombardy because he did not observe any of the conditions observed by others who have taken provinces and wanted to keep them. There is no miracle in this, but something quite reasonable and ordinary. I spoke about this very matter at Nantes with Rouen, when Valentino—as Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander, was popularly called—was occupying the Romagna. When the Cardinal of Rouen told me that the Italians did not understand war, I answered that the French did not understand statecraft; for if they had understood it, they would not have let the Church grow so great. And experience has shown that the greatness in Italy of the Church and of Spain was caused by France, and France's ruin was brought

10 In 1509 Louis joined the League of Cambrai and crushed Venice at Agnadello.
11 Alexander VI annulled Louis's marriage to Jeanne de France and made Georges d'Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen and Louis's chief minister, a cardinal (1498). The promised discussion is chapter 18.

about by them.[12] From this we can draw a general rule that never or rarely fails: whoever causes another to become powerful ruins himself. For that power is brought about either by skill or by force, and both are suspect to the one who has become powerful.

12 Cesare Borgia (1475–1507) was called "Valentino" from his French title, Duke of Valentinois. Machiavelli was on a diplomatic mission to France in 1500.

Chapter IV

Why the kingdom of Darius, conquered by Alexander, did not rebel against his successors after his death
Kingdoms ruled through servants, like Persia, are hard to conquer but easy to keep, unlike France.

4.1 Considering the difficulties of holding a newly acquired state, one might wonder how it came about that Alexander the Great became master of Asia in a few years and died having barely occupied it. It would have seemed reasonable for that whole state to rebel. Nevertheless his successors kept it, and had no other difficulty in holding it than the one that arose among themselves from their own ambition.[1] I answer that the principalities we have record of have been governed in two different ways. Either by a prince with all the others as his servants, who help govern the kingdom as ministers by his grace and permission; or by a prince and barons, who hold their rank not by the grace of their lord but by ancient lineage. Such barons have states and subjects of their own, who recognize them as their lords and feel a natural affection for them. In states governed by a prince and servants, the prince has more authority, because in all his province there is no one who recognizes anyone as superior but him. If they obey anyone else, they do so as to a minister and official, and bear him no particular love. The examples of these two kinds of government in our own times are the Turk and the King of France. The whole monarchy of the Turk is governed by one lord; the others are his servants. Dividing his king-

1 Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) conquered the Persian Empire; after his death his generals, the Diadochi, fought over it.

dom into sanjaks, he sends various administrators there, and shifts and changes them as he pleases.[2] But the King of France is set amid an ancient multitude of lords, recognized by their own subjects and loved by them. They have their privileges, and the King cannot take these away without danger to himself. Whoever considers both these states, then, will find that the Turk's state is difficult to acquire, but once conquered, very easy to hold.

4.2 The reasons it is difficult to seize the Turk's kingdom are that the invader cannot be called in by the princes of that kingdom, nor hope to make his enterprise easier through the rebellion of those around the ruler. This follows from the reasons given above. Since they are all his slaves and bound to him, they are harder to corrupt; and even if they were corrupted, little good could be hoped for from it, since they could not carry the people with them, for the reasons stated. So whoever attacks the Turk must expect to find him united, and must rely more on his own forces than on the disorders of others. But once the Turk is defeated and routed in the field so that he cannot raise new armies, there is nothing to fear except the prince's bloodline. Once that is wiped out, there is no one left to fear, since the others have no standing with the people. And just as the victor could place no hope in them before his victory, so after it he need not fear them.

4.3 The opposite happens in kingdoms governed like that of France. You can enter them easily by winning over some baron of the kingdom, for there are always malcontents and people eager for change. For the reasons given, these can open the way into that state for you and make victory easy. But afterward, if you want to hold on, that victory brings endless difficulties in its train, both with those who helped you and with those you have crushed. Nor is it enough for you to wipe out the prince's bloodline, because the lords remain, and they make themselves leaders of new revolts. Since you can neither satisfy them nor wipe them out, you lose that state whenever the opportunity arises.

2 Sanjaks were provincial districts of the Ottoman Empire.

Now if you consider what kind of government Darius had, you will find it was like the kingdom of the Turk. So Alexander first had to strike at it with his whole force and drive Darius from the field. After this victory, with Darius dead, the state remained securely in Alexander's hands, for the reasons discussed above. And his successors, had they remained united, could have enjoyed it at their ease; no disturbances arose in that kingdom except those they stirred up themselves. But states organized like that of France cannot possibly be held so quietly.[3] This is why Spain, Gaul and Greece so often rebelled against the Romans: those lands were full of principalities. As long as the memory of them lasted, the Romans were always insecure in their possession. But once that memory had faded, through the power and long duration of their rule, they became secure possessors. And later, when the Romans fought among themselves, each of them could draw a portion of those provinces after him according to the authority he had gained there. And the provinces, since the bloodlines of their old lords had been wiped out, recognized no one but the Romans.[4] Considering all this, then, no one will marvel at how easily Alexander held the state of Asia, or at the difficulties others have had in keeping what they acquired, such as Pyrrhus and many more. This did not come from the victor's greater or lesser *virtù*, but from the differences between the states conquered.[5]

3 Darius III, the last Achaemenid king of Persia, was defeated by Alexander and murdered by his own satraps in 330 BC.
4 "Francia" here means ancient Gaul.
5 Pyrrhus (319–272 BC), king of Epirus, won and quickly lost conquests in Italy, Sicily and Macedon.

Chapter V

How cities or principalities should be governed which, before they were conquered, lived under their own laws
Free cities can be held by ruining them, living there, or ruling through a friendly few.

5.1 When states that are acquired are, as I said, used to living under their own laws and in freedom, there are three ways to hold them. The first is to ruin them. The second is to go and live there in person. The third is to let them live under their own laws, drawing tribute from them and setting up within them a government of the few who will keep the state friendly to you. For since that government was created by the prince, it knows it cannot survive without his friendship and power, and it must do everything to maintain him. And if one wants to preserve a city used to living in freedom, it is more easily held by means of its own citizens than in any other way.

5.2 Take the Spartans and the Romans, for example. The Spartans held Athens and Thebes by setting up governments of the few there; nevertheless they lost them. The Romans, to hold Capua, Carthage and Numantia, destroyed them, and did not lose them. They tried to hold Greece much as the Spartans had, making it free and leaving it its own laws, and they did not succeed. So they were forced to destroy many cities in that province in order to hold it. For in truth there is no sure way to possess such cities except to ruin them.[1] Whoever becomes mas-

1 Sparta imposed the Thirty Tyrants on Athens in 404 BC and a garrison on Thebes in 382 BC; both soon threw them off. Rome destroyed Carthage and Numantia in 146 and 133 BC, and stripped Capua of its institutions in 211 BC.

ter of a city used to living in freedom and does not destroy it should expect to be destroyed by it. For in rebellion it always has as its refuge the name of liberty and its old institutions, which are never forgotten, neither through length of time nor through benefits received. Whatever is done or provided for, unless the inhabitants are divided or scattered, they do not forget that name or those institutions, but at once, at every turn of events, they fall back on them—as Pisa did after being held in servitude by the Florentines for so many years.[2] But when cities or provinces are used to living under a prince, and his bloodline is extinguished, they are on the one hand used to obeying, and on the other they no longer have their old prince. They cannot agree to make one from among themselves, and they do not know how to live in freedom. So they are slower to take up arms, and a prince can win them over and secure himself against them more easily. But in republics there is greater hatred and more desire for revenge. The memory of their ancient liberty does not and cannot let them rest. So the surest way is to wipe them out, or to live there.

2 Pisa, under Florence since 1406, rebelled in 1494 when Charles VIII invaded and was not retaken until 1509.

Chapter VI

Of new principalities acquired by one's own arms and ability
Princes who rise by their own ability, like Moses, Cyrus and Romulus, struggle first but then hold firm.

6.1 Let no one marvel if, in speaking of principalities that are entirely new, both in prince and in state, I bring forward the very greatest examples. Men almost always walk the paths beaten by others and proceed in their actions by imitation. Yet one cannot keep entirely to other men's paths, nor attain the *virtù* of those one imitates. So a prudent man should always follow the paths beaten by great men and imitate those who have been most excellent, so that if his own *virtù* does not reach theirs, it at least gives off some scent of it. He should do as prudent archers do. When the target they mean to hit seems too far away, knowing how far the strength of their bow will carry, they aim well above the mark—not to reach such a height with their strength or their arrow, but so that by aiming so high they may hit what they intended. I say, then, that in wholly new principalities, where there is a new prince, keeping them is more or less difficult according to how much or how little *virtù* the man who acquires them has. And since this event—rising from private citizen to prince—presupposes either *virtù* or Fortune, it seems that one or the other of these two things will partly ease many difficulties. Nevertheless, the one who has relied least on Fortune has held on the longest. It also makes things easier when the prince, having no other states, is forced to come and live there in person. But to come to those who became princes through their own *virtù* and not through Fortune, I say that the

most excellent are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus and the like.[1] And although we should not reason about Moses, since he was a mere executor of what God commanded him, still he deserves to be admired, if only for the grace that made him worthy to speak with God.

6.2 But if we consider Cyrus and the others who have acquired or founded kingdoms, we will find them all admirable. And if we consider their particular actions and institutions, they will not seem different from those of Moses, though he had so great a teacher. Examining their actions and lives, we will see that they had nothing from Fortune but the opportunity, which gave them the material into which they could introduce whatever form they saw fit. Without that opportunity the *virtù* of their spirit would have been wasted; without that *virtù* the opportunity would have come in vain. So it was necessary for Moses to find the people of Israel in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, so that they would be disposed to follow him to escape their servitude. For Romulus to become king of Rome and founder of that homeland, it had to be that there was no room for him in Alba, and that he had been exposed at birth. Cyrus had to find the Persians discontented with the rule of the Medes, and the Medes soft and effeminate from a long peace. Theseus could not have shown his *virtù* had he not found the Athenians scattered. These opportunities, then, made these men fortunate, and their excellent *virtù* enabled them to recognize the opportunity. Thus their homelands were ennobled by it and became most prosperous. Those who become princes by ways of *virtù* like these acquire their principality with difficulty but hold it with ease. The difficulties they meet in acquiring it arise partly from the new institutions and methods they are forced to introduce to establish their state and their own security. And one should bear in mind that there is nothing more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, or more dangerous to manage than to take the lead in introducing new institutions. For the

1 Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire in the 6th century BC; Romulus and Theseus are the legendary founders of Rome and of the Athenian state.

innovator has as enemies all those who do well under the old institutions, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would do well under the new. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things until they have seen them proven by firm experience. Hence, whenever those who are enemies have the chance to attack, they do so with partisan zeal, while the others defend only half-heartedly, so that the innovator is endangered along with them. It is necessary, therefore, if we want to examine this matter properly, to ask whether these innovators stand on their own or depend on others—that is, whether to carry out their work they must beg, or whether they can use force. In the first case they always come to a bad end and accomplish nothing. But when they depend on their own resources and can use force, they are seldom in danger. That is why all armed prophets have conquered and the unarmed ones have come to ruin. For besides what has been said, the nature of peoples is changeable: it is easy to persuade them of something, but hard to keep them in that persuasion. So things must be arranged so that when they no longer believe, they can be made to believe by force.

6.3 Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus could not have made their constitutions observed for long if they had been unarmed —as happened in our own times to Fra Girolamo Savonarola, who was ruined along with his new institutions as soon as the multitude began to stop believing him, since he had no means of holding firm those who had believed, nor of making the unbelievers believe. Such men, therefore, have great difficulty in making their way; all their dangers lie along the road, and they must overcome them with *virtù*. But once they have overcome them and begin to be held in veneration, having eliminated those who envied their qualities, they remain powerful, secure, honored and happy.[2] To such lofty examples I want to add a lesser one; but it will bear some proportion to them, and I want

2 Savonarola, a Dominican friar, dominated Florence from 1494 until he was executed in 1498.

it to stand for all others of the kind. This is Hiero of Syracuse. From private citizen he became prince of Syracuse, and he too had nothing from Fortune but the opportunity. For when the Syracusans were oppressed, they chose him as their captain, and from there he earned being made their prince. And even as a private citizen he had such *virtù* that one who writes of him says he lacked nothing to reign but a kingdom.[3] He abolished the old militia and organized a new one; he dropped his old friendships and made new ones. And once he had friends and soldiers who were his own, he could build any edifice on that foundation. So he labored hard to acquire, and little to maintain.

3 Hiero II ruled Syracuse in the 3rd century BC; the quoted judgment comes from the Roman historian Justin.

Chapter VII

Of new principalities acquired by the arms of others and by fortune
Princes made by fortune struggle to keep power; Cesare Borgia's career shows how and where he failed.

7.1 Those who rise from private citizens to princes by Fortune alone become princes with little effort, but maintain themselves with a great deal. They meet no difficulty along the way, because they fly there; all their difficulties arise once they have arrived. These are the men who are granted a state either for money or by the favor of whoever grants it. This happened to many in Greece, in the cities of Ionia and the Hellespont, where they were made princes by Darius so that they would hold those cities for his security and glory. So too were those emperors made who rose from private station to the Empire by corrupting the soldiers.[1] Such men rest simply on the will and the fortune of whoever made them great—two extremely fickle and unstable things—and they neither know how to hold that rank nor are able to. They do not know how, because unless a man has great intelligence and *virtù*, it is not reasonable to expect that, having always lived as a private citizen, he will know how to command. They are not able to, because they have no forces that can be friendly and loyal to them. Then, too, states that spring up suddenly, like all other things in nature that are born and grow quickly, cannot put down roots and branches deep enough that the first bad weather does not wipe them out—unless, as has

1 Darius I, king of Persia (522–486 BC), installed compliant tyrants in the Greek cities under his rule.

been said, those who have so suddenly become princes have so much *virtù* that they know at once how to prepare to preserve what Fortune has dropped into their laps, and afterward lay the foundations that others laid before becoming princes.

7.2 For each of these two ways of becoming a prince—by *virtù* or by Fortune—I want to offer two examples from within living memory: Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. Francesco, by the proper means and through his own great *virtù*, rose from private citizen to Duke of Milan, and what he had acquired with a thousand troubles he maintained with little effort. On the other hand Cesare Borgia, commonly called Duke Valentino, acquired his state through his father's fortune and lost it the same way—even though he did everything and took every step that a prudent and able man ought to take to put down his roots in the states that the arms and fortune of others had granted him. For, as was said above, whoever does not lay his foundations first might be able to lay them afterward through great *virtù*, though it will be hard on the architect and dangerous for the building. If, then, we consider all the Duke's progress, we will see how great a foundation he had laid for future power. I do not think it superfluous to discuss it, because I would not know what better precepts to give a new prince than the example of his actions. And if his arrangements did not succeed, it was not his fault; it came from an extraordinary and extreme malice of Fortune. In seeking to make his son the Duke great, Alexander VI faced many difficulties, present and future. First, he saw no way of making him lord of any state that was not a state of the Church; and he knew that the Duke of Milan and the Venetians would not allow it, since Faenza and Rimini were already under Venetian protection. Besides this, he saw that the arms of Italy, and especially those he might have used, were in the hands of men who had reason to fear the pope's greatness; so he could not trust them, since they were all with the Orsini and the Colonna and their followers. It was necessary, therefore, to upset the existing order and throw the states of Italy into disorder, so that he could safely make himself master of part of them. This was easy for him,

because he found the Venetians, moved by other motives, bent on bringing the French back into Italy. He not only did not oppose this but made it easier by dissolving King Louis's earlier marriage.[2] So the King came into Italy with the help of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander. No sooner was he in Milan than the Pope had troops from him for the campaign in Romagna, which was granted him because of the King's reputation.

7.3 Having acquired Romagna, then, and beaten the Colonna, the Duke wanted to hold it and go further, but two things held him back. One was his own troops, which did not seem loyal to him; the other was the will of France. That is, he feared that the Orsini forces he had been using would fail him, and not only keep him from acquiring more but take away what he had acquired—and that the King might do the same. He had a sign of this from the Orsini when, after taking Faenza, he attacked Bologna and saw them go coldly into that assault. As for the King, he learned his mind when, after seizing the Duchy of Urbino, he attacked Tuscany, and the King made him give up that enterprise. So the Duke decided to depend no longer on the fortune and arms of others. The first thing he did was weaken the Orsini and Colonna factions in Rome. He won over all their adherents who were gentlemen, making them his own gentlemen and giving them large stipends, and honored them according to their rank with military commands and governorships. So within a few months their attachment to the factions died out in their hearts and turned entirely to the Duke.

7.4 After this, having scattered the Colonna, he waited for an opportunity to eliminate the Orsini. It came to him well, and he used it better. For when the Orsini realized, too late, that the greatness of the Duke and of the Church meant their ruin, they held a meeting at Magione, near Perugia. From that came the rebellion of Urbino, the uprisings in Romagna and endless dangers for the Duke, all of which he overcame with the help of

2 The Orsini and Colonna were the two great rival baronial families of Rome; Alexander VI annulled Louis XII's first marriage so he could marry Anne of Brittany.

the French. Once his reputation was restored, trusting neither France nor any other outside force, so as not to have to put them to the test, he turned to deceit. He knew so well how to disguise his intentions that the Orsini, through Signor Paolo, made peace with him. The Duke spared no courtesy to reassure Paolo, giving him robes, money and horses—so much so that their simplicity led them to Senigallia and into his hands.[3] Having eliminated these leaders, then, and turned their partisans into his friends, the Duke had laid very good foundations for his power, holding all of Romagna along with the Duchy of Urbino, and having won over all those peoples, since they had begun to taste well-being. And because this part deserves to be known and imitated by others, I do not want to leave it out.

7.5 When the Duke took Romagna, he found it had been ruled by feeble lords, who had plundered their subjects rather than governed them, and had given them cause for disunion rather than union—so that the province was full of robbery, feuds and every other kind of lawlessness. He judged it necessary, if he wanted to make it peaceful and obedient to the sovereign arm, to give it good government. So he put in charge Messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and efficient man, to whom he gave the fullest power. In a short time this man made it peaceful and united, gaining a great reputation. Then the Duke judged that such excessive authority was no longer advisable, because he feared it would become hateful. So he set up a civil court in the middle of the province, under a most excellent president, where every city had its own advocate.[4] And because he knew that the past severities had generated some hatred against him, to purge the minds of those peoples and win them over entirely, he wanted to show that if any cruelty had occurred, it had come not from him but from the harsh nature of his minister. Seizing the opportunity, he had him placed one morning in the square at Cesena, cut

3 Paolo Orsini, head of the family; at Senigallia on December 31, 1502, Cesare seized the conspirators and had them killed.

4 Remirro de Orco (Ramiro de Lorqua), a Spanish captain in Cesare's service, executed in December 1502.

in two, with a block of wood and a bloody knife beside him. The ferocity of this spectacle left those peoples at once satisfied and stunned. But let us go back to where we left off.

7.6 I say that the Duke, finding himself quite powerful and partly secured against present dangers—having armed himself in his own way and largely eliminated the forces near enough to harm him—still had to reckon with France if he wanted to go on acquiring. For he knew the King, who had realized his mistake too late, would not stand for it. So he began to look for new friendships and to waver with France when the French marched toward the Kingdom of Naples against the Spaniards who were besieging Gaeta. His intention was to secure himself against them, which he would soon have managed if Alexander had lived. And this was how he handled present matters. But as to the future, he had to fear, first, that a new successor to the Church might not be friendly to him and might try to take away what Alexander had given him. He planned to guard against this in four ways. First, by wiping out the bloodlines of all the lords he had despoiled, so as to take that opportunity away from the Pope. Second, by winning over all the gentlemen of Rome, as has been said, so as to keep the Pope in check through them. Third, by making the College of Cardinals as much his own as he could. Fourth, by acquiring so much power before the Pope died that he could resist a first onslaught on his own.

7.7 Of these four things, by the time Alexander died he had accomplished three, and the fourth was nearly done. Of the despoiled lords he killed as many as he could lay hands on, and very few escaped; he had won over the Roman gentlemen; and he had a very large party in the College. As for new acquisitions, he had planned to become lord of Tuscany; he already held Perugia and Piombino, and had taken Pisa under his protection. And as soon as he no longer had to worry about France (which he no longer did, since the French had already been stripped of the Kingdom of Naples by the Spaniards, so that each side was forced to buy his friendship), he would have pounced on Pisa. After this, Lucca and Siena would have given way at once, partly

out of envy of the Florentines and partly out of fear, and the Florentines would have had no remedy. Had he succeeded—and he was succeeding the very year Alexander died—he would have gained such forces and such a reputation that he could have stood on his own, depending not on the fortune or forces of others but only on his own power and *virtù*. But Alexander died five years after Cesare had first drawn his sword. He left him with only the state of Romagna consolidated, all the others up in the air, caught between two very powerful enemy armies, and himself sick unto death.[5] Yet there was in the Duke such ferocity and such *virtù*, he understood so well how men are to be won or lost, and the foundations he had laid in so short a time were so solid, that if he had not had those armies on his back, or if he had been healthy, he would have withstood every difficulty. That his foundations were good could be seen: Romagna waited for him more than a month; in Rome, though half dead, he remained secure; and although the Baglioni, the Vitelli and the Orsini came to Rome, they found no following against him. If he could not make whom he wanted pope, he could at least prevent anyone he did not want. Had he been healthy when Alexander died, everything would have been easy for him. And he told me himself, in the days when Julius II was elected, that he had thought of everything that might happen when his father died and had found a remedy for all of it—except that he never imagined that at his father's death he himself would also be at death's door. Having gathered up all the Duke's actions, then, I would not know how to fault him. On the contrary, it seems to me that I should hold him up, as I have done, to be imitated by all those who have risen to power through Fortune and the arms of others. For with his great spirit and high ambitions, he could not have conducted himself otherwise; the only things that stood against his designs were the brevity of Alexander's life and his own illness.

5 The two armies were the French and the Spanish, fighting for Naples. The Italian here reads "the state of Rome," a misprint for "Romagna," which the sense requires.

7.8 Whoever, then, judges it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, to win friends, to conquer by force or by fraud, to make himself loved and feared by the people and followed and revered by the soldiers, to eliminate those who can or must harm you, to renew old institutions with new methods, to be severe and gracious, magnanimous and generous, to do away with a disloyal militia and create a new one, to keep the friendship of kings and princes so that they must either help you graciously or harm you with caution—such a man cannot find fresher examples than this man's actions. He can be faulted only in the election of Julius II, where he made a bad choice. For, as has been said, though he could not make a pope of his own liking, he could keep anyone from becoming pope; and he should never have agreed to the papacy of any cardinal he had injured, or who, once pope, would have reason to fear him. For men do harm either out of fear or out of hatred. Those he had injured included, among others, San Pietro in Vincoli, Colonna, San Giorgio and Ascanio. All the others, once raised to the papacy, would have had reason to fear him, except Rouen and the Spaniards—the Spaniards through kinship and obligation, Rouen through his power, having the Kingdom of France behind him.[6] Above all, therefore, the Duke should have made a Spaniard pope, and failing that, he should have agreed to Rouen and not San Pietro in Vincoli. Whoever believes that among great men new benefits make them forget old injuries deceives himself. The Duke erred, then, in this election, and it was the cause of his final ruin.

6 The cardinals are Giuliano della Rovere (the future Julius II), Giovanni Colonna, Raffaele Riario and Ascanio Sforza.

Chapter VIII

Of those who have attained a principality through crimes
Agathocles and Oliverotto rose by crime; cruelty must be done all at once, not bit by bit.

8.1 But since there are two more ways of rising from private citizen to prince that cannot be attributed wholly either to Fortune or to *virtù*, I do not think I should leave them out, even though one of them could be discussed more fully in a treatment of republics. These are when one rises to a principality by some wicked and criminal path, or when a private citizen becomes prince of his homeland by the favor of his fellow citizens. Speaking of the first way, I will illustrate it with two examples, one ancient and one modern, without otherwise going into the merits of this part, because I judge they are enough for anyone forced to imitate them. Agathocles the Sicilian became king of Syracuse not only from private station but from the lowest and most abject condition.[1] The son of a potter, he led a wicked life at every stage of his rise. Nevertheless, he combined his wickedness with such *virtù* of mind and body that, having joined the army, he rose through its ranks to become praetor of Syracuse. Once established in that position, he resolved to become prince and to hold by violence, with no obligation to anyone, what had been granted him by agreement. He came to an understanding about this plan with Hamilcar the Carthaginian, who was campaigning in Sicily with his armies. Then one morning he assembled the people and the Senate of Syracuse as though he

1 Agathocles ruled Syracuse from 317 BC until his death in 289 BC.

had to deliberate on matters concerning the republic, and at a prearranged signal had his soldiers kill all the senators and the richest of the people. With them dead, he seized and held the rule of that city without any civil strife. And although he was twice defeated by the Carthaginians and finally besieged, he was not only able to defend his city but, leaving part of his troops to defend it, attacked Africa with the rest. In a short time he freed Syracuse from the siege and reduced the Carthaginians to extreme straits. They were forced to come to terms with him, to content themselves with holding Africa, and to leave Sicily to Agathocles.

8.2 Whoever considers this man's actions and *virtù*, then, will see nothing, or very little, that can be attributed to Fortune. For, as said above, he came to the principality not through anyone's favor but by rising through the ranks of the army, which he had earned with a thousand hardships and dangers, and afterward he held it with many bold and dangerous decisions. Yet one cannot call it *virtù* to kill one's fellow citizens, betray one's friends, and be without faith, without mercy, without religion. Such methods can win power, but not glory. For if one considers Agathocles' *virtù* in getting into and out of dangers, and the greatness of his spirit in enduring and overcoming adversity, there is no reason why he should be held inferior to any of the most excellent commanders. Nevertheless, his savage cruelty and inhumanity, together with his countless crimes, do not allow him to be celebrated among the most excellent men. One cannot, therefore, attribute to Fortune or to *virtù* what he achieved without either.

OLIVEROTTO DA FERMO

Oliverotto da Fermo murders his uncle and Fermo's leading men at a banquet to seize the city.

In our own times, during the reign of Alexander VI, Oliverotto da Fermo, left fatherless as a child many years before, was brought up by a maternal uncle named Giovanni Fogliani. In his

early youth he was sent to soldier under Paolo Vitelli, so that, steeped in that discipline, he might reach some high rank in the military. After Paolo died, he fought under his brother Vitellozzo, and in a very short time, being clever and vigorous in body and spirit, he became one of the leading men in his army.[2] But since it seemed servile to him to be under others, he decided to seize Fermo with the help of some citizens of Fermo who preferred servitude to their homeland's liberty, and with the support of the Vitelli. He wrote to Giovanni Fogliani that, having been away from home many years, he wanted to come to see him and his city, and to look over his inheritance to some extent. And since he had labored for nothing but honor, he wanted his fellow citizens to see that he had not wasted his time, so he wished to come in honorable style, escorted by a hundred horsemen from among his friends and servants. He begged his uncle to kindly arrange for the people of Fermo to receive him with honor—which would bring honor not only to Oliverotto but to Giovanni himself, since he had raised him.

8.3 Giovanni, therefore, did not fail in any courtesy owed his nephew. He had the people of Fermo receive him with honor, and Oliverotto lodged in Giovanni's houses. After some days there, spent arranging what was needed for his coming crime, he gave a very formal banquet, to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani and all the leading men of Fermo. When the dinner and all the other entertainments customary at such banquets were over, Oliverotto artfully raised certain serious subjects, speaking of the greatness of Pope Alexander and of his son Cesare and of their enterprises. As Giovanni and the others responded, he suddenly rose, saying that these were matters to be discussed in a more private place, and withdrew into a room, where Giovanni and all the other citizens followed him. No sooner were they seated than soldiers came out of hiding places in the room and killed Giovanni and all the others. After this murder Oliverotto mounted his horse, rode through the town and besieged

2 Paolo and Vitellozzo Vitelli were condottieri (mercenary captains) from Città di Castello; Florence executed Paolo in 1499.

the chief magistracy in the palace, so that out of fear they were forced to obey him and set up a government of which he made himself prince. Having killed all those who, being discontented, could harm him, he strengthened himself with new civil and military institutions. So within the one year he held the principality, he was not only secure in the city of Fermo but had become formidable to all his neighbors. Dislodging him would have been as difficult as dislodging Agathocles, had he not let himself be deceived by Cesare Borgia when, at Senigallia, as was said above, Cesare seized the Orsini and the Vitelli. There Oliverotto was taken as well, and a year after committing his parricide he was strangled, together with Vitellozzo, who had been his teacher in both *virtù* and crime.

CRUELTY WELL USED AND BADLY USED

Cruelty done all at once and then stopped can secure a state; cruelty that grows cannot.

8.4 Someone might wonder how it came about that Agathocles and others like him, after endless betrayals and cruelties, could live long and securely in their homeland and defend themselves from outside enemies, without their citizens ever conspiring against them—while many others, by means of cruelty, have been unable to hold their states even in peaceful times, let alone in the uncertain times of war. I believe this comes from cruelty badly used or well used. Well used we may call it—if one may speak well of evil—when it is done all at once, out of the necessity of securing oneself, and then is not persisted in but turned as far as possible to the benefit of one's subjects. Badly used is the cruelty that, though slight at first, grows over time rather than dying out. Those who follow the first method can find some remedy for their state, with God and with men, as Agathocles did. The others cannot possibly maintain themselves. Hence it should be noted that in seizing a state, the one who takes it should think through all the cruelties he must commit and do them all at a stroke, so as not to have to repeat them every day.

By not renewing them, he can reassure men and win them over by doing them good. Whoever does otherwise, out of timidity or bad counsel, is always forced to keep a knife in his hand. Nor can he ever rely on his subjects, since they, because of fresh and continual injuries, can never feel secure with him. For injuries should be done all together, so that, being tasted less, they give less offense; benefits should be given little by little, so that they may be savored more. And above all a prince should live with his subjects in such a way that no event, whether bad or good, makes him change course. For when necessity comes in adverse times, you will be too late for harsh measures; and the good you do will not help you, because it will be judged forced, and you will get no gratitude for it.

Chapter IX

Of the civil principality
A prince raised by his fellow citizens should build on the people rather than the nobles.

9.1 But coming to the other case, when a leading citizen becomes prince of his homeland not through crime or other intolerable violence but with the favor of his fellow citizens—what may be called a civil principality, and to attain it one needs neither pure *virtù* nor pure Fortune but rather a fortunate cunning—I say that one rises to this principality either by the favor of the people or by the favor of the great. For in every city these two opposing humors are found, and they arise from this: the people desire not to be commanded or oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people. From these two opposing appetites arises in cities one of three effects: principality, liberty or license. A principality is brought about either by the people or by the great, depending on which of the two sides gets the opportunity. For when the great see that they cannot resist the people, they begin to build up the reputation of one of their own and make him prince, so that under his shadow they can give vent to their appetites. The people, likewise, seeing that they cannot resist the great, build up the reputation of a single man and make him prince, so as to be defended by his authority. Whoever comes to the principality with the help of the great maintains himself with more difficulty than one who gets there with the help of the people. For he finds himself a prince surrounded by many who consider themselves his equals, and so he can neither command them nor manage them as he wishes.

But whoever arrives at the principality by popular favor finds himself alone there, with no one, or very few, around him who are not ready to obey. Besides this, you cannot satisfy the great honestly and without injuring others, but you certainly can satisfy the people. For the people's aim is more honest than that of the great: the great want to oppress, and the people want not to be oppressed. Add to this that a prince can never make himself secure against a hostile people, because they are too many; against the great he can, because they are few.

9.2 The worst a prince can expect from a hostile people is to be abandoned by them. But from hostile great men he must fear not only being abandoned but also that they will actively come against him. Having more foresight and more cunning, they always act in time to save themselves, and they seek favor with whoever they hope will win. Moreover, the prince must always live with the same people, but he can do perfectly well without the same great men, since he can make and unmake them every day, and give or take away their standing as he pleases. To clarify this point further, I say that the great should be considered in two main ways. Either they conduct themselves so as to bind themselves entirely to your fortune, or they do not. Those who bind themselves and are not rapacious should be honored and loved. Those who do not bind themselves must in turn be considered in two ways. If they do so out of timidity and a natural want of spirit, then you should make use of them, especially those who are good counselors, because in prosperity they do you honor and in adversity you have nothing to fear from them. But when they hold back deliberately, out of ambition, it is a sign that they think more of themselves than of you. The prince must guard against these men and treat them as if they were declared enemies, because in adversity they will always help to ruin him. So one who becomes prince through the favor of the people must keep them friendly, which will be easy for him, since all they ask is not to be oppressed. But one who becomes prince against the people, through the favor of the great, must before anything else try to win the people over, which will be

easy for him if he takes them under his protection. And because men who receive good from someone they expected harm from feel more bound to their benefactor, the people become better disposed toward him than if he had been carried to the principality by their own favor. The prince can win them over in many ways, but since these vary with circumstances, no fixed rule can be given, and so I will leave them aside.

9.3 I will conclude only this: a prince must have the people on his side; otherwise he has no remedy in adversity. Nabis, prince of the Spartans, withstood a siege by all of Greece and by a victorious Roman army, and defended his country and his state against them. When the danger came, it was enough for him to secure himself against a few. Had he had the people against him, that would not have been enough.[1] And let no one challenge this opinion of mine with that tired proverb, "He who builds on the people builds on mud." That is true when a private citizen lays his foundations there and persuades himself that the people will rescue him if he is oppressed by his enemies or by the magistrates. In that case he may often find himself deceived, as happened to the Gracchi in Rome and to Messer Giorgio Scali in Florence.[2] But if the one who builds on the people is a prince who can command, a man of courage who does not lose his nerve in adversity, who does not neglect his other preparations, and who keeps the population as a whole in good heart through his own spirit and his institutions, he will never find himself deceived by them, and he will see that he has laid good foundations. These principalities are usually in danger when they are about to pass from a civil order to an absolute one. For such princes either govern in person or through magistrates. In the second case their position is weaker and more dangerous, because they depend entirely on the will of the citizens appointed to the magistracies. These men, especially in adverse times,

1 Nabis ruled Sparta c. 207–192 BC; in 195 BC he held out against Rome and its Greek allies.

2 Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, reforming Roman tribunes of the 2nd century BC, were both killed; Giorgio Scali, a Florentine popular leader, was beheaded in 1382.

can take the state from them with great ease, either by acting against them or simply by not obeying them. And once danger comes, it is too late for the prince to seize absolute authority, because the citizens and subjects, used to receiving their orders from the magistrates, are in no mood at such moments to obey his. In uncertain times he will always be short of men he can trust. For such a prince cannot rely on what he sees in quiet times, when the citizens have need of the state. Then everyone comes running, everyone makes promises, and each one is willing to die for him—when death is far away. But in adverse times, when the state has need of its citizens, few are to be found. And this test is all the more dangerous because it can be made only once. A wise prince, therefore, must devise a way by which his citizens will always, in every kind of circumstance, have need of the state and of him; and then they will always be loyal to him.

Chapter X

How the strength of all principalities should be measured
A prince's strength lies in fielding his own army or, failing that, fortifying his city against siege.

10.1 In examining the character of these principalities, there is another consideration to weigh: whether a prince has so much power that he can, if need be, stand on his own, or whether he always needs others to defend him. To clarify this further, I judge that those can stand on their own who, through an abundance of men or of money, can put together a proper army and fight a pitched battle against anyone who comes to attack them. And I likewise judge that those always need others who cannot meet their enemies in the field but are forced to take refuge behind their walls and guard them. The first case has already been discussed, and we will say more about it as the occasion arises. About the second case there is nothing to say except to urge such princes to fortify and provision their own town and to take no account of the surrounding countryside. Whoever has fortified his town well, and has handled his other dealings with his subjects as described above and as will be described below, will always be attacked with great caution. For men are always wary of enterprises in which they see difficulty, and there can be nothing easy about attacking someone whose town is strong and who is not hated by his people.

10.2 The cities of Germany are completely free. They have little surrounding territory, they obey the emperor when they feel like it, and they fear neither him nor any other power nearby. For they are so well fortified that everyone thinks taking them

would be a tedious and difficult business. All of them have proper ditches and walls and enough artillery, and they always keep in their public storehouses enough food, drink and firewood for a year.[1] Beyond this, in order to keep the common people fed without cost to the public purse, they always keep in common a year's worth of work to give them in the trades that are the lifeblood of the city and by whose industry the common people live. They also hold military exercises in high esteem and have many institutions to keep them up. A prince, then, who has a strong city and does not make himself hated cannot be attacked; and even if someone did attack him, the attacker would have to withdraw in disgrace. For the affairs of the world are so changeable that it is almost impossible for anyone to keep his armies sitting idle for a year besieging him. Someone may object that if the people have property outside the walls and see it burning, they will lose patience, and that the long siege and their own self-interest will make them forget their prince. I answer that a powerful and spirited prince will always overcome these difficulties: now giving his subjects hope that the trouble will not last long, now making them fear the enemy's cruelty, now deftly securing himself against those who seem too bold.

10.3 Besides, the enemy will naturally burn and ravage the countryside as soon as he arrives, at the very time when men's spirits are still hot and eager for the defense. So the prince has all the less reason to worry, because a few days later, when spirits have cooled, the damage is already done, the harm already suffered, and there is no longer any remedy. And then the people rally to their prince all the more, since he seems to be under obligation to them, their houses having been burned and their property ruined in his defense. For it is the nature of men to be bound as much by the benefits they confer as by those they receive. So, all things considered, it will not be hard for a prudent prince to keep his citizens' spirits firm from start to fin-

1 The free cities of the Holy Roman Empire, whose emperor at the time was Maximilian I.

ish of a siege, as long as he does not run short of the means to live and to defend himself.

Chapter XI

Of ecclesiastical principalities
Church states are kept by religion; Popes Alexander VI and Julius II made the Church a power.

11.1 It remains now only to discuss ecclesiastical principalities. With these, all the difficulties come before one possesses them. For they are acquired either by *virtù* or by Fortune, and are kept without either, because they are sustained by ancient religious institutions, which are so powerful and of such a nature that they keep their princes in power no matter how they act and live. These princes alone have states and do not defend them, have subjects and do not govern them. Their states, though undefended, are not taken from them; and their subjects, though ungoverned, do not mind, and neither think of breaking away from them nor could. These principalities alone, then, are secure and happy. But since they are ruled by higher causes, which the human mind cannot reach, I will say no more about them; for since they are exalted and maintained by God, it would be the act of a presumptuous and reckless man to discuss them. Still, someone might ask me how the Church has come to such greatness in temporal power. Before Alexander, the Italian powers—and not only those called powers, but every baron and lord, however minor—thought little of it in temporal matters; yet now a king of France trembles before it, and it has been able to drive him out of Italy and to ruin the Venetians. Although this is well known, it does not seem superfluous to me to recall it in part.

11.2 Before Charles, king of France, came into Italy, this land was under the rule of the pope, the Venetians, the king of Naples, the duke of Milan and the Florentines. These powers had two principal concerns: first, that no foreigner should enter Italy in arms; second, that none of them should seize more territory. The ones they had to watch most closely were the pope and the Venetians. To hold back the Venetians took the union of all the others, as in the defense of Ferrara; and to keep the pope down they made use of the Roman barons. These were divided into two factions, the Orsini and the Colonna, so there was always cause for strife between them; and standing with arms in hand under the pontiff's very eyes, they kept the papacy weak and infirm. And although a spirited pope sometimes arose, as Sixtus did, neither fortune nor wisdom could ever free him from these troubles.[1] The cause was the shortness of their lives. In the ten years a pope lived on average, he could barely bring down one of the factions. If, say, one pope had all but wiped out the Colonna, another would arise who was hostile to the Orsini and would revive the Colonna, and he would not have time to wipe out the Orsini. This is why the pope's temporal forces were little respected in Italy. Then came Alexander VI, who, of all the pontiffs there have ever been, showed how far a pope could prevail with money and with force. With Duke Valentino as his instrument, and the French invasion as his opportunity, he did all the things I discussed above in treating the duke's actions. And although his aim was to make not the Church great but the duke, what he did nonetheless contributed to the greatness of the Church, which after his death, once the duke was destroyed, became the heir of his labors.

11.3 Then came Pope Julius, and he found the Church great: it held all of Romagna, the Roman barons had been wiped out, and their factions crushed by Alexander's blows. He also found the way open to a method of amassing money never used before Alexander's time. Julius not only continued these things but

1 The War of Ferrara (1482–84), in which the other Italian powers checked a Venetian attack on Ferrara; Sixtus IV was pope 1471–84.

went further. He set out to win Bologna, destroy the Venetians and drive the French out of Italy; and all these enterprises succeeded, and with all the more credit to him because he did everything to increase the Church and not any private person. He also kept the Orsini and Colonna parties in the condition in which he found them. And although there were some leaders among them ready to stir up trouble, two things have kept them quiet: first, the greatness of the Church, which daunts them; second, their having no cardinals of their own, who are the source of the tumults among them. These parties will never be quiet whenever they have cardinals, because the cardinals nourish factions in Rome and outside it, and the barons are forced to defend them. Thus from the ambition of prelates arise the discords and tumults among the barons. His Holiness Pope Leo, then, has found the papacy exceedingly powerful; and it is hoped that, if those popes made it great by arms, he will make it very great and venerable by his goodness and his countless other virtues.[2]

2 Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici), pope 1513–21; Machiavelli was hoping for Medici favor.

Chapter XII

How many kinds of military there are, and of mercenary soldiers
Good laws rest on good arms, and mercenaries are useless, disloyal and the ruin of Italy.

12.1 I have now discussed in detail all the kinds of principalities I proposed at the beginning to treat, considered in some measure the causes of their well-being and ill-being, and shown the methods by which many have tried to acquire and hold them. It remains for me now to discuss in general the means of attack and defense that can come into play in each of them. We said above that a prince must have good foundations; otherwise he is bound to be ruined. The principal foundations of all states, new as well as old or mixed, are good laws and good arms. And because there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there are bound to be good laws, I will leave aside the discussion of laws and speak of arms. I say, then, that the arms with which a prince defends his state are either his own, or mercenary, or auxiliary, or mixed. Mercenary and auxiliary arms are useless and dangerous. If a man keeps his state founded on mercenary arms, he will never be firm or secure. For they are disunited, ambitious, undisciplined and disloyal; bold among friends, cowardly before enemies; they have no fear of God and keep no faith with men. Your ruin is put off only as long as the attack is put off. In peace you are plundered by them, in war by the enemy.

12.2 The reason is that they have no love, and no other reason to keep them in the field, beyond a little pay, which is not

enough to make them want to die for you. They are glad enough to be your soldiers as long as you are not at war; but when war comes, they either run away or leave. I should have little trouble proving this, since the present ruin of Italy is caused by nothing else than its having relied for many years on mercenary arms. These did once bring some success to some, and looked bold against one another; but when the foreigner came, they showed what they were. That is how Charles, king of France, was able to take Italy with a piece of chalk. And the man who said our sins were the cause spoke the truth; but they were not the sins he believed, but the ones I have described. And because they were the sins of princes, the princes too have paid the penalty. I want to show more fully the wretchedness of these arms.[1]

12.3 Mercenary captains are either excellent men or they are not. If they are, you cannot trust them, because they will always aspire to their own greatness, either by crushing you, their master, or by crushing others against your intentions. But if the captain lacks ability, he ruins you in the ordinary way. And if someone replies that anyone with arms in his hands will do the same, mercenary or not, I would answer that arms have to be employed either by a prince or by a republic. The prince must go in person and fill the office of captain himself. The republic must send its own citizens; when it sends one who does not prove capable, it must replace him, and when he is capable, it must restrain him by laws so that he does not overstep the mark. Experience shows that only princes and armed republics make very great gains, while mercenary arms never do anything but harm. And a republic armed with its own arms is brought to obey one of its citizens with more difficulty than one armed with foreign arms. Rome and Sparta stood armed and free for many centuries. The Swiss are thoroughly armed and thoroughly free. As for ancient mercenary arms, there is the example of the Carthaginians, who were nearly overthrown by

1 The French simply chalked the doors of the houses where their troops would be quartered—Italy was taken without a fight. The man who blamed "our sins" was Savonarola.

their own mercenary soldiers after the first war with the Romans, even though the Carthaginians had their own citizens as captains. Philip of Macedon was made captain of their forces by the Thebans after the death of Epaminondas, and after the victory he took away their liberty.[2] The Milanese, after Duke Filippo died, hired Francesco Sforza against the Venetians; and once he had beaten the enemy at Caravaggio, he joined forces with them to crush the Milanese, his employers. His father, Sforza, while in the service of Queen Joanna of Naples, suddenly left her defenseless, so that, to avoid losing her kingdom, she was forced to throw herself into the arms of the king of Aragon. And if the Venetians and the Florentines have in the past enlarged their dominions with these arms, and their captains have not made themselves princes but have defended them, I answer that the Florentines in this case were favored by luck. For of the able captains who might have been feared, some did not win, some met opposition, and others turned their ambition elsewhere.[3] The one who did not win was John Hawkwood. Since he did not win, his loyalty could not be tested; but everyone will admit that had he won, the Florentines would have been at his mercy. Sforza always had Braccio's men against him, so each kept the other in check. Francesco turned his ambition toward Lombardy; Braccio turned his against the Church and the Kingdom of Naples. But let us come to what happened only a short while ago.[4]

12.4 The Florentines made Paolo Vitelli their captain, a very prudent man who had risen from private life to great renown. Had he taken Pisa, no one would deny that the Florentines would have had to keep him; for if he had gone into their

2 The Mercenary War (241–237 BC) followed the First Punic War; Philip II of Macedon was the father of Alexander the Great, and Epaminondas the Theban general killed in 362 BC.

3 Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milan, died in 1447; Caravaggio was fought in 1448. Muzio Attendolo, called Sforza, served Joanna II of Naples, who turned to Alfonso V of Aragon.

4 Sir John Hawkwood (d. 1394), an English mercenary captain long in Florentine service; Braccio da Montone (d. 1424) was Sforza's great rival.

enemies' pay, they had no remedy, and if they kept him, they would have had to obey him. As for the Venetians, if one considers their progress, one will see that they acted safely and gloriously as long as they made war themselves, which was before they turned their enterprises toward the mainland. Then, with their own nobles and their common people under arms, they fought with great *virtù*; but when they began to fight on land, they abandoned this *virtù* and followed the customs of Italy. At the beginning of their expansion on land, because they held little territory and had a great reputation, they had little to fear from their captains. But as they expanded, which was under Carmagnola, they got a taste of this mistake. They saw that he was very able, since under his command they had beaten the duke of Milan; yet they also knew he had grown lukewarm about the war. They judged that they could no longer win with him, and they neither wished nor dared to dismiss him, for fear of losing what they had acquired. So, to secure themselves, they were forced to kill him.[5]

12.5 After that their captains were Bartolomeo da Bergamo, Roberto da San Severino, the count of Pitigliano and the like, with whom they had to fear losses rather than gains. And that is what later happened at Vailà, where in a single day they lost what they had acquired with such effort over eight hundred years. For these arms bring only slow, belated and feeble gains, and sudden and astonishing losses. And since these examples have brought me to Italy, which has been ruled for many years now by mercenary arms, I want to discuss them from further back, so that once their origin and development are seen, they can be better corrected.[6] You must understand that, as soon as the Empire began to be driven out of Italy in recent times and the pope gained more standing there in temporal affairs, Italy split into a number of states. For many of the large cities took up

5 Francesco Bussone, count of Carmagnola, was executed by Venice in 1432 on suspicion of treachery.

6 Bartolomeo Colleoni, Roberto da Sanseverino and Niccolò Orsini, count of Pitigliano; Vailà is the battle of Agnadello (1509), where Venice lost nearly all its mainland territory.

arms against their nobles, who, backed by the emperor, had kept them oppressed, while the Church backed the cities in order to gain temporal standing; in many others, their own citizens became princes. So Italy came almost entirely into the hands of the Church and a few republics; and since those priests and those other citizens were not used to handling arms, they began to hire foreigners. The first to give this kind of soldiering its prestige was Alberico da Conio, of Romagna.[7] From his school came, among others, Braccio and Sforza, who in their day were the arbiters of Italy.

12.6 After them came all the others who have commanded Italy's arms down to our own day. And the upshot of their *virtù* has been that Italy was overrun by Charles, plundered by Louis, violated by Ferdinand and humiliated by the Swiss. The method they followed was, first, to build up their own reputation by taking reputation away from the infantry. They did this because, having no state of their own and living by their trade, a few foot soldiers would not give them reputation, and they could not feed many. So they fell back on cavalry, where with a manageable number they were fed and honored. Things came to such a pass that in an army of twenty thousand soldiers there were not two thousand foot.[8] Besides this, they had used every device to spare themselves and their soldiers hardship and fear: they did not kill one another in battle but took prisoners, and released them without ransom. They did not attack towns at night, nor did the townsmen attack their tents at night; they built neither stockade nor ditch around the camp; they did not campaign in winter. All these things were permitted by their military codes, and were devised by them to escape, as I said, both hardship and danger. And so they have led Italy into slavery and disgrace.

7 Alberico da Barbiano, count of Conio (d. 1409), founded the all-Italian Company of St. George; this edition misprints his name as "da Como."

8 The invasions of 1494 and 1499, and the Spanish sack of Prato in 1512.

Chapter XIII

Of auxiliary, mixed, and native soldiers
Borrowed auxiliary troops are even more dangerous than mercenaries; a prince needs soldiers of his own.

13.1 Auxiliary arms, the other useless kind, are what you get when you call in a powerful ruler to come with his arms to help and defend you. Pope Julius did this recently: having seen the sorry performance of his mercenary arms in the campaign against Ferrara, he turned to auxiliaries and arranged with Ferdinand, king of Spain, to help him with his men and armies. Such arms can be useful and good in themselves, but for the one who calls them in they are always harmful: if they lose, you are undone; if they win, you are their prisoner. And although ancient histories are full of such examples, I do not want to leave this example of Pope Julius II, which is still fresh. His decision could hardly have been less well considered: wanting Ferrara, he put himself entirely in the hands of a foreigner. But his good fortune brought about a third outcome, so that he did not reap the fruit of his bad choice. His auxiliaries were routed at Ravenna, and then the Swiss rose up and drove out the victors, against all expectation, his own and everyone else's. So he ended up the prisoner neither of his enemies, since they had fled, nor of his auxiliaries, since he had won with arms other than theirs.[1]

13.2 The Florentines, being completely unarmed, brought ten thousand Frenchmen to Pisa to take it, and by this decision they

1 At Ravenna (April 1512) the French beat the Spanish and papal armies but lost their commander; that summer Swiss troops drove them from Lombardy.

ran more danger than at any other time in their troubles. The emperor of Constantinople, to oppose his neighbors, brought ten thousand Turks into Greece, who refused to leave when the war was over. This was the beginning of Greece's subjugation by the Turks.[2] So let whoever wants to make sure he cannot win make use of these arms, for they are far more dangerous than mercenaries. With auxiliaries your ruin comes ready-made: they are all united, all trained to obey someone else. Mercenaries, even after they have won, need more time and a better opportunity to harm you, since they are not a single body and were recruited and paid by you; and an outsider whom you put at their head cannot at once gain enough authority to harm you. In short, with mercenaries the danger is their cowardice; with auxiliaries, their prowess. A wise prince, therefore, has always avoided these arms and turned to his own, and has preferred to lose with his own rather than win with others', judging that no victory won with other people's arms is a real one. I will never hesitate to cite Cesare Borgia and his actions.

13.3 This duke entered Romagna with auxiliary arms, bringing only French troops with him, and with them he took Imola and Forlì. But then, as such arms did not seem safe to him, he turned to mercenaries, judging them less dangerous, and hired the Orsini and the Vitelli. Later, finding them in practice unreliable, disloyal and dangerous, he destroyed them and turned to his own. And one can easily see the difference between these kinds of arms by comparing the duke's reputation when he had the Orsini and Vitelli with his reputation when he was left with his own soldiers and relied on himself. It will be found to have grown steadily; and he was never highly esteemed until everyone saw that he was complete master of his own arms. I did not want to leave recent Italian examples, yet I do not want to leave out Hiero of Syracuse, since he is one of those I named above. As I said before, when the Syracusans made him head of their

2 The Pisa campaign was in 1500. The emperor was John VI Kantakouzenos, who brought in Ottoman troops in the 1340s. Machiavelli says Greece's servitude to "the infidels."

armies, he recognized at once that the mercenary soldiery was useless, because its commanders were like our Italian ones. And since he felt he could neither keep them nor let them go, he had them all cut to pieces; afterward he made war with his own arms and not with others'. I also want to recall a figure from the Old Testament that fits this point.

13.4 When David offered to go and fight Goliath, the Philistine challenger, Saul, to give him courage, armed him with his own armor. As soon as David had it on, he refused it, saying that in it he could not make proper use of himself; he wanted to meet the enemy with his own sling and his own knife. In short, other men's armor either falls off you, or weighs you down, or hems you in. Charles VII, father of King Louis XI, having freed France from the English by his Fortune and his *virtù*, recognized this need to be armed with one's own arms, and established in his kingdom a standing force of men-at-arms and infantry.[3] Then his son, King Louis, abolished the infantry and began to hire Swiss troops. That mistake, followed by his successors, is (as we can now see from the facts) the cause of the dangers that kingdom faces. By raising the reputation of the Swiss, he debased all his own arms: he did away with his infantry entirely, and he made his men-at-arms dependent on the arms of others, because, having grown used to fighting alongside the Swiss, they no longer think they can win without them.[4]

13.5 Hence the French are no match for the Swiss, and without the Swiss they will not risk themselves against anyone else. So the armies of France have been mixed, partly mercenary and partly their own. Arms of this kind, taken all together, are much better than purely mercenary or purely auxiliary arms, and much worse than one's own. Let this example be enough: the kingdom of France would be unbeatable if Charles's institutions had been developed, or even preserved. But human shortsightedness starts something that tastes good at first and does

3 The story is in 1 Samuel 17. Charles VII (reigned 1422–61) ended the Hundred Years' War and created France's first standing companies of cavalry and archers.
4 Louis XI, king of France 1461–1483, son of Charles VII.

not reveal the poison underneath, as I said earlier about consumptive fevers. So whoever holds a principality and does not recognize evils until they have already arisen is not truly wise; and this wisdom is given to few. If you consider the first cause of the ruin of the Roman Empire, you will find it was simply that it began to hire the Goths. From that beginning the strength of the Roman Empire began to drain away, and all the *virtù* that was taken from it was given to them. I conclude, then, that no principality is secure without its own arms. On the contrary, it is wholly at the mercy of fortune, having no *virtù* to defend it in adversity. And it has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men that nothing is so weak and unstable as a reputation for power that is not founded on one's own strength.[5] One's own arms are those made up of your subjects, your citizens or your dependents; all others are either mercenary or auxiliary. And the way to organize one's own arms will be easy to find if you study the institutions of those I have named above, and see how Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, and many republics and princes armed and organized themselves. On those institutions I rely entirely.

5 The Goths were Germanic peoples whom the late Roman Empire enlisted as soldiers and allies, and who sacked Rome in AD 410.

Chapter XIV

What a prince ought to do regarding the military
A prince must make war his only study, training in peacetime through hunting and history.

14.1 A prince, then, should have no other aim or thought, and take up no other profession, than war and its institutions and discipline. For that is the only art expected of someone who commands. And it has such power that it not only keeps those born princes in power, but often raises men of private station to that rank. Conversely, we see that when princes have thought more about refinements than about arms, they have lost their states. The first cause of losing your state is neglecting this art; the way to acquire one is to be a master of it. Francesco Sforza, because he was armed, rose from private citizen to Duke of Milan; his sons, by avoiding the hardships and discomforts of arms, fell from dukes to private citizens. Among the other evils that being unarmed brings you, it makes you despised, and that is one of the disgraces a prince must guard against, as will be explained below. For there is no comparison between an armed man and an unarmed one. It is not reasonable to expect an armed man to obey an unarmed one willingly, or an unarmed man to be safe among armed servants. Since the one feels contempt and the other suspicion, they cannot work well together. And so a prince who does not understand military matters, besides his other misfortunes, as I have said, cannot be respected by his soldiers or trust them.

14.2 He must therefore never take his mind off the practice of war, and in peacetime he should practice it even more than in

war. He can do this in two ways: by action and by study. As for action, besides keeping his men well organized and trained, he should always be out hunting. By this he accustoms his body to hardship, and meanwhile he learns the nature of the terrain: how the mountains rise, how the valleys open, how the plains lie, and the nature of rivers and marshes. To this he should give the greatest care. This knowledge is useful in two ways. First, he learns to know his own country and can better understand how to defend it. Second, through his knowledge of and practice in that terrain, he easily understands any other terrain he may need to study for the first time. For the hills, valleys, plains, rivers and marshes of, say, Tuscany have a certain resemblance to those of other regions, so that from knowing the lie of the land in one region you can easily come to know others. A prince who lacks this expertise lacks the first thing a commander needs. For it teaches you how to find the enemy, choose your camps, lead armies, plan battles and besiege towns to your advantage.

14.3 Among the praises the writers give to Philopoemen, prince of the Achaeans, is that in peacetime he never thought of anything but the ways of war. When he was out in the country with his friends, he would often stop and reason with them: "If the enemy were up on that hill, and we were here with our army, which of us would have the advantage? How could we safely go and attack them while keeping our ranks? If we wanted to retreat, how would we do it? If they retreated, how would we pursue them?"[1] As they went along, he would put to them every situation that can arise for an army. He listened to their opinions, gave his own and backed it up with reasons. Thanks to this constant reflection, no incident could ever arise while he was leading his armies for which he did not have a remedy. As for exercising the mind, the prince should read history and in it study the actions of excellent men: see how they conducted themselves in war, and examine the causes of their victories and

1 Philopoemen (c. 253–183 BC) was the leading general of the Achaean League in Greece.

defeats, so as to avoid the latter and imitate the former. Above all he should do as some excellent men have done in the past: take as a model someone who was praised and glorious before him, and keep that man's deeds and actions always before him. So it is said that Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar imitated Alexander, and Scipio imitated Cyrus.[2] Anyone who reads the life of Cyrus written by Xenophon will then recognize in the life of Scipio how much glory that imitation brought him, and how closely Scipio matched, in chastity, affability, humanity and generosity, what Xenophon wrote of Cyrus. A wise prince should follow methods like these. He should never be idle in peacetime, but diligently build up capital from it that he can draw on in adversity, so that when Fortune turns, she finds him ready to withstand her blows.[3]

2 Scipio Africanus (236–183 BC), the Roman general who defeated Hannibal.
3 Xenophon (c. 430–354 BC), Greek soldier and writer, whose *Cyropaedia* is an idealized life of Cyrus the Great of Persia.

Chapter XV

Of the things for which men, and especially princes, are praised or blamed
A prince must look at how men actually live, not how they should, and learn not to be good.

15.1 It remains now to see how a prince should conduct himself and govern toward his subjects and his friends. Since I know that many have written about this, I fear that in writing about it too I will be thought presumptuous, especially since, in discussing this subject, I depart from the principles laid down by others. But since my aim is to write something useful to whoever understands it, it seemed to me more fitting to go after the effectual truth of the matter than the imagined version of it. Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in reality. For how people live is so far from how they ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation. A man who wants to make a profession of goodness in everything is bound to come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence a prince who wants to keep his position must learn how not to be good, and to use this or not according to necessity.

15.2 Leaving aside, then, the imagined things about princes, and discussing the things that are real, I say that all men, when they are talked about, and princes above all because they are placed higher, are marked out by some of the following qualities, which bring them either blame or praise. Thus one is considered generous, another stingy (to use a Tuscan term, because

in our language "avaricious" also means someone who wants to acquire by plunder, whereas "stingy" is what we call someone who holds back too much from using what is his own). One is considered a giver, another grasping; one cruel, another merciful; one treacherous, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another fierce and spirited; one humane, another arrogant; one lustful, another chaste; one honest, another cunning; one hard, another easygoing; one serious, another frivolous; one religious, another unbelieving; and so on.[1] I know everyone will admit that it would be most praiseworthy for a prince to have all of the qualities listed above that are considered good. But since he cannot have them all, or observe them fully, because the human condition does not allow it, he must be prudent enough to know how to avoid the disgrace of those vices that would lose him his state. As for the vices that would not lose it for him, he should guard against them if he can; but if he cannot, he may let them go with less concern. Moreover, he should not worry about incurring the disgrace of those vices without which he could hardly save his state. For if you consider everything carefully, you will find that some things that look like virtues would, if followed, be his ruin, and some things that look like vices, if followed, result in his security and well-being.[2]

1 Machiavelli distinguishes the Tuscan "misero" (stingy with one's own) from "avaro" (greedy for others' goods).

2 Here "virtù" is used in its moral sense, as the opposite of vice.

Chapter XVI

Of liberality and parsimony
A reputation for generosity drains a prince's funds, so he should accept being called stingy.

16.1 Beginning, then, with the first of the qualities listed above, I say that it would be good to be considered generous. Nevertheless, generosity practiced in such a way that you become known for it harms you. For if it is practiced virtuously, as it should be, it will not be noticed, and you will not escape the reproach of its opposite. So if you want to keep a name for generosity among men, you cannot leave out any kind of lavishness. A prince of this sort will always use up all his resources on such displays, and in the end, if he wants to keep his name for generosity, he will be forced to burden the people with extraordinary taxes, to be rapacious in collecting revenue, and to do everything that can be done to get money.[1] This will begin to make him hated by his subjects, and, as he becomes poor, little respected by anyone. So, having offended many and rewarded few with this generosity of his, he feels the first difficulty and is endangered by the first danger. And when he recognizes this and tries to pull back, he immediately incurs the disgrace of being called stingy.

16.2 Since a prince cannot practice the virtue of generosity so that it is noticed without harm to himself, he should, if he is prudent, not worry about being called stingy. For in time he will be considered more and more generous, when people see that thanks to his thrift his income is enough for him, that he can

1 This edition reads "so that you are not feared"; other editions have "so that you are known for it," which the sense requires.

defend himself against anyone who makes war on him, and that he can undertake enterprises without burdening the people. So he ends up practicing generosity toward all those from whom he takes nothing, who are countless, and stinginess toward all those to whom he gives nothing, who are few. In our own times we have seen great things done only by those who were considered stingy; the others have been wiped out. Pope Julius II made use of a reputation for generosity to reach the papacy, but afterward he gave no further thought to keeping it, so that he could make war on the King of France. He has waged so many wars without imposing an extraordinary tax, because his long thrift covered the extra expenses. The present King of Spain, if he were considered generous, would not have undertaken or won so many campaigns. Therefore, so as not to have to rob his subjects, to be able to defend himself, not to become poor and contemptible, and not to be forced to become grasping, a prince should think little of being called stingy. For this is one of those vices that allow him to reign. And if someone should say, "Caesar reached supreme power through generosity, and many others have risen to the highest ranks because they were, and were considered, generous," I answer: either you are already a prince, or you are on the way to becoming one. In the first case this generosity is harmful; in the second it is indeed necessary to be considered generous. Caesar was one of those who wanted to become the ruler of Rome. But if, after he got there, he had survived and not moderated his spending, he would have destroyed that empire. And if someone should reply, "Many have been princes and done great things with their armies who were considered extremely generous," I answer you: either the prince spends what belongs to him and his subjects, or what belongs to others. In the first case he should be sparing; in the second he should not leave out any kind of generosity. A prince who goes out with his armies, who lives on plunder, sacking and ransoms, and handles what belongs to others, needs this generosity; otherwise his soldiers would not follow him. With what is not yours or your subjects', you can be a more lavish giver, as Cyrus,

Caesar and Alexander were. For spending what belongs to others does not take away from your reputation but adds to it. Only spending your own is what harms you. Nothing consumes itself as much as generosity: while you practice it, you lose the means to practice it, and you become either poor and contemptible or, to escape poverty, grasping and hated. Of all the things a prince must guard against, being despised and hated come first, and generosity leads you to both. So it is wiser to put up with being called stingy, which brings disgrace without hatred, than, in seeking a name for generosity, to be forced to incur the name of grasping, which brings disgrace with hatred.

Chapter XVII

Of cruelty and mercy, and whether it is better to be loved than feared
It is safer for a prince to be feared than loved, provided he avoids being hated.

17.1 Coming now to the other qualities mentioned above, I say that every prince should want to be considered merciful and not cruel. Nevertheless, he must take care not to misuse this mercy. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; yet that cruelty of his had restored order in the Romagna, united it, and brought it to peace and loyalty. If you consider this carefully, you will see that he was much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid a name for cruelty, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed.[1] A prince, therefore, should not worry about the disgrace of being called cruel, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal. For with a very few examples he will be more merciful than those who, out of too much mercy, allow disorders to go on, from which come killings and plunder. These usually harm a whole community, while the executions ordered by the prince harm only individuals. And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to escape a name for cruelty, because new states are full of dangers. So Virgil, through the mouth of Dido, excuses the harshness of her reign on the grounds that it is new, saying:[2]

1 In 1501–1502 Florence let the factional feuds in its subject town of Pistoia run unchecked rather than suppress them harshly.
2 Dido, legendary founder and queen of Carthage, in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

17.2 "Harsh circumstances and the newness of my kingdom force me to do such things, and to guard my borders far and wide."[3]

17.3 Nevertheless, he should be slow to believe and to act, should not be afraid of his own shadow, and should proceed in a way tempered by prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence does not make him careless and too much distrust does not make him unbearable. From this arises a question: *whether it is better to be loved than feared, or feared than loved*. The answer is that one would like to be both; but since it is hard to combine them, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both. For this can be said of men in general: they are ungrateful, fickle, deceitful, quick to run from danger and greedy for gain. While you do them good, they are all yours. They offer you their blood, their property, their lives and their children, as I said above, when the need is far off; but when it comes close, they turn against you. And the prince who has relied entirely on their words, finding himself stripped of other preparations, is ruined. For friendships acquired with money, and not with greatness and nobility of spirit, are paid for but not possessed, and when the time comes they cannot be spent. Men are less hesitant to harm someone who makes himself loved than someone who makes himself feared. For love is held by a bond of obligation, which, because men are wretched creatures, is broken whenever it suits their own interest; but fear is held by a dread of punishment that never leaves you. Still, the prince should make himself feared in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred. For being feared and not being hated can go together very well. He will achieve this as long as he keeps his hands off the property of his citizens and subjects, and off their women. And if he does need to take someone's life, he should do it when there is proper justification and a manifest cause. But above all he must keep his hands off other people's property, because men forget the death of their father sooner than the loss of their inheritance.

3 Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.563–564; quoted in Latin in the original.

17.4 Besides, reasons for seizing property are never lacking: whoever begins to live by plunder always finds reasons to take what belongs to others. Reasons for taking life, on the other hand, are rarer and run out sooner. But when the prince is with his armies and has a multitude of soldiers under his command, then it is absolutely necessary not to worry about a name for cruelty. For without it no army is ever kept united or ready for any action. Among Hannibal's remarkable achievements is counted this: he had an enormous army, made up of countless kinds of men, and led it to fight in foreign lands, yet no dissension ever arose, either among the men or against their leader, in bad fortune as in good. This could only have come from his inhuman cruelty, which, together with his countless abilities, always made him revered and terrifying in the eyes of his soldiers. Without it, his other abilities would not have been enough to produce that effect. And writers who have not thought it through admire these achievements of his on the one hand, and on the other condemn their principal cause. That his other abilities would not have been enough can be seen from Scipio, a most extraordinary man not only in his own times but in all recorded history. His armies in Spain rebelled against him, and this came from nothing but his excessive leniency, which had given his soldiers more license than befits military discipline. Fabius Maximus reproached him for this in the Senate, calling him the corrupter of the Roman army. When the Locrians were ravaged by one of Scipio's lieutenants, he did not avenge them or punish that lieutenant's arrogance, all because of his easygoing nature.[4] So much so that someone who wanted to excuse him in the Senate said that there were many men who knew better how not to err than how to correct the errors of others. In time this nature would have tarnished Scipio's fame and glory, had he kept it while holding supreme command. But since he lived under the Senate's authority, this harmful quality of his was not

4 Quintus Fabius Maximus (d. 203 BC), the cautious Roman general known as "the Delayer"; the Locrians were the people of Locri in southern Italy, abused by Scipio's legate Pleminius in 205 BC.

only hidden but even brought him glory. I conclude, then, returning to being feared and loved, that since men love at their own pleasure and fear at the prince's pleasure, a wise prince should build on what is his own, not on what belongs to others. He must only strive to avoid hatred, as has been said.

Chapter XVIII

How far princes should keep their word
A prince must know how to be both lion and fox, and break his word when it pays.

18.1 Everyone understands how praiseworthy it is for a prince to keep his word and to live with integrity rather than cunning. Nevertheless, experience shows that in our times the princes who have done great things are those who have taken little account of keeping their word, and who have known how to get around men's minds with cunning; and in the end they have overcome those who relied on honesty. You must know, then, that there are two ways of fighting: one with laws, the other with force. The first is proper to men, the second to beasts. But because the first is often not enough, one has to resort to the second. So a prince needs to know how to make good use of both the beast and the man. This was taught to princes covertly by the ancient writers, who write how Achilles and many other ancient princes were given to Chiron the centaur to be raised and trained under his discipline. Having as a teacher someone half beast and half man means nothing other than that a prince must know how to use both natures, and that one without the other does not last. Since a prince, then, must know how to make good use of the beast, he should choose the fox and the lion among the beasts. For the lion cannot defend himself from snares, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. So you must be a fox to recognize the snares and a lion to frighten off

the wolves.[1] Those who simply rely on the lion do not understand this. A prudent ruler, therefore, cannot and should not keep his word when doing so would work against him and when the reasons that made him promise no longer exist. If men were all good, this precept would not be good; but because they are wretched and would not keep their word to you, you do not have to keep yours to them. Nor will a prince ever lack legitimate reasons to disguise his breaking of faith.

18.2 Countless modern examples could be given of this, showing how many peace treaties, how many promises, have been made null and void by the faithlessness of princes; and whoever has known best how to use the fox has done best. But you must know how to disguise this nature well, and be a great pretender and dissembler. And men are so simple, and so obedient to present necessities, that a deceiver will always find someone who will let himself be deceived. I will not pass over one recent example. Alexander VI never did anything, or thought of anything, but deceiving men, and he always found someone he could deceive. There was never a man more convincing in his assurances, or who affirmed a thing with greater oaths, and kept it less. Nevertheless his deceptions always succeeded, because he knew this side of the world well. So a prince does not actually need to have all the qualities listed above, but he very much needs to appear to have them. I will even dare to say this: having them and always practicing them is harmful, while appearing to have them is useful. Thus you should appear merciful, faithful, humane, honest and religious, and be so; but keep your mind so disposed that, when you need to, you can and know how to change to the opposite. And this must be understood: a prince, especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things for which men are considered good, since he is often forced, in order to keep his state, to act against humanity, against charity, against religion. And so he needs a mind ready to turn as the winds and variations of fortune command him, and, as I said

1 Chiron, in Greek myth, was the wise centaur who tutored heroes such as Achilles.

above, not to depart from good if he can, but to know how to enter into evil when forced to.

18.3 A prince must therefore take great care never to let anything come out of his mouth that is not full of the five qualities listed above. To see and hear him, he should seem all mercy, all integrity, all humanity, all religion. And there is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality. For men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands, since everyone gets to see, but few get to touch. Everyone sees what you appear to be; few feel what you are; and those few do not dare oppose the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to protect them. And in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no court to appeal to, one looks to the end. So let a prince aim at winning and keeping his state: the means will always be judged honorable and praised by everyone. For the common crowd is always taken in by appearances and by the outcome of things; and in the world there is nothing but the common crowd. The few find room only when the many have nothing to lean on. A certain prince of our times, whom it is better not to name, never preaches anything but peace and good faith; yet had he observed either, it would have cost him his state or his reputation many times over.[2]

2 The unnamed prince is generally taken to be Ferdinand of Aragon.

Chapter XIX

That one should avoid being despised and hated
A prince must avoid hatred and contempt, as the fates of the Roman emperors show.

19.1 Since I have spoken of the most important of the qualities mentioned above, I want to discuss the others briefly under this general principle: that the prince should think, as has partly been said above, about avoiding anything that makes him hated or contemptible. Whenever he avoids this, he will have done his part, and he will find no danger in other disgraces. What above all makes him hated, as I said, is being grasping and seizing the property and women of his subjects; he must refrain from this. So long as you take neither property nor honor from the mass of men, they live contented, and you have only to contend with the ambition of a few, which can be curbed in many ways and easily. What makes him contemptible is being considered changeable, frivolous, effeminate, cowardly and irresolute. A prince should guard against this as against a reef, and strive to make his actions show greatness, spirit, seriousness and strength. In the private dealings of his subjects he should insist that his judgments are irrevocable, and maintain such a reputation that no one thinks of deceiving him or getting around him. The prince who gives this impression of himself is highly esteemed; and against someone highly esteemed it is hard to conspire, and hard to attack him, provided he is known to be excellent and revered by his people. For a prince should have two fears: one within, on account of his subjects; the other without, on account of foreign powers. Against the latter he defends himself with

good arms and good friends; and if he has good arms, he will always have good friends. Things inside will always be stable when things outside are stable, unless they have already been disturbed by a conspiracy. And even if things outside should stir, if he has organized himself and lived as I have said, and does not lose heart, he will withstand every onslaught, as I said Nabis the Spartan did. But as for his subjects, when things outside are not stirring, he has to fear that they may conspire in secret. The prince secures himself well against this by avoiding being hated and despised, and by keeping the people satisfied with him, which it is necessary to achieve, as was said at length above. One of the most powerful remedies a prince has against conspiracies is not to be hated or despised by the people at large. For whoever conspires always believes that by killing the prince he will please the people; but when he believes it will offend them, he does not find the courage to take such a course, because the difficulties on the conspirators' side are endless. Experience shows that there have been many conspiracies, but few have ended well. For a conspirator cannot act alone, nor can he take as companions any but those he believes to be discontented. And as soon as you have revealed your intentions to a malcontent, you give him the means to become content, because by denouncing you he can hope for every advantage. So, seeing sure gain on this side, and on the other side gain that is doubtful and full of danger, he must be either a rare friend or a thoroughly determined enemy of the prince to keep faith with you. To put it briefly: on the conspirator's side there is nothing but fear, jealousy and the dread of punishment, which unnerve him. On the prince's side there is the majesty of the principality, the laws, and the protection of his friends and of the state to defend him. Add the goodwill of the people to all this, and it is impossible that anyone should be so reckless as to conspire. For ordinarily a conspirator has to fear only before he carries out his crime; in this case he must fear afterward as well, since once the deed is done he has the people as his enemy and so cannot hope for any refuge. Countless examples of this could be given,

but I will content myself with one that happened within our fathers' memory.

19.2 Messer Annibale Bentivoglio, grandfather of the present Messer Annibale, was prince in Bologna. He was murdered by the Canneschi, who had conspired against him, and he left behind no one but Messer Giovanni, who was still in swaddling clothes. Immediately after the murder the people rose up and killed all the Canneschi.[1] This came from the goodwill the house of Bentivoglio enjoyed among the people of Bologna in those days. It was so great that, since after Annibale's death there was no one left who could rule the state, and since they had word that in Florence there was someone born of the Bentivoglio who until then had been taken for a blacksmith's son, the Bolognese came to Florence to fetch him and gave him the government of their city. He governed it until Messer Giovanni came of an age fit to rule. I conclude, therefore, that a prince should take little account of conspiracies when the people are well disposed toward him. But when they are hostile and hate him, he must fear everything and everyone.[2] Well-ordered states and wise princes have taken every care not to drive the great to desperation, and to satisfy the people and keep them content; for this is one of the most important matters a prince has to deal with. Among the well-ordered and well-governed kingdoms of our time is France. In it there are countless good institutions on which the king's liberty and security depend, and the first of these is the Parlement and its authority. The man who set up that kingdom knew the ambition and insolence of the powerful, and judged that they needed a bit in their mouths to hold them in check. On the other hand he knew how the common people hated the great out of fear, and he wanted to protect them. Yet he did not want this to be the king's own particular concern, so as to spare him the resentment he might incur among the great by favoring the people, and among the people by favoring the

1 Annibale Bentivoglio, lord of Bologna, was killed in 1445 by the rival Canetoli ("Canneschi") family.

2 The young man was Sante Bentivoglio, who ruled Bologna from 1446 to 1463.

great. So he set up a third party as judge, to beat down the great and favor the lesser folk without any blame falling on the king.[3] There could be no better or more prudent institution than this, nor any greater source of security for the king and the kingdom. From this another notable point can be drawn: princes should have others carry out the things that bring blame, and keep for themselves the things that win favor. Once again I conclude that a prince should respect the great, but not make himself hated by the people.

THE ROMAN EMPERORS

Machiavelli explains why emperors from Marcus Aurelius to Maximinus fell, caught between soldiers and people.

19.3 Many people might perhaps think that the lives and deaths of a number of Roman emperors offer examples contrary to this opinion of mine. They would find that some who always lived admirably and showed great strength of character nonetheless lost the empire, or were killed by their own men conspiring against them. To answer these objections, then, I will go through the qualities of some of the emperors and show that the causes of their ruin were no different from those I have set out. At the same time I will draw attention to the things worth noting for anyone who reads the history of those times. I think it will be enough to take all the emperors who succeeded to the empire from Marcus the Philosopher to Maximinus: namely Marcus, his son Commodus, Pertinax, Julian, Severus, his son Antoninus Caracalla, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, Alexander and Maximinus. The first thing to note is that whereas in other principalities one has only to contend with the ambition of the great and the insolence of the people, the Roman emperors had a third difficulty: they had to put up with the cruelty and greed of the soldiers. This was so hard that it caused the ruin of many, since it was difficult to satisfy both the soldiers and the people. For the

3 The Parlement of Paris was the kingdom's supreme court of justice, not a legislative assembly.

people love quiet, and so they love moderate princes; while the soldiers love a prince with a warlike spirit, one who is insolent, cruel and rapacious.[4] The soldiers wanted him to practice these things on the people, so that they could get double pay and give vent to their own greed and cruelty. The result was that those emperors who, by nature or by skill, lacked a reputation great enough to keep both sides in check always came to ruin. Most of them, especially those who came to the principality as new men, recognized how hard it was to reconcile these two opposing humors, and turned to satisfying the soldiers, caring little about injuring the people. This course was necessary. Since princes cannot avoid being hated by someone, they must first strive not to be hated by the community at large; and when they cannot manage that, they must work with all their skill to avoid the hatred of the most powerful groups. So those emperors who, being new, needed extraordinary support attached themselves to the soldiers rather than to the people. Whether this turned out useful to them or not depended on whether the prince knew how to keep his standing with the soldiers.

19.4 For the reasons given above, it came about that Marcus, Pertinax and Alexander, who all lived modestly, loved justice, hated cruelty, and were humane and kind, all came to a bad end, except Marcus. Marcus alone lived and died with the greatest honor. This was because he succeeded to the empire by inheritance and did not owe it to either the soldiers or the people. Then, too, he had many virtues that made him revered, so that as long as he lived he kept both orders within their bounds, and he was never either hated or despised. But Pertinax was made emperor against the will of the soldiers, who had grown used to living licentiously under Commodus and could not bear the honest life to which Pertinax wanted to bring them back. So he made himself hated, and to this hatred was added contempt, because he was old; and he was ruined at the very start of his reign. Here it should be noted that hatred is earned by good

4 These are the emperors from Marcus Aurelius (ruled AD 161–180) to Maximinus Thrax (AD 235–238).

deeds as well as by bad ones. That is why, as I said above, a prince who wants to keep his state is often forced not to be good. For when the group whose support you judge you need to maintain yourself is corrupt—whether it is the people, the soldiers or the great—you have to follow its humor and satisfy it, and then good deeds are your enemies. But let us come to Alexander. He was so good that, among the other praises given him, it is said that in the fourteen years he held the empire no one was ever put to death by him without trial. Nonetheless, because he was considered effeminate and a man who let himself be governed by his mother, he fell into contempt; the army conspired against him and killed him.

19.5 Now, by contrast, consider the qualities of Commodus, Severus, Antoninus Caracalla and Maximinus. You will find them extremely cruel and rapacious: to satisfy the soldiers, they did not refrain from any kind of injury that could be inflicted on the people. And all of them except Severus came to a bad end. In Severus there was so much *virtù* that, by keeping the soldiers his friends, he was always able to reign successfully, even though he oppressed the people. His qualities made him so remarkable in the eyes of both soldiers and people that the people were left somehow astonished and stunned, and the soldiers respectful and satisfied.[5] Since this man's actions were great for a new prince, I want to show briefly how well he knew how to play the fox and the lion—the two natures that, as I said above, a prince must imitate.

19.6 Severus, knowing how feeble the emperor Julian was, persuaded the army he commanded in Slavonia that it would be right to go to Rome and avenge the death of Pertinax, who had been killed by the imperial guard. Under this pretext, without showing that he aspired to the empire, he moved his army against Rome, and he was in Italy before anyone knew he had set out. When he reached Rome, the Senate, out of fear, elected him emperor, and Julian was put to death. After this beginning,

5 The Italian lists "Antonino" and "Caracalla" as if two men; they are one emperor, Antoninus Caracalla.

Severus faced two obstacles to making himself master of the whole state. One was in Asia, where Niger, the commander of the Asian armies, had had himself proclaimed emperor. The other was in the west, with Albinus, who also aspired to the empire.[6] Since he judged it dangerous to reveal himself as the enemy of both, he decided to attack Niger and deceive Albinus. He wrote to Albinus that, having been elected emperor by the Senate, he wished to share that dignity with him; he sent him the title of Caesar and, by decree of the Senate, took him as his colleague. Albinus accepted all this as genuine. But after Severus had defeated and killed Niger and settled affairs in the east, he returned to Rome and complained in the Senate that Albinus, showing little gratitude for the favors he had received, had treacherously tried to kill him, and that he was therefore obliged to go and punish his ingratitude. Then he went after him in Gaul and took from him his state and his life. Anyone who examines this man's actions closely will find him a most ferocious lion and a most cunning fox. He will see that he was feared and respected by everyone and not hated by the armies, and he will not wonder that Severus, a new man, was able to hold so great an empire; for his immense reputation always protected him from the hatred his plundering might have aroused in the people. His son Antoninus was also a most excellent man, with outstanding qualities that made him admired by the people and welcome to the soldiers. He was a military man, able to endure any hardship, scornful of all delicate food and every other luxury, and this made all the armies love him. Nevertheless his ferocity and cruelty were so great and so unheard of—after many individual killings he put to death a large part of the people of Rome and all the people of Alexandria—that he became hated by the whole world. Even those around him began to fear him, so that he was killed by a centurion in the midst of his army. Here it should be noted that deaths like this, which follow from the deliberate decision of a determined and

6 Machiavelli's "Schiavonia" is the Balkan region along the Danube; Severus in fact commanded in Pannonia in AD 193.

obstinate mind, cannot be avoided by princes, since anyone who does not care about dying can do it. But the prince should fear them less, because they are very rare. He must only take care not to do serious injury to any of those who serve him and whom he keeps about him in the service of his principality. Antoninus had done just that: he had shamefully put to death a brother of that centurion, and threatened the centurion himself every day, yet he kept him in his bodyguard. This was a reckless course and bound to ruin him, as indeed it did. But let us come to Commodus. It was very easy for him to hold the empire, since he had it by inheritance as Marcus's son. He had only to follow in his father's footsteps and he would have satisfied both the people and the soldiers. But being of a cruel and bestial nature, and wanting to indulge his rapacity on the people, he set about courting the armies and making them licentious. On the other hand, he did not maintain his dignity: he often went down into the arenas to fight with gladiators and did other utterly base things unworthy of imperial majesty, so that he became contemptible in the eyes of the soldiers. Being hated on one side and despised on the other, he was conspired against and killed.

19.7 It remains for us to describe the qualities of Maximinus. He was an extremely warlike man. The armies, fed up with the softness of Alexander, whom I discussed above, elected him to the empire after Alexander's death. He did not hold it long, because two things made him hated and despised. One was his extremely low birth, since he had once herded sheep in Thrace (this was known everywhere, and made him an object of great disdain in everyone's eyes); the other was that at the start of his reign he had put off going to Rome and taking possession of the imperial throne, and had given the impression of great cruelty, having committed many cruelties through his prefects in Rome and throughout the empire. So the whole world was stirred, on one side by indignation at the baseness of his blood, and on the other by hatred born of fear of his ferocity. First Africa rebelled against him, then the Senate with all the people of Rome, and all Italy conspired against him. His own army joined them:

besieging Aquileia and finding it hard to take, sick of his cruelty, and fearing him less now that they saw he had so many enemies, they killed him.

PRINCES OF TODAY AND THEIR SOLDIERS

Modern princes, except the Turk and the Sultan, must satisfy the people more than their soldiers.

I do not want to discuss Heliogabalus, Macrinus or Julian, who, being utterly contemptible, were quickly snuffed out. Instead I will come to the conclusion of this discussion. I say that the princes of our time have less of this difficulty of having to satisfy their soldiers by extraordinary means. For although some consideration must be given them, the matter is soon settled, since none of these princes has armies that have grown entrenched in the government and administration of provinces, as the armies of the Roman Empire had. So if in those days it was necessary to satisfy the soldiers more than the people, it was because the soldiers were more powerful than the people. Now it is more necessary for all princes, except the Turk and the Sultan, to satisfy the people rather than the soldiers, because the people are more powerful than they are.[7] I except the Turk because he always keeps around him twelve thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry, on whom the security and strength of his kingdom depend. He must put every other consideration for the people second and keep them his friends. The Sultan's kingdom is similar: since it is entirely in the hands of the soldiers, he too must keep them his friends without regard for the people. And you must note that this state of the Sultan is unlike all other principalities. It resembles the Christian papacy, which can be called neither a hereditary principality nor a new one. For it is not the sons of the dead prince who remain as heirs and lords, but the man who is elected to that rank by those who have the authority to do so. And since this system is ancient, it cannot be called a new principality, because it has none of the

7 The Sultan is the Mamluk ruler of Egypt.

difficulties that new ones have. Though the prince is new, the institutions of that state are old and arranged to receive him as if he were their hereditary lord.

19.8 But to return to our subject. I say that anyone who considers the discussion above will see that either hatred or contempt was the cause of the ruin of the emperors I have named. He will also understand how it came about that, though some of them proceeded one way and some the opposite way, in each group one had a happy end and the others an unhappy one. For Pertinax and Alexander, being new princes, it was useless and harmful to try to imitate Marcus, who held his principality by inheritance. Likewise, for Caracalla, Commodus and Maximinus it was fatal to imitate Severus, since they did not have enough *virtù* to follow in his footsteps. Therefore a new prince in a new principality cannot imitate the actions of Marcus, nor is it necessary for him to imitate those of Severus. Rather, he should take from Severus those elements that are necessary to found his state, and from Marcus those that are fitting and glorious for preserving a state that is already established and secure.

Chapter XX

Whether fortresses, and many other things that princes often do, are useful or harmful
Machiavelli weighs arming subjects, dividing towns and building fortresses, concluding the best fortress is not being hated.

20.1 Some princes, to hold their state securely, have disarmed their subjects. Others have kept the towns they ruled divided into factions. Others have fostered enmities against themselves. Others have set out to win over those they had suspected at the start of their rule. Some have built fortresses; some have torn them down and destroyed them. And although no definite judgment can be given on any of these things without coming down to the particulars of the states where such a decision had to be made, I will nonetheless speak in the broad terms that the subject itself allows. There has never been a new prince, then, who disarmed his subjects. On the contrary, when he has found them unarmed he has always armed them. For when you arm them, those arms become yours: those who were suspect to you become loyal, those who were loyal stay loyal, and your subjects become your partisans. And since not all your subjects can be armed, if you reward those you arm you can deal more safely with the rest. The difference in treatment they see puts the first group under obligation to you; the others excuse you, judging it right that those who bear more danger and more duty should have more reward. But when you disarm them, you begin to offend them. You show that you distrust them, either from cowardice or from lack of confidence, and either of these opinions

breeds hatred against you. And since you cannot remain unarmed, you must turn to mercenary troops, whose nature we have described above. Even if they were good, they could never be strong enough to defend you against powerful enemies and suspect subjects. So, as I have said, a new prince in a new principality has always organized arms there. History is full of examples of this. But when a prince acquires a new state that is joined like a limb to his old one, then it is necessary to disarm that state, except for those who sided with you when you acquired it. And even these, with time and opportunity, you must render soft and weak, and arrange things so that all the arms of your state are in the hands of your own soldiers, who live near you in your old state.

20.2 Our ancestors, and those who were considered wise, used to say that Pistoia had to be held by factions and Pisa by fortresses. For this reason they fostered quarrels in some of their subject towns so as to hold them more easily. In the days when Italy was in a kind of balance, this may well have been the right thing to do. But I do not think it can be given as a rule today, because I do not believe that divisions ever do any good. On the contrary, when the enemy approaches, divided cities are necessarily lost at once; for the weaker faction will always join the outside forces, and the other will not be able to hold out. The Venetians, moved, I believe, by the reasons given above, fostered the Guelf and Ghibelline factions in their subject cities. Although they never let them come to bloodshed, they nonetheless fostered these quarrels among them, so that the citizens, busy with their own disputes, would not unite against them. As we saw, this did not work out for them afterward: when they were defeated at Vailà, one of the factions at once took heart and seized their whole state from them. Methods like these, therefore, betray weakness in the prince, because in a strong principality such divisions will never be allowed. They are useful only

in peacetime, as a way of managing subjects more easily; but when war comes, such a policy shows its fallacy.[1]

20.3 Without doubt princes become great when they overcome the difficulties and opposition they face. So Fortune, especially when she wants to make a new prince great—since he has more need to gain reputation than a hereditary one—raises up enemies for him and has them launch enterprises against him, so that he has occasion to overcome them and climb higher on the ladder his enemies have brought him. That is why many judge that a wise prince, when he has the opportunity, should cunningly foster some enmity, so that by crushing it he increases his own greatness. Princes, and especially new ones, have found more loyalty and more usefulness in men who were held suspect at the start of their rule than in those who were trusted at the start. Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, governed his state more with those who had been suspect than with the others.[2] But one cannot speak of this in general terms, because it varies from case to case. I will only say this: those men who were enemies at the beginning of a principality, if they are the kind who need support to maintain themselves, can always be won over by the prince with the greatest ease. And they are all the more compelled to serve him loyally because they know how much they need to erase by their deeds the bad opinion held of them. So the prince always gets more use out of them than out of those who, serving him with too much security, neglect his affairs. And since the subject calls for it, I do not want to leave out a reminder to a prince who has taken a new state with the help of people inside it. He should consider carefully what moved those who helped him to do so. If it was not natural affection for him, but only that they were discontented with the previous state, he will keep them as friends only with great effort and difficulty, because it will be impossible for him to content them. And if he thinks carefully about the reason for this, using

1 The Guelfs and Ghibellines were rival factions, originally supporters of the pope and of the emperor.

2 Pandolfo Petrucci was lord of Siena from about 1500 until his death in 1512.

the examples drawn from ancient and modern affairs, he will see that it is much easier to win as friends those men who were content with the previous state, and were therefore his enemies, than those who, being discontented with it, became his friends and helped him seize it.

20.4 It has been the custom of princes, in order to hold their states more securely, to build fortresses that serve as a bridle and bit on those who might plot against them, and as a safe refuge from a first assault. I praise this method, because it has been used since ancient times. Nevertheless, in our own times Messer Niccolò Vitelli has been seen to demolish two fortresses in Città di Castello in order to hold that state. Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino, on returning to the state from which Cesare Borgia had driven him, razed all the fortresses of that province to their foundations, judging that without them it would be harder to lose that state again. The Bentivoglio, on returning to Bologna, did the same.[3] Fortresses, then, are useful or not depending on the times; and if they do you good in one way, they harm you in another. The matter can be put like this. A prince who is more afraid of his own people than of foreigners should build fortresses; but one who is more afraid of foreigners than of his people should do without them. The castle of Milan, which Francesco Sforza built there, has made and will make more war on the house of Sforza than any other disorder in that state. So the best fortress there is, is not to be hated by the people. For even if you have fortresses, they will not save you if the people hate you, since once a people has taken up arms there is never any lack of foreigners to come to its aid. In our times we do not see that fortresses have benefited any prince except the Countess of Forlì, when her husband Count Girolamo was killed. Thanks to her fortress she was able to escape the people's assault, wait for help from Milan, and recover her state; and the times were then such that no foreigner could come to the

3 Niccolò Vitelli recovered Città di Castello from papal control in 1482; Guidobaldo da Montefeltro returned to Urbino in 1503.

people's aid.[4] But later her fortresses were of little use to her, when Cesare Borgia attacked her and the people, who were her enemies, joined forces with the foreigner. So both then and earlier it would have been safer for her not to be hated by the people than to have fortresses. All things considered, then, I will praise both the prince who builds fortresses and the one who does not; and I will blame anyone who, trusting in fortresses, thinks little of being hated by the people.

4 Her husband Girolamo Riario was murdered in 1488; she held out in the fortress of Forlì until help came.

Chapter XXI

How a prince should conduct himself to gain reputation
A prince wins esteem through great enterprises like Ferdinand of Spain's, and by taking clear sides.

21.1 Nothing makes a prince so highly esteemed as great enterprises and setting rare examples of himself. In our own time we have Ferdinand of Aragon, the present king of Spain. He can almost be called a new prince, because from a weak king he has become, by fame and glory, the foremost king in Christendom. If you consider his actions, you will find them all very great, and some of them extraordinary. At the beginning of his reign he attacked Granada, and that enterprise was the foundation of his state. First, he undertook it when he had nothing else on his hands and no fear of being hindered. He kept the minds of the barons of Castile occupied with it, so that, thinking about that war, they did not think about making changes; and meanwhile he was gaining reputation and power over them without their noticing. With money from the Church and the people he was able to maintain armies, and through that long war to lay a foundation for his own military, which has since brought him honor. Beyond this, in order to undertake greater enterprises, always making use of religion, he turned to a pious cruelty, driving the Jews and converted Jews out of his kingdom and stripping them of their goods. No example could be more remarkable or more rare than this.[1] Under this same cloak he attacked Africa, undertook his enterprise in Italy, and has lately attacked

1 Machiavelli's word covers both Jews and converts from Judaism; he is probably referring to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

France. So he has always plotted great things, which have kept his subjects' minds in suspense and wonder, and absorbed in their outcome. And these actions of his have followed one from another in such a way that he has never given men the time to settle down and work against him.

21.2 It also helps a prince a great deal to set rare examples in his internal government, like those told of Messer Bernabò of Milan. When someone does something extraordinary in civic life, whether good or bad, the prince should find a way of rewarding or punishing him that will be much talked about. And above all a prince must strive, in every action, to earn a reputation as a great man of outstanding ability.[2] A prince is also esteemed when he is a true friend or a true enemy—that is, when he declares himself without reservation for one side against another. This course will always be more useful than staying neutral. For if two powerful neighbors of yours come to blows, either they are such that, if one of them wins, you will have to fear the winner, or they are not. In either case it will always be more useful to declare yourself and wage war openly. In the first case, if you do not declare yourself, you will always be the prey of the winner, to the pleasure and satisfaction of the loser; and you will have no reason or means to defend you, and no one to take you in. For the winner does not want doubtful friends who will not help him in adversity; and the loser will not take you in, since you were unwilling to share his fortune arms in hand.

21.3 Antiochus had crossed into Greece, brought there by the Aetolians to drive out the Romans. He sent envoys to the Achaeans, who were friends of the Romans, to urge them to stay neutral; the Romans, on the other hand, were urging them to take up arms on their side. The matter came up for decision in the council of the Achaeans, where Antiochus's envoy urged them to remain neutral. To this the Roman envoy replied: "As for what they tell you—that it is best and most useful for your state not to

2 Bernabò Visconti, lord of Milan (died 1385), was famous for his eccentric and often savage rewards and punishments.

get involved in our war—nothing could be further from the truth. For if you do not get involved, you will be left, without gratitude and without any standing, as the victor's prize."[3] And it will always happen that the one who is not your friend will ask you to stay neutral, while the one who is your friend will want you to declare yourself in arms. Irresolute princes, to escape present dangers, usually take the neutral road, and usually they are ruined by it. But when a prince declares himself boldly for one side, and the one you have joined wins, then even if he is powerful and you are left at his mercy, he is under obligation to you, and a bond of affection has been formed; and men are never so shameless as to crush you in so flagrant an example of ingratitude. Besides, victories are never so complete that the victor need show no regard for anything, and above all for justice. And if the one you have joined loses, he takes you in; he helps you while he can, and you become the companion of a fortune that may rise again. In the second case, when those who are fighting are such that you have nothing to fear from whoever wins, it is all the more prudent to take a side. For you bring about one man's ruin with the help of another who, if he were wise, ought to be saving him; and when he wins, he is at your mercy. And with your help it is impossible that he should not win. And here it should be noted that a prince must take care never to ally himself with someone more powerful than himself in order to attack others, unless necessity forces him to, as was said above. For if that ally wins, you are left at his mercy, and princes should avoid, as far as they can, being at the mercy of others. The Venetians allied themselves with France against the Duke of Milan, when they could have avoided that alliance, and their ruin came of it. But when it cannot be avoided, as happened to the Florentines when the Pope and Spain sent their armies to attack Lombardy, then the prince should take a side,

3 This was in 192 BC; Machiavelli takes the envoy's speech from Livy.

for the reasons given above.[4] Nor should any state ever believe it can choose safe courses; it should assume, rather, that every course it takes is doubtful. For it is in the order of things that you never try to avoid one trouble without running into another. Prudence consists in knowing how to recognize the nature of the troubles, and in taking the least bad as good.

21.4 A prince should also show himself a lover of talent and honor those who excel in every art. Next, he should encourage his citizens to pursue their callings in peace, in trade, in agriculture and in every other human occupation, so that one man is not afraid to improve his property for fear it will be taken from him, and another to open a business for fear of taxes. Instead he should set aside rewards for anyone who wants to do these things, and for anyone who thinks of any way to enlarge his city or his state. Beyond this, at the proper times of year he should keep the people occupied with festivals and spectacles. And since every city is divided into guilds or wards, he should take account of these bodies, meet with them now and then, and show himself an example of kindness and generosity, while always keeping the majesty of his rank intact, for that must never be lacking in anything.

4 In 1499 Venice joined Louis XII against Ludovico Sforza; in 1512 Julius II and Ferdinand of Aragon attacked the French in Lombardy, and Florence's neutrality cost it its republic.

Chapter XXII

Of the secretaries of princes
A prince is judged by the ministers he chooses, and must keep them loyal with honors.

22.1 The choice of ministers is of no small importance to a prince; they are good or not according to the prince's prudence. The first guess one makes about a ruler and his brains is from seeing the men he has around him. When they are capable and loyal, one can always judge him wise, because he has known how to recognize their ability and keep them loyal. When they are otherwise, one can always form a poor opinion of him, because the first mistake he makes, he makes in this choice. There was no one who knew Messer Antonio da Venafro as the minister of Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, who did not judge Pandolfo a very prudent man for having him as his minister.[1] For there are three kinds of brains: one understands things by itself; the second understands what others show it; the third understands neither by itself nor through others. The first is most excellent, the second excellent, the third useless.

22.2 It followed of necessity, then, that if Pandolfo was not of the first rank, he was of the second. For whenever a man has the judgment to recognize the good and the bad that someone does and says, even if he has no ideas of his own, he can tell his minister's bad work from his good; he praises the one and corrects the other, and the minister cannot hope to deceive him, and so keeps himself honest. But as for how a prince can know his min-

1 Antonio Giordani da Venafro, a jurist, was Petrucci's chief adviser.

ister, here is a method that never fails. When you see your minister thinking more of himself than of you, and seeking his own advantage in everything he does, a man like that will never be a good minister, and you can never trust him. For the man who holds another's state in his hands must never think of himself, but always of the prince, and never bring to his attention anything that does not concern the prince. On the other side, to keep him good, the prince must think of the minister: honoring him, making him rich, putting him in his debt, sharing honors and responsibilities with him, so that his many honors and much wealth leave him wanting no others, and his many responsibilities make him fear any change, knowing he cannot stand without the prince. When princes and ministers are like this, then, they can trust each other; when they are otherwise, the end will always be harmful for one or the other.

Chapter XXIII

How flatterers are to be avoided
A prince should let a few wise advisers speak freely when asked, then decide for himself.

23.1 I do not want to leave out an important point, a mistake that princes find hard to guard against unless they are very prudent or choose well. This is the matter of flatterers, with whom courts are full. For men take such delight in their own affairs, and deceive themselves about them so readily, that they can hardly defend themselves from this plague; and in trying to defend themselves they run the risk of becoming despised. For there is no other way to guard against flattery than for men to understand that they do not offend you by telling you the truth; but when everyone can tell you the truth, you lose their respect. A prudent prince must therefore take a third course: he should choose wise men for his state and give them alone the freedom to speak the truth to him, and only about the things he asks, and nothing else. But he should ask them about everything and hear their opinions, and then decide by himself, in his own way. With these councils, and with each of their members, he should conduct himself so that every one of them knows that the more freely he speaks, the more welcome he will be. Beyond these men he should listen to no one, pursue what has been decided, and be firm in his decisions. Whoever does otherwise either comes to grief through flatterers or keeps changing his mind as opinions vary, and so is little esteemed. I want to offer a modern example on this point. Pre' Luca, a man of Maximilian, the present Emperor, said of His Majesty that he took counsel with

no one, and yet never did anything his own way. This came from following a course contrary to the one described above. For the Emperor is a secretive man; he shares his plans with no one and takes no advice about them. But as he starts to put them into effect, they begin to be known and revealed, and those around him begin to oppose them, and he, being pliable, is talked out of them. As a result, what he does one day he undoes the next; no one ever understands what he wants or intends to do; and no one can rely on his decisions.[1]

23.2 A prince, therefore, should always take counsel, but when he wants to, not when others want him to; indeed, he should discourage anyone from advising him about anything unless he asks. But he should be a great asker, and then, about the things he has asked, a patient listener to the truth; and if he learns that someone, out of some scruple, is not telling it to him, he should be angry. Many people think that a prince who has a reputation for prudence owes it not to his own nature but to the good advisers around him. They are certainly wrong. For this is a general rule that never fails: a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well advised, unless by chance he has put himself entirely in the hands of a single man who governs him in everything and who happens to be very prudent. In that case he might well be governed well, but not for long, because that governor would soon take his state from him. But if he consults more than one, a prince who is not wise will never get consistent advice, nor will he know how to reconcile it himself. Each of his counselors will think of his own interest, and he will not know how to correct them or even see it. Nor can counselors be found who are otherwise, because men will always turn out bad for you unless some necessity makes them good. So the conclusion is that good advice, from whomever it comes, must arise from the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince from good advice.

1 Luca Rainaldi was one of Maximilian's envoys; Machiavelli had visited the imperial court as a Florentine envoy in 1507–1508.

Chapter XXIV

Why the princes of Italy have lost their states
Italy's princes lost their states through their own idleness and weak arms, not bad luck.

24.1 The things said above, if carefully observed, make a new prince seem long established, and at once make him safer and firmer in his state than if he had grown old in it. For a new prince's actions are watched far more closely than a hereditary one's, and when they are seen to show ability, they win men over and bind them far more than ancient blood. For men are much more taken with the present than with the past, and when they find things good in the present, they enjoy them and look no further. In fact, they will do everything to defend the new prince, provided he does not fail himself in other respects. And so he will have a double glory: of having founded a new principality, and of having adorned and strengthened it with good laws, good arms, good friends and good examples. Just as the man born a prince who loses his principality through his own lack of prudence will have a double shame. And if you consider those rulers in Italy who have lost their states in our time, such as the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan and others, you will find in them, first, a common failing in regard to arms, for the reasons discussed at length above. Then you will see that some of them either had the people against them, or, if they had the people on their side, did not know how to secure themselves against the

great. For without these failings, states that have enough sinews to keep an army in the field are not lost.[1]

24.2 Philip of Macedon, not the father of Alexander the Great but the one defeated by Titus Quinctius, did not have much of a state compared with the greatness of the Romans and of Greece, who attacked him. Nevertheless, because he was a military man who knew how to keep the people content and secure himself against the great, he held out in war against them for many years. And if in the end he lost control of a few cities, he still kept his kingdom.[2] So let these princes of ours who had held their principalities for many years and then lost them not blame Fortune, but their own sloth. For in quiet times they never imagined that times could change (it is a common failing of men not to reckon on the storm during the calm), and then, when adverse times came, they thought of running away, not of defending themselves, and hoped that the people, fed up with the insolence of the conquerors, would call them back. That course is good when the others are lacking; but it is very bad to have neglected the other remedies for its sake. For you should never fall in the belief that you will find someone to pick you up. Either that does not happen, or, if it does, it does not make you secure, because such a defense is cowardly and does not depend on you. And the only defenses that are good, certain and lasting are those that depend on you yourself and on your own ability.

1 Frederick I of Naples lost his kingdom in 1501 to France and Spain; Ludovico Sforza lost Milan to Louis XII in 1499–1500.

2 Titus Quinctius Flamininus defeated Philip at Cynoscephalae in 197 BC.

Chapter XXV

How much fortune can do in human affairs, and how she may be opposed
Fortune governs half of human affairs, but a prince can prepare for her like dikes against a flood.

25.1 I am not unaware that many have held, and hold, the opinion that the things of this world are so governed by Fortune and by God that men with their prudence cannot correct them, and in fact have no remedy against them at all. For this reason they might judge that there is no point in sweating much over things, and that one should let oneself be governed by chance. This opinion has been more widely believed in our times because of the great changes that have been seen, and are seen every day, beyond all human conjecture. Thinking about this myself at times, I am in some part inclined to share their opinion. Nevertheless, so that our free will may not be extinguished, I judge it may be true that Fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, but that she still leaves the other half, or close to it, for us to govern. I compare her to one of those violent rivers that, when they rage, flood the plains, tear down trees and buildings, and carry off soil from one place and set it down in another. Everyone flees before it; everyone yields to its fury without being able to stand against it in any way. And although it is like this, it does not follow that men, when times are quiet, cannot take precautions, with dikes and embankments, so that when it rises again it will either flow off through a channel or its force will not be so unchecked or so destructive.

25.2 It is the same with Fortune. She shows her power where no ability has been organized to resist her, and turns her fury where she knows no embankments or dikes have been built to hold her. And if you consider Italy, which is the seat of these changes and the one that set them in motion, you will see that she is a countryside without embankments and without any dike at all. If she had been protected by proper ability, as Germany, Spain and France are, this flood would not have caused the great changes it has, or it would not have come at all. And I want this to be enough said about opposing Fortune in general. But confining myself more to particulars, I say that one sees a prince prospering today and ruined tomorrow without seeing him change his nature or any of his qualities. I believe this comes, first, from the causes discussed at length earlier: that the prince who relies entirely on Fortune is ruined as she changes. I believe, too, that the one who is fortunate is the one whose way of proceeding matches the character of the times, and likewise that the one who is unfortunate is the one whose way of proceeding is out of step with the times. For one sees that men, in the things that lead them to the end each has before him, namely glory and riches, proceed in different ways: one with caution, another with impetuosity; one by force, another by skill; one with patience, another with its opposite; and each can get there by these different ways. One also sees two cautious men, one of whom achieves his aim and the other not; and likewise two men who prosper equally by two different methods, one being cautious and the other impetuous. This comes from nothing but whether the character of the times fits their way of proceeding or not. From this arises what I have said: that two men acting differently achieve the same result, and of two acting alike, one reaches his goal and the other does not. On this, too, depends the changeability of success. For if a man conducts himself with caution and patience, and the times and circumstances turn in such a way that his conduct is right, he prospers; but if the times and circumstances change, he is ruined, because he does not change his way of proceeding. Nor is there any man

so prudent that he knows how to adapt himself to this. For one thing, he cannot turn away from what his nature inclines him to; for another, having always prospered by walking one road, he cannot be persuaded that it is good to leave it. And so the cautious man, when the time comes to be impetuous, does not know how, and so he is ruined. If one could change one's nature with the times and circumstances, one's fortune would not change. Pope Julius II proceeded impetuously in everything he did, and found the times and circumstances so well suited to that way of proceeding that he always came out well. Consider his first campaign, against Bologna, while Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio was still alive. The Venetians were not happy about it, nor was the King of Spain, and Julius was still in talks with France about the enterprise. Nevertheless, with his fierceness and impetuosity, he set out on that expedition in person. That move left Spain and the Venetians hesitant and at a standstill, the latter out of fear, the former out of his desire to recover the whole Kingdom of Naples. On the other side, he drew the King of France along behind him: seeing the Pope on the move, and wanting to make him a friend in order to humble the Venetians, the King judged that he could not refuse him troops without openly insulting him.[1]

25.3 With his impetuous move, then, Julius achieved what no other pontiff, with all human prudence, would ever have achieved. For if he had waited to leave Rome until everything was settled and every arrangement in order, as any other pontiff would have done, he would never have succeeded: the King of France would have found a thousand excuses, and the others would have raised a thousand fears. I will leave aside his other actions, which were all alike and all turned out well for him; and the shortness of his life did not let him experience the opposite. For if times had come when he needed to proceed with caution, his ruin would have followed, since he would never have departed from the ways his nature inclined him to. I conclude, then, that since Fortune varies and men remain set in their ways, they

1 In 1506 Julius II marched on Perugia and Bologna and drove out the Bentivoglio.

are fortunate while the two agree, and unfortunate when they clash. I do judge this, however: that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because Fortune is a woman, and if you want to keep her down, you have to beat her and knock her about. And one sees that she lets herself be won more by men like this than by those who proceed coldly. And so, like a woman, she is always the friend of the young, because they are less cautious, fiercer, and command her with more audacity.

Chapter XXVI

Exhortation to free Italy from the barbarians
Machiavelli urges the Medici to lead Italy's liberation from foreign armies.

26.1 Having considered, then, all the things discussed above, and wondering to myself whether the present times in Italy were right for honoring a new prince, and whether there was material here that offered a prudent and able man the opportunity to give it a new form, one that would bring honor to him and good to the whole people of the country, it seems to me that so many things are coming together in favor of a new prince that I do not know of any time that was ever more fit for it. And if, as I said, it was necessary for the people of Israel to be enslaved in Egypt for the *virtù* of Moses to be seen, for the Persians to be oppressed by the Medes for the greatness and spirit of Cyrus to be known, and for the Athenians to be scattered for the excellence of Theseus to shine; so at present, for the *virtù* of an Italian spirit to be known, it was necessary for Italy to be brought to her present state: more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians; without a head, without order, beaten, stripped, torn, overrun, having endured every kind of ruin. And although until now some glimmer has shown itself in someone, enough to make one think he was sent by God for her redemption, still it has been seen how afterward, at the very height of his course, he was cast off by Fortune; so that Italy, left as if lifeless, waits for whoever may heal her wounds, put an end to the plundering and sacking of Lombardy

and to the extortion and taxing of the Kingdom of Naples and of Tuscany, and cure her of the sores that have long since festered.[1]

26.2 One sees how she prays God to send her someone to redeem her from these cruelties and outrages of the foreign invaders. One sees, too, that she is ready and willing to follow a banner, if only someone will raise it. Nor can one see at present anyone in whom she can place more hope than in your illustrious House, which, with its *virtù* and fortune, favored by God and by the Church, of which it is now the head, could make itself the leader of this redemption. And this will not be very hard for you if you keep before your eyes the actions and lives of the men named above.[2] And although those men were rare and marvelous, they were nonetheless men, and each of them had less opportunity than the present one; for their enterprise was no more just than this, nor easier, nor was God more their friend than yours. Here there is great justice: for "that war is just which is necessary, and those arms are holy when there is no hope except in them." Here there is the greatest readiness; and where there is great readiness there cannot be great difficulty, provided your House follows the methods of those I have set before you as models.[3] Beyond this, one sees here extraordinary signs without precedent, brought about by God: the sea has opened, a cloud has shown the way, the rock has poured out water, manna has rained down here. Everything has come together for your greatness. The rest you must do yourselves. God does not want to do everything, so as not to take from us our free will and the part of the glory that belongs to us. And it is no wonder if none of the Italians already mentioned has been able to do what one may hope your illustrious House will do, or if, in so many upheavals in Italy and so many campaigns of war, it always seems that military prowess has died out in her. This comes from the fact that her old institutions were not good, and

1 Probably Cesare Borgia, whose rise was cut short in 1503.
2 Machiavelli calls them "barbarians." "Your illustrious House" is the Medici, then holding both Florence and the papacy.
3 Machiavelli is adapting Livy (9.1).

there has been no one who knew how to find new ones. Nothing brings so much honor to a man newly risen as the new laws and new institutions he devises. When these are well founded and have greatness in them, they make him revered and admired; and in Italy there is no lack of material to be given any form. Here there is great *virtù* in the limbs, if only it were not lacking in the heads. Look at duels and at fights between a few men, and see how superior the Italians are in strength, skill and ingenuity. But when it comes to armies, they do not measure up. And it all comes from the weakness of the leaders: those who know are not obeyed, and everyone thinks he knows, since until now there has been no one who has risen so far, by ability or by fortune, that the others give way. This is why, in so long a time, in all the wars fought over the past twenty years, whenever there has been an all-Italian army it has always done badly. Witness first the Taro, then Alessandria, Capua, Genoa, Vailà, Bologna, Mestre.[4]

26.3 If your illustrious House, then, wants to follow those excellent men who redeemed their countries, it is necessary before all else, as the true foundation of every enterprise, to provide itself with its own arms; for one cannot have more faithful, truer or better soldiers. And although each of them is good, all together they will become better when they see themselves commanded by their own prince, and honored and well treated by him. It is necessary, therefore, to prepare these arms, so as to be able to defend yourselves against foreigners with Italian *virtù*. And although Swiss and Spanish infantry are considered formidable, both have a defect, because of which a third kind of formation could not only stand up to them but be confident of beating them. For the Spanish cannot withstand cavalry, and the Swiss have reason to fear infantry when they meet some as stubborn in combat as themselves. So it has been seen, and will be seen by experience, that the Spanish cannot withstand French cavalry, and that the Swiss are ruined by Spanish infantry. And

4 Battles and sieges from 1495 (Fornovo, on the Taro) to 1513 (Mestre) in which Italian forces failed against foreign armies.

although this last has not been fully seen by experience, a sample of it was seen at the battle of Ravenna, when the Spanish infantry clashed with the German battalions, which use the same formation as the Swiss. There the Spanish, with their agility and the help of their bucklers, got in under the Germans' pikes and could strike at them safely, without the Germans having any remedy. And if it had not been for the cavalry that charged them, they would have wiped them all out.[5] It is possible, then, once the defect of each of these infantries is known, to organize a new one that can resist cavalry and not fear infantry. This will be done not by a new kind of weapon but by a change in formation. And these are among the things that, newly introduced, give reputation and greatness to a new prince. This opportunity, then, must not be allowed to pass, so that Italy, after so long a time, may see her redeemer appear. I cannot express with what love he would be received in all those provinces that have suffered from these foreign floods; with what thirst for vengeance, with what stubborn loyalty, with what devotion, with what tears. What doors would be shut against him? What peoples would deny him obedience? What envy would oppose him? What Italian would refuse him homage? This foreign domination stinks in everyone's nostrils. Let your illustrious House, then, take up this task with the spirit and the hope with which just enterprises are undertaken, so that under its banner this country may be ennobled, and under its auspices that saying of Petrarch may come true:

26.4 *Valor against fury*
Will take up arms, and the fight will be short;
For the ancient courage
In Italian hearts is not yet dead.[6]

5 At Ravenna the German landsknechts fought on the French side.
6 From Petrarch's canzone "Italia mia" (Italy mine), written in the 1340s.