

native troops. Taken all in all, these troops are much better than mere auxiliaries or mere mercenaries, but they are much inferior to armies of one's own people. The example already given will suffice; the kingdom of France would be invincible if the laws of Charles had been kept in force or strengthened. But shortsighted men undertake policies for their immediate advantage, paying no heed to the slow poison hidden within them, as I said before regarding consumptive fevers.

So a prince who does not recognize the evils of a state the minute they are born is not really wise; and such ability to look ahead is given to very few. If you try to seek out the basic reason for the fall of the Roman Empire, you will find it began with the hiring of Goths as soldiers; from that moment, the forces of the Roman Empire began to grow slack, and all the energy [*virtù*] taken from them accrued to the outsiders.

I conclude, then, that unless it has its own armies, no state is really secure; in that case, it depends entirely on fortune, having no power [*virtù*] to put up a reliable defense in times of trouble. Wise men have always thought and said "that nothing is so weak and unstable as a reputation for power not founded on strength of one's own."⁷ Your own armies are defined as those composed of your own subjects, citizens, or dependents: all others are either mercenary or auxiliary. You will have no trouble creating your own armies if you study the regulations of the four men noted above,⁸ and note how Philip, father of Alexander the Great, levied and organized his armies. Many other republics and kingdoms have done the same; and to their precedents I refer you without further remark.

XIV

MILITARY DUTIES OF THE PRINCE

A prince, therefore, should have no other object, no other thought, no other subject of study, than war, its rules and disciplines; this is the only art for a man who commands, and it is of such value [*virtù*] that is not only keeps born princes in place, but often raises men from private citizens to princely fortune. On the other hand, it is clear that when princes have thought more about the refinements of life than about war, they have lost their positions. The quickest way to lose a state is to neglect this art; the quickest way to get one is to study it. Because he was a soldier, Francesco Sforza raised himself from private citizen to duke of Milan; his successors, who tried to avoid the hardships of warfare, became private citizens after being dukes.⁹ Apart from the other evils it

7. The quotation is from Tacitus, *Annals* 13.19.

8. The examples make a curious quartet: Cesare Borgia, Hiero of Syracuse, King David, and Charles VII of France. The point seems to be that the rule holds good whatever the moral status of the person to whom it may be applied.

9. The Sforzas passed, with spectacular abruptness, from barbarism to decadence in a generation; Machiavelli's exhortations, however necessary he supposed them, were not borne out by Medici history—they generally lost by warfare what they gained by diplomacy and trade.

brings with it, being defenseless makes you contemptible. This is one of the disgraces from which a prince must guard himself, as we shall see later. Between a man with arms and a man without them there is no proportion at all. It is not reasonable to expect an armed man to obey one who is unarmed, nor an unarmed man to be safe among armed servants; because, what with the contempt of the former and the mistrust of the latter, there is no living together. Thus a prince who knows nothing of warfare, apart from his other troubles already described, cannot hope for respect from his soldiers or put any trust in them.

Therefore the prince should never turn his mind from the study of war; in times of peace he should think about it even more than in wartime. He can do this in two ways, by training the body and training the mind. As for physical training, apart from keeping his troops well disciplined and exercised, he should do a great deal of hunting, and thus harden his body to strenuous exercise, meanwhile learning to read terrain. He will see how the mountains rise, how the valleys open out, and how the plains lie; he will know about rivers and swamps—and to this study he should devote the greatest attention. What he learns will be doubly useful; first, he will become acquainted with his own land, and understand better how to defend it; and then, because he knows his own country thoroughly, he can easily understand any other country that he is forced to look over for the first time. For example, in Tuscany the hills, valleys, plains, and swamps are pretty much like those in other provinces, so that, knowing one, you can easily get to know the others. Any prince who lacks this experience lacks the main thing a captain should have, that is, a knowledge of how to find the enemy, pick a campsite, draw up an army, prepare it for battle, and organize sieges for his own advantage.

Among the other good things that historians report of Philopoemon, prince of the Achaeans, they say that in peacetime he thought of nothing but how to make war;¹ and when he was in the country with his friends, he would sometimes stop and ask them: "Suppose there were enemies up in those hills, and we were here with our army, who would have the advantage? How could we get at them, without breaking ranks? If we wanted to get away, how would we do it? If they tried to get away, how could we cut them off?" Thus, as they traveled along he would raise every tactical problem that could confront an army; he listened to their opinions and put forth his own, supporting them with reasons. As a result of this constant practice, no unexpected difficulty could ever arise, when he was at the head of his army, for which he did not have a ready remedy.

As for exercising the mind, a prince should read history and reflect

1. The story of Philopoemon, leader of the Achaean league, and his single-minded strategic training program is told by Plutarch

among the *Parallel Lives*, where the Greek general is compared with the Roman Flamininus; and also by Livy 35.28.

on the actions of great men. He can see how they carried themselves during their wars, and study what made them win, what made them lose, so that he can imitate their successes and avoid their defeats. Above all, he should do as great men have done before him, and take as a model for his conduct some great historical figure who achieved the highest praise and glory by constantly holding before himself the deeds and achievements of a predecessor. They say Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar imitated Alexander, and Scipio imitated Cyrus. Anyone who reads Xenophon's life of Cyrus must realize how closely Scipio modelled himself on Cyrus, how much that imitation contributed to his glory, and how closely he conformed, in temperance, affability, humanity, and liberality to the things that Xenophon wrote about Cyrus.²

Such are the rules that a wise prince should observe. He must never idle away his days of peace, but vigorously make capital that will pay off in times of adversity; thus, when fortune changes, it will find him in a position to resist.

XV

ON THE REASONS WHY MEN ARE PRAISED OR BLAMED—ESPECIALLY PRINCES

It remains now to be seen what style and principles a prince ought to adopt in dealing with his subjects and friends. I know the subject has been treated frequently before, and I fear people will think me rash for trying to do so again, especially since I intend to differ in this discussion from what others have said. But since I intend to write something useful to an understanding reader, it seemed better to go after the real truth of the matter than to repeat what people have imagined. A great many men have imagined states and principedoms such as nobody ever saw or knew in the real world,³ and there's such a difference between the way we really live and the way we ought to live that the man who neglects the real to study the ideal will learn how to accomplish his ruin, not his salvation. Any man who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good. Hence a prince who wants to keep his authority must learn how not to be good, and use that knowledge, or refrain from using it, as necessity requires.

Putting aside, then, all the imaginary things that are said about

2. These various stories of classical figures imitating other classical figures are all taken from books—the story of Alexander imitating Achilles from Plutarch, the story of Caesar imitating Alexander from Suetonius, the story of Cato imitating Cyrus from a passage of Cicero. Even Xenophon's ostensible "life" of Cyrus is really a didactic novel, with only the slightest basis in historical fact.

3. Plato's *Republic* was certainly in Machiavelli's mind; More's *Utopia* was not yet published. But Machiavelli was doubtless thinking, as well, of previous books giving advice to princes, which dealt in realistic terms with impractical situations. Egidio Colonna had said, for example, that to lack just one of the princely virtues was to lack them all.

princes, and getting down to the truth, let me say that whenever men are discussed (and especially princes because they are prominent), there are certain qualities that bring them either praise or blame. Thus some are considered generous, others stingy (I use a Tuscan term, since "greedy" in our speech means a man who wants to take other people's goods; we call a man "stingy" who clings to his own);⁴ some are givers, others grabbers; some cruel, others humane; one man is treacherous, another faithful; one is feeble and effeminate, another fierce and spirited; one modest, another proud; one lustful, another chaste; one straightforward, another sly; one harsh, another gentle; one serious, another playful; one religious, another skeptical, and so on. I know everyone will agree that among these many qualities a prince certainly ought to have all those that are considered good. But since it is impossible to have and exercise them all, because the conditions of human life simply do not allow it, a prince must be shrewd enough to avoid the public disgrace of those vices that would lose him his state. If he possibly can, he should also guard against vices that will not lose him his state; but if he cannot prevent them, he should not be too worried about indulging them. And furthermore, he should not be too worried about incurring blame for any vice without which he would find it hard to save his state. For if you look at matters carefully, you will see that something resembling virtue, if you follow it, may be your ruin, while something else resembling vice will lead, if you follow it, to your security and well-being.

XVI

ON LIBERALITY AND STINGINESS

Let me begin, then, with the first of the qualities mentioned above, by saying that a reputation for liberality is doubtless very fine; but the generosity that earns you that reputation can do you great harm. For if you exercise your generosity in a really virtuous way [*virtuosamente*],⁵ as you should, nobody will know of it, and you cannot escape the odium of the opposite vice. Hence if you wish to be widely known as a generous man, you must seize every opportunity to make a big display of your giving. A prince of this character is bound to use up his entire revenue in works of ostentation. In the end, if he wants to keep a name for generosity, he will have to load his people with exorbitant taxes and squeeze money out of them in every way he can. This is the first step in making him odious to his subjects; for when he is poor, nobody will

4. The two words in Italian are *avaro* and *misero*. Machiavelli seems to derive the first by mistaken etymology from the verb *avere*, ("to possess"); the "avaro" is he who "per rapina desidera di avere." The "misero," by contrast, is the true miser; and that's a legitimate etymological link.

5. This phrase marks one extreme in Machiavelli's handling of the word *virtù*. It means here, not simply doing a charitable thing, but doing it without ulterior motives, from a sincere, inward, and personal sense of "caritas."

Contrast phrases like "tanta ferocità e tanta virtù" (chapter VII) or "maestro delle virtù e scelleratezze sua" (chapter VIII).

respect him. Then, when his generosity has angered many and brought rewards to a few, the slightest difficulty will trouble him, and at the first approach of danger, down he goes. If by chance he foresees this, and tries to change his ways, he will immediately be labelled a miser.

Since a prince cannot use this virtue [*virtù*] of liberality in such a way as to become known for it unless he harms his own security, he will not mind, if he judges prudently of things, being known as a miser. In due course he will be thought the more liberal man, when people see that his parsimony enables him to live on his income, to defend himself against his enemies, and to undertake major projects without burdening his people with taxes. Thus he will be acting liberally toward all those people from whom he takes nothing (and there are an immense number of them), and in a stingy way toward those people on whom he bestows nothing (and they are very few). In our times, we have seen great things being accomplished only by men who have had the name of misers; all the others have gone under. Pope Julius II, though he used his reputation as a generous man to gain the papacy, sacrificed it in order to be able to make war; the present king of France has waged many wars without levying a single extra tax on his people, simply because he could take care of the extra expenses out of the savings from his long parsimony.⁶ If the present king of Spain had a reputation for generosity, he would never have been able to undertake so many campaigns, or win so many of them.

Hence a prince who prefers not to rob his subjects, who wants to be able to defend himself, who wants to avoid poverty and contempt, and who has no desire to become a plunderer, should not mind in the least if people consider him a miser; this is simply one of the vices that enable him to reign. Someone may object that Caesar used a reputation for generosity to become emperor, and many other people have also risen in the world, because they were generous or were supposed to be so. Well, I answer, either you are a prince already, or you are in the process of becoming one; in the first case, this reputation for generosity is harmful to you, in the second case it is very necessary. Caesar was one of those who wanted to become ruler in Rome; but after he had reached his goal, if he had lived, and had not cut down on his expenses, he would have ruined the empire itself. Someone may say: there have been plenty of princes, very successful in warfare, who have had a reputation for generosity. But I answer: either the prince is spending his own money and that of his subjects, or he is spending someone else's. In the first case, he ought to be sparing; in the second case, he ought to spend

6. Louis XII, though afflicted like his predecessor Charles VIII with a mania for foreign conquest (a work for which both were largely incompetent), ran a thrifty shop at home. Starting with an empty treasury, he accumulated within a year after his accession enough money to support two years of war in Italy; and, as

Machiavelli remarks, he imposed no new taxes. Ferdinand of Spain was equally prudent in money matters; and though he is not mentioned here, Henry VII of England was as famous for stinginess as his son Henry VIII became for extravagance.

money like water. Any prince at the head of his army, which lives on loot, extortion, and plunder, disposes of other people's property, and is bound to be very generous; otherwise, his soldiers would desert him. You can always be a more generous giver when what you give is not yours or your subjects'; Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander were generous in this way. Spending what belongs to other people does no harm to your reputation, rather it enhances it; only spending your own substance harms you. And there is nothing that wears out faster than generosity; even as you practice it, you lose the means of practicing it, and you become either poor and contemptible or (in the course of escaping poverty) rapacious and hateful. The thing above all against which a prince must protect himself is being contemptible and hateful; generosity leads to both. Thus, it is much wiser to put up with the reputation of being a miser, which brings you shame without hate, than to be forced—just because you want to appear generous—into a reputation for rapacity, which brings shame on you and hate along with it.

XVII

ON CRUELTY AND CLEMENCY: WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO BE LOVED OR FEARED

Continuing now with our list of qualities, let me say that every prince should prefer to be considered merciful rather than cruel, yet he should be careful not to mismanage this clemency of his. People thought Cesare Borgia was cruel, but that cruelty of his reorganized the Romagna, united it, and established it in peace and loyalty. Anyone who views the matter realistically will see that this prince was much more merciful than the people of Florence, who, to avoid the reputation of cruelty, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed.⁷ Thus, no prince should mind being called cruel for what he does to keep his subjects united and loyal; he may make examples of a very few, but he will be more merciful in reality than those who, in their tenderheartedness, allow disorders to occur, with their attendant murders and lootings. Such turbulence brings harm to an entire community, while the executions ordered by a prince affect only one individual at a time. A new prince, above all others, cannot possibly avoid a name for cruelty, since new states are always in danger. And Virgil, speaking through the mouth of Dido, says:

Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt
Moliri, et late fines custode tueri.⁸

7. In 1501–2 the Pistoians broke out in a small but desperate civil war between two factions, the "Panciatichi" and the "Cancellieri"; though the nearby Florentines were in control of the city, and actually sent Machiavelli to investigate, they were afraid to intervene effectively, and so the townspeople hacked one another to pieces.

8. "Harsh pressures and the newness of my reign / Compel me to these steps; I must maintain / My borders against foreign foes. . . ." (*Aeneid* 1.563–64) [Editor's translation].

Yet a prince should be slow to believe rumors and to commit himself to action on the basis of them. He should not be afraid of his own thoughts; he ought to proceed cautiously, moderating his conduct with prudence and humanity, allowing neither overconfidence to make him careless, nor excess suspicion to make him intolerable.

Here the question arises: is it better to be loved than feared, or vice versa? I don't doubt that every prince would like to be both; but since it is hard to accommodate these qualities, if you have to make a choice, to be feared is much safer than to be loved. For it is a good general rule about men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and deceivers, fearful of danger and greedy for gain. While you serve their welfare, they are all yours, offering their blood, their belongings, their lives, and their children's lives, as we noted above—so long as the danger is remote. But when the danger is close at hand, they turn against you. Then, any prince who has relied on their words and has made no other preparations will come to grief; because friendships that are bought at a price, and not with greatness and nobility of soul, may be paid for but they are not acquired, and they cannot be used in time of need. People are less concerned with offending a man who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared: the reason is that love is a link of obligation which men, because they are rotten, will break any time they think doing so serves their advantage; but fear involves dread of punishment, from which they can never escape.

Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that, even if he gets no love, he gets no hate either; because it is perfectly possible to be feared and not hated, and this will be the result if only the prince will keep his hands off the property of his subjects or citizens, and off their women. When he does have to shed blood, he should be sure to have a strong justification and manifest cause; but above all, he should not confiscate people's property, because men are quicker to forget the death of a father than the loss of a patrimony. Besides, pretexts for confiscation are always plentiful; it never fails that a prince who starts to live by plunder can find reasons to rob someone else. Excuses for proceeding against someone's life are much rarer and more quickly exhausted.

But a prince at the head of his armies and commanding a multitude of soldiers should not care a bit if he is considered cruel; without such a reputation, he could never hold his army together and ready for action. Among the marvelous deeds of Hannibal, this was prime: that, having an immense army, which included men of many different races and nations, and which he led to battle in distant countries, he never allowed them to fight among themselves or to rise against him, whether his fortune was good or bad. The reason for this could only be his inhuman cruelty, which, along with his countless other talents [*virtù*], made him an object of awe and terror to his soldiers; and without the cruelty, his

other qualities [*le altre sua virtù*] would never have sufficed. The historians who pass snap judgments on these matters admire his accomplishments and at the same time condemn the cruelty which was their main cause.⁹

When I say, "His other qualities would never have sufficed," we can see that this is true from the example of Scipio, an outstanding man not only among those of his own time, but in all recorded history; yet his armies revolted in Spain, for no other reason than his excessive leniency in allowing his soldiers more freedom than military discipline permits.¹ Fabius Maximus rebuked him in the senate for this failing, calling him the corrupter of the Roman armies. When a lieutenant of Scipio's plundered the Locrians, he took no action in behalf of the people, and did nothing to discipline that insolent lieutenant; again, this was the result of his easygoing nature. Indeed, when someone in the senate wanted to excuse him on this occasion, he said there are many men who know better how to avoid error themselves than how to correct error in others.² Such a soft temper would in time have tarnished the fame and glory of Scipio, had he brought it to the office of emperor; but as he lived under the control of the senate, this harmful quality of his not only remained hidden but was considered creditable.

Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I conclude that since men love at their own inclination but can be made to fear at the inclination of the prince, a shrewd prince will lay his foundations on what is under his own control, not on what is controlled by others. He should simply take pains not to be hated, as I said.

XVIII

THE WAY PRINCES SHOULD KEEP THEIR WORD

How praiseworthy it is for a prince to keep his word and live with integrity rather than by craftiness, everyone understands; yet we see from recent experience that those princes have accomplished most who paid little heed to keeping their promises, but who knew how to manipulate the minds of men craftily. In the end, they won out over those who tried to act honestly.

You should consider then, that there are two ways of fighting, one with laws and the other with force. The first is properly a human method, the second belongs to beasts. But as the first method does not always suffice, you sometimes have to turn to the second. Thus a prince must

9. Among the historians who applauded Hannibal's feats but deplored the "inhuman cruelty" that made them possible was Livy himself, whom Machiavelli admired, but not uncritically.

1. In balancing Hannibal, the great Carthaginian commander, with his chief antagonist, Scipio Africanus, Machiavelli seems to be im-

itating the method of Plutarch, but he got most of his details from Livy.

2. The city of Locri in southern Italy was captured by Scipio in 205 B.C. and placed under Q. Plerninius. Livy tells how he outdid even the Carthaginians in wanton brutality without suffering so much as a minor rebuke from Scipio.

know how to make good use of both the beast and man. Ancient writers made subtle note of this fact when they wrote that Achilles and many other princes of antiquity were sent to be reared by Chiron the centaur, who trained them in his discipline.³ Having a teacher who is half man and half beast can only mean that a prince must know how to use both these two natures, and that one without the other has no lasting effect.

Since a prince must know how to use the character of beasts, he should pick for imitation the fox and the lion. As the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves, you have to be a fox in order to be wary of traps, and a lion to overawe the wolves. Those who try to live by the lion alone are badly mistaken. Thus a prudent prince cannot and should not keep his word when to do so would go against his interest, or when the reasons that made him pledge it no longer apply.⁴ Doubtless if all men were good, this rule would be bad; but since they are a sad lot, and keep no faith with you, you in your turn are under no obligation to keep it with them.

Besides, a prince will never lack for legitimate excuses to explain away his breaches of faith. Modern history will furnish innumerable examples of this behavior, showing how many treaties and promises have been made null and void by the faithlessness of princes, and how the man succeeded best who knew best how to play the fox. But it is necessary in playing this part that you conceal it carefully; you must be a great liar and hypocrite. Men are so simple of mind, and so much dominated by their immediate needs, that a deceitful man will always find plenty who are ready to be deceived. One of many recent examples calls for mention. Alexander VI never did anything else, never had another thought, except to deceive men, and he always found fresh material to work on. Never was there a man more convincing in his assertions, who sealed his promises with more solemn oaths, and who observed them less. Yet his deceptions were always successful, because he knew exactly how to manage this sort of business.

In actual fact, a prince may not have all the admirable qualities listed above, but it is very necessary that he should seem to have them. Indeed, I will venture to say that when you have them and exercise them all the time, they are harmful to you; when you just seem to have them, they are useful. It is good to appear merciful, truthful, humane, sincere, and religious; it is good to be so in reality. But you must keep your mind so disposed that, in case of need, you can turn to the exact contrary.⁵ This

3. In allegorizing Chiron as he does, Machiavelli is relatively original. If the mythographers know any such moral for the myth, they have hidden it in very remote places. A later writer, like Natale Conti (1568), follows Machiavelli.
4. Machiavelli perhaps had in mind the folly of Louis XII of France in trying to honor with one pope a pledge he had made to another: see chapter III, note 4, p. 11. But truth to one's

word was not the usual fault of princes in the Renaissance.

5. This recommendation that the prince should deliberately play the hypocrite has perhaps done more than any other passage of *The Prince* to darken Machiavelli's reputation. But it says nothing worse than what youthful Cyrus was required to learn in the first book of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

has to be understood: a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot possibly exercise all those virtues for which men are called "good." To preserve the state, he often has to do things against his word, against charity, against humanity, against religion. Thus he has to have a mind ready to shift as the winds of fortune and the varying circumstances of life may dictate. And as I said above, he should not depart from the good if he can hold to it, but he should be ready to enter on evil if he has to.

Hence a prince should take great care never to drop a word that does not seem imbued with the five good qualities noted above; to anyone who sees or hears him, he should appear all compassion, all honor, all humanity, all integrity, all religion. Nothing is more necessary than to seem to have this last virtue. Men in general judge more by the sense of sight than by the sense of touch, because everyone can see but only a few can test by feeling. Everyone sees what you seem to be, few know what you really are; and those few do not dare take a stand against the general opinion, supported by the majesty of the government. In the actions of all men, and especially of princes who are not subject to a court of appeal, we must always look to the end. Let a prince, therefore, win victories and uphold his state; his methods will always be considered worthy, and everyone will praise them, because the masses are always impressed by the superficial appearance of things, and by the outcome of an enterprise. And the world consists of nothing but the masses; the few have no influence when the many feel secure. A certain prince of our own time, whom it is just as well not to name,⁶ preaches nothing but peace and mutual trust, yet he is the determined enemy of both; and if on several different occasions he had observed either, he would have lost both his reputation and his throne.

XIX

ON AVOIDING CONTEMPT AND HATRED

Now that I have talked in detail about the most important of the qualities mentioned above, I'd like to discuss the others briefly under this general heading: that the prince should try to avoid anything which makes him hateful or contemptible, as was suggested above.⁷ When he has avoided actions that will have this effect, he has done his best, and he will run no risks from his other vices. What makes him hated above all, as I said,⁸ is his confiscating the property of his subjects or taking their women. He must not commit these acts, since most men, if you

6. The not-very-covert allusion is to Ferdinand of Spain, a political animal who is said to have boasted toward the end of his life that he had deceived Louis XII twelve times hand running. Machiavelli actively disliked Ferdi-

nand, calling him a shifty, shameless, tricky ruler, rather than a proper prince.

7. See chapter XVI.

8. See chapter XVII.

don't touch their property or their honor, will live contentedly. Then you have only to contend with the ambition of the few, which can easily be checked in a number of ways. What makes the prince contemptible is being considered changeable, trifling, effeminate, cowardly, or indecisive; he should avoid this as a pilot does a reef, and make sure that his actions bespeak greatness, courage, seriousness of purpose, and strength. In the private controversies of his subjects, he should be sure that his judgment once passed is irrevocable; indeed, he should maintain such a reputation that nobody will even dream of trying to trick or manage him.

Any prince who gives such an impression is bound to be highly esteemed, and a man with such a reputation is hard to conspire against, hard to assail, as long as everyone knows he is a man of character and respected by his own people. For a prince must be on his guard in two directions: domestically, against his own subjects; and abroad, against foreign powers. From the latter he can defend himself with good weapons and good friends; if he has good weapons, he will never lack for good friends. And domestic affairs will always be secure, as long as foreign policy is successful, unless the situation is disturbed by a conspiracy. Indeed, even when foreigners turn on him, if he has organized his defenses and his life as I suggested, and does not lose his head, he will withstand every assault, just as I said Nabis the Spartan did.⁹

As for one's own subjects; even when no outside disturbance occurs, there is danger they may form a secret conspiracy; from such a plot the prince's best protection lies in not being hated or despised, and keeping himself in popular favor. In a previous passage I explained the necessity for this at length.¹ One of the strongest counters that a prince has against conspiracies is not to be hated by the mass of the people, because every man who conspires always thinks that by killing the prince he will be pleasing the people. But when he thinks his act will enrage them, he no longer has any stomach for the work, because the problems of a conspirator are enormous at best. Experience teaches us that, of many conspiracies attempted, few turn out successfully; because a man who conspires can hardly do so alone, and can take as co-conspirators only those whom he judges to be discontented. Yet as soon as you explain your plot to a malcontent, you have furnished him with a means to be very content indeed. For he has everything to gain by giving you away; and when he has everything to gain one way, and so much danger and loss the other way, he must be either a very special friend of yours or a bitter enemy of the prince, if he is to keep faith with you. In a word, there is nothing in the conspirator's life but fear, jealousy, and the awful

9. See chapter IX.

1. See chapters XV–XVIII. These several ref-

erences to previous chapters of the book suggest review and summary.

prospect of punishment; while the prince is defended by the majesty of his office, by the laws, by the help of his allies, and by the state itself. And if to all this you add the good will of the people, it is impossible that any man will be rash enough to conspire against you.² Every conspirator is bound to live in fear before he executes his plot; but the man who conspires against a popular prince must also be fearful after his crime is committed—since then he will have the whole people against him, and from their hate he can hope for no refuge whatever.

I could give innumerable examples of this point, but one will suffice, that took place within the memory of our fathers. Messer Hannibal Bentivoglio, grandfather of the present Messer Hannibal, was murdered when he was prince of Bologna by a conspiracy of the Canneschi; he left behind only Messer Giovanni, then in his swaddling bands.³ Immediately after the prince's murder, the people rose up and massacred all the Canneschi. The reason for this was simply the people's devotion to the house of Bentivoglio, which was so great at that time that, when nobody was left in Bologna who could rule the state after Hannibal's death, the Bolognesi went to Florence to seek out a man of the Bentivoglio family (though he had previously been regarded as the son of a blacksmith), and entrusted him with the governing of their city. He governed it till Messer Giovanni was of age to rule.

Thus I conclude that a prince should not worry too much about conspiracies, as long as his people are devoted to him; but when they are hostile, and feel hatred toward him, he should fear everything and everybody. Well-ordered states and prudent princes have made every effort to keep the aristocracy from desperation and to satisfy the populace by making them happy; this is one of the most important of a prince's duties.

Among the well-ordered and -governed kingdoms of our time is that of France, where one can observe a great many good institutions making for the liberty and security of the king. Outstanding among these is the parliament, and its authority.⁴ The founder of the kingdom, clearly knowing the ambition of the nobility and their insolence, saw the necessity of putting a bit in their teeth by which they could be managed. At the same time he understood the hatred of the common people for

2. Machiavelli who dismisses conspiracies rather lightly here, is more impressed by them elsewhere; *Discorsi* 3.6 is an extended analysis of several different historical conspiracies, and of the elements involved in them.

3. The murder of Hannibal Bentivoglio took place in 1445; his son Giovanni did not come of age till seventeen years later, in 1462. Santi Bentivoglio, who filled the gap, was probably a bastard son of Hercules, Hannibal's cousin; but for the Bolognesi a left-handed Bentivoglio

was clearly better than none.

4. Machiavelli's ideas on the form and function of the French Paliament are not very historical. It began under the early Capets as a court of law, where the king in person gave judgment in the presence of his vassals. The idea of using it to balance off the various estates did not occur till later, and certainly never had the importance that Machiavelli assigns it.

the nobles, a hatred grounded in fear, and tried to reassure them. Yet he did not want this to be a particular responsibility of the king, lest he be accused of partiality—by the nobles for favoring the people, or by the people for favoring the nobles. Thus he established a third judicial force which, while it was not the king's direct responsibility, could hold down the nobility and favor the commons. There could hardly be a wiser or more prudent arrangement than this, nor one serving better to promote the security of king and kingdom. And from this we can draw another notable lesson: princes should delegate unpleasant jobs to other people and reserve the pleasant functions for themselves.⁵ Again let me conclude by saying that a prince should respect his nobles, but not let himself be hated by the people.

Many people who have studied the lives and deaths of the Roman emperors may think that they provide examples contrary to this opinion of mine, since some of them lived exemplary lives and showed great strength [*virtù*] of mind, yet lost the empire or were killed by subjects who conspired against them. By way of answering these objections, let me describe some of these emperors and show the reasons for which they came to grief; they will not be found much different from those I proposed. In passing, I will try to point out the most notable events in the history of those times, limiting myself to those emperors who came to the purple between Marcus the philosopher and Maximin. They were Marcus himself, Commodus his son, Pertinax, Julian, Severus, Antoninus Caracalla his son, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, Alexander, and Maximin.⁶

Now the first thing to note is that, unlike other princes who had to contend only with the ambition of nobles and the insolence of the people, the Roman emperors had a third difficulty: they had to cope with a cruel and avaricious soldiery. Satisfying both the soldiers and the populace at the same time proved so difficult that it cost many of the emperors their thrones. For the people generally wanted quiet, and thus were pleased with unambitious princes, while the soldiers loved a prince of warlike spirit, who was domineering, greedy, and cruel; they wanted to see these qualities exercised on the people, because that meant double wages for them, and satisfied their cruelty as well as their greed. These were the reasons why those emperors who had not a great reputation (granted by nature or acquired by political practice) could not keep the two factions

5. The somewhat cynical principle that Machiavelli is recommending here, to let nasty jobs be done by expendable agents, can be found as early as Xenophon's *Hiero*, a dialogue on the tyrant; it is timeless piece of common sense.

6. This period of Roman history, from the accession of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161) to the death of Maximin (A.D. 238) is later than that

covered by the great Roman historians. The fragmented history of Dio Cassius and that of Herodian (both in Greek) and the Latin biographies of the six *Scriptores historiae Augustae* are the chief authorities for the seventy-year period that Machiavelli covers; he used primarily Herodian, probably in Poliziano's Latin version.

in hand, and so came invariably to grief. Most of them, especially when they were new in office, recognized that they could not reconcile these two humors, so they chose to please the soldiers at the cost of doing harm to the people. This was a choice they had to make; because when princes cannot help being hated by someone, they ought first of all to try to avoid universal hatred, and when they cannot escape some hatred, they should try as hard as they can to avoid the hatred of the most powerful group around. Thus emperors who were new in office and needed special support, turned to the soldiers rather than the people, that policy serving them well or badly according to whether they maintained control over their troops or not.

These are the reasons why Marcus, Pertinax, and Alexander, who were all men of decent lives, lovers of justice, enemies of cruelty, humane, and benevolent, all came to bad ends—except for Marcus. Marcus alone lived and died in the highest honor, because he came to the purple by the law of heredity, and had nobody to thank for it, either soldiers or people. Besides, his many virtues [*virtù*], which made him an object of reverence to all, enabled him to keep both factions within bounds as long as he lived, and he was never hated or despised. But Pertinax was created emperor against the will of the army; the soldiers were accustomed to a licentious life under Commodus, and could not endure the honest life toward which Pertinax tried to direct them. In this way he made himself hated, and to hate was added contempt because he was old, and this ruined him at the very beginning of his administration.

And here it should be noted that hatred may be earned by doing good just as much as by doing evil; and so, as I said above, a prince who wants to keep his state, is often bound to do what is not good. Because when that group is corrupt whose support you think you need—whether the people or the army or the nobility—then you have to follow their humors to satisfy them; and in that case, good deeds are harmful to you. But let us now consider Alexander, who was such a good man that, among his other praises, this one is recorded: that in the fourteen years of his reign, no man was ever put to death by his orders without a trial. Yet, being considered effeminate and under his mother's thumb, he fell into contempt, the army conspired against him, and murdered him.⁷

Turning now for contrast to the emperors Commodus, Severus, Antoninus Caracalla, and Maximin, you will find that they were extremely cruel and rapacious men; to satisfy their soldiery, they condoned every

7. Pertinax was forced to become emperor in his old age and against his will; he lasted just three months in the job. Alexander Severus was just fourteen years old when the murder of

Heliogabalus propelled him to the purple. But Machiavelli is making points to which these untidy individual circumstances are irrelevant.

sort of lawlessness against the people; and yet they all came to a wretched end, except for Severus. The reason was that Severus was a man of such character [*tanta virtù*] that, by keeping the soldiers friendly to him, and oppressing the people, he was able to reign in prosperity all his life long: his talents [*virtù*] made him so remarkable, in the eyes of the people as well as the soldiery, that the former remained awestruck and appeased, the latter astonished and abashed.⁸

And since his actions were so striking and worthy of study by a new prince, I would like to show in brief what good use he made of the fox and the lion; which are the two natures that I said above must be simulated by a successful prince. When Severus realized that the Emperor Julian was a weakling, he persuaded the army he was leading in Sclavonia⁹ that it was a good idea to go to Rome, in order to avenge the death of Pertinax, who had been killed by the Praetorian Guards. Under this pretext, and without any indication that he aspired to the purple, he led his army against Rome, and was in Italy before anyone there knew he had set out. As soon as he reached Rome, the senate, acting out of fear, elected him emperor and ordered Julian killed. After taking this first step, Severus faced two other difficulties in making himself master of the entire state: one was in Asia, where Pescennius Niger, leader of the Asiatic armies, had had himself proclaimed emperor, and the other was in the west, where Albinus also aspired to the empire. Seeing it would be rash to engage both these enemies at once, he decided to attack Niger and deceive Albinus. So he wrote the latter, saying that though the senate had elected him emperor, he wanted a partner in that dignity; he hailed him as Caesar and got the senate to declare him a colleague. Albinus took all this at face value. But then when Severus had defeated Niger, killed him, and pacified the East, he went back to Rome and complained in the senate that Albinus, unmindful of all the benefits showered on him, had treacherously tried to murder him. For this reason, Severus was bound to seek him out and punish his ingratitude. Whereupon, he hunted him down in France, deprived him of his authority, and took his life.

Whoever examines carefully the action of this man will find that he was a most ferocious lion and a very clever fox; he was feared and respected by all, and his army did not hate him. Even though he was a new man, it is no wonder that he could successfully hold onto so great an empire, since his splendid reputation always protected him from that

8. The virtues [*virtù*] of Severus, which amounted to cold and ruthless decisiveness, are perceptibly different from the virtues [*virtù*] of Marcus Aurelius; in thus deliberately equating them, Machiavelli is in effect declaring that the moral qualities of a prince are virtues or vices only as they help or hinder his political functioning.

9. Severus was commanding a Roman army not far from modern Vienna; the "Julian" in question was not Julian the Apostate, emperor 361-63, but a certain Didius Julianus who in 193 bought the Roman Empire at public auction and enjoyed his prize for just sixty-six days before Severus took it away from him and cut off his head.

popular hatred which might have been the consequences of his looting.¹ His son, Antoninus Caracalla, was also a man of great talents, well suited to make him admirable in the eyes of the people and popular with soldiers; he was a man of arms, who could stand any kind of fatigue or hardship, who despised fine food and all sorts of delicate living; and this made him very popular with the army. But his cruelty was so ferocious, so unheard-of (after endless individual murders, he killed most of the population of Rome and the entire population of Alexandria), that he became hateful to everyone, and even his intimate associates began to fear him—so that he was finally murdered by a centurion in the middle of his army. We should note here that assassinations of this sort, long meditated by a fanatical mind, are impossible for a prince to avert, because anyone who does not fear to die himself can carry out such a deed. But since such episodes are very rare, the prince need not be too much concerned about them. He ought only to beware of inflicting serious injury on any of his personal servants or those who are employed near him in the service of the state. That was the mistake of Antoninus, who had imposed a shameful death on a brother of this centurion, and threatened the man himself every day, though he still kept him in his bodyguard; this was a rash thing to do, and, as it happened, brought about the emperor's death.

Now let us come to Commodus, who found the empire easy to acquire, since it descended to him by hereditary right, as son of Marcus Aurelius; and if he had simply been content to follow his father's footsteps, he would have satisfied both the populace and the soldiers. But he was a cruel and beastly man, who, to exercise his rapacity on the people, indulged his armies to the limit, and encouraged their excesses. On the other hand, he took no care for his own dignity, descending many times into the theater to fight with gladiators, and doing other completely vulgar things unworthy of imperial majesty, till at last he became contemptible to his own soldiers. Then, when he was hated by one faction and despised by the other, a conspiracy was formed against him, and he perished.

It remains now to describe Maximin. He was a man much practiced in war; and as the armies were disgusted by the effeminacy of Alexander, whom we described above, after his death they elected Maximin emperor. He was not long in power, because two things caused him to be hated and despised: one was his base birth (he had once been a shepherd in Thrace, everyone knew it, and it was much held against him); the

1. Machiavelli omits any mention of Severus's ruthless terrorizing of the Roman senate. As he himself had created a law punishing anyone who murdered a senator, he was careful to expel his enemies from the senate first, and then murder them when they were no longer senators. This did a good deal for his splendid reputation. His son Caracalla seems to have been more than half insane; having murdered

his brother Geta in their mother's arms, he turned over the government to her, and spent the last years of his life wandering from one remote military frontier to another, seeking the death with which his own soldiers at last obliged him. Macrinus, who murdered him and thereby gained the throne, retained it for less than a year.

other was his delay in entering Rome at the beginning of his reign to take possession of the royal throne. His prefects in Rome and other parts of the empire meanwhile carried out many harsh acts; and these gave everyone an impression of terrible personal cruelty. Thus everyone turned against him, some because of his base birth, others for fear of his bloodthirstiness; Africa was first to rebel, then the senate and all the Roman people followed, and all Italy conspired against him. Even his own army joined in; they were besieging Aquileia, found the assault difficult, were disgusted with his cruelty, feared him the less because he had so many enemies, and thus killed him.

I shall say nothing of Heliogabalus, Macrinus, and Julian because everyone despised them, and so they were quickly done away with. To conclude this discourse, let me say that the princes of our day have less trouble in satisfying the excessive demands of the soldiers under their command; though you have to have some concern for them, the conflicts are easily resolved, because modern princes do not have armies involved with provincial governments and administrators, like the armies of the Roman Empire. At that time, it was necessary to gratify the soldiers rather than the people because the soldiers represented the greater power; nowadays, it is necessary to gratify the people rather than the soldiers, because the people have more power except in the lands of the Turk and the sultan.² I except the Turk here, because he always keeps near the court twelve thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry, on whom the strength and security of his rule depend; and, before anything else, he must keep these armies satisfied. So too with the realm of the sultan, which is all under military rule; he also has to keep the soldiers on his side without regard to the people. And it is to be noted that the sultan's state is unlike all others in one respect, where it most resembles the Christian pontificate. It cannot be called a hereditary monarchy, nor yet a new monarchy, because the sons of the old prince do not inherit the throne and assume command; instead a man is elected to the office by those who have authority to do so. Since the system is traditional, the monarchy cannot be called a new one; it has none of the difficulties inherent in new regimes, for even though the prince himself may be new, the laws of the state are old, and are set up to receive him just as if he were a hereditary monarch.

But, to return to our topic, let me say that whoever studies the record described above will see that either hatred or contempt was the ruin of the Roman emperors we mentioned; and he will understand how the very different paths they took led each of them to his destined end,

2. "The Turk" is the hereditary monarchy of the Ottoman Empire, under the direction, as it happened, of successive sultans—Muhammad II the Conqueror, Bayezid II, Selim I, son regularly succeeding father. By "the sultan" Machiavelli evidently means the caliphate, as

established by Muhammad the prophet in the pattern of an elective monarchy, but radically modified, in its later Egyptian manifestations, by frequent assassinations, insurrections, depositions, and efforts by the caliphs to get their sons appointed to succeed them.

whether happy or unhappy. For Pertinax and Alexander, since they were new princes, it was useless and harmful to imitate Marcus Aurelius, who was emperor by hereditary right; so too it would have been fatal for Caracalla, Commodus, and Maximin to imitate Severus, since they had not sufficient character [*virtù*] to follow in his footsteps. Thus a new prince, coming to power in a new state, cannot imitate the actions of Marcus Aurelius, nor indeed is he bound to follow after Severus; but he should take from Severus those elements of his conduct that are necessary to found his state, and from Marcus those that are useful and creditable in preserving a state already stabilized and secure.³

XX

WHETHER BUILDING FORTRESSES AND OTHER DEFENSIVE POLICIES
OFTEN ADOPTED BY PRINCES ARE USEFUL OR NOT

In order to keep a tight grasp on the state, some princes have disarmed their subjects; others have tried to control their captured cities by dividing them into factions; still others have deliberately fomented hostilities against themselves; others again have made a point of winning over those who were suspect at the beginning of their reign; some have built new fortresses, other have torn down old ones. And though there is no formulating a definite rule about these many alternatives without knowing the particular circumstances of the state to be managed, still I will discuss these topics as generally as the nature of the subject allows.

There never was a new prince who disarmed his subjects; on the contrary, when he found them without weapons, he always armed them. The reason is that when you arm them, their arms become yours; those who were suspect become your faithful supporters, and those who were faithful before continue so, and from merely being your subjects become your partisans. Naturally, you cannot arm all your subjects, but when those whom you have armed are well treated, you can consider yourself safer from the others. Those you select for special favor will think themselves obliged to you, and the others will forgive you, judging that men deserve special rewards when they assume special risks and obligations. But when you disarm them, you begin to alienate them; you advertise your mistrust of them, which may come from your suspecting them of cowardice or treachery; both these insinuations will raise hatred against you. And since you cannot remain unarmed yourself, you will have to turn to mercenary armies, the quality of which was discussed above:

3. This perfunctory and superficial chapter concludes with some perfunctory and superficial moral generalities. In reality the downfall of Alexander Severus had nothing to do with his being a new prince: he was not, and the virtues fatal to him contributed to the success of Marcus Aurelius. The judgment about Caracalla, Commodus, and Maximin is an obvious

begging of the question; if they had acted like Severus, Machiavelli would have concluded that they had his *virtù*. Finally, it is apparent that in all these judgments, Machiavelli is making liberal use of historical hindsight, and tailoring his account of the different men's careers to the different fates he knows they met.

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