

20

Niccolò Machiavelli

The Prince

NICCOLÒ Machiavelli (1469–1527), for a time an ambassador and secretary of the Republic of Florence, was exiled when the Medici family returned to power in 1512. During his exile he wrote *The Prince* (1513), which was circulated in manuscript form but not published until 1532, five years after his death. In his later years, Machiavelli was permitted to return to Florence and was commissioned by the Medici to write *The History of Florence*. He was not, however, entrusted by them with any other important official post.

The influence of Machiavelli was profound in his own day and has continued so into our own. He departed from conventional medieval political theory, with its endless comparisons of the body politic to the human body—the king or prince representing the head and the people representing the body and limbs, and so on. Nor did Machiavelli agree with the many who regarded the prince as the divinely appointed ruler; in his treatise, *The Prince*, the state is considered entirely secular, and nothing happens to a state save by the application of power. The ruler's whole duty is to maintain order and to keep the state strong. In order to do this, the prince must gain and retain power by whatever means are available. The Romans, Machiavelli felt, were the best practitioners of this policy, and his writings are full of admiration for them—notably, his perceptive and analytical *Discourses on Livy*.

Unfortunately for his reputation, the name of Machiavelli became associated chiefly with *The Prince*, which is, in the opinion of many, a lesser work than his *Discourses on Livy*. He was attacked bitterly by those who regarded him as an embodiment of evil ("Old Nick himself"—the name coined for him by English mockers) and by more astute practitioners of tyranny who, according to Voltaire, disliked him because he gave away their trade secrets. In literature and legend Machiavelli's name became synonymous with the villain who, excusing

his actions with the doctrine that the end justifies the means, uses any method to gain power and enjoys crime for its own sake. In defense of Machiavelli one can cite his hope of uniting Italy so that the ceaseless local wars and invasions would end. He can also be viewed as simply an objective reporter of the actual state of affairs in the Italy of his time.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI TO LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT, SON OF PIERO DE' MEDICI

Those who want to gain a prince's favor usually offer him those things they value most or that they think he likes best. So we often see people giving him horses, armor, cloth of gold, gems, and similar ornaments suitable to their position. Wishing to offer Your Magnificence something on my behalf as evidence of my devotion, I find nothing in my possessions I value higher than the knowledge of the actions of great men, which I have gained from long experience of the affairs of today and from constant study of the past. I have carefully examined and thought about these matters for a long time, and now I have written it all down in a small volume, which I send to Your Magnificence.

Although I judge this book unworthy for you to receive, I am confident that you will generously accept it, especially when you recall that I can give no greater gift than to help you understand in a very short time what it has taken me many years and many dangers and much discomfort to learn.

...

A prince, first of all, should have no other object or thought in mind than war and how to wage it. He must not take up anything else to be skillful in, for war is the only art essential to those who govern. It is, moreover, of such great value that it not only keeps in power those who have been born rulers, but often helps men of humble origin to rise to high rank. On the other hand, when princes turn their attention more to luxuries than to war, they lose their power. The chief cause of losing

THE PRINCE From the introduction and chapters 14–19, 26. Translation by the editor, based on the texts in *Opere*, Firenze, 1843; *Opere*, Milano, 1873–77; and *Il Principe di Niccolò Machiavelli*, Oxford, 1891.

power is neglect of the art of war; the chief means of acquiring power is skill in the art of war.

Francesco Sforza,¹ because he had his own army, rose from private citizen to duke of Milan. His descendants, wanting to avoid the hardships of war, became private citizens instead of dukes. Among other misfortunes that being unskilled in arms brings you is that it makes others despise you, and that is a disgrace against which a prince must guard, as I will explain later. There is no possible equality between an armed man and one who is unarmed. It is unreasonable to suppose that the armed man will willingly obey the unarmed one or that the unarmed one will be safe among armed servants. For when one feels superior and the other suspicious, it is impossible for them to work well together. A prince who does not understand military affairs will, in addition to the other misfortunes I have described, lose the esteem of his soldiers and will be unable to trust them.

He should, therefore, never think of anything else than military training. In peacetime he ought to pay more attention to it than even in time of war. He can do this in two ways: first, with action; the second, with study. As to action, besides keeping his forces well trained and disciplined, he ought to go hunting often and thus keep his body used to hardship. He will also in this way learn the nature of the land, how the mountains rise up, how the valleys open, how the plains extend, and will discover the nature of the rivers and swamps. He ought to pay greatest attention to all of this, for this knowledge is useful in two ways: first, he comes to know his own country and can better plan its defense; then, by knowledge and experience of these places, he can easily understand any other location it becomes necessary to know about. Since the hills, valleys, plains, rivers, and swamps of Tuscany, for example, have a certain similarity to those of other provinces, knowledge of the appearance of one province can easily lead to an understanding of others. The prince who lacks this lacks the first qualification which a military leader ought to have, for this teaches him how to find the enemy, to select his campgrounds, to lead his forces, to plan battles, and to besiege territories to his advantage.

Philopoemen,² prince of the Achaeans, among other things for which writers praised him, never thought of anything but methods of

¹A military leader who overthrew the weak government of Milan in 1450 and became its duke. His son Lodovico Il Moro was driven from power in 1499 by Louis XII of France.

²Greek soldier, patriot, and statesman (253–184 B.C.).

waging war, even in peacetime. When he was in the country with his friends, he often stopped and questioned them: "If the enemy were on that hill, and we were here with our army, which of us would have the advantage? How could we advance toward him and still maintain good order? If we wanted to retreat, how should we do so? If they retreated, how should we follow?" As he went along, he put before them all the things which might happen to an army. He listened to their opinions and gave his own with supporting arguments, so that because of this constant discussion nothing could happen when he was leading his army for which he did not have an answer.

As to the exercise of the mind, however, the prince ought to read history and study the actions of distinguished men to see how they conducted themselves in war and to examine the reasons for their victories and their defeats so that he can imitate the former and avoid the latter. Above all, he ought to do as some great men have done in the past who took as a model someone praised and glorified and kept his deeds and actions before them. It is said that Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, Alexander; and Scipio, Cyrus.³ . . . A wise prince ought to do likewise and never remain idle in peacetime. He ought to put these examples to use so that if fortune turns against him he will be ready to resist her. . . .

We must now see what methods and rules a prince should use in dealing with his subjects and his friends. Because I know that many have written about this, I fear that my writing about it will be judged presumptuous, since I disagree in this matter completely with the opinions of others. But since I intend to write something useful to those who understand, it seems to me more practical to go directly to the actual truth of the matter than to speculate about it. Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known really to exist. But there is such a difference between how we live and how we ought to live that he who turns away from what actually does occur for the sake of what ought to occur, does something that will ruin him rather than save him. For he who wants to be a good man all the time will be ruined among so many who are not good. It is therefore necessary for a prince who wants to survive to learn how *not* to be good and to use goodness, or not use it, according to what needs to be done.

³Achilles: legendary Greek hero of the Trojan war. Caesar: Roman general and statesman (first century B.C.). Alexander: conqueror of the eastern Mediterranean world (fourth century B.C.). Scipio: Roman general, victor over Carthage (236–184 B.C.). Cyrus: founder of Persian empire (sixth century B.C.).

Leaving aside, then, those matters which concern only an imaginary prince and talking about those things that are real, I say that all men, and especially princes because they are situated higher, exhibit certain qualities which bring them either blame or praise. Thus, one is termed liberal or generous, another miserly or stingy . . . one is termed unselfish, another greedy; one cruel, another compassionate; one unreliable, another trustworthy; one effeminate and cowardly, another fierce and courageous; one humane, another proud; one lascivious, another chaste; one frank, the other crafty; one harsh, the other easy-going; one serious, the other lightminded; one religious, the other an unbeliever; and so on.

I know that everyone will admit that it would be very fine for a prince to have all of the qualities mentioned above that are judged good. But because human nature will not allow it, they cannot all be possessed or maintained. It is necessary, therefore, that the prince be clever enough to know how to avoid a bad reputation for having those vices which might endanger his position, and if he can do so, he should also avoid those vices that are not dangerous to his position. But if he cannot do so, he can let them persist with less worry. He must not care if he gets a bad reputation on account of those vices without which he could not protect the state; because, all things considered, we find that some things which seem to be virtues would, if followed, lead to ruin, whereas something else which seems vicious will bring about security and well-being.

. . .

Beginning now with the first of the qualities mentioned above, I say that it would be well to be thought liberal or generous. Nevertheless, liberality used to such a degree that you are known for it, is harmful to you. If you practice it moderately, as one ought to, no one will know about it, and you will be blamed for the opposite vice. If, on the other hand, you want to gain a reputation for being liberal or generous, you must not omit any extravagance, to such an extent that a prince who does so will use up his resources. It will then become necessary at last, if he wants to keep on being known for his liberality, for him to tax his people heavily, to extort money from them, and do everything possible just to get money.

This will begin to make his subjects hate him, and when he becomes poor no one will think much of him. Thus, having harmed many and

benefited few by his generosity, he will be subject to all kinds of hardships and all kinds of dangers. If he realizes this and wants to change his ways, he is immediately blamed for becoming stingy.

A prince, therefore, being unable to use this virtue of liberality or generosity to the point where it is recognized without harming himself, ought not, if he is wise, object to being termed stingy. For as time passes he will be termed more liberal when people see that because of his thriftiness his income is enough both to defend himself against those who make war against him and to begin his own enterprises without burdening the people. Such a prince is actually liberal to those from whom he takes nothing, who are numerous, and stingy to those to whom he does not give, who are few.

In our times we have not seen any great achievements except the ones performed by those considered stingy. The others have failed. Pope Julius II,⁴ though he used his reputation for generosity to win the papacy, did not try to maintain it afterwards because he wanted to be able to wage war. The present king of France⁵ has made many wars without imposing heavy taxes on his people because the extra expenditures were paid for by his long-term economies. The present king of Spain,⁶ if he had continued being liberal, would not have begun or completed so many undertakings.

For these reasons a prince ought to care little about being thought stingy if he thereby avoids robbing his subjects and can still defend himself, and if he does not become poor and contemptible or is not forced to become greedy. For this vice of stinginess is one of those that will enable him to rule. If someone says that Caesar came to power by using liberality and many others attained high rank by being generous or being thought so, I reply that you are already a prince or you are on the way to becoming one. In the first case, this liberality is dangerous; in the second it is quite necessary to be considered generous. Caesar was one of those who wished to come to power in Rome. But if, after attaining power, he had lived and had not decreased his expenditures, he would have destroyed his authority. And if someone should reply that there have been many princes considered to be very generous and who have done great deeds with their armies, I say that either the prince

⁴As pope, from 1503 to 1513, he was an energetic military leader in behalf of the temporal and political power of the papacy.

⁵Louis XII (reigned 1498–1515).

⁶Ferdinand II (reigned 1474–1516), called "the Catholic."

spends his own money and his subjects' or someone else's. In the first case, he ought to be careful; in the other case, he should not neglect in any way being very generous.

generosity
conq Generosity is necessary for the prince who marches with his army and lives on plunder, loot, and ransoms, and uses other people's wealth. Otherwise his soldiers would not follow him. You can be very generous with what does not belong to you or to your subjects, as were Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander. To spend others' money does not harm your reputation but helps it. It is only spending your own money that hurts you. There is nothing that uses itself up like generosity. For while you use it, you lose the power to use it, and you become either poor and despised or, in order to escape poverty, you become greedy and hated. Above all, a prince must guard against being despised and hated, and generosity or liberality brings you to one or the other condition. However, it is wiser to be known as stingy, which brings you disgrace without hatred, than trying to be known as liberal, which necessarily makes you known as rapacious; having a reputation for that brings disgrace and hatred. . . .

Proceeding to the other qualities mentioned before, I say that every prince ought to wish to be thought merciful and not cruel, but he ought to be careful not to misuse that mercy. Cesare Borgia⁷ was considered cruel; nevertheless, his cruelty pacified the Romagna, united it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. If this is well thought through, it will be seen to have been more merciful than the people of Florence who, in order to avoid being called cruel, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed.⁸ Hence, a prince ought not to worry about a reputation for being cruel in order to keep his subjects unified and loyal, for with a very few examples of cruelty he will prove more merciful than those who, because of too much leniency, allow disorder to erupt, whence arise murders and lootings. For these harm a whole community, whereas the executions ordered by the prince harm only individuals. And of all princes, it is impossible for a new one to avoid the reputation of being cruel because new states are full of dangers. Vergil says in Dido's words: "Harsh times and the newness of the state force me to do such things and to guard all my lands."⁹ Nevertheless, the prince should be cautious

⁷Son of Pope Alexander VI, and known for his skillful but ruthless tactics. The Romagna is a district in north-central Italy.

⁸Florence did not intervene to subdue civil strife in the nearby city of Pistoia when it was under Florentine control. As a result, the city was ruined.

⁹In his *Aeneid* the Roman poet Vergil describes the successful rule of Dido, legendary queen of Carthage.

moderation
in judging and acting, but not timid. He should proceed in a temperate manner, with prudence and humanity, so that overconfidence does not make him careless, or excessive suspicions make him intolerable.

From this rises a question: is it better to be loved than feared, or the reverse? The answer is that the prince should be both feared and loved, if possible. But since it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be given up. For it can be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, talkative, tricky, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers, anxious for gain. While you are doing them favors, they are all yours, offering you blood, possessions, life, and children, as I said before, when need for these is remote; but when you need them, they turn on you. And the prince who has trusted their words without making other preparations is ruined, for friendships gained by favors, and not by greatness and nobility, cannot be counted upon when needed. Men care less about offending someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared, because love is supported by a chain of obligation, which because of man's debased nature, is broken at every occasion for selfish profit; but fear, maintained by dread of punishment, never fails.

moderation
Nevertheless, the prince should make himself feared in such a way that if he does not gain love, he at least avoids hatred. For to be feared and not to be hated go very well together. This can always be done if the prince refrains from taking the property and women of his subjects. And when indeed it is necessary to take someone's life, it should be when there is sufficient justification and obvious cause. But above all he should refrain from taking the property of others, for men forget the death of their father sooner than the loss of their property. Moreover, reasons for taking property are never lacking, and he who begins to live by extortion always finds reasons to take the goods of others, whereas reasons for taking life are fewer and less lasting.

But when the prince is with the army and commands a great number of soldiers it is altogether necessary that he pay no attention to being called cruel, because if he is not cruel he cannot keep his army together or ready for service. Among the marvelous actions of Hannibal¹⁰ there is cited this: he had a large army made up of many kinds of men, but he led them through a foreign land without any disagreement arising either among them or with their commander, either in misfortune or in good times. This cannot have come from anything other than his

¹⁰Carthaginian general (247–183 B.C.) whose army crossed the Alps into Italy and defeated the Romans in several major battles.

inhuman cruelty, which, together with his many other qualities, always made his soldiers respect him and think him terrible. Without this, his other virtues would not have been enough to produce such an effect. Writers have thought too little about this when on the one hand they admire his achievements, and on the other blame the principal cause of those achievements.

The fact that his other qualities would not have been enough can be seen in the example of Scipio, a man very famous in his own time and in all times that we know anything about. His armies mutinied when he was in Spain. This resulted from nothing other than too much kindness, which allowed the soldiers more freedom than goes with military discipline. This fault was condemned in the Senate by Fabius Maximus¹¹ who called him the corruptor of the Roman militia. And when the Locrians¹² were destroyed by one of his officers, Scipio did not avenge them nor did he punish the officer's disobedience, owing to his easy-going nature. Thus, when someone in the Senate wanted to make excuses for him, he said that there were many men who knew better how not to make mistakes than to punish the mistakes of others. This characteristic would in time have ruined Scipio's fame and glory if he had kept on with it as a commander, but living under the Senate's command this bad quality was not merely hidden but was part of his fame.

I conclude, therefore, that as far as being feared or loved are concerned, men love as they please but fear as the prince wills. A wise prince ought to rely on what is in his power and not in the power of others, only being careful to avoid being hated, as I have pointed out. . . . *section on deception*

Everyone knows how praiseworthy it is for a prince to keep his word and to live honestly and not be deceitful. Nevertheless, experience shows that princes in our times who have done great things have cared little for honesty; they have known how to confuse men's minds with their cleverness and have finally defeated those who put their faith in honesty.

You ought to realize, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: one according to laws, the other with force. The first is appropriate to men, the second to animals. But often the first is not enough, and it is necessary to turn to the second. Therefore, it is necessary for a prince to

¹¹Roman statesman (third century B.C.).

¹²Citizens of Locri, a town in Sicily.

know very well the methods of both animal and man. This lesson was secretly taught by writers of antiquity, who tell how Achilles and many other princes of ancient times were given to the centaur Chiron,¹³ so that he could raise and teach them. Their having as tutor a creature half-animal and half-man indicates the need of a prince's knowing how to use the nature of both and that one cannot bring success without the other.

Therefore, since it is necessary for a prince to know well how to act like an animal, he should choose the natures of the fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. A prince needs to be a fox to know about traps, and a lion to terrify the wolves. Those who behave only like the lion do not understand this. Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when to do so would be disadvantageous and when the reasons for making promises no longer exist. If all men were good, this precept would not be good. But since they are bad and would not keep their promises to you, it is not necessary for you to keep yours to them. A prince never lacks good reason to excuse his breaking his word. One could give innumerable modern examples of this and show how many peace treaties and promises have been broken and made ineffective by the untrustworthiness of princes. He who has best known how to act like a fox has succeeded best. But he who has this talent has to know how to keep it hidden and to pretend and deceive. Men are so simple and yield to the needs of the present so readily that he who deceives will always find those who let themselves be deceived. *critical re-human nature*

I do not wish to remain silent about one recent example. Alexander VI¹⁴ did nothing else but deceive men and thought of nothing else, yet he always found the opportunity to do so. There never was a man who had greater success in affirming something; and the more oaths he used in affirming it, the sooner he broke his promise. Nevertheless, his deceptions always succeeded in the way he wanted, for he knew the way of the world. *seemingly over playing*

It is not necessary, then, for a prince to have the good qualities mentioned above, but it is necessary to seem to have them. I would even say this: to have them and use them all the time is dangerous, but seeming to have them is useful. He should seem to be pious, faithful, *opposite of N.C. motto*

¹³A mythical creature, half horse and half man, that was reputed to have been the educator of several legendary Greek heroes.

¹⁴As Pope, from 1492 to 1503, he was known for his astute but devious political maneuvering.

humane, honest, religious, and to be so. But he should have his mind prepared that when occasion requires, he is able to change to the opposite. And it must be understood that a prince, especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things for which men are considered good; it is often necessary to act contrary to faith, charity, humanity, and religion in order to maintain the state. It is therefore necessary for him to have the ability to change his mind according to the way the winds of fortune and conditions require. If possible, he ought not, as I have said before, turn away from what is good, but he should be able to do evil if necessary.

Ferdinand A prince should be very careful that nothing ever comes from his mouth that is not full of the aforementioned [good] qualities. Those who see and hear him should think him all compassion, all faith, all integrity, all humaneness, all religion. And nothing is more necessary to seem to have than the last quality. For people in general judge more with their eyes than with their minds. Everyone can see; few have understanding. Everyone sees what you seem to be; few know what you really are. And those few do not dare oppose the opinion of the many, who have the power of the state to support them. In the actions of individuals, especially princes, when there is no judge to appeal to, people look at the results.¹⁵ A prince only has to conquer and maintain the state. His means will always be considered honorable, and everyone will praise them because the common crowd is always deceived by appearances and by the way things turn out. In the world the crowd is everything. The few are isolated when the crowd is in control. A certain prince of the present time, whom it would be well not to mention by name,¹⁶ always preaches peace and fidelity but is actually a great enemy of both. Either of these qualities, had he followed them, would often have taken from him his reputation or his state. . . .

Since I have spoken of the most important of the qualities mentioned above, I want to discuss the others briefly, with this generalization: the prince should pay attention, as has been said before, to avoiding those things which make him hated and despised. As long as he succeeds in this, he will have done his part and will not find danger in other vices. Hatred, as I have said, comes from being greedy and seizing his subjects' property and women. He must refrain from doing these things.

¹⁵"In the actions . . . results." Some translations condense Machiavelli's sentence to "The end justifies the means."

¹⁶Probably Ferdinand II of Spain, who was on good terms with the Medici rulers of Florence.

For most men live contentedly as long as they are not deprived of their property or honor. Then he has to contend only with the ambition of a few, which he can easily control in many ways. He is judged contemptible if he is thought changeable, frivolous, effeminate, cowardly, and irresolute. A prince ought to guard against these as from a dangerous reef. He must try to show by his actions his greatness, spirit, seriousness, and bravery. In governing the affairs of his subjects, he must make his decisions irrevocable. He ought to maintain such a reputation that no one would think of deceiving or cheating him.

The prince who earns such an opinion for himself has a great reputation. If a prince has a great reputation, it is difficult to plot against him or to attack him so long as he is thought to have great ability and the respect of his subjects. Therefore, a prince must fear two things: one from inside his state because of his subjects, the other from outside because of foreign enemies. He can defend himself from the latter with good weapons and good friends, and he will always have good friends if he has good arms. Conditions inside the state will remain quiet when conditions outside are quiet, unless they are already stirred up by a conspiracy. When attacked from outside, if he has ruled and lived as I have said, and if he stands firm, he will repel all attacks as the Spartan Nabis¹⁷ did. But concerning his subjects when external matters are stable, he still has to be wary of their plots. The prince can be quite safe from these if he avoids being hated and if he keeps the people satisfied, which will of course happen as I have already explained.

One of the most effective safeguards a prince can have against conspiracies is not being hated by the people, for every conspirator believes that he will please the people by killing the prince. But if he thinks he will offend them by doing so, he does not dare to carry out the action because the difficulties encountered by conspirators are very many. Experience shows that there have been many conspiracies, and few have turned out well because a conspirator cannot act alone. He can get companions only from among those who, he thinks, are discontented. And just as soon as you have revealed your plot to a malcontent, you give him the means to be contented. . . . He sees on the one hand certain gain and on the other an uncertain prospect full of danger. He would have to be a rare friend to you or a fierce enemy of the prince to keep his word to you.

¹⁷Spartan military leader (third century B.C.) who executed eighty of his own soldiers in order to make the others fight more bravely.

To put the matter briefly, I say that a conspirator can know nothing but anxiety, jealousy, and fear of punishment, which terrifies him. But on the prince's side there are the prestige of his office, the laws, and the power of his friends and the state that defend him. When the good will of the people is added to all of these, it is impossible that anyone would be so foolhardy as to conspire. Whereas a conspirator usually has to be afraid before committing the act, in this case he also has to be afraid afterwards, for he will have the people for his enemy too, and he will have no hope of any escape.

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Having considered everything in the foregoing discussion, I ask myself if the time has not come in Italy for a new prince to succeed and whether conditions are not favorable for a prudent and capable person to introduce methods which would benefit him and do good for the mass of people. It seems to me that so many things come together to benefit a new prince that I do not know of any time more favorable for doing so. And if, as I have said, the Israelites had to be slaves in Egypt so that the power of Moses could become evident; and the Persians had to be oppressed by the Medes so that the greatness of Cyrus¹⁸ could be recognized; and the Athenians had to be scattered so that the excellence of Theseus¹⁹ could be revealed; then in order to reveal the greatness of the Italian spirit, it was necessary for Italy to be reduced to her present situation and that she be more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more scattered than the Athenians, without a leader, without order, beaten, plundered, impoverished, overrun, and suffering every kind of disaster.

And although before now some persons have shown signs that could be judged indications of their having been chosen by God for Italy's redemption, it happened that later on they were rejected by fortune.

So Italy remains, as if lifeless, and waits for the one, whoever he may be, who can heal her wounds, put an end to the plundering of Lombardy, Tuscany, and Naples, and cure her of those sores that have been festering for so long a time. She can be seen praying to God to send

¹⁸In the course of founding the Persian Empire, Cyrus defeated the Medes, who had been a major power in southwest Asia.

¹⁹Theseus, legendary hero, was said to have united the villages of the region around Athens into a single city-state.

someone who can save her from this barbarous cruelty and outrage. See how ready she is and willing to follow a banner if only someone would cause it.

There is no one to be seen in whom we can put our hope except in your own illustrious family,²⁰ because your good fortune and strength, favored by God and the Church which your family now rules, enable it to become the leader of this redemption. This will not be very difficult if you recall the deeds and lives of the persons I have named before. And although these were unusual and extraordinary, they were men and each one had less opportunity than exists at present. For their enterprise was not more just than this, nor easier, nor was God more their friend than yours.

Here is a great, just cause: a war is just when it is necessary, and arms are holy for him whose only hope is in arms. Everything is perfectly ready. Nor can it be very difficult where there is great willingness, if only the methods I have mentioned are followed. Moreover, we have seen extraordinary wonders performed by God: the sea has parted; a cloud has shown the way; the rock has poured out water; manna has rained down.²¹ Everything has contributed to your greatness. The rest is for you to do. God does not want to do everything, lest he take away our free will and the share in glory which belongs to us.

It is not remarkable that none of the Italians mentioned before has been able to do what we hope your illustrious House will do, nor that in so many revolutions and military operations in Italy it seems that military ability has disappeared. This happens because the old tactics were not good and there has not been anyone who has been able to find new ones. Nothing brings so much honor to a man who rises to power as the new laws and methods devised by him.

These things, when they are well done and contain greatness in them, make him revered and wondered at. And in Italy there is no lack of opportunity for introducing all kinds of reforms. Here there is a great power in the limbs if only it were not lacking in the head. You can see in duels and small scale combats how the Italians are superior in strength, dexterity, and cleverness. But when it comes to armies there is no comparison. It is all caused by the inferiority of the leaders, for those

²⁰That is, the Medici family.

²¹References to the miraculous circumstances of Moses' leading the Israelites out of bondage.

who know are not obeyed, and everyone thinks he knows. No one has yet been able to raise himself so high by his ability and fortune that others obey. Because of this it has happened in the wars of the past twenty years that whenever there has been an entirely Italian army, it has always failed. Proof of this was first Taro, then Alessandria, Capua, Genoa, Vaila, Bologna, and Mestri.²²

If your illustrious House, then, wishes to emulate those famous men who redeemed their countries, it is necessary first of all to have as the real beginning of all undertakings your own army. For you cannot have more faithful or more loyal or better soldiers. And although individually they may be good, they become even better when united and when they see that they are commanded by their prince and are respected and trusted by him. It is necessary, therefore, that you get such forces ready in order to be able to defend yourself with Italian strength against foreigners.

Although the Swiss and Spanish infantry may be looked upon as terrifying, nevertheless each has its faults, so that a third kind could not only resist them but be confident of defeating them. For the Spanish cannot withstand cavalry attacks, and the Swiss fear infantry that attacks as resolutely as they. Hence it is seen and is evident from experience that the Spanish cannot withstand French cavalry, and the Swiss are destroyed by Spanish infantry. Although a complete example of the latter has not actually been seen, yet it was almost observed in the battle of Ravenna, when the Spanish infantry attacked German battalions which deploy in the same way as the Swiss. The Spanish, because of their agility and use of their shields, got underneath the Germans' pikes and attacked them safely, whereas the Germans had no way of resisting. If the cavalry had not charged, they would have been annihilated.

It is possible, then, to know the drawbacks of these kinds of infantry and to organize a new kind which could resist cavalry and would not fear opposing infantry. To do this, one must create new weapons and a different kind of organization. These are things which, when used for the first time, give fame and glory to a new prince.

This opportunity must not be allowed to pass. Italy after so long a time sees her redeemer. I cannot express the love with which he would be greeted in all the provinces which have suffered from being overrun

²²Battles that took place in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth.

by foreigners, with what thirst for vengeance, with what firm faith, with what piety, what tears! What gates would be shut against him? What people would deny him obedience? What envy would oppose him? What Italian would fail to revere him?

This barbarian rule stinks in the nostrils of everyone. May your illustrious House undertake this task with that spirit and hope with which just causes are undertaken, so that under your banner our fatherland will become noble, and under its protection Petrarch's saying will become true:

Against the furious foe
Virtue herself will take up arms. The fight
Will then be brief. Not slow
Are Italian hearts to keep our honor bright.²³

²³Lines from Petrarch's patriotic verses, *My Italy (Italia Mia)*, which have remained familiar and loved to the present day.