

comes, because the virtue of the Romans and the fear caused by past defeats more than counterbalanced any obstinacy they might have derived from the virtue of religion and from the oath they had taken. Nevertheless, it is clear that to them there did not appear to be anything else to which they could have recourse or any other remedy they could try in the hope of recovering the virtue they had lost. This bears striking witness to the magnitude of that confidence which religion gives when properly used.

And, though, perhaps, it might have been better to discuss the question under the head of foreign affairs, yet it is concerned with one of the most important institutions of the Roman Republic, and so seems to me to belong here, since otherwise I should have to deal with this topic in parts and to return to it several times.

From: ~~the~~ Niccolò Machiavelli,
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Book One

[DISCOURSES 16-18]

[THE TRANSITION FROM SERVITUDE TO FREEDOM

16. *A People accustomed to live under a Prince, should they by some Eventuality become free, will with Difficulty maintain their Freedom*

How difficult it is for a people accustomed to live under a prince to preserve their liberty, should they by some accident acquire it as Rome did after the expulsion of the Tarquins, is shown by numerous examples which may be studied in the historical records of ancient times. That there should be such a difficulty is reasonable; for such a people differs in no wise from a wild animal which, though by nature fierce and accustomed to the woods, has been brought up in captivity and servitude and is then loosed to rove the countryside at will, where, being unaccustomed to seeking its own food and discovering no place in which it can find refuge, it becomes the prey of the first comer who seeks to chain it up again.

The same thing happens to a people which has been accustomed to live under foreign rulers and so has taken no thought for either public defence or offence and is acquainted with no princes nor yet are any acquainted with it; it forthwith returns to the yoke, and oftentimes to a heavier one than that which, a

while back, it threw off its neck. This difficulty may occur, no matter how free the material be from corruption. But, since a people which has become wholly corrupt, cannot even for a brief space, no, not even for a moment, enjoy its freedom, as we shall show later, we shall confine ourselves in the present discourse to peoples in whom corruption has not advanced too far, and in whom there is still more goodness than rottenness.¹²

In addition to the difficulty already mentioned there is yet another. It is that the government of a state which has become free evokes factions which are hostile, not factions which are friendly. To such hostile factions will belong all those who held preferment under the tyrannical government and grew fat on the riches of its prince, since, now that they are deprived of these emoluments, they cannot live contented, but are compelled, each of them, to try to restore the tyranny in order to regain their authority. Nor, as I have said, will such a government acquire supporters who are friendly, because a self-governing state^a assigns honours and rewards only for honest and determinate reasons, and, apart from this, rewards and honours no one; and when one acquires honours or advantages which appear to have been deserved, one does not acknowledge any obligation towards those responsible for the remuneration. Furthermore, that common advantage which results from a self-governing state is not recognized by anybody so long as it is possessed — the possibility of enjoying what one has, freely and without incurring suspicion for instance, the assurance that one's wife and children will be respected, the absence of fear for oneself — for no one admits that he incurs an obligation to another merely because that other has done him no wrong.

It is, then, as I have said. The government of a state which is free and has been newly formed, will evoke hostile factions but not friendly factions. If then one desires to remedy these

a Il vivere libero.

difficulties and to cure the disorders which the aforesaid difficulties bring about, there is no way more efficient, more sure, more safe or more necessary, than to kill the sons of Brutus, who, as history shows¹³ would not together with other Roman youths have been induced to conspire against their country if it had not been that, under consuls, they could not attain to an outstanding position, as they could under the kings; so that the freedom of the people was, from their point of view, but servitude.

He then who sets out to govern the masses, whether in a free state or in a principality, and does not secure himself against those who are hostile to the new order, is setting up a form of government which will be but short-lived. True, I look upon those rulers as unhappy who, to make their government secure, have to adopt abnormal methods because they find the masses hostile; for he who has but the few as his enemies, can easily and without much scandal make himself secure, but he who has the public as a whole for his enemy can never make himself secure; and the greater his cruelty, the weaker does his regime become. In such a case the best remedy he can adopt is to make the populace his friend.

Though to speak now of a prince, now of a republic is to distort the plan of this discourse, I propose, none the less, to talk of princes that I may not have to return to this topic. If, then, a prince wants to make sure of a populace that might be hostile to him — I speak of such princes as have become tyrants in their own country — what I say is that he ought first to ask what it is that the people desire, and that he will always find that they desire two things: (i) to avenge themselves against the persons who have been the cause of their servitude, and (ii) to regain their freedom. The first of these demands the prince can satisfy entirely, the second in part.

Of the first demand there is an example much to the point. When Clearchus, tyrant of Heraclea, was in exile, it happened

that in Perseida a controversy arose between the populace and the upper class who were in the weaker position, and so decided to support Clearchus and, despite the popular feeling, swore to bring him back and to deprive the populace of its freedom. It thus came about that Clearchus found himself between an arrogant upper class which he could in no way either satisfy or correct, and a raving populace who could not stand having lost its freedom. He decided therefore at one stroke to free himself from the vexations caused by the leading men and to win over the populace. So, choosing a suitable opportunity, he cut to pieces all the nobles to the immense satisfaction of the popular party, and in this way satisfied one of the demands of the populace, namely, the demand for vengeance.

As to the second popular demand – the restoration of freedom, since this the prince is unable to satisfy, he should inquire as to the grounds on which the demand for freedom is based. He will find that a small section of the populace desire to be free in order to obtain authority over others, but that the vast bulk of those who demand freedom, desire but to live in security. For in all states whatever be their form of government, the real rulers do not amount to more than forty or fifty citizens and, since this is a small number, it is an easy thing to make yourself secure in their regard either by doing away with them or by granting them such a share of honours, according to their standing, as will for the most part satisfy them. As for the rest, who demand but to live in security, they can easily be satisfied by introducing such institutions and laws as shall, in conjunction with the power of the prince, make for the security of the public as a whole. When a prince does this, and the people see that on no occasion does he break such laws, in a short time they will begin to live in security and contentment.

This is exemplified by the kingdom of France, in which

people live in security simply because its kings are pledged to observe numerous laws on which the security of all their people depends. It was the intention of the founder of this state that its kings should do as they thought fit in regard to the use of arms and to finance, but that in other respects they should act as the laws required.¹⁴ That prince, therefore, or that republic which has not made its government secure at the outset, must take the first opportunity of doing so, as the Romans did. He who fails to do this will repent too late of having omitted to do what he ought to have done.

Thus, since the Roman people were not as yet corrupt when they regained their freedom, they were able to maintain it when the sons of Brutus were dead and there was an end of the Tarquins, by means of those methods of government and those institutions which are discussed elsewhere. On the other hand, had this people already become corrupt, neither in Rome nor anywhere else would remedies adequate for its maintenance have been found, as will be shown in the next chapter.

17. *A Corrupted People, having acquired Liberty, can maintain it only with the Greatest Difficulty*

IN Rome it was inevitable, in my opinion, that either the kings should be removed or that in a very short time the state would have become weak and of no account; because, if one considers how corrupt the kings had become, it is clear that in the course of two or three generations the corruption inherent in the kingship would have begun to spread to the members, and, when the members had become corrupt, it would no longer have been possible to reform them. But, since the head was lost while the trunk remained whole it was easily possible to recover a free and ordered mode of life. It should be assumed, then, as a basic and established principle

that to a state^a which has been under a prince and has become corrupt, freedom cannot be restored even if the prince and the whole of his stock be wiped out. On the contrary, what will happen is that one prince will wipe out another, and without the creation of a new lord it will never settle down unless indeed the goodness of some one man, conjoined with virtue, should keep it free. Such freedom, however, will last only so long as he lives. This happened to Syracuse in the case of Dion and of Timoleon, whose virtue was such that on both occasions the city remained free so long as they lived, but when they were dead returned to its ancient tyranny.

Nor can any better example of this be found than in Rome, which, when the Tarquins were expelled, was able forthwith both to acquire and to maintain its liberty; yet, when Caesar was killed, and Gaius Caligula and Nero were killed, and the whole of Caesar's stock was exterminated, was not only unable ever to maintain liberty, but could not even make a start. Results so diverse in one and the same city are caused by nought else but that in the time of the Tarquins the Roman populace was not yet corrupt, but in the later period was extremely corrupt. For in the former case, in order to stiffen the people up and to keep them averse to a king, it sufficed to make them swear never to consent to any king ruling in Rome. But in the other period the authority and severity of Brutus, backed by all the legions of the East, did not suffice to keep them disposed to desire that liberty to be maintained which he, after the manner of the first Brutus, had introduced. This was due to the corruption with which the Marian faction had impregnated the populace. For, when Caesar became the head of this faction, he so successfully blinded the masses that they were unaware of the yoke which they themselves had placed on their necks.

Though the example of Rome is preferable to any other,

^a *civitas* - 'state', and so throughout.

yet I propose to add to it further examples with which those who live at the present time will be familiar. I assert, then, that nothing that befell Milan or Naples, however grave and however violent in character, could ever bring them freedom, since their members were wholly corrupt. This is apparent after the death of Filippo Visconti, for, though it was proposed to introduce freedom in Milan, it could not be done, nor could any means of maintaining it be devised. Rome, then, was extremely lucky in that its kings quickly became corrupt, with the result that they were expelled before their corruption had penetrated to the bowels of that city. This absence of corruption was, in fact, the reason why the numerous tumults which took place in Rome, instigated by men of good intentions, did no harm, but, on the contrary, were an advantage to that republic.

It is possible, then, to arrive at this conclusion: when the material is not corrupt, tumults and other troubles do no harm, but, when it is corrupt, good legislation is of no avail unless it be initiated by someone in so extremely strong a position that he can enforce obedience until such time as the material has become good. Whether this has ever happened or whether it is possible for it to happen I do not know. For, as I have just said, it is clear that, if in a state which is on the decline owing to the corruption of its material a renaissance is ever to be brought about, it will be by the virtue of some one person who is then living, not by the virtue of the public as a whole, that good institutions are kept up, and, as soon as such a person is dead, they will relapse into their former habits.

This happened at Thebes, which, thanks to the virtue of Epaminondas, successfully maintained a republican form of government as long as he lived, but, on his death, forthwith returned to its former disorderly state. The reason is that no individual can possibly live long enough for a state which has long had bad customs to acquire good ones. Unless a man

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living for a very long time or one virtuous man succeeded by another, organize it on their passing away, as we have said, there would be a collapse, unless the renaissance is brought about at considerable risk and with no small blood-shedding. For corruption of this kind and ineptitude for a free mode of life is due to the inequality one finds in a city, and, to restore equality it is necessary to take steps which are by no means normal; and this few people either know how to do or are ready to do, a point that will be dealt with in detail in another place.¹⁶

18. *How in Corrupt Cities a Free Government can be maintained where it exists, or be established where it does not exist*

It will not, I think, be foreign to my purpose nor contrary to the plan of my previous discourse to consider whether in a corrupt city it is possible to maintain a free government^a where it exists, and whether, when there has been none, it can be set up. In regard to this question I maintain that in either case it will be a very difficult thing to do. It is, moreover, almost impossible to lay down rules, for the method to be adopted will of necessity depend upon the degree of corruption. None the less, since it is well to take account of all cases, I do not propose to shelve the question. I suppose then an exceedingly corrupt state, whereby the difficulty will clearly be intensified, since in it there will be found neither laws nor institutions which will suffice to check widespread corruption. Because, just as for the maintenance of good customs laws are required, so if laws are to be observed, there is need of good customs. Furthermore, institutions and laws made in the early days of a republic when men were good, no longer serve

^a *uno stato libero* - free in the sense that citizens are free to choose their own government.

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their purpose when men have become bad. And, if by any chance the laws of the state are changed, there will never, or but rarely, be a change in its institutions. The result is that new laws are ineffectual, because the institutions, which remain constant, corrupt them.

In order to make this point more clear I would point out that in Rome there was a constitution regulating its government, or rather its form of government, and then laws enabling the magistrates to keep the citizens in order. To the constitution determining its form of government pertained the authority vested in the people, the senate, the tribunes, and in the consuls, the method of applying for and of appointing to magisterial posts, and its legislative procedure. These institutions underwent little or no change in the course of events, whereas there were changes in the laws which kept the citizens in order. There was, for instance, the law concerning adultery, the sumptuary law, a law concerning step-brother, and many others. These laws were introduced step by step as the citizens became corrupt. But since the institutions determining its form of government remained unchanged and, when corruption had set in, were no longer good, these modifications of the laws did not suffice to keep men good, though they might have helped had the introduction of new laws been accompanied by a modification of the institutions. That it is true to say that such institutions would not be good in a corrupted state is clearly seen in two important cases, in the appointing of magistrates and in the making of laws. The Roman people had never given the consulate or any other important office in the city except to such as had applied for the post. This institution was at the outset good, because only such citizens applied for posts as judged themselves worthy to fill them, and to be rejected was looked upon as ignominious; so that everybody behaved well in order to be judged worthy. This procedure, when the city became

corrupt, was extremely harmful; because not those who had more virtue, but those who had more power, applied for magistracies, and the powerless, though virtuous, refrained from applying through fear. This inconvenience did not come about all at once, but by stages, as is the case with all inconveniences. For when the Romans had conquered Africa and Asia, and had reduced the greater part of Greece to subjection, they had become secure as to their liberty nor had they any more enemies whom there was ground to fear. This sense of security and this weakness on the part of their enemies caused the Roman people in appointing to the consulate to consider not a man's virtue, but his popularity. This drew to that office men who knew better how to get round men, not those who knew better how to conquer enemies. They then turned from those who had more popularity and gave it to those who had more power. Thus owing to the defectiveness of this institution it came about that good men were wholly excluded from consular rank.

Again, a tribune or any other citizen could propose to the people a law, in regard to which every citizen was entitled to speak either in favour of it or against, prior to a decision being reached. This institution was good so long as the citizens were good, because it is always a good thing that anyone anxious to serve the public should be able to propose his plan. It is also a good thing that everyone should be at liberty to express his opinion on it, so that when the people have heard what each has to say they may choose the best plan. But when the citizens had become perverse, this institution became a nuisance; because only the powerful proposed laws, and this for the sake, not of their common liberties, but to augment their own power. And against such projects no one durst speak for fear of such folk; with the result that the people were induced, either by deceit or by force, to adopt measures which spell their own ruin.

In order to maintain Rome's liberty, therefore, when corruption had set in, it was necessary in the course of its development to introduce new institutions just as there had been made new laws; for different institutions and a different procedure should be prescribed for the governed according as they are good or bad, since similar forms cannot subsist in matter which is disposed in a contrary manner. Now defective institutions must either be renovated all at once as soon as the decline from goodness is noticed, or little by little before they become known to everybody. Neither of which courses is possible, I maintain. For if the renovation is to take place little by little, there is need of someone who shall see the inconvenience coming while yet it is far off and in its infancy. But it may quite easily happen in a state that no such person will ever arise, or, should he arise in point of fact, that he will never be able to persuade others to see things as he does himself; for men accustomed to a certain mode of life are reluctant to change it, especially when they have not themselves noticed the evil in question, but have had their attention called to it by conjectures. While with regard to modifying institutions all at once when everybody realizes that they are no good, I would point out that, though it is easy to recognize their futility, it is not easy to correct it; for, to do this, normal methods will not suffice now that normal methods are bad. Hence it is necessary to resort to extraordinary methods, such as the use of force and an appeal to arms, and, before doing anything, to become a prince in the state, so that one can dispose it as one thinks fit.

But, to reconstitute political life in a state presupposes a good man, whereas to have recourse to violence in order to make oneself prince in a republic supposes a bad man. Hence very rarely will there be found a good man ready to use bad methods in order to make himself prince, though with a good end in view, nor yet a bad man who, having become a prince, is ready to do the right thing and to whose mind it will occur

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to use well that authority which he has acquired by bad means.

It is on account of all this that it is difficult, or rather impossible, either to maintain a republican form of government in states which have become corrupt or to create such a form afresh. Should a republic simply have to be created or to be maintained, it would be necessary to introduce into it a form of government akin rather to a monarchy than to a democracy, so that those men whose arrogance is such that they cannot be corrected by legal processes, may yet be restrained to some extent by a quasi-regal power.¹⁷ To try to make them become good in any other way would be either a most brutal or an impossible undertaking – the kind of thing that Cleomenes did, as I said above; for that he might rule alone, he killed the ephors, and for the same reasons Romulus killed his brother and Titus Tatius killed the Sabine, and afterwards both of them made good use of their authority. It should, however, be noted that neither the one nor the other had subjects steeped in corruption, which in this chapter we have taken as the basis of our argument; so that both were able to resolve on such steps, and, having done so, to camouflage their plan.

Book One

[DISCOURSES 19-24]

[SUNDRY REFLECTIONS ON THE KINGS OF ROME]

19. *A Weak Prince who succeeds an Outstanding Prince can hold his own, but a Weak Prince who succeeds another Weak Prince cannot hold any Kingdom*

THE virtue and the methods of Romulus, Numa and Tullus, the first three kings of Rome, show how extremely fortunate Rome was to have had first a fierce and warlike king, then a peaceful and religious one, and thirdly a king with the military ardour of Romulus and a lover of war rather than peace. For it was essential to Rome in its early days that there should arise a legislator to give it a civic constitution, and it was also necessary that there should be others who would again display the virtue of Romulus, since, otherwise, the city would have become effeminate and have fallen a prey to its neighbours. In which connection it may be noted that a prince who is less virtuous than his predecessor can hold a state thanks to the virtue of his previous ruler and can enjoy the fruits of his labours; but, should he happen to live a long time or should there not arise another who again displays the virtue of the first, the kingdom must needs be ruined. And, conversely, if of two princes who come one after the other both are conspicuous for virtue, it is frequently found that they perform magnificent

~~into Samnium, of the Campanians into Tuscany, of the Mamertini into Sicily, of the Saguntines into Spain, of Masinissa into Africa, of the Aetolians into Greece, of Eumenes and other princes into Asia, of the Massilians and the Aedui into Gaul. Hence they never lacked supporters of this kind to facilitate their enterprise alike in acquiring the province and in holding it. Peoples who observe such customs will be found to have less need of fortune than those who do not observe them well.~~

~~That everyone may the better know how much more virtue helped the Romans to acquire their empire than did fortune, we shall in the next chapter discuss the character of the peoples with whom they had to fight, and show how obstinate they were in defending their liberty.~~

2. *Concerning the Kind of People the Romans had to fight, and how obstinately they defended their Freedom*

NOTHING made it harder for the Romans to conquer the peoples of the central and outlying parts of Italy than the love which in those times many peoples had for liberty. So obstinately did they defend it that only by outstanding virtue could they ever have been subjugated. For numerous instances show to what dangers they exposed themselves in order to maintain or to recover it, and what vendettas they kept up against those who had taken it away. The study of history reveals, too, the harm that servitude has done to peoples and to cities. There is, indeed, in our own times only one country which can be said to have in it free cities, whereas in ancient times quite a number of genuinely free peoples were to be found in all countries. One sees how in the times of which we are speaking at present the peoples of Italy from the Apennines which now divide Tuscany from Lombardy, right down to its toe, were all of them free. The Tuscans, the Romans, the Samnites were, for instance, and so were many other peoples

who dwelt in other parts of Italy. One never hears of there being any kings, apart from those who reigned in Rome, and Porsenna, the king of Tuscany, whose stock became extinct, though history does not tell us how. It is quite clear, however, that at the time when the Romans laid siege to Veii, Tuscany was free. Moreover, it enjoyed its freedom so much, and so hated the title of prince, that, when the people of Veii appointed a king in that city for the purpose of defence, and asked the Tuscans to help them against the Romans, the Tuscans after many consultations had been held, decided not to give help to the people of Veii so long as they lived under a king, since they held that they could not well defend a country whose people had already placed themselves in subjection to someone else.

It is easy to see how this affection of peoples for self-government^a comes about, for experience shows that cities have never increased either in dominion or wealth, unless they have been independent. It is truly remarkable to observe the greatness which Athens attained in the space of a hundred years after it had been liberated from the tyranny of Pisistratus. But most marvellous of all is it to observe the greatness which Rome attained after freeing itself from its kings. The reason is easy to understand; for it is not the well-being of individuals that makes cities great, but the well-being of the community; and it is beyond question that it is only in republics that the common good is looked to properly in that all that promotes it is carried out; and, however much this or that private person may be the loser on this account, there are so many who benefit thereby that the common good can be realized in spite of those few who suffer in consequence.

The opposite happens where there is a prince; for what he does in his own interests usually harms the city, and what is done in the interests of the city harms him. Consequently, as

^a *del vivere libero.*

soon as tyranny replaces self-government^a the least of the evils which this tyranny brings about are that it ceases to make progress and to grow in power and wealth: more often than not, nay always, what happens is that it declines. And should fate decree the rise of an efficient^b tyrant, so energetic and so proficient in warfare^c that he enlarges his dominions, no advantage will accrue to the commonwealth, but only to himself, for he cannot bestow honours on the valiant and good citizens over whom he tyrannizes, since he does not want to have any cause to suspect them. Nor yet can he allow the cities he acquires to make their submission to, or to become the tributaries of, the city of which he is the tyrant, for to make it powerful is not to his interest. It is to his interest to keep the state divided so that each town and each district may recognize only him as its ruler. In this way he alone profits by his acquisitions, not his country. Should anyone desire to confirm this view by a host of further arguments, let him read Xenophon's treatise *On Tyrannicide*.³⁹

It is no wonder, then, that peoples of old detested tyrants and gave them no peace, or that they were so fond of liberty and held the word itself in such esteem, as happened when Hieronymus, the grandson of Hiero, the Syracusan, was killed in Syracuse, and the news of his death came to his army which was then not very far from Syracuse. At first there was a tumult, and men took up arms against those who had killed him, but when they perceived that in Syracuse the cry was for liberty, they were so delighted to hear the word, that all became quiet, and, setting aside their anger against the tyrannicides, they began to consider how self-government could be organized in that city.

Nor is it surprising that peoples are so extraordinarily revengeful towards those who have destroyed their liberty. Of this there are numerous examples, but I propose to give

^a *uno vihere libero.* ^b *virtuoso.* ^c *per viam d'arme.*

but one, which happened in Corcyra, a city of Greece, during the Peloponnesian war. Greece was then divided into two parties, of which one supported the Athenians, the other the Spartans. The result was that in many cities internal dissensions arose, some advocating an alliance with Sparta, others an alliance with Athens. This happened in Corcyra, where the nobles got the upper hand, and deprived the populace of its liberty. But with the help of the Athenians the populace regained their strength, laid hands on all the nobles, and shut them up in one prison which held them all. Then they took them, eight or ten at a time, on the plea of banishing them to various parts, and then to set an example put them to death with much cruelty. When those who were left heard of this, they considered whether there was any possible way in which they could escape this ignominious death. So, having armed themselves with anything at hand, they defended the entrance to the prison, and fought with those who tried to get in. The result was that, when rumours of this reached the populace, they came in a crowd, removed the upper storey and roof from the building, and smothered the inmates beneath the ruins. Many well-known instances of a like horrible nature happened later in this country. We thus see how true it is that a liberty which you have actually had taken away is avenged with much greater ferocity than is a liberty which someone has only tried to take away.

If one asks oneself how it comes about that peoples of old were more fond of liberty than they are today, I think the answer is that it is due to the same cause that makes men today less bold than they used to be; and this is due, I think, to the difference between our education and that of bygone times, which is based on the difference between our religion and the religion of those days. For our religion, having taught us the truth and the true way of life, leads us to ascribe less esteem to worldly honour. Hence the gentiles, who held it in high

esteem and looked upon it as their highest good,^a displayed in their actions more ferocity than we do. This is evidenced by many of their institutions. To begin with, compare the magnificence of their sacrifices with the humility that characterizes ours. The ceremonial in ours is delicate rather than imposing, and there is no display of ferocity or courage. Their ceremonies lacked neither pomp nor magnificence, but, conjoined with this, were sacrificial acts in which there was much shedding of blood and much ferocity; and in them great numbers of animals were killed. Such spectacles, because terrible, caused men to become like them. Besides, the old religion did not beautify men unless they were replete with worldly glory: army commanders, for instance, and rulers^b of republics. Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation, and contempt for mundane things,^c whereas the other identified it with magnanimity, bodily strength, and everything else that conduces to make men very bold. And, if our religion demands that in you there be strength, what it asks for is strength to suffer rather than strength to do bold things.⁴⁰

This pattern of life, therefore, appears to have made the world weak, and to have handed it over as a prey to the wicked, who run it successfully and securely since they are well aware that the generality of men, with paradise for their goal, consider how best to bear, rather than how best to avenge, their injuries. But, though it looks as if the world were become effeminate and as if heaven were powerless, this undoubtedly is due rather to the pusillanimity of those who have interpreted our religion in terms of *laissez faire*,^d not in terms of *virtù*. For, had they borne in mind that religion permits us to exalt and defend the fatherland, they

^a *si sommo bene* – the 'summum bonum', a technical scholastic term.
^b *principi*. ^c *case umane*. ^d *l'ozio*.

would have seen that it also wishes us to love and honour it, and to train ourselves to be such that we may defend it.

This kind of education, then, and these grave misinterpretations account for the fact that we see in the world fewer republics than there used to be of old, and that, consequently, in peoples we do not find the same love of liberty as there then was. Yet I can well believe that it was rather the Roman empire, which, with its armed forces and its grandiose ideas, wiped out all republics and all their civic institutions, that was the cause of this. And though, later on, Rome's empire disintegrated, its cities have never been able to pull themselves together nor to set up again a constitutional regime,^a save in one or two parts of that empire.

Anyhow, however this may be, the Romans encountered in all parts of the world, however small, a combination of well-armed republics, extremely obstinate in the defence of their liberty; which shows that, if the virtue of the Roman people had not been of a rare and very high order, they would never have been able to overcome them. Of instances which bear this out, I shall cite but one case, that of the Samnites. It is a remarkable thing, as Livy admits, that they should have been so powerful and their arms so strong that they were able to withstand the Romans right up to the time of Papirius Cursor, the consul, son of the first Papirius; i.e. to withstand them for the space of forty-six years in spite of many disastrous defeats, the destruction of towns and the slaughter of the inhabitants of their country, a slaughter so great that this country, in which there were formerly seen so many cities and so many inhabitants, was now almost deserted, whereas at one time, it was so well ordered and so strong that it would have been insuperable if it had not been confronted with a virtue such as Rome's.

^a *virtutem alla vita civile*. [Again, this is 'constitution' as a way of life, not simply as legal powers. B.R.C.]

It is easy, moreover, to see whence arose that order and how this disorder came about. For it is all due to the independence which then was and to the servitude which now is. Because, as has been said before, all towns and all countries that are in all respects free, profit by this enormously. For, wherever increasing populations are found, it is due to the freedom with which marriage is contracted and to its being more desired by men. And this comes about where every man is ready to have children, since he believes that he can rear them and feels sure that his patrimony will not be taken away, and since he knows that not only will they be born free, instead of into slavery, but that, if they have virtue, they will have a chance of becoming rulers. One observes, too, how riches multiply and abound there, alike those that come from agriculture and those that are produced by the trades. For everybody is eager to acquire such things and to obtain property, provided he be convinced that he will enjoy it when it has been acquired. It thus comes about that, in competition one with the other, men look both to their own advantage and to that of the public; so that in both respects wonderful progress is made. The contrary of this happens in countries which live in servitude; and the harder the servitude the more does the well-being to which they are accustomed, dwindle.

Of all forms of servitude, too, that is the hardest which subjects you to a republic. First because it is more lasting, and there is no hope of escape; secondly because the aim of a republic is to deprive all other corporations of their vitality and to weaken them, to the end that its own body corporate may increase. A prince who makes you his subject, does not do this unless he be a barbarian who devastates the country and destroys all that man has done for civilization, as oriental princes do. On the contrary, if his institutions be humane and he behave constitutionally, he will more often than not be

equally fond of all the cities that are subject to him, and will leave them in possession of all their trades and all their ancient institutions. So that, if they are unable to increase, as free cities do, they will not be ruined like those that are enslaved. I refer here to the servitude that befalls cities which are subject to a foreigner, for of those that are subject to one of their own citizens I have already spoken.

He who reflects, therefore, on all that has been said, will not wonder at the power the Samnites had when free, or at the weakness that befell them later, when they became a subject state. This Titus Livy attests in several places, particularly in his account of the war with Hannibal, where he shows how the Samnites, when they had been maltreated by a legion which lay at Nola, sent messengers to Hannibal to ask him to come to their aid. In their address they told him that for a hundred years they had been fighting the Romans with their own troops and their own officers, and that often they had held up two consular armies and two consuls, but that now they had come to such a pass that they could scarce hold their own against the small Roman legion that was at Nola.

3. *Rome became a Great City by ruining the Cities
round about her, and by granting Honours
Easy Access to her Honours*

'ROME meanwhile grows on the ruins of Alba.' Those who plan to convert a city into a great empire should use every available device to fill it with inhabitants; for unless a city has a large male population it cannot do much. There are two ways of acquiring a large population, by friendliness and by force. It is done by friendliness when the road is kept open and safe for foreigners who propose to come and dwell there so that everybody is glad to do so. It is done by force, when

9. *That it behoves one to adapt Oneself to the Times
if one wants to enjoy Continued Good Fortune*

I HAVE often thought that the reason why men are sometimes unfortunate, sometimes fortunate, depends upon whether their behaviour is in conformity with the times.⁴ For one sees that in what they do some men are impetuous, others look about them and are cautious; and that, since in both cases they go to extremes and are unable to go about things in the right way, in both cases they make mistakes. On the other hand, he is likely to make fewer mistakes and to prosper in his fortune when circumstances accord with his conduct, as I have said, and one always proceeds as the force of nature compels one.

Everybody knows how Fabius Maximus, when in command of the army, proceeded circumspectly and with a caution far removed from the impetuosity and boldness characteristic of the Roman; and by good luck this sort of thing just fitted the circumstances. For Hannibal had arrived in Italy, a young man flushed with success, and had twice routed the Roman people, so that this republic had lost almost all its best troops and was alarmed. Hence it could not have been more fortunate than to have had a general who by his slowness and his caution held the enemy at bay. Nor could Fabius have met with circumstances more suited to his ways; and it is to this that his fame was due.

That in so doing Fabius behaved naturally and not by choice is shown by the fact that, when Scipio wanted to go to Africa with his armies to bring the war to an end, Fabius was much against this, since he could not get out of his ways and habits; so that, if it had been left to him, Hannibal would still be in *ei tempi* - the 'times' or the 'circumstances'; in the translation sometimes one and sometimes the other of these terms has been used.

Italy, for he did not see that times had changed, and that new methods of warfare were called for. So that, if Fabius had been king of Rome, he might easily have lost this war, since he was incapable of altering his methods according as circumstances changed. Since, however, he was born in a republic where there were diverse citizens with diverse dispositions, it came about that, just as it had a Fabius, who was the best man to keep the war going when circumstances required this, so later it had a Scipio at a time suited to its victorious continuation.

For this reason a republic has a fuller life and enjoys good fortune for a longer time than a principality, since it is better able to adapt itself to diverse circumstances owing to the diversity found among its citizens than a prince can do. For a man who is accustomed to act in one particular way, never changes, as we have said. Hence, when times change and no longer suit his ways, he is inevitably ruined.

Piero Soderini, whom we have mentioned several times,⁵⁹ conducted all his affairs in his good-natured and patient way. So long as circumstances suited the way in which he carried on, both he and his country prospered. But when afterwards there came a time which required him to drop his patience and his humility, he could not bring himself to it; so that both he and his country were ruined. Pope Julius II during the whole course of his pontificate acted with impetuosity and dash, and, since the times suited him well, he succeeded in all his undertakings; but had other times come which called for other counsels, he would of necessity have been undone, for he could not have changed his ways or his method of handling affairs.

There are two reasons why we cannot change our ways. First, it is impossible to go against what nature inclines us to. Secondly, having got on well by adopting a certain line of conduct, it is impossible to persuade men that they can get on

III.9 ADAPTATION TO ENVIRONMENT

well by acting otherwise. It thus comes about that a man's fortune changes, for she changes his circumstances but he does not change his ways. The downfall of cities also comes about because institutions in republics do not change with the times, as we have shown at length already,⁶⁰ but change very slowly because it is more painful to change them since it is necessary to wait until the whole republic is in a state of upheaval; and for this it is not enough that one man alone should change his own procedure.

Since we have mentioned Fabius Maximus who held Hannibal at bay, it seems to me appropriate in the next chapter to discuss whether a general who is determined at all costs to force the enemy to fight, can be prevented by the enemy from doing this.

Book Three

[DISCOURSES 10-15]

[SUNDRY REMARKS ON STRATEGY, TACTICS, NEW DEVICES AND DISCIPLINE]

10. *That a General cannot avoid an Engagement if the Enemy is determined to force him to it at All Costs*

GAIUS SUIPICRUS, the dictator, when waging war with the Gauls, was unwilling to try his fortune in an engagement with an enemy whose position time and an awkward situation was steadily making worse. When there occurs an error which all men, or most men, are liable to make, it is not a bad thing, I think, to warn them often against it. Since, therefore, as I have frequently pointed out, the way in which important matters are dealt with today does not come up to the standard of the ancients, it does not seem to me superfluous at this juncture to point it out once again. For, if there be any way in which there has been a departure from ancient customs, it is especially so in military matters, in which none of the things the ancients esteemed so highly are now done. This inconvenience is due to republics and princes having entrusted such matters to other people. To avoid danger they themselves keep clear of military operations and, though one does sometimes find a king in these days sallying forth in person, I do not on this account think that it leads him to do much else that is

he was able to carry on the war against them for many years. And although he eventually lost control of some cities, he still kept his Kingdom.

Therefore, those of our rulers who lost their principalities, after having ruled them for many years, should not lament their bad luck but should blame their own indolence.² For in quiet times they never thought that things could change (it is a common human failing when the weather is fine not to reckon on storms). When difficult times came, they thought only of fleeing and not of defending themselves; and they hoped that the people, angered by the arrogant conduct of the conquerors, would restore them to power.³ This policy is sound if no other is possible, but it is very bad to neglect other policies and choose this one. A man should never risk falling because he thinks it likely that he will be rescued. This may not happen, but even if it does it will not make you secure; such a defence is weak and cowardly, because it is outside your control. Only those defences that are under your control and based on your own ability are effective, certain and lasting.

CHAPTER XXV

How much power fortune has over human affairs,
and how it should be resisted

I am not unaware that many have thought, and many still think, that the affairs of the world are so ruled by fortune and by God⁴ that the ability of men cannot control them. Rather, they think that we have no remedy at all; and therefore it could be concluded that it is useless to sweat much over things, but let them be governed by fate. This opinion has been more popular in our own times because of the great changes that have taken place⁵ and are still to be seen even now, which could hardly

² *ignavia*: see M.'s sharp comments on the habits of Italian rulers at the end of Bk VII of the *Art of War*.]

³ M. refers to the rulers of Naples and Milan just mentioned, particularly to Ludovico il Moro.]

⁴ *e da Dio*: these words are not in the early Charlecot MS, and may have been inserted posthumously, when the book was published in 1532; as J. H. Whitfield (*Discourses on Machiavelli*, p. 222) notes, there are no other references to God in this chapter.]

⁵ I.e., since 1494, when the invasions of Italy began.]

have been predicted. When I think about this, I am sometimes inclined, to some extent, to share this opinion. Nevertheless, so as not to eliminate human freedom, I am disposed to hold that fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, but that it lets us control roughly the other half.⁶

I compare fortune to one of those dangerous rivers⁷ that, when they become enraged, flood the plains, destroy trees and buildings, move earth from one place and deposit it in another. Everyone flees before it, everyone gives way to its thrust, without being able to halt it in any way. But this does not mean that, when the river is not in flood, men are unable to take precautions, by means of dykes and dams, so that when it rises next time, it will either not overflow its banks or, if it does, its force will not be so uncontrolled or damaging.

The same happens with fortune, which shows its powers where no force has been organised to resist it, and therefore strikes in the places where it knows that no dykes or dams have been built to restrain it. And if you consider Italy, which has been the seat of these changes, and which has given rise to them, you will see a countryside devoid of any embankments or defences. If it had been protected by proper defences, like Germany, Spain and France, the flood would not have caused such great changes⁸ or it would not have occurred at all. But I have said enough in general terms about resisting fortune.

Considering the matter in more detail, I would observe that one sees a ruler flourishing today and ruined tomorrow, without his having changed at all in character or qualities. I believe this is attributable, first, to the cause previously discussed at length,⁹ namely, that a ruler who trusts entirely to luck comes to grief when his luck runs out. Moreover, I believe that we are successful when our ways are suited to the times and circumstances, and unsuccessful when they are not. For one sees that, in the things that lead to the end which everyone aims at, that is, glory, and riches, men proceed in different ways: one man cautiously, another impetuously; one man forcefully, another cunningly; one man patiently, another impatiently, and each of these

⁶ The power of *fortuna* varies according to how much *virtù* there is in a country. Germany, Spain and France were well equipped in this respect, whereas Italy was not.]

⁷ M. alludes to the ambitious conduct of Ludovico il Moro (who encouraged the intervention of Charles VIII; see also *ist. for.* VIII, 36), and later that of Alexander VI and Julius II.]

⁸ See p. 84.]

From: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*,
ed. Q. Skinner, trans. R. Price (Cambridge
University Press, 1988)

different ways of acting can be effective. On the other hand, of two cautious men, one may achieve his aims and the other fail. Again, two men may both succeed, although they have different characters, one acting cautiously and the other impetuously. The reason for these different outcomes is whether their ways of acting conform with the conditions in which they operate. Consequently, as I have said, two men, acting differently, may achieve the same results; and if two men act in the same way, one may succeed and the other fail. From this, again, arise changes in prosperity; because if a man acts cautiously and patiently, and the times and circumstances change in ways for which his methods are appropriate, he will be successful. But if the times and circumstances change again, he will come to grief, because he does not change his methods. And one does not find men who are so prudent that they are capable of being sufficiently flexible: either because our natural inclinations are too strong to permit us to change, or because, having always fared well by acting in a certain way, we do not think it a good idea to change our methods. Therefore, if it is necessary for a cautious man to act expeditiously, he does not know how to do it; this leads to his failure. But if it were possible to change one's character to suit the times and circumstances, one would always be successful.

Pope Julius II always acted impetuously, and found the times and circumstances so suited to his ways that he was always successful. Consider the first expedition he made to Bologna,² while messenger Giovanni Bentivoglio was still alive. The Venetians were opposed to it, and so was the King of Spain; there were also discussions with the King of France about such an enterprise. Nevertheless, acting with his usual indomitable spirit and impetuosity, he led the expedition personally. This initiative caught the King of Spain and the Venetians off guard and constrained them to be passive spectators, the latter through fear and the former because of his desire to recover the whole of the Kingdom of Naples. On the other hand, Julius involved the King of France: for that King saw the Pope moving and, because he wanted to cultivate the Pope's friendship with a view to reducing the power of Venice, he decided that he could not refuse him troops without offending him very openly. With this swift initiative, then, Julius achieved what no other pope, acting with consummate prudence, could have attained. If he had not left Rome until everything had been agreed and

settled, as any other pope would have done, he would never have succeeded. For the King of France would have contrived to find countless excuses, and the others would have produced countless reasons why the Pope should hesitate. I shall not discuss his other actions, which were similar in character, and all turned out well for him. The shortness of his pontificate³ did not permit him to taste of failure. But if circumstances had changed so that it was imperative to act cautiously, he would have been undone; for he would never have deviated from the methods that were natural to him.

I conclude, then, that since circumstances vary and men when acting lack flexibility, they are successful if their methods match the circumstances and unsuccessful if they do not. I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous⁴ than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you want to control her, it is necessary to treat her roughly. And it is clear that she is more inclined to yield to men who are impetuous than to those who are calculating. Since fortune is a woman, she is always well disposed towards young men,⁵ because they are less cautious and more aggressive, and treat her more boldly.

CHAPTER XXVI

Exhortation to liberate Italy from
the barbarian yoke

Bearing in mind all the matters previously discussed, I ask myself whether the present time is appropriate for welcoming a new ruler in Italy, and whether there is matter that provides an opportunity for a far-seeing and able man to mould it into a form that will bring honour to him and benefit all its inhabitants. It seems to me that so many things are propitious for a new ruler that I am not aware that there has ever been a more appropriate time than this.

I have maintained⁶ that the Israelites had to be enslaved in Egypt

² *viz.* 'he, 'five'. See also p. 41.] ³ As Julius was.]

⁴ The idea that *fortuna* is a friend of young men is also expressed in M.'s play *Cizzia*, IV, 1.]

⁵ See p. 20.]

⁶ In 1506. See also *Disc.* I, 27.]