

## **The Prince**

by Niccolo Machiavelli

### **To the great Lorenzo Di Piero De Medici**

Those who try to obtain the favourable attention of a prince are accustomed to come before him with the things that they value most, or which they think the prince will most enjoy. As a result, one often sees expensive gifts such as horses, weapons, cloths of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments presented to princes.

Desiring therefore to present myself with some proof of my devotion towards you, I have found that the possession I value above all is the knowledge of the actions of great men. This knowledge has been acquired by long experience in contemporary affairs, and a continual study of history. I have reflected on this long and carefully, and I now send you these reflections presented in a small volume.

And although I consider this work unworthy of your attention, nevertheless I trust that you will be kind enough to accept it. The best gift I can offer you is the opportunity of understanding in the shortest time all that I have learnt in so many years, and with so many troubles and dangers. I have written the work in a simple and direct way, so that it will be accepted not for its style but for the importance of the theme.

I do not agree with those who regard it as a presumption if a man of low and humble condition dares to discuss and criticise the concerns of princes. Those who draw pictures place themselves below in the plain to understand the nature of the mountains and other high places, and in order to understand the plains place themselves upon high mountains. Similarly, to understand the nature of the people one needs to be a prince, and to understand princes one needs to be of the people.

Take then, this little gift in the spirit in which I send it. If it is carefully read and considered by you, you will learn my extreme desire that you should attain that greatness which fortune and your other attributes promise. And if, my lord, from the mountain top of your greatness, you will sometimes turn your eyes to these lower regions, you will see how undeservedly I suffer great and continued bad fortune.

**This document is a shortened version of the complete book, and has been limited to the sections needed. The earlier portions contain other advice, and a host of examples from history, but the reasons why Machiavelli drew such hatred (and followers) are in the sections provided here.**

## CHAPTER 14

### THAT WHICH CONCERNS A PRINCE ON THE SUBJECT OF THE ART OF WAR

A prince ought to have no other aim or thought, nor select anything else for his study, than war and its rules and discipline. This is the sole art that belongs to him who rules, and it is of such force that it not only supports those who are born princes, but it often enables men to rise from a private station to that rank. It is often seen that when princes have thought more of ease than of arms they have lost their states, and the first cause of losing it is to neglect this art. What enables a prince to acquire a state is to be master of the art. Francesco Sforza, through studying war, rose from being a private citizen to become Duke of Milan, and his sons through avoiding the hardships and troubles of arms, fell from being dukes to become private citizens. For among other evils which being unarmed brings you, it causes you to be despised. This is one of those dangers which a prince ought to guard against. There is a big difference between being armed and being unarmed, and it is not reasonable that an armed person should willingly obey an unarmed person. An unarmed man will not be secure among armed servants, because by being unarmed he will be suspicious of them and they will despise him. So, it is not possible for them to work well together. Therefore a prince who does not understand the art of war, over and above the other disadvantages already mentioned, cannot be respected by his soldiers, nor can he rely on them. He ought never, therefore, to have this subject of war out of his thoughts, and in peace he should devote himself more to its exercise than in times of war. He can do this in two ways, by action, and by study.

As regards action, he ought above all things to keep his men well trained and organized, and to carry out extended exercises in the field, by which he accustoms his body to hardships, and learns something of the nature of the land. He gets to find out how the mountains rise, how the valleys open out, how the plains lie, and to understand the nature of rivers and wet areas, and to do all this with careful planning and analysis. This knowledge is useful in two ways. Firstly, he learns to know his country, and is better able to undertake its defence. Afterwards, by means of the knowledge and observation of that land, he can easily understand any other which it may be necessary for him to study, because the hills, valleys, and plains, and rivers that are, for instance, in Tuscany, have a certain similarity to those of other countries. So, with a knowledge of the aspect of one country, one can easily arrive at a knowledge of others. The prince that lacks this skill lacks the essentials which it is desirable that a military leader should possess. It teaches him to surprise his enemy, to select places to camp, to lead armies, to organise the soldiers in a battle, and to besiege towns in the best way.

Philopoemen, prince of the Achaeans, among other praises which writers have heaped on him, is especially praised because in times of peace he never had anything in his mind but the rules of war. When he was in the country with friends, he often stopped and reasoned with them "If the enemy were on that hill, and we were here with our army, who would have the advantage? How should we best advance to meet the enemy, without breaking ranks? If we should wish to go back, how could we do it? If they ran, how ought we pursue them?" And he would suggest to them, as he went, all the things that could happen to an army. He would listen to their opinion and state his, confirming it with reasons, so that by these continual discussions there could never arise, in time of war, any unexpected circumstances that he could not deal with.

But to exercise his mind, the prince should read histories, and study there the actions of great men, to see how they have conducted themselves in war, to examine the causes of their victories and defeats, so as to avoid the latter and imitate the former. Above all a prince should do as great men did, to take as a model one who had been praised and famous before them, and whose achievements and deeds they always kept in mind. Thus, it is said Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar imitated Alexander, and Scipio

imitated Cyrus. Whoever reads the life of Cyrus, written by Xenophon, will recognize afterwards in the life of Scipio how that imitation was his glory, and how in his behaviour, friendliness, kindness, and generosity Scipio conformed to those things which have been written of Cyrus by Xenophon. A wise prince ought to observe such rules, and never in peaceful times stand idle. He should actively increase his resources in such a way that they may be available to him in difficult times, so that if fortune changes, it will find him prepared to resist her blows.

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **CONCERNING THINGS FOR WHICH MEN, AND ESPECIALLY PRINCES ARE PRAISED OR BLAMED**

It remains now to see what ought to be the rules of conduct for a prince towards subjects and friends. And as I know that many have written on this point, I expect I shall be considered too bold in mentioning it again, especially as in discussing it I shall not follow the methods of other people. But, it being my intention to write something which shall be useful to him who reads it, it appears to me more appropriate to follow up the real truth of the matter than the imagination of it. Many have imagined republics and principalities which in fact have never been known or seen. How one actually lives is far distant from how one ought to live. Anyone who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner brings about his ruin rather than his preservation. A man who wishes to act entirely in a virtuous way is soon destroyed among so much that is evil in the world.

Hence a prince who wishes to survive must know how to do wrong, and how to do or not do wrong according to necessity. Therefore, putting on one side imaginary things concerning a prince and discussing those which are real, I say that all men when they are spoken of, and chiefly princes for being more highly placed, are remarkable for some of those qualities which bring them either blame or praise. Thus one has the reputation of being liberal, another mean. One is said to be generous, one greedy; one cruel, one kind; one disloyal another faithful; one weak and cowardly, another bold and brave; one friendly, another proud; one pleasure loving, another restrained; one sincere, another not truthful; one hard, another easy; one serious, another foolish; one religious, another unbelieving, and the like. And I know that everyone will confess that it would be most worthy in a prince to exhibit all the above qualities that are considered good. But, because they can neither be entirely possessed nor observed in any one person, for human conditions do not permit it, it is necessary for him to be sufficiently careful so that he may know how to avoid the criticism of those things considered bad which would lose him his state. Also, he should avoid, if it is possible, bad behaviour which would not lose him his state, but, if this is not possible, he may with less hesitation do it. Moreover, he need not feel uneasy about being criticised for that bad behaviour which is necessary to maintain the state, because if everything is considered carefully, it will be found that something which looks like virtue, if followed would be his ruin; while something else, which looks wrong, may bring him security and wealth.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **CONCERNING GENEROSITY AND MEANNESS**

Commencing then with the first of the characteristics mentioned above, it would be nice to have the reputation of being generous. Nevertheless generosity exercised in a way that does not bring you the

reputation for it, injures you. If one shows generosity honestly and as it should be shown, it may not become known, and you will not avoid the criticism of its opposite, meanness. Therefore, anyone wishing to maintain the reputation of being generous has to keep on being more and more generous. As a result a prince thus inclined will consume all his property in such acts. In the end, he will have to unnecessarily exploit his people, and tax them, and do everything he can to get money. This will soon make him disliked by his subjects, and becoming poor he will be little valued by anyone. Thus, with his generosity, having offended many and rewarded few, he is affected by the very first trouble. Recognizing this himself, and wishing to draw back from it, he runs at once into the criticism of being mean.

Therefore, a prince, not being able to exercise this virtue of generosity in such a way that it is recognized, except to his cost, if he is wise, ought not to fear the reputation of being mean. In time he will come to be highly regarded, seeing that with his economy his revenues are enough, that he can defend himself against all attacks, and is able to carry out projects without placing a heavy load on his people. Thus he exercises generosity towards all from whom he does not take, who are many, and meanness towards those to whom he does not give, who are few.

We have not seen great things done in our time except by those who have been considered mean; the rest have failed. Pope Julius the Second was assisted in becoming Pope by a reputation for generosity. However, he did not try to keep it up afterwards, when he made war on the King of France. He made many wars without imposing any extraordinary tax on his subjects, for he supplied his additional expenses out of his continued care with money. The present King of Spain would not have undertaken or conquered in so many difficult adventures if he had been considered generous. A prince, therefore, provided that he does not have to rob his subjects, can defend himself, does not become poor and despised, and is not forced to exploit the people, ought not to worry about having a reputation for being mean, because it is one of those bad characteristics which will enable him to govern.

And if any one should say: Caesar obtained an empire by generosity, and many others have reached the highest positions by having been generous and by being considered so, I answer: Either you are a prince in fact or on the way to becoming one. In the first case this generosity is dangerous. In the second case, it is very necessary to be considered generous; and Caesar was one of those who wished to become powerful in Rome. But if he had survived after becoming so, and had not controlled his expenses, he would have destroyed his government. And if anyone should reply: Many have been princes, and have done great things with armies, who have been considered very generous, I reply Either a prince spends that which is his own or his subjects' or else that of others. In the first case he ought to be careful, in the second he ought not to neglect any opportunity for generosity. And to the prince who goes forth with his army, supporting it by taking what he finds around him, handling that which belongs to others, this generosity is necessary, otherwise he would not be followed by soldiers. You can be a ready giver of that which is neither yours nor your subjects', as were Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander, because it does not take away your reputation if you waste what belonged to others, but adds to it. It is only wasting your own possessions that injures you.

Nothing disappears so rapidly as generosity. Even while you exercise it, you lose the power to do so, and so become either poor or despised, or else, in avoiding poverty, you exploit the people and become hated. A prince should guard himself, above all things, against being despised and hated. Generosity leads you to both. Therefore it is wiser to have a reputation for meanness which brings criticism without hatred than to be forced through seeking a reputation for generosity to get a reputation for exploiting people which causes criticism with hatred.

## CHAPTER 17

### CONCERNING CRUELTY AND KINDNESS, AND WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO BE LOVED THAN FEARED

Coming now to the other qualities mentioned above, every prince ought to desire to be considered kind and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this kindness. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel, but notwithstanding, his cruelty calmed the Romagna, unified it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. And if this is carefully considered, he will be seen to have been much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid a reputation for cruelty, permitted Pistoia to be destroyed. Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the criticism of cruelty. By making an example of a few people, he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow rebellions to arise, from which follow murders or robberies. These are likely to injure the whole people, while those killings which are commanded by the prince only affect the individual.

And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to avoid the reputation for cruelty. This is because new states are full of dangers.

Nevertheless a prince ought to be slow to believe and to act, and should not show fear. He should proceed in a calm manner with care and concern for others, so that too much confidence does not make him careless and too much distrust does not make him always suspicious.

Related to this a question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person it is much safer to be feared than loved, when only one is possible. The reason for this is that in general men are ungrateful, inconstant, false, cowardly, and greedy. As long as you succeed, they are yours entirely - they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children, when the need is far distant. But when the need approaches, they turn against you. A prince who, relying entirely on their promises, has neglected other ways of protecting himself, will be ruined. Friendships that are obtained by payments, and not by greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned, but they are not secured, and in time of need cannot be relied upon. Men are less worried about offending one who is loved than one who is feared. Love is preserved by the link of gratefulness which, owing to the weak nature of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a fear of punishment which never fails.

Nevertheless a prince ought to encourage fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred. He can carry on very well being feared while he is not hated, which will always be as long as he keeps away from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women. But when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it with proper justification and for obvious reasons. But above all things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men more quickly forget the death of their father than the loss of their inheritance. Besides, it is always easy to create reasons for taking away property. Anyone who has once begun to live by robbery will always find reasons for seizing what belongs to others. But reasons for taking life, on the other hand, are more difficult to find and are hard to keep justifying. But when a prince is with his army, and has hundreds of soldiers under his command, then it is necessary for him to not worry about having a reputation for cruelty, because without it he will not keep his army united or disposed to do its duties.

Among the wonderful deeds of Hannibal this one is described: that having led an enormous army,

composed of various races of men, to fight in foreign lands, no disagreements arose either among them or against the prince, no matter whether things were going badly or well. This arose from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty, which, with his boundless courage, made him respected and terrible in the sight of his soldiers. Without that cruelty, his other virtues were not sufficient to produce this effect. Short-sighted writers admire his deeds from one point of view and from another criticise the principal cause of them. Evidence for this can be seen in the case of Scipio, that most excellent man, not only of his own times but within the memory of man, against whom, nevertheless, his army rebelled in Spain. This arose from nothing but his too great kindness, which gave his soldiers more freedom than is consistent with military discipline. For this he was criticised in the Senate by Fabius Maximus, and called a bad leader. Also because of his easy nature he did not punish one of his officers who exploited the Locrians. Someone in the Senate, wishing to excuse him, said there were many men who knew much better how not to make errors than to correct the errors of others. This kindness as a commander would have eventually destroyed Scipio's reputation and glory. Fortunately, he was under the control of the Senate, so this dangerous characteristic not only remained hidden, but contributed to his glory.

Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I come to the conclusion that, because men love according to their own will and fear according to the will of the prince, a wise prince should establish himself on that which is in his own control and not in the control of others. He must try however to avoid hatred.

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH PRINCES SHOULD KEEP FAITH**

Everyone admits how good it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with trickery. Nevertheless our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to get their way through cheating. In the end they have overcome those who have relied on their word. You must know there are two ways of winning, one by the rules, and the other by force. The first method is suited to men, the second to beasts. But because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to use the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to understand how to use the ways of both the beast and the man. This has been taught by example to princes by ancient writers, who describe how Achilles and many other princes of old were given to Chiron, who was half horse and half man, to nurse who brought them up in his discipline. This means that they had for a teacher one who was half beast and half human. So, it is necessary for a prince to know how to make use of both natures, and that one without the other is not sufficient. A prince, therefore, being forced knowingly to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against traps and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the traps and a lion to frighten the wolves. Those who rely simply on the lion do not understand what they are doing. Therefore a wise lord cannot, nor ought he, keep faith when such promises may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to promise no longer exist. If men were entirely good this principle would not hold, but because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to observe it with them. There will never be a shortage of good reasons to excuse going back on your word. Endless modern examples of this could be given, showing how many agreements have been broken by princes, and how he who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best.

But it is necessary to know how to hide this characteristic well and to be a great pretender. People are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that anyone who seeks to deceive will always find someone

who will allow himself to be deceived. One recent example I cannot pass over in silence. Pope Alexander the Sixth did nothing else but deceive men, nor ever thought of doing otherwise. He always found people to fool, because there never was a man who could so convincingly say something was true and promise something, and yet be so unlikely to do it. Nevertheless his lies always succeeded according to his wishes, because he understood this side of mankind very well.

Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have described, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have these qualities and always to observe them is dangerous, and that to appear to have them is useful. A prince should appear merciful, faithful, kind, religious, upright, but should be flexible enough to make use of the opposite qualities when it is necessary.

And you have to understand this, that a prince, especially a new one cannot do all those things for which men are praised, being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to honesty, friendship, kindness, and religion. Therefore it is necessary for him to have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds and variations of fortune force it. Yet, as I have said above, a prince should not turn away from the good if he can avoid doing so, but, if it is truly necessary, then he should know how to set about it.

For this reason a prince ought to take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that is not full of the five qualities mentioned above, so that he may appear to everyone who sees and hears him completely merciful, faithful, kind, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality. Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because everybody can see you, but few come in touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, but few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose the opinion of the many, who have the power of the state to defend them. In the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not wise to challenge, one judges by the result.

For that reason, let a prince have the credit for conquering and holding his state, the means will always be considered honest, and he will be praised by everybody. This is because the common people are always influenced by what a thing seems to be and by what results from it. In this world only the common people matter when their minds are firmly made up.

One prince of the present time, whom it is not wise to name, never preaches anything else but peace and good faith, and yet to both he is most opposed. If he had followed what he preached, he would have lost his reputation and kingdom many a time.

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **THAT ONE SHOULD AVOID BEING HATED AND DESPISED**

I have spoken of the most important characteristics a prince should have, and now I wish to discuss the others briefly under the general theme that the prince must consider how to avoid those things which will make him hated or despised. If he can succeed with this, he will have done the best he can, and he need not fear any danger in other criticisms.

It makes him hated above all things, as I have said, to be greedy and to exploit the property and women of his subjects, and he must avoid doing this. And when neither their property nor their honour is threatened,

the majority of men live happily, and the prince has only to deal with the ambition of a few, whom he can easily control in many ways.

A prince is despised if he is considered changeable, foolish, weak, mean, and uncertain. A prince should avoid these characteristics. In his actions he should try to show greatness, courage, seriousness, and strength. In his private dealings with his subjects he should show that his judgments must be followed, and he should maintain himself with such a reputation that no one can hope either to deceive him or to get round him.

A prince who shows these good qualities will be highly respected, and such a person can only be attacked with difficulty. For this reason a prince ought to have two fears, one from within, on account of his subjects, the other from without, on account of external powers. From the latter he is defended by being well armed and having good friends, and if he is well armed he will have good friends. Affairs will always remain quiet within, when they are quiet outside, unless they have been already disturbed by conspiracy; and even if affairs outside are disturbed, if he has carried out his preparations and has lived as I have said, as long as he does not despair, he will resist every attack.

But concerning his subjects, when affairs outside are disturbed, he only has to fear that his subjects will conspire secretly. A prince can easily secure himself from this by avoiding being hated and despised, and by keeping the people satisfied with him. It is extremely important for him to do this, as I have said above at length. And one of the most effective remedies that a prince can have against conspiracies is not to be hated and despised by the people. Any conspirator always expects to please the people by the prince's removal. But when the conspirator can only look forward to offending them, he will not have the courage to take such a course, because the difficulties that face a conspirator are infinite. As experience shows, there have been many conspiracies, but few have been successful. A conspirator cannot act alone, nor can he take a companion except from those whom he believes to be dissatisfied. As soon as you have opened your mind to a dissatisfied person, you have given him the material with which to satisfy himself, because by informing on you he can look for every advantage. So, because of the certain gains from informing and the uncertain gains and certain dangers from conspiring, he must be a very true friend, or a thoroughly determined enemy of the prince, to keep faith with you.

On the side of the conspirator, there is nothing but fear, jealousy, and the prospect of punishment. On the side of the prince there is the power of the principality, the laws, the protection of friends, and the state to defend him. If we add to all these things the popular support of the people, it is impossible that any one should be so foolish as to conspire. Whereas in general the conspirator has to fear before he carries out his plan, in this case he has also to fear what follows the crime; because on account of it he has the people for an enemy and thus cannot hope for any escape.

Endless examples could be given on this subject, but I will be content with one, which happened within the memory of our fathers. Annibale Bentivogli, who was prince in Bologna (grandfather of the present Annibale), was murdered by the Canneschi, who had conspired against him, and all but one of his family, a very young child called Giovanni, were killed. Immediately after Annibale was killed the people rose and murdered all the Canneschi. This sprung from the popular love which the house of Bentivogli enjoyed in those days in Bologna. This love was so great that after the death of Annibale, although none remained there who was able to rule the state, the Bolognese, having information that there was one of the Bentivogli family in Florence, sent to Florence for him, and gave him the government of their city, even though he was thought to be the son of a poor worker. It was ruled by him until the surviving child, Giovanni, was old enough to take over the government.

For this reason I consider that a prince ought not to worry about conspiracies when his people have love and respect him. But when the people are hostile to him, and bear hatred towards him, he ought to fear everything and everybody. Well ordered states and wise princes have taken every care to keep the nobles happy, and to keep the people satisfied and contented, for this is one of the most important goals a prince can have.

Among the best ordered and governed kingdoms of our times is France and in it are found many good institutions on which the liberty and security of the king depends. Of these, the first is the parliament and its authority. The person who founded the kingdom, knowing the ambition of the nobility and their boldness, considered that there needed to be a way to control them. On the other side, knowing the hatred of the people, founded in fear, against the nobles, he wished to protect the people. However, he did not want this to be the particular responsibility of the king. Therefore, to take away the criticism which the king would face from the nobles for favouring the people and from the people for favouring the nobles, he set up the parliament which would be one who could beat down the great and favour the lesser without the king being blamed. You could not have a better or more effective arrangement, or a greater source of security to the king and kingdom. From this, one can draw another important conclusion, that princes ought to leave affairs which may upset some people to the management of others, and keep those which will make people happy in their own hands. However, I consider that a prince ought to take care of the nobles, but not so as to make himself hated by the people.

It may appear, perhaps, to some who have examined the lives and deaths of the Roman emperors that many of them would be an example contrary to my opinion, seeing that some of them lived nobly and showed great qualities of soul, but nevertheless they lost their empire or were killed by subjects who conspired against them. Wishing therefore, to answer these objections, I will describe the characters of some of the emperors. I will show that the causes of their ruin were not different from those described by me. At the same time I will submit for consideration only those things that are relevant for studying the affairs of those times.

It seems to me sufficient to take all those emperors who succeeded to the empire from Marcus the philosopher down to Maximinus. They were Marcus and his son Commodus, Pertinax, Julian, Severus and his son Antoninus Caracalla, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, Alexander, and Maximinus.

It is necessary to note that, whereas in other principalities a prince only has to deal with the ambition of the nobles and the demands of the people, the Roman emperors had a third difficulty in having to deal with the cruelty and greed of their soldiers. This was such a difficult matter that it was the ruin of many, because it was a hard thing to give satisfaction both to soldiers and the people. The reason for this was that the people loved peace, and so they loved a contented emperor. The soldiers however loved a warlike emperor who was bold, cruel, and greedy, and they were quite willing for the emperor to exercise these qualities on the people. Then they could get double pay and satisfy their own greed and cruelty. Hence it happened that those emperors were always thrown out of power who, either by birth or training, had no great authority. Most of them, especially those who came new to the principality, recognizing the difficulty of these two opposing forces, were inclined to give satisfaction to the soldiers, caring little about injuring the people. This unfortunately was necessary, because as princes cannot help being hated by someone, they ought, in the first place, to avoid being hated by everyone. When they cannot manage this, they ought to try most of all to avoid the hatred of the most powerful. Therefore, those emperors who through inexperience had need of special support more readily favoured the soldiers than the people. Whether this policy worked to their advantage or not depended on whether the prince knew how to

maintain authority over them.

For these reasons Marcus, Pertinax, and Alexander, all being men of modest life, lovers of justice, enemies to cruelty, kind and generous to others, came to a sad end. Marcus alone lived and died respected, because he had become emperor by hereditary title, and owed nothing either to the soldiers or the people. Afterwards, being possessed of many virtues which made him respected, he always kept both groups in their place while he lived, and was neither hated nor despised.

But Pertinax was created emperor against the wishes of the soldiers. They were accustomed to live beyond the rules under Commodus, and could not bear the honest life to which Pertinax wished to reduce them. Thus having given a cause for hatred, to which hatred there was added a lack of respect for him because he was old, he was destroyed at the very beginning of his administration. It should be noted here that hatred is acquired as much by good works as by bad ones. Therefore, as I said before, a prince wishing to keep his state is very often forced to do evil. When the principality is in a bad way, you have to submit to the wishes of who you think you have need of to maintain yourself – it may be either the people or the soldiers or the nobles – and then good works will do you harm.

But let us come to Alexander, who was a man of such great goodness that among the other praises which are accorded him is this, that in the fourteen years he held the empire no one was ever put to death by him without due process of law. Nevertheless, being considered too much like a woman, and a man who allowed himself to be governed by his mother, he became despised, and the army conspired against him, and murdered him.

Turning now to the opposite characters of Commodus, Severus, Antoninus Caracalla, and Maximinus, you will find them all cruel and greedy. They were men who, to satisfy their soldiers, did not hesitate to commit every kind of wicked act against the people. All, except Severus, came to a bad end. In Severus there was so much courage that, keeping the soldiers friendly, although the people were oppressed by him, he ruled successfully. His courage made him so much admired in the sight of the soldiers and the people that the latter were kept in a way astonished, and the former were respectful and satisfied. Because the actions of this man, as a new prince, were great, I wish to show briefly that he knew well how to be the fox and the lion, which natures, as I have said above, it is necessary for a prince to imitate.

Knowing the laziness of the Emperor Julian, he persuaded the army in Sclavonia, of which he was captain, that it would be right to go to Rome and revenge the death of Pertinax, who had been killed by the emperor's own soldiers. Under this pretence, without appearing to want to be emperor, he moved the army towards Rome. He reached Italy before it was even known that he had started. On his arrival at Rome, the Senate, through fear, elected him emperor and killed Julian. After this there remained for Severus, who wished to make himself master of the whole empire, two difficulties - one in Asia, where Niger, head of the Asian army, had caused himself to be named emperor; and the other in the west where Albinus also wanted to be emperor. As he considered it dangerous to declare himself hostile to both, he decided to attack Niger and to deceive Albinus. To the latter he wrote that, being elected emperor by the Senate, he was willing to share that honour with him and sent him the title of Caesar; and moreover, he wrote that the Senate had made Albinus his colleague. This was all believed by Albinus as true. But after Severus had conquered and killed Niger, and settled affairs in the east, he returned to Rome. He complained to the Senate that Albinus, little recognizing the benefits that he had received from him, had sought to murder him and for this he was forced to punish him. Afterwards he sought him out in France, and took from him his government and life. Therefore, anyone who carefully examines the actions of this man will find him a most courageous lion and a most tricky fox. He will find him feared and respected by

everyone, and not hated by the army. It is not surprising that he, a new man, was able to hold the empire so well, because his reputation for courage always protected him from that hatred which the people might have conceived against him for his violence.

His son Antoninus was a very capable man, and had very excellent qualities. These made him admired by the people and accepted by the soldiers. He was a warlike man, full of energy, who despised all delicate food and other rich delights. This caused him to be loved by the armies. Nevertheless, his fierceness and cruelties were great and far beyond belief. After endless single murders, he killed a large number of the people of Rome and all those of Alexandria. He became hated by the whole world, and feared by those he had around him, to such an extent that he was murdered in the midst of his army by a soldier. It must be noted here that killings like this, which are done with a resolved courage by those who are not afraid to die, cannot be avoided by princes. Anyone who does not fear to die can do them. But a prince may fear them less because they are very rare. He only has to be careful not to do any serious injury to those whom he employs or has around him in the service of the state. Antoninus had not been careful about this. He had dishonourably killed a brother of that soldier, whom also he threatened each day, yet retained in his own personal soldiers. This, as it turned out, was a foolish thing to do, and proved to be the emperor's ruin.

But let us come to Commodus. It should have been very easy for him to hold on to the empire. Being the son of Marcus, he had inherited it and he only had to follow in the footsteps of his father to please his people and soldiers. But, he was by nature cruel and hard, he gave himself up to amusing the soldiers and allowing them too much freedom, so that he could treat the people badly. In addition, he did not maintain the proper respect for his own position, often descending to the theatre to compete with soldiers, and doing wicked things not worthy of the emperor. He became despised by the soldiers, and being hated by one party and despised by the other, he was conspired against and killed.

It remains to discuss the character of Maximinus. He was a very warlike man, and the armies, being disgusted with the weakness of Alexander, of whom I have already spoken, killed him and elected Maximinus as emperor. He did not keep this position for long, for two things made him hated and despised. Firstly, he came from a very poor background, having once raised sheep. This was known by everyone and was considered a completely unsuitable background for an emperor. Secondly, when he first became emperor he put off going to Rome and officially taking the position. He had also gained a reputation for great cruelty by having done many wicked things, through his representatives in Rome and elsewhere in the empire. So, the whole world was moved to anger at the meanness of his birth and by fear of his cruelty. First Africa rebelled, then the Senate with all the people of Rome, and all Italy conspired against him, to which may be added his own army. The army, besieging Aquileia and meeting with difficulties in taking it, were disgusted with his cruelties, and fearing him less when they found so many people against him, murdered him.

I do not wish to discuss Heliogabalus, Macrinus, or Julian, who, being thoroughly despised, were quickly wiped out. I will bring this discussion to a conclusion by saying that princes in our times have much less trouble with this difficulty of giving too much satisfaction to their soldiers, because, notwithstanding one has to keep them happy, that is soon done. None of these princes have armies that are experienced in the governing and administration of parts of an empire, as were the armies of the Roman Empire. Whereas then it was more necessary to give satisfaction to the soldiers than to the people, it is now more necessary for all princes, except the leader of the Turks and the ruler of Egypt, to satisfy the people rather than the soldiers, because the people are the most powerful.

From the above I have excluded the leader of the Turks, who always keeps twelve thousand foot soldiers and fifteen thousand horse soldiers round him on which depend the security and strength of the kingdom. It is thus necessary that putting aside every consideration for the people, he should keep them his friends. The kingdom of the Egypt is similar, being entirely in the hands of soldiers. It follows again that, without regard to the people, the leader must keep the soldiers as his friends. But you must note that the state of Egypt is unlike all other principalities. It is most like that controlled by the Pope. It cannot be called either an hereditary or a newly formed principality, because the sons of the old prince do not inherit. The person who is elected to that position by those who have authority, and his sons remain only as nobles. Because this is an ancient custom, it cannot be called a new principality, and so there are none of those difficulties in it that are met with in new ones. Thus although the prince is new, the constitution of the state is old, and it is framed so as to receive him as if he were inheriting it.

But returning to the main subject, I say that whoever will consider it will acknowledge that either being hated or despised has resulted in the fall of the emperors mentioned above. It will also be recognized how it happened that, a number of them acting in one way and a number in another, only one in each way came to a happy end and the rest to unhappy ones. It would have been useless and dangerous for Pertinax and Alexander, being new princes, to imitate Marcus, who inherited the principality. Likewise it would have been completely destructive to Caracalla, Commodus, and Maximinus to have imitated Severus. They did not have sufficient courage to enable them to follow in his footsteps. Therefore a prince, new to the principality, cannot imitate the actions of Marcus, nor, again, is it necessary to follow those of Severus. But a prince ought to take from Severus those parts which are necessary to establish his state, and from Marcus those which are proper and glorious to keep a state that may already be stable and firm.

## ~~CHAPTER 20~~

### ~~ARE CASTLES, AND MANY OTHER THINGS WHICH PRINCES OFTEN USE, ADVANTAGEOUS OR HURTFUL~~

Some princes, in order to hold the state securely, have disarmed their subjects; others have kept their subject towns divided by setting up opposing groups; others have encouraged attacks against themselves; others have tried to win over those whom they did not trust in the beginning of their governments; some have built castles; some have destroyed them. One cannot give a final judgment on all of these things unless one possesses the particular details of those states in which a decision has to be made. Nevertheless I will speak as comprehensively as possible on these matters.

There never was a new prince who has disarmed his subjects. Rather, when he has found them disarmed, he has always armed them. By arming them, those arms become yours, those men who were distrusted become faithful, and those who were faithful are kept so, and your subjects become your supporters. Although all subjects cannot be armed, yet when those whom you do arm are benefited, the others can be handled more freely. This difference in their treatment, which they quite understand, makes the former your supporters, and the latter, considering it to be necessary that those who have the most danger and service should have the most reward, excuse you. But when you disarm them, you at once offend them by showing that you distrust them, either for cowardice or for lack of loyalty. Either of these opinions creates hatred against you, and because you cannot remain unarmed, it follows that you turn to mercenaries, which are of the character already shown. Even if they happen to be good, they would not be sufficient to defend you against powerful enemies and distrusted subjects. Therefore, as I have said, a new prince in a