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The Prince

I hope it will not be considered presumptuous for a man of very low and humble condition to dare to discuss princely government, and to lay down rules about it. For those who draw maps place themselves on low ground, in order to understand the character of the mountains and other high points, and climb higher in order to understand the character of the plains. Likewise, one needs to be a ruler to understand properly the character of the people, and to be a man of the people to understand properly the character of rulers.

May Your Magnificence, then, accept this little gift in the spirit in which I am sending it; if it is read and pondered diligently, my deep wish will be revealed, namely, that you should achieve that greatness which propitious circumstances and your fine qualities promise. And if Your Magnificence, from the heights of your exalted position, should sometimes deign to glance down towards these lowly places, you will see how much I am unjustly oppressed by great and cruel misfortune.

Chapter 1

The different kinds of principality and how they are acquired

All the states, all the dominions that have held sway over men, have been either republics or principalities. Principalities are either hereditary (their rulers having been for a long time from the same family) or they are new. The new ones are either completely new (as was Milan to Francesco Sforza) or they are like limbs joined to the hereditary state of the ruler who annexes them (as is the Kingdom of Naples to the King of Spain). States thus acquired are either used to living under a prince or used to being free; and they are acquired either with the arms of others or with one’s own, either through luck or favour or else through ability.

[* This chapter summarises the topics discussed later, esp. in Chs. II–XI.*]
[* Sforza became Duke of Milan in 1450, putting an end to the short-lived Ambrosian republic, which arose after Filippo Maria Visconti’s death in 1447.*]
[* Ferdinand the Catholic. *]
[* I.e., are republics.*]
[* This is the first instance of the antithesis between *fortuna* and *virtù*, which is so conspicuous in M.’s works. See esp. Chs. VI–IX.*]
Chapter II

Hereditary principalities

I shall not discuss republics, because I have previously treated them at length. I shall consider only principalities, and shall weave together the warps mentioned above, examining how principalities can be governed and maintained.

I say, then, that states which are hereditary, and accustomed to the rule of those belonging to the present ruler’s family, are very much less difficult to hold than new states, because it is sufficient not to change the established order, and to deal with any untoward events that may occur; so that, if such a ruler is no more than ordinarily diligent and competent, his government will always be secure, unless some unusually strong force should remove him. And even if that happens, whenever the conqueror encounters difficulties, the former ruler can re-establish himself.

To cite an Italian example: the Duke of Ferrara\textsuperscript{4} resisted the assaults of the Venetians in 1484, as well as those of Pope Julius in 1510, just because his family was very well established in that state. For a natural ruler has fewer reasons and less need to harm others. Consequently, men will be better disposed towards him; and if he is not hated for unusually vicious conduct, it is not surprising that he should be regarded with affection by his subjects. Moreover, the length and continuity of his family’s rule extinguishes the memories of the causes of innovations;\textsuperscript{5} for any change always leaves a toothing-stone for further building.

Chapter III

Mixed principalities

However, it is in new principalities that there are real difficulties. First, if the principality is not completely new but is like a limb that is joined to

\textsuperscript{4} This is probably an allusion to the Discourses, or perhaps to Bk I of that work. But it may well be a later interpolation.

\textsuperscript{5} Here M. confuses two Dukes of Ferrara, Ercole I and Alfonso I d’Este. See p. 123.

\textsuperscript{6} E.g., taking property or womenfolk belonging to others: see pp. 59, 63-4.

\textsuperscript{7} This sentence is not entirely clear; for Montanari, le memorie e le ragioni is an instance of hendiadys, and means ‘the memory of the causes’.

\textsuperscript{8} Ludovico Sforza returned to Milan on 5 Feb. 1500, but he lost it in April 1500.

\textsuperscript{9} See p. 84.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{uno}: the indefinite article expresses M.’s contempt for Ludovico Sforza.

\textsuperscript{11} In April 1512, after the battle of Ravenna, in which the French were opposed by the army of the Holy League; Louis had retaken Milan in April 1500, after the battle of Novara.
Nevertheless, he did lose Milan twice. The general reasons for the first loss have been discussed; it remains now to discuss the reasons for the second, and to consider what solutions were available to him, and what someone in his position might do, in order to maintain better than the King of France did the territory annexed.

I say, then, that the territories a conqueror annexes and joins to his own well-established state are either in the same country, the same language, or they are not. If they are, it is extremely easy to hold them, especially if they are not used to governing themselves. To hold them securely, it is enough to wipe out the family of the ruler who held sway over them, because as far as other things are concerned, the inhabitants will continue to live quietly, provided their old way of life is maintained and there is no difference in customs. This has happened with Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony and Normandy, which have been joined to France for a long time. Although there are some linguistic differences, nevertheless their way of life is similar, so no difficulties have arisen. Anyone who annexes such countries, and is determined to hold them, must follow two policies: the first is to wipe out their old ruling families; the second is not to change their laws or impose new taxes. Then the old principality and the new territory will very soon become a single body politic.

But considerable problems arise if territories are annexed in a country that differs in language, customs and institutions, and good great luck and great ability are needed to hold them. One of the best and most effective solutions is for the conqueror to go and live there. This makes the possession more secure and more permanent. This is what the Turks did in Greece: all the other measures taken by them to hold that country would not have sufficed, if they had not instituted direct rule. For if one does do that, troubles can be detected when they are just beginning and effective measures can be taken quickly. But if one does not, the troubles are encountered when they have grown, and nothing can be done about them. Moreover, under direct rule, the

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[\textit{principia}: it denotes any area that is larger than a 'city' or 'city-state' (\textit{città}). See p. 103.]
[\textit{visere liberi:} see p. 109.]
[\textit{Normandy in 1204, Gascony in 1453, Burgundy in 1472, Brittany in 1491.}]
[\textit{I.e., to institute direct rule.}]
[\textit{‘Greece’: M. meant the whole Balkan peninsula, which was subjected to Turkish invasions during the fifteenth century. The statement that the Turks lived in that state (or ruled it directly) refers to the fact that, after 1453, Constantinople became the capital of the new state.}]

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Mixed principalities

country will not be exploited by your officials; the subjects will be content if they have direct access to the ruler. Consequently, they will have more reason to be devoted to him if they intend to behave well, and to fear him if they do not. Any foreigners with designs on that state will proceed very carefully. Hence, if the state is ruled directly, it is very unlikely indeed to be lost.

The other very good solution is to establish colonies in a few places, which become, as it were, fetters for the conquered territory. If this is not done, it will be necessary to hold it by means of large military forces. Colonies involve little expense; and so at little or no cost, one establishes and maintains them. The only people injured are those who lose their fields and homes, which are given to the new settlers; but only a few inhabitants are affected in this way. Moreover, those whom he injures can never harm him, because they are poor and scattered. All the other inhabitants remain unharmed, and should therefore be reassured, and will be afraid of causing trouble, for fear that they will be dispossessed, like the others. I conclude that these colonies are not expensive, are more loyal, and harm fewer people; and those that are harmed cannot injure you because, as I said, they are scattered and poor.

It should be observed here that men should either be caressed or crushed; because they can avenge slight injuries, but not those that are very severe. Hence, any injury done to a man must be such that there is no need to fear his revenge."

However, if military forces are sent instead of colonists, this is much more expensive, because all the revenue of the region will be consumed for its security. The outcome is that the territory gained results in loss to him; and it is much more injurious, because it harms the whole of that region when his troops move round the country. Everyone suffers this nuisance, and becomes hostile to the ruler. And they are dangerous enemies because, although defeated, they remain in their own homes. From every point of view, then, this military solution is misguided, whereas establishing colonies is extremely effective.

Again, as I have said, anyone who rules a foreign country should take the initiative in becoming a protector of the neighbouring minor powers and contrive to weaken those who are powerful within the country itself. He should also take precautions against the possibility

\[\textit{Cf. Disc. II, 23.}\]
that some foreign ruler as powerful as himself may seek to invade the
country when circumstances are favourable. Such invaders are always
helped by malcontents within the country, who are moved either by
their own overweening ambition or by fear, as happened in Greece,
where the Aetolians were responsible for the invasion by the Romans.
And in every country that the Romans attacked, some of the inhabitants
aided their invasion. What usually happens is that, as soon as a strong
invader attacks a country, all the less powerful men rally to him,
because they are enviously hostile to the ruler who has held sway over
them. The invader has no trouble in winning over these less powerful
men, since they will all be disposed to support the new power he has
acquired. He needs only to be careful that they do not acquire too much
military power and influence. And using his own forces, and with their
consent, he can easily put down those who are powerful, thus gaining
complete control of that country. A ruler who does not act in this way
will soon lose what he has gained and, even while he does hold it, he will
be beset by countless difficulties and troubles.

The Romans followed these policies very well in the countries they
conquered. They established colonies, they had friendly relations with
the less powerful (though without increasing their influence), they put
down the powerful, and they ensured that strong foreign powers did
not acquire influence in them.

I shall cite only Greece as an example. The Romans established
friendly relations with the Achaean and the Aetolian;[1] the Macedonian
Kingdom was put down;[2] Antiochus was driven out;[3] they never
permitted the Achaean and the Aetolian to augment their power,
despite the good offices rendered by them; Philip[4] sought to be
accepted as their ally, but they would not permit any revival of his power;
and even the might of Antiochus could not constrain them to let him
hold any dominions in that country.

The Romans acted in these circumstances as all wise rulers should:
for they have to deal not only with existing troubles, but with troubles

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[2] Those who have some influence or power, not the masses.
[3] They were the less powerful ones (minor potent) in Greece.
[4] Philip V of Macedon was decisively defeated by Flaminius at Cynocephalae in 197
B.C.
[5] Antiochus III, King of Syria, defeated by the Romans at Thermopylae in 191 B.C., and
again at Magnesia in 190.

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Mixed principalities

that are likely to develop, and have to use every means to overcome
them. For if the first signs of trouble are perceived, it is easy to find a
solution; but if one lets trouble develop, the medicine will be too late,
because the malady will have become incurable. And what physicians
say about consumptive diseases is also true of this matter, namely, that
at the beginning of the illness, it is easy to treat but difficult to diagnose
but, if it has not been diagnosed and treated at an early stage, as time
passes it becomes easy to diagnose but difficult to treat. This also
happens in affairs of state: for if one recognises political problems early
(which only a shrewd and far-seeing man can do),[7] they may be resolved
quickly, but if they are not recognised, and left to develop so that
everyone recognises them, there is no longer any remedy.

The Romans, therefore, because they perceived troubles when they
were merely brewing, were always able to overcome them. They never
allowed them to develop in order to avoid fighting a war, for they knew
that wars cannot really be avoided but are merely postponed to the
advantage of others. This was why they wanted to wage war against
Philip and Antiochus in Greece, so that they could avoid having to fight
them in Italy; it was possible for them to have avoided fighting both of
them in Greece, but they were resolved not to. Moreover, the Romans
never accepted a maxim heard every day on the lips of our own sages, to
seek to benefit from temporising. They preferred to enjoy the benefits
that derived from their own strength and prudence; because time
brings all things with it, and can produce benefits as well as evils, evils
as well as benefits.

However, let us return to the King of France, and examine whether
he followed any of the policies I have advocated. I shall discuss Louis,
not Charles,[8] since he held possessions in Italy for a longer period,[9] his
conduct can be better studied. You will see that he did the opposite of
what should be done in order to hold territory that is acquired in a
foreign country.

King Louis's invasion of Italy was aided by the ambitious schemes of
the Venetians, who wanted to gain half of Lombardy through that

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[7] In Ist. for. VII. 5. M. remarks that Cosimo de' Medici ruled a difficult state 'for
thirty-one years: because he was very prudent he recognised troubles when they were
only brewing, and therefore had time to prevent them growing or to protect himself so
that they would not harm him when they had grown'.
[8] Louis XII and Charles VIII.
[9] Louis maintained power in Italy from 1499 to 1512, whereas Charles was in Italy only
between Aug. 1494 and July 1495.
live under their own laws, exacting tribute and setting up an oligarchical government that will keep the state friendly towards you. Since the government has been set up by that ruler, it knows that it will be dependent upon his goodwill and power, and will be very concerned to maintain the status quo. If one wants to preserve a city that is accustomed to being independent and having free institutions, it is more easily held by using its citizens to govern it than in any other way.

The Spartans and the Romans provide good examples. The Spartans held Athens* and Thebes† by establishing oligarchies there; yet they eventually lost control over them. In order to hold Capua, Carthage and Numantia, the Romans destroyed them‡ and consequently never lost them. They tried to hold Greece in a similar manner to the Spartans, by granting it freedom and letting it live under its own laws. This was unsuccessful, so they were then forced to destroy many cities in that country, in order to maintain their hold over it. In fact, destroying cities is the only certain way of holding them. Anyone who becomes master of a city accustomed to a free way of life, and does not destroy it, may expect to be destroyed by it himself, because when it rebels, it will always be able to appeal to the spirit of freedom and its ancient institutions, which are never forgotten, despite the passage of time and any benefits bestowed by the new ruler. Whatever he does, whatever provisions he makes, if he does not foment internal divisions or scatter the inhabitants, they will never forget their lost liberties and their ancient institutions, and will immediately attempt to recover them whenever they have an opportunity, as Pisa did after enduring a century of subjection to the Florentines.*

However, when cities or countries are accustomed to living under a prince, and the ruling family is wiped out, the inhabitants are used to obeying but lack their older ruler; they are unable to agree on making one of themselves ruler, and they do not know how to embrace a free way of life. Consequently, they are slow to resort to arms, and a ruler can more easily win them over, and be sure that they will not harm him.

But in republics there is greater vitality,† more hatred, and a stronger desire for revenge; they do not forget, indeed cannot forget, their lost liberties. Therefore, the surest way is to destroy them or else go to live there.‡

Chapter vi

New principalities acquired by one's own arms and ability

Nobody should be surprised if, in discussing completely new principalities, both as regards the ruler and the type of government, I shall cite remarkable men as examples. For men almost always follow in the footsteps of others, imitation being a leading principle of human behaviour. Since it is not always possible to follow in the footsteps of others, or to equal the ability of those whom you imitate, a shrewd man will always follow the methods of remarkable men, and imitate those who have been outstanding, so that, even if he does not succeed in matching their ability, at least he will get within sniffing distance of it. He should act as skilful archers do, when their target seems too distant: knowing well the power of their bow, they aim at a much higher point, not to hit it with the arrow, but by aiming there to be able to strike their target.

I maintain, then, that in a completely new principality, where there is a new ruler, the difficulty he will have in maintaining it will depend on how much ability he possesses. And because for a private citizen to become ruler presupposes that he is either able or lucky, it might seem that one or other of these would, to some degree, mitigate many of the difficulties. Nevertheless, rulers maintain themselves better if they owe little to luck. It is also very helpful when the ruler is compelled to go and live in his principality, because he does not possess other states.

[* Following their victory in the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans in 404 B.C. imposed on Athens the government of the so-called Thirty Tyrants, which was overthrown in 403 by Thrasylalus, who restored democratic rule.]
[† The oligarchy established there lasted only three years (382–379 B.C.); it was overthrown by Pelepidas and Epaminondas.]
[‡ Carthage was destroyed in 146 B.C., Numantia in 133 B.C., the political organisation of Capua was destroyed in 211 B.C.]
[§ Pisa was bought from Gabriele Maria Visconti in 1405, subdued in 1406, and lost in 1494, the 'opportunity' (accidente) being the turmoil into which Charles VIII's invasion had thrown Italian politics.]
The Prince

However, to come to those who have become rulers through their own ability and not through luck or favour, I consider that the most outstanding were Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus and others of that stamp. And although one should not discuss Moses, because he was merely an executor of what had been ordained by God, yet he should be admired even if only for that favour which made him worthy to speak with God. But let us consider Cyrus and others who have acquired or founded kingdoms. They will all be found remarkable, and if their actions and methods are considered, they will not appear very different from those of Moses, who had such a great master.

If their deeds and careers are examined, it will be seen that they owed nothing to luck except the opportunity to shape the material into the form that seemed best to them. If they had lacked the opportunity, the strength of their spirit would have been sapped; if they had lacked ability, the opportunity would have been wasted.

It was necessary, then, for Moses to find the people of Israel in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, so that they would be disposed to follow him, in order to escape from their servitude. It was necessary that Romulus, who was exposed at birth in Alba, did not find there full scope for his abilities, so that he should have wanted to become King of Rome and, indeed, its founder. It was necessary that Cyrus should have found the Persians discontented under the rule of the Medes, and that the Medes should have been soft and weak because of the long peace. And Theseus could not have fully revealed his abilities had he not found the Athenians dispersed. These opportunities, then, permitted these men to be successful, and their surpassing abilities enabled them to recognise and grasp these opportunities; the outcome was that their own countries were ennobled and flourished greatly.

Those who, like them, become rulers through their own abilities, experience difficulty in attaining power, but once that is achieved, they keep it easily. The difficulties encountered in attaining power arise partly from the new institutions and laws they are forced to introduce in order to establish their power and make it secure. And it should be realised that taking the initiative in introducing a new form of government is very difficult and dangerous, and unlikely to succeed. The reason is that all those who profit from the old order will be opposed to the innovator, whereas all those who might benefit from the new order are, at best, tepid supporters of him. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws on their side, partly from the sceptical temper of men, who do not really believe in new things unless they have been seen to work well. The result is that whenever those who are opposed to change have the chance to attack the innovator, they do it with much vigour, whereas his supporters act only half-heartedly; so that the innovator and his supporters find themselves in great danger.

In order to examine this matter thoroughly, we need to consider whether these innovators can act on their own or whether they depend upon others; that is, whether they need to persuade others if they are to succeed, or whether they are capable of establishing themselves by force. In the former case, they always fare badly and accomplish nothing. But if they do not depend upon others and have sufficient forces to take the initiative, they rarely find themselves in difficulties. Consequently, all armed prophets succeed whereas unarmed ones fail. This happens because, apart from the factors already mentioned, the people are fickle; it is easy to persuade them about something, but difficult to keep them persuaded. Hence, when they no longer believe in you and your schemes, you must be able to force them to believe.

If Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus had been unarmed, the new order which each of them established would not have been obeyed for very long. This is what happened in our own times to Fra' Girolamo Savonarola, who perished together with his new order as soon as the masses began to lose faith in him; and he lacked the means of keeping the support of those who had believed in him, as well as of making those who had never had any faith in him believe.

Such innovators, then, have to confront many difficulties; all the dangers come after they have begun their enterprises, and need to be overcome through their own ability. But once they have succeeded, and begin to be greatly respected (after they have extinguished those envious of their success), they remain powerful, secure, honoured and successful.

[1 M. now comes to the theme of this chapter.]
[2 This is the theme of Ch. VII.]
[3 The peace that lasted from 600 to 560 B.C.]
I should like to add a less important example than the eminent ones already discussed. But it certainly is worthy of mention in this context, so let it suffice for all the others like it: I refer to Hiero of Syracuse. From being a private citizen, he became ruler of Syracuse. He enjoyed a fine opportunity but, apart from that, his success owed nothing to luck. For when the Syracusans were in desperate straits, they chose him as their general; afterwards he was deservedly made their ruler. And even in private life he showed so much ability that it was written of him "quod nihil illi deerrat ad regnandum praeter regnum". He disbanded the old army and raised a new one; he abandoned the old alliances and formed new ones; and as soon as he possessed his own troops and had reliable allies he could build any edifice he wanted upon this foundation. Thus, it was very difficult for him to attain power, but not to keep it.

**CHAPTER VII**

New principalities acquired through the power of others and their favour

Private citizens who become rulers only through favour or luck achieve that rank with little trouble, but experience great difficulty in retaining it. In arriving at that position there are no problems, because they fly there; all the difficulties arise afterwards. This is the situation if a state or territory is granted to someone either for money or by favour of the giver, as happened to many in Greece, in the cities of Ionia and the Hellespont, where Darius set up rulers so that they would hold them to increase his security and enhance his glory. Other cases are those private citizens who became emperors, attaining the imperial throne by bribing the soldiers. Such men are entirely dependent on the goodwill

[* In 270 B.C., when they were attacked by the Mamertines.]*

[* Justinus, XVIII, 4: "that the only thing he lacked to be a ruler was a kingdom". What Justinus wrote was: "ut nihil ei regnum deesset, praeter regnum videretur".]*

[* See p. 30.]*

[* I.e., construct his state.]*

[* M. alludes to the division of the Persian Empire into satrapies in the sixth century B.C. 'Greece' refers not to the Greek mainland but, as M. specifies, to the Greek cities of Asia and the Hellespont.]*

[* E.g., Ch. XIX passim.*]
The Prince

In seeking to make his son the Duke a great man, Alexander VI faced many difficulties, both present and future. First, he did not see how he could make him a ruler of any territory that was not part of the States of the Church. And if he were to appropriate one of the territories belonging to the Church, he was well aware that the Duke of Milan and the Venetians would not permit it (for Faenza and Rimini were already under the protection of the Venetians). Apart from this problem, Alexander saw that the Italian military forces (and especially those that he could have used most easily) belonged to those who had every reason to fear any increase of the Pope’s power; therefore, he could not safely use them, because they all belonged to the Orsini and Colonna factions and their adherents.

It was therefore necessary to sow disorder in Italy, making their states unstable, so as to be able to seize and hold some portion of them. This was easy for him, because he found that the Venetians, for other reasons, wanted to bring the French back into Italy. Not only did he not oppose this policy; he facilitated it by annulling the first marriage of King Louis. The King, then, invaded Italy with the help of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander. Louis was no sooner in Milan than the Pope received troops from him for his own campaign in the Romagna, which was made easier because of the standing of the King.

After the Duke had conquered the Romagna and defeated the Colonna faction, two things hindered him from holding that region securely and annexing more territory. One was that he had doubts about the loyalty of his troops, the other was the goodwill of the King of France. The Orsini troops, which he had used, might prove worthless when he attacked and not only prevent him from annexing more territory, but take from him what he had acquired. He also feared that the King might deprive him of what he possessed.

He had a proof of the worth of the Orsini troops when, after having besieged Faenza, he attacked Bologna, because he saw them under-

take that attack half-heartedly. And he understood the King’s attitude when, after he had captured the Duchy of Urbino, he attacked Tuscany, for the King made him abandon the campaign.

The Duke then decided not to depend any longer upon the troops and the favour of others. He first undermined the strength of the Orsini and Colonna factions in Rome, by making all their noble adherents his own nobles, heaping much wealth on them. He also honoured them, according to their merits, giving them military posts and responsibilities. The outcome was that within a few months they abandoned their ancient factional loyalties, and became completely attached to the Duke.

After this, he waited for an opportunity to destroy the leaders of the Orsini faction, having already scattered those of the Colonna. A fine chance came, and he exploited it to the full. For the Orsini leaders realised, belatedly, that the great power of the Duke and of the Church spelt their ruin, and called a diet at Magione, in the province of Perugia. This meeting gave rise to the revolt in Urbino and disorders in the Romagna, and countless other dangers for the Duke, all of which he overcame with the help of the French.

This restored his prestige, but he distrusted the King of France and all other external forces; in order not to risk depending on them, he resorted to trickery. He so cleverly concealed his intentions that the Orsini leaders, through the person of the Signor Paulo, became reconciled with him. The Duke treated Paulo very courteously and generously, giving him money, fine clothes and horses, in order to reassure him. Their naivety was such that it brought them to Senigallia, and into the hands of the Duke. Having killed these leaders, then, and

[† A few days later, Borgia was then compelled to come to terms with Giovanni Bentivoglio.]
[† 21 June 1502.] [† 9 Oct. 1502.]
[† In fact, this began two days before, on 7 Oct., and within a few days Guido Ubaldino Montefeltro repossessed the Duchy.]
[† Borgia’s troops were defeated on 17 Oct.]
[† Paulo Orsini who, on behalf of the other leaders, met Cesare Borgia at Imola on 25 Oct.]
[† On 31 Dec. 1502, Borgia had Vitellozzo Vitelli and Oliverotto Uffreduccio strangled at Senigallia; and on 18 Jan. 1503 he had Paulo Orsini and the Duke of Gravina Orsini strangled at the Castel della Pieve. See M.’s Description of the Methods Used by Duke Valentino when Killing Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, the Signor Pagolo and the Duke of Gravina Orsini.]
won over their adherents to himself, the Duke had established a very good basis for his power, because he controlled all the Romagna, together with the Duchy of Urbino and, especially, he thought that the Romagna was well disposed towards him, and that he had won over all the inhabitants, for they had begun to enjoy prosperity.

Since this policy of his should be known about, and imitated by others, I do not want to pass over it. After the Duke had conquered the Romagna, he found that it had been controlled by violent lords, who were more disposed to despoil their subjects than to rule them properly, thus being a source of disorder rather than of order; consequently, that region was full of thefts, quarrels and outrages of every kind. He considered it necessary to introduce efficient government, because he wanted the region to be peaceful and its inhabitants obedient to his monarchical authority. He therefore sent there messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and energetic man, giving him full powers. Remirro quickly restored order and peace, and acquired a very formidable reputation. Later, the Duke considered that such great power was undesirable, because he was afraid it would incur hatred; and he set up a civil tribunal under a distinguished president, in the centre of the region, to which each city sent a lawyer. Because he recognised that the severe measures that had been taken had resulted in his becoming hated by some people, in order to dispel this ill-feeling and win everyone over to him, he wanted to show that if any cruel deeds had been committed they were attributable to the harshness of his governor, not to himself. And availing himself of an appropriate opportunity, one morning the Duke had Remirro placed in two pieces in the square at Cesena, with a block of wood and a blood-stained sword at his side. This terrible spectacle left the people both satisfied and amazed.

But let me continue from where I left off. I say that the Duke was very powerful, and secure in some measure against existing dangers, because he possessed his own troops, and had largely destroyed those neighbouring forces that could have harmed him. Since he wanted to annex more territory, he had to be very careful about the King of France. For he recognised that the King, who had belatedly realised his mistake, would not tolerate this plan. The Duke therefore began to seek new alliances, and to temporise with the King of France when the French undertook a campaign in the Kingdom of Naples against the Spaniards, who were besieging Gaeta. His aim was to protect himself against them; if Alexander had not died, he would soon have succeeded.

This was how he acted in relation to the existing situation. But as to the future, his main fear was that a new pope might be hostile to him, and seek to take away what Alexander had given to him. He decided to protect himself against this possibility by following four courses of action: first, to wipe out the families of the rulers whom he had dispossessed, so that a new pope could not restore them to power; secondly, to win over all the Roman nobles, as has been said, so that by using them he could check a new pope; thirdly, to have the college of cardinals as well disposed towards him as possible; fourthly, to extend his power so much, before the Pope died, that he would be capable of resisting the first attacks without outside aid. Of these four aims, he had achieved three by the time Alexander died, and had almost achieved the fourth. For he had killed as many of the old dispossessed rulers as he was able, and very few escaped from him. He had won over the Roman nobles, and most of the cardinals. As for annexing new territories, he had planned to become master of Tuscany, he already held Perugia and Piombino, and had taken Pisa under his protection. And since he no longer needed to be worried by French power (which was indeed now the case, as the French had already been deprived of the Kingdom of Naples by the Spaniards, with the result that each of them would have been obliged to purchase an alliance with him) he would swoop on Pisa. After this, Lucca and Siena would have surrendered immediately, partly through envious hatred of the Florentines, partly through fear; and the Florentines could have done nothing. If he had succeeded in all this (and it could well have happened within the very

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[1] There is a longer account in Disc. III, 29.
[4] Antonio Cioechi da Montesansavino, also known as Antonio dal Monte.
[5] In 1502; Remirro had been arrested on 22 Dec.

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[1] i.e., of underrating Cesare Borgia.
[5] signors; but, as specified earlier, M. meant their descendants, esp. the males. See pp. 129, 139.
The Prince

year that Alexander died), he would have acquired so much military strength and so much prestige that he would have been solidly established in power, and would no longer have depended on the favour and arms of others, but on his own strength and ability.

However, five years after the Duke had taken up the sword, Alexander died. He found himself firmly established only in the Romagna, with all his other possessions in the air, between two very powerful enemy armies, and critically ill. But the Duke possessed such indomitable spirit and so much ability, he was so well aware that men must either be won over or else destroyed, and had such a sound basis for his power, which he had established in such a short period, that he would have overcome all the difficulties if he had not had those armies on top of him, or if he had been in good health.

That his power was firmly based is shown by the following facts. The Romagna waited for him for more than a month. In Rome no attack was made on him, even though he was half-dead; and although the Baglioni, Vitelli and Orsini came to Rome, they were unable to stir anyone up against him. Moreover, if he was not able to have whatever cardinal he wanted chosen pope, at least he was able to prevent someone he objected to from being chosen. Everything would have been easy for him, if he had been well when Alexander died. And he told me himself, on the day Julius II was elected, that he had thought about what might happen when his father died, and had provided against everything, except that he had never thought that, when his father was dying, he too would be at death’s door.

Having reviewed all the actions of the Duke, then, I would not wish to criticise him; rather, he seems to me worthy to be held up as a model, as I have done, for all those who have risen to power through favour or luck and through the arms of others. For he could not have acted differently, given that he possessed a great spirit and had high ambitions. Only two things hindered his schemes: the shortness of Alexander’s pontificate and his own illness.

Hence, anyone who considers it necessary in his new principality to deal effectively with his enemies, to gain allies, to conquer (whether by force or by cunning), to inspire both devotion and respectful fear in the people, to be obeyed and respectfully feared by troops, to neutralise or destroy those who can or must be expected to injure you, to replace old institutions with new ones, to be both severe and kind, both magnanimous and open-handed, to disband disloyal troops and form a new army, to maintain alliances with kings and other rulers in such a way that they will either be glad to benefit you or be slow to injure you: for all these, no better examples can be cited than the actions of this man.

He can be criticised only with regard to the election of Pope Julius, in which he made a bad choice; as has been said, even if he could not ensure that the man he favoured was made pope, he could have prevented certain other choices. And he should never have permitted any cardinals he had injured to be chosen, or any who, once he became pope, would have reason to be afraid of him. For men harm others because they fear them or because they hate them. Among those whom he had injured were San Piero ad Vincula, Colonna, San Giorgio and Ascanio; if any of the others had become pope, they would have been afraid of him, with the exceptions of Rouen and the Spaniards (the latter because of the bonds of relationship and obligation, the former because of his power, since he was supported by the Kingdom of France). The most important thing for the Duke, therefore, was to make a Spaniard pope and, if this was impossible, he should have arranged for Rouen to be chosen and not San Piero ad Vincula. Anyone who thinks that new benefits make important men forget old injuries is mistaken. The Duke, then, blundered in this election, and it was the cause of his final downfall.

[† On 18 Aug. 1503.] [‡ The Spaniards in Gaeta, the French in Rome.]
[§ Several cities there submitted only when it was known that Borgia was held as a prisoner of Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordoba.]
[¶ 28 Oct. 1503. The ailing Pius III had reigned briefly after Alexander’s death (22 Sept.–18 Oct.), and M. had been sent to Rome in late October to follow the conclave.]
[** Vita: lit., ‘life’. Alexander was over seventy when he died. See also p. 41 n. a.]

New principalities acquired through power of others

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[† I.e., Giuliano della Rovere (Julius II), Giovanni Colonna, Raffaello Riario, Ascanio Sforza. The first and third of these are called by the names of their titular churches.]
[‡ Georges d’Amboise, archbishop of Rouen.]
[¶ Cf. Disc. III, 4.]
CHAPTER VIII.

Those who become rulers through wicked means

But because there still remain two ways in which one can become a ruler, which cannot be attributed entirely either to favour or luck or to ability; I do not want to neglect them, even though one of them could be discussed at greater length when dealing with republics. These two ways are seizing power through utterly wicked means, and a private citizen becoming ruler of his country through the favour of his fellow-citizens. Considering the first way now, I shall cite two examples, one ancient and the other modern, without considering explicitly the merits of this way of gaining power, for I think they should be enough for anyone who needs to imitate them.

Agathocles the Sicilian, who became King of Syracuse, was not only an ordinary citizen, but of the lowest and most abject origins. He was the son of a potter, and he always led a very dissolute life. Nevertheless, his evil deeds were combined with such energy of mind and body that, after having entered the militia, he rose through the ranks to become praetor of Syracuse. Holding that position, he resolved to become ruler, and to hold violently and without being beholden to others the power that had been conferred on him. In order to achieve this purpose, he conspired with Hamilcar the Carthaginian, who was campaigning in Sicily. One morning he called together the people and the senate of Syracuse, as if some matter concerning the republic had to be decided. Then, at a prearranged signal, his soldiers killed all the senators and the richest men of the city. After this massacre, he seized control of the city, and thereafter held it without any civil strife.

Although he was twice defeated by the Carthaginians, and eventually besieged by them, he not only showed himself capable of defending his besieged city but, leaving part of his army to resist the siege, he attacked Africa with the rest. Very soon he was able to relieve Syracuse from the siege, and went on to reduce Carthage to the direst straits. Consequently, the Carthaginians were forced to make an agreement with him, according to which they were to remain in Africa and leave Sicily to Agathocles.

If Agathocles's conduct and career are reviewed, then, it will be seen that luck or favour played little or no part in his success, since (as has been said above) it was not through anyone's favour, but through overcoming countless difficulties and dangers, that he rose up through the ranks of the militia, and gained power, which he afterwards maintained by undertaking many courageous and dangerous courses of action.

Yet it cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow-citizens, to betray one's friends, to be treacherous, merciless and irreligious; power may be gained by acting in such ways, but not glory. If one bears in mind the ability displayed by Agathocles in confronting and surviving dangers, and his indomitable spirit in enduring and overcoming adversity, there is no reason for judging him inferior to even the ablest general. Nevertheless, his appallingly cruel and inhumane conduct, and countless wicked deeds, preclude his being numbered among the finest men. One cannot, then, attribute either to luck or favour or to ability what he achieved without either.

In our own times, when Alexander VI was pope, Oliverotto of Fermo, whose father died when he was very young, was brought up by Giovanni Fogliani, his maternal uncle, and when still a youth was sent to train as a soldier under Paulo Vitelli, with a view to his achieving high rank when he had become proficient in things military. After Paulo's execution, he trained under Vitellozzi, Paulo's brother; and since he was clever, and strong in body and spirit, in a very short time he became a leader of Vitellozzi's troops. But because he considered it demeaning

\[ \text{footnotes:}\]

"M. refers to Chs. VI and VII."
"Cf. Disc. I. 52; III. 8. 34."
"The other is the theme of Ch. IX."
"M.'s account of Agathocles, which follows closely Bk XXII of Justinus's history, is not always accurate."
"di privata fortuna: i.e., he did not belong to a family prominent in public life."
"I.e., commander of the army."
"Not all of Sicily, but only the Greek part."
"Cf. Disc. III. 40."
"Cf. Disc. III. 40."
"Cf. Disc. III. 40."
"Cf. Disc. III. 40."
"On 1 Oct. 1499. See p. 45."
to serve under another, he resolved to seize power in Fermo, with Vitellozzo's assistance, and with the help of some citizens of Fermo, to whom the servitude of their native city was preferable to its free institutions. Accordingly, he wrote to Giovanni Fogliani, saying that since he had been away from home for many years, he wanted to come to see him and his own city, and to inspect in some measure his own patrimony. Since achieving honour had been the only goal of all his efforts, so that his fellow-citizens would realise that he had not spent his time in vain, he wanted to return in a way that did him honour, and accompanied by a hundred cavalrymen drawn from his friends and followers. And he beseeched Giovanni to arrange for him to be received with due honour by the citizens of Fermo; this would not only honour himself, but also Giovanni, who had educated him.

Giovanni did not fail to treat his nephew with the utmost courtesy, and after the citizens (thanks to Giovanni) had received him with every honour, he was lodged in Giovanni's house, where, after he had spent some days secretly arranging everything that was necessary for carrying out his intended crime, Oliverotto held a formal banquet, to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani and all the leading citizens of Fermo. After the banquet, and all the entertainments customary on such occasions, Oliverotto artfully raised some serious matters, speaking of the great power of Pope Alexander and his son Cesare, and of their various enterprises. When Giovanni and the others began to reply to what Oliverotto had said, he suddenly arose, saying that such matters should be discussed in a more private place. And he went into another room, followed by Giovanni and all the others. No sooner were they all seated than his soldiers emerged from hiding-places, and killed Giovanni and all the others.

After this massacre, Oliverotto mounted his horse and rode through the city, taking possession of it, and besieged the chief magistrates in their palace. They were so afraid that they felt constrained to obey him, and they formed a new government, of which he made himself the head. And when he had killed all the malcontents who could have

harmed him, he consolidated his power by means of new civil and military institutions, so that in the space of the year that he held power he was not only secure in the city of Fermo, but made all the neighbouring powers fear him. And ousting him would have been as difficult as ousting Agathocles, if he had not let himself be tricked by Cesare Borgia, when the Orsini leaders and Vitellozzo Vitelli were captured (as was previously related) at Senigallia. He too was captured there, a year after his paricide, and together with Vitellozzo, his former mentor in prowess and villainy, strangled.

It may well be wondered how it could happen that Agathocles, and others like him, after committing countless treacherous and cruel deeds, could live securely in their own countries for a long time, defend themselves against external enemies and never be plotted against by their citizens. For many others have not been able to maintain their power by acting cruelly even in peaceful times let alone in times of war, which are always uncertain.

I believe that this depends upon whether cruel deeds are committed well or badly. They may be called well committed (if one may use the word 'well' of that which is evil) when they are all committed at once, because they are necessary for establishing one's power, and are not afterwards persisted in, but changed for measures as beneficial as possible to one's subjects. Badly committed are those that at first are few in number, but increase with time rather than diminish. Those who follow the first method can in some measure remedy their standing both with God and with men, as Agathocles did. Those who follow the second cannot possibly maintain their power.

Hence, it should be noted that a conqueror, after seizing power, must decide about all the injuries he needs to commit, and do all of them at once, so as not to have to inflict punishments every day. Thus he will be able, by his restraint, to reassure men and win them over by benefiting them. Anyone who does not act in this way, either because he is timid or because he lacks judgement, will always be forced to stand with sword in hand. He will never be able to rely upon his subjects, for they can never feel safe with him, because of the injuries that continue to be inflicted. For injuries should be done all together so that, because they are tasted less, they will cause less resentment;

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[* See p. 25. | [† As M. advises rulers to do on p. 36. | [‡ I.e., to those who are not 'injured', and who would otherwise be afraid or hostile. |
The Prince

benefits should be given out one by one, so that they will be savoured more. And above all a ruler must live with his subjects in such a way that no unexpected events, whether favourable or unfavourable, will make him change course. For when difficult times put you under pressure you will not have enough time to take harsh measures, and any benefits that you confer will not help you, because they will be considered to be done unwillingly, and so you will receive no credit for them.

Chapter IX

The civil principality

I turn now to the other case, when a private citizen becomes ruler of his own country through the favour of his fellow-citizens, not through villainy or intolerable violence of other kinds; this may be called a civil principality (and to attain it, it is not necessary to have only ability or only good luck, but rather a lucky astuteness). I say that one rises to this position either through being favoured by the people or through being favoured by the nobles; for these two classes are found in every city. And this situation arises because the people do not want to be dominated or oppressed by the nobles, and the nobles want to dominate and oppress the people. And from these two different dispositions there are three possible outcomes in cities: a principality, a republic or anarchy.

This kind of principality is brought about either by the people or by the nobles, according to whether one or the other has the opportunity to act. As for the nobles, when they are unable to resist popular pressure, they begin to favour and advance one of themselves, and make him ruler so that, under his protection, they will be able to satisfy their appetites. On the other hand, the people, when they realise that they cannot resist the nobles, favour and advance one of themselves, and make him ruler, so that through his authority he will be able to protect them.

A man who becomes ruler through the help of the nobles will find it harder to maintain his power than one who becomes ruler through the help of the people, because he is surrounded by many men who consider that they are his equals, and therefore he cannot give them orders or deal with them as he would wish. On the other hand, a man who becomes ruler through popular support finds himself standing alone, having around him nobody or very few not disposed to obey him.

Moreover, the nobles cannot be satisfied if a ruler acts honourably, without injuring others. But the people can be thus satisfied, because their aims are more honourable than those of the nobles: for the latter want only to oppress and the former only to avoid being oppressed. Furthermore, a ruler can never protect himself from a hostile people, because there are too many of them; but he can protect himself from the nobles, because there are few of them. The worst that can befall a ruler from a hostile people is being deserted by them; but he has to fear not only being abandoned by hostile nobles, but also that they will move against him. Since they are more far-seeing and cunning, they are able to act in time to save themselves, and seek to ingratiate themselves with the one whom they expect to prevail. Again, a ruler is always obliged to co-exist with the same people, whereas he is not obliged to have the same nobles, since he is well able to make and unmake them at any time, advancing them or reducing their power, as he wishes.

To clarify this matter, let me say that two main considerations need to be borne in mind with regard to the nobles. Either they conduct themselves in a way that links your success with theirs, or they do not. You should honour and esteem those of the former who are not rapacious. As for those who do not commit themselves to you, two different kinds of reason for their conduct must be distinguished. If they act in this way because of pusillanimity or natural lack of spirit, you should make use of them, especially those who are shrewd, because in good times they will bring you honour, and in troubled times you will have nothing to fear from them. But if they do not commit themselves
to you calculatingly and because of ambition, it is a sign that they are thinking more of their own interests than of yours. And a ruler must watch these nobles very carefully, and fear them as much as if they were declared enemies, because if he finds himself in trouble they will always do their best to bring him down.

A man who becomes ruler through popular favour, then, must keep the people well disposed towards him. This will be easy, since they want only not to be oppressed. But a man who becomes ruler against the wishes of the people, and through the favour of the nobles, must above all else try to win over the people, which will be easy if you protect them. And if men are well treated by those from whom they expected ill-treatment, they become more attached to their benefactor; the people will at once become better disposed towards him than if he had attained power through their favour. A ruler can win over the people in many ways; but because these vary so much according to the circumstances one cannot give any definite rules, and I shall therefore leave this matter on one side. I shall affirm only that it is necessary for a ruler to have the people well disposed towards him; otherwise, in difficult times he will find himself in desperate straits.

Nabis, ruler of the Spartans, withstood a siege by all the other Greek powers and by a triumphant Roman army, defending both his country and his own power against them. When danger threatened, he needed only to act against a few; but if the people had been hostile to him, this would not have been enough. And doubt should not be cast on my opinion by quoting the trite proverb, 'He who builds upon the people, builds upon mud.' This is true if it is a private citizen who builds his power upon them, and believes that the people will come to his rescue if he is oppressed by his enemies or by the rulers. In such circumstances one may often be disappointed, as the Gracchi were in Rome and messer Giorgio Scali in Florence. But if it is a ruler who builds his power upon the people, and if he knows how to command and if he is courageous, does not despair in difficult times, and maintains the morale of his people by his spiritedness and the measures that he takes,

he will never find himself let down by them, and he will realise he had laid sound foundations for his power.

These civil principalties tend to encounter grave difficulties if an attempt is made to transform them into absolute regimes. For civil rulers either rule directly or through public officials. In the latter case their position is weaker and more dangerous, because they depend completely on the goodwill of those citizens who act as their officials. And, especially in troubled times, they can very easily remove him from power, either by moving against him or simply by refusing to obey him. Moreover, in troubled times, the ruler does not have enough time to assume absolute authority, because the citizens or subjects, accustomed as they are to obeying the officials, will not be disposed to obey him in such a crisis. And in difficult times, he will always lack men on whom he can depend.

For such a ruler cannot rely upon what he sees happen in peaceful times, when citizens have need of his government, because then everyone comes running, everyone is ready with promises, and everyone wants to die for him, when the prospect of death is far off. But in troubled times, when the government needs the services of the citizens, few are then to be found. And it is especially dangerous to have to test their loyalty, because it can be done only once. A shrewd ruler, therefore, must try to ensure that his citizens, whatever the situation may be, will always be dependent on the government and on him; and then they will always be loyal to him.

Chapter X

How the strength of all principalities should be measured

There is another consideration that must be borne in mind when examining the strength of principalities: namely, whether a ruler has

[1 Against the Achaean League, as an ally of Philip V of Macedon. Cf. Livy, XXXIV, 22-40.]

[2 Few of his subjects' is implied. Nabis favoured the people at the expense of the nobles, and Livy (XXXIV, 27) relates that he imprisoned and then killed about eighty prominent young men.]

[3 These difficulties, then, are not inherent in 'civil principalities'; they arise if such a state is being changed into an 'absolute' regime, that is, a 'tyranny' (see Disc. I, 25).]

[4 Cf. p. 59.]