Book Two

[THE GROWTH
OF ROME'S EMPIRE]

[The Preface]

Men always, but not always with good reason, praise bygone
days and criticize the present, and so partial are they to the past
that they not only admire past ages the knowledge of which
has come down to them in written records, but also, when
they grow old, what they remember having seen in their
youth. And, when this view is wrong, as it usually is, there
are, I am convinced, various causes to which the mistake may
be due.

The first of them is, I think, this. The whole truth about
olden times is not grasped, since what redounds to their dis-
credit is often passed over in silence, whereas what is likely to
make them appear glorious is pompously recounted in all its
details. For so obsequious are most writers to the fortune of
conquerors that, in order to make their victories seem glorious,
they not only exaggerate their own valorous deeds, but also
magnify the exploits of the enemy, so that anyone born after-
wards either in the conquering or in the conquered province
may find cause to marvel at such men and such times, and is
bound, in short, to admire them and to feel affection for them.

Another reason is that, since it is either through fear or
through envy that men come to hate things, in the case of the
past the two most powerful incentives for hating it are lacking,
since the past cannot hurt you nor give you cause for envy. Whereas it is otherwise with events in which you play a part and which you see with your own eyes, for of these you have an intimate knowledge, are in touch with every detail, and in them find, mingled with the good, also much which displeases you; so that you cannot help thinking them far inferior to the remote past, even though in fact the present may be much more deserving of praise and renown. I am not here referring to what pertains to the arts, for in themselves they have so much lustre that time can scarce take away or add much to the glory which they themselves deserve. I am speaking of things appertaining to human life and human customs, the evidence for whose merit is not so clear to one's eyes.

My answer is, then, that it is true there exists this habit of praising the past and criticizing the present, and not always true that to do so is a mistake, for it must be admitted that sometimes such a judgement is valid because, since human affairs are ever in a state of flux, they move either upwards or downwards. Thus one sees a city or a province that has been endowed with a sound political constitution by some eminent man, thanks to its founder's virtue for a time go on steadily improving. Anyone born in such a state at such a time, is wrong if he gives more praise to the past than to the present, and his mistake will be due to the causes we have mentioned above. But those who are born in this city or province later on, when there has come a time in which it is on the decline and is deteriorating, will not then be in error.

When I reflect that it is in this way that events pursue their course it seems to me that the world has always been in the same condition, and that in it there has been just as much good as there is evil, but that this evil and this good has varied from province to province. This may be seen from the knowledge we have of ancient kingdoms, in which the balance of good and evil changed from one to the other owing to changes in their customs, whereas the world as a whole remained the same. The only difference was that the world's virtue first found a home in Assyria, then flourished in Media and later in Persia, and at length arrived in Italy and Rome. And, if since the Roman empire there has been no other which has lasted, and in which the world's virtue has been centred, one none the less finds it distributed among many nations where men lead virtuous lives. There was, for instance, the kingdom of the Franks; the kingdom of the Turks, [i.e.] that of the Sultan; and today all the peoples of Germany. Earlier still there were the Saracens, who performed such great exploits and occupied so much of the world, since they broke up the Roman empire in the East. Hence, after ruin had overtaken the Romans, there continued to exist in all these provinces and in all these separate units, and still exists in some of them, that virtue which is desired and quite rightly praised. If, then, anyone born there praises the past over and above the present, he may well be mistaken; but anyone born in Italy who has not become at heart an ultramontane, or anyone born in Greece who has not become at heart a Turk, has good reason to criticize his own times and to praise others, since in the latter there are plenty of things to evoke his admiration, whereas in the former he comes across nothing but extreme misery, infamy and contempt, for there is no observance either of religion or of the laws, or of military traditions, but all is besmirched with filth of every kind. And so much the more are these vices detestable when they are more prevalent among those who sit on the judgement seat, prescribe rules for others, and expect from them adoration.

But to return to our main point, I maintain that if man's judgement is biased when he tries to decide which is the better, the present age, or some past age of which he cannot have so perfect a knowledge as he has of his own times precisely because it is long since past, this ought not to bias the judgement
of old men when they compare the days of their youth with those of their old age, for of both they have had the same knowledge and experience. Nor would it in point of fact, if during the various phases of their lives men judged always in the same way and had the same appetites. But, as men’s appetites change, even though their circumstances remain the same, it is impossible that things should look the same to them seeing that they have other appetites, other interests, other standpoints, from what they had in their youth. For, since, when men grow old, they lack energy but increase in judgement and prudence, it is inevitable that what in their youth appeared to be tolerable and good, in their old age should become intolerable and bad; so that, instead of blaming the times, they should lay the blame on their own judgement. Furthermore, human appetites are insatiable, for by nature we are so constituted that there is nothing we cannot long for, but by fortune we are such that of these things we can attain but few. The result is that the human mind is perpetually discontented, and of its possessions is apt to grow weary. This makes it find fault with the present, praise the past, and long for the future; though for its doing so no rational cause can be assigned. Hence I am not sure but that I deserve to be reckoned among those who thus deceive themselves if in these my discourses I have praised too much the days of the ancient Romans and have found fault with our own. Indeed, if the virtue which then prevailed and the vices which are prevalent today were not as clear as the sun, I should be more reserved in my statements lest I should fall into the very fault for which I am blaming others. But as the facts are there for any one to see, I shall make so bold as to declare plainly what I think of those days and of our own, so that the minds of young men who read what I have written may turn from the one and prepare to imitate the other whenever fortune provides them with occasion for so doing. For it is the duty of a good man to point out to others what is well done, even though the malignity of the times or of fortune has not permitted you to do it for yourself, to the end that, of the many who have the capacity, some one, more beloved of heaven, may be able to do it.

Having, therefore, in the discourses of the last book spoken of the decisions the Romans came to in regard to the internal affairs of the city, in this we shall speak of the measures the Roman people took to increase their empire.
Book Two

[discourses 1-5]

[METHODS OF EXPANSION]

1. Whether Virtue or Fortune was the Principal Cause of the Empire which Rome acquired

Many are of opinion, and among them Plutarch, a writer of great weight, that the Roman people was indebted for the empire it acquired rather to fortune than to virtue. Among other reasons he adduces he says that the Roman people by their own confession admit this since they ascribed all their victories to fortune, and erected more temples to Fortune than to any other god. It would seem that with this view Livy also agrees, for rarely does he put into the mouth of any Roman a speech in which he tells of virtue without conjoining fortune with it.

With this view I cannot by any means agree, nor do I think it can be upheld. For if there is nowhere to be found a republic so successful as was Rome, this is because there is nowhere to be found a republic so constituted as to be able to make the conquests Rome made. For it was the virtue of her armies that caused Rome to acquire an empire, and it was her constitutional procedure and the peculiar customs which she owed to her first legislator that enabled her to maintain what she had acquired, as will be explained at length in many of the discourses which follow.

The aforesaid writers claim that Rome's never having been engaged in two very big wars at one and the same time was due to the fortune, not to the virtue, of the Roman people; for there was no war with the Latins until Rome had so thoroughly beaten the Samnites that she had to go to war in their defence. Nor did the Romans fight the Tuscans until the Latins had been subjugated and the Samnites were almost entirely exhausted by frequent defeats; yet had two of these powers, while yet intact and vigorous, united together, it is easy to conjecture, nor can one doubt, that it would have meant ruin for the Roman republic. Anyhow, however it came about, it is a fact that the Romans never had two very big wars going on at the same time; on the contrary, one finds that either when one began the other faded out, or that when one faded out the other began. This can easily be seen from the order in which their wars took place. For, setting aside those waged before Rome was taken by the Gauls, we see that, while they were fighting with the Aequis and the Volsci, no other people attacked them so long as the Aequis and Volsci were strong. It was only after they were beaten that the war with the Samnites arose; and although before this war was over the Latin peoples rebelled against the Romans, yet, when this rebellion occurred, the Samnites were already in alliance with Rome and with their armies helped the Romans to subjugate Latin insolence. When they had been subjugated, the war with Samnium flared up again. And when the forces of the Samnites were beaten owing to the many routes inflicted on them, war with the Tuscans broke out; and, when this was settled, the Samnites started a fresh one, owing to the arrival of Pyrrhus in Italy. On Pyrrhus being repulsed and sent back to Greece, they started on their first war with the Carthaginians; and, scarce was this war over, when all the Gauls, both from this and from the other side of the Alps, conspired against the Romans, with the result that they were
II. I METHODS OF EXPANSION

defeated with immense slaughter between Popolonia and Pisa, where the tower of St Vincent now stands. When this war ended, they had no war of any importance for the space of twenty years, for they fought with no one except the Ligurians and what remained of the Gauls in Lombardy. Matters stood thus until the second Punic war, which led to Italy’s being occupied for sixteen years. When this came to an end amid great glory, the Macedonian war broke out, and, when this was over, there came the war with Antiochus and with Asia. After which victories there remained in the whole world neither princes nor republics which, either alone or all together, could successfully oppose the forces of Rome.

If, before the final victory, we consider well the order in which these wars took place and the Roman method of procedure, it will be seen that in them, mingled with fortune, was virtue and prudence of a very high order. Hence, if one looks for the cause of this fortune, it should be easy to find. For it is quite certain that, when a prince and a people has acquired such repute that each of the neighbouring princes and peoples is afraid to attack it and fears it, no one will ever assault it unless driven thereunto by necessity; so that it will be open, so to speak, to that power to choose the neighbour on which it seems best to make war, and industriously to foster tranquility among the rest. In this, owing in part to the respect they have for its power, and in part to their being deceived by the means it takes to lull them to sleep, they readily acquiesce. For other powers, which are farther away and have no intercourse with it, look on the affair as remote from their interests and as no concern of theirs; and in this error they remain until the conflagration is at their doors. Nor, when it arrives, have they any means of stopping it except by their own forces, which will then be inadequate, since the state in question has now become very powerful.

EMPIRE, VIRTUE AND FORTUNE II.I

I do not propose to deal with the Samnites, who stood by, watching the Roman people overcome the Volsci and the Aequi; and lest I should be too prolix, only the Carthaginians, who were already a great power and in great esteem when the Romans were fighting the Samnites and the Tuscans, for they held the whole of Africa, held Sardinia and Sicily, and had dominion over part of Spain. This their power, conjoined with the fact that they were remote from the confines of the Roman people, accounts for their never having thought of attacking the Romans, or of helping the Samnites and Tuscans. On the contrary, they acted as men do when things seem to be moving rapidly in another’s favour, namely, came to terms with her, and sought her friendship. Nor was the mistake thus made at the outset realized until the Romans had conquered all the peoples that lay between them and the Carthaginians and they began to contend with each other for the dominion of Sicily and Spain. The same thing happened to the Gauls, to Philip, king of Macedon, and to Antiochus as happened to the Carthaginians. Whilst Rome was engaged with some other state, each of them thought the other state would beat Rome, and that they had time enough to protect themselves against her either by peaceful or by warlike methods. I am of opinion, therefore, that the fortune which Rome had in these matters, all rulers would have who should emulate Roman methods and should be imbued with the same virtue.

I should point out in this connection how the Romans behaved on entering foreign provinces, had I not spoken of it at length in my treatise on principalities, for I have there discussed the question fully. Here I shall make but this remark in passing. The Romans always took care to have in new provinces some friend to act as a ladder up which to climb or a door by which to enter, or as a means whereby to hold it. Thus we see that with the help of the Capuans they got
Methods of Expansion

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

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

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

Nothing made it harder for the Romans to conquer the peoples of the central and outlying parts of Italy than the love which in those times many peoples had for liberty. So obstinately did they defend it that only by outstanding virtue could they ever have been subjugated. For numerous instances show to what dangers they exposed themselves in order to maintain or to recover it, and what vendettas they kept up against those who had taken it away. The study of history reveals, too, the harm that servitude has done to peoples and to cities. There is, indeed, in our own times only one country which can be said to have in it free cities, whereas in ancient times quite a number of genuinely free peoples were to be found in all countries. One sees how in the times of which we are speaking at present the peoples of Italy from the Apennines which now divide Tuscany from Lombardy, right down to its toe, were all of them free. The Tuscans, the Romans, the Samnites were, for instance, and so were many other peoples who dwelt in other parts of Italy. One never hears of there being any kings, apart from those who reigned in Rome, and Porsenna, the king of Tuscany, whose stock became extinct, though history does not tell us how. It is quite clear, however, that at the time when the Romans laid siege to Veii, Tuscany was free. Moreover, it enjoyed its freedom so much, and so hated the title of prince, that, when the people of Veii appointed a king in that city for the purpose of defence, and asked the Tuscans to help them against the Romans, the Tuscans after many consultations had been held, decided not to give help to the people of Veii so long as they lived under a king, since they held that they could not well defend a country whose people had already placed themselves in subjection to someone else.

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

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

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

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

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

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{uno vivere libero.}
  \item \textit{virtuoso.}
  \item \textit{per virtù d'arme.}
\end{itemize}
methods of expansion

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

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

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

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

---

\[a\] il sommo bene – the ‘summum bonum’, a technical scholastic term.  
\[b\] principi.  
\[c\] cose umane.  
\[d\] Pizio.

---

278
It is easy, moreover, to see whence arose that order and how this disorder came about. For it is all due to the independence which then was and to the servitude which now is. Because, as has been said before, all towns and all countries that are in all respects free, profit by this enormously. For, wherever increasing populations are found, it is due to the freedom with which marriage is contracted and to its being more desired by men. And this comes about where every man is ready to have children, since he believes that he can rear them and feels sure that his patrimony will not be taken away, and since he knows that not only will they be born free, instead of into slavery, but that, if they have virtue, they will have a chance of becoming rulers. One observes, too, how riches multiply and abound there, alike those that come from agriculture and those that are produced by the trades. For everybody is eager to acquire such things and to obtain property, provided he be convinced that he will enjoy it when it has been acquired. It thus comes about, in competition one with the other, men look both to their own advantage and to that of the public; so that in both respects wonderful progress is made. The contrary of this happens in countries which live in servitude; and the harder the servitude the more does the well-being to which they are accustomed, dwindle.

Of all forms of servitude, too, that is the hardest which subjects you to a republic. First because it is more lasting, and there is no hope of escape; secondly because the aim of a republic is to deprive all other corporations of their vitality and to weaken them, to the end that its own body corporate may increase. A prince who makes you his subject, does not do this unless he be a barbarian who devastates the country and destroys all that man has done for civilization, as oriental princes do. On the contrary, if his institutions be humane and he behave constitutionally, he will more often than not be equally fond of all the cities that are subject to him, and will leave them in possession of all their trades and all their ancient institutions. So that, if they are unable to increase, as free cities do, they will not be ruined like those that are enslaved. I refer here to the servitude that befalls cities which are subject to a foreigner, for of those that are subject to one of their own citizens I have already spoken.

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

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

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

neighbouring cities are destroyed and their inhabitants are sent to dwell in your city. This custom was so studiously observed in Rome that, in the time of its sixth king, there dwelt in Rome eighty thousand men bearing arms. For in this the Romans sought to do as a good farmer does, who, that a plant may grow big and produce and mature its fruit, cuts off the first branches that are put forth so that its roots may gather virtue and in due course may produce greener and more fruitful branches.

That this method of providing for expansion and a future empire was both necessary and good is shown by the example of Sparta and Athens, two republics which were very well armed and governed by the best laws, yet never attained the greatness of the Roman empire, though Rome appears to have been more tumultuous and not so well governed as they were. For this no reason can be assigned other than that already adduced. For Rome, by pursuing these two ways of enlarging the composition of her city, was able to put under arms two hundred and eighty thousand men, whereas Sparta and Athens could never muster twenty thousand each. This was not due to Rome’s being in a more advantageous position than was theirs, but simply to the difference in their modes of procedure. For Lycurgus, the founder of the Spartan republic, thought nothing more likely to frustrate his laws than the admixture of new inhabitants, and so did everything he could to prevent foreigners having any intercourse with the citizens. Not only was intermarriage forbidden, but also the admittance to civic rights and other forms of intercommunication which bring men together. In addition to which he instituted a coinage of leather, so that nobody might be tempted to come there with merchandise or any manufactured goods. Hence it was impossible for the inhabitants of that city ever to grow in number.

Since all our actions resemble those of nature, it is neither possible nor natural that a slender trunk should support a heavy branch. Hence a small republic cannot take possession of cities and kingdoms which are stronger and larger than itself: and, should it actually do so, it will happen as it does in the case of a tree which has a branch that is bigger than its trunk: it will support the branch with difficulty, and the least wind weakens it. This is just what happened to Sparta. It occupied all the cities of Greece. Then, when Thebes rebelled, all the other cities rebelled, and the trunk was left without branches. In Rome’s case this could not happen, for it had so large a trunk that it could easily support any branch. This mode of procedure, therefore, together with others of which we shall presently speak, made Rome great and exceedingly powerful, as Titus Livy pithily points out when he says: ‘Rome meanwhile grows on the ruins of Alba.’

4. Republics have adopted Three Methods of Expansion

The student of ancient histories will find that there are three ways in which republics have expanded. The first was that which the Tuscans of old adopted, namely, that of forming a league consisting of several republics in which no one of them had preference, authority or rank above the others; and in which, when other cities were acquired, they made them constituent members in the same way as the Swiss act in our times, and as in Greece the Achaeeans and the Aetolians acted in olden times. Now, since the Romans made frequent war on the Tuscans, I shall pay special attention to them in order the better to show the nature of this first method.

Before the Romans established their imperium in Italy, the Tuscans were very powerful both by sea and by land. Though of their affairs history gives no exact account, there are one or two records and monuments which give some indication of their greatness. We know, for instance, that
they sent to the mare superum, a colony which they called Adria, and that it was of such noble proportions that it gave its name to that sea which is still called the ‘Adriatic’ by the Latins. We likewise know that their arms held sway from the Tiber right up to the foot of the Alps, which encircle here the main portion of Italy, though they lost their imperium over that country which is now called Lombardy two hundred years before the Romans had acquired much power. For this district was occupied by the Gauls, who, driven by necessity or attracted by the sweetness of its fruit and especially of its wine, invaded Italy under Bellovesus, their leader, defeated and drove out the inhabitants, and settled in this region, where they built many towns. They called this district ‘Gaul’, since this was the name they then bore; and they held it till they were conquered by the Romans. The Tuscans, therefore, worked on the basis of equality, and, in expanding, followed the first of the methods mentioned above. There were twelve cities, and among others they included Chiusi, Veii, Arezzo, Fiesole, Volterra and so forth, each of which, as a member of the league, shared in the government of its empire. They never succeeded, however, in extending their gains beyond Italy; and of Italy, too, the greater part remained intact, for reasons which will presently be given.

The second method consists in forming alliances in which you reserve to yourself the headship, the seat in which the central authority resides, and the right of initiative. This was the method adopted by the Romans. The third method is to make other states subjects instead of allies, as the Spartans and the Athenians did. Of these three methods the last is quite useless, as is seen in the case of the two republics just mentioned. For they came to disaster for the simple reason that they had acquired a dominion which they could not hold. For to undertake the responsibility of governing cities by force, especially such as have been accustomed to self-government, is a difficult and tiresome business. And unless you have armed forces, and they are strong forces, you can neither impose obedience on, nor rule, them. For, if this be your plan, it is essential to have allies to assist you, and to increase the population of your own city. Wherefore, since these two cities did neither of these things, their mode of procedure was futile. But, since Rome, which exemplifies the second method, did both, she rose to exceedingly great power. And, since she was the only state that thus behaved, she was the only one that became so powerful. And, since she made many states her allies throughout the whole of Italy, which to a large extent lived under the same laws, and since, on the other hand, she reserved to herself, as has been said, the seat of empire and the right to issue orders, these allies without being aware of it, fell under her yoke and laboured and shed their blood on her behalf. For when they began to go forth with the armies of Italy and to transform kingdoms into provinces and to make subjects of those who did not mind being subjects since they were accustomed to live under kings, and who, since they had Roman governors and had been conquered by armies bearing the Roman insignia, recognized no superior other than Rome, the result was that Rome’s allies inside Italy found themselves before long encircled by Roman subjects and with an immense city, such as Rome had now become, towering above them; so that, when they realized the mistake they had been making, it was too late to put it right, so great was the authority Rome now exercised over outside provinces and so great the force which lay at her disposal within, since she had a city so enormous and so extremely well armed. And though her allies, to avenge their injuries, formed a league against her, they were soon defeated in war, with the result that their position became worse, for instead of being Rome’s allies, they now became Rome’s subjects. This mode of procedure, as has been
said, has only been adopted by the Romans. Nor can a republic that wants to expand, adopt any other, for experience has shown that no other is so certain or so sure.

The alternative method of leagues, mentioned above and adopted by the Tuscans, the Achaecans, and the Aetolians, and today by the Swiss, is the next best to that of the Romans. For, though by this method it is impossible to expand indefinitely, it has two advantages. First, it does not readily involve you in war; secondly, you can easily hold as much as you take. The reason why such a republic cannot expand is that its members are distinct and each has its own capital; which makes it difficult for them to consult and to make decisions. It means also that they are less keen on acquiring dominion, for, since many communities share in that dominion, they do not appreciate further acquisitions in the same way as does a single republic which hopes to enjoy the whole. Furthermore, a league is governed by a council, which must needs be slower in arriving at any decision than are those who dwell within one and the same circle. Experience shows, too, that such a method of forming a confederation has a fixed limit, and that there is no case which indicates that this limit can be transcended. Twelve or fourteen communities join together, and beyond that they do not seek to go; for, having attained the stage at which it seems to them they can defend themselves against all comers, they do not try to extend their dominion, whether because necessity does not require them to have more power, or because they see no advantage in acquisitions for the reasons already given. For in that case they would have to do one of two things: either to proceed to get allies, which, owing to their number, would entail confusion; or to make others their subjects, which they do not care to do since in it they see difficulty and in having them no great advantage. Hence, when they have reached the number which appears to promise them security, they devote themselves to two things. (i) They accept and undertake the protection of those who apply for it, and by this means get from all around money which can easily be distributed among them. (ii) They also fight for others and take pay from a prince here and a prince there who is prepared to spend money on his enterprises.

This, as we see, is what the Swiss are doing today. It is also, as we read, what was done by the states mentioned above. Titus Livy bears witness to this when he tells us that, at a conference between Philip, king of Macedonia, and Titus Quintius Flaminius, they were talking together amicably in presence of a praetor from the Aetolians, and that, when this praetor came to speak with Philip, Philip upbraided him for the avarice and double-dealing of his people, alleging that the Aetolians had not been ashamed to fight on one side and then to let their men take service with its enemy; so that the insignia of the Aetolians were often seen in two armies which were opposed. We find, then, that this method of forming leagues has always been the same, and has led to the same results. We see, too, that this method of acquiring subjects has always entailed weakness and has produced but small advantages; and that those who went beyond the appropriate limit, were speedily ruined. Moreover, if this method of acquiring subjects is useless to republics that are armed, it is utterly useless to those that are without arms; as it has proved to be in the case of the Italian republics in our time.

It thus becomes clear that the proper method to adopt is that which the Romans adopted; which is so much the more remarkable in that it was never adopted before, and has never been imitated by anyone since Rome. As to leagues, they are only found among the Swiss, and in the Swabian league which has copied it. And, as will be said at the close of this topic a great many institutions observed in Rome, pertaining both to internal and to foreign affairs, are not only not imitated at the present time, but are deemed to be of no account,
since some are looked on as fables, others as impracticable, others as irrelevant and useless; with the result that, owing to this ignorance, we [in Italy] have become the prey of anybody who has wanted to overrun this land. Yet, if to imitate the Roman way seems to be difficult, that of the Tuscans of old should not appear so difficult, especially to the Tuscans of today. For, though they were unable, for the reasons assigned, to form an empire like that of Rome, they did succeed in acquiring in Italy such power as this method of proceeding allowed. This method, too, was for a long time secure, resulting in the greatest glories of empire and of arms in the highest degree as well as customs and religious observances which are worthy of the highest praise. It was by the Gauls that this power and glory was first reduced, and by the Romans that it was extinguished; and so completely was it extinguished that great as was the power of the Tuscan two thousand years ago, of it at present there scarce remains a trace. Which leads me to consider how things come to be thus lost in oblivion, a point that will be discussed in the next chapter.\(^{41}\)

5. Changes of Religion and of Language, together with such Misfortunes as Floods or Pestilences, obliterate the Records of the Past

To those philosophers who want to make out that the world is eternal, I think the answer might be that, if it really were as old as all this, it would be reasonable to expect there would be records going back further than five thousand years, did we not see how the records of times gone by are obliterated by diverse causes, of which some are due to men and some to heaven. Those which are due to men are changes in religious institutions and in language. For, when a new religious institution comes into being, i.e. a new religion, its first care is, for the sake of its own reputation, to wipe out the old one; and, when the founders of a new religion happen to speak a different tongue, the old one is easily abolished. This becomes clear if we consider the measures which Christianity adopted vis-à-vis Paganism; how it abolished all pagan institutions, all pagan rites, and destroyed the records of the theology of the ancients. It is true that Christianity did not succeed in wiping out altogether the record of what outstanding men of the old religion had done; which was due to the retention of the Latin language, for this they had to retain so that they might use it in writing down their new laws. Had they been able to write them in a new tongue, there would, if we bear in mind the way they persecuted in other matters, have been no record of the past left at all.

Whoever reads of the measures taken by Saint Gregory and other heads of the Christian religion, will see what a fuss they made about getting rid of all records of the past, how they burnt the works of poets and historians, destroyed images and spoiled everything else that betokened in any way antiquity. So much so that, if to this persecution there had been conjoined a new language, in a short time one would have found all traces of the past wiped out. One can well believe, therefore, that what Christianity did with regard to Paganism,\(^{42}\) Paganism did to the religion that preceded it; and, as there have been two or three changes of religion in five or six thousand years, the record of what happened before that has been lost; or, if of it there remains a trace, it is regarded as a fable and no credence is given to it; as has happened with regard to the History of Diodorus Siculus, which covers a period of some forty or fifty thousand years, but is looked upon as untrustworthy, as I believe it to be.

The causes due to heaven are those which wipe out a whole generation and reduce the inhabitants in certain parts of the
people well armed and equipped for war, should always wait at home to wage war with a powerful and dangerous enemy, and should not go out to meet him; but that one who has ill-armed subjects and a country unused to war should always meet the enemy as far away from home as he can. Both of them will in this way defend themselves better, each in his degree.

13. Men rise from a Low to a Great Position by Means rather of Fraud than of Force

It is quite true, I think, that seldom, if ever, do men of low position obtain high rank except by force and by fraud, though there are, of course, others to whom rank comes merely by way of gift or inheritance. Nor do I think that force by itself ever suffices, whereas instances can easily be found in which fraud alone has sufficed. Anyone who has read the life of Philip of Macedon or that of Agathocles the Sicilian, for instance, or others of that ilk, will see that, from an extremely low, or at any rate a low position, they rose either to a kingdom or to very great power. Xenophon, in his Life of Cyrus, calls attention to the necessity for deceit. For in view of the amount of fraud used in the first expedition Cyrus made against the King of Armenia, and of the fact that it was by means of deceit, not by means of force, that he acquired his kingdom, one cannot but conclude from such actions that a prince who wishes to do great things must learn to practise deceit. Besides this, Xenophon also makes him deceive Cyaxares, king of the Medes, his maternal uncle, in various ways, and shows that without such frauds Cyrus could not have attained the greatness he did attain.

Nor do I think that anyone can be found whose position at *di piccola fortuna* in contrast with *gran fortuna*, the terms used in the heading.

the outset was humble, but who subsequently acquired vast power simply by the use of open and undisguised force: but it can quite well be done by using only fraud, as was done by Giovanni Galeazzo in order to deprive his uncle, Bernabo, of his position as ruler of Lombardy. And what princes have to do at the outset of their career, republics also must do until such time as they become powerful and can rely on force alone.

Since in all her decisions, whether by chance or by choice, Rome took all steps necessary to make herself great, she did not overlook fraud. She could not at the start have been more deceitful than she was in the means she took, as we were saying just now, to acquire allies, since under this title she made them her servants, as was the case with the Latins and other peoples round about. For she first availed herself of their arms in order to subjugate neighbouring peoples and to build up her reputation as a state, and then, having subdued them, she increased to such an extent that she could beat anyone. Nor would the Latins ever have realized that in reality they were mere slaves, if they had not seen the Samnites twice defeated and forced to accept Rome’s terms. Since this victory increased the already great reputation of the Romans with more distant rulers, who thus felt the impact of her name though not of her arms, envy and suspicion were aroused in those who did see and feel the weight of her arms, among them the Latins. So strong became this envy and this dread that not only the Latins, but also the colonies Rome had in Latium, together with the Campanians who a short while before had been defended by Rome, joined in a conspiracy against her. The Latins provoked this war in the way in which most wars are provoked, as has been pointed out above, namely, not by attacking the Romans, but by protecting the Sidicines against the Samnites, who had made war on them with Rome’s sanction. That the Latins were moved to do this because they recognized the deceit Rome had practised, is
shown by the words Titus Livy puts into the mouth of Annius Setinus, the Latin praetor, when speaking before the allied council: ‘For if under cover of a treaty between equals it has been possible to reduce us to servitude’, and so forth. 45

It is clear, therefore, that, when the power of the Romans was first beginning to grow, they did not fail to use fraud; of which it is always necessary that those should make use who from small beginnings wish to rise to sublime heights, and the better they conceal it, as the Romans did, the less blameworthy it is.

14. Men often make the Mistake of supposing that Pride is overcome by Humility

There are to be found numerous cases in which humility is not only no help, but is a hindrance, especially when used in dealing with arrogant men who, either out of envy or for some other cause, have come to hate you. This, our historian assures us, was the cause of the war between the Romans and the Latins. For, when the Samnites complained to the Romans that the Latins had attacked them, the Romans were unwilling to forbid the Latins to make war on them, because they did not wish to annoy them. Yet, by so doing, they not only annoyed them, but intensified their animosity and caused them the sooner to become open enemies. This is borne out by what the prefect, Annius, the Latin praetor, said to the aforementioned council of the allies: ‘You have tried their patience, by refusing them troops. Who can doubt that this has made them angry? Yet they have put up with it. They have heard that we have an army ready to attack their allies, the Samnites, yet they have not stirred from the city. To what is this marked modesty due if it be not that they are aware of the strength of our respective forces, ours and their own?’ This shows very clearly how much the patience of the Romans intensified the arrogance of the Latins.

15. The Decisions of Weak States are always fraught with Ambiguity, and the Slowness with which they arrive at them is Harmful

In regard to the topic we have been discussing in connection with the outbreak of war between the Romans and the Latins, it may be remarked that in all consultations it is well to come to the point which is under discussion, not to remain ever hesitant and uncertain in regard to the real issue. This is brought out very clearly in the consultation the Latins held
Book Two

[Discourses 19-23]

[The Administration of Conquered Territory and Other Problems Which Admit of No Middle Course]

19. Acquisitions made by Republics, when not well governed nor handled with the Virtue the Romans displayed, contribute to the Downfall, not to the Advancement, of such Republics

The erroneous views, based on ill-chosen examples, which have been introduced by our corrupt age, prevent men from considering whether to depart from the customary methods. Who could have persuaded an Italian, thirty years ago, that ten thousand infantry could attack ten thousand cavalry and as many infantry in an open plain and not only engage them in battle but defeat them, as happened at Novara — to cite a case already mentioned more than once? Even though history is full of such examples, nobody would have credited them; and, had they been credited, it would have been objected that in those days there are better arms, and that a squadron of men-at-arms should be able to hurl itself against a rock, not merely against an infantry battalion. With such false pretexts men impaired their judgement; nor would they have taken into account that Lucullus with a small force of infantry routed a hundred and fifty thousand cavalry under Tigranes,
II.19 ADMINISTRATION OF TERRITORY

it may not molest other states, it will be molested by them, and, when thus molested, there will arise in it the desire, and the need, for conquest. It will find, too, that, when it has no external foe, there will be one at home, for this seems necessarily to happen in all large cities.

That the republics of Germany have been able to live in this way [i.e. to maintain their status quo], and have lasted a considerable time, is due to the conditions which prevail in that country and are not found elsewhere, conditions without which it is impossible to maintain this type of polity. The part of Germany of which I am speaking was, like France and Spain, subject to the Roman empire; but, when later the Empire declined and the Imperial title was transferred to Germany, its more powerful towns, owing either to the weakness or to the exigencies of the emperors, began to free themselves, recompensing the emperor by the payment of a small annual tribute, so that little by little all the towns which had been directly dependent on the emperor and were not subject to any other prince, purchased their freedom in like manner. It also happened that, whilst these towns were in process of recovering their freedom, other communes which were subject to the Duke of Austria, rebelled against him—among them Fribourg, the Swiss communes, and others like them. These communes prospered from the start, and grew little by little to such dimensions that not only did they never fall under the Austrian yoke again, but they became the terror of all their neighbours. I mean the communes now called Switzerland.

Germany, then, is divided among the Swiss, republics called free states, princes and the emperor. And the reason why amidst such diverse forms of constitution wars do not arise, or, if they do arise, do not last long, is the Imperial title, for, though the emperor has no power to enforce his will, yet he has such standing among them that he acts as an arbitrator, and by interposing his authority, mediates between them and at once puts an end to any dissension. The more important and the longest wars that have occurred there, have been those between the Swiss and the Duke of Austria; and, though for many years the Emperor and the Duke of Austria have been identical, this has not enabled the Duke to overcome the boldness of the Swiss, among whose communes there would never have been an entente if they had not been driven to it. Nor has the rest of Germany given the Emperor much help; for, on the one hand, the communes do not want to harm those who desired, like themselves, to be free, and, on the other, the princes are in some cases unable to help on account of their poverty, and in others do not care to help, since they envy the Imperial power.

These communities, therefore, are able to live, content with their small dominions, since with respect to the Imperial authority they have no cause to desire more. Within their walls they live united because in the offing there is an enemy who, should there be internal disorder, would take the opportunity to subjugate them. Were conditions in Germany other than these, they would have to seek expansion and disrupt their present tranquility. And, since elsewhere such conditions are not present, other states cannot adopt this type of polity, but must needs expand either by means of confederations or in the way the Romans did. To adopt any other policy is to seek not life but death and ruin; since conquests are harmful in a thousand ways and for many reasons. For it is easy to acquire dominion but not at the same time military strength, and yet it must needs be that those who acquire dominion and not at the same time military strength are ruined. Nor can one who has been impoverished by wars acquire forces even if he be victorious, because he spends on them more than he gets from what he has acquired. This is what the Venetians and the Florentines did, and, when the
II.19 ADMINISTRATION OF TERRITORY

one held Lombardy and the other Tuscany, they were both much weaker than when the one was content with the sea and the other with boundaries six miles long.

The trouble in all such cases is that with the will to acquire there does not go the wisdom to adopt the right method. This is the more blameworthy in that today there is less excuse for it; for the way the Romans behaved is there for all to see, and their example can be followed, whereas the Romans had no example before them, and had to use their own intelligence in order to discover what to do.

In addition to this, conquests sometimes do no small harm even to a well-ordered republic when the province or city it has acquired is given to luxurious habits which can be taken up by those who have intercourse with it; as happened first to Rome when she acquired Capua, and then to Hannibal. Indeed, had Capua been so remote from Rome as to have had no remedy at hand for the mistake the soldiers made, or had Rome then been in any way corrupt, the acquisition of Capua would undoubtedly have been the end of the Roman republic. Titus Livy bears witness to this when he says: ‘Capua was by no means good for military discipline, for it afforded all manner of opportunities for indulgence which obliterated the memory of their fatherland in the debilitated minds of the troops.’ In this way cities and provinces avenge themselves on their conquerors without either battle or bloodshed, for, when the latter have become imbued with their deplorable habits, they are liable to be beaten by anyone who attacks them. This could not be put better than it is by Juvenal in his *Satires*, where, in dealing with this question, he says that the acquiring of foreign lands familiarized the minds of the Romans with foreign customs, so that, in place of frugality and its other high virtues, ‘gluttony and self-indulgence took possession of it and avenged the world it had conquered’.

If, then, the acquisition of territory did so much harm to the

AUXILIARIES AND MERCENARIES II.19–20

Romans at a time when their conduct was conspicuous for prudence and virtue, what effect will it have upon states whose conduct is very far removed from this? Upon states which, in addition to the other mistakes they make, of which enough has been said above, in their wars use either mercenary or auxiliary troops? From which there results harm of diverse kinds which will be mentioned in the next chapter.

20. On the Dangers which accrue to the Prince or the Republic that employs Auxiliary or Mercenary Troops

If I had not in another of my works discussed at length on the futility of mercenary and auxiliary troops and on the advantage of one’s own, I should make this discourse of greater length than I shall do; but having spoken at length elsewhere, I shall here be brief. Yet I cannot well omit to mention an important example which I have found in Titus Livy concerning auxiliary troops, where by ‘auxiliary troops’ I mean those that a prince or a republic sends to help you under commanders appointed and paid by that prince or that republic.

Coming then to Livy’s evidence, I would point out that, after the Romans in two different places had routed two Samnite armies with the armies which they had sent to help the Capuans, and had thus freed the Capuans from the war the Samnites had been waging against them, they decided to return to Rome. But lest the Capuans, when deprived of their help, should again fall a prey to the Samnites, they left two legions in the neighbourhood of Capua to defend them. These legions began to enjoy an idleness which was bad for them; so much so that, though it would mean being false to their fatherland and to the respect they owed the senate, they thought of taking up arms and making themselves lords of the country which by their valour they had defended, for it