

Niccolò Machiavelli

THE DISCOURSES

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
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WITH REVISIONS
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Book One

[THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROME'S CONSTITUTION]

[*The Preface*]

ALTHOUGH owing to the envy inherent in man's nature it has always been no less dangerous to discover new ways and methods than to set off in search of new seas and unknown lands because most men are much more ready to belittle than to praise another's actions, none the less, impelled by the natural desire I have always had to labour, regardless of anything, on that which I believe to be for the common benefit of all, I have decided to enter upon a new way, as yet untried by anyone else. And, even if it entails a tiresome and difficult task, it may yet reward me in that there are those who will look kindly on the purpose of these my labours. And if my poor ability, my limited experience of current affairs, my feeble knowledge of antiquity, should render my efforts imperfect and of little worth, they may none the less point the way for another of greater ability, capacity for analysis, and judgement, who will achieve my ambition; which, if it does not earn me praise, should not earn me reproaches.

When, therefore, I consider in what honour antiquity is held, and how – to cite but one instance – a bit of an old statue has fetched a high price that someone may have it by him to give honour to his house and that it may be possible for it to be copied by those who are keen on this art; and how the

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latter then with great industry take pains to reproduce it in all their works; and when, on the other hand, I notice that what history has to say about the highly virtuous actions performed by ancient kingdoms and republics, by their kings, their generals, their citizens, their legislators, and by others who have gone to the trouble of serving their country, is rather admired than imitated; nay, is so shunned by everybody in each little thing they do, that of the virtue of bygone days there remains no trace, it cannot but fill me at once with astonishment and grief. The more so when I see that in the civic disputes which arise between citizens and in the diseases men get, they always have recourse to decisions laid down by the ancients and to the prescriptions they drew up. For the civil law is nothing but a collection of decisions, made by jurists of old, which the jurists of today have tabulated in orderly fashion for our instruction. Nor, again, is medicine anything but a record of experiments, performed by doctors of old, upon which the doctors of our day base their prescriptions. In spite of which in constituting republics, in maintaining states, in governing kingdoms, in forming an army or conducting a war, in dealing with subjects, in extending the empire, one finds neither prince nor republic who repairs to antiquity for examples.

This is due in my opinion not so much to the weak state to which the religion of today has brought the world, or to the evil wrought in many provinces and cities of Christendom by ambition conjoined with idleness, as to the lack of a proper appreciation of history, owing to people failing to realize the significance of what they read, and to their having no taste for the delicacies it comprises. Hence it comes about that the great bulk of those who read it take pleasure in hearing of the various incidents which are contained in it, but never think of imitating them, since they hold them to be not merely difficult but impossible of imitation, as if the heaven, the sun, the

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elements and man had in their motion, their order, and their potency, become different from what they used to be.

Since I want to get men out of this wrong way of thinking, I have thought fit to write a commentary on all those books of Titus Livy which have not by the malignity of time had their continuity broken. I will comprise what I have arrived at by comparing ancient with modern events, and think necessary for the better understanding of them, so that those who read what I have to say may the more easily draw those practical lessons which one should seek to obtain from the study of history. Though the enterprise is difficult, yet, with the help of those who have encouraged me to undertake the task, I think I can carry it out in such a way that there shall remain to another but a short road to traverse in order to reach the place assigned.

chosen in order to live more conveniently and the more easily to defend themselves.

This was the case with Athens and Venice, among many others. Athens was built under the authority of Theseus for reasons such as these by inhabitants who were dispersed; Venice by numerous peoples who had sought refuge in certain islets at the top of the Adriatic Sea that they might escape the wars which daily arose in Italy after the decline of the Roman empire owing to the arrival of a new lot of barbarians. There, without any particular person or prince to give them a constitution, they began to live as a community under laws which seemed to them appropriate for their maintenance. And this happened because of the long repose the situation afforded them in that the sea at their end had no exit and the peoples who were ravaging Italy had no ships in which to infest them. This being so, a beginning, however small, sufficed to bring them to their present greatness.

The second case occurs when a city is built by men of a foreign race. They may either be free men, or men dependent on others, as are the colonies sent out either by a republic or a prince to relieve their towns of some of the population or for the defence of newly acquired territory which they desire to hold securely and without expense. The Romans built a number of such cities, and this throughout the whole of their empire. Others have been built by a prince, not that he may dwell there, but to enhance his reputation, as the city of Alexandria was built by Alexander. And since such cities are not at the outset free, it very seldom happens that they make great progress or that of their own doing they come to be reckoned among the capitals of kingdoms.

It was thus that Florence came to be built; for - whether it was built by the soldiers of Sulla, or was built by chance by inhabitants from the hills of Fiesole who, relying on the long peace which the world enjoyed under Octavian, came to

Book One

[DISCOURSES 1-10]

[THE BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT]

1. *Concerning the Origin of Cities in General and of Rome in Particular*

THOSE who read of the origin of the city of Rome, of its legislators and of its constitution, will not be surprised that in this city such great virtue was maintained for so many centuries, and that later on there came into being the empire into which that republic developed.

Since this first discourse will deal with its origin, I would point out that all cities are built either by natives of the place in which they are built, or by people from elsewhere. The first case comes about when inhabitants, dispersed in many small communities, find that they cannot enjoy security since no one community of itself, owing to its position and to the smallness of its numbers, is strong enough to resist the onslaught of an invader, and, when the enemy arrives, there is no time for them to unite for their defence; or, if there be time, they have to abandon many of their strongholds, and thus at once fall as prey to their enemies. Hence, to escape these dangers, either of their own accord or at the suggestion of someone of greater authority among them, such communities undertake to live together in some place they have

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dwell in the plains above the Arno - it was built under the Roman empire, and could at the outset make no addition to its territory save such as was allowed by the courtesy of the emperor.

Free cities are those which are built by peoples who, either under a prince or of their own accord, are driven by pestilence or famine or war to abandon the land of their birth and to look for new habitations. These may be either cities they find in countries they have occupied and in which they go to dwell, as Moses did; or new cities which they build, as Aeneas did. In this case the virtue of the builder is discernible in the fortune of what was built, for the city is more or less remarkable according as he is more or less virtuous who is responsible for the start. This virtue shows itself in two ways: first in the choice of a site, and secondly in the drawing up of laws.

Since men work either of necessity or by choice, and since there is found to be greater virtue where choice has less to say to it, the question arises whether it would not be better to choose a barren place in which to build cities so that men would have to be industrious and less given to idleness, and so would be more united because, owing to the poor situation, there would be less occasion for discord; as happened in Ragusa and in many other cities built in such-like places.

Such a choice would undoubtedly be wiser and more advantageous were men content to earn their own living and not anxious to lord it over others. Since, however, security for man is impossible unless it be conjoined with power, it is necessary to avoid sterile places and for cities to be put in very fertile places where, when expansion has taken place owing to the fruitfulness of the land, it may be possible for them both to defend themselves against attack and to overcome any who stand in the way of the city's greatness. As to the idleness which such a situation may encourage, it must be provided for by laws imposing that need to work which the situation

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I. I

does not impose. It is advisable here to follow the example of those wise folk who have dwelt in most beautiful and fertile lands, i.e. in such lands as tend to produce idleness and ineptitude for training in virtue of any kind, and who, in order to obviate the disasters which the idleness induced by the amenities of the land might cause, have imposed the need for training on those who were to become soldiers, and have made this training such that men there have become better soldiers than those in countries which were rough and sterile by nature.

A case in point is the kingdom of the Egyptians which, notwithstanding the amenities of the land, imposed the need to work so successfully by means of laws that it produced most excellent men, whose names, if they had not been lost in antiquity, would be even more celebrated than that of Alexander the Great, and than those of many others whose memory is still fresh. So, too, anyone who has reflected on the kingdom of the Sultan, on the discipline of the Mamelukes, and on that of their troops, before they were wiped out by Selim, the Great Turk, might have noted there the many exercises the troops underwent, and might have inferred from this how greatly they feared the idleness to which the beneficence of the country might have led if they had not obviated it by very strict laws.

I maintain, then, that it is more prudent to place a city in a fertile situation, provided its fertility is kept in due bounds by laws. When Alexander the Great was proposing to build a city that should redound to his credit, Democritus, the architect, came to him and suggested that he should build it on Mount Athos, for, besides being a strong place, it could be so fashioned as to give the city a human form, which would be a remarkable thing, a rare thing, and worthy of his greatness. And on what, Alexander asked, would the inhabitants live? Democritus replied that he had not thought of this. Whereupon

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Alexander laughed, and, leaving the mountain alone, built Alexandria where inhabitants would be glad to live owing to the richness of the land and to the conveniences afforded by the sea and by the Nile.

For those, then, who, having examined the question how Rome came to be built, hold that Aeneas was its first founder, it will be a city built by foreigners, but for those who prefer Romulus, it will be a city built by natives of the place. But whichever be the case, both will recognize that it began as a free city, dependent upon no one. They will also recognize, as we shall presently point out, under what strict discipline it was placed by the laws made by Romulus, Numa, and others, and that, in consequence, neither its fertile situation, the convenience afforded by the sea, its frequent victories, nor the greatness of its empire, were for many centuries able to corrupt it, but that these laws kept it so rich in virtue that there has never been any other city or any other republic so well adorned.

Wherefore since what was done by this city, as Titus Livy records it, was done sometimes in accordance with public enactments, sometimes on the initiative of private individuals, and sometimes within the city, sometimes abroad, I shall begin by discussing such of the events due to public decrees as I shall judge to be more worthy of comment, and with the events shall conjoin their consequences to which the discourses of this first book or first part will be restricted.

2. *How many Kinds of States there are and of what Kind was that of Rome*

I PROPOSE to dispense with a discussion of cities which from the outset have been subject to another power, and shall speak only of those which have from the outset been far removed from any kind of external servitude, but, instead,

STATES AND THEIR TRANSITIONS 1.2

have from the start been governed in accordance with their wishes, whether as republics or principalities. As such cities have had diverse origins, so too they have had diverse laws and institutions. For either at the outset, or before very long, to some of them laws have been given by some one person at some one time, as laws were given to the Spartans by Lycurgus; whereas others have acquired them by chance and at different times as occasion arose. This was the case in Rome.

Happy indeed should we call that state^a which produces a man so prudent that men can live securely under the laws which he prescribes without having to amend them. Sparta, for instance, observed its laws for more than eight hundred years without corrupting them and without any dangerous disturbance. Unhappy, on the other hand, in some degree is that city to be deemed which, not having chanced to meet with a prudent organizer, has to reorganize itself. And, of such, that is the more unhappy which is the more remote from order; and that is the more remote from order whose institutions have missed altogether the straight road which leads it to its perfect and true destiny. For it is almost impossible that states of this type should by any eventuality be set on the right road again; whereas those which, if their order is not perfect, have made a good beginning and are capable of improvement, may become perfect should something happen which provides the opportunity. It should, however, be noted that they will never introduce order without incurring danger, because few men ever welcome new laws setting up a new order in the state unless necessity makes it clear to them that there is need for such laws; and since such a necessity cannot arise

^a *quella republika*. [Walker renders this 'Commonwealth'. Plainly in the context *republika* means any kind of state with some civic spirit or sense of *res publica* (see above, p. 24), not specifically a republican one. But 'Commonwealth' (shades of Cromwell!) sounds even more republican than 'republic'. B.R.C.]

without danger, the state may easily be ruined before the new order has been brought to completion. The republic of Florence bears this out, for owing to what happened at Arezzo in '02 it was reconstituted, and owing to what happened at Prato in '12 its constitution was destroyed.

It being now my intention to discuss what were the institutions of the city of Rome and what events conducted to its perfection, I would remark that those who have written about states^a say that there are to be found in them one of three forms of government, called by them *Principality*, *Aristocracy* and *Democracy*,^b and that those who set up a government in any particular state^c must adopt one of them, as best suits their purpose.^d

Others -- and with better judgement many think -- say that there are six types of government,^e of which three are very bad, and three are good in themselves but easily become corrupt, so that they too must be classed as pernicious. Those that are good are the three above mentioned. Those that are bad are the other three, which depend on them, and each of them is so like the one associated with it that it easily passes from one form to the other. For *Principality* easily becomes *Tyranny*. From *Aristocracy* the transition to *Oligarchy*^f is an easy one. *Democracy*^g is without difficulty converted into *Anarchy*.^h So that if anyone who is organizing a commonwealth sets up one of the three first forms of government, he sets up what will last but for a while, since there are no means whereby to prevent it passing into its contrary, on account of the likeness which in such a case virtue has to vice.

These variations of government among men are due to chance. For in the beginning of the world, when its inhabitants were few, they lived for a time scattered like the beasts. Then,

^a *repubbliche*. ^b *sono de' tre stati, chiamati da loro Principato, Aristocrazia, e Popolare*. ^c *ciò*. ^d *nel regni governi*. ^e *stato di pochi*. ^f *popolare*. ^g *licenzioso*.

with the multiplication of their offspring, they drew together and, in order the better to be able to defend themselves, began to look about for a man stronger and more courageous than the rest, made him their head, and obeyed him.

It was thus that men learned how to distinguish what is honest and good from what is pernicious and wicked, for the sight of someone injuring his benefactor evoked in them hatred and sympathy and they blamed the ungrateful and respected those who showed gratitude, well aware that the same injuries might have been done to themselves. Hence to prevent evil of this kind they took to making laws and to assigning punishments to those who contravened them. The notion of justice thus came into being.

In this way it came about that, when later on they had to choose a prince, they did not have recourse to the boldest as formerly, but to one who excelled in prudence and justice.

But when at a yet later stage they began to make the prince hereditary instead of electing him, his heirs soon began to degenerate as compared with their ancestors, and, forsaking virtuous deeds, considered that princes have nought else to do but to surpass other men in extravagance, lasciviousness, and every other form of licentiousness. With the result that the prince came to be hated, and, since he was hated, came to be afraid, and from fear soon passed to offensive action, which quickly brought about a tyranny.

From which, before long, was begotten the source of their downfall; for tyranny gave rise to conspiracies and plots against princes, organized not by timid and weak men, but by men conspicuous for their liberality, magnanimity, wealth and ability, for such men could not stand the dishonourable life the prince was leading. The masses,^a therefore, at the instigation of these powerful leaders,^b took up arms against the prince, and, when he had been liquidated, submitted to the

^a *la moltitudine*. ^b *potenti*.

authority of those whom they looked upon as their liberators. Hence the latter, to whom the very term 'sole head' had become odious, formed themselves into a government. Moreover, in the beginning, mindful of what they had suffered under a tyranny, they ruled in accordance with the laws which they had made, subordinated their own convenience to the common advantage, and, both in private matters and public affairs, governed and preserved order with the utmost diligence.

But when the administration passed to their descendants who had no experience of the changability of fortune, had not been through bad times, and instead of remaining content with the civic equality then prevailing, reverted to avarice, ambition and to seizing other men's womenfolk, they caused government by an aristocracy to become government by an oligarchy in which civic rights were entirely disregarded; so that in a short time there came to pass in their case the same thing as happened to the tyrant, for the masses, sick of their government, were ready to help anyone who had any sort of plan for attacking their rulers; and so there soon arose someone who with the aid of the masses liquidated them.

Then, since the memory of the prince and of the injuries inflicted by him was still fresh, and since, having got rid of government by the few, they had no desire to return to that of a prince, they turned to a democratic form of government, which they organized in such a way that no sort of authority was vested either in a few powerful men or in a prince.

And, since all forms of government are to some extent respected at the outset, this democratic form of government maintained itself for a while but not for long, especially when the generation that had organized it had passed away. For anarchy quickly supervened, in which no respect was shown either for the individual or for the official, and which was such that, as everyone did what he liked, all sorts of outrages were

constantly committed. The outcome was inevitable. Either at the suggestion of some good man or because this anarchy had to be got rid of somehow, principality was once again restored. And from this there was, stage by stage, a return to anarchy, by way of the transitions and for the reasons assigned.

This, then, is the cycle through which all commonwealths pass, whether they govern themselves or are governed. But rarely do they return to the same form of government, for there can scarce be a state of such vitality that it can undergo often such changes and yet remain in being. What usually happens is that, while in a state of commotion in which it lacks both counsel and strength, a state becomes subject to a neighbouring and better organized state. Were it not so, a commonwealth might go on for ever passing through these governmental transitions.

I maintain then, that all the forms of government mentioned above are far from satisfactory, the three good ones because their life is so short, the three bad ones because of their inherent malignity. Hence prudent legislators, aware of their defects, refrained from adopting as such any one of these forms, and chose instead one that shared in them all, since they thought such a government would be stronger and more stable, for if in one and the same state^e there was principality, aristocracy and democracy each would keep watch over the other.

Lycurgus is one of those who have earned no small measure of praise for constitutions of this kind. For in the laws which he gave to Sparta, he assigned to the kings, to the aristocracy, and to the populace each its own function, and thus introduced a form of government which lasted for more than eight hundred years to his very great credit and to the tranquillity of that city.

^e *ciuitas*.

It was not so in the case of Solon, who drew up laws for Athens, for he set up merely a democratic form of government, which was so short-lived that he saw before his death the birth of a tyranny under Pisistratus; and though, forty years later, Pisistratus' heirs were expelled, and Athens returned to liberty because it again adopted a democratic form of government in accordance with Solon's laws, it did not retain its liberty for more than a hundred years. For, in spite of the fact that many constitutions were made whereby to restrain the arrogance of the upper class^a and the licentiousness of the general public,^b for which Solon had made no provision, none the less Athens had a very short life as compared with that of Sparta because with democracy Solon had not blended either princely power or that of the aristocracy.

But let us come to Rome. In spite of the fact that Rome had no Lycurgus to give it at the outset such a constitution as would ensure to it a long life of freedom, yet, owing to friction between the plebs and the senate, so many things happened that chance effected what had not been provided by a law-giver. So that, if Rome did not get fortune's first gift, it got its second. For her early institutions, though defective, were not on wrong lines and so might pave the way to perfection. For Romulus and the rest of the kings made many good laws quite compatible with freedom; but, because their aim was to found a kingdom, not a republic, when the city became free, it lacked many institutions essential to the preservation of liberty, which had to be provided, since they had not been provided by the kings. So, when it came to pass that its kings lost their sovereignty, for reasons and in the manner described earlier in this discourse, those who had expelled them at once appointed two consuls to take the place of the king, so that what they expelled was the title of king, not the royal power. In the republic, then, at this stage there were the consuls and

^a *grandi*. ^b *universale*.

the senate, so that as yet it comprised but two of the aforesaid estates,^c namely, Principality and Aristocracy. It remained to find a place for Democracy. This came about when the Roman nobility became so overbearing for reasons which will be given later — that the populace rose against them, and they were constrained by the fear that they might lose all, to grant the populace a share in the government; the senate and the consuls retaining, however, sufficient authority for them to be able to maintain their position in the republic.

It was in this way that tribunes of the plebs came to be appointed, and their appointment did much to stabilize the form of government in this republic, for in its government all three estates now had a share. And so favoured was it by fortune that, though the transition from Monarchy to Aristocracy and thence to Democracy, took place by the very stages and for the very reasons laid down earlier in this discourse, none the less the granting of authority to the aristocracy did not abolish altogether the royal estate, nor was the authority of the aristocracy wholly removed when the populace was granted a share in it. On the contrary, the blending of these estates made a perfect commonwealth; and since it was fiction between the plebs and the senate that brought this perfection about, in the next two chapters we shall show more fully how this came to be.

3. *What Kind of Events gave rise in Rome to the Creation of Tribunes of the Plebs, whereby that Republic was made more Perfect*

All writers on politics have pointed out, and throughout history there are plenty of examples which indicate, that in constituting and legislating for a commonwealth it must

^c *qualità* — here used in the sense of what is earlier called *potenza*, just as we say either 'three powers' or 'three estates'.

needs be taken for granted that all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers.³ That evil dispositions often do not show themselves for a time is due to a hidden cause which those fail to perceive who have had no experience of the opposite; but in time – which is said to be the father of all truth – it reveals itself.

After the expulsion of the Tarquins there appeared to be in Rome the utmost harmony between the plebs and the senate. The nobles seemed to have set aside their pride, to have become imbued with the same spirit as the populace, and to be bearable by all, even by the meanest. In this neither their deception nor the cause of it was apparent so long as the Tarquins lived; for the nobility were afraid of them and feared that, if they treated the plebs badly, it would not be friendly towards them, but would make common cause with the Tarquins, so they treated the plebs with consideration. But, no sooner were the Tarquins dead and the fears of the nobility removed, than they began to vomit forth against the plebs the poison hid in their hearts and to oppress them in every way they could.

This bears out what has been said above, namely, that men never do good unless necessity drives them to it; but when they are too free to choose and can do just as they please, confusion and disorder become everywhere rampant. Hence it is said that hunger and poverty make men industrious, and that laws make them good. There is no need of legislation so long as things work well without it, but, when such good customs break down, legislation forthwith becomes necessary. Hence when the regime of the Tarquins collapsed and the nobility were no longer kept in check by the fear of them, it became necessary to devise some new institution which should produce the same effect as the Tarquins had done in their time. Wherefore, after many disturbances, rumours, and

dangers of scandal had been occasioned by the squabbles between the plebs and the nobility, for the security of the former tribunes came to be appointed, and were invested with such prerogatives and standing that henceforth they could always mediate between the plebs and the senate and curb the arrogance of the nobility.

4. *That Discord between the Plebs and the Senate of Rome made this Republic both Free and Powerful*

I MUST not fail to discuss the tumults that broke out in Rome between the death of the Tarquins and the creation of the tribunes, nor yet to mention certain facts which militate against the view of those who allege that the republic of Rome was so tumultuous and so full of confusion that, had not good fortune and military virtue counterbalanced these defects, its condition would have been worse than that of any other republic. I by no means deny that fortune and military organization had a good deal to do with Rome's empire, but it seems to me that this view fails to take account of the fact that where military organization is good there must needs be good order, and that rarely does it happen that good fortune does not also accompany it.

There are also other points to be observed in connection with this city. To me those who condemn the quarrels between the nobles and the plebs, seem to be cavilling at the very things that were the primary cause of Rome's retaining her freedom, and that they pay more attention to the noise and clamour resulting from such commotions than to what resulted from them, i.e. to the good effects which they produced. Nor do they realize that in every republic there are two different dispositions, that of the populace and that of the upper class and that all legislation favourable to liberty is brought about by the clash between them.

It is easy to see that this was the consequence in Rome; for from the days of the Tarquins to those of the Gracchi, which was more than three hundred years, tumults in Rome seldom led to banishment, and very seldom to executions. One cannot, therefore, regard such tumults as harmful, nor such a republic as divided, seeing that during so long a period it did not on account of its discords send into exile more than eight or ten citizens, put very few to death, and did not on many impose fines. Nor can a republic reasonably be stigmatized in any way as disordered in which there occur such striking examples of virtue, since good examples proceed from good education, good education from good laws, and good laws in this case from those very tumults which many so inconsiderately condemn; for anyone who studies carefully their result, will not find that they occasioned any banishment or act of violence inimical to the common good, but that they led to laws and institutions whereby the liberties of the public benefited.

But, someone may object, the means used were extraordinary and almost barbaric. Look how people used to assemble and clamour against the senate, and how the senate decried the people, how men ran helter-skelter about the streets, how the shops were closed and how the plebs en masse would troop out of Rome - events which terrify, to say the least, anyone who read about them. To which I answer that every city should provide ways and means whereby the ambitions of the populace may find an outlet, especially a city which proposes to avail itself of the populace in important undertakings. The city of Rome was one of those which did provide such ways and means in that, when the populace wanted a law passed, it either behaved in some such way as we have described or it refused to enlist for the wars, so that, to placate it, it had to some extent to be satisfied. The demands of a free populace, too, are very seldom

harmful to liberty, for they are due either to the populace being oppressed or to the suspicion that it is going to be oppressed, and should these impressions be false, a remedy is provided in the public platform on which some man of standing can get up, appeal to the crowd, and show that it is mistaken. And though, as Tully remarks, the populace may be ignorant, it is capable of grasping the truth and readily yields when a man, worthy of confidence, lays the truth before it.

Critics, therefore, should be more sparing in finding fault with the government of Rome, and should reflect that the excellent results which this republic obtained could have been brought about only by excellent causes. Hence if tumults led to the creation of the tribunes, tumults deserve the highest praise, since, besides giving the populace a share in the administration, they served as the guardian of Roman liberties, as we shall show in the next chapter.

5. *Whether the Safeguarding of Liberty can be more safely entrusted to the Populace or to the Upper Class; and which has the Stronger Reason for creating Disturbances, the 'Have-nots' or the 'Haves'**

THOSE who have displayed prudence in constituting a republic have looked upon the safeguarding of liberty as one of the most essential things for which they had to provide, and according to the efficiency with which this has been done liberty has been enjoyed for a longer or a shorter time. And, since in every republic there is an upper and a lower class,^b it may be asked into whose hands it is best to place the guardianship of liberty. By the Lacedaemonians, and in our day by

* *chi vuole acquistare o chi vuole mantenere* - those who want to acquire or those who want to keep, i.e. what we commonly call the have-nots and the haves. ^b *uomini grandi e popolari.*

Venice, it was entrusted to the nobles, but by the Romans it was entrusted to the plebs.

It is necessary, therefore, to inquire which of these republics made the better choice. If we appeal to reason arguments may be adduced in support of either thesis; but, if we ask what the result was, the answer will favour the nobility, for the freedom of Sparta and of Venice lasted longer than did that of Rome.

Let us deal first with the appeal to reason. It may be urged in support of the Roman view that the guardianship of anything should be placed in the hands of those who are less desirous of appropriating it to their own use. And unquestionably if we ask what it is the nobility are after and what it is the common people are after, it will be seen that in the former there is a great desire to dominate and in the latter merely the desire not to be dominated. Consequently the latter will be more keen on liberty since their hope of usurping dominion over others will be less than in the case of the upper class. So that if the populace be made the guardians of liberty, it is reasonable to suppose that they will take more care of it, and that, since it is impossible for them to usurp power, they will not permit others to do so.

On the other hand, the defenders of the Spartan and Venetian systems say that to place the guardianship in the hands of the powerful has two good results. First, it satisfies their ambition more, since with this stick in their hands, they play a more important part in the republic, and so should be more contented. Secondly, it prevents the restless minds of the plebs from acquiring a sense of power, which is the cause of endless squabbles and trouble in a republic, and is enough to drive the nobility to desperate measures which in course of time have disastrous results. They cite as an instance Rome itself, where, when the plebs through their tribunes got this power into their hands, they were not content with one plebeian consul, but wanted to have both. After which they demanded the

censorship, the praetorship, and all the other great offices in the city. Nor did this satisfy them, but, impelled by the same mad desire, they began later on to worship any men they saw were strong enough to get the better of the nobility. Whence arose the power of Marius and Rome's undoing. It must be confessed, then, if due weight be given to both sides, that it still remains doubtful which to select as the guardians of liberty, for it is impossible to tell which of the two dispositions we find in men is more harmful in a republic, that which seeks to maintain an established position or that which has none but seeks to acquire it.

All things considered, however, and due distinctions being made, we shall arrive in the end at this conclusion. Either you have in mind a republic that looks to founding an empire, as Rome did; or one that is content to maintain the *status quo*. In the first case it is necessary to do in all things as Rome did. In the second case it is possible to imitate Venice and Sparta, as will be explained in the next chapter.

Turning now to the question as to which are more harmful in a republic, the 'have-nots' who wish to have or the 'haves' who are afraid of losing what they have, I would point out that when Marcus Menenius was appointed dictator and Marcus Fulvius master of horse, both of them plebeians, in order to investigate certain conspiracies formed in Capua against Rome, the people empowered them to inquire also about those in Rome who, moved by ambition, had sought to obtain the consulship and other posts in the city by other than the accepted methods. To the nobility it looked as if the authority thus vested in the dictator was a hit at them, so they spread it about in Rome that it was not the nobles who had ambitioned these positions and used out-of-the-way means to get them, but commoners who, having neither blood nor virtue on which to rely, sought to obtain these posts by round-about methods, and in particular they accused the dictator of

this. So much weight was attached to this accusation that Menenius, having made a speech in which he complained about the calumnies spread by the nobles, resigned the dictatorship, and submitted his actions to the judgement of the people. He defended his own case and was acquitted.

At the trial there arose considerable discussion as to whether the 'haves' or the 'have-nots' were the more ambitious, for the appetites of both might easily become the cause of no small disturbance. Actually, however, such disturbances are more often caused by the 'haves', since the fear of losing what they have arouses in them the same inclination we find in those who want to get more, for men are inclined to think that they cannot hold securely what they possess unless they get more at others' expense. Furthermore, those who have great possessions can bring about changes with greater effect and greater speed. And yet again their corrupt and grasping deportment arouses in the minds of the 'have-nots' the desire to have, either to revenge themselves by despoiling them, or that they may again share in those riches and honours in regard to which they deem themselves to have been badly used by the other party.

6. *Whether in Rome such a Form of Government could have been set up as would have removed the Hostility between the Populace and the Senate*

WE have just been discussing the effects produced by the controversies between the populace and the senate. Now, since these controversies went on until the time of the Gracchi⁴ when they became the causes which led to the destruction of liberty, it may occur to some to ask whether Rome could have done the great things she did without the existence of such animosities. Hence it seems to me worth while to inquire whether it would have been possible to set

up in Rome a form of government which would have prevented these controversies. In order to discuss this question it is necessary to consider those republics which have been free from such animosities and tumults and yet have enjoyed a long spell of liberty, to look at their governments, and to ask whether they could have been introduced into Rome.

Among ancient states Sparta is a case in point, and among modern states Venice, as I have already pointed out. Sparta set up a king and a small senate to govern it. Venice did not distinguish by different names those who took part in its government, but all who were eligible for administrative posts were classed under one head and called gentry.⁵ This was due to chance rather than to the prudence of its legislators; for many people having retired to those sandbanks on which the city now stands and taken up their abode there for the reasons already assigned, when their numbers grew to such an extent that it became necessary for them to make laws if they were to live together, they devised a form of government. They had frequently met together to discuss the city's affairs, so, when it seemed to them that the population was sufficient to form a body politic,⁶ they decided that all newcomers who meant to reside there, should not take part in the government. Then, when in course of time they found that there were quite a number of inhabitants in the place who were disbarred from government, with an eye to the reputation of those who governed they called them gentlefolk and the rest commoners.

Such a form of government could arise and be maintained without tumult because, when it came into being, whoever then dwelt in Venice was admitted to the government, so that no one could complain. Nor had those who came to dwell there later on and found the form of government firmly established, either cause or opportunity to make a commotion.

⁵ *Gentilissimi.* ⁶ *where politics.*

They had no cause because they had been deprived of nothing. They had no opportunity because the government had the whip-hand and did not employ them in matters which would enable them to acquire authority. Besides, there were not many who came later to dwell in Venice, nor were they so numerous as to upset the balance between rulers and ruled; for the number of gentilefolk^s was either equal to, or greater than, that of the newcomers. These, then, were the causes which enabled Venice to set up this form of government and to maintain it without disruption.

Sparta, as I have said, was governed by a king and by a small senate. It was able to maintain itself in this way for a long time, because in Sparta there were few inhabitants and access to outsiders desirous of coming to dwell there was forbidden. Moreover, it had adopted the laws of Lycurgus and shared in his repute, and, as these laws were observed, they removed all occasion for tumult, so that the Spartans were able to live united for a long time. The reason was that the laws of Lycurgus prescribed equality of property and insisted less on equality of rank. Poverty was shared by all alike, and the plebeians had less ambition, since offices in the city were open but to few citizens and from them the plebs were kept out; nor did it desire to have them since the nobles never ill-treated the plebs. This was due to the position assigned to the Spartan kings, for, since in this principality they were surrounded by nobles, the best way of maintaining their position was to protect the plebs from injustice. It thus came about that the plebs neither feared authority nor desired to have it, and, since they neither feared it nor desired it, there was no chance of rivalry between them and the nobility, nor any ground for disturbances, and they could live united for a long time. It was, however, mainly two things which brought this union about: (i) the smallness of Sparta's population, which made it possible for a few to rule, and (ii) the exclusion of

foreigners from the state, which gave it no chance either to become corrupt or to become so unwieldy that it could no longer be managed by the few who governed it.

All things considered, therefore, it is clear that it was necessary for Rome's legislators to do one of two things if Rome was to remain tranquil like the aforesaid states: either to emulate the Venetians and not employ its plebs in wars, or, like the Spartans, not to admit foreigners. Rome did both these things, and, by doing so, gave to its plebs alike strength, increase and endless opportunities for commotion. On the other hand, had the government of Rome been such as to bring greater tranquillity, there would have ensued this inconvenience, that it would have been weaker, owing to its having cut off the source of supply which enabled it to acquire the greatness at which it arrived, so that, in seeking to remove the causes of tumults, Rome would have removed also the causes of expansion.

So in all human affairs one notices, if one examines them closely, that it is impossible to remove one inconvenience without another emerging. If, then, you want to have a large population and to provide it with arms so as to establish a great empire, you will have made your population such that you cannot now handle it as you please. While, if you keep it either small or unarmed so as to be able to manage it, and then acquire dominions, either you will lose your hold on it or it will become so debased that you will be at the mercy of anyone who attacks you. Hence in all discussions one should consider which alternative involves fewer inconveniences and should adopt this as the better course; for one never finds any issue that is clear cut and not open to question. Rome might indeed have emulated Sparta, have appointed a prince for life, and have made its senate small; but it would not in that case have been able to avoid increasing its population with a view to establishing a great empire; nor would the appointment of

a king for life and of a small number of senators have been of much help in the matter of unity.

Should, then, anyone be about to set up a republic, he should first inquire whether it is to expand, as Rome did, both in dominion and in power, or is to be confined to narrow limits. In the first case it is essential to constitute it as Rome was constituted and to expect commotions and disputes of all kinds which must be dealt with as best they can, because without a large population, and this well armed, such a republic will never be able to grow, or to hold its own should it grow. In the second case it might be constituted as Sparta and Venice were, but, since expansion is poison to republics of this type, it should use every endeavour to prevent it from expanding, for expansion, when based on a weak republic, simply means ruin. This happened both in Sparta's case and in that of Venice. For of these republics the first, after having subjugated almost the whole of Greece, revealed, on an occasion of slight importance in itself, how weak its foundation was, since, when Thebes revolved at the instigation of Pelopidas and other cities followed suit, this republic entirely collapsed. In like manner Venice, having occupied a large part of Italy, most of it not by dint of arms, but of money and astute diplomacy, when its strength was put to the test, lost everything in a single battle.

I am firmly convinced, therefore, that to set up a republic which is to last a long time, the way to set about it is to constitute it as Sparta and Venice were constituted; to place it in a strong position, and so to fortify it that no one will dream of taking it by a sudden assault; and, on the other hand, not to make it so large as to appear formidable to its neighbours. It should in this way be able to enjoy its form of government for a long time. For war is made on a commonwealth for two reasons: (i) to subjugate it, and (ii) for fear of being subjugated by it. Both these reasons are almost entirely re-

moved by the aforesaid precautions; for, if it be difficult to take by assault owing to its being well organized for defence, as I am presupposing, rarely or never will it occur to anyone to seize it. And, if it be content with its own territory, and it becomes clear by experience that it has no ambitions, it will never occur that someone may make war through fear for himself, especially if by its constitution or by its laws expansion is prohibited. Nor have I the least doubt that, if this balance could be maintained, there would be genuine political life and real tranquillity in such a city.

Since, however, all human affairs are ever in a state of flux and cannot stand still, either there will be improvement or decline, and necessity will lead you to do many things which reason does not recommend. Hence if a commonwealth be constituted with a view to its maintaining the *status quo*, but not with a view to expansion, and by necessity it be led to expand, its basic principles will be subverted and it will soon be faced with ruin. So, too, should heaven, on the other hand, be so kind to it that it has no need to go to war, it will then come about that idleness will either render it effeminate or give rise to factions; and these two things, either in conjunction or separately, will bring about its downfall.

Wherefore, since it is impossible, so I hold, to adjust the balance so nicely as to keep things exactly to this middle course, one ought, in constituting a republic, to consider the possibility of its playing a more honourable role, and so to constitute it that, should necessity actually force it to expand, it may be able to retain possession of what it has acquired. Coming back, then, to the first point we raised, I am convinced that the Roman type of constitution should be adopted, not that of any other republic, for to find a middle way between the two extremes I do not think possible. Squabbles between the populace and the senate should, therefore, be looked upon as an inconvenience which it is necessary to put

L6-7 THE BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT

up with in order to arrive at the greatness of Rome. For, besides the reasons already adduced to show that the authority of the tribunes was essential to the preservation of liberty, it is easy to see what benefit a republic derives when there is an authority that can bring charges in court, which was among the powers vested in the tribunes, as will be shown in the following chapter.

Book One

[DISCOURSES 11-15]

[RELIGION]

11. *Concerning the Religion of the Romans*

THOUGH the first person to give Rome a constitution was Romulus, to whom, as a daughter, it owed its birth and its education, yet, since heaven did not deem the institutions of Romulus adequate for so great an empire, it inspired the Roman senate to choose Numa Pompilius as Romulus's successor, so that the things which he had left undone, might be instituted by Numa. Numa, finding the people ferocious and desiring to reduce them to civic obedience by means of the arts of peace, turned to religion as the instrument necessary above all others for the maintenance of a civilized state, and so constituted it that there was never for so many centuries so great a fear of God as there was in this republic.

It was religion that facilitated whatever enterprise the senate and the great men of Rome designed to undertake. Whoever runs through the vast number of exploits performed by the people of Rome as a whole, or by many of the Romans individually, will see that its citizens were more afraid of breaking an oath than of breaking the law, since they held in higher esteem the power of God than the power of man. This is clearly seen in the case of Scipio and of Manlius Torquatus. For, after the defeat which Hannibal had inflicted on the

Romans at Cannae, many of the citizens got together and, despairing of their fatherland, decided to abandon Italy and to transfer themselves to Sicily. When Scipio heard of this, he sought them out, and, sword in hand, forced them to swear that they would not abandon their country. Again, Lucius Manlius, the father of Titus Manlius, afterwards called Torquatus, had been indicted by Marcus Pomponius, the plebeian tribune. Before the case came up for trial, Titus went to Marcus, threatened to kill him if he did not swear to withdraw the charge against his father, and forced him to take an oath to this effect. Having taken the oath out of fear, Marcus withdrew the charge. Thus were those citizens whom neither love for their country nor the laws of their country sufficed to keep in Italy, kept there by an oath which they had been forced to take; and thus did a tribune set aside the hatred which he had for the father, and the injustice which the son had done him, together with his honour, for the sake of the oath he had taken. All of which was due to nothing else but the religion which Numa had introduced into that city.

It will also be seen by those who pay attention to Roman history, how much religion helped in the control of armies, in encouraging the plebs, in producing good men, and in shaming the bad. So that if it were a question of the ruler to whom Rome was more indebted, Romulus or Numa, Numa, I think, should easily obtain the first place. For, where there is religion, it is easy to teach men to use arms, but where there are arms, but no religion, it is with difficulty that it can be introduced. Thus, one sees that in establishing the senate and introducing other civic and military institutions, Romulus did not find it necessary to appeal to divine authority; but to Numa it was so necessary that he pretended to have private conferences with a nymph who advised him about the advice he should give to the people. This was because he wanted to introduce new institutions to which the city was unaccustomed, and doubted whether his own authority would suffice.

Nor in fact was there ever a legislator who, in introducing extraordinary laws to a people, did not have recourse to God, for otherwise they would not have been accepted, since many benefits of which a prudent man is aware, are not so evident to reason that he can convince others of them. Hence wise men, in order to escape this difficulty, have recourse to God. So Lycurgus did; so did Solon, and so have many others done who have had the same end in view. Marvellous, therefore, at Numa's goodness and prudence, the Roman people accepted all his decisions. True, the times were so impregnated with a religious spirit and the men with whom he had to deal so stupid that they contributed very much to facilitate his designs and made it easy for him to impress on them any new form. Doubtless, too, anyone seeking to establish a republic at the present time would find it easier to do so among uncultured men of the mountains than among dwellers in cities where civilization is corrupt; just as a sculptor will more easily carve a beautiful statue from rough marble than from marble already spoiled by a bungling workman.

All things considered, therefore, I conclude that the religion introduced by Numa was among the primary causes of Rome's success, for this entailed good institutions; good institutions led to good fortune; and from good fortune arose the happy results of undertakings. And, as the observance of divine worship is the cause of greatness in republics, so the neglect of it is the cause of their ruin. Because, where the fear of God is wanting, it comes about either that a kingdom is ruined, or that it is kept going by the fear of a prince, which makes up for the lack of religion. And because princes are short-lived, it may well happen that when a kingdom loses its prince, it loses also the virtue of its prince. Hence kingdoms which depend on the virtue of one man do not last long, because they lose their virtue when his life is spent, and it seldom happens that it is revived by his successor; for, as Dante has wisely remarked:

Rarely to the branches

Does human worth ascend; for 'tis the will

Of its donor that men may recognize it as his gift.¹⁰

The security of a republic or of a kingdom, therefore, does not depend upon its ruler governing it prudently during his lifetime, but upon his so ordering it that, after his death, it may maintain itself in being. And, though it is easier to persuade rude men^a to adopt a new institution or a new standpoint, it does not follow that it is impossible to persuade civilized men to do so, i.e. those who do not look on themselves as rude men. It did not seem to the people of Florence that they were either ignorant or rude, yet they were persuaded by Friar Girolamo Savonarola that he had converse with God. I do not propose to decide whether it was so or not, because of so great a man one ought to speak with reverence; but I do say that vast numbers believed it was so, without having seen him do anything out of the common whereby to make them believe; for his life, his teaching and the topic on which he preached, were sufficient to make them trust him. Let no one despair, then, of being able to effect that which has been effected by others; for, as we have said in our preface, men are born and live and die in an order which remains ever the same.

12. *How Important it is to take Account of Religion,
and how Italy has been ruined for lack of it,
thanks to the Roman Church*

THOSE princes and those republics which desire to remain free from corruption, should above all else maintain incorrupt the ceremonies of their religion and should hold them always in veneration; for there can be no surer indication of the decline of a country than to see divine worship neglected.

^a uomini rozzi.

This is easy to understand provided one knows on what basis the religion of a man's homeland is founded, for every religion has the basis of its life rooted in some one of its main institutions. Thus religious life among the gentiles was based on the responses given by oracles and upon a body of soothsayers and diviners. All the rest of its ceremonies, sacrifices and rites depended on these, for it was easy to believe that the god who can predict your future, be it good or evil, could also bring it about. Hence there came to be temples in which the gods were venerated by sacrifices, supplications and ceremonies of all kinds; and also the oracle of Delos, the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and other well-known oracles, which filled the world with wonder and devotion. But when the oracles began to say what was pleasing to the powerful, and this deception was discovered by the people, they became incredulous and inclined to subvert any good institution.

The rulers of a republic or of a kingdom, therefore, should uphold the basic principles of the religion which they practise in, and, if this be done, it will be easy for them to keep their commonwealth religious, and, in consequence, good and united. They should also foster and encourage everything likely to be of help to this end, even though they be convinced that it is quite fallacious. And the more should they do this the greater their prudence and the more they know of natural laws. It was owing to wise men having taken due note of this that belief in miracles arose and that miracles are held in high esteem even by religions that are false; for to whatever they owed their origin, sensible men made much of them, and their authority caused everybody to believe in them.

There were plenty of such miracles in Rome, among them one that happened when Roman soldiers were sacking the city of Veii. Some of them went into the temple of Juno and, addressing her image, said: 'Do you want to come to Rome?' To some it seemed that she nodded. To others that she

answered. Yes. The reason was that the men were so deeply imbued with religion; for, as Livy points out, on entering the temple, they did not create a disturbance but behaved devoutly and displayed the greatest reverence. Hence it seemed to them that they heard the answer they wanted the goddess to give and had taken for granted when they approached her. Such beliefs and such credulity was studiously fostered and encouraged by Camillus and by the rest of the city's rulers.

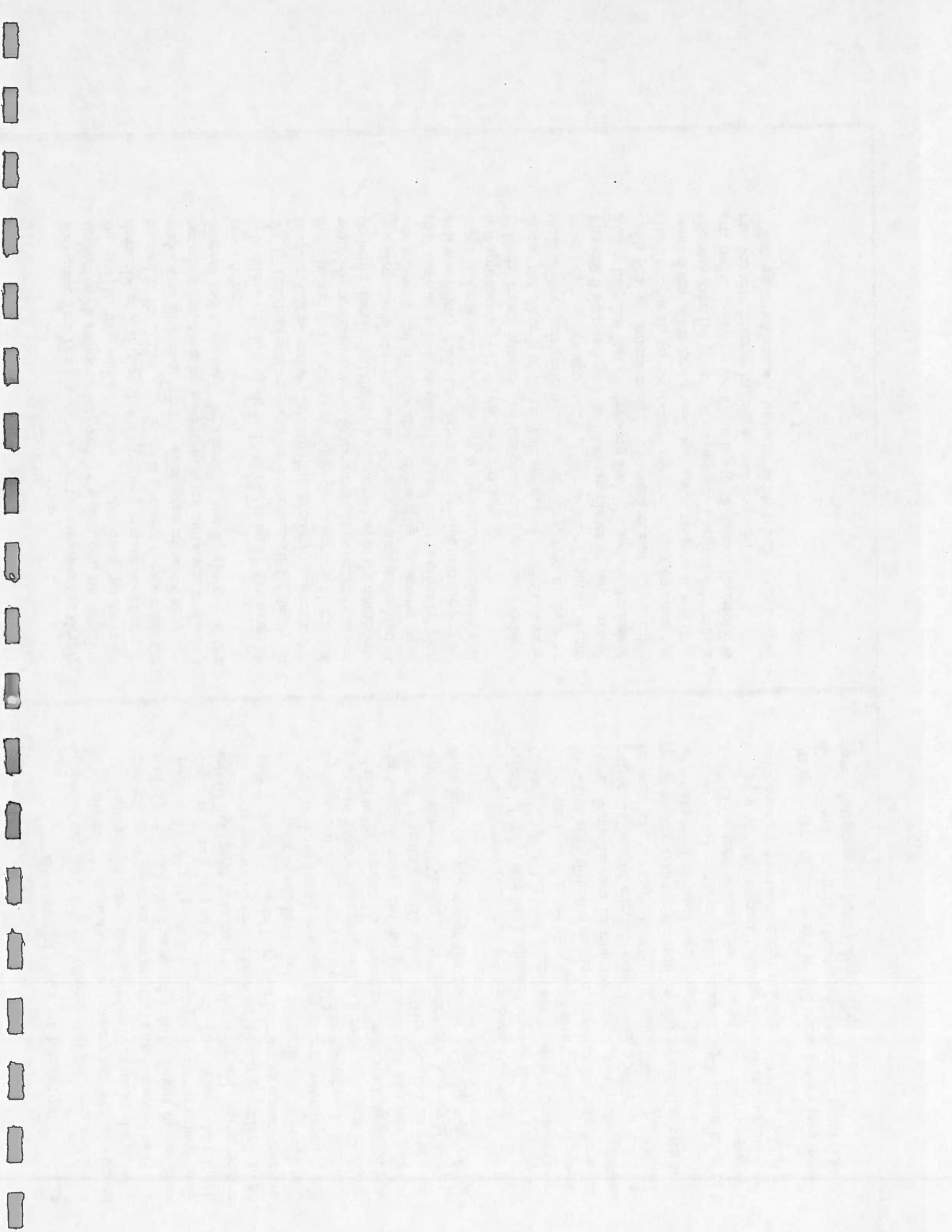
If such a religious spirit had been kept up by the rulers of the Christian commonwealth as was ordained for us by its founder, Christian states and republics would have been much more united and much more happy than they are. Nor if one would form a conjecture as to the causes of its decline can one do better than look at those peoples who live in the immediate neighbourhood of the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, and see how there is less religion among them than elsewhere. Indeed, should anyone reflect on our religion as it was when founded, and then see how different the present usage is, he would undoubtedly come to the conclusion that it is approaching either ruin or a scourge.

Many are of opinion that the prosperity of Italian cities is due to the Church of Rome. I disagree, and against this view shall adduce such reasons as are necessary, two of them so potent that, in my opinion, it is impossible to gainsay them. The first is that owing to the bad example set by the Court of Rome, Italy has lost all devotion and all religion. Attendant upon this are innumerable inconveniences and innumerable disorders; for as, where there is religion, it may be taken for granted that all is going well, so, where religion is wanting, one may take for granted the opposite. The first debt which we, Italians, owe to the Church and to priests, therefore, is that we have become irreligious and perverse.

But we owe them a yet greater debt, which is the second

cause of our ruin. It is the Church that has kept, and keeps, Italy divided. Now of a truth no country has ever been united and happy unless the whole of it has been under the jurisdiction of one republic or one prince, as has happened to France and Spain. And the reason why Italy is not in the same position, i.e. why there is not one republic or one prince ruling there, is due entirely to the Church. For, though the Church has its headquarters in Italy and has temporal power, neither its power nor its virtue has been sufficiently great for it to be able to usurp power in Italy and become its leader; nor yet, on the other hand, has it been so weak that it could not, when afraid of losing its dominion over things temporal, call upon one of the powers to defend it against an Italian state that had become too powerful. There is abundant evidence of this in times gone by. For instance, with the help of Charles the Great, it drove out the Lombards who had established a sort of kingship over the whole of Italy. So, too, in our own day, it stripped Venice of its power with the help of France, and, later on, drove out the French with the help of the Swiss.¹¹

The Church, then, has neither been able to occupy the whole of Italy, nor has it allowed anyone else to occupy it. Consequently, it has been the cause why Italy has never come under one head, but has been under many princes and *signori*, by whom such disunion and such weakness has been brought about, that it has now become the prey, not only of barbarian potentates, but of anyone who attacks it. For which our Italians have to thank the Church, and nobody else. Should anyone want to prove the truth of this by actual experience, he would need to have such power that he could send the Roman Court, together with the authority it has in Italy, to dwell in the territories of the Swiss, who are the only people who today, with respect both to religion and to military institutions, live as the ancients did. He would then find that the evil ways of this court would cause before long more disorders in that country than any that any other event at any time whatsoever has been able to bring about.



Book Two

[THE GROWTH
OF ROME'S EMPIRE]

[*The Preface*]

MAN 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 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 afterwards 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,

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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

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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

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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

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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 I-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.

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EMPIRE, VIRTUE AND FORTUNE II.1

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 Aequi and the Volsci, no other people attacked them so long as the Aequi 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

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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 thereto 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 tranquillity 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.

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 bear 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,³⁸ 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

into Samnium, of the Carnetini into Tuscany, of the Mamertini into Sicily, of the Saguntines into Spain, of Masinissa into Africa, of the Actolians 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 dwell in other parts of Italy. One never hears of there being any kings, apart from those who reigned in Rome, and Porcenna, 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^a the least of the evils which this tyranny brings about are that it ceases to make progress and to grow in power and wealth: more often than not, nay always, what happens is that it declines. And should fate decree the rise of an efficient^b tyrant, so energetic and so proficient in warfare^c that he enlarges his dominions, no advantage will accrue to the commonwealth, but only to himself, for he cannot bestow honours on the valiant and good citizens over whom he tyrannizes, since he does not want to have any cause to suspect them. Nor yet can he allow the cities he acquires to make their submission to, or to become the tributaries of, the city of which he is the tyrant, for to make it powerful is not to his interest. It is to his interest to keep the state divided so that each town and each district may recognize only him as its ruler. In this way he alone profits by his acquisitions, not his country. Should anyone desire to confirm this view by a host of further arguments, let him read Xenophon's treatise *On Tyrannicide*.³⁹

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

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

^a *utno vivere libero.* ^b *virtuoso.* ^c *per virtū & armis.*

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

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

esteem and looked upon it as their highest good,³⁸ 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 rulers³⁹ of republics. Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation, and contempt for mundane things,⁴⁰ whereas the other identified it with magnanimity, bodily strength, and everything else that conduces to make men very bold. And, if our religion demands that in you there be strength, what it asks for is strength to suffer rather than strength to do bold things.⁴⁰

This pattern of life, therefore, appears to have made the world weak, and to have handed it over as a prey to the wicked, who run it successfully and securely since they are well aware that the generality of men, with paradise for their goal, consider how best to bear, rather than how best to avenge, their injuries. But, though it looks as if the world were become effeminate and as if heaven were powerless, this undoubtedly is due rather to the pusillanimity of those who have interpreted our religion in terms of *laissez faire*,⁴¹ not in terms of *virtù*. For, had they borne in mind that religion permits us to exalt and defend the fatherland, they

³⁸ *si summum bene* - the 'summum bonum', a technical scholastic term.
³⁹ *principi*. 'case unanite'. *of ozio*. - *phrasin*

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,⁴² 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.

⁴² *virtutem alla vita civile*. [Again, this is 'constitution' as a way of life, not simply as legal power. B.R.C.]

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

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

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

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

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

'ROMA 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

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.'

Book Three

[DISCOURSES 1-5]

[REFORM, SECURITY AND THE ELIMINATION OF RIVALS]

i. *In Order that a Religious Institution or a State
should long survive it is essential that it should frequently
be Restored to its original principles^a*

It is a well-established fact that the life of all mundane things is of finite duration. But things which complete the whole of the course appointed them by heaven are in general those whose bodies do not disintegrate, but maintain themselves in orderly fashion so that if there is no change; or, if there be change, it tends rather to their conservation than to their destruction. Here I am concerned with composite bodies, such as are states and religious institutions, and in their regard I affirm that those changes make for their conservation which lead them back to their origins.^b Hence those are better constituted and have a longer life whose institutions make frequent renovations possible, or which are brought to such a renovation by some event which has nothing to do with their constitution. For it is clearer than daylight that, without renovation, these bodies do not last.

The way to renovate them, as has been said, is to reduce
^a *ritirarla spesso verso il suo principio.* [Walker says, 'to its start']
^b *le riducano inverso i principii loro.* [Walker says, 'to their start']



III. I ELIMINATION OF RIVALS

them to their starting-points. For at the start religious institutions, republics and kingdoms have in all cases some good in them, to which their early reputation and progress is due. But since in process of time this goodness is corrupted, such a body must of necessity die unless something happens which brings it up to the mark. Thus, our medical men, speaking of the human body, say that 'every day it absorbs something which from time to time requires treatment'.

This return to its original principles in the case of a republic, is brought about either by some external event or by its own intrinsic good sense. Thus, as an example of the former, we see how it was necessary that Rome should be taken by the Gauls in order that it should be re-born and in its re-birth take on alike a new vitality and a new virtue, and also take up again the observance of religion and justice, both of which had begun to show blemishes. This plainly appears from Livy's account where he shows how, when the Romans led out their army against the Gauls and created tribunes with consular power, they observed no religious ceremony. And, in like manner, not only did they not punish the three Fabii who had attacked the Gauls 'in contravention of the Law of Nations', but they made them tribunes. Whence it is easy to infer that of the good constitutions established by Romulus and by those other wise princes they had begun to take less account than was reasonable and necessary for the maintenance of a free state. This defeat in a war with outsiders, therefore, came about so that the institutions of this city should be renovated and to show this people that not only is it essential to uphold religion and justice, but also to hold in high esteem good citizens and to look upon their virtue as of greater value than those comforts of which there appeared to them to be a lack owing to what these men had done. This actually came about. For as soon as Rome had been recovered they renewed all the ordinances of their ancient religion and punished the Fabii who

CONSTANT NEED OF RENAISSANCE III. I

had fought 'in contravention of the Law of Nations'. They also set such esteem on the virtue and goodness of Camillus that the senate and the rest, putting envy aside, laid on his shoulders the whole burden of this republic.

It is, therefore, as I have said, essential that men who live together under any constitution should frequently have their attention called to themselves either by some external or by some internal occurrence. When internal, such occurrences are usually due to some law which from time to time causes the members of this body to review their position; or again to some good man who arises in their midst and by his example and his virtuous deeds produces the same effect as does the constitution.

Such benefits, therefore, are conferred on a republic either by the virtue of some individual or by the virtue of an institution. In regard to the latter, the institutions which caused the Roman republic to return to its start were the introduction of plebeian tribunes, of the censorship, and of all the other laws which put a check on human ambition and arrogance; to which institutions life must needs be given by some virtuous citizen who cooperates strenuously in giving them effect despite the power of those who contravene them. Notable among such drastic actions, before the taking of Rome by the Gauls, were the death of Brutus' sons, the death of the ten citizens, and that of Maelius, the corn-dealer. After the taking of Rome there was the death of Manlius Capitolinus, the death of Manlius Torquatus' son, the action taken by Papirius Cursor against Fabius, his master of horse, and the charge brought against the Scipios. Such events, because of their unwonted severity and their notoriety, brought men back to the mark every time one of them happened; and when they began to occur less frequently, they also began to provide occasion for men to practise corruption, and were attended with more danger and more commotion. For

between one case of disciplinary action of this type and the next there ought to elapse at most ten years, because by this time men begin to change their habits and to break the laws; and, unless something happens which recalls to their minds the penalty involved and reawakens fear in them, there will soon be so many delinquents that it will be impossible to punish them without danger.

In regard to this, those who governed the state of Florence from 1434 to 1494 used to say that it was necessary to reconstitute the government every five years; otherwise it was difficult to maintain it; where by 'reconstituting the government' they meant instilling men with that terror and that fear with which they had instilled them when instituting it—in that at this time they had chastised those who, looked at from the established way of life, had misbehaved. As, however, the remembrance of this chastisement disappears, men are emboldened to try something fresh and to talk sedition. Hence provision has of necessity to be made against this by restoring that government to what it was at its origins.

Such a return to their original principles in republics is sometimes due to the simple virtue of one man alone, independently of any laws spurring you to action. For of such effect is a good reputation and good example that men seek to imitate it, and the bad are ashamed to lead lives which go contrary to it. Those who in Rome are outstanding examples of this good influence, are Horatius Cocles, Scaevola, Fabricius, the two Decii, Regulus Atilius, and several others, whose rare and virtuous examples wrought the same effects in Rome as laws and institutions would have done. If then effective action of the kind described above, together with this setting of good example, had occurred in that city at least every ten years, it necessarily follows that it would never have become corrupt. But when both the one and the other began to occur more rarely, corruption began to spread. For, after

the time of Marcus Regulus, there appeared no examples of this kind, and, though in Rome there arose the two Catos, between them and any prior instance there was so great an interval, and again between the Catos themselves, and they stood so alone that their good example could have no good effect; especially in the case of the younger Cato who found the greater part of the city so corrupt that he could not by his example effect any improvement among the citizens. So much then for republics.

As to religious institutions one sees here again how necessary these renovations are from the example of our own religion, which, if it had not been restored to its starting-point by St Francis and St Dominic, would have become quite extinct. For these men by their poverty and by their exemplification of the life of Christ revived religion in the minds of men in whom it was already dead, and so powerful were these new religious orders that they prevented the depravity of prelates and of religious heads from bringing ruin on religion. They also lived so frugally and had such prestige with the populace as confessors and preachers that they convinced them it is an evil thing to talk evilly of evil doing, and a good thing to live under obedience to such prelates, and that, if they did wrong, it must be left to God to chastise them. And, this being so, the latter behave as badly as they can, because they are not afraid of punishments which they do not see and in which they do not believe. It is, then, this revival which has maintained and continues to maintain this religion.

Kingdoms also need to be renovated and to have their laws brought back to their starting-points. The salutary effect this produces is seen in the kingdom of France, for the conduct of affairs in this kingdom is controlled by more laws and more institutions than it is in any other. These laws and these institutions are maintained by *parlements*, notably by that of Paris, and by it they are renovated whenever it takes action

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against a prince of this realm or in its judgements condemns the king. Up to now it has maintained its position by the pertinacity with which it has withstood the nobility of this realm. But should it at any time let an offence remain unpunished and should offences begin to multiply, the result would unquestionably be either that they would have to be corrected to the accompaniment of grievous disorders or that the kingdom would disintegrate.

The conclusion we reach, then, is that there is nothing more necessary to a community, whether it be a religious establishment, a kingdom or a republic, than to restore to it the prestige it had at the outset, and to take care that either good institutions or good men shall bring this about rather than that external force should give rise to it. For though this on occasion may be the best remedy, as it was in Rome's case, it is so dangerous that in no case is it what one should desire.

In order to make it clear to all how much the action of particular men contributed to the greatness of Rome and produced in that city so many beneficial results, I shall proceed to narrate and to discuss their doings, and shall confine myself to this topic in this third and last book on this first Decad [of Livy's history]. And, though the actions of the kings were great and noteworthy, since history deals with them at length I shall not mention them here, except where they may have done things with a view to their personal advantage. I begin, then, with Brutus, the father of Rome's liberties.

2. *That it is a Very Good Notion at Times to pretend to be a Fool*

NO one ever acted so prudently nor acquired such a reputation for wisdom owing to any remarkable deed as that which Junius Brutus earned by pretending to be stupid. And although Titus Livy assigns but one cause as the ground which induced

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him to practise this dissimulation, namely, that he might live in greater security and preserve his estates, none the less, in view of his conduct, one can well believe that he practised it also in order to escape observation and that he might get a better opportunity of downing the kings and liberating his country, whenever they gave him a chance. That it was of this he was thinking is clear first from the interpretation he put on the oracle of Apollo when he pretended to fall down so that he might kiss the ground, and from this inferred that the gods looked with favour on what he had in mind; and, later, when on the death of Lucretia he was the first to pull the dagger out of the wound in the presence of her father, her husband and other of her relatives, and to make the bystanders swear that they would never tolerate for the future any king reigning in Rome.

From the example this man set, all those who are ill content with a prince should take note that they ought first to measure and to weigh their strength. Should they be so powerful that they can afford to declare themselves his enemies and openly to make war on him, this is the course they should adopt, since it is less dangerous and more honourable. But if their position is such that they have not sufficient forces to make war openly, they should use every endeavour to acquire the prince's friendship; and to this end should avail themselves of every opening which they think necessary to attain it, by becoming obsequious to his wishes and by taking pleasure in everything in which they see that he takes pleasure. Such familiar intercourse in the first place assures that your life will be safe, and, without entailing any danger, allows you to enjoy the prince's good fortune just as he does himself. It also provides you with ample opportunity for fulfilling your intentions.

