

From Robert M Adams, *The Prince*  
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## Machiavelli the Working Diplomat

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

[The Legation to Cesare Borgia]†

[Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy was no business for a man with weak nerves. Personal relations counted for a great deal, and decisions involving the life or death of a city had to be made, sometimes on the basis of nothing more than a smile or an immendo. Communications were abominable. Even though he was only a few hundred miles from home, the ambassador could not ask a question and get an answer (during the winter, particularly, when the Apennine passes were sometimes closed and always perilous) in much less than a week. There was no systematic reporting of news throughout Italy, far less throughout Europe. News spread by word of mouth, with casual couriers, travelers, and merchants as its carriers, and often its garblers. Dealing with a man like Cesare Borgia, who was impatient of temper and quick to act, an ambassador had to be bold, decisive, and independent, yet careful to avoid overstepping the bounds of his commission.

For back in Florence Machiavelli had to deal not just with one commander in chief, but with a committee, the Dieci di Balìa, or as we would say, the Council of Ten, though the Italian means the "Ten of Council." Under this neutral title they were in fact the Ministry of War. They commissioned numerous Florentine citizens, among them Machiavelli, to serve as their agents at the courts of various princes in Italy and abroad; and from these agents they received reports, more or less detailed, as circumstances required. Among these agents, Machiavelli, as a simple civil servant, a secretary, occupied a position of no great eminence. He was not, for example, a nobleman like his contemporary Count Baldassare Castiglione, who served several different princes; he was not a prelate or dignitary of the Church. During his first days in the service, he was generally associated with another ambassador, to whom he was junior if not directly subordinate. But as his talents became known, he was sent on more and more important missions, and assumed more authority over their conduct. In June of 1502, he was sent, with Francesco Soderini, bishop of Volterra and brother of Piero Soderini, the chief magistrate of Florence, to deal with Cesare Borgia, then in his ascendant. For a sketch of Cesare's circumstances and intentions, see the Historical Introduction, pp. xiv-xv. Machiavelli and Francesco Sod-

† Translated by the editor from Niccolò Machiavelli, *Legazione e commissaire*, ed. Sergio Bettelli (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1961), vol. 1 (vol. 3 of the *Machiavelli Opere*) 335-45, 502-10.

crimi were much impressed with Cesare Borgia when they first saw him, as he was just setting out on his conquests. In a letter from Urbino, dated June 26, 1502, they summarized his character:

This Lord is very splendid and magnificent and so fierce in battle that there's no great enterprise that he won't take lightly; in the pursuit of glory and reputation he never rests, and recognizes neither weariness nor danger; he has arrived at a new position before anyone understands that he has left the old one. He is well liked by his soldiers, and he has enrolled the best men in Italy. These qualities make him both victorious and dangerous for the future; added to which, he is always lucky.

The Florentines should, technically, have been natural allies of Cesare, since they were both allied to the king of France; but the connection was not one on which anybody could count. Cesare wanted the king's soldiers only until he could get together an army of his own; the Florentines, if they could only get back Pisa, wanted desperately to be left alone, so they could make their way by trading and manufacturing. But they were too fat a prize to live comfortably in the sea of sharks that was northern Italy. One of the fiercest and hungriest of these sharks was Cesare Borgia. Machiavelli's dealings with this up-and-coming tyrant (of which we can represent here only a small sample, culled from a second mission to Cesare in October–December 1502) show him hard at work on the daily business of diplomacy—playing for time, persuading, promising, calculating, observing, serving the best interests of his city in whatever way he could, under extremely difficult and trying circumstances. It was his long experience in this sort of work that tempered the mind of Machiavelli toward the writing of *The Prince*, after Cesare Borgia was dead and after the republic for which Machiavelli worked so faithfully had gone down the drain.

The translation of these documents has been made from Machiavelli's *Legazione e commissaire* (vol. 3 of his *Opere*). The translation aims at bald authenticity. Machiavelli's employers write committee-room prose at its worst; in Machiavelli's reports, the trivial rubs shoulders with the crucial; the spelling of names is very casual, and allusive formulas are everywhere. We are, as it were, in the workshop of sixteenth-century city-state diplomacy.]

1

### *Deliberations of the Signoria*

October 5, 1502

The Magnificent Lords, etc., by special decree, have sent to the same illustrious Duke Valentino as their envoy Nicholas Malclavellus,<sup>1</sup> with

1. "Malclavellus" is a Latin secretary's instinctive effort to Latinize "Machiavelli" but it is etymologically correct: the name derives from the Latin for "bad keys," *mali clavelli*.

a salary which is stipulated elsewhere and with these instructions which are written below.

Departed, October 6.

Returned, January 23, 1503.

2

### *The Commission*

Commission given to Niccolò Machiavelli, formulated by our esteemed masters on the fifth of October 1502.

Niccolò, we send you to Imola<sup>2</sup> to find His Excellency the Duke Valentino with credentials to him; you will proceed there on horse as fast as you can, and in your first conference with him you will explain that, in recent days, since his return into the Romagna, we've learned of the estrangement and departure of the Orsini from His Excellency, and the gathering and conclave of them and their adherents near La Magione in the neighborhood of Perugia, and the story has gone round that the duke of Urbino and Signor Bartolommeo d'Alviano will be there too, in order to plan and plot actions against His Excellency, actions which we consider to be directed against the Most Christian King,<sup>3</sup> and we too have been slyly requested to send our man to that meeting, and talk with them; but we continue to be of our old opinion, desirous of being good friends of Our Master and His Excellency, firmly committed against separating ourselves or abandoning our devotion to the king of France;<sup>4</sup> because, living in friendship with him, and under his protection, our city cannot fail to recall, when it's a question of the king's interests, and His Excellency's friends and dependents, everything which has been done and promised in our interests, and so reciprocate with all the good offices of good friends; and it's for this reason that we've sent you posthaste to His Excellency, since we think the importance of the business requires it; and you should tell him again that in these movements of our neighbors, we intend to preserve the greatest respect for his interests, and maintain the same esteem for him that we have always had, in view of the fact that we consider all the friends of France to be our friends, and where it's a question of their interests, there it's

2. Lying across the Apennines in the broad plain fronting the Adriatic Sea, Imola was only about fifty miles from Florence as the crow flies; but the actual distance was twice as much. As we learn below, one particularly urgent courier made the trip in about seventeen hours; most took longer. See the map of the area, p. 74.

3. The assembly at La Magione near Perugia, which did not actually convene till October 9 but was much talked of in advance, brought

together local lords, soldiers, bravos, and family heads of the Romagna. Signor Bartolommeo d'Alviano was a Venetian soldier; his presence would greatly have strengthened the conspiracy. The plot was directed against Cesare, as captain of the Church, but also against his two chief supporters: his father, Pope Alexander VI, and the "Most Christian King," Louis XII of France.

4. "Our Master" is Louis XII, then with his army; "His Excellency" is Cesare.

also a question of ours. And this, it seems to us, ought to be enough for your first encounter, in which you will make it as clear as possible that we have great confidence and hope in His Excellency: and on this theme you can enlarge as much as you think proper, spelling out in your conversation all the details and circumstances of which the material allows, none of which need be expanded on here, as you're perfectly well acquainted with them: nor do we want you to talk of anything outside of this material, nor deal with it in any other way; and whenever His Excellency tries to push you further, we want you to tell us of it, and wait for our reply. And after this first opening statement, either in this first audience or later, will you thank His Excellency as warmly as you can for his good services to our merchants, which is a benefit we consider to be conferred on us, and a public benefaction; reminding him of the liberation of those goods which had been held up for some months past at Urbino, and about which we've just heard today from those merchants that they've been forwarded according to their instructions; with a great show of friendship, which will make clear that you have particular instructions to look into the matter; and then afterwards, when you think the occasion right, you can request of His Excellency in our name security and safe conduct through his states and territories for the goods of our merchants coming and going from the East; and this is a matter of considerable import, which you could call the very stomach of our city, and you must pay particular attention to it, and exercise all your diligence so that the outcome may be according to our desires.

3

*Credentials Given to the Ambassador*

October 5, 1502

To Duke Valentino.

Most Illustrious Lord, etc. We send to Your Excellency Niccolò Machiavelli, a citizen and our secretary, in order to acquaint you with various matters of great significance both to our friendship and present circumstances. We beg Your Lordship by our love to give this man the same trust that you would to ourselves.

4

*Safe Conduct for Machiavelli*

The Priors in the name of freedom and the Gonfalonier in the name of justice of the Florentine people, to all and sundry whom these letters

may reach, greetings. We are sending Niccolò, son of Messer Bernardo Machiavelli, a very noble citizen and our secretary, to the most illustrious duke of Romagna, etc., on some of our business; and so we command all rectors, officials, subjects, and employees of ours, and we beg all you our friends and allies, to let pass the aforesaid Niccolò with all his goods and properties, without payment of any impost or excise; and if he should need any help or favor in order to arrive safely before the aforesaid lord, let him have it; and we will always be very ready to return a similar or greater favor, should need arise. Farewell.

From our palace, October 4, 1502.

Marcellus<sup>5</sup>

5

*Machiavelli to the Ten*

Magnificent and Distinguished Lords, my very particular masters. Since I found myself ill provided with horses at my departure, and it seemed to me that my duties required haste, I took post<sup>6</sup> at Scarperia and came to this place without any loss of time, where I arrived today around six o'clock; and because I had left behind my own horses and my servants, I presented myself immediately in traveling dress before His Excellency, who greeted me warmly; and as I presented my credentials, I explained to him the reason for my coming, and began to thank him for the restitution of our merchants' goods. Then I turned to the falling away of the Orsini and to the counsel they were holding with their adherents, and how Your Lordships had been secretly invited, and I reminded him of the views you hold regarding friendship with the king of France and your devotion to the Church; and I amplified on these topics with all the words that occurred to me, explaining that you felt bound to hold friendship with king and Church while avoiding complicity with their enemies. And I explained that in every action, Your Lordships are concerned to safeguard his particular interests, as befits the friendship you maintain with the king of France and the devotion you have always felt for his own power, since you consider all friends of France to be most faithful friends and allies of your own. His Excellency, on the matter of the restitutions, gave no answer at all; but, turning to the other particulars, he thanked Your Lordships for this kind and welcome demonstration: and then he said that he had always desired friendly relations with Your Lordships, and that any lapse in them should

5. Marcello Virgilio di Adriano Betti, secretary of the Florentine chancery.

6. Instead of riding his own horse all the way, he rented successive horses from the post service. As each beast covered only a short stage

of the journey, a man could travel faster by post than on his own animal. Scarperia is a little village about fifteen miles north-northeast of Florence on the road to Imola.

be laid to the malignity of others, not to his account; and he said he wanted to explain to me in particular what he had never told anyone else, regarding his coming with an army to Florence.<sup>7</sup> And he said that when Faenza had fallen and an attempt had been made on Bologna, the Orsini and Vitelli were on his back to get him to return to Rome by way of Florence; and when he said no, because the pope had ordered him to go another way, Vitellozzo threw himself at his feet in tears, begging him to go this way, and promising that he would do no harm either to the city or to the countryside. And he didn't want to grant even this much, until others came with similar requests that they be allowed to go there, but always with the proviso that the countryside should not be harmed and there should be no talk of the Medici. But since he was now going to Florence, he thought to profit by the occasion and reach a friendly agreement with Your Lordships: which shows that he had never in a business way talked at all or to any effect about the Medici, as the commissioners who treated with him know very well; nor did he ever want to have Pietro with him in his camp.<sup>8</sup> When they were at Campi, he says the Orsini and Vitelli often asked his permission to make a show of force before Florence or Pistoia, to show that those were feasible enterprises; but he never gave his consent, instead he gave them to understand with a thousand protests, that he would fight them. The agreement then followed,<sup>9</sup> but it seemed to the Orsini and Vitelli that he had had his will, and they hadn't had theirs, since the event had turned out to his advantage and their loss, so that they began secretly to sabotage it, and did all they could to make trouble for Your Lordships and upset the agreement. And he couldn't properly set things right, partly because he couldn't be everywhere at once, and partly because Your Lordships hadn't come through with the advance which had been agreed on, and which once seemed about to be paid. Things standing thus about the end of last June, the rebellion of Arezzo broke out at that time:<sup>1</sup> concerning which, he said, he had never had any foreknowledge, as he had already assured the bishop of Volterra; but he certainly welcomed it, supposing it offered him a chance to achieve recognition. Yet even then nothing was done, either through bad luck on both sides,

7. During the summer of 1501 Cesare Borgia, with his ragtag international army, had paid an ambiguous call on the Florentines. Cesare was much feared himself, and a chief captain in his army was Vitellozzo Vitelli, who bore a grudge against the Florentines because they had executed his brother Paolo. After some rather tense negotiations, Cesare was appointed "protector" of Florence, with an annual salary of thirty-six thousand ducats. Always a threat to the republic under such circumstances was the possibility that someone might try to reinstate the Medici, who had been driven from Florence in 1494.

8. Pietro de' Medici, deposed and disagreeable son of the Magnificent Lorenzo, who was al-

ways hanging around armies in the hope of being restored by them.

9. I.e., Cesare's agreement to "proter" Florence from enemies—including, in the first instance, himself. Technically, he took the city under his "condotta."

1. This was in June 1502. Arezzo, a city dependent on Florence, tried to break away; and Vitellozzo Vitelli, a neighbor who was always itching to get at the Florentines, came to the aid of the rebels. The "bishop of Volterra" was Francesco Soderini, brother of the Florentine gonfalonier, Piero Soderini, and a political associate of Machiavelli's in an earlier mission to Cesare.

or because your city was not then in a position to discuss and decide matters which would have been of great advantage to both; and yet he said that gave him no particular trouble, and being still disposed to do you good, in view of the king's good will, he wrote and sent men directly to Vitellozzo, telling him to clear out of Arezzo: and not content with this, he went off with his men toward Città di Castello, and could have taken Vitelli's own state from him, because the chief men of the countryside came forward to offer their help; and this, he said, was the prime source of Vitellozzo's discontent and ill humor. As for the Orsini, he said he didn't know what made them discontented in the French court, and couldn't tell without papal permission. But they perhaps resented that the French king had treated him more honorably than Cardinal Orsini, and given him special privileges;<sup>2</sup> and then rumor had said he was going to take their state away; so on that they broke away, and now found themselves in this convocation of bankrupts. And though he had received various messages from Signor Giulio Orsini, declaring that he was not going to oppose him, etc., and it wasn't reasonable to expect them to declare themselves openly, because they had taken his money:<sup>3</sup> still, when they did declare themselves, he expected they would prove crazier than people had thought, since they weren't even able to pick the right time to attack him—the king of France was in Italy, and His Holiness the pope was still living, and those two things lit such a fire under him that putting it out would require a different water than theirs. He didn't worry about the loss of Urbino, because he hadn't forgotten the way to get it back when he lost it.<sup>4</sup> And then he suggested that now was the time, if Your Lordships wanted to be his friends, to prove it; because he could now make friends with you without having to placate the Orsini, as he had always had to do before. But if Your Lordships delayed, and he meanwhile was reconciled with the Orsini, who are still dealing with him, then the same old problems would come back; and as the Orsini could scarcely be satisfied with any deal unless it replaced the Medici,<sup>5</sup> then Your Lordships would be back in the same old jealousies and troubles. Thus he thinks Your Lordships should declare yourselves at once to be his friends or theirs, one way or the other, because if you put it off, either the two parties will reach an agreement at your expense, or else one of them will be victorious, which in the hour of victory will be either hostile or else under no obligation to Your

2. This would have been four years before, in 1498, when Cesare was sent as papal legate to the court of France, bearing the order that annulled Louis's marriage with Jeanne of France and so enabled him to marry Anne of Brittany.

3. Whatever the consequences for his domestic bliss, the shift of wives was a great political coup for Louis.

4. Cesare had made it his business to seem

placatory and even generous toward the Orsini and Vitelli; it was by means of these soft words and lavish presents that he lured them into the trap at Sirigaglia; see below.

5. Only two days before (October 5) Urbino had revolted against Cesare as part of the general rising of the Romagna, which was coming to a head with the meeting at La Magione.

6. In Florence.

Lordships. And when you come to make your decision, he thinks you will see the necessity of it; he doesn't see how Your Lordships can take sides against the majesty of the king and the sanctity of the pope; and he adds that it would ease things for him if, when he moves Vitellozzo or others into one or another of his states, you would make a show with what forces you have in the direction of Borgo or those boundaries, in order to lend color to his actions.<sup>6</sup>

I listened very carefully as His Excellency went over the points given above: what he said was not just to the general effect that I report but in exactly the same words, which I have transcribed at length so that Your Lordships may better judge of the whole: I don't transcribe my own answers, as that isn't necessary: I tried very hard not to go beyond my commission, and in the matter of using your forces, I made no answer whatever; I simply said that I would write to Your Lordships, declaring his exact thoughts, in which I declared you would take extraordinary pleasure. And although His Excellency, as you see, showed a great desire to reach immediate agreement with you, still even when I pressed closely to draw him into some particulars, he always talked in large generalities, and I couldn't get anything out of him beyond what I've written. And since I'd mentioned in my opening remarks that there had been a certain turnaround in the state of Urbino, and His Excellency had said in his reply that he didn't much care what had happened in that dukedom, it occurred to me to ask in my reply how these things came about. To which His Excellency replied: My being too gentle, and taking too little care over the details, is what did me harm: I took that dukedom, as you know, in three days, and didn't ruffle a hair on anyone's head, except for Messer Dolce and two others, who had taken actions against His Holiness the pope; indeed, I went further, and appointed several of those leading citizens to offices in the state, one of them in charge of certain walls that I was having erected in the fort of San Leo. Two days ago, he conspired with some people of the countryside who made a show of bringing up a big beam for the work, and so they forced the gate, and the fortress was lost. Some say the cry that went up was Marco,<sup>7</sup> others Vitelli, others Orsini; but up to this point nobody has declared himself. Personally, I consider the dukedom was lost because it was a weak and sluggish state; the men were malcontents, whom I had overburdened with soldiery; but I expect to take care of it all. And you write to your lords that they should look to their own affairs here; because if the duke returns to Urbino and he comes from Venice,<sup>8</sup>

6. The suggestion is that the Florentines should mime an act of aggression so that Cesare could order Vitellozzo Vitelli, still technically in his service, into some disadvantageous position. "Borgo" is Borgo San Sepolcro.

7. "Marco" is San Marco, patron saint of Venice. "Overburdened with soldiery" means sim-

ply that there had been too many armies camped around Urbino, foraging off the countryside.

8. The Florentines had good reason to fear the Venetians, who as their commercial rivals had lent troops to the Pisans in their struggle against Florence.

it's not by any means our loss and your gain; which is one more reason why we should trust one another.

This is, in effect, all that I can write to Your Lordships at this time; and though it's part of my assignment to write you how many visitors are at this nobleman's court, where they are staying, and many other local particulars, still, since I just arrived today, I can't be sure of the truth of it, and thus I'll save it for another occasion: and I commend myself to Your Lordships.

Your servant, Nicolaus Machiavellus. At Imola.

October 7, 1502

E. V. D.<sup>9</sup>

Held over to the next day at four P.M., the horse supplier being completely out, and I haven't been able to find an animal up to now. And I can add that yesterday His Excellency in his talk with me said that the day before Pandolfo Petrucci<sup>1</sup> had sent a secret message, pledging that he would give no favors to anyone who opposed His Excellency, and went on to give more general pledges to this effect.

On my way here I encountered Messer Agapito some two miles out of town, with seven or eight horses; and when he recognized me, I told him where I was going and who sent me. He made me very welcome, and went forward only a little distance before turning back. This morning, I realized that the said Messer Agapito was on his way to Your Lordships as the emissary of this duke, and because of my coming he turned back.<sup>2</sup> Farewell again.

October 8, 1502

I have given the present horseman two ducats on the understanding that he will be there tomorrow morning before daybreak, which should be around nine A.M. Will you be good enough to reimburse Ser Agostino Vespncci.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

9. E. V. D. stands for Excellentissimae Vestrae Dominationis (Servitor), ("[Servant of] Your Most Excellent Lordship").

1. Pandolfo Petrucci was prince and tyrant of Siena.

2. The point being made is that Cesare had greater need of Florentine support than he let

on; if the Florentines hadn't sent Machiavelli to him, he was on the point of sending Messer Agapito as an envoy to them.

3. Machiavelli asks that reimbursements for his expenses be paid to various of his friends, who would find ways to get the money to him.

*Machiavelli to the Ten*

Magnificent Lords, etc. By way of Bagno I wrote my latest to Your Lordships on the twenty-third, and since I wrote at length there of the departure of the French and the various opinions about it, there's no need for me now to say anything more of it, since there's nothing important to add.

The day before yesterday the boy of Ardingo, the courier, arrived, with two letters of Your Lordships' dated the twentieth and twenty-second, and though I made every effort after receiving them to talk with the duke, I could not do so, because my only chance was yesterday, and yesterday His Excellency was busy reviewing the infantry and in his other holiday pleasures, so I could not get to him; and this morning he rose early, and went off with the whole army to Santo Arcangelo, some fifteen miles from here and five miles from Rimini; so tomorrow I'll get up early and go to Rimini, since I can't lodge any closer because of the shortage of housing—it's very scant—even though people say we aren't to stop in this district for any time at all; but next day the army will move on to near Pesaro; nobody knows what's up; some think an attempt will be made on Sinigaglia, others say Ancona.<sup>4</sup> As for soldiers, he has those troops that I mentioned in my latest list, and in addition around thirty newly enrolled Albanian auxiliaries, in addition to 2,500 infantry from beyond the Alps, and about the same number of Italians, some of whom put on the show yesterday and the day before. You can figure that for every thousand infantry there are fifty horsemen capable of serving as cavalry; the artillery have moved at the same pace as the army's leader, with the necessary powder and shot. What sort of power the Orsini and the Vitelli have, nobody knows; we'll know better on the day when the armies get closer to one another; as I've often told Your Lordships, this duke is extremely secretive, and I don't think anyone but himself knows what he's about to do: even his chief secretaries have often told me that he never explains what he's going to do till he's already begun it, and he begins it when circumstances constrain him, and the situation is ripe, not otherwise; so I beg Your Lordships to excuse me, and don't think I'm negligent when I can't give Your Lordships exact information, since most of the time I can't even satisfy myself as to what is happening. Concerning San Leo and the deal he is making with Duke Guido there's no further news.<sup>5</sup> As for Camerino I wrote on another

4. Pesaro, Sinigaglia, and Ancona are stretched out along the Adriatic coast at intervals of about twenty to twenty-five miles; Cesare's interest wasn't in any of them, particularly, but in rounding up the conspirators of La Magione, who at the moment were desperately trying to pretend they were his best

friends. When caught, they had taken Sinigaglia and proposed to present it to him as a peace offering. He took both it and them.  
5. This deal clearly involved the fate of Urbino. "Duke Guido" is Guidobaldo da Montefeltro. Camerino, also captured by Cesare, was another city whose fate was up in the air

occasion what the duke told me, who had been there on official duties, and afterwards I wrote as much as I had been able to get out of that secretary to Cardinal Farnese, who told me that there was little hope for it, and that mostly on the part of the French: yesterday I heard from the bishop of Fuma that things were practically settled, but I'd better wait for the last word, in order not to be mistaken again.

This morning Messer Remirro was found in two pieces on the public square, where he still is: the whole city has been to see him: nobody is sure of the reason for his death, except that it was the will of the prince, who shows himself capable of making men and breaking them as he pleases, according to their merits.<sup>6</sup>

The courier I mentioned above brought me twenty-five golden ducats and sixteen yards of black damask. I thank Your Lordships for the one thing as well as the other.

Because the court is on the move, no man has been assigned to me to go and pick up the three horses that Your Lordships say are at Poppi; let me beg of Your Lordships to ensure that they are properly cared for till I can arrange for them to come here.

Messer Bartolommeo Marcelli of Bagno, for whom the baron of Bierra lately wrote to our exalted masters, asks nothing but that a little time be granted before his appearance, so that he can get there; he's writing on this point to Piero de Braccio Martelli, who is acting as his lawyer in the case; and I again recommend his request to Your Lordships' consideration; may all your affairs go well.

Your servant, Nicolaus Machiavellus, Secretary

From Cesena, December 26, 1502, at ten P.M.  
E.V.D.

\* \* \*

*Machiavelli to the Ten*

Magnificent Lords, etc. Day before yesterday I wrote from Pesaro to Your Lordships describing what I understood of Sinigaglia: yesterday I went to Fano, and this morning early the duke with his whole army came here to Sinigaglia where were assembled all the Orsini and Vitellozzo, who as I wrote before had taken possession of this area. They went into the city, he went in with them and as soon as he was near the center, he turned to his guard and took them all prisoner: and thus he has captured them all, and the district will be sacked everywhere; and it is now eleven P.M. I'm overwhelmed with business; I don't know

6. See *The Prince*, chapter VII.

if I'll be able to send this letter, for lack of anyone going that way. I'll write at length on another occasion; in my opinion, there won't be one of them alive tomorrow morning.

In Sinigaglia, the last day of December 1502.

All their people are in fact taken, and the papers which are being drawn up about them say that the traitors have been captured, etc.

I have given the present bearer three ducats, and Your Lordships will give him another three; for my share you will reimburse Biagio.<sup>7</sup>

Your servant, Nicolaus Machiavellus

80

*Machiavelli to the Ten*

Magnificent Lords, etc. Yesterday I wrote two letters to Your Lordships about everything that happened after the arrival of His Excellence the Duke in Sinigaglia, and of how he captured Paolo Orsini, the duke of Gravina, Vitellozzo, and Oliverotto; in the first I simply gave you notice of the event, and in the second I described things in more detail, adding all the things that His Excellency told me, and an account of public opinion regarding this lord and his doings. I would repeat these letters in detail if I thought they had not reached you safely. But as I sent the first with all the force of six ducats and the second with the force of three, by picked men, one Florentine, the other from Urbino, I'm in good hopes. Still, I will summarize everything yet again for Your Lordships, out of an excess of caution, just in case my first letters don't reach you. This lord left Fano yesterday morning, and with his whole army came up to Sinigaglia, which had been occupied, except for the fortress, by the Orsini and Messer Liverotto da Fermo. The day before, Vitellozzo had arrived in the district from Castello; they went one after the other to meet with the duke, and then accompanied him into the town and into a house; and then when they were all together in one room, my lord had them made prisoner; then he had all their troops disarmed, who were in the suburbs around the city, and sent half his own army to disarm some other retainers, who had been placed in different castles six or seven miles around Sinigaglia. Afterwards he called me into his presence about two in the morning, and with the most cheerful expression in the world joked with me about these events, saying that he had spoken to me before about them, but hadn't explained his whole plan, which was true; then he added some wise and unusually affectionate words about our city, explaining all the reasons which made him eager

7. Biagio Buonaccorsi, Machiavelli's oldest and most intimate friend.

for your friendship, as long as you aren't found wanting. Indeed, he left me in a state of astonishment, but I won't expand on this further, since I described it at length in last night's letter. He concluded that I should write three things to Your Lordships on his behalf. The first, that I was delighted with his success in having destroyed those men who were most bitterly hostile to the king, to himself, and to you; and in taking away every seed of scandal and discord that could have disturbed Italy; for all of which Your Lordships are much obliged to him. Next, that I should earnestly request and beseech Your Lordships in his name, that in order to make clear to the whole world that you have been his friends in this matter, you should send some cavalry to Borgo, and assemble some troops, so that you can move with him against Castello or Perugia, which are the next orders of business. And he said he wanted to move swiftly in this matter, and would have marched last night, if he hadn't been afraid that when he left town Sinigaglia would be put to the sack. And again he asked me to write that you should make every demonstration possible of being friendly to him, adding that for the present there was no reason to fear or suspect anything, since he was well armed and all your enemies were captured. *Finally*, he asked me to write Your Lordships, in connection with the capture of Vitellozzo, that if Duke Guido,<sup>8</sup> who is at Castello, should take refuge in your districts, he would appreciate your holding him a prisoner. I said that giving up political refugees didn't suit with the dignity of our city, and that you would never do it; he answered that I talked very well, but it would be quite adequate if Your Lordships simply held him in custody, and didn't let him go without prior approval. I agreed to write everything; and he will expect your answer.

I also wrote in my letter of yesterday that many men, well disposed and friendly to our city, have suggested to me that this was a great occasion for Your Lordships to place your city to advantage in the new order of things. Everyone thinks that with regard to France, Your Lordships can safely trust them; and the feeling here is that you should send one of your chief citizens to be ambassador there, particularly because of this turn of events, and not postpone this action, because a man of position who comes there with specific proposals to make, will find a good response. This point has been made to me time and again by people who wish well to our city; and I write it to Your Lordships with the same sincerity that I have always observed toward you. And this is in substance what I wrote in my second letter yesterday, perhaps even spelled out in more detail.

As for recent developments, last night about ten o'clock this lord had Vitellozzo and Oliverotto da Fermo put to death; the other two are still

8. Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, currently out of a job.



alive; it's thought they are waiting to see if the pope has his hands on the cardinal and the others at Rome. If he has, as they think, then they'll dispose of the whole parcel at once.

This morning early the fortress of Sinigaglia surrendered to the duke, and is now in his power; His Lordship left the same morning, and came here with his army; from here they will be heading toward Perugia or Castello for certain, and perhaps toward Siena; then they'll move down toward Rome, taking over all those strongholds of the Orsini, and the plan is to capture Bracciano, after which the others will go like a bonfire of straw. All this however is just popular conjecture. I'll remain here all day tomorrow, and the next day stay at Sassoferrato. You can imagine what sort of weather this is for making war, indeed you wouldn't believe it if I told you the hardships these troops are undergoing, as well as anyone who accompanies them, because it's a lucky man who has a roof over his head.

Messer Goro da Pistoia, an enemy of our city and rebel against it,<sup>9</sup> was with Vitellozzo, and is now being held here by certain Spaniards; I think for two hundred ducats, if Your Lordships wanted to spend that much, you could arrange for one of his present keepers to turn him over to one of your officials. Let Your Lordships consider this matter, and let me know what you think of it: I commend myself to Your Lordships; May all things go well with you.

Your servant, Nicholaus Machiavellus, Secretary

From Corinaldo, the first day of January 1503.

F.V.D.

. . .

9. Goro da Pistoia was an active agent of the Medici in their efforts to overthrow the republic, and so a declared enemy of Machiavelli's party.

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## Machiavelli the Correspondent

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NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

From His Private Letters†

[Machiavelli was one of the great letter writers. He should have been; it was his business. What is remarkable, given his unpopularity and the chaos of Italy at the time, is that many of his letters were preserved. Originally there must have been thousands; several hundred survive. As a letter writer, Machiavelli is notable for his extraordinary mobility and variety. With every different correspondent, and sometimes within the same letter, he shifts character and changes tone. Now he is jocose, now ironic, now severely practical, now self-mocking, occasionally conspiratorial. Out of these riches we have selected just three letters. The first, written to his old boss Piero Soderini after the collapse of the Florentine republic, condenses even further the already condensed political lessons of *The Prince*. What he says here to Soderini (whom he always considered too gentle and kindly a man) confirms what he wrote after Soderini's death in *Discorsi* 3. 9 (above, p. 117). A second letter is addressed to Francesco Vettori, the closest friend of Machiavelli's later years. Vettori was a cautious, cynical Florentine functionary at the papal court in Rome; with this wise, tough old bird, Machiavelli felt free to joke, complain, talk international politics, or compare wenching experiences. His letter describing the circumstances under which *The Prince* was composed is surely the most famous letter in Italian literature. Finally, a letter to Francesco Guicciardini, the famous historian of Florence, was written from a monastery to which Machiavelli (then in his fifties and long since removed from major public office) had been sent to select a special preacher for an upcoming religious festival in Florence. With Guicciardini, who fancied himself a joker and a cynic, Machiavelli is even more earthy than with Vettori. The scene that results is worthy of one of Machiavelli's stage comedies—*La Clizia* or *La Mandragola*—from which, alas, the present volume has no room even to excerpt.]

† The text of the letters is from Allan Gilbert, trans. and ed., *Machiavelli, the Chief Works and Others* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University

Press, 1965) volume 2. Unless otherwise noted, the footnotes are by Gilbert.



January 1512 (1513), Florence  
To Piero Soderini, in Ragusa<sup>1</sup>

A letter of yours came to me in a hood,<sup>2</sup> yet after ten words I recognized it. I am sure the crowds at Piombino will recognize you, and of your hindrances and Filippo's I am certain, because I know one is harmed by a little light, the other by too much. January does not trouble me, if only February supports me with his hands. I am sorry about Filippo's suspicions, and in suspense wait for its end. [*He who does not know how to fence overcomes him who knows fencing.*]

Your letter was short but I by rereading it made it long. It was pleasing to me because it gave me a chance to do what I feared to do and what you remind me that I should not do; and this part alone I have observed in it as without application. At this I would wonder, if my fate had not shown me so many and such varied things that I am obliged to wonder but little, or to confess that I have not comprehended while reading and experiencing the actions of men and their methods of procedure.

I understand you and the compass by which you navigate; and if it could be condemned, which it cannot, I would not condemn it, seeing to what port it has taken you and with what hope it can feed you. Consequently, I see, not with your mirror, where nothing is seen but prudence, but with that of the many, which is obliged in political affairs to judge the result when they are finished, and not the management while they are going on. Each man according to his own imagination guides himself. And I see various kinds of conduct bringing about the same thing, as by various roads one comes to the same place, and many who work differently attaining the same end. The actions of this pontiff<sup>3</sup> and their results have furnished anything needed to confirm this opinion.

Hannibal and Scipio were equally excellent in their military attainments; one of them with cruelty, treachery and lack of religion kept his armies united in Italy and made himself admired by the people, who to follow him rebelled against the Romans; the other, with mercy, loyalty and religion, in Spain got from those people the same effect; both of them won countless victories. But because it is not usual to bring up the Romans, Lorenzo de' Medici disarmed the people to hold Florence; Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio in order to hold Bologna armed them; the Vitelli in Città de Castello and the present duke of Urbino in his territory

1. This letter is apparently a rough draft, with notes (bracketed and italicized by Gilbert) for possible expansions. Piero Soderini, gonfalonier of the Florentine Republic, had been driven into exile by the return of the Medici. The letter, addressed to him at Ragusa, would have to go to the southernmost tip of Sicily to find him. The "crowds at Piombino" are therefore, like "January," "February," and almost cer-

tainly "Filippo," part of a secret code [Editor].  
2. In a hood: as an enclosure within another letter, mailed from a different address.  
3. Julius II, who was always surprising Machiavelli by coming to unexpected ends by unexpected paths. He added one more surprise to the list about a month after this letter was written by dying unexpectedly, February 20, 1513 [Editor].

destroyed the fortresses in order to retain those states; Count Francesco Sforza and many others built them in their states to make themselves sure of those states. [*To test Fortune, who is the friend of young men, and to change according to what you find. But it is not possible to have fortresses and not to have them, to be cruel and compassionate.*] Titus the Emperor believed he would lose his position on any day when he did not benefit somebody; some others might believe they would lose theirs on the day when they did anybody a favor. To many, weighing and measuring everything, success comes in their undertakings. [*As Fortune gets tired, anything is ruined. The family, the city, every man has his Fortune founded on his way of proceeding, and each Fortune gets tired, and when she is tired, she must be got back in another way. Comparison of the horse and the bridle about fortress.*] This Pope Julius, who hasn't a pair of scales or a yardstick in his house, gains through chance—although unarmed—what through organization and arms he scarcely could attain.

We have seen and see every day those I have mentioned, and countless others who could be used as instances, gaining kingdoms and sovereignties or falling, according to circumstances; and a man who was praised while he was gaining is reviled when he is losing; and frequently after long prosperity a man who finally loses does not in any way blame himself but accuses the heavens and the action of the Fates. But the reason why different ways of working are sometimes equally effective and equally damaging I do not know, but I should much like to know. So in order to get your opinion I shall be so presuming as to give mine.

I believe that as Nature has given each man an individual face, so she has given him an individual disposition and an individual imagination. From this it results that each man conducts himself according to his disposition and his imagination. On the other hand, because times vary and affairs are of varied types, one man's desires come out as he had prayed they would; he is fortunate who harmonizes his procedure with his time, but on the contrary he is not fortunate who in his actions is out of harmony with his time and with the type of its affairs. Hence it can well happen that two men working differently come to the same end, because each of them adapts himself to what he encounters, for affairs are of as many types as there are provinces and states. Thus, because times and affairs in general and individually change often, and men do not change their imaginings and their procedures, it happens that a man at one time has good fortune and at another time bad.

And certainly anybody wise enough to understand the times and the types of affairs and to adapt himself to them would have always good fortune, or he would protect himself always from bad, and it would come to be true that the wise man would rule the stars and the Fates. But because there never are such wise men, since men in the first place are shortsighted and in the second place cannot command their natures,

it follows that Fortune varies and commands men and holds them under her yoke. And to verify this opinion, I think the instances given above, on which I have based it, are enough, and so I expect one to support the other.

To give reputation to a new ruler, cruelty, treachery and irreligion are enough in a province where humanity, loyalty and religion have for a long time been common. Yet in the same way humanity, loyalty and religion are sufficient where cruelty, treachery and irreligion have dominated for a time, because, as bitter things disturb the taste and sweet ones cloy it, so men get bored with good and complain of ill. These causes, among others, opened Italy to Hannibal and Spain to Scipio; thus both of them found times and things suited to their way of proceeding. At that very time a man like Scipio would not have been so successful in Italy, or one like Hannibal so successful in Spain, as they both were in the provinces where they acted.

Niccolò Machiavelli

2

10 December 1513, Florence

To Francesco Vettori, his benefactor, in Rome

Magnificent Ambassador:

"Never late were favors divine."<sup>4</sup> I say this because I seemed to have lost—no, rather mislaid—your good will; you had not written to me for a long time, and I was wondering what the reason could be. And of all those that came into my mind I took little account, except of one only when I feared that you had stopped writing because somebody had written to you that I was not a good guardian of your letters, and I knew that, except Filippo and Pagolo,<sup>5</sup> nobody by my doing had seen them. I have found it again through your last one of the twenty-third of the past month, from which I learn with pleasure how regularly and quietly you carry on this public office, and I encourage you to continue so, because he who gives up his own convenience for the convenience of others, only loses his own and from them gets no gratitude. And since Fortune wants to do everything, she wishes us to let her do it, to be quiet, and not to give her trouble, and to wait for a time when she will allow something to be done by men; and then will be the time for you to work harder, to stir things up more, and for me to leave my farm and say: "Here I am." I cannot however, wishing to return equal favors, tell you in this letter anything else than what my life is; and if you judge it is to be swapped for yours, I shall be glad to change it.

I am living on my farm, and since I had my last bad luck, I have not

4. Petrarch, *Triumph of Eternity* 13.

5. Filippo Casavecchia and Pagolo Vettori, brother of the recipient of the letter.

spent twenty days, putting them all together, in Florence. I have until now been snaring thrushes with my own hands. I got up before day, prepared birdlime, went out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I looked like Geta when he was returning from the harbor with Amphitryo's books.<sup>6</sup> I caught at least two thrushes and at most six. And so I did all September. Later this pastime, pitiful and strange as it is, gave out, to my displeasure. And of what sort my life is, I shall tell you.

I get up in the morning with the sun and go into a grove I am having cut down, where I remain two hours to look over the work of the past day and kill some time with the cutters, who have always some bad-luck story ready, about either themselves or their neighbors. And as to this grove I could tell you a thousand fine things that have happened to me, in dealing with Frosino da Panzano and others who wanted some of this firewood. And Frosino especially sent for a number of cords without saying a thing to me, and on payment he wanted to keep back from me ten lire, which he says he should have had from me four years ago, when he beat me at *cricca* at Antonio Guicciardini's. I raised the devil, and was going to prosecute as a thief the waggoner who came for the wood, but Giovanni Machiavelli came between us and got us to agree. Battista Guicciardini, Filippo Ginori, Tommaso del Bene and some other citizens, when that north wind was blowing, each ordered a cord from me. I made promises to all and sent one to Tommaso, which at Florence changed to half a cord, because it was piled up again by himself, his wife, his servant, his children, so that he looked like Gabburra when on Thursday with all his servants he cudgels an ox.<sup>7</sup> Hence, having seen for whom there was profit, I told the others I had no more wood, and all of them were angry about it, and especially Battista, who counts this along with his misfortunes at Prato.<sup>8</sup>

Leaving the grove, I go to a spring, and thence to my aviary. I have a book in my pocket, either Dante or Petrarch, or one of the lesser poets, such as Tibullus, Ovid, and the like. I read of their tender passions and their loves, remember mine, enjoy myself a while in that sort of dreaming. Then I move along the road to the inn; I speak with those who pass, ask news of their villages, learn various things, and note the various tastes and different fancies of men. In the course of these things comes the hour for dinner, where with my family I eat such food as this poor farm of mine and my tiny property allow. Having eaten, I go back to the inn; there is the host, usually a butcher, a miller, two furnace tenders. With these I sink into vulgarity for the whole day, playing at *cricca* and at trichtrach, and then these games bring on a thousand disputes and countless insults with offensive words, and usually we are fighting over

6. A reference to a story founded on the *Amphitryo* of Plautus.

7. Gabburra, apparently a butcher, is unknown.

8. Battista Guicciardini was podestà (mayor) of

Prato when it was taken by the Spanish forces in 1512; as an immediate result the Medici were restored to Florence. It is remarkable that Machiavelli could use the fall of Prato in a jest.

a penny, and nevertheless we are heard shouting as far as San Casciano. So, mixed up with these lice, I keep my brain from growing mouldy, and satisfy the malice of this fate of mine, being glad to have her drive me along this road, to see if she will be ashamed of it.

On the coming of evening, I return to my house and enter my study; and at the door I take off the day's clothing, covered with mud and dust, and put on garments regal and courtly; and re clothed appropriately, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them with affection, I feed on that food which only is mine and which I was born for, where I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their kindness answer me; and for four hours of time I do not feel boredom, I forget every trouble, I do not dread poverty, I am not frightened by death; entirely I give myself over to them.

And because Dante says it does not produce knowledge when we hear but do not remember, I have noted everything in their conversation which has profited me,<sup>9</sup> and have composed a little work *On Princesdoms*, where I go as deeply as I can into considerations on this subject, debating what a princesdom is, of what kinds they are, how they are gained, how they are kept, why they are lost. If ever you can find any of my fantasies pleasing, this one should not displease you; and by a prince, and especially by a new prince, it ought to be welcomed. Hence I am dedicating it to His Magnificence Giuliano.<sup>1</sup> Filippo Casavecchia has seen it; he can give you some account in part of thing in itself and of the discussions I have had with him, though I am still enlarging and revising it.

You wish, Magnificent Ambassador, that I leave this life and come to enjoy yours with you. I shall do it in any case, but what tempts me now are certain affairs that within six weeks I shall finish. What makes me doubtful is that the Soderini we know so well are in the city, whom I should be obliged, on coming there, to visit and talk with. I should fear that on my return I could not hope to dismount at my house but should dismount at the Bargello, because though this government has mighty foundations and great security, yet it is new and therefore suspicious, and there is no lack of wiseacres who, to make a figure, like Pagolo Bertini, would place others at the dinner table and leave the reckoning to me.<sup>2</sup> I beg you to rid me of this fear, and then I shall come within the time mentioned to visit you in any case.

I have talked with Filippo about this little work of mine that I have spoken of, whether it is good to give it or not to give it; and if it is good

9. This seems to be Machiavelli making notes on Livy's *History* for his own *Discourses*, out of which rose *The Prince*.

1. Giuliano de' Medici, later duke of Nemours, son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. He resided in Florence after the restoration of the Medici in 1512, but in 1513 withdrew to

Rome.

2. Pagolo Bertini is unknown and the meaning of the sentence is uncertain. [But "dismounting at the Bargello" is very clear; it means being called before the central police authority on suspicion of conspiring with Soderini against the Medici.—*Editor*.]

to give it, whether it would be good to take it myself, or whether I should send it there.<sup>3</sup> Not giving it would make me fear that at the least Giuliano will not read it and that this rascal Ardinghelli will get himself honor from this latest work of mine.<sup>4</sup> The giving of it is forced on me by the necessity that drives me, because I am using up my money, and I cannot remain as I am a long time without becoming despised through poverty. In addition, there is my wish that our present Medici lords will make use of me, even if they begin by making me roll a stone; because then if I could not gain their favor, I should complain of myself; and through this thing, if it were read, they would see that for the fifteen years while I have been studying the art of the state, I have not slept or been playing, and well may anybody be glad to get the services of one who at the expense of others has become full of experience. Of my honesty there should be no doubt, because having always preserved my honesty, I shall hardly now learn to break it; he who has been honest and good for forty-three years, as I have, cannot change his nature; as a witness to my honesty and goodness I have my poverty.

I should like, then, to have you also write me what you think best on this matter, and I give you my regards. Be happy.

Niccolò Machiavelli, in Florence.

17 May 1521, Carpi

To his Magnificent Master Francesco Guicciardini, J.U.D.,<sup>5</sup> Governor of Modena and Reggio, most worthy and especially to be most honored

Magnificent Sir, Ruler to be Most Respected:

I was on the privy seat when your messenger came, and just then I was thinking of the absurdities of this world, and I was giving all my attention to imagining for myself a preacher after my mind for the place at Florence, and he would be just what would please me, because in this I intend to be as abstinate as in my other opinions. And because I never failed that city by not benefiting her when I could—if not with deeds, with words, if not with words, with gestures—I do not intend to fail her this time either. It is true that I know I am opposed, as in many other things, to the opinion of the citizens there: they would like a preacher who would show them the road to Paradise, and I should like to find one who would teach them the way to go to the house of the Devil; they would like, besides, that he should be a man prudent, blameless and true; and I should like to find one crazier than Ponzio,

3. There is a story that Machiavelli did give Giuliano the book, but that someone else at the same time gave him a brace of fine greyhounds, so the book was set aside [*Editor*].

4. Piero Ardinghelli was secretary to Pope Leo X. Machiavelli seems to have feared that [if] Giuliano had not read *The Prince*, Ardinghelli

would steal ideas from it and offer them as his own.

5. J.U.D. means "Juris Utrisque Doctor," i.e., "Doctor of Both Laws" (canon and civil). All these formalities are burlesque, as is the letter [*Editor*].

more crafty than Fra Girolamo, more of a hypocrite than Frate Alberto,<sup>6</sup> because it would seem to me a fine thing, worthy of the goodness of these times, that all we have experienced in many friars should be experienced in one, because I believe the true way of going to Paradise would be to learn the road to Hell in order to avoid it. Seeing, besides this, how much credit a bad man has who conceals himself under the cloak of religion, I can easily conjecture how much of it a good man would have who in truth and not in pretense continued to tread muddy places like St. Francis. So since my fancy seemed to me good, I have planned to take Rovalto,<sup>7</sup> and I believe that if he is like his brothers and sisters, he will be just right. I should be glad if, next time you write, you will give me your opinion.

I continue in idleness here because I cannot carry out my commission until the general and the assessors are chosen, and I keep ruminating on how I can sow so much discord among them that either here or elsewhere they may go to hitting each other with their sandals; and if I do not lose my wits, I believe I am going to succeed; and I believe that the advice and help of Your Lordship would assist greatly. So if you would come as far as this with the excuse of a pleasure jaunt, it would not be a bad thing, or at least by writing give me some master strokes. If you once every day would send me a servant just for this purpose, as you have today, you would do several good things: for one, you would give me light on some things quite to my purpose; for another, you would make me more esteemed by those in the house, seeing the messages come thick. And I can tell you that on the arrival of this arbalester with the letter, making a bow down to the earth, and with his saying that he was sent specially and in haste, everybody rose up with so many signs of respect and such a noise that everything was turned upside down, and I was asked by several about the news. I, that its reputation might grow, said that the emperor was expected at Trent, and that the Swiss had summoned new diets, and that the king of France wanted to go in person to speak with that king, but that his councilors advised him against it; so that they all stood with open mouths and with their caps in their hands; and while I write I have a circle of them around me, and seeing me write at length they are astonished, and look on me as inspired; and I, to make them wonder more, sometimes hold my pen still and swell up, and then they slaver at the mouth, but if they could see what I am writing, they would marvel at it more. Your Lordship knows that these friars say that when one is confirmed in grace, the Devil has no more power to tempt him. So I have no more fear that these friars will make me a hypocrite, because I believe I am very well confirmed.

As to the lies of the Carpigiani, I should like a contest in that matter

6. Ponzio is obscure; Fra Girolamo is Savonarola; Frate Alberto is from the *Decameron* 4.2.

7. Giovan Cnalberto, a Florentine, and a Franciscan.

with all of them, because quite a while ago I trained myself in such a way that I do not need Francesco Martelli<sup>8</sup> for a servant, because for a long time I have not said what I believed, nor do I ever believe what I say, and if indeed sometimes I do happen to tell the truth, I hide it among so many lies that it is hard to find.

To that governor I did not speak, because having found lodgings, I thought speaking to him useless. It is true that this morning in church I stared at him a bit while he was standing to look at some paintings. He did seem to me well set up, and I can believe that the whole corresponds to the part, and that he is what he seems, and that his crooked back is not a liar;<sup>9</sup> hence that if I had your letter with me, I should have made an attempt at drawing a bucketful out of him. At any rate, no damage has been done, and I expect tomorrow some advice from you on my affairs and that you will send one of the same arbalesters and that he will hurry and get here all sweaty, so that the household will be amazed; for by so doing you will bring me honor, and at the same time your arbalaster will get a little exercise, which for the horses on these spring days is very wholesome.

I might write to you also some other things, if I were willing to weary my fancy, but I wish tomorrow to keep it as fresh as I can. I send my regards to Your Lordship, and may you ever prosper as you desire.

Your faithful Niccolò Machiavelli,  
Ambassador to the Minor Friars.

8. Unknown.

9. The original of this sentence is not clear. [But the general implication is plain that the

man's crooked back is a good index to his crooked mind—*Editor*.]