they can only establish reputations that help support, not undermine, political freedom. I will discuss how to accomplish this in another chapter.

Chapter Forty-Nine: On how those cities that are free at the time of their foundation, as Rome was, have difficulty in determining which laws will make it possible for them to preserve their freedom; consequently, it is almost impossible for those cities that are under someone else's authority at the very beginning to establish the right laws.[88]

Just how difficult it is when one is drawing up the constitution of a republic to put in place all those laws needed to preserve its freedom is well illustrated by the development of the constitution of Rome. For, although first Romulus, then Numa, next Tullus Hostilius and Servius, and finally the commission of ten citizens appointed for that purpose all drew up numerous laws, new problems were constantly becoming apparent to the rulers of the city, and new constitutional legislation was constantly having to be introduced. So, for example, the office of censor had to be introduced;[89] the censors were one of the innovations that helped keep Rome free, for a while at least. The censors had authority over the manners and morals of the Romans, and this was an important factor slowing down the progress of their corruption.

It is true they made a mistake when they appointed the first censors, for they were given a five-year term of office; but it was not long before this mistake was put right thanks to the wisdom of the dictator Mamercus who introduced a new law to restrict their term of office to eighteen months.[90] The censors who were in office at the time were so angry at this that they expelled Mamercus from the senate: an action that was sharply criticized, both by the populace and the senators. The historical record does not indicate that Mamercus had any recourse, so either our historian has slipped up, or there was something wrong with the constitutional provisions of Rome in this area. For a republic ought not to have a constitution under which a citizen who introduces a new law that fosters political liberty can find himself as a consequence facing enemies against whom he has no defense.

88. I.e., even when they become free.

89. In 443 B.C.

90. In 433 B.C.

But to get back to our subject, my point is that the creation of this new office of censor should serve to bring home to us that if cities like Rome that were free when they were founded, and have governed themselves from the beginning, find it very difficult to establish the right laws to protect their freedom, it is not surprising those cities that have been from the beginning under the authority of an outsider, face, not just difficulties, but virtual impossibilities whenever they attempt to establish a constitution that will make it possible for them to live a peaceful and civilized life.

The history of Florence is a good example of this. Because she began life under the authority of Rome, and because she had always lived subordinated to an outsider, for a long time she had no self-respect and gave no thought to her own welfare. Then, when her chance came to do as she pleased, she began to construct her own institutions. But her new institutions were mixed up with old ones, and as these were bad, the new ones could do no good. So Florence has ruled herself for at least the two hundred years for which we have reliable records without having once had a constitution that properly entitled her to be called a republic. And the difficulties that she has had are merely representative of those faced by all cities that have begun in circumstances similar to hers. And although on many occasions there have been public and free elections to appoint a small group of citizens with ample authority to reform the constitution, nevertheless, they have never introduced reforms that served the general interest but always ones that served the interests of their faction. The result has been not a new order but a new disorder in the affairs of the city.

Let us take a particular instance. I maintain that among the matters someone establishing a constitution for a republic ought to consider is that of deciding who is to have the right to pass sentence of death on his fellow citizens. The Romans handled this well, for normally a convicted citizen could appeal to the populace; and if because of some exceptional event it was dangerous to defer the execution to allow time for an appeal, then they had the option of appointing a dictator who could carry out immediate executions. And they never had recourse to this option unless it was absolutely necessary.

But in Florence and the other cities born in servitude, it was an outsider who had the right to pass sentence of death; someone who had been sent by their ruler to exercise judicial authority. When they later acquired their freedom, they retained this practice of giving judicial authority to an outsider, who was given the title of *Capitano*. This was a very bad arrangement, for the *Capitano* could easily be corrupted by powerful citizens. But this institution was altered as political

revolutions occurred. They created a commission of eight citizens who carried out the functions previously performed by the *Capitano*.[91] In doing so, they went from bad to worse, for the reasons I have given above: Elites always look after the interests of elites, and concentration of power always serves the interests of the powerful.

Venice avoided this mistake. She has a commission of ten citizens who can pass sentence on any citizen, and against whose judgment there is no appeal. But in case they proved incapable of taking action against the powerful, even though they had the authority to do so, they established the commission known as the Forty;[92] and moreover they provided the senate, the most powerful commission, with authority to punish them. The result is that as long as there is someone willing to bring charges, there is a court capable of keeping the members of the elite in check.

Thus, we should not be surprised to see that in Rome, which drew up its own constitution, and which had so many wise men among its political leaders, new problems arose almost every day that necessitated the establishment of new institutions to foster political freedom; or to see that in other cities, which started out with less satisfactory institutions, so many problems arise that they never get a chance to establish a functional constitution.

Chapter Fifty: On how a single committee or official ought not to be able to bring the government of the city to a halt.

Titus Quintius Cincinnatus and Gaius Julius Mento were the consuls in Rome.[93] Because they disagreed with each other they had brought all the business of the republic to a halt. Seeing this, the senate urged them to appoint a dictator, so that he could carry out the business that their disagreements prevented them from handling. But the consuls, who disagreed about everything else, were agreed only on this: Neither wanted to appoint a dictator. So the senate, having no other options, was obliged to turn to the tribunes for help. They, supported by the authority of the senate, forced the consuls to obey. The first thing to note here is the usefulness of the office of tribune; it was useful not only to place a brake upon the aspirations of the powerful in their dealings with the populace, but also in their dealings with each other.

91. In 1477.

92. Established in 1179.

93. The year is 431 B.C.

Second, we see that one should never organize a city so that a few individuals can hold up any of those decisions that are, in the normal course of events, necessary for the preservation of the republic. For example, if you give a committee authority to make a distribution of honors and employments, or you appoint a magistrate to administer some activity, then you should either make it obligatory for them to fulfill their function no matter what, or provide that if they are not willing to do it, then someone else can and must substitute for them. Otherwise, your constitution will be defective and will endanger the city, as we have seen the Roman constitution would have been if it had not been possible to overcome the obstinacy of the consuls by appealing to the authority of the tribunes.

In the Venetian republic, the Grand Council[94] distributes honors and employments. On occasion this assembly, out of frustration or because of some misunderstanding, has failed to appoint successors to the officials who govern the city and to those who are sent out to administer Venice's empire. This was a serious breakdown in government, for all of a sudden both the subject territories and the capital city were without duly-appointed authorities, and absolutely nothing could be done if the general assembly of the Council was not either appeased or persuaded of the seriousness of the situation. This constitutional defect would have had serious consequences for the city if some of the wiser citizens had not taken appropriate measures. They found an opportune moment to introduce a law stating that no official, present or future, either within the city or without, should lose his authority until appointments had been made and his successor was ready to take office. In this way the Grand Council lost its ability to endanger the republic by bringing the conduct of public business to a halt.

Chapter Fifty-Three: On how the populace often seeks its own ruin, taken in by some plan with a misleading appearance of being in its interests; and on how great hopes and cheerful promises easily influence it.

When the city of Veii had been conquered, the populace of Rome persuaded itself that the city of Rome would benefit if half the Romans went to live in Veii.[95] It argued that since that city was in a fertile

94. An assembly of all the nobles.

95. 395 B.C.

region, had fine buildings, and was close to Rome, half the citizens of Rome could be made better off, while, since they would still be nearby, they could continue to play their part in Roman politics. The senate and the more sensible citizens thought that this plan was pointless and potentially damaging. They openly said that they would rather be put to death than agree to such a proposal. The result was that, as the debate on the question became heated, the populace became so furious with the senate it was on the point of resorting to arms, which would have led to bloodshed. But the senate took refuge behind a number of old and revered citizens; respect for them made the populace pause, and it went no further in their disobedience towards the authorities.

Here there are two things we need to note. The first is that the populace is often taken in by some plan with a misleading appearance of being in its interests, and seeks its own ruin. Unless someone who has its confidence makes it understand why the plan is a bad one and what policy ought to be followed instead, the republic will run into an infinity of dangers and suffer innumerable losses. Of course, there are times when nobody has the confidence of the populace, for it may have already been disillusioned either by events or by its leaders. Then you are unlucky; your city is bound to be destroyed. Dante remarks on this subject, in his discourse *On Monarchy*, that the populace often cries out: "Kill us quick! Off with our heads!"[96] This popular scepticism with regard to good advice means that republics often fail to reach sound decisions. I have already discussed the case of the Venetians who, when under attack by so many enemies, could not agree to save something before all was lost by returning the territory they had taken from their neighbors (which was the reason why they were under attack, and the cause of the alliance of powers against them).[97]

However, if you ask yourself what decisions it is easy to persuade a populace to take, and what decisions it is difficult, these categories are helpful: Either the policy you propose appears at first sight to involve gains or losses; alternatively, it either appears brave or cowardly. When you propose something to the populace that appears to involve gain, even if hidden behind the appearance of gain there is a real loss, and when you propose something that seems courageous, even if the real consequence is likely to be the destruction of the republic, then it is easy to persuade the masses to agree with you. On the other hand, it is always difficult to persuade them to adopt policies that seem to

96. In fact, Dante, *Convivio*, I.11, l. 54.

97. The War of the League of Cambrai, 1505–09.

involve cowardice or loss, even if they are likely to lead, in fact, to security and to gain.

Innumerable examples could be cited to confirm this, both Roman and non-Roman, both ancient and modern. Thus, this is the explanation of the hostility with which Fabius Maximus came to be regarded in Rome. He could not persuade the Roman populace that the republic would benefit by drawing the war out and by allowing Hannibal to advance without meeting him in battle. The populace thought this policy was cowardly, and did not understand the real benefits that would come from it. Fabius could not find arguments strong enough to convince it. The populace is often blinded by its sense of honor. Thus, the people of Rome not only made the mistake of giving Fabius's commander of the cavalry permission to engage the enemy, even though Fabius disapproved, and even though there was a danger that the resulting conflict of authority would tear the Roman army apart unless Fabius was astute enough to find a way of resolving the problem; they did not learn their lesson, but went on to make Varro consul, not because of any good qualities he had, but simply because he had gone around Rome telling everyone he met in the streets and squares that he would defeat Hannibal as soon as he was given permission to engage him in battle. This led straight to the Battle of Cannae[98] and the rout of the Roman army, and it very nearly caused the defeat of Rome.

On this subject I want to introduce one more example from Roman history. Hannibal had been in Italy for eight or ten years. He had slaughtered Romans from one end of the peninsula to the other. Then Marcus Centenius Penula, a man of contemptible family background (although he had risen to a senior rank in the army), stood up in the senate and said that if they gave him permission to form an army of volunteers wherever he wanted in Italy he would either capture or kill Hannibal in no time at all. The senate thought that his proposal was reckless; but they also feared that if they turned it down, and the populace later got to hear of Penula's offer, then there might be a riot, for the populace would be provoked to hatred and ill-will towards the senatorial class. So they accepted his proposal, preferring to endanger the lives of all those who enrolled under Penula than to risk provoking new hostility towards themselves within the populace. For they understood how easy it would be to persuade the populace to approve of a proposal of this sort, and how difficult it would be to persuade it to reject it. So Penula set out with a disorderly and undisciplined mob

98. In 216 B.C.

to confront Hannibal. The battle was no sooner begun than it was over, and he and all his followers were defeated and killed.

Let us turn to Greece, and in particular to Athens. There Nicias, a man of remarkable wisdom and good sense, could never persuade the populace that it was a bad idea to set out to attack Sicily. They voted for it, despite the opposition of those who were sensible, and the result was the complete defeat of Athens. Again, Scipio, when he became consul, wanted to have command in Africa, claiming he would be able to destroy the Carthaginians.[99] Fabius Maximus persuaded the senate that this was a bad idea; but Scipio threatened to propose it to the populace, knowing perfectly well that proposals of this sort appeal to the common sort.

There are relevant examples to be found in the history of our own city. For instance, there was the occasion when Mr. Ercole Bentivoglio, commander, along with Antonio Giacomini, of the Florentine armies, defeated Bartolommeo d'Alviano at San Vincenti, and so went on to attack Pisa.[100] The populace voted in favor of this campaign on the basis of the optimistic promises made by Mr. Ercole, although many wise citizens criticized it. Nevertheless, there was nothing they could do to stop it, for the vast majority were all in favor of it, having taken at face value the optimistic promises of the commander. I conclude that there is no easier way to destroy a republic where the populace holds power than to encourage it to engage in bold enterprises. For where the populace have any influence, such proposals will always be adopted; and those who are opposed to it will find themselves marginalized. But if the outcome is often the destruction of the city, it is even more often the ruin of the individual citizens who put forward such enterprises. For the populace is led to expect victory; when it faces defeat it does not blame fortune, nor does it excuse its military commander on the grounds that he had insufficient resources at his disposal. It concludes he was stupid or malicious. Usually, he is either assassinated, or imprisoned, or put under house arrest; this was the fate of innumerable Carthaginian commanders and of many Athenian ones. Any victories they had in the past are discounted; today's defeat cancels them out. This is what happened to our Antonio Giacomini who, having failed to take Pisa as the populace expected and as he had promised, became the object of such contempt among the people that, despite the fact that he had done innumerable good deeds in the past, he was allowed to live only because the political authorities took pity

99. 205 B.C.

100. In 1505.

on him, and not because the populace could see any reason why he should be pardoned.

Chapter Fifty-Four: On the ability of a senior statesman to restrain an agitated mob.

The second thing worth remarking about the text cited in the last chapter is that there is nothing more likely to restrain an agitated mob than the respect it has for some senior and experienced statesman who is prepared to meet it face-to-face. Virgil is right to say:

> But if by chance they find themselves in front of a man who has
> a reputation for piety and trustworthiness,
> They fall silent and listen attentively.[101]

Consequently, if you are in command of an army about to mutiny or in charge of a city on the verge of a riot, then you should face the mob, making yourself seem both as friendly and as authoritative as possible. In order to inspire respect, you should surround yourself with all the trappings of the office you hold. A few years ago Florence was divided into two factions, the *frateschi*[102] and the *arrabiati*,[103] as they were called. They came to blows and the *frateschi* were defeated. Pagolantonio Soderini was on the losing side; at the time he was thought of as one of the leading citizens. During the rioting, the mob, weapons in hand, went to his house to loot it. Mr. Francesco, his brother, who was then Bishop of Volterra and is now a cardinal, happened to be in the house. As soon as he heard the shouts and saw the crowds approaching, he put on his most distinguished robes, put his bishop's rochet over them, and went out unarmed to meet the mob. His demeanor and his words stopped them in their tracks. For many days afterwards his achievement was talked about and admired throughout the city.

The conclusion I draw from this is that there is no more reliable or more essential technique for controlling an agitated mob than to put in front of it someone whose appearance suggests he is entitled to respect and who does in fact inspire it. To go back to the original text, note how determined the Roman populace were to adopt the proposal to move to Veii, since they thought they would benefit from it, and

101. Virgil, *Aeneid*, bk. 1, ll. 151–2.

102. The followers of the friar, Savonarola.

103. The crazies, i.e., the aristocratic faction.

were unable to recognize the evil consequences that would result from it. Demonstrations would surely have turned into riots if the senate had not brought their fury under control by employing senior statesmen who were widely respected.

Chapter Fifty-Five: On how easy it is to reach decisions in cities where the multitude is not corrupt; and on how it is impossible to establish one-man rule where there is social equality; and on how it is impossible to establish a republic where there is inequality.

Although we have already discussed at some length what one should expect, be it good or bad, in corrupt cities, nevertheless, I do not think it would be a digression if we considered a debate that took place in the senate over a motion introduced by Camillus. He proposed giving one-tenth of the plunder seized in Veii to the temple of Apollo.[104] Since this plunder had fallen into the hands of the Roman populace, and since there was no other way of knowing what it was worth, the senate passed a decree that everyone should hand over to the treasury one-tenth of the loot that he had seized. This decree was never enforced, for the senate later adopted another proposal, and found a different way of compensating Apollo on behalf of the Roman people. Nevertheless, the very fact that it was passed is an indication of the extent to which the senate had confidence in the trustworthiness of the populace. In their opinion, everyone could be relied on to give an accurate account of all that he owed under the terms of the decree. As for the populace, they did not think for a moment of evading the decree by simply handing over less than they owed; they sought to have it repealed by openly protesting against it.

This example, along with many others that we have already discussed, shows the extent to which the Roman populace had a sense of public duty and of religious obligation, and how justified were those who had confidence in them. It is a simple fact that where such a sense of public duty is not to be found, one is entitled to be pessimistic. There is no point in being optimistic if you live in one of those regions that, in our own day, have become corrupt. Italy is the most far gone of them all; even France and Spain have been infected. If we do not see quite so many disorders in those countries as break out in Italy every day, the reason is not so much that the populace has a sense of public duty,

104. The chief deity of Veii. The year is 395 B.C.

for the truth is that their peoples are for the most part corrupted; rather it is because each has a king who keeps it united, not only because he is a strong leader [*non solamente per la virtù sua*], but because the institutions of those kingdoms are still intact. In the territory of Germany, it is evident that a sense of public duty and of religious obligation is still widespread among the populace; the result is that many self-governing republics survive there. They observe their own laws so well that nobody dares try to invade them from without or to subvert them from within.

In order to show that I am right to claim that the sense of public duty we associate with the ancients still predominates in them, I want to give one example comparable to the one I gave earlier concerning the senate and the Roman populace. In the German republics, it is customary, when they find they need to spend a considerable amount of money on public business, for the appropriate magistrates or councils to impose a tax on the inhabitants of the city of one or two percent of each person's assets. Once a decree has been passed according to whatever procedures are required by the local constitution, each person makes an appearance before the officials assigned to collect the tax, and, having taken an oath to pay what he owes, places in an official chest the sum of money that he, having consulted his conscience, thinks he ought to pay. He himself is the only witness to how much he pays. From this you can get some idea of how far a sense of public duty and of religious obligation is still to be found among these men. One is bound to think that each person pays what he really owes; for if he did not, the tax would not yield as much as they expected, judging by its yield on previous occasions over a long period of time; if it did not yield as much, the public would know they had been defrauded; and if they knew they were being defrauded they would change their method of collecting taxes. Such public spiritedness is all the more to be admired in our day and age because it is so rare.

Indeed, it survives only in Germany, and there are two reasons for this. The first is that the Germans do not have numerous contacts with their neighbors, for their neighbors rarely visit them, and they rarely visit their neighbors. They have been content with the products of the local economy, eating food grown and raised nearby, and dressing in wool from their own sheep. This removes the primary reason for contact with foreigners, and with it, the primary source of all corruption. They have avoided being infected with the customs of the French, the Spanish, or the Italians; and these three nations between them are the source of corruption throughout the world. The second reason is that those republics that have preserved popular sovereignty and resisted

corruption do not tolerate any of their citizens to style himself a gentleman, or to live like one. So they maintain among themselves a genuine equality, and they are bitterly hostile to those lords and gentlemen who do exist in their region. If by chance some of them fall into their hands, they regard them as the germs of corruption and the causes of every possible immorality, and kill them.

In order to clarify the meaning of this term "gentleman," let me say that men are called "gentlemen" if they live in luxury without working. Their income arises from their estates, but they do not have to worry about cultivating them or going to any other trouble to make ends meet. Such people are pernicious influences in any republic and, indeed, in any part of the world. But even worse are those who, in addition to being wealthy, have a castle at their disposal and have subjects who obey them. Gentlemen of both types are to be found throughout the kingdom of Naples, in the papal states, in the Romagna, and in Lombardy. This is the reason why no republic has ever been established in those regions, nor any other form of popular sovereignty. For such types of men are totally hostile to a civilized way of life. To want to set up a republic in regions with this sort of social structure is to want the impossible; if one wanted to introduce a new political system in such regions, supposing one had gained control of them, there would be no choice but to establish a monarchy. The reason is as follows: Where the individuals are so corrupt that the laws alone will not restrain them, then you need to establish alongside the laws a force greater than theirs, that is to say, the heavy hand of a king, who can use an absolute and unlimited power to put a halt to the unlimited ambition and corruption of the elite.

This argument is confirmed by the example of Tuscany. There you find that for a long time there have been three republics—Florence, Siena, and Lucca—crammed into a small geographical space. And the other cities of the region are either accustomed to subordination, as is apparent both from the character of their citizens and from their constitutions, or else defend, or at least would like to defend, their liberty. The reason is simple: In that region there are no lords of castles to be found and no (or at any rate very few) gentlemen. There is so much social equality that it would be easy for a wise man with some knowledge of ancient civilizations to establish some form of popular sovereignty. But it has been their great misfortune that, right down to the present, they have not chanced upon a leader who has been able to do it or has understood how to do it.

From this discussion I draw the following conclusion: Anyone who wants to set up a republic in a place where there is a fair number of gentlemen can only do it if he begins by killing them all. On the other hand, anyone who wants to set up a monarchy or a system of one-man rule in a place where there is a fair amount of social equality will never manage to do it unless he lifts out of that equality many individuals who are ambitious and restless, and makes them into gentlemen in fact if not in name, giving them castles and estates, and giving them control of men and property. Then he will be surrounded by an elite whom he can rely on to uphold his power, while they can rely on him to further their aspirations. As for the rest of the population, they will be obliged to submit to a yoke nothing but force could persuade them to tolerate. This way, those doing the forcing will be more than a match for those being forced, and so people will stay obediently in the ranks assigned to them. The task of making a region suited to monarchy into a republic, or one suited to republican government into a monarchy, is one for somebody of quite exceptional intelligence and force of personality. There have been many who have tried to do it, but very few have known how to carry it out in practice. For the scale of the enterprise is daunting in itself, and it means that often people fail when they have scarcely begun.

I believe that this opinion of mine—that where there are gentlemen one cannot establish a republic—may appear to be contradicted by the history of the Venetian republic, for there only those who are gentlemen are allowed to be elected to office. But my reply is that this example does not tell against me, for the gentlemen of Venice are rather gentlemen in name than in fact. For they do not have large incomes from country estates since their great wealth is founded on commerce and trade. Moreover, none of them has a castle or has any private jurisdiction over other men. In their case the name "gentleman" is a purely honorific title, one that has nothing to do with the factors that determine whether or not you are called a gentleman in any other city. Just as all republics have social distinctions that they refer to by one name or another, so Venice is divided into the gentlemen on the one hand and the populace on the other. They insist that the gentlemen have a monopoly, both in practice and in theory, of all the offices, while the rest are completely excluded from them. This does not lead to conflict in that territory, for the reasons I have explained. So we see that a republic can only be established where there is considerable social equality or where men are made to be equal; by contrast, the rule of one man requires considerable social inequality. If you ignore this principle you get a lopsided construction, and one that will not stand for long.

Chapter Fifty-Eight: On how the masses are wiser and more loyal than any monarch.

There is nothing more worthless and more unreliable than the masses. So says our Titus Livy, and all the other historians agree with him. For it often happens that, as one follows a political narrative, one sees the masses condemn someone to death, and then next moment lament his death, and long for his return. This is how the Roman populace behaved towards Manlius Capitolinus whom they first condemned to death and then longed for him to be alive.[105] This is what Livy says: "As soon as he was no longer a danger, the populace wanted him back."[106] And elsewhere, when he describes the events that took place in Syracuse after the death of Hieronymus, nephew of Hiero, he says: "This is the nature of the masses: Either they obey humbly, or they domineer arrogantly."[107]

I am not sure if I want to embark on an undertaking that is so hard and full of so many difficulties that I will either have to give up in disgrace or, if I carry on, be made to pay dearly for my persistence. I am not sure if I want to defend a view that, as I have said, is rejected by all the authorities. Nevertheless, I do not think, and never will think, that one should be blamed for putting forward an argument, so long as one relies on reason and has no intention of resorting to citing authorities or to force. In my view, then, the defect for which authors criticize the masses is a defect to be found in all men, considered as individuals, and, above all, in rulers. For anyone who is not constrained by the laws will make exactly the same errors as will the unbridled masses. One can easily recognize the truth of this, for there are and have been plenty of rulers but there are few who have been good and wise. I am speaking of rulers who have been able to break the bounds that ought to restrain them. I do not mean to include those kings who were to be found in Egypt when, at the beginning of recorded history, that territory was governed according to laws; or those who were to be found in Sparta; or those who in our own day have ruled in France. For government in France is more moderated by legal constraints than in any other presently-existing kingdom about which we are well-informed. The rulers who hold power under such constitutions are not to be included in the category I am discussing, for we want to

105. Manlius had saved the Capitol from the Gauls in 390 B.C., but was condemned to death in 384.

106. Livy, bk. 6, ch. 20.

107. Livy, bk. 24, ch. 25.

consider the nature of individual men taken on their own and see if it is similar to that of the masses. Otherwise, we would have to consider the masses when they are similarly constrained by the laws so that we could compare them with constitutional monarchs. In such cases you would find the masses just as well-behaved as the monarchs, and you would find that they neither arrogantly domineer nor humbly obey.

Take for example the Roman populace who, for as long as the republic survived uncorrupted, never humbly obeyed and never arrogantly domineered; instead, they maintained their proper status honorably, respecting their institutions and obeying their governors. When it was necessary for them to join forces against an internal enemy, they did so, as they did against Manlius Capitolinus, against the Decemviri, and against others who tried to oppress them. But when it was necessary to obey dictators and consuls in order to preserve the republic, they did so. And if the Roman populace wished Manlius Capitolinus were alive once he was dead, it is not surprising; what it missed were his virtues [*virtù*], which were so great that remembering them made everyone regret his death. The same memories would have had the same consequences in a monarch, for all authors agree that virtue [*virtù*] is praised and admired even in one's enemies. If Manlius had been brought back to life while the populace mourned his death, it would have passed the same sentence on him as it did when it let him out of prison and shortly afterwards condemned him to death. So, too, we find examples of monarchs who are thought of as wise but have had someone put to death, and then bitterly regretted it. Alexander killed Cleitus[108] and other friends of his; Herod killed Mariamne.[109] But what our historian says about the nature of the masses is not intended to refer to those masses who are constrained by the laws, as the Roman populace was, but to those who are unbridled, as the populace of Syracuse was; they made the same errors as individuals who are enraged and unconstrained, the same errors as Alexander the Great and Herod made in the instances I have mentioned. Consequently, one should no more blame the masses in general than one does rulers in general, for both groups and individuals make mistakes when they have opportunities to go wrong and nothing prevents them. There are plenty of other examples of this beyond the ones I have mentioned, both among the Roman emperors and among other tyrants and monarchs. One finds far more examples of unreliable behavior and of shifts of policy and attitude among them than among any populace.

108. In 328 B.C.

109. In 29 B.C. The source is probably Josephus.

I conclude, therefore, that the common opinion, which holds that the populace, when they are in power, are unreliable, changeable, and disloyal is wrong. I maintain that they are no more guilty of these vices than are individual rulers. If someone were to criticize both multitudes and individuals who hold power, he might be right; but if he makes an exception of the individuals, then he makes a mistake. For a populace in power, if it is well ordered, will be as reliable, prudent, and loyal as an individual, or rather it will be even better than an individual, even one who is thought wise. On the other hand, an individual who is not restrained by the laws will be even more disloyal, unreliable, and imprudent than a populace. The difference in their behavior would be a consequence, not of a difference in their natures, for all men are alike, and if any type of person is better than the rest, it is the common man who is; but would reflect whether they had more or less respect for the laws under which both prince and populace are supposed to live.

If you consider the Roman populace, you will see that for four hundred years they were hostile to the idea of monarchy, and were in love with the glory and the common good of their homeland; there are innumerable instances of their behavior that testify to both commitments. And if anyone cites against me the ingratitude that they showed towards Scipio, I would reply with what I said at length on this question above, when I showed that the populace was less ungrateful than an individual ruler.

But as far as prudence and predictability are concerned, I say that the populace is generally more prudent, more predictable, and has better judgment than a monarch. It is with good reason that people compare the voice of the populace to the voice of God, for one can see that there is a widespread belief that the predictions of a populace are uncannily accurate; indeed, it seems as if it has an inexplicable capacity [*occulta virtù*] to foresee what will bring it good fortune and what bad. As far as exercising their judgment is concerned, one sees that it is rare indeed that the people hear two speeches upholding different policies, and do not, if the speeches are equally effective [*virtù*], choose the better policy. They are almost always able to understand those truths that are explained to them. I have already admitted they sometimes make mistakes in matters involving their pride or what they take to be their interests. But monarchs often make mistakes when their passions are aroused, which happens much more often with a single ruler than it does with the populace. One also sees that, when it comes to making appointments to government offices, the populace makes much better choices than rulers do. You will never persuade

the populace that it is a good idea to promote to an office a man who has a bad reputation and lives a decadent life. But rulers are easily persuaded to do this for all sorts of reasons. One sees a populace begin to be committed to opposing something, and then not change its mind for several centuries; the same cannot be said for rulers. For both the good judgment of the populace and its enduring commitments, I will rely simply on the example of the Roman people who, over a period of hundreds of years, during which they elected vast numbers of consuls and tribunes, did not make more than two or three appointments they afterwards had cause to regret. And they were, as I have said, so hostile to the idea of monarchy that no matter how much they were indebted to one of their citizens, if he aspired to be crowned king, then he could not hope to escape the lawful penalties.

One may also note, in addition, that cities where the populace is in power are capable of making immense territorial gains in very short periods of time, much greater than any that have been made by an individual ruler. This is what Rome did after it had expelled its kings, and Athens after it freed itself from Pisistratus. The only possible reason for this is that the populace is better at ruling than individuals are. Neither can I allow you to argue against my view by appealing to the things our historian says in the text I began by quoting and in other similar places. For if you go over all the cases of bad government by the populace, and all those by monarchs, all the achievements of the populace, and all those of monarchs, you will find the populace to be much superior in both goodness and glory. If individuals are superior to the populace in drawing up laws, establishing civic forms of life, creating constitutions and institutions, then the populace is equally superior to an individual when it comes to maintaining the institutions once they have been established. No doubt its achievements in this respect get credited to the original legislators.

So finally, to conclude my discussion, I say that just as some states based on one-man rule have endured over time, so have some republics. Both monarchies and republics need to be regulated by laws, for a king who can do whatever he wants is a madman on the loose, and a populace that can do what it wants is never wise. However, if we were to discuss the relative merits of a monarch who is obliged to obey the law and a populace restrained by legislation, you would find that the populace made a better ruler [*si vedra più virtù nel popolo*] than the monarch. If we were to discuss both types of government unconstrained by the law, you would find that the populace makes fewer mistakes than a monarch, and the ones it makes are less significant and easier to put right. For a populace that is licentious and disorderly needs

only to be talked to by someone who is good, and he will find it easy to set it on the right path. A bad monarch will not listen to anyone, and the only way to correct him is to kill him. This enables one to judge the relative importance of the faults of the two types of government. To cure the faults of the people, you need only words; to cure those of a monarch, you need cold steel. Now it is obvious that a disease that is hard to cure is worse than one that is easy.

When a populace breaks free from restraint, there is no need to fear the foolish things it may do. It is not the present evil one has to worry about but the evil that may develop out of popular government, for a tyrant may seize power in the midst of the confusion. But the opposite is the case with bad monarchs. With them, one fears the present evil and hopes for some future improvement, for men persuade themselves that the evil deeds of their ruler may provoke people to lay claim to their freedom. So you can see that the difference between them is that under one type of government you fear what exists, under the other what might come to pass.

The cruel deeds of the multitude are directed at those whom it fears will endanger the common good; those of a monarch are directed at those whom he fears will endanger his own interests. Why then do people think ill of the populace? Because everyone freely speaks ill of them; they can do so without fear even when they are in power. But about monarchs one always speaks with great caution, and one is always fearful of the consequences. It does not seem to me irrelevant, since my present subject has led me towards it, to discuss in the next chapter which alliances one can most safely put one's trust in, those made with republics, or those made with monarchs.

Book Two

Preface

Men always praise the olden days and criticize the present, but they do not always have good reason for doing so. They are so biased in favor of the past that they do not celebrate only those periods they know about because of the surviving descriptions of them written by men alive at the time; they also, once they have become old, praise the way they remember things having been in their youth. When their praise of the past is mistaken, as it usually is, there are, I think, several reasons why history plays tricks on them.

I believe the first is that we are not told the whole truth about the

past. For the most part, people keep quiet about those events it would be shameful to record, while those deeds that will make them seem glorious in the eyes of posterity they portray in the most favorable light possible. Most writers place themselves in the service of victory. In order to make fortune's victories glorious they not only exaggerate the skillful [*virtuosamente*] things the victors did, they even improve on the actions of their enemies, with the result anyone who is born in future ages in either of the territories, either that of the victors or that of the vanquished, has good reason to be amazed at the actions of those men and the character of those times, and has no choice but to praise them to the skies and to love them.

Secondly, men hate things either out of fear or jealousy. But these two powerful motives for hatred cease to apply as time passes, for what is past can no longer hurt you, and you no longer have reason to be jealous of it. The opposite is true of those things you can still touch and see for yourself. Because you know them through and through, and nothing is hidden from you, you recognize their good features, but at the same time there are many aspects of them that displease you. So you conclude things were much better in the past, even when in reality actions in the present are much more deserving of fame and of glory. I am not talking about scientific and artistic activities, for their qualities are so transparent there is little time can do to take away or add to the reputation that they properly deserve. I am talking, rather, about the manners and morals of men, reports of which are much harder to assess.

I ought to admit that although the habit of praising the past and condemning the present is as widespread as I have said, nevertheless, people are not always mistaken when they think the past superior to the present. Sometimes their judgment is bound to be justified. Human affairs are always changing, and when they change it must be either for better or worse. One sees a city or a territory organized for a constitutional government by some one excellent individual; for a while, thanks to the skill [*virtù*] of this founder, the political system will get steadily better and better. Someone who is born in such a state, if he praises the olden times more than his own day, makes a mistake; and he makes this mistake for the reasons I have explained above. But later generations in this same city or territory, born when things have gone into decline, are not mistaken. Thinking about how these things work, I reached the conclusion that the world is always in the same overall condition. There has always been in it as much good as bad, but both the good and the bad are redistributed from territory to territory.

One can see this from what we know about the ancient monarchies.

Good and bad were redistributed among them as manners and morals changed, but the overall condition of the world remained the same. There was only this one difference: Where virtue [*virtù*] had at first been resident in Assyria, it later moved to the Kingdom of the Medes, and then to Persia, until eventually it came to Italy, and to Rome. Since the Roman empire, it is true, there has been no lasting empire, and virtue [*virtù*] has not remained concentrated in one place; nevertheless, you can see it was scattered among many nations, each of whom came to live virtuously [*virtuosamente*]: the Kingdoms of France and Turkey; the Sultanate of Egypt; and now the peoples of Germany. Above all, virtue was to be found among the sect of the Saracens, who accomplished so much, occupied so much territory, and were indeed responsible for the destruction of the Roman empire in the east.

In all these territories, then, and in all such sects, virtue [*virtù*] was to be found after the Romans had gone into decline, and still is to be found in some parts of them that still aspire to greatness; there she is deservedly praised. If you are born in one of these virtuous places and praise the olden days more than the present, you may be making a mistake. But if you are born in Italy or in Greece, and if you have not become (if you are Italian) an admirer of the northerners, or (if you are Greek) a supporter of the Turks, then you are right to criticize your own times and praise the past. For in the past, there were plenty of things that deserved admiration; in the present, there is nothing at all to mitigate unalloyed misery, disgrace, and contempt. Now there is no respect for religion, for the law, or for military service; everything is splattered with filth. These vices are all the more detestable because they are most prevalent among those who hold government office, who order everyone else around, and want to be treated like gods.

But let us get back to our subject. I meant to point out that if men's judgment is unreliable when it comes to judging the relative merits of the present and the distant past in matters where one cannot have such detailed knowledge of the past as one can of the present, this does not explain why old men are poor judges of the relative merits of the times of their youth and their old age, for they have had an equal knowledge and experience of the one and the other. Or at least they would have if men throughout their lives had the same capacity to make judgments and were governed by the same appetites. But men change as they grow older, even if their circumstances do not; so things look different to them, even if they have in fact stayed the same, for men have different appetites, different pleasures, different preoccupations in old age from the ones they had when young. For men, as they grow older, become weaker, but at the same time more prudent and astute in their judgment.

So those things that seemed to them tolerable, even excellent, when they were young, as they grow old seem to them intolerable and wretched. Where they ought to blame their own changing judgment, they blame the changing times.

Moreover, there is another reason: Human appetites are insatiable. It is in man's nature to be able to and to want to desire all things; it is in the nature of circumstances that he can only realize a few of his desires. The result is that men are always finding themselves discontented and discovering themselves to be dissatisfied with what they possess. This makes them have a low opinion of the present, praise the past, and put their hope in the future, even though they have no good reason for thinking things were better or will improve.

I do not know, however, if I deserve to be included among those whose judgment is flawed, though I might be thought to praise the ancient Romans too much and criticize our own times too severely in these discourses. Indeed, if the excellence [*virtù*] that was the norm then, and the inadequacy that is to be found everywhere today, were not as plain as day, then I would express myself more cautiously, for fear I might slip into this error for which I criticize others. But the matter is so obvious anyone can recognize the truth, so that I am entitled to speak frankly and express myself bluntly on the differences between our own times and those of the ancient Romans, in the hope any young men who read what I write will be encouraged to reject the world they live in and will want to try to imitate the ancients, should fortune ever give them the opportunity to do so. For it is a worthy undertaking to teach others how to do those admirable things that you, because of corrupt circumstances and hostile fortune, have been unable to perform. If many acquire the ability to do what is needed, then one, if fortune smiles upon him, may be successful.

Having, in the previous book, talked about the decisions the Romans took in matters relating to the internal affairs of the city, in this book we will discuss those things the Roman populace did in order to expand the territory under their control.

Chapter One: On whether skill [*virtù*] or good fortune was a more significant factor in the Romans' acquisition of an empire.

Many have been of the opinion—among them Plutarch who is an author whose judgment is always to be respected[1]—that the Roman

1. Plutarch, *Opera moralia*, 44: *De fortuna Romanorum*.

people, in acquiring an empire, benefited more from good fortune than from skill [*virtù*]. One of the various reasons they put forward to support this view is that it is evident, they say, from the actions of the Romans themselves that they attributed all their victories to good luck, for they erected more temples to the goddess Fortune than to any other god. It would seem Livy was more or less of this opinion, for it is rare for him, whenever he has a Roman speak about skill [*virtù*], not to couple skill with luck.

But I do not want to admit the truth of this opinion under any circumstances, and I do not believe there are good arguments to support it. For if there has never been a republic that has made as extensive gains as Rome did, it is also evident there has never been a republic better organized to make gains than Rome was. It was the skill [*virtù*] of their armies that enabled them to conquer an empire, and it was their way of going about things, which dates back to their first legislator, that enabled them to hold on to what they had conquered, as I will explain at length below, over the course of a number of chapters. Some people say it was good fortune and not skill [*virtù*] that ensured the Roman people never had to face war against two powerful enemies at the same time. Thus, they only found themselves at war with the Latins, when, if they had not really defeated the Samnites, they were at least able to call on their support, for in fighting the Latins they were helping the Samnites. They did not campaign against the Tuscans until they had first conquered the Latins and had almost completely crippled the Samnites by defeating them again and again. If two of these powers had allied when they were fresh and undefeated, then without doubt one could reasonably have predicted they would destroy the Roman republic.

But, however it came about, it is true they never had to fight two extremely powerful enemies at one time. It seems the rise of one always caused the decline of another, or the decline of one made possible the rise of another. This is apparent from the chronology of the wars they fought, for, leaving aside those that took place before Rome was seized by the French, one can see that while they were at war with the Aequi and the Volsci,[2] and so long as those tribes remained powerful, nobody else attacked them. Only after they had been subdued did the war with the Samnites begin,[3] and although the Latin tribes rebelled against the Romans before that war was over,[4] nevertheless, when that rebellion took place the Samnites entered into a league with the Romans and

2. 493–380 B.C.
3. 343 B.C.
4. 340–338 B.C.

sent their troops to help the Romans punish the Latins for their insolence. Once they were subdued, the war against the Samnites began again.[5] When the Samnites had been beaten in battle after battle, the war with the Tuscans began;[6] and when that had been settled, the Samnites rebelled again as a result of the invasion of Italy by Pyrrhus.[7] When he had been forced to retreat into Greece, they began the first war with the Carthaginians;[8] no sooner was this war over, but all the French, on both sides of the Alps, allied against the Romans, until they were defeated and butchered in large numbers between Popolonia and Pisa, where now stands the tower of St. Vincent.[9]

After this war, there was a period of about twenty years when they were not involved in any major conflicts, for they only fought against the Ligurians[10] and against those remnants of the French who held out in Lombardy. This relative peace lasted until the beginning of the Second Carthaginian War in which Italy was embroiled for sixteen years.[11] Having brought this to a glorious conclusion, they found themselves at war with Macedon,[12] and, after that was over, with Antiochus and with Asia.[13] And after they had been victorious in that war there was not a ruler or a republic in the whole world who, either alone or in alliance with others, could hope to defy the Roman armies.

But anyone who considers the chronology of the wars before this final victory and who studies the policies of the Romans will realize they did not simply rely on fortune. They also employed a quite remarkable prudence and skill [*virtù*]. For if you ask yourself why they were so fortunate the answer will be obvious. It is evident that when a ruler or a people acquire a reputation such that every neighboring prince and people is spontaneously afraid of attacking them and fearful of being attacked by them, then it will always be the case that no state will ever attack them unless it has no alternative.

The result is that the dominant state will have almost a free choice when it comes to deciding with which of its neighbors it wants to fight

5. 327–314 B.C.
6. 310–300 B.C.
7. 281–275 B.C.
8. 264–241 B.C.
9. In 225 B.C.
10. 223–222 B.C.
11. 218–201 B.C.
12. 200–196 B.C.
13. 193–188 B.C.

a war, and will be able, with a little effort, to pacify the others. They, partly out of fear of the dominant power and partly taken in by the techniques it will employ to give them a false sense of security, will be easy to pacify. The other powers who are not immediate neighbors and who do not have dealings with the victim, will regard the whole business as taking place a long way away and think it no concern of theirs. They will keep making this mistake until they are next in line. By which time they have no defense available except to rely on their own troops. But by then their own troops will be inadequate, for the dominant power will have become overwhelmingly strong.

I will not delay to discuss how the Samnites stood by and watched while the Romans defeated the Volsci and the Aequi, and, in order to be brief, I will confine myself to the case of the Carthaginians. They were very powerful and widely respected at the time the Romans were fighting against the Samnites and the Tuscans, for they already controlled the whole of Africa along with Sardinia, and Sicily, and part of Spain. Because they were so powerful, and because their territory was some distance from that of the Romans, it never occurred to them to attack them, or to come to the assistance of the Samnites and the Tuscans. Thus, they behaved as one does if one thinks time is on one's side, allying with the Romans, and trying to win their good will. They did not recognize their mistake until the Romans had conquered all the peoples between themselves and the Carthaginians, and had begun to challenge them for control of Sicily and Spain.

The same thing happened to the French as to the Carthaginians, and the same thing again to Philip, King of Macedon, and to Antiochus. Each one of them believed, while the people of Rome were occupied with one of the others, that Rome's enemies would win, and that there was plenty of time to defend themselves, either through diplomacy or war, against Rome's advancing power. So I am of the view that the good fortune the Romans had in never having to fight against two enemies at the same time is available to any ruler who acts as the Romans did and is as skillful [*virtù*] as they were.

It would be relevant here for us to explain the policies pursued by the Roman people when occupying newly acquired territory if we had not discussed this question at length in our treatise on Princedoms. You will find an extensive discussion of this question there. I will only say this much in passing: The Romans always tried hard when they were acquiring new territory to have the support of an ally who could serve as a ladder over the defenses, or as a gate through the walls, or as an assistant in retaining control once it was acquired. So they used

the Capuans to get entry to Samnium,[14] the Camertini to get into Tuscany;[15] the Mamertini helped them in Sicily,[16] the Saguntines in Spain,[17] the Masinissa in Africa,[18] the Aetolians in Greece,[19] the Eumenes and other rulers in Asia,[20] the Massilians and the Aedui in France.[21] They were never short of such allies to assist them in their undertakings and to help them acquire and hold new territories. Governments that systematically follow this policy will find they have less need of good fortune than those who do not.

So that everyone can clearly recognize how much more important skill [*virtù*] was than good fortune in the acquisition of the Roman empire we will discuss in the next chapter the character of the peoples they had to fight against, and will see just how determined they were to defend their liberty.

Chapter Two: On the peoples the Romans had to fight against, and on their determination in defending their liberty.

Nothing made it harder for the Romans to overcome the peoples immediately around them and, indeed, some in more distant territories, than the love many societies in those times had for liberty. They defended their liberty so stubbornly that they could never have been conquered except by a people of quite exceptional strength [*virtù*]. For there are many examples that show the dangers these societies were willing to endure in order to defend or recover their liberty; and show, too, the revenge they sought to exact on those who had taken their freedom from them.

One learns, too, from the study of history the losses both peoples and cities suffered as a result of their enslavement. While at the present time there is only one geographical region where one can say there

14. 340 B.C.
15. 310 B.C.
16. 264 B.C.
17. 218 B.C.
18. 205 B.C.
19. 211 B.C.
20. 193 B.C.
21. 154 and 122 B.C.

are free cities to be found,[22] in classical times there were numerous peoples in every region who lived in complete liberty. One sees how, in the times we are discussing at the moment in Italy there were nothing but free peoples from the Appennines, which now mark the boundary between Tuscany and Lombardy, right down to the southern tip: the Tuscans, the Romans, the Samnites, and many other societies which lived in that section of the peninsula. Nor is there any report of there being any kings other than those who ruled in Rome, plus Porsenna, King of Tuscany—history does not record how many successors he had. But it is evident that when the Romans went to war with Veii, Tuscany was free. Indeed, the Tuscans were so enamored of liberty and so hated the title of king, that, when the inhabitants of Veii, who had appointed a king to take charge of their defense, asked them for help in resisting the Romans, they decided, after much debate, not to come to their assistance. They argued that, so long as they obeyed a king, there was no point in defending the freedom of people who had already given their freedom away.

It is easy to understand how a people acquires such a love of political freedom, for we see by experience that city-states have never been successful, either in expanding their territory or in accumulating wealth, except when they have been free. And really one is bound to be astonished if one considers the extraordinary accumulation of power and wealth in the hands of Athens in the hundred years that followed her freeing herself from the tyranny of Pisistratus.[23] But it is even more breathtaking to consider the astonishing success of Rome once she had freed herself from her kings. It is easy to work out why, for cities become great by pursuing, not the interests of private individuals, but the interests of the community as a whole. And there is no doubt the public interest is never a guiding principle except in republics. There, everything that furthers the common good is carried out, even if one or two private individuals suffer by it. The vast majority have interests that coincide with the public interest, and so they are able to pursue it, even in face of the resistance of the small minority who suffer by it. But the opposite occurs when a city is under the rule of one man, for usually what serves his interests hurts the city, and what would benefit the city is contrary to his interests.

The result is that as soon as a tyranny is established in a city where once there has been political freedom, the least bad outcome for the inhabitants is that their city ceases to make progress and stops

22. Germany.

23. 510 B.C.

accumulating either power or wealth; but usually, indeed nearly always, they begin to lose what they have won. If by chance it were a competent [*virtuoso*] tyrant who took power, who had the courage and military strength [*virtù*] to extend the territory under his control, still his society would not benefit at all from his achievements. He would be the only beneficiary. For he would not be able to reward any of his citizens who are strong and good. He must keep such men in servitude for fear they might be a threat to him. Nor can he make the cities he conquers subordinate to his home city or have them pay tribute to it, for if he makes his own city strong he endangers himself. It is in his interest to keep his state divided into distinct territories and to ensure each city and each province answers to him directly. So, naturally, he is the only one who benefits from his conquests, while his homeland is no better off. If you want to see my opinion confirmed and to read numerous arguments in support of it, read the treatise Xenophon wrote *On Tyranny*.

Thus, it is not at all surprising that in classical times peoples hunted down tyrants with such bitterness and were so enamored of political freedom, and that the very idea of liberty was held in such respect among them. See, for example, what happened when Hieronymus, the nephew of Hiero of Syracuse, was killed in the city of Syracuse.[24] News of his death reached his army, which was not far away. At first they began to form a mob, seizing weapons to go to kill his murderers; but, when they heard that in Syracuse people were crying out "Liberty!," the word itself was enough to mesmerize them, and at once they quieted down, put aside their anger against the tyrannicides, and began to ask themselves how one could institutionalize political freedom in their city.

Again, it is not at all surprising that peoples pursued extraordinary vendettas against individuals who had taken their liberty from them. There are plenty of examples of this. I intend to refer only to one case that happened in Corcyra, a Greek city, at the time of the Peloponnesian War.[25] Greece was divided between two alliances, one of which was led by the Athenians, the other by the Spartans. The result was that in many cities where there were already internal divisions one faction allied itself with the Spartans, the other with the Athenians. In Corcyra the nobles got the upper hand and deprived the populace of their liberty. The popular party, thanks to Athenian assistance, took back control and seized all the nobles, locking them up in a prison big

24. Hieronymus was murdered in 215 B.C. after being in power for a year.

25. In 427 B.C. Machiavelli's source is Thucydides, bk. 4, chs. 46–48.

enough to hold them all. From there they took them out in groups of eight or ten at a time, pretending they had been sentenced to exile in different places, and tortured them to death in the public view. When those who were still alive realized what was happening, they decided to do their best to escape such an ignominious death. Arming themselves with whatever they could find, they fought with those who wanted to enter the prison, defending the gateway against them. The populace, hearing the noise of the struggle, came running; they wrecked the upper floors of the building and buried their captives under the rubble. Many other similar events, both horrible and remarkable, took place in Greece. They show people go to greater lengths to take revenge on those who have taken their liberty from them than on those who have merely tried to do so.

You may wonder why, in those classical times, peoples were more in love with liberty than they are now. I think the reason is the same as why men in our day are less strong. In my view, both result from the difference between our upbringing and that of classical times, which is rooted in the difference between our religion and theirs. Because our religion has taught us the truth and the right way to salvation, it makes us less concerned with our reputation in this world. The pagans, on the other hand, were much more concerned with reputation and regarded it as the highest good, with the result their deeds were more savage. There are lots of their institutions that could serve as indications of this—one might begin with a comparison between the magnificence of their religious ceremonies and the simplicity of ours. Ours make a show of refinement rather than magnificence and include no actions that require savagery or courage. Their rituals were full of pomp and ceremony, but in addition they sacrificed numerous animals in ceremonies full of blood and savagery. These were cruel rites, and from them the worshipers learned to be cruel men.

Moreover, classical religion only deified men who had already been heaped with worldly glories, men such as generals of armies and rulers of states. Our religion, by contrast, glorifies men who are humble and contemplative, rather than those who do great deeds. In fact, it regards humility, self-abasement, and contempt for worldly goods as the supreme virtues, while classical religion valorized boldness of spirit, strength of body, and all the other qualities that make men redoubtable. It is true our religion requires that you be strong, but it wants you to demonstrate your strength by undergoing suffering without complaint, rather than by overcoming resistance. This set of values, it would seem, has turned the men of our own day into weaklings and left them unable to defend themselves against the ravages of the wicked. The wicked

have no difficulty in handling their fellow men, for they know the average individual wants rather to endure their blows than to strike back, for he hopes to go to heaven.

Although it seems we have all been made effeminate, and God himself allows injustice to flourish, it is of course the fault of the sinful nature of mankind, which has caused them to interpret the teachings of our religion as suits their lazy temperament and not as brave men would have done [*non secondo la virtù*]. For if they had taken into account the fact that our religion allows us to praise and defend our homeland, they would have realized that if we are religious we ought to love and honor our country and to prepare ourselves to be the sort of people who will be capable of defending it. The upbringing we get, and these false interpretations of our religion, have the consequence that there are not so many republics to be found in the world as there were in classical times; nor, it follows, does one find in the peoples of our day as much love of liberty as there was then.

Another, and perhaps better, explanation is that the strength and military might of the Roman empire destroyed all the republics and all the free cities. And although that empire later collapsed, the cities within it were not able to reconstruct political freedom or rebuild institutions that would foster liberty, except in a very few places. Whatever the real cause, the Romans, no matter where they went, found republics allied together, armed to the teeth, and determined to defend their freedom to the end. Which shows that the Roman people, had they not been of exceptional and extreme strength [*virtù*], would never have been able to defeat them.

I want to give one example among them all and will confine myself to the case of the Samnites. It seems astonishing, but they were so powerful and so effective on the battlefield, that they could, as Livy admits, resist the Romans right down to the time of the consul Papirius Cursor,[26] son of the first Papirius, that is, for a period of forty-six years, despite having been defeated on the battlefield again and again, having had their crops destroyed repeatedly, and having their people massacred in their homes. Especially when one sees that their territory, where there were once so many cities and such a dense population, is now almost uninhabited, while in those days the people were so strong and so well organized it would have been impossible to overcome them, had they not been attacked by troops with the strength [*virtù*] of the Romans.

It is easy to establish where the organization they had then came from, and why we are now disorganized. For it is all the result of the

26. 298 B.C.

fact that in those days they lived as free men, while now we live as slaves. For all the lands and territories, wherever they may be, that live in freedom experience, as I have already said, immense benefits. There you see denser populations, for men are freer to enter into marriage and keener to do so. People are happy to engender children if they think they will be able to feed them and do not fear their family wealth will be confiscated from them. They are happier if they know they will not only be born free, not slaves, but, if they have the right qualities [*virtù*], they will be able to grow up to share in government. There, people see wealth steadily accumulate, both wealth from agriculture and wealth from industry and commerce. For each person tries hard to build up savings and pile up goods if he believes he will have a chance to enjoy what he has acquired. As a result, men are eager to pursue both private and public benefits, and both types of interest are advanced extraordinarily quickly.

The opposite of all this happens in those countries where the people are enslaved. Then their traditional standard of living diminishes in proportion to the severity of their enslavement. Of all harsh enslavements, the harshest is to be enslaved to a republic: in the first place, because republics are more durable, and you have less hope of escaping from their control; in the second, because the objective of a republic is to weaken and consume all other communities in order to strengthen its own. This is not the objective of an individual ruler who forces you to submit to him, unless he is a barbarian, someone who lays waste the countryside and destroys civilized urban life. Oriental rulers act like this. But if he has normal human sentiments, then in most cases he loves all the cities subjected to him equally and leaves them with their commerce intact and with by far the greater part of their ancient institutions, so that if they cannot advance as they could while they were free, they are not ruined because they are enslaved. Here I am talking about the enslavement cities enter into when they are subjected to a foreign ruler, for I have already discussed above the case of cities subjected to one of their own citizens.

If you think about everything I have said, you will not be astonished at the power the Samnites had when they were free, or at the feeble state they were reduced to when they were enslaved. Livy testifies to this at several points, and particularly in his account of the invasion of Hannibal, where he reports the Samnites were being oppressed by a Roman legion based in Nola. They sent ambassadors to Hannibal to ask him to come to their assistance.[27] During their speech they said

27. 215 B.C. Livy, bk. 23, ch. 42.

they had fought against the Romans for a hundred years, relying on their own soldiers and their own commanders. Many times they had stood firm against two consular armies commanded by both consuls; but now they were reduced to such a low condition they could scarcely defend themselves, even against the insignificant Roman legion that was in Nola.

Chapter Three: On how Rome became a great city by ruining the cities round about and by allowing foreigners easy access to her privileges.

"Meanwhile Rome grew on the ruins of Alba."[28] Those whose aim is that a city should acquire a large empire should make every effort to ensure it is full of inhabitants; for without this abundance of manpower you will never succeed in making a city great. There are two ways of doing this: by attraction and by compulsion. By attraction, you keep the routes open and safe for foreigners who wish to come and live in your city, so that everyone is keen to live there. By compulsion, you destroy the neighboring cities and compel their inhabitants to move to your city. These policies were so effectively pursued by the Romans that when the sixth king was on the throne[29] there were eighty thousand men living in Rome who were able to bear arms. For the Romans modelled their behavior on that of a good farmer. So that a fruit tree will grow, will produce a good crop of fruit and carry it until it is ripe, he cuts off the first branches that appear. Its strength [*virtù*] remains in the trunk, so that later it will have more numerous branches and bear more fruit.

This policy for enlarging a city and building an empire is demonstrated to be necessary and effective by the examples of Sparta and Athens. These two republics were heavily armed and administered under excellent laws; nevertheless, they never acquired an empire as large as that of Rome, despite the fact that Rome seemed to suffer more internal conflicts and to be less well administered than they were. For this there is no explanation other than the one I have just given. Rome, because it had grown bulky by pursuing these two policies, could at one point put in arms two hundred and eighty thousand men, while Sparta and Athens were never able to arm more than twenty thousand each. This was not because Rome's location was more favorable than theirs, but simply because Rome pursued different policies.

28. Livy, bk. 1, ch. 30.

29. Servius Tullius ruled from 578 to 535 B.C.

For Lycurgus, the founder of the Spartan republic, believing nothing could more easily lead to the decay of his constitution than immigration, did everything he could to prevent foreigners from having dealings with Spartans, and, apart from preventing intermarriage and refusing to allow them to take out citizenship, apart from obstructing the development of those links that cause men to meet together, he decreed that in his republic the money be made of leather, thus ensuring no one would want to come there to sell goods or to establish any industry. As a result the city of Sparta could never increase its population.

Everything we do has to imitate natural processes. Just as it is neither possible nor natural for a slender stalk to support a heavy branch, so a small republic cannot take control of cities or kingdoms stronger or larger than itself. Even if it conquers them, its fate will be like that of a tree with a branch thicker than its trunk. It will carry its burden only with great effort, and any little breeze will snap it. This is what happened to Sparta. She conquered all the cities of Greece, but as soon as Thebes rebelled against her, so did all the other cities.[30] The trunk was left standing with the branches torn off it. This could not happen to Rome, for her trunk was so thick she could easily support any branch. These policies, then, along with the others I will discuss below, made Rome large and immensely powerful. Livy made the point economically when he said: "Meanwhile Rome grew on the ruins of Alba."

Chapter Fifteen: On how weak states always have trouble making up their minds, and on how delays in decision making are always dangerous.

While we are on this subject, and still discussing the beginning of the war between the Latins and the Romans, it is worth noting that, whenever one has to take a decision, it is best to come straight to the particular issue one has to resolve; one should not allow uncertainties to develop or allow time to pass without reaching a decision. This is very apparent from the decision the Latins reached when they were planning to break with the Romans. For the Romans had caught wind of the hostile attitude that had spread among the Latin peoples. In order to confirm their assessment, and in order to see if they could regain the support of the Latins without resorting to arms, they told them to send eight of their citizens to Rome so they could consult with them. The Latins, hearing this, and well aware they had done numerous

30. 379 B.C.

things the Romans had not wanted, held a meeting to decide who should go to Rome and to give them instructions as to what they should say. While the council was debating what to decide, Annius, their praetor, said the following: "In my view it is of foremost importance for the conduct of our affairs that you decide what ought to be done rather than what ought to be said. It will be easy, once you have decided what you want to achieve, to choose words to fit your deeds."[31]

There is no doubt this argument is absolutely correct, and every ruler and every republic should consider its implications. For if you are confused or uncertain as to what you want to do, then you will not know what to say; but once you have made up your mind and have decided what policy to implement, then it is easy to find the right words. I have been all the keener to draw attention to this remark because I have often noticed that such uncertainties have handicapped public policy making, to the detriment and disgrace of our republic. It will always be the case that when difficult decisions have to be taken, and when you need courage to make up your mind, then uncertainties will flourish so long as weak men debate the issues and make the decisions. Slow and late decisions are every bit as harmful as ambiguous ones, especially when a decision has to be made as to whether to help a friend. For delay does no good to anyone and brings harm to you. Late and poorly-formulated decisions are the result of either lack of courage and strength or the ill will of those who have to take the decision. They, driven by their own passions, want to ruin the state or accomplish some other private objective. They do not let debate reach a conclusion but obstruct it and waylay it.

Good citizens, by contrast, even if they see popular enthusiasm building up for a mistaken decision, never try to delay decision making, particularly in cases where delay will have evil consequences. When Hieronymus, tyrant of Syracuse, died while a major war was going on between the Carthaginians and the Romans, the Syracusans began to disagree among themselves as to whether they should ally themselves with the Romans or the Carthaginians. Both sides were so intransigent that the decision hung in the balance, and no decision was actually taken until Apollonides, one of the leading citizens of Syracuse, made a speech full of wisdom, maintaining one ought not to criticize those who thought the Syracusans should ally with the Romans or those who thought they should ally with the Carthaginians, but one certainly should have no patience with uncertainty and delay in reaching a

31. Livy, bk. 8, ch. 4. The year is 341 B.C.

decision, for he feared such uncertainty could lead to the ruin of the republic; but once a decision had been taken, no matter what it was, one could hope some good might come of it.[32]

Livy could not have made clearer than he does in this passage the dangers that accompany indecision. He points them out again in the section on the Latins, for when the Latins asked the Lavinians for help against the Romans, the Lavinians put off making a decision so long that when they finally marched out of their city to come to the Latins' aid, no sooner had they passed the gate than news arrived that the Latins had been defeated. Milionius their praetor then said this: "You're going to have pay a high price to the Roman people for marching this short distance."[33] They should have made up their minds earlier either to help or not to help the Latins. If they had decided not to help them they would not have angered the Romans, while if they had decided to help them, and their help had come in time, then their additional troops might have been enough to secure victory; but by delay they ensured they lost out no matter what happened, as proved to be the case.

If the Florentines had taken note of this passage, they would not have had so much trouble with the French as they had when King Louis XII of France marched into Italy to attack Ludovico, Duke of Milan,[34] nor would they have suffered such losses at their hands. For the king, when he was planning his advance, asked the Florentines for permission to cross their land. The Florentine ambassadors at the French court agreed with Louis that Florence would stay neutral, and the king when he invaded Italy would support Florence if she were attacked and extend his protection to her. It was agreed that the city should have one month in which to ratify this undertaking. Ratification, however, was delayed by those who were foolish enough to support the cause of Ludovico, until the king was on the point of victory. Only then did the Florentines want to ratify the agreement, but their proposal was rejected, for it was evident to the king that the Florentines had been forced to become his allies and had not done so voluntarily. This cost the city of Florence a good deal of money and put its government at risk—on a later occasion it did, indeed, fall in similar circumstances.[35] This policy was all the more misconceived because it did not even provide any assistance to Duke Ludovico. If he had won, he would

32. Livy, bk. 24, ch. 28. The year is 215 B.C.

33. Livy, bk. 8, ch. 11. The year is 340 B.C.

34. In 1499.

35. In 1512, when the Medici were restored with Spanish help.

have been even more hostile in his behavior towards the Florentines than the King of France was. Although I have discussed in an earlier chapter the evil consequences that this feebleness had for the republic, nevertheless, since I had another occasion to mention it while discussing a different topic, I wanted to repeat myself, for I think this is a matter of the greatest importance that ought to be noted by all republics like ours.

Chapter Sixteen: On how soldiers in our day do not come up to the standards of classical times.

The most important battle the Romans ever fought—in any war, with any enemy—was the battle with the Latin peoples that took place during the consulship of Torquatus and Decius.[36] For there is no reason to doubt that, just as the Latins were enslaved because they had lost the battle, so the Romans would have been enslaved if they had not won it. Livy takes this view, and at every point he stresses the two armies were equal: in discipline, skill [*virtù*], determination, and numbers. The only difference was that the commanders of the Roman army were more skillful [*virtuosi*] than those of the Latin army.

One may remark how, in the course of this battle, two things happened that had not happened before and rarely happened afterwards. Both consuls sought to keep their soldiers in good spirit, obedient to their commands, and determined to fight. To achieve this, one of them killed himself, and the other killed his own son.[37] If, as Livy stresses, the two armies were indistinguishable, it was because they had fought alongside each other as allies for a long time. They had the same language, the same training, the same weapons. Their battle formations were identical, and their military units and officers had the same names and titles. It was therefore necessary, since they were equal in strength and skill [*virtù*], that some extraordinary event should take place that would improve the morale of one side and make it more determined than its opponent, for, as I have said before, it is determination that decides the outcome of a battle; as long as the individual soldiers who are fighting are determined the army will never retreat. And in order to ensure the Romans remained determined longer than the Latins, a

36. In 340 B.C.

37. The consuls had vowed to kill themselves if their troops retreated. This Decius did, while the son of Manlius Torquatus disobeyed orders and was executed on his instructions.

combination of chance and the skill [*virtù*] of the consuls brought it about that Torquatus had to kill his son, and Decius himself.

Livy describes, in explaining the equality of the two armies, the organization of the Roman army, both while on the march and in battle. Since he describes this at length I will not repeat what he says. I will only discuss the lesson that I think is to be learned from it. Because it has been neglected by all the military commanders of modern times the result has been poor organization, both in armies on the march and in the field. Let me point out, then, that from Livy's text we can gather that the Roman army had three principal divisions, or, in Tuscan terminology, three "ranks." They called the first *Hastati* (lancers), the second *Principes*,[38] the third *Triarii*,[39] and each rank had its own cavalry. In drawing up their troops on the battlefield, they put their *Hastati* in front; behind them, standing right by their shoulders, they placed the *Principes*; in the third rank, still directly behind them, they placed the *Triarii*. The cavalry of all these formations were placed to the right and to the left of the three divisions; the ranks of the cavalry, because of how they were organized and where they were placed, were called *alae*, because they looked like two wings attached to the main body.

They organized the first division, the *Hastati*, which was in front, in a tight formation so they could push forward and take the brunt of an enemy charge. The second division, the *Principes*, because it was not the first to engage the enemy, but was needed to give support to the front division if it was broken or buckled, they did not draw up in close formation. They kept its ranks spread out, so it could absorb the first division into its lines without becoming disordered, should the enemy attack oblige the first division to retreat. The third division, the *Triarii*, had its ranks even more spread out than the second, so it could absorb, if necessary, the first two divisions, the *Hastati* and the *Principes*. With these divisions drawn up in this way they entered into the fight; and if the *Hastati* were pushed back or broken, then they withdrew into the open lines of the *Principes*, and, all joined together, having turned the two divisions into one body, they returned to the fray; if this new formation was beaten back yet again, then, under pressure, they all retreated into the open lines of the *Triarii*, and all three divisions having become one body reentered the battle. If they were then overwhelmed, having nothing more to fall back on, they lost the battle. And because every time this last division, the *Triarii*, was thrown into the battle it meant the army was in danger of defeat,

38. I.e., the first division.

39. I.e., the third division.

there came to be a proverbial saying: "There's nothing left but the *Triarii*," which is the equivalent of our Tuscan proverb, "We're betting everything on the outcome."

The military commanders of our own day, just as they have given up all the other practices and no longer observe any aspect at all of the old military procedures, so they have given up this, too. Which is of no small consequence, for if you draw up your troops so that you can regroup yourselves three times during the course of a battle, then you can face the prospect of defeat three times, and three times you have the chance to show you have the determination [*virtù*] to fight back against the odds. But if you are drawn up to withstand only a first charge, as all Christian armies are these days, you can easily be defeated, because any defect in your organization, any limitations in your skill [*virtù*] can deprive you of victory.

Our armies are unable to regroup three times because they have forgotten how to absorb one division into another. This is because nowadays people draw up battle formations in one of two unsatisfactory ways: either they put their divisions shoulder to shoulder, so that they have a battle line that is wide, but thin, which means it is weak, because there is little between front and rear; or, in order to strengthen their formation, they concentrate on a narrower front so as to have the strength in depth of the Romans. But still, if the first division is broken, because they are not organized so as to be able to absorb it into the second, they all get tangled up together and destroy their own formation. For if the front division is driven back, it crashes into the second; if the second wants to advance, it is blocked by the first. The result is the first bangs into the second, and the second into the third, and total confusion breaks out. Thus, a small setback can often destroy a whole army.

According to the standards of our day, the Battle of Ravenna, where the Count of Foix, the commander of the French forces, was killed, was a rather well-fought event.[40] The French and Spanish armies drew themselves up in one of the formations I have just described: That is, both armies spread all their troops out in a line, with the result neither army had any troops in reserve, and both formations were aimed more at width than at depth. This is what they always do when, as at Ravenna, they have a large space in which to maneuver. For, knowing the disorder that results if they retreat into each other, they try to avoid it by drawing themselves up in a single line, as I have described, whenever they have the space for a broad front. But when the lay of the land constricts them,

40. 11 April 1512. The French won, but, without Foix, were soon in retreat.

then they draw themselves up in the other unsatisfactory arrangement I described, and yet have no plan for avoiding the evil consequences. In this same unsatisfactory formation they march through hostile territory, whether they are plundering or engaged in some other military maneuver.

At Santo Regolo, in the territory of Pisa,[41] and elsewhere when the Florentines were defeated by the Pisans during the war between Florence and Pisa that began when Pisa rebelled after King Charles of France brought his troops into Italy, defeat was simply brought about by the Florentine's own cavalry. They were in front and were driven back by the enemy straight into the ranks of the Florentine infantry, who broke, with the result that all the rest of the troops turned and fled. Mr. Ciriaco dal Borgo, formerly commander of the Florentine infantry, has often said, as I can testify, that they would never have been beaten had they not had to face their own cavalry. The Swiss, who are the best of modern soldiers, when they fight as allies of the French, always take the greatest care to ensure they stand to one side of the allied cavalry, so if they are forced to retreat they will not charge into them.

Although this seems easy to understand and easy to prevent, nevertheless, we have yet to see a modern commander who is prepared to imitate classical methods or to correct the defects of contemporary ones. It is true they have divided their armies into three, calling one part the vanguard, another the battalion, and the third the rearguard, but they do not make any use of this division except when it comes to assigning sleeping quarters; when it actually comes to fighting it is rare, as I have said, for the whole army not to be forced to submit to a single fate.

Many, in order to justify their ignorance, claim the introduction of artillery makes it impossible to adopt many of the practices of the ancients in our own times. So I want, in the next chapter, to discuss this question and to ask whether artillery fire makes it impossible to use ancient techniques [*virtù*].

Chapter Nineteen: On how republics that acquire new territory do themselves much more harm than good, unless they have good institutions and a Roman efficiency [*virtù*].

These opinions [that cavalry are better than infantry], though at odds with the truth, are justified by appealing to bad examples that have

41. 21 May 1498.

become the norm in these centuries of corruption. They ensure men do not think of deviating from their accustomed procedures. How could one have convinced an Italian of thirty years ago that ten thousand infantry could attack, across a plain, ten thousand cavalry and as many infantry and not only hold their own but defeat them? Yet we have seen this can indeed happen. I have already referred several times to the lessons to be learned from the Battle of Novara. Although the history books are full of such examples, until recently nobody would have believed they really happened; and if they did believe they happened they would have said that in these days the heavy cavalry are better armed, and a squadron of cavalry would be able to cut through a rock face, let alone some infantry. Such misconceived excuses would have distorted their judgment. They would have given no weight to the fact that Lucullus with only a few infantry broke an army of one hundred fifty thousand cavalry under Tigranes, and among those cavalry there was a sort of horseman almost identical to our own heavy cavalry.[42] So it has been left to the northerners to show in practice that this view is mistaken. But now we can see that what is said about the infantry in the history books is nothing less than the truth. We ought to conclude that everything else they say about classical military tactics and political institutions is true and useful.

If we took this approach, then republics and rulers would make fewer mistakes. In particular, they would be stronger in standing firm against a cavalry charge; they would not think their best hope lay in running away. And those who are in charge of a participatory political system would have a better idea of how to manage it, whether their goal was to acquire new territory or hang on to what they had. They would recognize the sound policies that would make a republic great and enable it to acquire an empire are the following: to increase the number of inhabitants in the capital city; to acquire fellow citizens and not subjects; to send out colonies to hold down newly acquired territory; to make plunder a capital offense; to defeat the enemy with raids and with pitched battles and not with sieges; to keep the state wealthy and the individual poor; and to put every effort into keeping up a high level of military training. And if the pursuit of territorial expansion by means of these policies did not please them, they would pause to consider that acquisitions made by any other means bring about the ruin of a republic. So they would put a stop to all ambitious plans, would regulate the internal affairs of their city well with good laws and good customs, and would prohibit territorial expansion, thinking only of defense. They

42. In Armenia, 69 B.C.

would keep their defenses in good order, as the republics of Germany do. They live according to these principles and have been able to maintain their freedom for some considerable time.

Nevertheless, as I said earlier when discussing the difference between organizing yourself for conquest and organizing yourself for defense, it is not possible for a republic to succeed in peacefully enjoying its liberty within a small territory, for if she does not attack anyone else, then someone will attack her. If she is attacked, she will want and need to conquer. Even if she did not have an enemy abroad, she would find enemies within, for it seems this is inevitable in all large cities. So if the republics of Germany can get by on the basis of this policy and have been able to survive for some time, then this is because of certain exceptional circumstances that are to be found in that geographical region and do not occur elsewhere; without these circumstances such a strategy cannot succeed.

The region of Germany I am talking about was part of the Roman empire, just as France and Spain were. But when Rome declined, and when the title of emperor came to be held by someone whose authority was confined to Germany, then the more powerful German cities, seizing on the weakness or necessities of the Holy Roman Emperors, began to lay claim to independence, purchasing their liberty by agreeing to pay the emperor a small annual tax. So, little by little, all those cities that were under the immediate authority of the emperor and were not subject to any intermediate prince, bought their freedom in this way. At the same time as these cities were buying their freedom, a number of communities that were under the authority of the Duke of Austria rebelled against him, among them being Fribourg, the Swiss communes, and others like them.[43] They prospered from the beginning, and little by little their strength grew to the extent that, far from being reconquered by the Austrians, they have become a source of fear to all their neighbors. These are the people we call the Swiss. So the province of Germany came to be divided between the Swiss, a number of republics that are called free states, the princes, and the emperor.

The reason why, among so many different political systems, there are not many wars, or, when there are wars, they do not last long, is because of the vestigial authority of the emperor. It is true he has little power, but he has such status among them that he is able to function as a conciliator. He uses his authority to interpose as a mediator between the parties and, so, quickly brings every conflict to an end. The greatest and longest wars in Germany have been those between the Swiss and

43. The first Swiss confederation was formed in 1291.

the Duke of Austria; and although for many years now, the emperor and the Duke of Austria have been one and same person, nevertheless, he has never been able to overpower the bold Swiss, and there has never been any way of bringing about a settlement between them except by force. The rest of Germany has not been eager to come to his support. The free cities have no desire to attack people who want to live in freedom as they do; and as for the princes, some of them are unable to help because they are too poor, and others have no desire to help because they are jealous of the emperor's power. So these cities are able to survive. They content themselves with the small territories they control, for they have no reason, given the limited extent of the emperor's authority, to want more. They have to live in unity within their city walls, for their enemy is close at hand and would seize the opportunity to occupy them if they fell out among themselves. If the province of Germany were structured differently, then they would need to try to extend their territory, and they would no longer be able to live in peace. Because elsewhere the same circumstances do not apply, other states cannot adopt this way of life. They must either increase their power by forming alliances or grow as the Romans did.

Anyone who acts differently from the Romans is not trying to survive but to bring about his own death and ruination. For conquests are dangerous in a thousand ways and for a thousand reasons. It is all too easy to acquire territory without acquiring new strength, and if you acquire territory without at the same time building up your strength, you are heading for destruction. You cannot increase your strength if you impoverish yourself by expenditure on war, even if you win, for then your acquisitions are costing you more than you are gaining by them. This is what happened to the Venetians and to the Florentines. The Venetians were much weaker when they controlled Lombardy[44] and the Florentines much weaker when they controlled Tuscany[45] than they were when the Venetians were content to rule the sea and the Florentines to control the territory within six miles of their city walls. Their problems derived from wanting to expand without knowing how to do it; and they deserve to be all the more criticized because they had so little excuse, for they had the example of the Romans to follow and could have imitated them had they chosen to. The Romans, on the other hand, had no model to copy but worked out what to do through their own wisdom.

In addition, acquisitions are capable of doing significant harm to

44. I.e., in the second half of the fifteenth century.

45. In the last quarter of the fifteenth century.

even a well-organized republic when one acquires a city or a province that is full of delights. There one is in danger of picking up the manners of the conquered from the dealings one has with them. This happened to the Romans when they conquered Capua;[46] and then happened to Hannibal when he did the same.[47] If Capua had been further from Rome, so the failings of her soldiers could not rapidly be put right, or if Rome had been at all corrupt, then without doubt the acquisition of Capua would have been the ruin of the Roman republic. And Livy says as much when he says this: "Even then life in Capua was far from favorable to the maintenance of military discipline, for every pleasure was to be encountered there, and the weary soldiers began to forget their homeland."[48] Such cities and provinces have their revenge on their conquerors without a fight and without bloodshed, for they infect them with their wicked habits and leave them ready to be defeated by the first attacker. Juvenal could not have expressed the situation better when he says in his *Satires* that the conquest of foreign lands had led the Romans to adopt foreign customs, and instead of the parsimony and other excellent virtues [*virtù*] they had exemplified, "they became given over to greed and luxury, so that the conquered globe had its revenge."[49]

If, then, acquiring new territories could be dangerous for the Romans in the days when their policies were shaped by such remarkable wisdom and virtue [*virtù*], what will happen to those who conquer without imitating their policies? Especially to those who, leaving aside the other mistakes they make, about which I have already said enough, employ soldiers who are either mercenaries or auxiliaries? The harm that often results will be briefly discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Twenty: On the risks a ruler or a republic runs by using auxiliary or mercenary troops.

If I had not discussed at length in another book of mine how useless mercenary and auxiliary troops are, and how necessary it is to have an army of one's own subjects,[50] I would discuss the matter in more detail in this chapter than I will do. But since I have talked in detail about

46. 343 B.C.
47. 216 B.C.
48. Livy, bk. 7, ch. 38.
49. *Satires*, bk. 6, ll. 291–92.
50. *The Prince*, ch. twelve.

it elsewhere I will be brief here. I did not think, however, I could completely omit the question, having found so many instances of the use of auxiliary troops in Livy. Let me explain that auxiliary troops are those another ruler or republic lends to you, while he provides their commanding officers and their pay. Turning to the text of Livy, I note that the Romans, on two separate occasions, defeated Samnite armies with their own, which they had sent to help the Capuans.[51] By this assistance they put an end to Samnite aggression against the Capuans. They wanted to withdraw their troops and bring them back to Rome, and were concerned that the Capuans, without an army to defend them, would once again be attacked and defeated by the Samnites. So they left two legions behind in the territory of Capua to defend them. These legions, with time on their hands, began to enjoy living a life of leisure, so much so that they forgot their homeland and their duty of obedience to the senate. It occurred to them that they could take up their arms and seize control of the territory they had already, through their courage and skill [*virtù*], defended. They felt the inhabitants were not worthy to own the property they had been incapable of protecting. Realizing what was happening, Rome took the necessary steps, and in the chapter on conspiracies I will discuss what happened in detail.

For now I want to repeat that, of all the types of soldier, auxiliaries are the greatest liability. For the ruler or the republic who uses them to fight on his side has no control over them. Only the authorities in their homeland can control them. For auxiliary soldiers, as I said, are troops sent to you by another ruler. He supplies their commanders and pays their wages, and it is his standard they fight under. An example is the army we have been discussing that the Romans sent to Capua. Such soldiers, if they win the war, usually plunder impartially those they were fighting for and those they were fighting against; they do so, sometimes because the ruler who has sent them has evil intentions, sometimes because they have their own plans. The Romans had no intention of breaking the alliance and the agreements they had made with the Capuans; nevertheless, the Roman troops thought it would be so easy to crush them they began to think of seizing their land from them and establishing their own government.

One could give plenty of other examples like this; but I want to make do with this one, and with the example of the inhabitants of Rhegium.[52] They had their lives and their land taken from them by a Roman legion that had been sent to protect them. So a ruler (or a

51. Livy, bk. 7, chs. 32–41. The battles were in 443–42 B.C.
52. Polybius, bk. 1, ch. 7, in 279 B.C.

republic) ought to do anything rather than resort to bringing auxiliary troops onto his territory to fight in his defense in circumstances where he will be completely dependent on them. Any agreement, any treaty, no matter how harsh, that you can reach with the enemy will be more favorable to you than such a policy. If you study history carefully and analyze contemporary events, you will find that for every occasion on which such a policy has paid off there have been innumerable occasions when it has failed. A monarchy or a republic that is keen to expand cannot hope for a better opportunity to occupy a city or a region than to receive a request to send one of its armies to defend it. While someone who is so keen to acquire new territory that he calls on such assistance, not merely to defend himself, but to attack someone else, is trying to acquire territory he cannot hope to hold, that can easily be taken from him by the ally that acquires it for him.

Yet men are so eaten up with ambition that in their eagerness to get something they want here and now, they do not pause to think about the evil consequences they are storing up for themselves in the not-too-distant future. Neither do they pay attention to the examples provided by ancient history on this subject and on the others discussed in this book; for if they paid attention they would see that the more generous a state appears to be towards its neighbors, and the more it seems to have no interest at all in gobbling them up, the more likely it is to be successful in taking them over, as I will point out below in discussing the case of the Capuans.

Chapter Twenty-Seven: On how wise princes and republics will be satisfied with winning; for those who want more usually lose.

You usually insult your enemy because you have become overconfident, either as a result of victory, or because you mistakenly feel sure of victory. Such overconfidence makes men not only say, but also do, things they will come to regret. For this overconfidence, when it gets a hold on men's minds, makes them overstep the limit and often causes them to pass up a chance to acquire a guaranteed benefit in the hope of acquiring something better, but something that may prove to be beyond their grasp. This problem of knowing where to draw the line deserves consideration, for people often make mistakes in this matter and damage their political interests as a result. I think it is best illustrated by a consideration of ancient and modern examples, for it cannot be so clearly portrayed if one discusses it in abstract terms.

Hannibal, after he had defeated the Romans at Cannae, sent his

ambassadors to Carthage to tell them of the victory and to ask for assistance.[53] The Carthaginian senate debated what to do. Hanno, an experienced and prudent citizen, advised that they make intelligent use of this victory to make peace with the Romans, for they could obtain peace on favorable terms, given that they were for the moment the victors, while they would not be able to obtain comparable terms once they had been defeated. The goal of the Carthaginians ought to be to demonstrate to the Romans that they were capable of standing up to them; having won a victory they should not run the risk of losing merely because they had some hope of making further gains. This view was not adopted, but the Carthaginian senate later had to recognize just how wise it was, by which time it was too late to act on it.

Another example: when Alexander the Great had conquered the whole of Asia, the republic of Tyre—which was in those days a great city and was powerful because, like Venice, it was a city built on the water—having seen how successful Alexander was, sent ambassadors to tell him they wanted to become his faithful servants and to obey him in any way he wanted, but they were not ready to allow either him or his troops to enter their territories.[54] Alexander, indignant that a city would dare to close its gates to him when everyone else was opening theirs, turned them away: He rejected their proposal, and laid siege to Tyre. The city was surrounded by water, and well stocked with food and with the ordnance necessary for its defense. After four months Alexander had to admit a single city was holding up his advance longer than a whole series of conquests had done. He decided to try to reach a settlement with them and to agree to the terms they themselves had proposed. But the citizens of Tyre had grown conceited and not only did not want to reach a settlement, but killed the ambassadors sent to negotiate it. Alexander was enraged and renewed the attack with such overwhelming force he overran the defenses and destroyed the city, killing and enslaving the men.

In 1512, a Spanish army marched across Florentine territory in order to restore the Medici to power in Florence and to hold the city to ransom. They were led by Florentine citizens who had encouraged them to believe that as soon as they crossed the Florentine frontier the people would take up arms in their support. Having advanced to the plain without anyone having declared for them, they found themselves short of provisions and tried to negotiate a settlement. This success made the people of Florence disdainful, and they rejected the

53. 216 B.C.

54. 333 B.C. The source is probably Quintus Curtius.

offer. The consequence was their defeat at Prato and the collapse of the government.

Rulers who are attacked, if their attackers are immeasurably more powerful than they are, can make no error greater than that of rejecting a settlement on any terms, especially when one is actually offered to them. For there is no proposal, no matter how unfavorable, that is not in some respect to their advantage, and so any proposal may be considered a partial victory. It ought to have been sufficient for the people of Tyre that Alexander was prepared to accept conditions he had earlier rejected. It should have been victory enough for them to have forced such a man to give in to their wishes by taking arms against him. The people of Florence, similarly, ought to have been satisfied, ought to have regarded themselves as victorious enough, if the Spanish army would agree to only one of their demands and did not simply do as it pleased. For the Spanish intended to overthrow the government of Florence, force Florence to abandon her French alliance, and force her to pay a ransom. If the Spanish had been prepared to settle for only two of these three objectives, provided they were the last two, and the people of Florence had been able to achieve only one of theirs, which was the preservation of their political system, then each party would have emerged with some honor and grounds for satisfaction. It would have been wrong for the people to worry about the two concessions they would have had to make, for they would have survived as a people. Even if they thought they were almost certain of achieving better terms by holding out, they should not have been prepared to gamble on the outcome, for their own destruction was a possibility. No wise man will risk everything unless he is forced to do so.

When Hannibal left Italy, where he had campaigned for sixteen glorious years, because he had been recalled to defend Carthage, his own homeland, he found Hasdrubal and Syphax defeated, the kingdom of Numidia lost, and Carthage no longer in control of any territory outside her own city walls.[55] He and his army were their only hope. Realizing his homeland's survival was at stake, he did not want to risk a battle until he had tried every possible alternative. He was not ashamed to sue for peace, believing that if his homeland had any chance of surviving it was through a negotiated settlement, not through war. When the enemy refused to negotiate, he was determined to put up a fight, though he seemed bound to lose. He reckoned that perhaps he could win against the odds, or, if he was defeated, he would go down to defeat covered in glory. If Hannibal, who was so skillful [*virtuoso*]

55. 202 B.C.

and whose army was intact, tried to negotiate peace before going into battle when he saw that his homeland would be enslaved if he was defeated in the field, what should someone else do, someone who is less skillful [*virtù*] and less experienced than he? But the men who make this mistake are those who do not know how to keep their hopes within bounds; they plan as if their hopes were bound to be realized, and, having failed to calculate the odds, they are destroyed.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: On how fortune blinds men's minds when she does not want them to thwart her plans.

If you will think sensibly about how people's lives are shaped, you will see that often events and accidents occur against which the heavens were determined we should have no protection. Seeing this sort of thing happened to the Romans, who were so skillful [*virtù*], pious, and well-organized, it is not surprising that it happens much more often to cities or regions who lack these advantages. Because this subject is a rather good one if one wants to show the influence of the heavens in human affairs, Livy discusses it at length and most eloquently.[56]

He says that, because the heavens had some reason for wanting the Romans to recognize their power, they first made those Fabii who had been sent as ambassadors to the French make mistakes, with the result that their efforts served to incite the French to make war against the Romans, and then they ensured the Romans fell way below their normal standards when it came to making preparations for war. Fate had ensured that Camillus, who would have been able to handle such a difficult situation single-handedly, but for whose abilities there was no substitute, had been banished to Ardea. When the French began to march on Rome, the Romans, who had often appointed a dictator when faced with attacks by the Volsci and other hostile neighbors, failed to appoint one to deal with the French. Moreover, when it came to choosing soldiers, they chose poorly and without making any real effort. They were so slow to muster that they were only just in time to block the French advance where it had to cross the river Allia, a mere ten miles from Rome. There the tribunes pitched camp without taking any of the normal precautions. They did not reconnoiter the site, nor did they surround the camp with a ditch and palisade. In fact, they did not employ any precautions, either natural or supernatural. When it came to drawing up the battle lines they spread the ranks out

56. Livy, bk. 5, chs. 37–38.

so they were thin and weak. Neither soldiers nor officers lived up to the standards of the Roman army. The battle itself was bloodless, for the Romans fled before they were attacked, the bulk of the army making for Veii, while the rest withdrew to Rome.[57] When they arrived in Rome they did not even stop by their houses but made straight for the Capitol, with the result the senate did not give any thought to defending the city, did not even bother to close the gates, but some of them fled, and others went with the rest into the Capitol. However, when it came to defending the Capitol, they finally began to get organized. They did not hamper the defense by admitting people who would be useless, while they stockpiled all the grain they could collect so they could withstand a siege. Of the vast numbers of those who were useless—the old, women, and children—the majority fled into the surrounding countryside, while the rest remained in Rome at the mercy of the French.

Anyone who read about all the Romans had achieved over the preceding years and then came to read about these events, would be quite incapable of believing these were the same people. When Livy has described this whole series of errors, he concludes with the remark: "So one can see the extent to which fortune will blind men's minds when she does not want them to deflect her onward momentum."[58] This conclusion is as true as could be. It follows that men who regularly encounter extreme adversity or have the habit of success deserve less praise or less blame than one might think. For usually you will find they have been led to either tragedy or triumph because the heavens have pushed them decisively either one way or the other, either making it easy or virtually impossible for them to be able to act effectively [*virtuosamente*].

One thing fortune does is select someone, when she wants him to accomplish great things, who will be sufficiently bold and skillful [*virtù*] to recognize the opportunities she makes for him. In the same way, when she wants to bring about someone's destruction, she chooses a man who will help bring about his own undoing. If there is someone around who might get in her way, then she kills him, or deprives him of all the resources he would need to do any good. You can see this clearly in Livy's account. Fortune, in order to make Rome all the greater and build her up to the power she eventually attained, judged it necessary to give her a nasty shock (I will describe all that happened at length at the beginning of the next book), but did not want, at this point, to destroy her completely. That is why she had Camillus banished, but not killed; had Rome seized by the enemy, but not the

57. 390 B.C.

58. Livy, bk. 5, ch. 37.

Capitol; determined that the Romans did nothing right when it came to defending Rome, but did everything right when it came to defending the Capitol. So that Rome would fall to the enemy, she ensured the bulk of the forces that had been defeated at the Allia would make for Veii, thus destroying any opportunity of defending the city. But in bringing this about she also laid the ground for Rome's liberation. A complete Roman army stood ready at Veii, and Camillus was nearby at Ardea. So they were able to make a determined effort to liberate their homeland under the command of a general whose reputation was not tarnished by defeat but was unblemished.

Perhaps I should add, in support of what I have said, an example from modern history; but I do not think it necessary, for this one example should be sufficient to satisfy anyone, and so I will move on. But I want to repeat that this is absolutely true, and all history testifies to it. Men can help fortune along, but they cannot resist it; they can swim with the tide, but they can never make headway against it. Of course, they should never give up, for they can never know what fortune has in mind. Her path is often crooked, her route obscure. So there is always reason to hope, and if one has hope one will never give up, no matter how hostile fortune may be, no matter how dreadful the situation in which one finds oneself.

Book Three

Chapter One:[1] On how, if you want a [political or religious] movement or a state to survive for long you must repeatedly bring it back to its founding principles.

It is certainly true that everything in the world has a natural life expectancy. But usually creatures live out the full cycle the heavens have determined for them only if they do not abuse their bodies, but keep them in such good shape they either remain unchanged, or if they change it is to get healthier, not weaker. Now my subject is collective bodies, such as republics, political parties, and religious sects, and my claim is that those changes are healthy that bring them back to their founding principles. Consequently, the best constructed organizations, those that will live longest, are those that are organized in such a way they can be frequently reformed; it amounts to the same thing if, for some external reason independent of their structure, reform is thrust

1. This chapter serves as preface to Book Three.

upon them. It is clearer than daylight that if organizations are not reformed they cannot survive.

The way to reform an organization is, as I just said, to bring it back to its founding principles. For all political and religious movements, all republics and monarchies must have some good in them at the start. Otherwise, they would not be able to start out with a favorable reputation, nor would they be able to make progress in the early days. But as time goes by, that original goodness becomes corrupted, and, unless something happens that brings them back to first principles, corruption inevitably destroys the organization. Medical doctors say, speaking of the human body, "Everyday it takes in something that, in the end, requires treatment."

This return to founding principles, in the case of states, occurs either through some external accident or through domestic wisdom. As for the first, you can see it was necessary for Rome to fall to the French[2] if she was to have a hope of being reborn; being reborn, she acquired new strength and new skill [*virtù*], committing herself once again to respect for religion and justice, which, in the old Rome, had begun to be corrupted. This is very evident in Livy's history, when he points out that when they marched out with an army against the French and when they created tribunes with consular authority they did not perform any religious ceremonies. Even more strikingly, not only did they not punish the three Fabii who, contrary to the law of nations, had attacked the French, but they appointed them tribunes. One can reasonably presume the other sound laws that had been introduced by Romulus and by Rome's other wise rulers were increasingly treated with less respect than was reasonable and, indeed, necessary if Rome was to preserve political freedom.

Then this shock came from the outside so that all the institutions of the city could be renewed. It was made evident to the people that it was not only necessary to uphold religion and justice, but also to have respect for good citizens and to place more value on their judgment [*virtù*] than on the interests they felt they would have to sacrifice if they adopted their policies. And this is, indeed, exactly what happened, for as soon as Rome recovered, they renewed all her old religious ordinances; punished the Fabii for beginning a conflict contrary to the law of nations; and moreover held the judgment [*virtù*] and goodness of Camillus in such esteem the senate and everyone else put their jealousy to one side and entrusted to him the leadership of the republic.

So it is necessary, as I have said, that men who live together in any

2. In 390 B.C.

sort of institution regularly take stock of themselves, either as a result of external shocks or of internal factors. As far as this second type of reform is concerned, it best arises either as a result of a legal requirement that the members of an institution frequently take stock, or because one good man appears among them and, by his own example and his skillful [*virtuose*] policies, has the same effect as such a law. So this improvement takes place in a state, either because of the skill [*virtù*] of a man, or because of the effect [*virtù*] of a law.

As far as legal authorities are concerned, the institutions that drew the Roman republic back to its first principles were the tribunes of the people, the censors, together with all those laws that were a barrier to the ambition and the insolence of men. Such laws and institutions have to be given life through the will power [*virtù*] of an individual citizen who determinedly sets out to enforce the laws despite the powerful opposition of those who seek to ignore them. Among such cases of the laws' being enforced, prior to the sack of Rome by the French, one may note the death of the sons of Brutus, the death of the ten citizens, and that of Maelius the corn dealer.[3] After the sack of Rome, there is the death of Manlius Capitolinus, the death of the son of Manlius Torquatus, the prosecution brought by Papirius Cursor against Fabius, his commander of cavalry, and the charges brought against the Scipios.[4] These cases involved going to extremes and caught people's attention. Whenever such a case occurred, it made men take stock; and as they became less common there was more opportunity for men to become corrupt, and reform became accompanied by ever greater danger and ever increasing conflict. For between two such dramatic legal decisions no more than ten years ought to go by. If the gap is longer men begin to develop bad habits and to break the laws; and if nothing happens to remind them of the penalties and to reawaken their sense of fear, there are soon so many lawbreakers springing up all over the place that it is no longer possible to punish them without endangering stability.

Those who were in charge of the Florentine state from 1434 to 1494[5] used to say, when discussing this subject, that it was necessary to retake power every five years, otherwise power would slip away from them. What they meant by "retaking power" was inspiring the same

3. Respectively 509 B.C.; 449 B.C. (in fact the Ten were only exiled); 440 B.C.

4. Respectively 384 B.C.; 340 B.C.; 326 B.C.; and 189 B.C., the two being Scipio Africanus and his brother Lucius.

5. The Medici.

fear and terror in their subjects they had inspired when they first came to power, when they had set out to crush those who had acted badly by the standards of the new system of government. But as the memory of that clampdown faded, people began to be emboldened to attempt innovations and to speak ill of their rulers. So it was necessary to provide a remedy by bringing matters back to first principles.

This reform of governments according to their first principles is sometimes the result of the simple virtue [*virtù*] of one man, without being based on any law that inspires him to act rigorously; such men are so respected and admired that good men want to imitate them, and bad men are ashamed to live according to principles at odds with theirs. The individuals in Roman history who are notable for having had such good effects are Horatius Cocles, Scaevola, Fabricius, the two Decii, Regulus Attilius, along with a few others. By their remarkable and virtuous [*virtuosi*] examples they had almost the same effects on their fellow citizens as good laws and good institutions had. If the individual instances of law enforcement I have mentioned, together with the examples provided by admirable individuals, had occurred at least every ten years in Rome, then it would certainly have been the case that Rome would never have become corrupt. But as both punishments and role models became less frequent, corruption began to spread. After Marcus Regulus there is not a single exemplary individual to be found. It is true the two Catos came along later, but there was such a long gap between Regulus and the first Cato, and then between the first and the second, and they were such isolated instances, that they could not by their own good example have any good effects.[6] This is particularly true of the second Cato, who found the city very generally corrupted and could not by his own example improve the behavior of his fellow citizens. This is all I need to say about republics.

But we should consider movements. We can see similar reforms are necessary if we take the example of our own religion. If this had not been brought back to first principles by St. Francis and St. Dominic it would have completely died away.[7] They, by living lives of poverty and imitating the life of Christ, renewed religion in the minds of men at a time when they had lost all commitment to it. The new orders they founded were so effective that it is only because of them that the

6. Regulus died in 250 B.C., Cato the Elder in 149 B.C., Cato the Younger in 46 B.C.

7. St. Francis founded the Franciscans in 1210; St. Dominic the Dominicans in 1216.

dishonesty of the prelates and of the hierarchy does not destroy the church, for the friars continue to live in poverty and have such influence with the people as a result of hearing confession and preaching that they persuade them it is wrong to criticize evil, and it is right quietly to obey the church authorities, and, if they make mistakes, to leave their punishment to God. And so the clergy do as much harm as they can, for they do not fear a punishment they do not see and in which they do not believe. Thus, this reform movement preserved, and continues to preserve, the Christian religion.

Kingdoms, too, need to renew themselves and to reform their laws so they accord with their original principles. One can see what a good effect this policy has in the Kingdom of France. That kingdom lives according to its laws and respects its institutions more than any other kingdom. These laws and institutions are upheld by the *parlements*, and especially the *Parlement* of Paris. They give them new life every time they enforce them against a prince of the kingdom or condemn the king in one of their judgments. So far, the *parlements* have maintained their role by being determined enforcers of the laws whenever the nobility break them; but should they ever leave first one and then more and more noblemen unpunished, the result would certainly be that they would either have to put things right by provoking a major crisis, or the whole system of government would break down.

One can therefore conclude that there is nothing more essential in any form of communal life, whether of a movement, a kingdom, or a republic, than to restore to it the reputation it had when it was first founded, and to strive to ensure there are either good institutions or good men who can bring this about, so that one is not dependent on having some external intervention before reform can occur. For although an external intervention is sometimes the best remedy, as it proved for Rome, it is so dangerous there are no circumstances in which one should hope for it.

In order to show you how the deeds of individuals made Rome great and had numerous good consequences for that city, I will turn to an account of individual leaders and a commentary on their actions. This third and final section of my commentary on the first ten books of Livy will deal with this subject. And although the kings of Rome did great and remarkable things, nevertheless, since history discusses them at length, I will leave them to one side and will say nothing more about them, except for mentioning one or two things they did in pursuit of their own private interests. I will begin, instead, by talking about Brutus, the father of Roman liberty.

Chapter Three: On how it is necessary, if one wants to preserve liberty when it has been newly won, to kill the sons of Brutus.

The harsh methods Brutus employed to preserve the liberty he had won for Rome were not merely useful, but necessary. His example is an exceptional one, with few parallels throughout history: a father sitting in judgment and not only condemning his sons to death, but supervising their execution.[8] Those who study classical history will always learn from this that after a change in the system of government, whether it be from republic to tyranny, or from tyranny to republic, it is necessary to act decisively and in public against those who want to overthrow the new government. Anyone who sets up a tyranny and does not kill Brutus, anyone who introduces self-government and does not kill the sons of Brutus, cannot expect to survive long. Because I have already discussed this at length and in detail, I refer you to what I have already said on the subject.

I will simply add one memorable example that occurred in our own time and in our own country, that of Piero Soderini. He believed that he could overcome through patience and kindness the desire the sons of Brutus[9] had to restore a different system of government. He was mistaken. Although he had wisdom enough to recognize the need to act, and although circumstances and the ambition of those who opposed him gave him the opportunity to eliminate them, nevertheless, he never resolved to do it. For not only did he believe he could overcome hostility through patience and kindness, and could buy off some of his enemies with rewards, he was of the view (and he often affirmed as much to his friends) that if he set out to attack his opponents boldly and to destroy his adversaries, he would have to claim extraordinary powers and set aside not only the laws but the principle of political equality. Even if he did not go on to make tyrannical use of his powers, he believed such an action would have so dismayed public opinion that after he died people would never agree again to appoint a gonfaloniere for life; and he believed this office was one that ought to be preserved and strengthened.

This was a genuine and significant consideration. But one should never put up with an evil consequence for the sake of some benefit if the evil consequence is more than likely to eliminate the benefit. He ought to have decided that since his deeds and his intentions would

8. See Livy, bk. 2, ch. 5. The date is 509 B.C.

9. I.e., in this case, the supporters of the Medici.

be judged by their outcome (assuming he lived long enough, and circumstances were not too unfavorable), he would be able, in due course, to demonstrate to everyone that he had acted in order to ensure the safety of the homeland and not out of private ambition. He ought to have been able to take steps to ensure no successor of his would be able to do for corrupt motives what he had done for patriotic ones. But he failed to see the mistake in his original view. He did not recognize that hostility is not overcome by time or bought off by gifts. So, because he did not know how to imitate Brutus, he fell from power, lost his reputation, and was forced into exile.

It is difficult to preserve a free state; but it is equally difficult to preserve a monarchy, as I will show in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: On why it happens that some revolutions, when liberty is replaced by servitude, or servitude by liberty, are bloodless, while others are bloody.

Perhaps someone wonders why, of the many revolutions and coups d'état that occur, when political liberty is replaced by tyranny or vice versa, some are bloody, others bloodless. For history records that, in what would appear to be similar political upheavals, sometimes innumerable men are killed, and other times no one is hurt. For example, in the revolution in which monarchy was replaced in Rome by the rule of the consuls, the Tarquins were the only people expelled from the city, and nobody else was hurt at all.

The crucial factor is this: The government that is being overthrown was either created through violence or was not. If it was established through violence, then the likelihood is that many people suffered by it; and, consequently, when it is brought down those who suffered want their revenge, and this desire for revenge leads to bloodshed and killing. But when the government was established by the common agreement of the community, working together to make it powerful, then when it is brought down the community has no need to attack anyone except the head of state. This was the case with the government of Rome and the expulsion of the Tarquins, just as it was the case with the government of the Medici in Florence. When they were driven out of power in 1494, they were the only ones who were attacked. Such revolutions, consequently, do not turn out to be very dangerous; but those carried out by people with a desire to exact revenge are extremely dangerous. They have always been enough to appall anyone who reads about them, let alone lives through them. And because history is full of examples that make my point, I will say no more.

Chapter Eight: On how, if you want to overthrow a republic, you ought to take account of its inhabitants.

I have already discussed how a wicked citizen can do no harm, except in a republic that is corrupt. Further evidence in support of this view, beyond what I have already given, is provided by the cases of Spurius Cassius and of Manlius Capitolinus. Spurius was ambitious and wanted to acquire unconstitutional power in Rome. He sought to win the support of the populace by doing numerous things to benefit them, such as sharing out among them the agricultural land the Romans had seized from the Hernici. The senators began to suspect his true motives and reported them to the populace, who became so distrustful of him that when he addressed it, offering to hand over to it the proceeds from the sale of the grain the government had imported from Sicily, it was determined to reject his proposal, for it believed Spurius was trying to buy from it its liberty. But if the Roman populace had been corrupt, then it would not have turned the money down and would have allowed him to take a step towards establishing a tyranny, instead of blocking his path.[10]

An even more important example of this is that of Manlius Capitolinus.[11] His case enables us to see how strength [*virtù*] of body and mind, and good works done in favor of the homeland, become worthless once one has demonstrated a disgusting desire to seize power. This desire grew in him, it seems, because he was jealous of the honors received by Camillus.[12] He was so blinded by ambition that, giving no thought to the political culture of the day, paying no attention to the inhabitants of the city, who were not yet ready to give their support to an evil constitution, he set out to provoke demonstrations in Rome against the senate and against the fundamental laws. What happened demonstrates the excellence of that city and the goodness of her inhabitants. For in this case not a single member of the nobility, who usually did not hesitate to come to each other's defense, declared support for him; even among his relatives no one moved a finger to help him. It was customary for an accused man's relatives to appear at his trial looking disheveled and sorrowful, dressed in black as if in mourning, in order to evoke pity for the accused; there were no mourners when Manlius stood trial. The tribunes of the people, who usually gave their support to anything that seemed likely to help the populace, and were

10. He was executed in 486 B.C.
11. Executed 384 B.C.
12. Who had defeated the French: cf. above, bk. 2, ch. 29.

especially keen to support anything that seemed likely to harm the nobility, in this case made common cause with the nobility to eliminate a threat to them all. The populace of Rome, which was all too keen to defend its own interests and quick to approve of anything that was disadvantageous to the nobility, had given its backing to Manlius in the past; nevertheless, when the Tribunes charged him, and handed him over to the populace to be judged, the populace, sitting in judgment on the man it had supported, showed no partiality at all as it condemned him to death.

I do not think there is another case in this history book better suited to illustrate the excellence of all the traditions of that republic. Not a single person in that city came to the defense of a citizen who had every good quality [*virtù*], someone who had done, in public life and in private life, very many admirable deeds. For in each of them the love of country counted for more than anything else, and each of them was more concerned about the present danger Manlius represented than about his past accomplishments. They wanted him to die so they might be free. Livy says: "So died a man who, if he had not been born in a free city, would have left his mark on history."[13] There are two things to think about here: In the first place, we see the strategies you must employ to achieve glory in a city that is corrupt differ from those that work in a city that still lives in freedom; secondly (but the point is almost the same), men should think about the times they live in and adapt how they behave to the circumstances in which they find themselves, particularly if they are trying to accomplish something important. Those who do not fit in with their times, either because they make the wrong decisions or because their temperaments are unsuited, usually live unhappy lives, and everything they try to do comes out badly. The opposite is true of those who meet the needs of the day.

There is no doubt that we can conclude, from the sentence of Livy I just quoted, that if Manlius had been born in the days of Marius and Sulla,[14] when the Romans were already corrupt, and when they would have been responsive to his ambitions, then his plans would have had as much support and success as those of Marius and Sulla and of all the others who aspired to establish tyrannies after they had shown the way. By the same token, if Marius and Sulla had been born in the days of Manlius, then they would have been crushed almost before their plots had begun to take shape. For a man's behavior and evil talk can begin to corrupt the inhabitants of a city, but there is no way in which one man can live long enough for him to corrupt them sufficiently to gain the

13. Livy, bk. 6, ch. 20.
14. I.e., three hundred years later.

benefits himself. Indeed, even if it were possible for him to live that long, success would be at odds with human nature. Men are impatient, and they cannot put off trying to satisfy their desires for year after year. So they make mistakes in the management of their affairs and especially in trying to obtain the things they greatly desire. Either for lack of patience or because of bad judgment, someone who set out to corrupt his city would try to seize power too soon and would come to a bad end.

If you want to take power in a republic and change its constitution for the worse, you will only succeed if the citizens have long been corrupt, if, little by little, for generation after generation, decay has set in. Now this is bound to happen, as I have explained, whenever the republic is not regularly renewed by the exemplary conduct of good citizens or is not brought back to first principles with new laws. We have seen why Manlius would have left his mark on history if he had been born in a corrupt city. The moral is that citizens who try to accomplish anything in a republic, whether in favor of liberty or of tyranny, ought to give some thought to their fellow inhabitants, and, in the light of their assessment of them, decide whether their undertaking is likely to succeed. It is just as difficult and dangerous to try to free a people who want to live in slavery as it is to try to enslave a people who want to live in freedom. I have just said men in making their plans should take into account the nature of the times and adapt themselves to them. We will discuss this point at greater length in the next chapter.

Chapter Nine: On how you have to change with the times, if you want always to have good fortune.

I have pointed out several times that whether men have good or bad fortune depends on whether they adjust their style of behavior to suit the times. It is evident that some men set about doing what they want impetuously, while others act cautiously and carefully. Both styles are mistaken, for in both one behaves inappropriately, and deviates from the best path. But, as I have said, the mistake is less important and you will still encounter good fortune if the times are suited to your style and if you always act as nature urges you.

Everyone knows how Fabius Maximus proceeded cautiously and carefully, keeping his army out of battle and avoiding any display of Roman audacity.[15] It was his good fortune that his style corresponded well to the needs of the time. For Hannibal was a young man when he marched into Italy, things were going his way, and he had already defeated the Roman

15. After the defeat at Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C.

armies twice. Since Rome had lost most of her best soldiers and was demoralized, she was extremely lucky to acquire a general whose delay and caution slowed the enemy down. Nor could Fabius have found himself in circumstances better suited to his style, with the result that he was covered in glory. It is evident Fabius acted in this way because it came naturally to him, not because he had made a conscious choice. For when Scipio wanted to invade Africa with the Roman armies in order to bring the war to an end, Fabius was strongly opposed to his plan.[16] He could not break with his past habits and adopt a different style. If it had been left to him, Hannibal would still be in Italy, for he could not recognize that circumstances had changed, and he needed to change his style of warfare. If Fabius had been King of Rome he might well have lost the war, for he would not have known to change his style of behavior as the times changed. But he was born in a republic, where numerous citizens, all with different temperaments, had a say. So, just as they had Fabius to lead them when he was the best man to avoid defeat, so they had Scipio when he was the best man to ensure victory.

One can see a republic should survive longer and should more frequently have fortune on its side, than a monarchy, for a republic can adapt itself more easily to changing circumstances because it can call on citizens of differing characters. Someone who is used to proceeding in a particular way will never change, as I have already pointed out, so it is inevitable that when the times change and become unsuitable for his particular style, he will be ruined.

Piero Soderini, as I have already mentioned on several occasions, always proceeded with kindness and patience. Both he and his country did well while the times favored his style of behavior; but when the circumstances were such that he needed to stop being patient and kind, he did not know how to do it; and he and his country were destroyed. Julius II, during the whole time he was pope, proceeded impatiently and always acted in the heat of the moment; and, since the times suited such behavior, he succeeded in all his undertakings. But in other circumstances, when different policies were needed, he would inevitably have brought about his own downfall, for he would not have changed his style of behavior or pursued different policies.

There are two reasons why we are unable to change when we need to: In the first place, we cannot help being what nature has made us; in the second, if one style of behavior has worked well for us in the past, we cannot be persuaded we would be better off acting differently. The consequence is that one's fortune changes, for the times change,

16. In 205 B.C.

and one's behavior does not. Another consequence is that cities are destroyed, for the institutions of a republic are never modified to suit changing circumstances, as I have pointed out at length already. Change comes too late because it is too difficult to accomplish. In order to bring it about the whole society must feel endangered; it is not enough for just one individual to change his methods.

Since I have mentioned Fabius Maximus, who kept Hannibal at bay, I think I will discuss in the next chapter whether a general who is determined to engage the enemy in battle can be prevented from doing so by his opposite number.

Chapter Twenty-Two: On how the harshness of Manlius Torquatus and the gentleness of Valerius Corvinus won the same amount of glory for them both.

There were two excellent generals in Rome at the same time: Manlius Torquatus and Valerius Corvinus.[17] They were equally skillful [*virtù*], were rewarded with the same triumphs, and each obtained as much glory as the other. Each of them, in his dealings with the enemy, demonstrated the same level of skill [*virtù*]. But they behaved very differently in the treatment of their soldiers and the management of their armies. For Manlius always relied on harshness when commanding his soldiers; he always worked them hard and punished them severely. Valerius, by contrast, always treated his with every possible kindness and behaved towards them as if they were his personal friends. In order to ensure the obedience of his soldiers, one of them killed his own son, while the other never did any harm to anyone. Nevertheless, despite their quite different modes of behavior, they were both equally successful. They were equally effective against the enemy and equally good at pursuing their country's interests and their own. Not a single soldier in either of their armies ever refused to fight or mutinied against them; both were obeyed implicitly. Manlius's command, however, was so harsh that all other commanders who exceeded the limits were called Manlians. One should ask oneself the following: First, why was Manlius obliged to behave so harshly? Second, how was Valerius able to get away with being so kind? Third, why did these contrasting ways of proceeding have the same effect? Lastly, which of them is the better and more useful to imitate?

If you pay attention to Manlius's character, from the moment when

17. Manlius was dictator in 353, 349, and 320 B.C.; Valerius in 343 and 301.

Livy first begins to mention him, you will find he was a very strong man, devoted to his father and his country, and extremely respectful towards his superiors. You can tell as much from the death of the Frenchman, from his defense of his father before the tribunes, and from the fact that before he went to fight with the Frenchman he came to the consul and said, "Unless you command me to, I will never fight against the enemy, even if I am certain of victory."[18] When a man like this is put in charge he wants everyone under him to be like him, and his strength of spirit makes him push his men to the limit and makes him want to be obeyed without question. It is an infallible rule that if you ask the virtually impossible, then you must be implacable in demanding obedience; otherwise, you will find yourself let down. You should note that if you want to be obeyed you must know how to command. You will know how to command if you compare your qualities with those of the men who have to obey you. You must give commands when you know you are their superior but keep silent when you are not.

For this reason a wise man said that if you are going to keep power through violence you have to be able to overpower those whom you expect to submit. As long as you are able to do this your hold on power is secure; but as soon as those you are trying to overpower become stronger than you, then you must expect to lose power at any moment.

Getting back to our subject, my claim is that if you are going to push your troops to the limit you must be capable of doing what you ask them to do. If you are as tough as any of them and command them to do things only the tough can do, then you will not get them to obey by being gentle with them. But if you do not have this strength of will, then you should avoid making exceptional demands on your troops. If your demands are modest, on the other hand, you can rely on kindness, for commanders are not held responsible for run-of-the-mill punishments; the laws and the institutions take the blame. So one is bound to think Manlius was obliged to proceed so harshly because he made exceptional demands of his troops, and that he was inclined to do this because it was in his character. Such demands are useful in a republic, because they bring its institutions back to their founding principles and restore their original virtue [*virtù*]. If, as I have already said, a republic was lucky enough often to have people who, by their example, gave new vigor to the laws, and who not only put a brake on its descent into the abyss but pulled it back up the slope, then it would last forever.

Manlius was one of those who, by the harshness of their command, preserved military discipline in Rome; he was compelled to it first by his

18. Livy, bk. 7, ch. 10; 361 B.C.

character and second by his desire to see obeyed the commands that his instincts had caused him to give. On the other hand, Valerius could rely on kindness, for it was enough for him if his soldiers did the things Roman soldiers normally did. Because the army's traditions were good ones, respect for them was enough to win him admiration. It was not difficult to obey him, and Valerius had no need to punish those who disobeyed—for either everyone obeyed, or, if some disobeyed, their punishment was, as I have said, blamed on the code of discipline and not on the commander. So Valerius could give free rein to his instinct for kindness, which enabled him to acquire the goodwill of his soldiers and to ensure their contentment. Thus, both commanders could rely on the obedience of their soldiers, and consequently both, despite following different policies, could achieve the same results. But those who want to imitate them must also beware of falling into the vices that provoke disdain and hatred, the ones I referred to above when discussing Hannibal and Scipio. In order to escape these vices you must have exceptional qualities [*virtù*]; without them you cannot succeed.

There remains the question which of these styles of command is the more praiseworthy. There are, I gather, two points of view on this, for some writers praise one, others the other. Nevertheless, those who discuss how a ruler ought to govern lean more in the direction of Valerius than of Manlius. Thus, one may compare the many examples Xenophon (whom I had occasion to cite earlier) gives of the kindness of Cyrus with what Livy says about Valerius.[19] When Valerius was made consul in the war against the Samnites, and when the day of battle came, he spoke to his troops with the affection typical of his command. After reporting his speech, Livy says: "There was never a general who was on better terms with his soldiers. He did not hesitate to help out with the tasks of the lowest ranks and did so without complaint. Moreover, on the sports field, when the soldiers competed one against the other in trials of speed and tests of strength, he was as cheerful and comradely if he won or if he lost, and he never held it against anyone if they boasted they were as good as he. He was as generous as circumstances permitted, and when talking to people was as mindful of the fact that they were free citizens as of the fact that he was in command. Nothing made him more popular than that he continued to display the same attitudes after he became a commander as he had when seeking promotion."[20]

Livy speaks equally well of Manlius, pointing out that when he was

19. Xenophon, *Cyropaedeia*, bks. 4 and 5.

20. Livy, bk. 7, ch. 33.

consul his severity in executing his son made his army remarkably obedient, and this made it possible for the Romans to defeat the Latins. He goes so far in praising him that, after reporting Manlius's victory, after describing the order of battle, and pointing out all the dangers the Romans faced and the difficulties that had to be overcome in order to win, he draws the conclusion that Manlius's vigor [*virtù*] was alone responsible for the Roman victory. When he compares the strength of the two armies, he asserts that whichever side was commanded by Manlius was bound to win. So, taking into account everything the various authors say about such men, it would seem to be difficult to choose between them.

Nevertheless, so as to eliminate uncertainty, I would say that in a citizen that lives under the laws of a republic I take Manlius's methods to be less dangerous and more praiseworthy. For this approach is entirely directed at the public benefit and is completely unconcerned with private advantage. For by such policies you cannot hope to acquire "party members." You will not win those personal allies whom we call "party members" by treating everyone harshly and acting solely out of love of the public good. So this form of behavior is extremely useful and entirely to be encouraged in a republic, since it serves the public good and cannot be suspected of being directed at building up private power. Valerius's style of behavior is the opposite. It may bring about the same public benefits, but it gives rise to real concerns as a result of the personal loyalty such a commander builds up among his soldiers. If he is in command for long, then the consequences for liberty can be serious. It is true such evil consequences did not result from the command of Publicola,[21] but then the Romans had not yet been corrupted, and he was not long or continuously in command.

But if we are considering the qualities that should be found in a ruler, as Xenophon is, then we cannot fully approve of Valerius, but we can recommend Manlius even less. For a ruler should seek to have his soldiers and his subjects both obedient and loving. They will be obedient if he respects the laws and is thought to be a good ruler [*virtuoso*]; they will be loving if he is friendly, gentle, compassionate, and has the other qualities that Valerius had and that Xenophon describes Cyrus as having had. For it is perfectly compatible with the other aspects of his government for a ruler to be someone for whom his subjects feel personal affection, and for him to have an army made up of his loyal supporters. But to have a citizen with an army made up of his own loyal supporters is at odds with the other aspects of a

21. Valerius Publicola, consul in 509 B.C.

republican government which requires its citizens to live under the laws and obey the authorities.

In the records of the early history of the Venetian republic I have read of an occasion when the Venetian galleys returned to their home port. Some dispute broke out between those who had been on the galleys and the populace, and it escalated from shouts to armed conflict. It proved impossible to restore order; neither the brute force of the local guards, nor respect for the citizens, nor fear of the magistrates could do the job. All of a sudden a gentleman who the year before had had command of the rioting sailors came forward, and out of love of him they withdrew and abandoned the fight. This obedience made the senate so suspicious that shortly afterwards the Venetians neutralized him, either by locking him up or killing him.[22]

So I conclude Valerius's style of command is useful in a ruler and dangerous in a citizen; dangerous not only to his country but to himself. To his country, because this style of command gives him an opportunity to establish a tyranny; to himself, because when his city comes to be suspicious of his methods it will be obliged to neutralize him to his own prejudice. On the other hand, I hold that Manlius's style of command is disadvantageous for a ruler and useful in a citizen, and that his homeland especially benefits from it. You are unlikely to suffer from being thought of as a harsh commander unless you have so many fine qualities [*virtù*] that the hatred your severity provokes is reinforced by suspicion of the immense reputation you have won for yourself. I will describe below how this happened to Camillus.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: On how rulers are responsible for the failings of their subjects.

Princes should not complain of any failings to be found in the people over whom they rule. For such failings are likely to be caused either by their own negligence or because they themselves have the same faults. If you think of the peoples who in our own day have been thought of as being given over to robbery and such crimes, you will see their faults were entirely derived from those who ruled them and had the same failings. The Romagna, before Pope Alexander VI eliminated the nobles who ruled over it, was well known for every type of crime. People knew that on the slightest excuse, murders and mayhem

22. This may be a garbled account of events involving the Venetian admiral Vettor Pisani, who was imprisoned in 1379 and defeated the Genoese in 1380, the year of his death.

took place there. The cause of this was the wickedness of the rulers, not the incorrigible wickedness of their subjects, as the rulers claimed. For the rulers of the Romagna were poor but wanted to live as if they were rich. So they had to turn to plunder and invented various types of exaction. One of the dishonest methods they turned to was to pass laws prohibiting some activity or other. Then they encouraged people to ignore the laws and never punished those who broke them. Only when they were sure lots of people had put themselves in the wrong did they start enforcing the laws; not because they wanted people to be law-abiding, but because they wanted to collect the fines. Such policies had many evil consequences; above all, they impoverished the people without improving their behavior. Those who had been impoverished put their minds to ways of getting the better of those who were weaker than themselves. The result was all those evils I began by mentioning, all of which were caused by the rulers.

The truth of this is apparent from Livy's account of how, when the Roman legates were bringing the plunder they had taken from Veii as an offering to Apollo, they were seized by pirates from Lipari in Sicily and taken there as prisoners. When Timasitheus, their ruler, heard what sort of cargo this was, where it was going and who had sent it, he behaved as if he were a Roman though he had been born in Lipari, and explained to his people how wicked it would be to seize a religious offering. So, with popular approval, he let the legates continue on their journey with all their possessions. Our historian says: "Timasitheus inspired in the populace, who always copy their rulers, respect for religion."[23] And Lorenzo de' Medici made the same point, remarking: "What the ruler does one day, many others do the next, for they all have their eyes on him."[24]

Chapter Thirty: On how a citizen who wants to use his personal authority to do some good deed in his republic must first overcome other people's jealousy; and on how, when the enemy attack, one should organize a city's defense.

The Roman senate was informed that the whole of Tuscany had raised an army to attack Rome, and the Latins and the Hernici, who had previously been allies of the Romans, had reached an understanding with the Volsci, who had always been Rome's enemies. They gathered

23. Livy, bk. 5, ch. 28.

24. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere*, ed. A. Simioni (Bari, 1914), vol. 2, 100.

the coming war was going to be dangerous. Camillus was tribune at the time, with consular authority, which caused them to think they could get by without creating a dictator, provided the other tribunes who were his colleagues would agree to transfer to him all their authority. This the tribunes were perfectly willing to do. "Neither did they think," says Livy, "that they were losing status by virtue of giving it to him."[25] So Camillus, taking these expressions of obedience literally, ordered that three armies be enrolled. He wanted to be in command of the first himself, which would fight the Tuscans. He made Quintius Servilius commander of the second and ordered him to remain close to Rome so he could obstruct the Latins and the Hernici if they advanced. He put Lucius Quintus in charge of the third army, which he enrolled to garrison the city and to defend the gates and the city-center no matter what happened. In addition, he ordered Horatius, one of his colleagues, to stockpile weapons, grain, and the other supplies needed in time of war. He placed Cornelius, another colleague, in charge of the senate and the public assembly, so he could take advice on those things that had to be done day by day. This is how, in those days, the tribunes were prepared both to take command and to obey in order to protect the homeland.

This passage gives an indication of what a good and wise man can do, how much he can accomplish, and how useful he can be to his homeland, provided that his goodness and skill [*virtù*] have been able to overcome the envy of others. For envy often prevents men from achieving what they might have; it resists their having the authority necessary in crucial situations. There are two ways in which such envy is eliminated. One is for people to find themselves in a dangerous and difficult situation. Everyone faces the prospect of death, lays ambition aside, and eagerly agrees to obey whoever they think has the skill [*virtù*] required to rescue them. This is what happened to Camillus. Everyone was familiar with the reports of his extraordinary abilities. He had been dictator three times, and each time he had used his office to benefit the public, not to advance his own interests, with the result that no one feared being harmed if power was concentrated in his hands. Because Camillus was so admired and so important no one thought it shameful to take orders from him (hence Livy's wise remark that I have just quoted).

Another situation in which envy is eliminated is when those who have been your competitors in pursuit of status and office die, whether by violence or by natural causes. For when they were alive, they would

25. Livy, bk. 6, ch. 6; 389 B.C.

never have been able to acquiesce in your being better thought of than they, neither would they have patiently put up with it. Such men, if they are accustomed to living in a corrupt city, where their upbringing has not given them any generous qualities, will never under any circumstances be prepared to abandon the competition. To get their own way and satisfy their perverse desires, they will be happy to see the destruction of their homeland. There is no cure for envy like this other than the death of those who are eaten up with it. If fortune smiles on an able [*virtuoso*] man, his envious opponents die naturally, and he can become illustrious without provoking a crisis, for then he can demonstrate his abilities [*virtù*] without opposition and without giving offense. But if he does not have this stroke of luck, then he must try to think of any possible way to get rid of them. Before he does anything he must find a way of solving this problem.

If you read the Bible at all sensibly you will see Moses was obliged, in order to have his laws accepted and his proposals adopted, to murder vast numbers of men, men who opposed his plans for no other reason but envy.[26] Friar Girolamo Savonarola clearly recognized the need to take such action; so, too, did Piero Soderini, Gonfaloniere of Florence. The first, the friar, could not overcome the problem because he did not have an office that gave him authority to do it, and because his intentions were not well understood by his followers who were in a position to take action. Nevertheless, it was not his fault nothing was done, and his sermons are full of attacks on the worldly-wise—that is what he called those who were jealous of him and opposed his plans—and of invectives directed against them. Soderini believed that with time, with kindness, with good luck, with the occasional favor, he would be able to overcome this jealousy. He was fairly young and constantly winning new supporters with his style of government, so he thought he would eventually be able to overcome all those who opposed him out of envy and to do so without a crisis, without conflict or violence. He did not realize that time does not stand still, that goodness is not enough, that good luck changes to bad, and that there is no bribe that will buy off hatred. So both these men were ruined, and their destruction was caused by their not having known how to overcome jealousy, or not having had the opportunity to put their knowledge to work.

Also worth noting are the arrangements Camillus made for the protection of Rome, both within the city and without. Good historians, like our Livy, are right to deal with certain situations in detail and with care, so that future generations can learn from them how they ought

26. Exodus, 32.25–8.

to defend themselves if they find themselves similarly placed. In this passage, one should note there is no more dangerous and more worthless defense than one thrown together in a hurry without adequate planning. This is apparent from the case of the third army that Camillus enrolled so they could remain in Rome as a garrison for the city. Many must have thought, and would still think, that this decision was unnecessary. The Roman people were used to bearing arms and were always keen to fight, so many would conclude there was no need to enroll them in an army. All one had to do was arm them when the need arose. But Camillus thought differently, and anyone who had his good sense would have agreed with him. One should never allow a mob to arm itself; there must always be an organization and a plan. So anyone who is put in charge of the defense of a city should learn from this example that one should avoid like the plague having men arm themselves in a disorderly way; first, you must select and enroll those you want to be armed, appoint their officers, decide where they are to muster, and choose where they are to be posted. Those you do not enroll you must instruct to remain in their own houses, guarding their own possessions. If you adopt this procedure in a city that is under attack, you will have no difficulty in defending it; if you do not, you will not be following Camillus's example, and your defense will fail.

Chapter Thirty-One: On how strong republics and fine men sustain the same outlook, no matter what happens, and never lose their dignity.

Our historian has Camillus do and say magnificent things in order to show us how a fine man ought to behave. One example is the following statement that he puts into his mouth: "Being dictator did not make me more self-confident, and being in exile will not make me doubt myself."[27] From this you can see how great men are always themselves, no matter what happens to them. Their luck may change, and one moment they may be lifted up to the heights, the next crushed, but they themselves do not change, but always remain determined and seem so comfortable with their own style of behavior that everyone can easily see fortune has no power over them. Weak men behave very differently. For they become conceited and overexcited when they have good fortune, presuming that everything good that happens to them is a reward for excellent qualities [*virtù*] they do not, in fact, have. The

27. Livy, bk. 6, ch. 7.

result is they become intolerable and hateful to all those who have to deal with them. And this causes their luck to change quickly, and, as soon as they stare ill fortune in the face, they quickly develop the opposite vices, becoming inadequate and unselfconfident. Rulers who have weak characters like this are quicker to think of flight than of self-defense when times become tough, but then, since they have misused their period of good fortune, they have made no preparations against attack.

This virtue [*virtù*] of strength of character, and this vice of weakness of character, which I have been describing in individuals, can also be found in republics. One may take the Romans and the Venetians as examples. As for the first, no bad luck ever made them demoralized; and no good fortune ever made them overconfident, as is evident from their behavior after their army was routed at Cannae and after their victory fighting against Antiochus. After the rout, although it was extremely serious, for it was their third defeat,[28] they never allowed themselves to feel inadequate. They sent armies into the field. They refused to ransom those of their soldiers who had been made prisoner, for this would have been a breach with tradition. They did not send emissaries to either Hannibal or Carthage to beg for peace. But, turning their backs on all such feeble policies, they thought only of carrying on the war, arming, since they were short of soldiers, old men and slaves. When Hanno the Carthaginian learned of this, he pointed out to the Carthaginian senate, as I have already mentioned, just how little they had gained by their victory at Cannae. So you can see how hard times did not dismay them or humiliate them.

On the other hand good fortune did not make them overconfident. Antiochus had sent ambassadors to Scipio to seek peace before the battle that he was to lose.[29] Scipio had stated certain conditions for a settlement. They were that he must withdraw into Syria and that all other outstanding matters must be left to the decision of the Roman state. Antiochus rejected these terms. After he had fought the battle and lost he sent new ambassadors to Scipio with instructions to accept whatever conditions the victor chose to impose. The conditions Scipio offered them were exactly the same as those he had offered before the battle. He only added these words: "For the Romans, if they are beaten in battle, do not lose heart; and, if they win, they do not make a habit of being overconfident."[30]

28. Following Ticinus in 218 B.C. and Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C.

29. Livy, bk. 37, chs. 35–45; 190 B.C.

30. An invented quotation. The nearest equivalent is in Livy, bk. 37, ch. 45.

We have seen the Venetians exemplify the opposite characteristics. When things were going their way they thought they had made gains because of their own excellent qualities [*virtù*], which in fact they did not have. They became so full of themselves they called the King of France the son of St. Mark;[31] they showed no respect towards the church; their aspirations extended far beyond Italy; and they had begun to dream of having an empire like that of the Romans. Then, when their luck turned, and they were half-defeated at Vailà by the King of France, they not only lost control of the whole of their territory because their subjects rebelled, but they ceded large parts of it to the pope and to the King of Spain out of feebleness and inadequacy.[32] They sank so low they sent ambassadors to the emperor offering to be his vassals; they wrote letters to the pope full of cowardice and of submission in an attempt to persuade him to have pity on them. They were reduced to this miserable condition in four days after a semi-defeat, for after the battle their army, in retreat, was attacked, and about half of it destroyed.

Nevertheless, one of their generals who escaped reached Verona with more than twenty-five thousand soldiers, counting both infantry and cavalry. If the Venetians and their institutions had had any decent qualities [*virtù*], they could have regrouped and stood up to look fortune in the eye. There was still time for them either to win or lose more gloriously, or to obtain a more honorable settlement. But their feeble spirits, which had been shaped by the character of their institutions, which were unsatisfactory when it came to war, made them lose in one and the same moment both their territory and their self-confidence.

And this will always happen to anyone who behaves as they did. For this pattern of becoming overconfident at times of good fortune and inadequate at times of bad is a result of your habits of behavior and of your upbringing. If your education was foolish and weak, then you will be, too; if it was the opposite, then you will be the opposite. If you are brought up to have a decent understanding of the world, then you will be less inclined to get overexcited when things go well or to get dismayed when things go badly. If this is true of an individual it is also true of a group of people living together in the same state; they have the qualities that result from their society's habits of behavior.

Although earlier on I said that all states depend upon having a good

31. St. Mark is the patron saint of Venice.

32. In 1509.

army, and that if you do not have a good army you cannot hope to have either good laws or anything else worth having, I think it bears repeating. For at every point, as we read this history book, the importance of this fundamental requirement becomes apparent. And we see an army cannot be good if it is not kept in training, and you cannot keep it in training if it is not composed of your own subjects. States are not always at war, nor could they withstand it if they were. So you must be able to train your army during peacetime; but it is far too expensive to train an army in peacetime unless it consists of your own subjects.

Camillus, as I have said, had marched out with an army against the Tuscans. When his soldiers saw the size of the enemy army they were all dismayed, for it seemed to them they were so badly outnumbered that they would not be able to stand up to an enemy charge. When Camillus came to hear of the low morale among his soldiers, he went out and walked around the camp, chatting to a soldier here, another there, and got them to express their fears. In the end, without altering any of the dispositions he had made, he said, "Let each man do what he knows how to do, what he is used to doing."[33] If you think about what he said and the way in which he set out to give his soldiers courage to face the enemy, you will realize you could not say this or pursue this sort of policy with an army that had not first been organized and trained, both in time of peace and in time of war. For a general who has soldiers who have never learned anything cannot trust them or expect them to do anything worthwhile; even if they had a second Hannibal in command, they would be defeated under him. For a commander cannot be everywhere while the battle takes place. So he is bound to be defeated unless he has first ensured there will be men throughout the army who share his outlook and have a good understanding of his routines and methods.

If a whole city is armed and organized as Rome was, so that every day its citizens, both in private and in public, have occasion to experience both the extent of their own strength [*virtù*] and the power of fortune, the result will always be that they will maintain the same attitude whatever happens to them and will always keep up their dignity without wavering. But if they are disarmed, and they put their trust in the tides of fortune and not in their own strength, then their temperament will change as their luck changes, and they will inevitably make a spectacle of themselves, just as the Venetians did.

33. Livy, bk. 7, ch. 6.

Chapter Thirty-Four: On the role of rumor, word of mouth, and public opinion in deciding whether the people begin to support a particular citizen; and on whether the people make wiser appointments to government offices than individual rulers do.

Earlier on we were discussing how Titus Manlius, who was later called Torquatus, successfully rescued Lucius Manlius, his father, from an accusation brought against him by Marcus Pomponius, tribune of the people;[34] and although the way in which he rescued him was somewhat violent and exceptional, nevertheless, his filial piety towards his father was so strongly approved of by everybody that not only was he not criticized for what he had done, but, when they came to elect the tribunes of the legions, Titus Manlius was elected in second place. This achievement invites us to consider how the people make judgments about men they are considering for public office; and it enables us to test the conclusion I put forward above, that the people are a better judge of whom to appoint than is an individual ruler.

In my view, the people, in deciding whether to appoint someone, do not simply rely on what rumor and gossip say about him. If they do not have enough information about things he himself has done, then they judge by presumption or on the basis of the opinion they have of him. Presumptions are based on their knowledge of the candidate's father. If he has been a great man and accomplished a great deal in public life, then people believe his sons ought to take after him, at least until their own deeds establish this is not the case. Opinions are based on the characteristic behavior of the candidate himself. The best type of behavior is the following: to be a companion of men who are serious, well-behaved, and believed by everyone to be wise. There is no better indication of the sort of person someone is than the company he keeps, so it is right that someone who keeps good company acquires a good reputation, for it is inevitable he will have some similarity to those with whom he associates. On the other hand, you can acquire a public reputation through some extraordinary and remarkable thing you yourself have done, and that has won honor for you, even if it was an action in your private life.

Of all these three factors that give someone a good reputation before he enters public life, none is more influential than this last. The first factor, a presumption based on the character of your father and your

34. *Discourses*, bk. 1, ch. 11; bk. 3, ch. 22.

relatives, is so unreliable people are reluctant to place much store by it; and it has little continuing significance if the qualities of the candidate himself prove not to live up to it. The second, which judges you on the basis of your associates, is better than the first but is not nearly as good as the third, for so long as you are not being judged on the basis of something you yourself have done, your reputation is based on assumptions, and it is easy for them to be proved mistaken. But the third, being begun and maintained by your own deeds and actions, gives you from the beginning such a secure reputation you need to do many things that are at odds with this reputation before you can change it. So men who are born in a republic ought to take advantage of this and ought to make every effort to come to the public's attention through some remarkable achievement. Many men in Rome succeeded in this while they were still young. Perhaps they proposed a law from which the public stood to benefit; or they charged some prominent citizen with breaking the law; or they did some other similar action that was novel and remarkable, and was bound to be widely discussed.

Not only are such actions necessary if you want to begin to acquire a reputation, but they are also essential if you want to preserve one and strengthen it. If you want to do this, you must be always doing new things, as Titus Manlius was throughout his life. For, after he had defended his father so successfully and so remarkably, and had thereby acquired the beginnings of his reputation, a few years later he fought with the Frenchman and, having killed him, took from him a necklace of gold, which resulted in his being called Torquatus.[35] He did not stop there, for in middle age he killed his son for having fought without his permission, even though he had defeated his enemy. These three deeds gave him a greater reputation at the time and have made him more famous through the centuries, than any of his triumphs or any of his other victories, although he had as many of these as any other Roman. The reason is that there are many others besides Manlius who had such victories; but in these particular deeds, there were none or few with whom he could be compared.

Scipio the elder did not win more glory from all his triumphs than he got from having, when he was still young, defended his father during the battle of Ticinus and from having, after the defeat of Cannae, boldly, bloody sword in hand, made a group of younger Romans swear they would not abandon Italy, as they earlier had been discussing among themselves. These two deeds were the start of his reputation and were steps on the way to the triumphs of Spain and of Africa. He

35. I.e., necklace-wearer.

improved his public reputation even further when, in Spain, he returned a daughter to her father, a wife to her husband.[36]

This type of behavior is not only necessary for citizens who want to acquire fame in order to win places of honor within their own republic, but it is also necessary for rulers who want to maintain their reputations in their own states, for nothing causes a ruler to be more admired than doing or saying something exceptional that benefits the public and is quoted as a remarkable example to others. By such actions a ruler shows himself to be magnanimous, or generous, or fair; and he becomes a byword for such qualities among his subjects.

But to go back to the subject with which we began this chapter, I claim that the people, when they first appoint one of their citizens to an office, if they rely on one of the three factors I have described, are employing the right criteria. But later, when someone has established a record that ensures he is well known for his good actions, then their decision is even more soundly based, for in such cases they scarcely ever make a mistake. However, I am only talking about those appointments that are given to men at the beginning of their careers, before they have done enough for people to have a secure knowledge of their character, or before it has become apparent they are capable of doing an admirable thing one day, and a disgraceful thing the next. In such circumstances the people will always be a better judge than a ruler, for they will be less easily misled, and less liable to corruption.

Of course it is true a community may be misled by the fame, the reputation, and the deeds of an individual, and may think him better than in fact he is, while a ruler may avoid such errors because his advisers point out his mistake to him; for this reason, the wise founders of republics have sought to ensure that the people, too, should have their advisers. They have decreed that when people are to be appointed to the highest offices in the city, to which it would be dangerous to appoint men who were unsuitable, if any citizen believes public opinion is about to bring about the appointment of such a person, then he is entitled to declare in the public assembly the faults of this individual so that the people, having the advantage of his knowledge, may reach a better judgment. To stand in this way against the tide of opinion should be seen as a noble action.

Such a practice existed in Rome, as we can see from the speech Fabius Maximus made to the people during the Second Punic War, when, during the election of the consuls, public opinion seemed to be favoring the appointment of Titus Otacilius. Fabius thought he was

36. Livy, bk. 26, ch. 50.

not up to the job of being consul in such circumstances and spoke against his appointment, pointing out his defects.[37] By so doing he prevented his being elected and ensured the people elected someone better. So we can see the people, when they are appointing to offices, make their decisions on the basis of those indications that are the most reliable guides to men's characters; when they can be advised as princes are, then they make fewer mistakes than princes do; and a citizen who wants to begin to have the people's good will must do something remarkable to win it, as Titus Manlius did.

Chapter Forty-One: On how one should defend one's homeland whether one wins shame or glory by it; one should employ whatever defense will work.

The consul and the Roman army were, as I explained above, under siege by the Samnites, who had proposed they surrender ignominiously; they wanted to make them pass under the yoke[38] and send them disarmed back to Rome. The consuls were shocked by this, and the whole army was in despair. Lucius Lentulus, a Roman ambassador, said that in his view one should not reject any terms if they would make possible the defense of the homeland. Rome's survival depended on the survival of this army, so he thought one should do anything necessary to ensure the army's survival. The homeland is well defended by any methods that work, whether one wins shame or glory by them. For if this army escaped destruction, then Rome would have a chance to undo the disgrace it had incurred; but if it did not escape, even if it died gloriously, then Rome and her political freedom were doomed. So his advice was followed.[39]

This deserves to be noted and is an example to be imitated by any citizen who finds himself called on to advise his country. If you are discussing nothing less than the safety of the homeland, then you should pay no attention to what is just or what is unjust, or to what is kind or cruel, or to what is praiseworthy or shameful. You should put every other consideration aside, and you should adopt wholeheartedly the policy most likely to save your homeland's life and preserve her liberty. The words and the deeds of the French, when it comes to defending the majesty of their king and the power of their kingdom,

37. Livy, bk. 24, ch. 8; 215 B.C.
38. A form of ritual humiliation.
39. Livy, bk. 9, ch. 4; 321 B.C.

show that they understand this principle. There is nobody they are more impatient with than someone who stands up and says, "Such a proposal is beneath the dignity of the king," for they say that nothing the king does can bring shame on him, whether in the end it succeeds or fails, for whether he loses or wins, whatever the king does is said to be a matter of state.

Chapter Forty-Three: On how the men who are born in a particular region scarcely change in character over the course of centuries.

Wise men often say, and not without good reason, that if you want to predict the future you should look at the past, for everything that happens, no matter where or when, has its analogue in past history. The reason for this is that men have and always have had the same passions, so it inevitably follows that their passions have the same effects, and their deeds do not change. It is true that what they do varies from place to place. In one region they are more effective [*virtuose*] than in another and still more successful in a third, depending on the upbringing that has shaped the way of life of that particular people. It is also easy to predict the future on the basis of the past if one recognizes that nations retain the same habits of life over long periods. They are always miserly, or always dishonest, or have some other similar vice or virtue [*virtù*].

If you read about the past history of our own city of Florence and also consider those things that have happened in the last few years, then you will find the German and French peoples are full of avarice, pride, ferocity, and untrustworthiness; for our city has suffered greatly from each of these four qualities of theirs at different times. As far as their unreliability is concerned, everyone knows how often we gave money to King Charles VIII, in return for which he promised to hand back the fortress of Pisa; yet he never gave it back.[40] This behavior shows just how unreliable and greedy this king was. But let us leave to one side these recent injuries, the memory of which is still fresh.

Everyone will have heard of what happened during the war between the Florentines and the Visconti, dukes of Milan. Florence, having run out of options, thought of persuading the emperor to march into Italy so he could attack Lombardy; his reputation, it was thought, would be as intimidating as his army. The emperor gave his promise to come with an adequate number of troops, and to join in the war against the

40. 1494.

Visconti, and also to defend Florence from the enemy forces, provided Florence gave him one hundred thousand ducats to enroll an army and a further hundred thousand once he had reached Italy. The Florentines accepted these terms and paid him both installments. But, once he had reached Verona, he turned back without having done anything, complaining he had had to call a halt because the Florentines had not lived up to the agreements between them.[41]

The Florentines may have been forced by circumstances or overcome by passion, but if they had studied and understood the ancient habits of the barbarians, they would not have been taken in, either on this occasion or on numerous others. For they have always been the same, and everywhere they have gone, and no matter with whom they have been dealing, they have always behaved in the same way. An example is their behavior in classical times towards the Tuscans who were being oppressed by the Romans, had been defeated by them several times, and been put to rout. They realized their troops could not withstand the Roman legions, and so they reached an agreement with those French who lived on this side of the Alps, in Italy, that, in return for a certain sum of money, they would be committed to join forces with them and march against the Romans. What happened was that the French took the money but then did not want to fight on their behalf, saying they had been paid, not to fight Tuscany's enemies but to give up plundering the Tuscan countryside.[42] So the Tuscans, because of the greed and unreliability of the French, found themselves deprived simultaneously of their own money and of the help they had hoped to receive from the French. So you can see, from this example from classical history involving the Tuscans and from the more recent case of the Florentines, that the French have always behaved in the same way, and so it is easy to work out to what extent other rulers can afford to trust them.

41. 1401.

42. 300 B.C.