All states and governments that have ever possessed, or at the present day exercise, dominion over mankind, have been in their origin, or continue to subsist, either as republics or as monarchies. I shall confine myself to the subject of monarchies; and in following the divisions that I have laid down, I shall consider how such states ought to be governed and maintained.

In the government of countries newly acquired, many difficulties occur. In the first place, if they are not entirely new, but merely annexed as appendages to another sovereignty (in which case the state may be called mixed), a degree of instability is created by the difficulties ever incident to new governments. For as most men are willing enough to change their masters, in expectation of improving their condition, such a persuasion induces them to take up arms against the existing government. But in this respect they are often deceived, and find by experience that they have only rendered their condition worse. This mischievous result appears to be both natural and inevitable; for every new prince is compelled, in some degree, to displease his new subjects, either by the presence of the soldiers he is obliged to retain, or by numerous other grievances that are always attendant on recent acquisitions. And thus he is sure to render inimical to him all those persons whom he has injured by seizing the government, and is unable to preserve the friendship of others who assisted him in his enterprise because he can neither reward them as they expect, nor coerce them with rigor, as they have laid him under such weighty obligations. For, however great the military resources of a prince may be, he will find that to obtain firm footing in a province he must engage the favor and interest of the inhabitants.

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One of the readiest and most effective methods that a new prince can employ, is to go thither and inhabit the country himself, which cannot fail to render his possession more durable and secure. . . . For when the prince is immediately present he sees the beginning of disorder, and can apply a speedy remedy; but when he is absent, he learns the evil only when it has attained such force and extent as to become incurable. . . . Another excellent method is to send colonies to those places that are considered the keys of the province. Either this measure must be adopted, or a military force must be maintained. . . .

But if, instead of forming colonies, armed forces are sent thither, the expense will be infinitely greater, and the whole revenue of the country consumed in the single purpose of maintaining peaceable possession, so that the prince loses, rather than gains, by his conquest. The wrongs effected in this manner are so much the greater as they extend indiscriminately to all his subjects, who are perpetually harassed by the marches, the lodging, and subsistence of his troops. These inconveniences being universally felt, all become his enemies, and the more dangerous on this account, that although defeated, they remain in possession of their homes. Such a force, therefore, will be in every respect as prejudicial as colonies are advantageous.

The new sovereign of a country, the manners and constitution of which are different from his own, ought to take care to make himself the protector and chief of the weaker neighboring princes, and to curb and diminish the authority of the more powerful.

Nothing is so natural or so common as the thirst for conquest, and when men can satisfy it, they deserve praise rather than censure. But when they are not equal to the enterprise they undertake, disgrace is the inevitable consequence.

Whence we may draw this general and almost infallible conclusion, that the prince who contributes to the advancement of another power ruins his own. For this new power has been advanced either by address or by force, both which means will ever be viewed with suspicion by him who has attained sovereignty through their instrumentality. . . .
[A]ll monarchies of which there are records in history have either been governed by an absolute prince, to whom all the rest are slaves, and who as ministers with his favor and consent assist in governing the kingdom, or else by a prince and nobles who claim a share in the government, not so much through the prince’s favor as from the antiquity and nobility of their blood. Such nobles also possess states and subjects of their own, who acknowledge them as their lords and entertain a particular affection toward them.

In a country governed by a prince and ministers of his own appointment, the sovereign enjoys infinitely the greatest authority, because throughout the whole province no authority is acknowledged but his; and if they obey another, it is only as his minister or official, for whom they have no particular affection. . . . It is difficult to seize on such a state, because the invader cannot be called in by the nobles of the kingdom, nor can he reckon on the assistance and rebellion of those who surround the prince. The reason of this is easily conceived from what we have said above. For as the officers of the state are his slaves and dependants, it becomes more difficult to corrupt them; and, supposing this were possible, little assistance is to be had from them, from their inability to draw the people along with them. . . . But, once vanquished, and their armies absolutely put to rout, nothing more is to be feared except the family of the prince. That once extinct, all further apprehension is at an end, since no one else would have interest among the people; and as the invader could have no hopes from them before they were conquered, so he can have nothing to fear from them afterward.

It is quite otherwise in kingdoms governed like France. Here one may easily secure an entrance by gaining over certain nobles of the kingdom, among whom there will always be a party discontented and fond of change. These will open for him a way to the state, and facilitate the conquest of it; but in order afterward to keep possession an infinity of difficulties must be surmounted, not only from the conquered but from those who have assisted in the enterprise. Nor will it be sufficient in this case to destroy the family of the prince; the nobles of the kingdom still remain to take the lead of new parties; and as these can neither be satisfied nor destroyed, the conquest will be lost on the first and frequently on the slightest occasion.

When newly conquered states have been accustomed to liberty, and to live under their own laws, there are three ways of maintaining them. The first is to ruin them. The second to inhabit them. The third to leave them in the
enjoyment of their laws, rendering them tributary, and establishing there a small council to form a government that may keep the country in peace; for this new government, being created by the prince, and dependent therefore on his favor and power, will be interested in exerting itself to support him. Besides, a state accustomed to enjoy its liberty can be more easily held by establishing there a government of its citizens than by any other means. . . . For otherwise whoever becomes master of a free state, and does not destroy it, may expect to be ruined by it himself. In all its revolts it has ever the cry of liberty for its rallying-point and its refuge, as well as the remembrance of its ancient institutions, which neither length of time nor benefits can efface. Do what we may, take whatever precautions we can, unless we divide and disperse the inhabitants, this name of liberty will never depart from their memory or their hearts, any more than the remembrance of their ancient institutions, and they will immediately recur to it on the slightest occasion. . . .

But the case is different when cities or provinces have been accustomed to live under a prince and the race of that prince is extinct; for, as they are accustomed to obey, and are deprived of their former prince, they will not agree in the election of a new one, and are ignorant how to govern like free states, whence they are little disposed to rebel, and thus a conqueror may without much difficulty gain their affections and attach them to himself.

In republics, on the contrary, the resentment of citizens is stronger and more active, the desire of vengeance more animated, and the remembrance of their ancient liberty will not permit them to enjoy a single instant of repose; so that the surest means is either to live among them or to destroy them....

In a kingdom entirely new the degree of difficulty experienced by a prince in maintaining himself there depends on his own personal qualities. That a private individual should become a prince, argues a great share of fortune or talent, and the greater part of the difficulties should be surmounted by either of these qualities. Nevertheless, he who relies least on fortune has the strongest hold of his acquisitions, which is easier to those who, having no dominions of their own, are obliged to reside personally on their conquests.

Nothing is more difficult and dangerous, and the success of which is more doubtful, than the introduction of new laws. He who introduces them renders all those his enemies who lived satisfied under the former code, and is sure to find but feeble defenders in those who are to be benefited by the new system; and this supineness arises in part from the fear of their adversaries, to whom the ancient order of things is beneficial, and partly from the...
incredulity of mankind, who have no confidence in new measures except those founded on long experience; whence it follows, that when the enemies to the new order of things find an opportunity of attack, they use it with zeal and enthusiasm, while the others defend it with indifference; so that the prince encounters as much danger from his defenders as from his enemies.

Wherefore, for better discussion of this case, it is necessary to inquire whether these innovators stand upon their own feet, or depend upon other people; that is to say, whether in the conduct of their affairs they make more use of their rhetoric than of their arms. In the first case they usually miscarry, and their designs seldom succeed; but when their expectations are only from themselves, and they have power in their own hands to make themselves obeyed, they run little or no hazard, and frequently prevail.

They who from private condition become princes, and, merely by the indulgence of fortune, arrive without much trouble at that dignity, though it costs them dear to maintain it, meet but little difficulty in their passage, being hurried as it were with wings, yet when they come to settle and establish then begins their misery. Such persons attain their dignity by bribes, or concession of some other great prince. . . . These persons, I say, subsist wholly upon the pleasure and fortune of those who advanced them, which being two things very valuable and uncertain, they have neither knowledge nor power to continue long in that degree. They know not, because, unless one is a man of extraordinary qualities and virtue, it is not reasonable to think that he who before lived always in a private condition himself can know how to command other people. They cannot, because they have no forces upon whose friendship and fidelity they can rely. Moreover, states that are suddenly conquered (like all things else in Nature whose rise and increase is speedy) can have no root or foundation that will be shaken and supplanted by the first gust of adversity, unless they who have been so suddenly exalted be wise enough to prepare prudently in time for the conversation of that which Fortune threw so luckily into their lap, and establish afterward such fundamentals for their duration as others have done in like cases.

Because there are two ways from a private person to become a prince, which ways are not altogether to be attributed either to fortune or to management, I think it not convenient to pass over them. . . . One of the ways is, when one is advanced to the sovereignty by any illegal, nefarious means; the
other, when a citizen by the favor and partiality of his fellow-citizens is made prince of his country.

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It may seem wonderful to some that it should come to pass that Agathocles, and such as he, after so many treacheries and acts of inhumanity, should live quietly in their own country so long, defend themselves so well against foreign enemies, and none of their subjects conspire against them at home; since several others, by reason of their cruelty, have not been able, even in time of peace, to maintain their government. I conceive it fell out according as their cruelty was well or ill applied. I say well applied (if that word may be applied to an ill action), and it may be called so when committed but once, and that of necessity for one’s own preservation, but never repeated, and even then converted as much as possible to the benefit of the subjects. Ill applied are such cruelties as are but few in the beginning, but in time do rather multiply than decrease. Those that are guilty of the first receive assistance sometimes both from God and man, and Agathocles is an instance. But the others cannot possibly subsist long. Whence it is to be observed that he who usurps the government of any State is to execute and put in practice all the cruelties that he thinks material at once, that he may have no occasion to renew them often, but that by his discontinuance he may mollify the people, and by benefits bring them over to his side. He who does otherwise, whether from fear or from ill counsel, is obliged to be always ready with his knife in his hand; for he never can repose any confidence in his subjects, while they, by reason of his fresh and continued inhumanities, cannot be secure against him.

So then injuries are to be committed all at once, that the last being the less, the distaste may be likewise the less; but benefits should be distilled by drops, that the relish may be the greater. Above all, a prince should so behave himself toward his subjects that neither good fortune nor bad should be able to alter him; for being once assailed with adversity, he has no time to do mischief; and the good that he does avails not, being looked upon as forced, and entitled to no thanks. . . .

A private individual may attain sovereignty by the favor of his fellow-citizens, and without either violence or treason. This is what I call a civil principality, and it is not to be acquired by merit or fortune alone, but by a lucky sort of craft. The sovereign power is obtained by favor of the people or the nobility; for the different parties in a state are reduced to these two elements, one springing from the aversion of the people to the oppressive government of the nobles, the other from the desire of these latter to govern and
oppress the people. This diversity of views and interests produces a struggle, which must always end in establishing either a principality or a free government, or in downright lawlessness.

A principality emanates either from the nobles or from the people, according as it operates to their respective advantage; for when the former are too weak to cope with the people, they have often no other means of subduing them than by advancing from their own class one whom they nominate prince, that, under the mask of an acknowledged authority, they may indulge their desire of domination. The people, likewise, when they can no longer resist the oppression of the nobles, throw all their power into the hands of one person and appoint him prince to defend and protect them.

A prince raised by the favor of the nobles will find much difficulty in supporting himself, because he is surrounded by men who, thinking themselves still his equals, submit reluctantly to his authority. On the other hand, he who is raised to that dignity by the will of the people stands alone and has few around him who would dare resist his measures.

Besides, the people can be contented without the exercise of injustice, but not so the nobles; the latter seek to practise tyranny, the former merely to avoid it. Moreover, a prince that is opposed by the nobles may, by reason of their small number, easily restrain them within the limits of duty; but how could he assure himself of the obedience and fidelity of the people if he separated his own interests from theirs?

The worst that he has to expect from the people in such circumstances is that they will desert him; but if the nobles are disaffected they may not only desert but conspire against him. For as they usually have more penetration than the common people, they are likely to secure themselves in time and go over to the more fortunate competitors.

In short, it is always necessary to live with the same people; but a prince has no occasion to continue the same set of nobles, whom he can at pleasure disgrace or honor, elevate or destroy. To explain the subject more fully, I purpose to examine the two points of view in which a prince ought to consider his nobles. First, whether they are entirely attached to his fortune or not. Those who give him proofs of their zeal and devotion deserve his honor and esteem, provided they are not rapacious. But those who do not, perhaps have no other motive for their coolness than a natural timidity and want of spirit. In this case he may employ them, and moreover with great advantage, particularly if they are able in counsel; for then they will honor him in prosperity, and in adversity they will do him no injury. But when they keep aloof, from ambition or some other latent cause, it is a proof that they more regard
their own welfare than that of the prince. He, therefore, ought to consider them declared enemies, who, not content with abandoning his interests, would not hesitate, in adversity, to take up arms against him.

Therefore, a prince that owes his exaltation to the favor of the people should exert himself to preserve their affection, an easy matter, since they desire nothing more than security from oppression. But one who is advanced by the favor of the nobles, and in opposition to the will of the people, should earnestly strive to gain their attachment, a task in which he will infallibly succeed if he protects them against those who seek to oppress them.

And, as it is natural when we receive favors from whom we expected only evil, to feel more obliged to such benefactors, so the attachment of a people to a prince that treats them well will be more certain than if he had attained his rank by their instrumentality. . . .

Let no one quote the old proverb against me, that “he who relies on the people builds on a sandy foundation.” It may be true in the case of a single citizen opposed to powerful enemies, or oppressed by the magistrates, but a prince that is not deficient in courage, and is able to command—who, not dejected by ill fortune nor wanting in necessary preparations, knows how to preserve order in his states by his own valor and conduct—need never repent of having laid the foundation of his security on his people’s affection.

But a prince that seeks to change a civil principality to an absolute rule incurs great risk, because he must govern entirely or by the assistance of the magistracy. In the latter case, his government necessarily becomes weak and precarious, as he must depend on those to whom he has confided his authority, and they, on the first disturbance, will immediately rebel, or refuse to execute his commands, in which juncture he can no longer think of exercising absolute authority; for subjects accustomed to obey the magistrates in time of trouble will not acknowledge any other authority, nor can the prince then find many persons in whom he may confide. . . .

A wise prince should therefore at all times conduct himself in such a manner, that, under every change of circumstance, his subjects may feel the want of a correcting hand, and then he may rely on their unshaken fidelity.

It is also important in the study of governments to examine whether the prince, in time of need, be powerful enough to defend himself by his own forces, without having recourse to the assistance of his allies. To place this point in the clearest view, I may observe that those only can so defend themselves who have men and money enough to bring an army into the field, and give battle to whoever shall attack them. But wretched indeed is the situation
of that prince who is reduced to the necessity of shutting himself up in his native city, there to await the enemy’s approach. . . .

As to the second, I cannot but warn princes of the necessity they are under to fortify and provision the place of their residence, without troubling themselves about the rest of the country; for if, as I have already observed, and shall again have occasion in the sequel to repeat, they have in addition to this precaution learned the art of gaining their people’s affection, they will be secure from all danger. Men are naturally cautious of engaging in difficult enterprises without some appearance of success, and it is never prudent to attack a prince whose capital is in a good state of defense and who is on good terms with his subjects. . . .

A prince, therefore, who possesses a well fortified city, and is respected by his people, can hardly be attacked with advantage, because the affairs of this world are so liable to change that it would be almost impossible for an enemy to keep the field for a year before a place so defended.

It may perhaps be objected that the people who possess property in the country, and who see their lands ravaged, will lose their patience, and that their attachment to their prince will not long continue against the inconveniences of a long siege, and the desire of preserving their property. I answer, that a prudent and spirited prince will easily surmount these obstacles, by inspiring the people either with hopes that their sufferings will soon be over, or with a dread of the resentment and cruelty of the conqueror, or by taking other proper means to appease those that are clamorous.

To this may be added, that the enemy begins his ravage of the country as soon as he enters it, and at that time the besieged are most animated and disposed to defend themselves; in which case the prince has still less to apprehend, because, before their ardor has cooled, the inhabitants, perceiving that all the mischief has been accomplished, and the loss is irretrievable, will evince the more attachment to their prince in proportion as their sacrifices are greater. For such is the nature of mankind that they become as strongly attached to others by the benefits they render as by the favors they receive.

All these considerations persuade me that a wise and provident prince may, without difficulty, succeed in sustaining the courage of his people under the distress of a siege, if he take care that they are well provided with the means necessary for their sustenance and defense.

. . . .

Having examined in detail the different kinds of political states that I purposed to investigate, and inquired into the causes of their decline as well
as their prosperity, and also the means by which many of them have been
acquired or preserved, it remains now to advert to the different kinds of mil-
itary forces, whether for purposes of attack or of defense.

I have already said that princes, who wish their power to be durable,
should fix it on a solid foundation. The principal foundations of all states,
whether ancient, modern, or mixed, are good laws and a proper military force
to support them; but as good laws can never be of any effect without good
troops, and as these two elements of political power cannot be separated, it
will be sufficient if I confine my view, for the present, to one of them.

Troops that serve for the defense of a state are either national, foreign,
or mixed. Those of the second class, whether they serve as auxiliaries or as
mercenaries, are useless and dangerous; and the prince that relies on such
soldiers will never be secure, because they are always ambitious, disunited,
unfaithful, and undisciplined. Brave amongst friends, but cowardly in the
face of an enemy, they neither fear God nor keep faith with man; so that the
prince that employs them can only retard his fall by delaying to put their
valor to the proof, and, in short, they plunder the state in time of peace as
much as the enemy plunders it in time of war....

To place this matter in clearer view, I may observe that the commanders
of these troops are either men of conduct or abilities, or they are not. If they
are, they cannot be trusted; because their own elevation can be obtained only
by oppressing the prince that employs them, or others against his will; if they
are not, they must hasten the ruin of the state they serve so ill.

A prince, therefore, who cannot defend his dominions without the assis-
tance of foreign troops, continues ever at the mercy of fortune, and is with-
out resource in adversity. It is a generally received maxim, that there is
nothing so weak as a power that is not supported by itself, that is to say, that
is not defended by its own citizens or subjects, but by foreigners, whether
allies or mercenaries. . . .

Princes ought, therefore, to make the art of war their sole study and
occupation, for it is peculiarly the science of those that govern. War and the
several sorts of discipline and institutions relative to it should be his only
study, the only profession he should follow, and the object he ought always
to have in view. By this means princes can maintain possession of their
dominions; and private individuals are sometimes raised thereby to supreme
authority; while, on the other hand, we frequently see princes shamefully
reduced to nothing by suffering themselves to be enfeebled by slothful inac-
tivity. I repeat, therefore, that by a neglect of this art states are lost, and by cultivating it they are acquired. . . .

We cannot establish a comparison between men that are armed and those that are not; and it would be equally absurd to suppose that the unarmed should command and the others obey. A prince that is ignorant of the art of war never can enjoy repose or safety amongst armed subjects; he will always be to them an object of contempt, as they to him will justly be subjects of suspicion; how is it possible then that they should act in concert? In short, a prince that does not understand the art of war can never be esteemed by his troops, nor can he ever confide in them. . . .

It now remains to show in what manner a prince should behave to his subjects and friends. This matter having been already discussed by others, it may seem arrogant in me to pursue it farther, especially if I should differ in opinion from them. . . . [A] good man, and one that wishes to prove himself so in all respects, must be undone in a contest with so many that are evilly disposed. A prince that wishes to maintain his power ought to learn that he should not be always good.

Laying aside, then, the false ideas that have been formed as to princes, and adhering only to those that are true, I say that all men, and especially princes, are marked and distinguished by some quality or other that entails either reputation or dishonor. For instance, men are liberal or parsimonious, honorable or dishonorable, effeminate and cowardly or courageous and enterprising, humane or cruel, affable or haughty, wise or debauched, honest or dishonest, good tempered or surly, sedate or inconsiderate, religious or impious, and so forth.

It would, doubtless, be happy for a prince to unite in himself every species of good quality; but as our nature does not allow so great a perfection, a prince should have prudence enough to avoid those defects and vices that may occasion his ruin; and he ought, if possible, to guard against those who can only compromise his safety and the possession of his dominions; but if he cannot succeed in this, he need not embarrass himself in escaping the scandal of those vices, but should devote his whole energies to avoid those that may cause his ruin. He should not shrink from encountering some blame on account of vices that are important to the support of his states; for, everything well considered, there are some things, having the appearance of virtues, that would prove the ruin of a prince should he put them in practice, and others upon which, though they are seemingly bad and vicious, his actual welfare and security depend.

To begin with the first qualities of the above-mentioned, I must observe that it is for the interest of a prince to be accounted liberal, but dangerous so
to exercise his liberality that he is thereby neither feared nor respected. I will explain myself. If a prince be liberal only as far as it suits his purposes, that is to say, within certain bounds, he will please but few and will be called selfish. A prince that wishes to gain the reputation of being liberal should be regardless of expense; but then, to support this reputation, he will often be reduced to the necessity of levying taxes on his subjects and adopting every species of fiscal resource, which cannot fail to make him odious. Besides exhausting the public treasure by his prodigality, his credit will be destroyed, and he will incur the risk of losing his dominions on the first reverse of fortune, his liberality, as always happens, having ensured him more enemies than friends. And, which is worse, he cannot retrace his steps and replenish his finances without being charged with avarice.

A prince, therefore, that cannot be liberal without prejudicing his state, should not trouble himself much about the imputation of being covetous; for he will be esteemed liberal in time, when people see that by parsimony he has improved his revenue, and become able to defend his dominions and even to undertake useful enterprises without the aid of new taxes; then the many from whom he takes nothing will deem him sufficiently liberal, and only the few whose expectations he has failed to realize will accuse him of avarice.

A prince, then, that would avoid poverty and always be in a condition to defend his dominions without imposing new taxes on his subjects, should care little for being charged with avarice, since the imputed vice may be the very means of securing the prosperity and stability of his government. A prince should be very sparing of his own and his subjects’ property; but he should be equally lavish of that which he takes from the enemy, if he desires to be popular with his troops; for that will not diminish his reputation, but rather add to it. He that is too liberal cannot long continue so; he will become poor and contemptible unless he grinds his subjects with new taxes, which cannot fail to render him odious to them. There is nothing a prince should dread so much as his subjects’ hatred—unless, indeed, it be their contempt. And both these evils may be occasioned by over-liberality. If he must choose between extremes, it is better to submit to the imputation of parsimony than to make a show of liberality; since the first, though it may not be productive of honor, never gives birth to hatred and contempt. A prince ought unquestionably to be merciful, but should take care how he executes his clemency. When it is necessary for a prince to restrain his subjects within the bounds of duty, he should not regard the imputation of cruelty, because, by making a few examples he will find that he really showed more humanity in the end than he who, by too great indulgence, suffers disorders to arise, which commonly terminate in rapine
and murder. For such disorders disturb a whole community, while punishments inflicted by the prince affect only a few individuals. . . .

A prince . . . should temper his mercy with prudence in such a manner that too much confidence may not put him off his guard, nor causeless jealousies make him insupportable. There is a medium between a foolish security and an unreasonable distrust.

It has been sometimes asked whether it is better to be loved than feared; to which I answer that one should wish to be both. But as that is a hard matter to accomplish, I think, if it is necessary to make a selection, that it is safer to be feared than to be loved. For it may be truly affirmed of mankind in general that they are ungrateful, fickle, timid, dissembling, and self-interested; so long as you can serve them, they are entirely devoted to you; their wealth, their blood, their lives, and even their offspring are at your disposal, when you have no occasion for them; but in your day of need they turn their back upon you. The prince that relies on professions courts his own destruction, because the friends whom he acquires by means of money alone, and whose attachment does not spring from a regard for personal merit, are seldom proof against reverse of fortune, but abandon their benefactor when he most requires their services. Men are usually more inclined to submit to him who makes himself dreaded than to one who merely strives to be beloved; and the reason is obvious, for friendship of this kind, being a mere moral tie, a species of duty resulting from a benefit, cannot endure against the calculations of interest; whereas fear carries with it the dread of punishment, which never loses its influence. A prince, however, ought to make himself feared in such a manner that if he cannot gain the love of his subjects he may at least avoid their hatred; and he may attain this object by respecting his subjects’ property and the honor of their wives. If he finds it absolutely necessary to inflict the punishment of death, he should avow the reason for it, and, above all things, he should abstain from touching the property of the condemned person. For certain it is that men sooner forget the death of their relatives than the loss of their patrimony. . . .

But when a prince is at the head of his army, and has under his command a multitude of soldiers, he should make little account of being esteemed cruel; such a character will be useful to him by keeping his troops in obedience and preventing every species of faction.

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It is unquestionably very praiseworthy in princes to be faithful to their engagements; but among those of the present day that have been distinguished
for great exploits, few indeed have been remarkable for this virtue, or have scrupled to deceive others who may have relied on their good faith.

It should, therefore, be known that there are two ways of deciding any contest: the one by laws, the other by force. The first is peculiar to men, the second to beasts; but when laws are not sufficiently powerful, it is necessary to recur to force. A prince ought, therefore, to understand how to use both these means. . . .

I should be cautious in inculcating such a precept if all men were good; but as the generality of mankind are wicked, and ever ready to break their word, a prince should not pique himself on keeping his more scrupulously, especially as it is always easy to justify a breach of faith on his part. . . . But it is necessary to disguise the appearance of craft, and thoroughly to understand the art of feigning and dissembling; for men generally are so simple and so weak that he who wishes to deceive easily finds dupes. . . .

It is not necessary, however, for a prince to possess all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is indispensable that he should appear to have them. I will even venture to affirm, that it is sometimes dangerous to use them, though it is always useful to appear to possess them. A prince should earnestly endeavor to gain the reputation of kindness, clemency, piety, justice, and fidelity to his engagements. He should possess all these good qualities, but still retain such power over himself as to display their opposites whenever it may be expedient. I maintain that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot with impunity exercise all the virtues, because his own self-preservation will often compel him to violate the laws of charity, religion and humanity. He should habituate himself to bend easily to the various circumstances that may from time to time surround him. In a word, it will be as useful to him to persevere in the path of rectitude, while he feels no inconvenience in doing so, as to know how to deviate from it when circumstances dictate such a course. He should make it a rule, above all things, never to utter anything that does not breathe of kindness, justice, good faith and piety. This last quality it is most important for him to appear to possess, as men in general judge more from appearances than from reality. All men have eyes, but few have the gift of penetration. Everyone sees your exterior, but few can discern what you have in your heart; and those few dare not oppose the voice of the multitude, who have the majesty of their prince on their side. In forming a judgment of the minds of men, and more especially of princes, as we cannot recur to any tribunal, we must attend only to results. Let it then be the prince’s chief care to maintain his authority; the means he employs, be they what they may, will, for this purpose, always appear hon-
orable and meet applause; for the vulgar are ever caught by appearances, and judge only by the event. And as the world is chiefly composed of such as are called the vulgar, the voice of the few is seldom if ever heard or regarded. . . .

A prince ought sedulously to avoid everything that may make him odious or despicable. If he succeed in this, he may fill his part with reasonable success, and need not fear danger from the infamy of other vices.

Nothing, in my opinion, renders a prince so odious as violation of the right of property and a disregard to the honor of married women. Subjects will live contentedly enough under a prince that invades neither their property nor their honor; and then he will only have to contend against the pretensions of a few ambitious persons, whom he can easily find means to restrain.

A prince whose conduct is light, inconstant, pusillanimous, irresolute and effeminate, is sure to be despised: these defects he ought to shun as he would shun so many rocks, and endeavor to display a character for courage, gravity, energy, and magnificence in all his actions. His decisions in matters between individuals should be irrevocable, so that none may dare to think of abusing or deceiving him. By these means he will obtain the esteem of his subjects and prevent any attempt to subvert his authority. He will then have less to apprehend from external enemies, who will be cautious in their attacks upon a prince that has secured the affection of his subjects. A prince has two things to guard against, the machinations of his own subjects and the attempts of powerful foreigners. The latter he will be able to repel by means of good friends and good troops; and these he will be sure to have as long as his arms are respectable. Besides, internal peace can be interrupted only by conspiracies, which are dangerous only when they are encouraged and supported by foreign powers. The latter, however, dare not stir, if the prince but conform to the rules I have laid down. . . .

With regard to his subjects, if all be at peace without his dominions, a prince has nothing to dread but secret conspiracies, from which he may always secure himself by avoiding whatever can render him odious or contemptible. Conspiracies are seldom formed, except against princes whose ruin and death would be acceptable to the people; otherwise, men would not expose themselves to the dangers inseparable from such machinations.

A prince has therefore little to fear from conspiracies when he possesses the affections of the people; but he has no resource left if this support should fail him. Content the people and manage the nobles, and you have the maxim of wise governors. . . .
I repeat that a prince ought to cherish and support the nobility, but without attracting the hatred of the people.

A new prince never disarms his subjects; on the contrary, if he finds them without the means of defense, he at once provides them with arms, and his subjects are thus converted into soldiers devoted to his service. The suspected become thenceforth attached to his cause, his friends continue firm in their attachment, and all his people become his partisans.

It is, of course, impossible to arm every one; but if the prince is kind and obliging to those whom he does arm, he can have little to fear from the rest. Those that are in his service will think themselves honored by the preference, and those that are not will readily excuse him from a persuasion that the greatest merit is due to those who run the greatest dangers. But a prince that disarms his subjects forfeits their affection by the distrust that he betrays, and nothing is more likely to excite their hatred. In addition, it becomes necessary, under such circumstances, to support an army of mercenaries, the dangers of which I have sufficiently explained. Besides, amongst other inconveniences, troops of this kind never can be efficient against a powerful enemy and disaffected subjects.

Thus it always has been a maxim with those that raise themselves to power, to arm their subjects. But when a prince acquires a new state, and annexes it as an appendage to his hereditary dominions, he should then disarm his subjects, excepting those who were favorable to his views antecedent to his new conquest; and even then it would still behoove him to soften and enervate, as occasion may require, in order that his whole military force may consist of his own subjects.

It is by conquering difficulties that princes raise themselves to power; and fortune cannot more successfully elevate a new prince than by raising enemies and confederacies against him, thus stimulating his genius, exercising his courage, and affording him an opportunity of climbing to the highest degree of power. Many persons are therefore of opinion that it is advantageous for a prince to have enemies, which, by preventing him from indulging in a dangerous repose, will enable him to win the esteem and admiration not only of his faithful subjects but of the rebellious also.
Fortresses are . . . useful or dangerous according to circumstances; and though in some cases they are serviceable, they are in others injurious. Thus a prince that is more in dread of his subjects than of foreign foes ought to fortify his cities; but if the reverse, he should abstain from such a course. . . .

There is no better fortress for a prince than the affection of the people. If he is hated by his subjects, all other fortresses will be in vain, for when they fly to arms, there will be no want of enemies without the walls to afford them assistance. . . .

Nothing is more likely to make a prince esteemed than great enterprises and extraordinary actions.

It is also of great service to a prince to afford rare examples of civil administration, especially when it is necessary to reward or punish in an exemplary manner, for the extraordinary good or evil that his subjects may have done. . . . A prince should also invest his actions with a character of greatness, and, above all things, avoid weakness and indecision. He must be a firm friend or an open foe, otherwise he will with difficulty conciliate his subjects. Should two powerful neighbors go to war, he must declare for one of them, or he will inevitably become the prey of the conqueror; and the vanquished party will be gratified at his ruin, and thus he will lose all protection; for the conqueror will despise a doubtful friend, who may abandon him on the first reverse of fortune, and the vanquished will never pardon him for remaining a tranquil spectator of his defeat. . . .

They can be no real friends who ask you to stand neutral. This consideration alone should open the eyes of a prince to the consequences of such conduct. Irresolute princes frequently embrace a neutrality to avoid some present inconvenience; but by such a course they meet their ruin. A bold adhesion to one party secures friendship by the tie of gratitude, and leaves but little to fear from the mercy of the conqueror; first, because men are seldom so wholly destitute of honor as to repay benefits by revolting ingratitude: secondly, because victory is rarely so very complete as to place the conqueror in a condition to violate all laws of propriety. If, on the other hand, he whose fortune the prince espouses should be vanquished, he may in time retrieve his losses and acknowledge this mark of preference and esteem.

A prince ought never, as I have already observed, unless under the pressure of circumstances, to espouse the part of a neighboring state more powerful than himself; because he lies at the mercy of his neighbor should he be the conqueror. . . . After all, no party can be absolutely sure of success, and
sometimes one danger is avoided only to encounter a greater; the utmost that human prudence can do in such extremities, is to choose the lesser evil.

Princes ought to honor talents and protect the arts, particularly commerce and agriculture. It is peculiarly important that those who follow such pursuits should be secure from all dread of being overcharged with taxes and despoiled of their lands after they have improved them by superior cultivation. Finally, they should not neglect to entertain the people at certain periods of the year with festivals and shows, and they should honor with their presence the trading companies and corporations, and display on such occasions the greatest affability and facility of access, always remembering to support their station with becoming dignity, which never should be lost sight of, under any circumstances.

A proper choice of ministers is of no small importance to a prince, for the first opinion of his capacity arises from the persons by whom he is surrounded. When they are men of ability, he is deemed a wise prince for having discovered their worth and found means to attach them to him. But when they prove otherwise, a mean opinion is entertained of his judgment from the unfit selection he has made. . . . But how are princes to know a minister? There is one infallible rule, viz., to observe whether he attends more to his own interest than to that of the state. A minister should be entirely devoted to the public service, and never should address the prince on his private affairs. It is the part of the prince to attend to the interests of the minister, and to heap honors, riches, fortune, and other favors upon him, that so he may be satisfied in his station, and have no reason to desire a change; in fine, that he may dread, and endeavor with all his power to prevent, any fatal reverse that may threaten his master. And this is the only method of establishing between a prince and his ministers a confidence equally useful and honorable to both.

I must not forget to mention one evil against which princes should ever be upon their guard, and which they cannot avoid except by the greatest prudence; and this evil is the flattery that reigns in every court. Men have so much self-love, and so good an opinion of themselves, that it is very difficult to avoid such contagion; and, besides, in endeavoring to avoid it they run the risk of being despised.

For princes have no other way of expelling flatterers than by showing that the truth will not offend. Yet if everyone had the privilege of uttering his sentiments with impunity, what would become of the respect due to the majesty of the sovereign? A prudent prince should take a middle course, and make choice of some discreet men in his state, to whom alone he may give the liberty of telling him the truth on such subjects as he shall require infor-
mation concerning. He ought undoubtedly to interrogate them, and hear their opinions upon every subject of importance, and determine afterward according to his own judgment, conducting himself at all times in such a manner as to convince everyone that the more freely he speaks the more acceptable he will be. After which he should listen to nobody else, but proceed firmly and steadily in the execution of what he has determined.

I know that several have thought, and many still are of opinion, that all sublunary events are governed either by Divine Providence or by chance, in such a manner that human wisdom has no share in their direction; and hence they infer that man should abstain from interfering with their course, and leave everything to its natural tendency.

The revolutions that in our times are of such frequent recurrence, seem to support this doctrine, and I own that I myself am almost inclined to favor such opinions, particularly when I consider how far those events surpass all human conjecture; yet, as we confessedly possess a free will, it must, I think, be admitted that chance does not so far govern the world as to leave no province for the exercise of human prudence.

Those princes who adapt their conduct to circumstances are rarely unfortunate. Fortune is only changeable to those who cannot conform themselves to the varying exigencies of the times; for we see different men take different courses to obtain the end they have in view; for instance, in pursuit of riches or glory, one prosecutes his object at random, the other with caution and prudence: one employs art, the other force; one is impetuosity itself, the other all patience—means by which each may severally succeed. It also happens that of two who follow the same route, one may arrive at his destination, and the other fail; and that if two other persons, whose dispositions are diametrically opposite, pursue the same object by wholly different means, yet both shall equally prosper; which is owing entirely to the temper of the times, which always prove favorable or adverse, according as men conform to them.

Circumstances frequently decide whether a prince conducts himself well or ill on any particular occasion. There are times when an extraordinary degree of prudence is necessary; there are others when the prince should know how to trust some things to chance; but nothing is more difficult than suddenly to change his conduct and character; sometimes from inability to
resist his old habits and inclinations, at others, from want of resolution to quit a course in which he had always been successful. . . .

From all these circumstances we may conclude that those who cannot change their system when occasion requires it, will no doubt continue prosperous as long as they glide with the stream of fortune; but when that turns against them they are ruined from not being able to follow that blind goddess through all her variations.

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