

CHAPTER XV

CONCERNING THINGS FOR WHICH MEN, AND ESPECIALLY PRINCES, ARE PRAISED OR BLAMED

IT REMAINS now to see what ought to be the rules of conduct for a prince towards subject and friends. And as I know that many have written on this point, I expect I shall be considered presumptuous in mentioning it again, especially as in discussing it I shall depart from the methods of other people. But, it is my intention to write a book which shall be useful to him who understands it, and it appears to me more appropriate to follow up the real truth of a matter than the imagination of it. Many have pictured republics and principalities which in fact have never been known or seen because how one lives is so far different from how one ought to live, that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, soon is ruined. A man who wishes to act entirely up to his claims of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil in the world. Therefore, it is necessary for a prince, wishing to hold his own, to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity.

Putting aside imaginary things concerning a prince, and discussing only those which are real, I say that all men, especially princes, are remarkable for qualities which bring them either blame or praise. Thus it is that one is reputed generous, another miserly; one cruel, one compassionate; one faithless; and another faithful. I know that every one believes that it would be most praiseworthy in a prince to exhibit all the above qualities that are considered good, but because these good qualities can neither be entirely possessed nor observed, because human conditions do not permit it, it is necessary for him to be sufficiently prudent that he may know how to avoid those vices which would lose him his state; and, if possible, to avoid those vices which would not lose him his position.

And again, he should not be uneasy at incurring a reproach for those vices without which his state could only be saved with difficulty. For if everything is considered carefully, it will be found that something which looks like virtue, if followed, would be his ruin and the ruin of his state; while something else, which looks like vice, which followed brings both him and his state security and prosperity.

CHAPTER XVI CONCERNING GENEROSITY AND MEANNESS

COMMENCING then with the first of the above-named characteristics, I say that it would be well to be reputed generous. Nevertheless, generosity exercised in a way that does not bring you the reputation for it, injures you; for if one exercises it honestly and as it should be exercised, it may not become known, and you will not avoid the reproach of being stingy. Therefore, any one wishing to maintain among men the name of generous is obliged to avoid no sort of magnificence. A prince thus inclined will consume in generous acts all his property, and will be compelled in the end, if he wish to maintain the name of generous, to unduly weigh down his people, and tax them, and do everything he can to get money. This will soon make him despicable to his subjects. Thus, with his generosity, having offended many and rewarded few, he puts himself and his rulership in danger. To draw back from disaster, he then runs in the opposite direction to the reproach of being miserly.

Therefore, a prince is unable to exercise this virtue of generosity in such a way that it is recognized without risking his position. If he is wise, he ought not to fear the reputation of being stingy. In time he will come to be more favored than if generous, because his economy with revenues are enough to defend himself against all attacks, and to engage in enterprises without burdening his people. Thus it will come to pass that he exercises generosity towards all from whom he does not take, who are numberless, and mean only towards those to whom he does not give, who are few. We have not seen great things done in our time except by those who have been considered mean; the rest have failed. While Pope Julius the Second was assisted in reaching the papacy by a reputation for liberality, he did not strive afterwards to keep it up. When he later got involved in many wars, he did so without imposing any extraordinary tax on his subjects, for he supplied his additional expenses out of his long thriftiness.

A prince, therefore, should not worry about a reputation for being stingy provided that he does not rob his subjects, that he can defend himself when needed, that he does not become poor and abject, and that he is not forced to become rapacious. Stinginess is one of those vices that will enable him to govern.

Generosity has its uses in winning a state. Caesar obtained empire by giving away millions, and many others have reached the highest positions by having been generous, and by being considered so. However, if Caesar had survived after becoming Emperor, and had not moderated his expenses, he would have destroyed his government. Therefore it is wiser to have a reputation for meanness which brings reproach without hatred, than to be compelled through seeking a reputation for liberality to incur a name for rapacity which begets reproach with hatred.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCERNING CRUELTY AND CLEMENCY, AND WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO BE LOVED THAN FEARED

COMING now to another quality mentioned above, I say that every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; but his cruelty unified a large part of Italy, and restored it to peace and loyalty. Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty. That prince with a few examples of individual cruelty will be more merciful than those who are too merciful and allow disorder to arise because disorder injures the whole people.

And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to avoid the reputation of cruelty, since new states are full of dangers. Nevertheless the prince ought to be slow to believe and to act, nor should he himself show fear. He should proceed in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence may not make him incautious and too much distrust render him intolerable. Upon this a question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved?

It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with. This is true in general of men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, and covetous. As long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life and children; but when failure approaches they turn against you. The prince, who relies entirely on their promises and neglects other precautions, is ruined. Friendships that are obtained by payments, and not by greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned, but they are not secured. In time of need these friendships cannot be relied upon because men have less problem in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared. Love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the selfishness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.

Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred. He can endure very well being feared whilst he is not hated. In general he will not be hated as long as he leaves alone the property of his citizens and their women. When it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it on proper justification and for clear cause. Above all things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men more quickly forget the death of their father than the loss of their inheritance.

When a prince is with his army, and has under control a multitude of soldiers, then it is quite necessary for him to disregard the reputation of cruelty, for without it he would never hold his army united. Among the wonderful deeds of Hannibal this

one is enumerated: that having led an enormous army, composed of many various races of men, to fight in foreign lands, no dissensions arose either among them or against the prince, whether in his bad or in his good fortune. This arose from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty, which, with his boundless valor, made him revered and terrible in the sight of his soldiers, but without that cruelty, his other virtues were not sufficient to produce this effect. Yet shortsighted writers admire his deeds from one point of view and from another condemn the principal cause of them.

Returning to the question of being feared or loved, I concluded that, since men love according to their own will and fear according to that of the prince, a wise prince should establish himself on that which is in his own to control. However, he must try to avoid hatred, as is noted.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH PRINCES SHOULD KEEP FAITH

EVERY one admits how praiseworthy it is in a prince to keep faith, and to live with integrity and not with craft. Nevertheless our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word. You must know there are two ways of contesting, the one by the law, the other by force; the first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because the first is frequently not sufficient for men, it is necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to understand how to avail himself of the beast and the man.

A prince, therefore, being compelled to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves. Those who rely simply on the lion do not understand what they are about. Therefore a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may ensnare him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer. If men were entirely good this principle would not hold, but because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to observe it with them. Nor will there ever be a lack of legitimate reasons to excuse this nonobservance. Of this idea endless modern examples could be given, showing how many treaties have been made void and of no effect through the faithlessness of princes. He who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best. But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic and to be a great pretender and dissembler. Men, in general, are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.

Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have listed above, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. I shall also dare to say that to have these virtues and to always observe them is injurious to a prince and a state. To appear to have them is useful; and to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind that should you require not to be so, you may know how to change to the opposite. You have to understand this, that a prince, especially a new one, cannot observe all those things for which men are esteemed, being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to faith, friendship, humanity, and religion. Therefore it is necessary for him to have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds of fortune force it, but not to diverge from the good if he can avoid doing so.

For this reason a prince ought to take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that is not full of the above-named five qualities, that he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality, inasmuch as men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, to few to come in touch with you. Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the power of the prince to defend them. In the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result. For that reason, no matter how a prince conquers and holds his state, the means will always be considered honest. He will be praised by everybody because the vulgar are always taken by what a thing seems to be and by what comes of it; and in the world there are only the vulgar, The few find a place there only when the many have no ground to rest on.

CHAPTER XIX

THAT ONE SHOULD AVOID BEING DESPISED AND HATED

NOW, I have spoken of the more important principles need to hold a state, the others I wish to discuss briefly under in this chapter. The prince must consider, as has been said before, how to avoid those things that will make him hated or contemptible; when he succeeds here, he need not fear any danger in other reproaches. It makes him hated above all things, as I have said, to be rapacious, and to be a violator of the property and women of his subjects, from both of which he must abstain. And when neither their property nor honor is touched, the majority of men live content. At that point, the prince has only to contend with the ambition of a few, whom he can curb with ease in many ways.

It makes him contemptible to be considered fickle, frivolous, effeminate, mean-spirited, irresolute, from all of these a prince should guard himself as from a rock; and he should endeavor to show in his actions, greatness, courage, gravity, and fortitude. In his private dealings with his subjects let him show that his judgments are irrevocable, and maintain himself in such reputation that no one can hope either to deceive him or to get round him. That prince is highly esteemed who conveys this impression of himself, and he who is highly esteemed is not easily conspired against; for, provided it is well known that he is an excellent man and revered by his people, he can only be attacked with difficulty.

For this reason a prince ought to have two fears, one from within, on account of his subjects, the other from without, on account of external powers. From the outside the prince is defended by being well armed and having good allies. If he is well armed he will have good friends, and affairs will always remain quiet within when they are quiet without, unless they have been already disturbed by conspiracy. One of the best remedies that a prince can have against conspiracies is not to be hated and despised by the people. He who conspires against a prince always expects to please the people by the prince's removal; but when the conspirator can only look forward to offending them, he will not have the courage to take such a course, for the difficulties that confront a conspirator are infinite.

As experience shows, many have been the conspiracies, but few have been successful. He who conspires cannot act alone, and he must take a companion from those whom he believes to be malcontents. As soon as you have opened your mind to a malcontent, you have given him the material with which to content himself, for by denouncing you he receives every advantage from the prince. The malcontent, seeing

the gain from denouncing you to be assured, and seeing being your ally to be doubtful and full of dangers, he must be a very rare friend, or a thoroughly obstinate enemy of the prince, to keep faith with you. Summing up, on the side of the conspirator, there is fear, jealousy, and prospect of punishment to terrify the potential co-conspirator; but on the side of the prince there is the majesty of the principality, the laws, and the protection of friends and the state to defend him. Added to all these things is the popular goodwill, so it seems impossible that anyone should be so rash as to conspire in a well-ordered state.

In general the conspirator has to fear before the execution of his plot, but he has also to fear the sequel to the crime; because on account of it he has the people for an enemy, and thus cannot hope for any escape. Endless examples could be given on this subject, but I will be content with one. The prince of Bologna was overthrown and murdered by a noble family, the Cannedeschi. Such was the reputation of the murdered prince that the people revolted and murdered all the Cannedeschi and restored the old prince's surviving son. For this reason I consider that a prince ought to reckon conspiracies of little account when his people hold him in esteem; but when it is hostile to him, and bears hatred towards him, he ought to fear everything and everybody. Well-ordered states and wise princes have taken every care not to drive the nobles to desperation, and to keep the people satisfied and contented, for this is one of the most important objects a prince can have.