

PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

THE PRINCE

by Niccolò Machiavelli



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

THE PRINCE



Niccoló Machiavelli



Prestwick House

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THE PRINCE

C O N T E N T S

Notes	7
Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights	9
Dedication	11
Chapter I	13
Chapter II	15
Chapter III	17
Chapter IV	25
Chapter V	29
Chapter VI	31
Chapter VII	35
Chapter VIII	41
Chapter IX	45
Chapter X	49
Chapter XI	51
Chapter XII	55
Chapter XIII	61
Chapter XIV	65
Chapter XV	69
Chapter XVI	71
Chapter XVII	75
Chapter XVIII	79
Chapter XIX	83
Chapter XX	93

Chapter XXI.....	97
Chapter XXII	101
Chapter XXIII.....	103
Chapter XXIV	105
Chapter XXV	107
Chapter XXVI.....	111
Glossary.....	115
Vocabulary	131

Notes

What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

Niccolò Machiavelli was born on May 3, 1469, in Florence, Italy. His family was not very affluent, even though his father was a judge and dealt with powerful people. Not much is known about Machiavelli's childhood, and the first mention of him in history came when he was involved in deposing the most important religious and political figure in Florence at the time, Girolamo Savonarola, for which Machiavelli was given a post in the new Florentine government.

This work allowed him to observe how people in power functioned and why political intrigue was important, but it also brought him into contact with many high-placed officials, including Cesare Borgia. Historical events, however, were against Machiavelli's further rise, and the leading politicians of the time, the Medici family, were reinstated as rulers of Florence and forced him out of any position of power. Machiavelli was jailed, tortured, and subsequently exiled.

Pointers

READING POINTERS

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

To understand the points Machiavelli makes in *The Prince*, pay attention to the following:

Machiavelli's Time and the Politics of Italy:

- During Machiavelli's time, Italy was broken into five separate entities, which created five political powers; however, the Medici family ruled Florence, and Machiavelli curried favor with them. It was obvious to him that politics had its own rules, and it was unnecessary to subjugate them to any other set of rules.

The Organization of *The Prince*:

- Machiavelli arranged his novel so it would proceed from general information and advice to specific areas of major relevance to the Medici family.
 - Chapters 1-11: Types of Principalities and territories
 - Chapters 12-14: Armies and a Prince's role as military leader
 - Chapters 15-23: A Prince's Behavior and Subsequent Reputation
 - Chapters 24-26: Italy's Political Situation

Motifs in *The Prince*:

- **Fate as Opposed to Free Will:**

According to Machiavelli, Fate or Fortune (events that are beyond human control) affects the major portion of life, and Free Will (man's decisions, actions, etc.), controls the rest. He states that princes can prepare themselves for the vagaries of Fortune by having the willingness to change their ways quickly to accommodate whatever Fortune brings. Therefore, cautious rulers are frowned upon, and careless rulers are praised; the former believe they have the ability to control fate to some degree.



C H A P T E R I

OF THE VARIOUS KINDS OF PRINCEDOM, AND OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY ARE ACQUIRED

ALL THE STATES and Governments by which men are or ever have been ruled, have been and are either Republics or Princedoms. Princedoms are either hereditary, in which the sovereignty is derived through an ancient line of ancestors, or they are new. New Princedoms are either wholly new, as that of Milan to Francesco Sforza;[†] or they are like limbs joined on to the hereditary possessions of the Prince who acquires them, as the Kingdom of Naples to the dominions of the King of Spain.[†] The States thus acquired have either been used to live under a Prince or have been free; and he who acquires them does so either by his own arms or by the arms of others, and either by good fortune or by merit.

OF HEREDITARY PRINCEDOMS

OF REPUBLICS I shall not now speak, having elsewhere spoken of them at length. Here I shall treat exclusively of Princedoms, and, filling in the outline above traced out, shall proceed to examine how such States are to

[†]Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.

I say, men, that hereditary States, accustomed to the family of their



C H A P T E R 2 I I

Prince, are maintained with far less difficulty than new States, since all that is required is that the Prince shall not depart from the usages of his ancestors, trusting for the rest to deal with events as they arise. So that if

Oan hereditary Prince be of average address, he will always maintain himself in his Princedom, unless deprived of it by some extraordinary and irresistible force; and even if so deprived will recover it, should any, even the least, mishap overtake the usurper. We have in Italy an example of this in the Duke of Ferrara, who never could have withstood the attacks of the Venetians in 1484, nor those of Pope Julius in 1510, had not his authority in that State been consolidated by time.[†] For since a Prince by birth has fewer occasions and less need to give offence, he ought to be better loved, and will naturally be popular with his subjects unless outrageous vices make him odious. Moreover, the very antiquity and continuance of his rule will efface the memories and causes which lead to innovation. For one change always leaves a dovetail into which another will fit.

OF MIXED PRINCEDOMS

BUT IN NEW Princedoms difficulties abound. And, first, if the Princedom be not wholly new, but joined on to the ancient dominions of the Prince, so as to form with them what may be termed a mixed Princedom, changes will come from a cause common to all new



C H A P T E R 3 I I I

States, namely, that men, thinking to better their condition, are always ready to change masters, and in this expectation will take up arms against any ruler; wherein they deceive themselves, and find afterwards by experience that they are worse off than before. This again results naturally and necessarily from the circumstance that the Prince cannot avoid giving offence to his new subjects, either in respect of the troops he quarters on them, or of some other of the numberless vexations attendant on a new acquisition. And in this way you may find that you have enemies in all those whom you have injured in seizing the Princedom, yet cannot keep the friendship of those who helped you to gain it; since you can neither reward them as they expect, nor yet, being under obligations to them, use violent remedies against them. For however strong you may be in respect of your army, it is essential that in entering a new Province you should have the good will of its inhabitants.

Hence it happened that Louis XII[†] of France, speedily gaining possession of Milan, as speedily lost it; and that on the occasion of its first capture, Lodovico Sforza[†] was able with his own forces only to take it from him. For the very people who had opened the gates to the French King, when they found themselves deceived in their expectations and hopes of future benefits, could not put up with the insolence of their new ruler. True it is that when a State rebels and is again got under, it will not afterwards be lost so easily. For the Prince, using the rebellion as a pretext, will not scruple to secure himself by punishing the guilty, bringing the suspected to trial, and otherwise strengthening his position in the points

where it was weak. So that if to recover Milan from the French it was enough on the first occasion that a Duke Lodovico should raise alarms on the frontiers, to wrest it from them a second time the whole world had to be ranged against them, and their armies destroyed and driven out of Italy.[†] And this for the reasons above assigned. And yet, for a second time, Milan was lost to the King. The general causes of its first loss have been shown. It remains to note the causes of the second, and to point out the remedies which the French King had, or which might have been used by another in like circumstances to maintain his conquest more successfully than he did.

I say, then, that those States which upon their acquisition are joined on to the ancient dominions of the Prince who acquires them, are either of the same Province and tongue as the people of these dominions, or they are not. When they are, there is a great ease in retaining them, especially when they have not been accustomed to live in freedom. To hold them securely it is enough to have rooted out the line of the reigning Prince; because if in other respects the old condition of things be continued, and there be no discordance in their customs, men live peaceably with one another, as we see to have been the case in Brittany, Burgundy, Gascony, and Normandy,[†] which have so long been united to France. For although there be some slight difference in their languages, their customs are similar, and they can easily get on together. He, therefore, who acquires such a State, if he mean to keep it, must see to two things; first, that the blood of the ancient line of Princes be destroyed; second, that no change be made in respect of laws or taxes; for in this way the newly acquired State speedily becomes incorporated with the hereditary.

But when States are acquired in a country differing in language, usages, and laws, difficulties multiply, and great good fortune, as well as address, is needed to overcome them. One of the best and most efficacious methods for dealing with such a State, is for the Prince who acquires it to go and dwell there in person, since this will tend to make his tenure more secure and lasting. This course has been followed by the Turk with regard to Greece,[†] who, had he not, in addition to all his other precautions for securing that Province, himself come to live in it, could never have kept his hold of it. For when you are on the spot, disorders are detected in their beginnings and remedies can be readily applied; but when you are at a distance, they are not heard of until they have gathered strength and the case is past cure. Moreover, the Province in which you take up your abode is not pillaged by your officers; the people are pleased to have a ready recourse to their Prince; and have all the more reason if they are

Glossary

Dedication

Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici – Lorenzo II de' Medici (1492-519) was Duke of Urbino, Italy, and became ruler of Florence in 1513. Machiavelli dedicated *The Prince* to the new ruler in hopes that it would provide effective ways to govern the country. Machiavelli claims he wrote this piece in the best interest of Florence and its new leader; however, many critics sense an ulterior motive—Machiavelli probably had aspirations of acquiring a government job and was using his writing to impress Lorenzo.

Chapter I

Francesco Sforza – (1401-1466), Duke of Milan, Italy

“Kingdom of Naples...King of Spain.” – The Kingdom of Naples was a large area expanding from central to southern Italy, and throughout history, there were struggles between France and Spain for control over the kingdom. When Machiavelli returned to the kingdom in 1494, he was just in time to witness the exile of the Medici family, which had been the ruling family for years; the Medicis came back into power in 1512. The exile of this family was the result of Girolamo Savanorola's influence as a religious leader. Savanorola supported Charles VIII, the Frenchman who seized Naples in 1494, which, consequently, began the Italian Wars (1494-1559) between France and Spain. As a result, the Treaties of Blois were written, which turned the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily over to Spain.

Chapter II

“We have in Italy...consolidated by time.” – This quote deals with two specific dukes in Ferrara, but the reference is to the entire family line that reigned for many generations. Ercole d'Este (1431-1505) is noted as the most important duke from his family. He was Duke of Ferrara from 1471-1505. The “attacks of the Venetians” that Machiavelli mentions is a specific reference to the war between Venice and Ferrara (1482-1484) that nearly destroyed Ercole's city. This war was the result of an alliance formed between Pope Sixtus IV and the city of Venice. Ercole was able to hold the Venetians off, and the Peace of Bagnolo ended the war in 1484.

Vocabulary

Dedication

allurements – attractions

antiquity – history; ancient times

diligently – with steady effort

discourse – to write about or discuss a subject at length

eminence – greatness

esteem – to respect

extrinsic – additional features; unrelated, irrelevant

malignity – hatred

wont – accustomed

Chapter I

dominions – territories

sovereignty – authority

Chapter II

dovetail – a piece of an interlocking joint; a perfect fit

efface – to destroy; erase

odious – hateful

usurper – a person who seizes something as his or her own

Chapter III

abode – a home

acquisition – an accomplishment, achievement; something gained

aggrandized – made more powerful

allege – to state; assert

axiom – a truism

ceded – yielded

conciliated – satisfied; appeased

defence – [British] defense

disaffected – discontent; resentful

discontented – unsatisfied

discordance – a disagreement, conflict

dissolution – termination

efficacious – effective

endeavour – to try; make an honest effort

ensue – to follow, pursue

expedient – a solution; plan