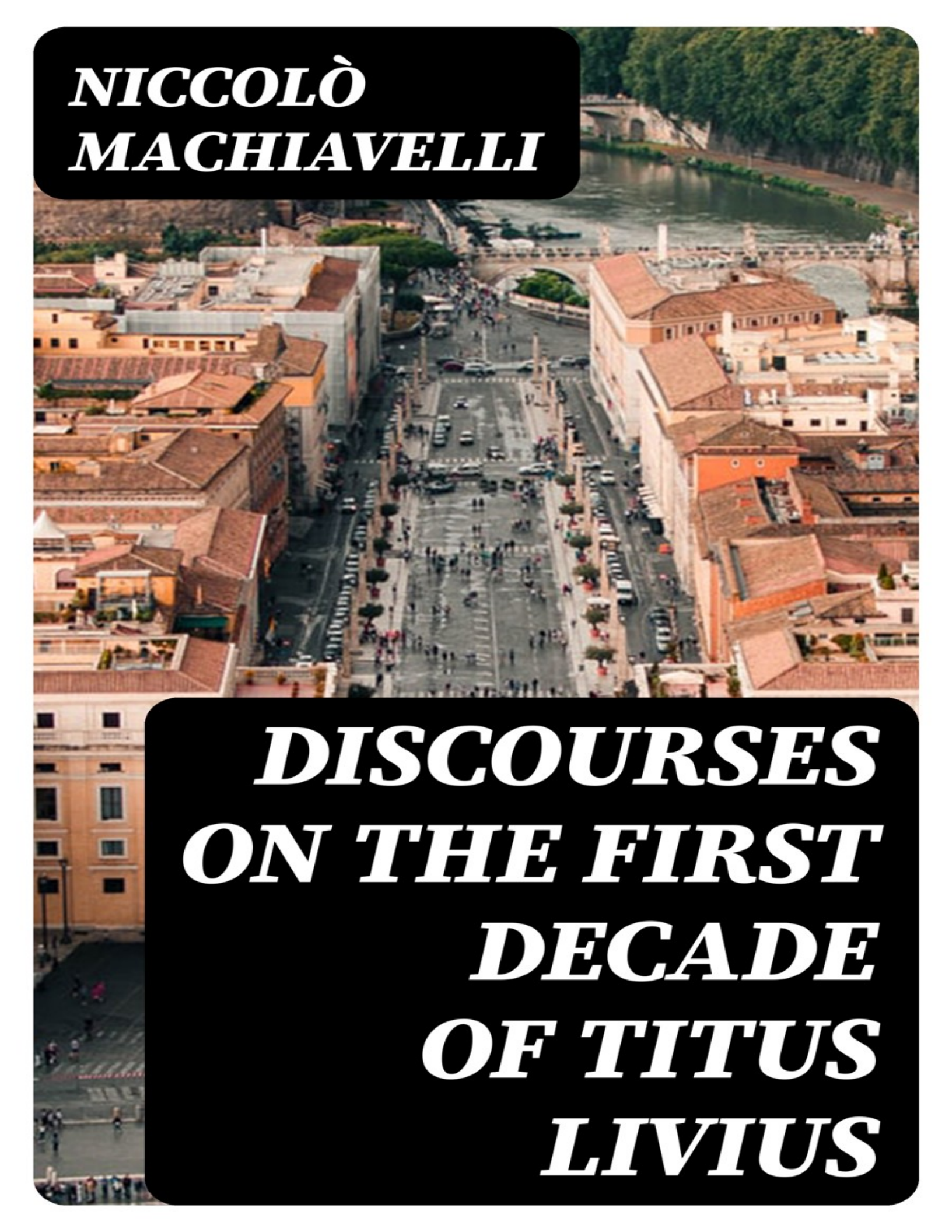


***NICCOLÒ
MACHIAVELLI***

An aerial photograph of a city street, likely in Rome, showing a wide road with traffic and pedestrians. The street is flanked by buildings with terracotta roofs. In the background, a river flows through the city, with a bridge crossing it. The scene is captured from a high angle, providing a clear view of the urban layout and the natural surroundings.

***DISCOURSES
ON THE FIRST
DECADE
OF TITUS
LIVIUS***

Niccolò Machiavelli

Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

DISCOURSES

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.— Of the Beginnings of Cities in general, and in particular. of that of Rome.

CHAPTER II.—Of the various kinds of Government; and to which of them. the Roman Commonwealth belonged.

CHAPTER III.—Of the Accidents which led in Rome to the creation of. Tribunes of the People; whereby the Republic was made more perfect.

CHAPTER IV.—That the Dissensions between the Senate and Commons of. Rome, made Rome free and powerful.

CHAPTER V.— Whether the Guardianship of public Freedom is safer in the. hands of the Commons or of the Nobles; and whether those who seek to. acquire Power or they who seek to maintain it are the greater cause of. Commotions.

CHAPTER VI.— Whether it was possible in Rome to contrive such a. Government as would have composed the Differences between the Commons. and the Senate.

CHAPTER VII.— That to preserve Liberty in a State there must exist the. Right to accuse.

CHAPTER VIII.— That Calumny is as hurtful in a Commonwealth as the. power to accuse is useful.

CHAPTER IX.— That to give new Institutions to a Commonwealth, or to. reconstruct old Institutions on an entirely new basis, must be the work. of one Man .

CHAPTER X.— That in proportion as the Founder of a Kingdom or. Commonwealth merits Praise, he who founds a Tyranny deserves Blame.

CHAPTER XI.— Of the Religion of the Romans.

CHAPTER XII.—That it is of much moment to make account of Religion; and. that Italy, through the Roman Church, being wanting therein, has been. ruined.

CHAPTER XIII.— Of the use the Romans made of Religion in giving. Institutions to their City, in carrying out their Enterprises, and in. quelling Tumults.

CHAPTER XIV.— That the Romans interpreted the Auspices to meet the. occasion; and made a prudent show of observing the Rites of Religion. even when forced to disregard them; and any who rashly slighted Religion. they punished.

CHAPTER XV.— How the Samnites, as a last resource in their broken. Fortunes, had recourse to Religion.

CHAPTER XVI.— That a People accustomed to live under a Prince, if by. any accident it become free, can hardly preserve that Freedom.

CHAPTER XVII.— That a corrupt People obtaining Freedom can hardly. preserve it.

CHAPTER XVIII.— How a Free Government existing in a corrupt City may be. preserved, or not existing may be created.

CHAPTER XIX.— After a strong Prince a weak Prince may maintain himself:. but after one weak Prince no Kingdom can stand a second.

CHAPTER XX.— That the consecutive Reigns of two valiant Princes produce. great results: and that well-ordered Commonwealths are assured of a. Succession of valiant Rulers by whom their Power and Growth are rapidly. extended .

CHAPTER XXI.— That it is a great reproach to a Prince or to a. Commonwealth to be without a national Army.

CHAPTER XXIII.— That we should never hazard our whole Fortunes where we. put not forth our entire Strength; for which reason to guard a Defile is. often hurtful .

CHAPTER XXIV.— That well-ordered States always provide Rewards and. Punishments for their Citizens; and never set off Deserts against. Misdeeds .

CHAPTER XXV.— That he who would reform the Institutions of a free. State, must retain at least the semblance of old Ways.

CHAPTER XXVI.— A new Prince in a City or Province of which he has taken. Possession, ought to make Everything new.

CHAPTER XXVII.— That Men seldom know how to be wholly good or wholly. bad .

CHAPTER XXVIII.— Whence it came that the Romans were less ungrateful to. their Citizens than were the Athenians .

CHAPTER XXIX.— Whether a People or a Prince is the more ungrateful.

CHAPTER XXX.— How Princes and Commonwealths may avoid the vice of. Ingratitude; and how a Captain or Citizen may escape being undone by. it.

CHAPTER XXXI.— That the Roman Captains were never punished with extreme. severity for Misconduct; and where loss resulted to the Republic merely. through their Ignorance or Want of Judgment, were not punished at all .

CHAPTER XXXII.— That a Prince or Commonwealth should not delay. conferring Benefits until they are themselves in difficulties.

CHAPTER XXXIII.— When a Mischief has grown up in, or against a State,. it is safer to temporize with than to meet it with Violence .

CHAPTER XXXIV.— That the authority of the Dictator did good and not. harm to the Roman Republic: and that it is not those Powers which are. given by the free suffrages of

the People, but those which ambitious. Citizens usurp for themselves, that are pernicious to a State.

CHAPTER XXXV.— Why the Creation of the Decemvirate in Rome, although brought about by the free and open Suffrage of the Citizens, was hurtful to the Liberties of that Republic

CHAPTER XXXVI.— That Citizens who have held the higher Offices of a Commonwealth should not disdain the lower .

CHAPTER XXXVII.— Of the Mischief bred in Rome by the Agrarian Law: and how it is a great source of disorder in a Commonwealth to pass a Law opposed to ancient Usage and with stringent retrospective Effect.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.— That weak Republics are irresolute and undecided; and that the course they may take depends more on Necessity than Choice.

CHAPTER XXXIX.— That often the same Accidents are seen to befall different Nations.

CHAPTER XLI.— That it is unwise to pass at a bound from leniency to severity, or to a haughty bearing from a humble.

CHAPTER XLII.— How easily Men become corrupted.

CHAPTER XLIII.— That Men fighting in their own Cause make good and resolute Soldiers.

CHAPTER XLIV.— That the Multitude is helpless without a Head: and that we should not with the same breath threaten and ask leave.

CHAPTER XLV.— That it is of evil example, especially in the Maker of a Law, not to observe the Law when made: and that daily to renew acts of injustice in a City is most hurtful to the Governor.

CHAPTER XLVI.— That Men climb from one step of Ambition to another, seeking at first to escape Injury and then to injure others.

CHAPTER XLVII.— That though Men deceive themselves in Generalities, in Particulars they judge truly.

CHAPTER XLVIII.— He who would not have an Office bestowed on some worthless or wicked Person, should contrive that it be solicited by one who is utterly worthless and wicked, or else by one who is in the highest degree noble and good.

CHAPTER XLIX.— That if Cities which, like Rome, had their beginning in Freedom, have had difficulty in framing such Laws as would preserve their Freedom, Cities which at the first have been in Subjection will find this almost impossible.

CHAPTER L.— That neither any Council nor any Magistrate should have power to bring the Government of a City to a stay.

CHAPTER LI.— What a Prince or Republic does of Necessity, should seem to be done by Choice .

CHAPTER LII.— That to check the arrogance of a Citizen who is growing too powerful in a State, there is no safer Method, or less open to objection, than to forestall him in those Ways whereby he seeks to advance himself .

CHAPTER LIII.— That the People, deceived by a false show of Advantage, often desire what would be their Ruin; and that large Hopes and brave Promises easily move them .

CHAPTER LIV.— Of the boundless Authority which a great Man may use to restrain an excited Multitude .

CHAPTER LV.— That Government is easily carried on in a City wherein the body of the People is not corrupted: and that a Principdom is impossible where Equality prevails, and a Republic where it does not .

CHAPTER LVI.— That when great Calamities are about to befall a City or Country, Signs are seen to presage, and Seers arise who foretell them .

CHAPTER LVII.— That the People are strong collectively, but individually weak .

CHAPTER LVIII.— That a People is wiser and more constant than a Prince

CHAPTER LIX.— To what Leagues or Alliances we may most trust; whether those we make with Commonwealths or those we make with Princes .

CHAPTER LX.— That the Consulship and all the other Magistracies in Rome. were given without respect to Age .
BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.— Whether the Empire acquired by the Romans was more due to Valour or to Fortune .

CHAPTER II.— With what Nations the Romans had to contend, and how stubborn these were in defending their Freedom.

CHAPTER III.— That Rome became great by destroying the Cities which lay round about her, and by readily admitting strangers to the rights of Citizenship.

CHAPTER IV.— That Commonwealths have followed three Methods for extending their Power .

CHAPTER V.— That changes in Sects and Tongues, and the happening of Floods and Pestilences, obliterate the Memory of the Past .

CHAPTER VI.— Of the Methods followed by the Romans in making War .

CHAPTER VII.— Of the Quantity of Land assigned by the Romans to each Colonist .

CHAPTER VIII.— Why certain Nations leave their ancestral Seats and overflow the Countries of others .

CHAPTER IX.— Of the Causes which commonly give rise to Wars between States .

CHAPTER X.— That contrary to the vulgar opinion, Money is not the Sinews of War .

CHAPTER XI.— That it were unwise to ally yourself a Prince who has. Reputation rather than Strength.

CHAPTER XII.— Whether when Invasion is imminent it is better to. anticipate or to await it.

CHAPTER XIII.— That Men rise from humble to high Fortunes rather by. Fraud than by Force.

CHAPTER XIV.— That Men often err in thinking they can subdue Pride by. Humility.

CHAPTER XV.—That weak States are always dubious in their Resolves; and. that tardy Resolves are always hurtful.

CHAPTER XVI.— That the Soldiers of our days depart widely from the. methods of ancient Warfare.

CHAPTER XVII.— What importance the Armies of the present day should. allow to Artillery; and whether the commonly received opinion concerning. it be just.

CHAPTER XVIII.— That the authority of the Romans and the example of. ancient Warfare should make us hold Foot Soldiers of more account than. Horse.

CHAPTER XIX.— That Acquisitions made by ill-governed States and such as. follow not the valiant methods of the Romans, tend rather to their Ruin. than to their Aggrandizement .

CHAPTER XX.— Of the Dangers incurred by Princes or Republics who resort. to Auxiliary or Mercenary Arms .

CHAPTER XXI.— That Capua was the first City to which the Romans sent. a Prætor; nor there, until four hundred years after they began to make. War.

CHAPTER XXII.— That in matters of moment Men often judge amiss.

CHAPTER XXIII.— That in chastising their Subjects when circumstances. required it the Romans always avoided half-measures.

CHAPTER XXIV.— That, commonly, Fortresses do much more Harm than. Good

CHAPTER XXV.— That he who attacks a City divided against itself, must. not think to get possession of it through its Divisions.

CHAPTER XXVI.— That Taunts and Abuse breed Hatred against him who uses. them, without yielding him any Advantage.

CHAPTER XXVII.— That prudent Princes and Republics should be content to. have obtained a Victory; for, commonly, when they are not, theft-Victory. turns to Defeat.

CHAPTER XXVIII.— That to neglect the redress of Grievances, whether. public or private, is dangerous for a Prince or Commonwealth .

CHAPTER XXIX.— That Fortune obscures the minds of Men when she would. not have them hinder her Designs.

CHAPTER XXX.— That really powerful Princes and, Commonwealths do not. buy Friendships with Money, but with their Valour and the Fame of their. Prowess .

CHAPTER XXXI.— Of the Danger of trusting banished Men.

CHAPTER XXXII.— In how many Ways the Romans gained Possession of. Towns.

CHAPTER XXXIII.— That the Romans intrusted the Captains of their Armies. with the fullest Powers.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER II.— That on occasion it is wise to feign Folly.

CHAPTER III.— That to preserve a newly acquired Freedom we must slay. the Sons of Brutus.

CHAPTER IV.— That an Usurper is never safe in his Princedom while those. live whom he has deprived of it.

CHAPTER V.— How an Hereditary King may come to lose his Kingdom.

CHAPTER VI.— Of Conspiracies.

CHAPTER VII.— Why it is that changes from Freedom to Servitude, and. from Servitude to Freedom, are sometimes made without Bloodshed, but at. other times reek with Blood .

CHAPTER VIII.— That he who would effect Changes in a Commonwealth, must. give heed to its Character and Condition

CHAPTER IX.— That to enjoy constant good Fortune we must change with. the Times.

CHAPTER X.— That a Captain cannot escape Battle when his Enemy forces. it on him at all risks.

CHAPTER XI.— That one who has to contend with many,. though he be weaker. than they,. will prevail if he can withstand their first onset.

CHAPTER XII.— A prudent Captain will do what he can to make it. necessary for his own Soldiers to fight, and to relieve his Enemy from. that necessity.

CHAPTER XIII.— Whether we may trust more to a valiant Captain with a. weak Army, or to a valiant Army with a weak Captain.

CHAPTER XIV.— Of the effect produced in Battle by strange and. unexpected Sights or Sounds.

CHAPTER XV.— That one and not many should head an Army: and why it is. harmful to have more Leaders than one.

CHAPTER XVI.— That in Times of Difficulty true Worth is sought after;. whereas in quiet Times it is not the most deserving, but those who are. recommended by Wealth or Connection who are most in favour.

CHAPTER XVII.— That we are not to offend a Man, and then send him to. fill an important Office or Command.

CHAPTER XVIII.— That it is the highest Quality of a Captain to be able. to forestall the designs of his Adversary.

CHAPTER XIX.— Whether Indulgence or Severity be more necessary for. controlling a Multitude.

CHAPTER XX.— How one humane act availed more with the men of Falerij,. than all the might of the Roman Arms.

CHAPTER XXI.— How it happened that Hannibal pursuing a course contrary. to that taken by Scipio, wrought the same results in Italy which the. other achieved in Spain.

Chapter XXII.— That the severity of Manlius Torquatus and the. gentleness of Valerius Corvinus won for both the same Glory.

CHAPTER XXIII.— Why Camillus was banished from Rome.

CHAPTER XXIV.— That prolonged Commands brought Rome to Servitude .

CHAPTER XXV.— Of the poverty of Cincinnatus and of many other Roman. Citizens.

CHAPTER XXVI.— How Women are a cause of the ruin of States.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHAPTER XXIX.— That the Faults of a People are due to its Prince.

CHAPTER XXX.— That a Citizen who seeks by his personal influence to. render signal service to his Country,. must first stand clear of Envy.. How a City should prepare for its defence on the approach of an Enemy.

CHAPTER XXXI.— That strong Republics and valiant Men preserve through. every change the same Spirit and Bearing.

CHAPTER XXXII.— Of the methods which some have used to make Peace. impossible .

CHAPTER XXXIII.— That to insure victory in battle you must inspire your. Men with confidence in one another and in you.

CHAPTER XXXIV.— By what reports, rumours, or surmises the Citizens of. a Republic are led to favour a Fellow-citizen: and-whether the. Magistracies are bestowed with better judgment by a People or by a. Prince.

CHAPTER XXXV.— Of the Danger incurred in being the first to recommend. new Measures; and that the more unusual the Measures the greater the. Danger .

CHAPTER XXXVI.— Why it has been and still may be affirmed of the Gauls,. that at the beginning of a fray they are more than Men, but afterwards. less than Women .

CHAPTER XXXVII.— Whether a general engagement should be preceded by. skirmishes; and how, avoiding these, we may get knowledge of a new. Enemy.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.— Of the Qualities of a Captain in whom his Soldiers. can confide.

CHAPTER XXXIX.— That a Captain should have good knowledge of Places.

CHAPTER XL.— That Fraud is fair in War.

CHAPTER XLI.— That our Country is to be defended by Honour or by. Dishonour; and in either way is well defended.

CHAPTER XLII.— That Promises made on Compulsion are not to be. observed.

CHAPTER XLIII.— That Men born in the same Province retain through all. Times nearly the same Character.

CHAPTER XLIV.— That where ordinary methods fail,. Hardihood and Daring. often succeed.

CHAPTER XLV.— Whether in battle it is better to await and repel the. Enemy's attack, or to anticipate it by an impetuous onset.

CHAPTER XLVI.— How the Characteristics of Families come to be. perpetuated.

CHAPTER XLVII.— That love of his Country should lead a good Citizen to. forget private Wrongs.

CHAPTER XLVIII.— That on finding an Enemy make what seems a grave blunder, we should suspect some fraud to lurk behind.

CHAPTER XLIX.— That a Commonwealth to preserve its Freedom has constant need of new Ordinances. Of the services in respect of which Quintius Fabius received the surname of Maximus.

BOOK I.

PREFACE

CHAPTER

I. Of the beginnings of Cities in general, and in particular of that of Rome

II. Of the various kinds of Government; and to which of them the Roman Commonwealth belonged

III. Of the accidents which led in Rome to the creation of Tribunes of the People, whereby the Republic was made more perfect

IV. That the dissensions between the Senate and Commons of Rome made Rome free and powerful

V. Whether the guardianship of public freedom is safer in the hands of the Commons or of the Nobles; and whether those who seek to acquire power, or they who seek to maintain it, are the greater cause of commotions

VI. Whether it was possible in Rome to contrive such a Government as would have composed the differences between the Commons and the Senate

VII. That to preserve liberty in a State, there must exist the right to accuse

VIII. That calumny is as hurtful in a Commonwealth as the power to accuse is useful

IX. That to give new institutions to a Commonwealth, or to reconstruct old institutions on an entirely new basis, must be the work of one Man

X. That in proportion as the founder of a Kingdom or Commonwealth merits praise, he who founds a Tyranny deserves blame

XI. Of the Religion of the Romans

XII. That it is of much moment to make account of Religion; and that

Italy, through the Roman Church, being wanting therein, has been ruined

XIII. Of the use the Romans made of Religion in giving institutions to their City; in carrying out their enterprises; and in quelling tumults

XIV. That the Romans interpreted the auspices to meet the occasion; and made a prudent show of observing the rites of Religion even when forced to disregard them; and any who rashly slighted Religion they punished

XV. How the Samnites, as a last resource in their broken fortunes, had recourse to Religion

XVI. That a People accustomed to live under a Prince, if by any accident it become free, can hardly preserve that freedom

XVII. That a corrupt People obtaining freedom can hardly preserve it

XVIII. How a free Government existing in a corrupt City may be preserved, or not existing may be created

XIX. After a strong Prince a weak Prince may maintain himself: but after one weak Prince no Kingdom can stand a second

XX. That the consecutive reigns of two valiant Princes produce great results: and that well-ordered Commonwealths are assured of a succession of valiant Rulers by whom their power and growth are rapidly extended

XXI. That it is a great reproach to a Prince or to a Commonwealth to be without a National Army

XXII. What is to be noted in the combat of the three Roman Horatii and the three Alban Curiatii

XXIII. That we should never hazard our whole fortunes, where we put not forth our entire strength; for which reason to guard a defile is often hurtful

XXIV. That well-ordered States always provide rewards and punishments for their Citizens; and never set off deserts against misdeeds

XXV. That he who would reform the institutions of a free State, must retain at least the semblance of old ways

XXVI. That a new Prince in a city or province of which he has taken possession, ought to make everything new

XXVII. That Men seldom know how to be wholly good or wholly bad

XXVIII. Whence it came that the Romans were less ungrateful to their citizens than were the Athenians

XXIX. Whether a People or a Prince is the more ungrateful

XXX. How Princes and Commonwealths may avoid the vice of ingratitude; and how a Captain or Citizen may escape being undone by it

XXXI. That the Roman Captains were never punished with extreme severity for misconduct; and where loss resulted to

the Republic merely through their ignorance or want of judgment, were not punished at all

XXXII. That a Prince or Commonwealth should not defer benefits until they are forced to yield them

XXXIII. When a mischief has grown up in, or against a State, it is safer to temporize with it than to meet it with violence

XXXIV. That the authority of the Dictator did good and not harm to the Roman Republic; and that it is, not those powers which are given by the free suffrages of the People, but those which ambitious Citizens usurp for themselves that are pernicious to a State

XXXV. Why the creation of the Decemvirate in Rome, although brought about by the free and open suffrage of the Citizens, was hurtful to the liberties of that Republic

XXXVI. That Citizens who have held the higher offices of a Commonwealth should not disdain the lower

XXXVII. Of the mischief bred in Rome by the Agrarian Law: and how it is a great source of disorder in a Commonwealth to pass a law opposed to ancient usage with stringent retrospective effect

XXXVIII. That weak Republics are irresolute and undecided; and that the course they may take depends more on Necessity than Choice

XXXIX. That often the same accidents are seen to befall different Nations

XL. Of the creation of the Decemvirate in Rome, and what therein is to be noted. Wherein among other matters it

is shown how the same causes may lead to the safety or to the ruin of a Commonwealth

XLI. That it is unwise to pass at a bound from leniency to severity, or to a haughty bearing from a humble

XLII. How easily men become corrupted

XLIII. That men fighting in their own cause make good and resolute

Soldiers

XLIV. That the Multitude is helpless without a head: and that we should not with the same breath threaten and ask leave

XLV. That it is of evil example, especially in the maker of a law, not to observe the law when made: and that daily to renew acts of severity in a City is most hurtful to the Governor

XLVI. That men climb from one step of ambition to another, seeking at first to escape injury, and then to injure others

XLVII. That though men deceive themselves in generalities, in particulars they judge truly

XLVIII. He who would not have an office bestowed on some worthless or wicked person, should contrive that it be solicited by one who is utterly worthless and wicked, or else by one who is in the highest degree noble and good

XLIX. That if Cities which, like Rome, had their beginning in freedom, have had difficulty in framing such laws as would preserve their freedom, Cities which at the first have been in subjection will find this almost impossible

L. That neither any Council nor any Magistrate should have power to bring the Government of a City to a stay

LI. What a Prince or Republic does of necessity, should seem to be done by choice

LII. That to check the arrogance of a Citizen who is growing too powerful in a State, there is no safer method, nor less open to objection, than to forestall him in those ways whereby he seeks to advance himself

LIII. That the People, deceived by a false show of advantage, often desire what would be their ruin; and that large hopes and brave promises easily move them

LIV. Of the boundless authority which a great man may use to restrain an excited Multitude

LV. That the Government is easily carried on in a City wherein the body of the People is not corrupted: and that a Princedom is impossible where equality prevails, and a Republic where it does not

LVI. That when great calamities are about to befall a City or Country, signs are seen to presage, and seers arise who foretell them

LVII. That the People are strong collectively, but individually weak

LVIII. That a People is wiser and more constant than a Prince

LIX. To what Leagues or Alliances we may most trust, whether those we make with Commonwealths or those we make with Princes

LX. That the Consulship and all the other Magistracies in Rome were given without respect to Age

BOOK II.

PREFACE

I. Whether the Empire acquired by the Romans was more due to Valour or to Fortune

II. With what Nations the Romans had to contend, and how stubborn these were in defending their Freedom

III. That Rome became great by destroying the Cities which lay round about her, and by readily admitting Strangers to the rights of Citizenship

IV. That Commonwealths have followed three methods for extending their power

V. That changes in Sects and Tongues, and the happening of Floods and Pestilences, obliterate the memory of the past

VI. Of the methods followed by the Romans in making War

VII. Of the quantity of land assigned by the Romans to each colonist

VIII. Why certain Nations leave their ancestral seats and overflow the Countries of others

IX. Of the Causes which commonly give rise to wars between States

X. That contrary to the vulgar opinion, Money is not the sinews of War

XI. That it were unwise to ally yourself with a Prince who has reputation rather than strength

XII. Whether when Invasion is imminent it is better to anticipate or to await it

XIII. That Men rise from humble to high fortunes rather by Fraud than by

Force

XIV. That Men often err in thinking they can subdue Pride by Humility

XV. That weak States are always dubious in their resolves; and that tardy resolves are always hurtful

XVI. That the Soldiers of our days depart widely from the methods of ancient Warfare

XVII. What importance the Armies of the present day should allow to Artillery; and whether the commonly received opinion concerning it be just

XVIII. That the authority of the Romans and the example of ancient warfare should make us hold Foot Soldiers of more account than Horse

XIX. That conquests made by ill governed States and such as follow not the valiant methods of the Romans, lend rather to their ruin than to their aggrandizement

XX. Of the dangers incurred by Princes or Republics who resort to

Auxiliary or Mercenary Arms

XXI. That Capua was the first City to which the Romans sent a Prætor; nor there, until four hundred years after they began to make war

XXII. That in matters of moment Men often judge amiss

XXIII. That in chastising their Subjects when circumstances required it the Romans always avoided half measures

XXIV. That, commonly, Fortresses do much more harm than good

XXV. That he who attacks a City divided against itself, must not think to get possession of it through its divisions

XXVI. That Taunts and Abuse breed hatred against him who uses them, without yielding him any advantage

XXVII. That prudent Princes and Republics should be content to have obtained a victory; for, commonly, when they are not, their victory turns to defeat

XXVIII. That to neglect the redress of Grievances, whether public or private, is dangerous for a Prince or Commonwealth

XXIX. That Fortune obscures the minds of Men when she would not have them hinder her designs

XXX. That really powerful Princes and Commonwealths do not buy Friendships with money, but with their valour and the fame of their prowess

XXXI. Of the danger of trusting banished men

XXXII. In how many ways the Romans gained possession of Towns

XXXIII. That the Romans entrusted the Captains of their Armies with the fullest Powers

BOOK III.

I. For a Sect or Commonwealth to last long, it must often be brought back to its beginnings

II. That on occasion it is wise to feign folly

III. That to preserve a newly acquired freedom we must slay the Sons of Brutus

IV. That an Usurper is never safe in his Princedom while those live whom he has deprived of it

V. How an Hereditary King may come to lose his Kingdom

VI. Of Conspiracies

VII. Why it is that changes from Freedom to Servitude, and from Servitude to Freedom, are sometimes made without bloodshed, but at other times reek with blood

VIII. That he who would effect changes in a Commonwealth, must give heed to its character and condition

IX. That to enjoy constant good fortune we must change with the times

X. That a Captain cannot escape battle when his Enemy forces it on him at all hazards

XI. That one who has to contend with many, though he be weaker than they, will prevail if he can withstand their first onset

XII. A prudent Captain will do what he can to make it necessary for his own Soldiers to fight, and to relieve his Enemy from that necessity

XIII. Whether we may trust more to a valiant Captain with a weak Army, or to a valiant Army with a weak Captain

XIV. Of the effect produced in Battle by strange and unexpected Sights or Sounds

XV. That one and not many should head an Army; and why it is disadvantageous to have more leaders than one

XVI. That in times of difficulty true Worth is sought after whereas in quiet times it is not the most deserving but those who are recommended by wealth or connection who are most in favour

XVII. That we are not to offend a Man, and then send him to fill an important Office or Command

XVIII. That it is the highest quality of a Captain to be able to forestall the designs of his adversary

XIX. Whether indulgence or severity be more necessary for controlling a
Multitude

XX. How one humane act availed more with the men of Falerii than all the might of the Roman Arms

XXI. How it happened that Hannibal pursuing a course contrary to that taken by Scipio, wrought the same results in Italy which the other achieved in Spain

XXII. That the severity of Manlius Torquatus and the gentleness of Valerius Corvinus won for both the same Glory

XXIII. Why Camillus was banished from Rome

XXIV. That prolonged Commands brought Rome to Servitude

XXV. Of the Poverty of Cincinnatus and of many other Roman Citizens

XXVI. How women are a cause of the ruin of States

XXVII. How a divided City may be reunited; and how it is a false opinion that to hold Cities in subjection they must be kept divided

XXVIII. That a Republic must keep an eye on what its Citizens are about; since often the seeds of a Tyranny lie hidden under a semblance of generous deeds

XXIX. That the faults of a People are due to its Prince

XXX. That a Citizen who seeks by his personal influence to render signal service to his Country, must first stand clear of Envy. How a City should prepare for its defence on the approach of an Enemy

XXXI. That strong Republics and valiant Men preserve through every change the same spirit and bearing

XXXII. Of the methods which some have used to make Peace impossible

XXXIII. That to insure victory in battle, you must inspire your soldiers with confidence in one another and in you

XXXIV. By what reports, rumours, or surmises the Citizens of a Republic are led to favour a fellow-citizen: and whether the Magistracies are bestowed with better judgment by a People or by a Prince

XXXV. Of the danger incurred in being the first to recommend new measures; and that the more unusual the measures, the greater the danger

XXXVI. Why it has been and still may be affirmed of the Gauls, that at the beginning of a fray they are more than Men, but afterwards less than Women

XXXVII. Whether a general engagement should be preceded by skirmishes; and how, avoiding these, we may get knowledge of a new Enemy

XXXVIII. Of the Qualities of a Captain in whom his Soldiers can confide

XXXIX. That a Captain should have good knowledge of Places

XL. That Fraud is fair in War

XLI. That our Country is to be defended by Honour or by Dishonour, and in either way is well defended

XLII. That Promises made on compulsion are not to be observed

XLIII. That Men born in the same Province retain through all times nearly the same character

XLIV. That where ordinary methods fail, Hardihood and Daring often succeed

XLV. Whether in battle it is better to await and repel the enemy's attack, or to anticipate it by an impetuous onset

XLVI. How the Characteristics of Families come to be perpetuated

XLVII. That love of his Country should lead a good Citizen to forget private wrongs

XLVIII. That on finding an Enemy make what seems a grave blunder we should suspect some fraud to lurk behind

XLIX. That a Commonwealth to preserve its Freedom has constant need of new Ordinances. Of the services in respect of which Quintius Fabius received the surname of Maximus

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

[Table of Contents](#)

TO

**ZANOBI BUONDELMONTI AND COSIMO
RUCELLAI**

HEALTH.

I send you a gift, which if it answers ill the obligations I owe you, is at any rate the greatest which Niccolò Machiavelli has it in his power to offer. For in it I have expressed whatever I have learned, or have observed for myself during a long experience and constant study of human affairs. And since neither you nor any other can

expect more at my hands, you cannot complain if I have not given you more.

You may indeed lament the poverty of my wit, since what I have to say is but poorly said; and tax the weakness of my judgment, which on many points may have erred in its conclusions. But granting all this, I know not which of us is less beholden to the other: I to you, who have forced me to write what of myself I never should have written; or you to me, who have written what can give you no content.

Take this, however, in the spirit in which all that comes from a friend should be taken, in respect whereof we always look more to the intention of the giver than to the quality of the gift. And, believe me, that in one thing only I find satisfaction, namely, in knowing that while in many matters I may have made mistakes, at least I have not been mistaken in choosing you before all others as the persons to whom I dedicate these Discourses; both because I seem to myself, in doing so, to have shown a little gratitude for kindness received, and at the same time to have departed from the hackneyed custom which leads many authors to inscribe their works to some Prince, and blinded by hopes of favour or reward, to praise him as possessed of every virtue; whereas with more reason they might reproach him as contaminated with every shameful vice.

To avoid which error I have chosen, not those who are but those who from their infinite merits deserve to be Princes; not such persons as have it in their power to load me with honours, wealth, and preferment, but such as though they lack the power, have all the will to do so. For men, if they would judge justly, should esteem those who are, and not

those whose means enable them to be generous; and in like manner those who know how to govern kingdoms, rather than those who possess the government without such knowledge. For Historians award higher praise to Hiero of Syracuse when in a private station than to Perseus the Macedonian when a King affirming that while the former lacked nothing that a Prince should have save the name, the latter had nothing of the King but the kingdom.

Make the most, therefore, of this good or this evil, as you may esteem it, which you have brought upon yourselves; and should you persist in the mistake of thinking my opinions worthy your attention, I shall not fail to proceed with the rest of the History in the manner promised in my Preface. *Farewell.*

DISCOURSES

[Table of Contents](#)

ON THE FIRST DECADE OF TITUS LIVIUS.

BOOK I.

[Table of Contents](#)

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PREFACE.

Albeit the jealous temper of mankind, ever more disposed to censure than to praise the work of others, has constantly made the pursuit of new methods and systems no less perilous than the search after unknown lands and seas; nevertheless, prompted by that desire which nature has implanted in me, fearlessly to undertake whatsoever I think offers a common benefit to all, I enter on a path which, being hitherto untrodden by any, though it involve me in trouble and fatigue, may yet win me thanks from those who judge my efforts in a friendly spirit. And although my feeble discernment, my slender experience of current affairs, and imperfect knowledge of ancient events, render these efforts of mine defective and of no great utility, they may at least open the way to some other, who, with better parts and sounder reasoning and judgment, shall carry out my design; whereby, if I gain no credit, at all events I ought to incur no blame.

When I see antiquity held in such reverence, that to omit other instances, the mere fragment of some ancient statue is often bought at a great price, in order that the purchaser may keep it by him to adorn his house, or to have it copied by those who take delight in this art; and how these, again, strive with all their skill to imitate it in their various works; and when, on the other hand, I find those noble labours which history shows to have been wrought on behalf of the monarchies and republics of old times, by kings, captains, citizens, lawgivers, and others who have toiled for the good