

## ARTICLE VI.

THE TIMES, CHARACTER AND POLITICAL SYSTEM OF  
MACHIAVELLI.<sup>1</sup>

By Daniel E. Goodwin, Professor of Languages, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Me.

AMONG the most remarkable phenomena of mediæval history, may be reckoned the rise and fall of the Italian republics. In the course of what, for most of Europe, was the night of the dark ages, Italy, by a more rapid revolution, had its own early night; then its dawn, its noon, and its second decline; another cloud of darkness gathering over it just as the returning light was chasing away the lingering shades of barbarism from the rest of Europe. It was midnight in Italy when it was but evening in Britain and France; again it was morning in Italy when it was hardly midnight in the neighboring countries.

As early as the 13th century Italy contained an almost incredible number of separate republics—*independent cities*, some of which were respectively possessed of greater wealth, power and foreign influence than England, France or Spain. Their merchants were princes, the islands and coasts of the sea their possessions, the whole commercial world their tributaries. Literature and the arts also shone forth with a short but magnificent effulgence. The great poem of Dante—one name for all, was written about the year 1300, in a language which differs not so much from that now spoken in Italy, as Shakspeare's does from the present ordinary English; while in Dante's time the English language could hardly be said to exist.

<sup>1</sup> *Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli*, 10 vols. 8vo.; Firenze, per Niccolò Conti, 1818.

Besides the Preface of the learned editor to the above mentioned collection of Machiavelli's Works, the authorities consulted in the preparation of this Article are, among others, Botta, Guicciardini, Sismondi and Tiraboschi. Some of the passages translated from these authors, and interwoven into the text are not accompanied with any marks of acknowledgment. Particular references to volume and page have not been thought necessary. And, perhaps, it is equally unnecessary to add, that for the opinions, whether true or false, expressed and defended in this Article, the writer alone is responsible. The subject, though not coming within the narrowest scope of this Review, will be found to have many points of contact with its general objects.

While the great warlike and maritime republics of Venice and Genoa were under an aristocratic form of government, Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Siena, Bologna, Modena, Ferrara, Verona, Padua, Milan, Parma, Mantua and a host more, were democracies more or less pure. In the course of time, Florence subjected or subordinated to herself most of the other Tuscan republics. In her most flourishing periods her wealth was almost incredible. Her revenues were many times greater than those of the crown of England. Some idea of her population may be gathered from the fact that in the great plague of 1348, which has been immortalized by the Description and the Decameron of Boccaccio, more than 100,000 of her inhabitants died; and again, in the long mortality which prevailed from 1522 to 1527, of which Machiavelli has left an almost equally graphic description, more than 250,000 of her citizens perished; and in six months of the year 1527, there died within her walls no less than 40,000 persons. Yet she survived, and, but for other causes, might have soon recovered from the blow.

Like all the other democratic republics, Florence was subject to many violent revolutions, constantly torn by factions, often under the control of tyrants; but her liberties were not entirely extinguished till 1530, when the overwhelming power of Austria, instigated and backed by the pope, finally reduced the city and gave it into the hands of the Medicean family, who had been exiled as dangerous citizens, and who soon after their return assumed the title of Dukes. Here ends the history, not only of the Italian republics, but of the Italian nation.

As to the rest of the democratic cities, before the 14th century they had all fallen under the iron rule of *signori*, i. e. lords or tyrants, who have been not inaptly compared to the men that sprung from the serpent's teeth sown by Cadmus, and that went on fighting one another until they were all killed. Foreign allies were called in to decide their contests. Italy, which had recovered from the desolations of Goths and Vandals, and become once more the garden of Europe, was made the battle-field and war-prize of the most powerful nations of Christendom. Rome, that had often been captured by the barbarians in the early part of the Christian era, never was so savagely treated by any of them, as when sacked by the troops of Charles V. in the 15th century.

The republics of Italy and those of Greece present a striking analogy in their character, history and fate; with this important difference, that while those of Greece were subjugated by a sin-

gle master, Philip of Macedon, who was himself proud to be called a Greek ; those of Italy were a bone of contention for the neighboring potentates, who had all learned to despise the Italian name, and who seem to have conspired to do their utmost to degrade still lower the object of their contempt.

Machiavelli was born at Florence in 1469, and died in 1527. A contemporary of Christopher Columbus and Martin Luther, his life corresponds precisely with one of the greatest crises the history of Europe has ever experienced—one of the most fortunate crises, too, in many respects, though some of its results are not a little to be regretted.

At this period all was in movement and expectation. There was a universal longing and struggling for light and liberty. The mind of Christendom, roused from the stupor of its long slumber to a state of semi-consciousness, shook violently off the shackles of superstition and ghostly tyranny, though in the convulsive effort of blind impulse and gigantic might, what wonder if in too many instances it shook off also the wholesome restraints of truth and soberness and legitimate authority? With instinctive repugnance it stripped away the garments of corruption, whose loathsome aspect met the dim vision of its opening eyes ; but what wonder, if with them, in its hasty zeal, it rejected, in too many instances, the decent habiliments of social fitness and beauty?

Physical science lighted her torch, and speculation sealed up her visions ; the secular spirit ascended the throne of human affairs, while the predominance of the religious idea (in external institutions) passed away. Common sense began her reign. New worlds were discovered. Commerce was extended. The fine arts rose to their highest pitch of splendor. In short, so great was the change, that many historians have considered the discovery of America, as the most appropriate epoch from which to date the commencement of modern history.

But while this was in many respects, and especially in material well-being, the period of general renovation for Europe ; for Italy it was the season of unmingled degradation and accelerated decline. Language fails to convey an idea of the deep-seated and wide-spread corruption, and of the inextricable, infinite confusion of Italian society at this period. St. Paul's terrible description of the state of the heathen world before the introduction of Christianity, never could have applied more exactly in all its lineaments, parts and particulars to any people or state of society than to the Italians of this period. They were addicted to vile

affections and to the most debasing lusts and vices; *being filled with all unrighteousness, licentiousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despitesful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, and adding to that catalogue of vices the most presumptuous hypocrisy, not only did the same and had pleasure in them which did them, but professed to be Christians, to be the very centre and model of Christianity—nay, to contain the very head of the corner and keystone of the Christian edifice.* Popes administered poison to cardinals, and cardinals conspired against the lives of popes; princes disarmed their foes by treachery and then murdered them in cold blood; cardinals' caps were sold to the highest bidder; even the pontifical tiara in two flagrant instances, those of Alexander VI and Clement VII, (Julius II and Leo X. might be added to the number,) was bargained for and bought with gold. Varchi, the most indulgent contemporary historian acknowledges that Clement was elected with manifest simony.

Treaties sanctioned by the most solemn oaths in war, impudently violated in peace, ostentatious luxury and licentiousness, unblushing incest, fraud boasting openly of its exploits, virtue everywhere neglected or oppressed, right trampled on by force, prostitution, violence, assassinations, increasing the more as they were the more notorious and sure of impunity or even honor—these, says a modern Italian Professor of History, offer to the pencil of the historian such a deep coloring of baseness, that he must needs soften or reduce it, or his tale would be incredible, not to say intolerable.

This was the age of Caesar Borgia, a natural son of pope Alexander VI; endowed with extraordinary talents, but probably the most monstrous specimen of depravity that ever existed under the human form. Fratricide and incest were the A B C of his morals, poison and the dagger his escutcheon. He never made a promise with any other design than that he might gain an advantage by breaking it. He acquired sovereignty by assassinating his rivals, and popularity by destroying his tools; and "he fell at last amidst the mingled curses and regrets of a people, of whom his genius had been the wonder and might have been the salvation."

This was the age too of Lucretia Borgia, daughter of the same

Alexander VI, the presiding genius of the Pontifical palace during most of his reign, and, if contemporary historians are to be believed, the incestuous mistress of both father and brother. Over her life decency draws a veil.

Alexander himself, (according to Sismondi,) created during his pontificate forty-three cardinals, of whom scarcely a single nomination was gratuitous. The greater part brought him at least 10,000 florins, some 20,000, some 30,000. But for the pope to sell these highest dignities of the church was a small affair. The cardinals employed by him in the administration, enriched themselves rapidly, and the pope was accused of making way with a great number of them, to seize upon their estates and dispose of their benefices which returned to the Holy See; thus reaping a double harvest from the simoniacal transaction. Such were the criminal resources by which the pope was enabled to meet the prodigious expenses of supporting the prodigalities of his daughter, the luxury of his court and the armies of his son. While issuing his bulls, defining the faith of Christendom and dividing the whole unchristianized world between the Spaniards and Portuguese, he was rendering himself an accomplice in all the crimes of Caesar Borgia, prostituting the whole power of the church, and setting every little engine of papal influence in motion, to secure to that illegitimate son the dominion of the paltry province of Romagna. It was believed in all Italy that Alexander, having poisoned the cardinals of St. Angelo, of Capua and of Modena, in the attempt to add the cardinal of Cornets to the number, poisoned himself.

We will stain these pages with the story of but one more of the monsters of crime, with whom this period swarmed; and we select this instance, not because it is extraordinary but because it is classical with the Italian writers of this period; it is that of Oliverotto of Fermo. Left an orphan in the tenderest infancy, he had been adopted and educated by his natural uncle, who had treated him with all the tenderness that a father could have shown to a beloved child. His uncle had introduced him into the military career under the most favorable auspices. He had distinguished himself, and had risen to a high rank among the Italian captains of the time. Finding himself once, with a troop of his followers, on the frontiers of his native country, he wrote to his uncle that he desired to see again the paternal mansion, and to show himself there with the honors that he had acquired in war, by bringing a retinue of a hundred of his horsemen. His

uncle obtained of the civil authorities permission to introduce his followers into the city. He contrived for him the most flattering reception, lodged him at his own house with all his troop, and a few days after gave in his honor a repast to all the magistracy of Fermo. In the midst of this repast Oliverotto caused his soldiers to enter, massacred his uncle and all his guests, and compelled the citizens to acknowledge himself as prince of Fermo and its territory. Truly, if Dante had lived two centuries later, we should have had no *Purgatory* or *Paradise*; *Hell* would have engrossed all his Poem. To complete the picture, Sismondi adds, with some exaggeration we would fain believe, that "the enemies of Caesar Borgia were no less perfidious and no less polluted with crimes than he."

It is a heavy accusation preferred by Montaigne against Guicciardini, that "of all the passions, words, counsels and actions on which he passes judgment, he never attributes one to religion, conscience or virtue, as if these no longer existed in the world." But it may be truly answered, that if ever there were times in which faith and virtue were banished from among men, they were precisely those which were described by him. And Montaigne himself admits, that Guicciardini wrote uninfluenced by hatred, favor or vanity.

It is difficult, in those times, to make any exceptions in favor of virtue. But it is a relief to be able to make three or four. Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence was better than Pericles of Athens; Dandolo of Venice was as courageous as Leonidas; Doria of Genoa was as virtuous as the Spartan Agis and more fortunate; in the opinion of the Italians there is no glory among the moderns and perhaps none among the ancients which equals the glory of the Genoan Columbus. After a life without a stain he could die without remorse. But, with a few exceptions more, the rest, to use a strong phrase of St. Augustine in its strongest sense, was a *mass of corruption*.

Such were the times in which Machiavelli lived, such was the atmosphere in which he was educated, such was the society in which he moved, and such were the events and scenes which he witnessed and recorded, and which were at once the occasion and the basis of his political theories.

It might be interesting to inquire into the causes of this unexampled spectacle; but when we talk of the causes of such phenomena, we almost always reason in a circle. Wealth, luxury, the vices natural to petty tyrants, the degrading influence of

foreign control—these, and other circumstances, may have had their share in producing the sad result, but we still look for the source of the *unprecedented* enormity of corruption which characterized this period. We find it nowhere but in the antecedent perversion of religion, in the foul crimes and shameless turpitude of the court of Rome. It is impossible to say to what degree a false religious instruction had been ruinous to the morals of Italy. Men were taught, not to obey but to evade their consciences. Every body gave his passions free scope, relying upon papal indulgences, mental reservations, a future penance, and an approaching absolution. The greatest religious fervor was so far from being a guaranty of probity, that the more scrupulous a man was in his public practices of devotion, the more his character was to be distrusted. Even Borgia, like the later Robespierre, seemed to have a peculiar quickness of sensibility for religious and moral affections. He could make himself an agreeable, a bewitching companion; and talk of faith, frankness and friendship, with such a perfection of hypocrisy as sometimes to throw even the most wary off their guard.

That the corruption of the Papal court preceded this general corruption of Italy, is evident from the fact that, two centuries before, Dante bitterly complained of it. Three of the pontiffs who occupied the seat of St. Peter during *his* times, Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, and Clement V, he unceremoniously places in his Hell, among those who were there tormented for the sin of simony; and to one of them he there addresses these remarkable words:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Di voi pastor s'accorse il Vangelista,  
 Quando colei che siede souva l'acque  
 Puttaneggiar co'regi a lui fu vista:  
 Quella che con le sette teste nacque,  
 E dalle diece corna ebbe argomento  
 Fin che virtute al suo marito piacque.  
 Fatto v'avete Dio d'oro e d'argento;  
 E che altro è da voi all' idolatre,  
 Se non ch'egli uno e voi n'orate cento?  
 Ah! Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre  
 Non la tua conversion, ma quella dote  
 Che da te prese il primo ricco patre!

Inferno. Canto XIX.

From the poems, tales and satirical literature of the middle ages might be collected a mass of testimony against the church of Rome as strong and as strongly expressed, we are almost tempted to think, as the Reformation itself

"T'was of such Pastors of Christ's flock as you  
 The Revelator spake, when her he saw  
 Who on the waters sat, foul whore of kings.  
 That ten-horned beast who rose with seven heads  
 Was held in check while virtue pleased her lord.  
 Of gold and silver ye have made your God ;  
 Differing wherein from the idolater,  
 But that he worships one, a hundred ye ?  
 Ah Constantine ! to how much ill gave birth  
 Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower  
 Which the first wealthy Father gained from thee !"

Scarcely did the coarse-mouthed Luther himself speak with more freedom of the Babylonian harlot, than this stern, indignant poet of the thirteenth century.

Machiavelli, too, though like Dante a good Roman Catholic, treats the court of Rome with fearless severity, or rather justice. He plainly ascribed to it the vices and the degradation of Italy in his own times, in a passage for which popes and Jesuits could never forgive him. We the more readily cite at length this passage, as it may serve to counterbalance in some degree the prevailing prejudice with which the name of Machiavelli is associated.

Discoursing of religion in respect to its utility in a State he says : " Those republics which would maintain themselves uncorrupted, must above all things see to it that they maintain uncorrupted the ceremonies of religion, and hold them always in their veneration ; for there can be no surer symptom of the ruin of a country, than to see divine worship neglected or despised. As the observance of divine worship conduces to the greatness and growth of republics, so the contempt of it leads to their certain ruin. Because when the fear of God is wanting, the State must either go to ruin, or be sustained by the fear of a prince which may supply the deficiency of religion. If our religion had been preserved in its purity as it was ordained by its founder, the

can furnish. Take the following pasquinade against the pope from the " *Apo-  
stypsis Golias*," of the thirteenth century.

" Non pastor ovium, sed pastus ovibus.  
 Membra dolent singula capitis dolore !  
 Roma mundi caput est ; sed nil capit mundum ;  
 Quod pendit a capite totum est immundum ;  
 Transit enim vitium primum in secundum,  
 Et de fundo redolet quod est juxta fundum."

See also such books as " *Reynard the Fox*," " *Life of St. Nemo*," " *Piers Ploughman*," " *Eulenspiegel*," etc.

States and republics of Christendom would have been vastly more united and happy than they now are. Nor can there be a surer proof of its adulteration and decline, than to see how those people who are nearest the Roman church, which is the head of our religion, have the least religion. Whoever should compare its original foundation with the present usage, and consider how utterly unlike they are, would conclude that beyond all doubt either ruin or a scourge must be near. But because some are of opinion that the salvation of Italy depends upon the church of Rome, I will allege two irrefragable reasons to the contrary. The first is, that through the evil example of that court, this country has lost all devotion to any religion whatever; a state of things which brings in its train infinite evils and infinite disorders; for, as, where religion is, every good is presupposed, so, where religion is not, the contrary is presupposed. We Italians therefore are under this first obligation to the church of Rome, that we have come to be without religion and without morals. We are under another, which, in a political point of view, is a more immediate cause of our ruin; for the church in its loss of temporal power, in its anxiety to retain the control of certain provinces, has kept, and still keeps this our country divided. For not being sufficiently powerful to occupy all Italy herself, and fearing to allow all the rest but her own States to be under any other one head, she has been the occasion that the country has remained under many different princes and lords, from whom have arisen so great disunion and weakness that Italy has become the prey of any and every assailant. For all which, we Italians are under obligation to the church and to no other. But for the church we might have been a united and happy people, as well as France and Spain. And whoever should wish by a sure experiment to test the truth of all this, need only be clothed with sufficient power to send the court of Rome to reside, with the authority it has in Italy, in the territories of the Swiss—who are the only people at the present day that live, as regards religion, according to the usages of antiquity; and he would see that, in a very short time, the depraved manners of that court would produce in that country more disorders than any other accident which at any time could possibly happen there."

This was written just at the moment when the monk of Wittenberg was roused to his great work of reformation. The politician of Italy seems to have known little of the reformer of Germany; but of Savonarola his own countryman and contem-

porary, and one of Luther's forerunners, he always speaks with marked respect; "of *such a man*," he says, ("d'un tanto uomo") we ought to speak with reverence; for the purity of his life, his learning, his doctrine, the great work of reform which he undertook, sufficed to make the people of Florence, who were neither rude nor ignorant, believe that he talked with God." Such is the testimony of this man of the world to the character of the pious, though perhaps somewhat too enthusiastic Savonarola. *Yet the court of Rome burnt Savonarola and patronized Borgia.* What wonder that under the immediate influence of such a court, occupying such a peculiar position in relation to the conscience, wickedness should have kept holiday? What wonder too, that Machiavelli himself, falling on such evil times, breathing such a tainted air, compelled as a statesman and diplomatist to deal with such men, should not in his political writings have preserved the highest tone of moral purity?

Of the private character of Machiavelli, little is known and nothing to his disadvantage; both which facts, considering the circumstances, are not a little to be wondered at. The heaviest charge brought against him by his contemporaries, and that preferred by an enemy and accompanied with the acknowledgment that it was his only fault, is that he was wanting in gravity. He was a hater of tyrants, a sturdy republican and a sincere lover of his country, especially of his dear native Florence. He was engaged in public employments most of his life, and though at last thrust out of office, maltreated and imprisoned by the opposing faction, he never sought vengeance like his contemporary, the aristocratical Guicciardini, by joining the enemies of his country that he might overturn the power of his opponents.

He held the office of Secretary of State in the Florentine republic upwards of fourteen years, (that is to say, precisely during the period of its greatest liberty,) and was a most indefatigable and faithful public servant. Besides the ordinary occupations of his office, which were no less than the whole domestic and foreign correspondence of the republic, and the registry of the acts and resolutions of the government, he discharged very frequent extraordinary domestic commissions, and went on twenty-three foreign embassies respecting affairs the most delicate and important for the Florentine State. Four times he was sent ambassador to the king of France, twice to the emperor of Germany, twice to the court of Rome and three times to Caesar Borgia. He raised armies, reformed the constitution and disci-

pline of the troops of the republic, and several times took the field in person. With what ability he acquitted himself of his multifarious duties, his despatches which are extant, and are a model for the imitation of all other ministers and public servants, give the most satisfactory testimony.

His labors were not limited to the exact fulfilment of the purely indispensable duties of his ministry. It is difficult to judge, whether his capacity or his zeal for his country were the greatest. If he did not succeed in saving entire its liberties, he wanted only greater confidence and concord of his fellow citizens, and times less turbulent and desperate. At least the glory is due to him of having attempted it, as far as his influence in affairs permitted him. He could perceive rather than remedy the consequences of the rage of party spirit with which Florence was then agitated, and the faults of the weak government of Soderini, its chief magistrate; who had thrown himself and his country entirely into the arms of France; in relation to which procedure Machiavelli used to say; "The good luck of the French has stripped us of half our dominions, their bad luck will cost us our liberty."

Never was political prediction better verified. The power of France declined. Florence was invested by the troops of Austria, Spain and the pope. The banished Medici were restored. Soderini was driven into exile. Machiavelli was ignominiously ejected from office and treated as a state criminal. On a false accusation he was put to the torture and thrown into prison, from which the interest rather than the equity of his enemies liberated him.

One thing is here to be specially noted, which, the rarer it is, does the more honor to the merit of Machiavelli. The high opinion which was had of his talents and of his affectionate and ingenuous character, preserved him faithful friends in his adversities, and finally overcame and extinguished the aversion of his enemies. In the polite *conversazioni* of the gardens of the Rucellai he was courted and listened to as the oracle. Guicciardini, though of the Medicean party in politics, kept up with him, even in the most dangerous times, an intimate and confidential correspondence. The Medici themselves, both Leo X. and Clement VII, though they could not but regard him as an obstacle to the accomplishment of their designs upon the republic, availed themselves of his services on many important occasions. There was a universal movement at Florence in his favor, and Machiavelli re-appeared in public affairs. He was employed on several impor-

tant commissions, and died in the public service and in the full communion of the Roman church. His son writes to a friend immediately after his death : " Our father has left us, as you know, in extreme poverty."

Such was the public and private life of Machiavelli, a man whose name, by reason of the interpretation usually given to some of his writings, has become synonymous with all that is perfidious and base ; whether deservedly or undeservedly it remains for us to consider.

In his character of author Machiavelli may be considered as a poet and dramatist, an historian, and a statesman or political theorist. As poet and dramatist, we have little to say of him at present. Like most other productions for the stage, his dramas were written to suit the taste of his contemporaries. They contain disgusting exhibitions of the prevailing vices of the times, though often relieved by strokes of extraordinary genius. One of his pieces has been pronounced by Voltaire worth more than all the comedies of Aristophanes, and his poetry has been ranked by some of his countrymen second only to that of Dante and Petrarch. Both judgments are certainly exaggerated ; but it is indeed wonderful how a man of such cool intellect and all immured in political speculations, could so gracefully converse with the muses, and succeed equally well in the epic and lyric, the serious and the comic, though each of them usually requires a peculiar talent.

His historical and political writings are closely related to each other ; the latter being but a sort of philosophical commentary upon the former and upon history in general.

Botta divides the historians Italy has produced into three classes. The first he calls *patriotic*, the second *moral*, and the third *natural* or *positive*. Livy is a type of the first ; Tacitus of the second ; Machiavelli and Guicciardini belong to the third. Machiavelli's view of human affairs and conduct, was practical rather than ethical. Of human nature his judgment was altogether unfavorable ; and in this even the amiable Botta does not wholly disagree with him. " These historians," says he, " consider human nature as it is and not as it ought to be ; and if I were not afraid of bringing down upon myself the severe reproof of those who wish to appear good without being so, I would affirm that the historians of this sort are the most true in regard to the immediate causes and motives of actions ; and perhaps the most useful of all, if we have in view the government of States, not the amelioration of the human race ; the service rather than the love of our

country. Men are indeed exceedingly difficult to be governed, for if their nature partakes of the angelic, it partakes also of the beastly. These historians march straight forward to the end, and give themselves little solicitude about the means. Vice or virtue, it matters not to them; they have only to explain why and how the object was actually attained. They describe with equal coolness an act of atrocity or of benevolence, an act of baseness or of magnanimity. Hence they are the most impartial historians, because having no impulsive bias for virtue or for vice, for good or for evil, for country or for no country, they suffer themselves to be turned aside by no passion good or bad, but imperturbably pursue their inexorable way. In short, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, the Tacitus and Thucydides of Italian story, are like two buoys moored amidst the tempestuous sea of human passions, towards which he who guides the ship of State, and he too who simply lives in this mad and naughty world, ought continually to turn his eyes, not that he may follow them as a guide, but that he may be warned by them to avoid the shoals and rocks on which he might be wrecked and lost."

Machiavelli's political writings are chiefly three,—“The Art of War,” “Discourses on Livy,” and “The Prince.” For mentioning the first here, which seems to have no very close connection with this department, we have two reasons. The first is, because it shows the wonderful versatility and practical exactness of Machiavelli's mind. This treatise is no mere closet or fire-side theory, to be laughed at by practical men. According to the testimony of high authorities, it shows a knowledge of military science, not only marvellous in a man of the cloth, but extraordinary even in a veteran commander. He went in advance of his age, and assumed the office of teacher. One of his leading objects was, to show the advantage of infantry at a time when this service was generally despised; and his reasonings had such a powerful effect, that to him must be in part attributed the restoration of good tactics, and the perfection which the art of war has reached in modern times. Another reason for mentioning this treatise in connection with its author's political writings, is for the sake of the parallel between them. As the one is an Art of War or Strategy, the other is an Art of Politics or State-craft. War may be wrong and politics may be wrong; yet there may be an art on which depends success in the one as well as in the other. And this art may have its own rules, which may have little to do with

the rules of morality; yet if they can be coolly laid down in the one case why not in the other?

In the treatise entitled "The Prince," by which Machiavelli is more known than by all his other writings, this art of politics is set forth in its most condensed and repulsive form. His detractors have believed or affected to believe, that they found in it a thoroughly digested system of irreligion, impiety and tyranny, proceeding from the heart of the author, and recommended by the seal of his full approbation; and they have shouted *wolf*, and raised against him the universal indignation.

It must be confessed, we think, that there are passages in "The Prince," which, taken by themselves, sound harsh and offensive, we may even say horrible, to humane and Christian ears, and which it is hard to conceive how a man, with right feelings, could set down without some caution or disapproval on the spot, at times even with phrases too nearly approaching to commendation. But a fair criticism requires that his political doctrines should be taken into consideration as a whole, and not in detached passages and garbled extracts. We ought not, in mere charity, to dissemble the author's own disapprobation of wicked maxims, either given in the context or elsewhere in his works. We ought to confront Machiavelli with Machiavelli, one writing with his other writings, one sentiment with the general drift of his sentiments; and the whole, as we do in interpreting the imprecations in the Psalms of David, with the author's own life and character. And if his true spirit and the spirit of his works, were comprehended in this *royal way*, he would have left his detractors but little to do, to refute the horrid doctrines they have laid to his charge, and men would be ashamed of fighting a phantom of their own imaginations.

The grounds and motives of Machiavelli's policy together with its *most exceptionable* maxims, he himself gives in the following words, in the 15th chap. of The Prince.

"It being my intention to write what may be useful to men of intelligence, [and who will be able therefore to make the proper qualifications and distinctions,] it has seemed to me more to the purpose, to follow the practical truth of things, than any visions of the imagination. Many philosophers have imagined republics and principalities which never did nor can exist; for the manner in which men live is so different from that in which they ought to live, that one who leaves *what is* for what *ought to be*, is in the high road to ruin. Thus a man who refuses ever to deviate from

the path of strict rectitude, must needs be undone among so many who unhesitatingly pursue a different course." "Every one will undoubtedly confess, that a prince endowed with all virtues and free from all vices, would be a most estimable and praiseworthy personage; but while human nature remains as it is, we cannot expect that any man should be possessed of all good qualities, nor could he put them all in practice if he had them;" "it is therefore necessary for a prince, if he would sustain himself, to learn how not to be good sometimes, and to use that knowledge according to the exigency of the case."

In chap. 18, he says: "How honorable and praiseworthy it is in a prince, for example, to maintain good faith and act with integrity, every one must be sensible. Yet experience has shown us, that those princes of our own times who have made the least account of their word, have done the greatest things. By the mazes of their subtlety they have set the brains of men in a whirl, and in the end have got the better of those who have rested in the power of sincerity and good faith."

"You must know then, there are two ways of deciding a contest, the one by laws, the other by cunning and force; the first proper to man, the second to beasts. But as the first is oftentimes insufficient, we must resort to the second. Wherefore a prince must know on proper occasions how to act the beast as well as the man. And this is obscurely taught by the ancient writers, who relate that Achilles and several other princes were committed to the nurture and discipline of Chiron the Centaur, that, as their preceptor was half man and half beast, they might be taught, as was needful, to imitate both natures. Since then a prince must learn to act the beast sometimes, he should take the lion and the fox for his patterns; for the lion cannot defend himself from snares nor the fox from wolves. Wherefore he must be a fox to detect the snares, and a lion to frighten the wolves. Those who stand simply upon the lion, do not understand the business. A prudent prince, therefore, cannot and must not keep his word when it would be to his own hurt or ruin, and the causes no longer exist which made him give it. If all mankind were good, this precept would not be good; but since they are bad and will take all possible advantage of you, so must you of them. A prince will never want colorable pretences to varnish his breach of faith, of which we might bring numberless examples, and show how many treaties and promises have been perfidiously violated by princes; while those who have best

acted the fox have always succeeded best in their enterprises. But it is necessary to disguise this character, and be a thorough master of simulation and of dissimulation."

"I will even venture to affirm, that the semblance of good qualities is useful while their reality may be prejudicial." "A prince must have great care that nothing ever drop from his lips inconsistent with the highest virtues; so that at seeing and hearing him, one would think him all goodness, all faith, all humanity, all integrity, all religion—especially the last; because men generally judge by the eyes more than by the hands; for every one can see, few can perceive. Every body sees what you appear, few can discern what you are, and those few dare not oppose the voice of the many who have the majesty of the State to defend them."<sup>1</sup>

"As to the query, whether it be better for a prince to be feared or loved, one would wish to be both. A weak prince will rather seek to gain love, a strong prince to inspire fear. But as it depends entirely upon the inclinations of the subjects themselves whether they will love their prince or not, whereas the prince has it in his own power to make them fear him; if he is a wise man, he ought to trust to what depends upon himself alone and not upon the caprice of others; yet by all means so to conduct himself as not to be hated, or at least to be on good terms with the strongest party."<sup>2</sup>

"But let a prince make it his chief care to be victorious and preserve his State; if he is successful, the means will always be judged honorable and praised by every body. For the vulgar always follow appearances and the event. And in this world there are scarce any but the vulgar. The rest can make their

<sup>1</sup> "Be frank in such wise as that thou gain the name of frankness; yet, in cases of importance, use dissimulation, which doth succeed the better to one who doth thus live, inasmuch as, through having a name for the contrary, it is more easily believed in him."—*Guicciardini, Maxims.*

"Clear and round dealing is the honor of man's nature; and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold or silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it."—*Lord Bacon, Essays.*

"Les plus habiles affectent toute leur vie de blâmer les finesses, pour s'en servir en quelque grande occasion, et pour quelque grand intérêt."—*Roche-foucault.*

"Car le monde se paye de paroles; peu approfondissent les choses."—*Pascal, Lett. Prov.*

<sup>2</sup> See also certain important limitations in Book III, chap. XIX, of the *Livian Discourses*. Compare the saying of Tacitus: "In multitudine regendâ plus frena quam obsequium valet."

voices heard only when the many are at a loss what to say. There is a prince now living who has nothing in his mouth but 'peace and good faith,' while he is the greatest enemy of both; and if he had observed either, he would long ago have lost both his reputation and his dominions."

This prince, whom Machiavelli does not deem it prudent to name, was Ferdinand of Arragon, husband of Isabella; who owed the acquisition of the kingdoms of Naples and Navarre merely to his perfidy; and the consolidation of his Spanish dominions to the most barbarous cruelties perpetrated always under the cloak of religion. Yet Ferdinand, wicked at heart as he was, succeeded in all his undertakings, obtained and transmitted to his descendants the glorious surname of Catholic, died in peace, and left a name that is still preserved in the highest honor by his countrymen.

Machiavelli's moral judgment of Ferdinand's character is sufficiently obvious; but, as we have proposed to present his most objectionable views, let us hear what he says of Caesar Borgia, whom some have accused him, but plainly upon insufficient grounds, of making the hero of his book.

"Caesar Borgia," says he, "did everything that a wise or brave man could or should do in order to establish himself in his States, and I know of no better pattern that can be proposed for the imitation of a new prince. Upon a thorough review of Borgia's conduct I see nothing worthy of political reprehension; on the contrary, I propose it as a pattern for the imitation of all those who arrive at dominion by the arms or fortune of others."

Now it is strange, after making all due allowance for the frigid-ity of political phraseology, it is strange, that while recounting much of the worst parts of the history of this detestable man, he should not have uttered one word of disapprobation. Against men who certainly could not have been any worse, he has not restrained, even in the midst of his political imperturbability, the strong expression of his moral indignation. Thus he condemns the infamous Oliverotto's parricidal baseness, although it was successful. Thus he condemns Agathocles, the great Syracusan tyrant, who, having massacred the senate and principal citizens, seized the reins of government; and who afterwards gained so much glory in his unequal contest with the Carthaginians, carrying the war to the very gates of Carthage, and forcing his enemies to agree to a highly disadvantageous peace. Yet Machiavelli says of him, "a man cannot properly be called virtuous who massacres

his fellow citizens, betrays his friends, and has no regard either to his word or to religion and humanity; for though indeed he may arrive at empire, he can never acquire true glory by those means. When I reflect, therefore, upon the intrepidity and address of Agathocles, both in encountering and extricating him out of all dangers, as well as his invincible magnanimity in adversity, I see no reason why he may not be ranked among the greatest captains; but if we consider the horrid barbarities and innumerable other crimes he was guilty of, he certainly does not deserve to be numbered with truly virtuous or excellent men." True; but has Caesar Borgia any better claim to be admitted into that good society? Machiavelli does not indeed allow, nor does he expressly disallow, such a claim in this treatise. But he gives Borgia his true character elsewhere, in his letters and in one of his poems. The private correspondent and the poet seem more free to moralize than the politician. It is possible, that being a hater of petty tyrants and a true lover of the people, Machiavelli felt less horror at the crimes of Borgia, because they were chiefly committed against the nobility and petty chieftians, while he was a good governor, and his treatment of the people was at once wise, just and kind; a fact on which our author evidently dwells with complacency: "for," says he, "notwithstanding his cruelty and perfidy, he not only thoroughly reformed and united Romagna, but settled it in peace, and attached the people so strongly to him, that they remained in firm allegiance after his power had vanished and all his other dominions had abandoned him." Perhaps Machiavelli had entertained hopes, that the genius of Borgia might be made the means of restoring the union and independence, if not the liberty of his country. But after all, in view of his judgment of this wicked man, we cannot entirely acquit him of being blinded by the corruption of the times.

Nor would we undertake to defend all the phraseology of his general theories; but so far as refutation is needed we leave that work, as we proposed, to Machiavelli himself. In his Livian Discourses he introduces the same subject, and lays down the same rules for the guidance of the new prince (a Machiavellian euphemism for *tyrant*) in order to maintain his State.

The general principle is, he must destroy whatever is old and make all things new. He must raze the old cities, and build new ones; change the inhabitants from place to place, make the rich poor and the poor rich, and in short leave nothing unturned, allow no gradation, order, state or wealth to exist whose possessor does

not owe it to *him*. He must take for his pattern Philip of Macedon who thus from a petty prince became sovereign of all Greece, and whose historian says that he changed men from province to province as the herdsmen drive their herds from place to place.

Such are the maxims; now for the comment. "These methods," Machiavelli adds, "are indeed most cruel and destructive, not only to all Christian, but to all human living; and every man ought to avoid them, and prefer rather to live a private man than be a king with so great a ruin of mankind. Nevertheless, he who will not take that first way of virtue, must needs, if he will maintain himself, enter into this course of cruelty. But men are apt to take certain middle courses which are their infallible ruin; for not having learned to be wholly good nor wholly bad, they lose everywhere and gain nowhere."

In this passage we think we find the private key to the moral side of Machiavelli's system. But we leave it for the present, and hasten to close our extracts with a portion of what the admirers of the Florentine secretary call his *golden chapter*.

"Among all celebrated men, the most celebrated are the founders of religions; next, the founders of States; next, successful commanders; and next, the men of letters; these last each according to his degree. To an innumerable multitude of other men belongs some meed of praise, which their respective arts and professions measure out to each. On the other hand, infamous and detestable are the corrupters of religion, the destroyers of States, the enemies of virtue, of letters and of whatever art brings utility and honor to mankind, as are the impious and violent, the ignorant, the idle, the vile and the worthless. And no man will ever be found so foolish or so wise, so bad or so good, that, these two sorts of men being set before him, he would not praise that which is to be praised and blame that which is to be blamed. Yet, after all, most men deceived by a false good and a false glory, are led away either voluntarily or unwittingly in the footsteps of those who deserve blame rather than praise." "But it seems impossible that a man who had rightly considered the memories of ancient things, should not prefer as a private man to live in his country like Scipio rather than Caesar; or as a prince to be like Timoleon and Dion honored and loved, rather than infamous and hated like Phalaris and Dionysius. Nor let any one be deceived by the glory of Caesar, finding history full of his praise; because his eulogists were dazzled by the splendor of his fortune, and confounded by the duration of the em-

pire, which being governed still under his name did not allow the historians to speak freely of *him*. But whoever would know what free historians would have said of him, may see what they say of Catiline. And Caesar is so much more detestable than Catiline as, the man is more to be blamed who has committed wrong than he who has only designed it." "Let a person consider the unutterable woes which the usurpation of Caesar and the vices of his successors entailed upon their country;—Rome burnt, the Capitol razed, the ancient temples laid waste, the cities full of adulteries, the seas full of exiles, the rocks covered with blood; nobility, riches, honors, above all, virtue imputed as a capital crime;—he will know then most perfectly, what obligations Rome, Italy, and the world are under to Caesar. And without doubt if he be born of man he will shrink with horror from all imitation of those wicked times, and will burn with an immense desire to follow the good. And verily a prince seeking a world-wide renown, might desire to possess a corrupt city, not utterly to ruin it like Caesar, but to reconstitute it like Romulus. Heaven cannot give, nor man desire a better occasion of acquiring glory. And let those to whom Heaven gives this opportunity, consider that two ways are set before them—one which will make their lives secure and their memories glorious, the other which will make them live in continual anxiety, and after death, leave behind them an everlasting infamy."

Now let any of the detractors of Machiavelli give worthier expressions to worthier sentiments than those. Those sentiments manifestly came from his heart; yet he does not so much as hint that they are inconsistent with those which in his "Prince" he had already given to the world; on the contrary it is plain from the whole context that his *political* views had undergone no change. I say, those sentiments came from his heart. If there was anything Machiavelli loved, it was his country; if there was anything for which he labored and sighed, it was for the reformation, reunion and independence of Italy. Those concluding sentences, just cited, were evidently addressed to the princes and great men of Italy in the hope of stirring up some one of them to the undertaking of that great effort. Machiavelli could not close a work so dry and cold as his "Prince" even, without devoting the whole of the last chapter to an exhortation to liberate *Italy from the "barbarians,"* (as, in their pride, the degenerate *Italians still used to denominate the rest of the Europeans,*)

concluding with the earnest hope that the patriotic lines of Petrarca might be verified ;

“ Virtue against barbarian rage shall arm,  
And make the contest short ; for what once fired  
Italian hearts is not yet all extinct.”<sup>1</sup>

Not only was Machiavelli's character as a patriot and statesman held in honor while he lived ; but his writings were received at first, both in Italy where he was personally known, and elsewhere, with unmingled approbation. Their subsequent fate has been singular. They were prohibited and pronounced accursed by the Council of Trent ; and, by a strange coincidence, the general voice of Christendom seems to have agreed with that of the Tridentine Fathers. But far different was their first reception. Pope Clement VII graciously received the dedication of the Florentine History, and issued his brief granting the privilege of the Apostolic See for the publication of the History, the *Prince* and the Livian Discourses. John Gaddi, one of the principal prelates of the Romish church, and clerk of the Apostolic chamber, had no difficulty in accepting the publisher's dedication of the Discourses and the Prince ; and together with Cardinal Ridolfi, even lent all the aid in his power to the publication of the complete writings of Machiavelli. All this was done when their contents were thoroughly known and understood. Even after they had been put under the ban by the court of Rome, the congregation of Cardinals appointed a commission to revise and expurgate them, that they might be stricken from the prohibited list ; and the only changes or expurgations proposed by this commission were a few grammatical corrections, *pro formâ* ; and the omission of certain passages, in which the author had spoken with too great liberty of the popes. With these alterations they offered to allow the works to be published under another name than Machiavelli's ; but his surviving friends would not accede to that condition, and so the plan proved abortive. Thus it is abundantly manifest that the real objections of Rome were not, are not, founded on the alleged immorality and impiety of his “ Prince,” but on the freedom with which he deals with the popes, a freedom which gave not the same offence at the time ;

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<sup>1</sup> Virtù contr'al furore  
Prenderà l'arme, e fia il combatter corto,  
Che l'antico valore  
Negl' Italici cuor' non è ancor morto.

because the statements were then notoriously true; and a pope in those times cared little for the honor or memory of his immediate predecessors, but perhaps had even opposed and hated them with all his heart. But in after times, when the honor of the Romish church was felt to be involved in the honor of her popes, of course such writings as Machiavelli's which were of a character to immortalize their infamy, became extremely obnoxious, and must be silenced at all hazards. The passage, which has been cited, on the Romish corruptions of Christianity, was of itself enough to rouse the Fathers of Trent to the most vehement anathemas.

It is true that one of the earliest assailants of "The Prince" was a French Protestant, Gentilette, who wrote an *Anti-Machiavelli*; but he is known to have been instigated to do this by a temporary political purpose, that of bringing into odium Catherine of Medici, as an Italian, then Queen of France and head of the Roman Catholic party. Its first assailant was cardinal Pole, an English Romanist. And from that time the Jesuits seem to have taken it as their special charge to preserve and augment the public horror against all the works of the unfortunate Florentine Secretary. Even the Abate Tiraboschi, generally so impartial, treats Machiavelli with manifest unfairness. The Jesuits denouncing Machiavelli as a teacher of perfidy and fraud! The Jesuits! who have rightly given their name to a practice to which they can only accuse Machiavelli of having furnished a part, and that, (if Pascal is to be believed,) not the worst part, of the theory! But wonders do not cease here. Whom would you select, of all the men of the last century, as the least fit,—except on the principle on which one thief is most fit to catch another,—to refute the perfidious and impious doctrines ascribed to Machiavelli? About the year 1740 there appeared at Amsterdam an anonymous critique of "The Prince," entitled *Anti-Machiavelli*, the most unmeasured tirade against that book and its author that had ever been seen. You would suppose the writer a perfect saint, bating the excess of his holy indignation. Who published this criticism? Voltaire. Who wrote it? Frederic, then crown-prince of Prussia, afterwards Frederic II surnamed the Great; a monarch whose name is as deservedly and inseparably associated with rapacity, perfidy, tyrannical government and unjust war, as any of the wretches whose names are "damned to everlasting fame," in Machiavelli's immortal pages.

This same conscientious, noble-minded, tender-hearted royal critic began his reign with a series of acts of treachery and baseness, to which we may safely challenge the history of the world to furnish a parallel. Read the story of his first unprovoked, unthreatened, though not unpremeditated attacks upon the young, lovely and defenceless queen of Hungary, whom he had solemnly sworn to protect in the succession, on the demise of her father the emperor of Germany. Inhumanly selecting for the commencement of hostilities a moment which any savage would have respected, the moment when she had just become an orphan and a mother, all unexpectedly, Frederic poured his troops like a whirlwind into her dominions. This was not all. Without any exaggeration or figure of speech beyond a most rigid mathematical comparison, we may say, that in the course of this transaction he carried his perfidy to the fourth degree of intensity. He first attacked, under the circumstances referred to, the queen and empress, and thus drew all Europe into the famous "seven years' war;" then broke his solemn engagements with his allies, abandoned them and made peace with the empress; again joined them in violation of his solemn treaty, and attacked the empress; when the purpose of this movement was accomplished, he again abandoned them and again made a separate peace, and at the general pacification of Aix la Chapelle, Frederic was the only gainer. But on his head is all the blood that was shed in a war that raged for many years all round the globe. This was the time and the primary occasion of our old French and Indian war. "The evils produced by Frederic's wickedness were felt in lands where the name of Prussia was unknown; and in order that he might rob a neighbor whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the great lakes of Canada;" the scattered villages of New England were laid in ashes by the savages, men butchered, children dashed against the stones and women carried into captivity. Such a man was the modern Anti-Machiavelli! Yet the Jesuits, Frederic and Voltaire have raised such a din, as to make men believe that Nicholas Machiavelli was the advocate in theory of the same principles which too many of his opponents have carried out in practice.

But were not some of his doctrines really immoral and dangerous? Before answering this question, it is fair to say that the most objectionable of them did not originate with him, but were enunciated long before by Aristotle, and commented upon by

Thomas Aquinas without disapprobation.<sup>1</sup> Like Machiavelli, Aristotle was at once a hater and an instructor of tyrants, himself a republican, the son of a free city. Like Machiavelli he lived just in the last period of the struggling liberty of his country; and like Machiavelli he wrote a treatise on Politics which is a store-house of facts and profound reflections fitted to teach us modern republicans most useful lessons; for the father of syllogisms and categories was also a practical man.

According to him most tyrants have sprung from demagogues who began with exciting and pampering the passions, and thus captivating the affections of the people, and ended with enslaving their persons. Such is their *genealogy*. Their *policy* is of two kinds, either *intension* or *remission*; i. e. they either so cripple the people that resistance becomes impotent if not impossible; or else they continue to make the people believe them their guardians and protectors, by putting on a semblance of religion and love of justice, reforming abuses and engaging in great enterprises. As to morals, therefore, concludes Aristotle, "let a tyrant, if it is impossible to be virtuous, at least seem so, and not be professedly, but only really wicked."<sup>2</sup>

But who does not see that the tyrannic precepts whether of Aristotle or of Machiavelli, in a moral view, amount to just this, that as tyranny is a bad thing, it can be sustained only by bad means. And this is sufficient explanation and defence of all Machiavelli's directions for his *new prince*, which are among the most repulsive in his book.

But ought he not to have condemned tyranny, and warned men not to become tyrants? He has done it in the strongest terms, and in the most earnest and persuasive forms. Of an Agathocles, a Ferdinand and a Caesar he has given, as has been seen, his moral judgment with sufficient distinctness. In his "Prince," he did not profess to point out what man, as a moral being ought to do, but what man, as a selfish being, must do, under certain conditions, to attain certain ends. And the only fair question is, taking things as they really are, or rather as they really were, has he pointed out the efficacious means of success? If he has not, who shall complain? the bad men deceived by his direction, or the good men who see them thus ruined?

<sup>1</sup> Aristoteles de Republica, Liber V. et Comment. S. Thom. Aquin. Lect. X. and XI.

<sup>2</sup> De Republica Lib. V. cap. XI. ad fin.  
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But is it allowable to give systematic rules for the commission of wickedness, though the rules may be ever so wisely adapted to the attainment of the wicked end? It certainly should seem that a Christian man might be better employed. But if Machiavelli is wrong in this particular, he is not at all singular. There are many men among us who think that, judged by the Christian principles of private intercourse, war is indefensible; still neither men in general nor they themselves have yet learned to shrink from an art of war, or condemn a writer on that subject as they would one who should draw up a system of rules for house-breaking, highway-robbery or piracy; nor is such probably the real feeling in any intelligent man's mind. The Scythian ambassadors are represented as having told Alexander the Great to his face, that he was no better, nay infinitely worse, than a common robber and pirate. And so he was in a certain point of view. But has he on the whole been so regarded by mankind, or is he likely to be? Is there likely to be a man so good, that he would rather be the basest thief than Alexander the Great? There may be. All men may come to think so by and by. But hitherto men have not thought so. And surely Machiavelli should not be harshly condemned because his ethics were not *singularly* pure, meek and Christian in a period of unusual corruption, violence and selfishness. In the tone of his morals, taking his works all together, he was decidedly in advance of his age and countrymen. Yet he plainly thought that Philip of Macedon, Ferdinand the Catholic, even Agathocles and the Borgias, were more respectable personages than common burglars and pirates. And until the two classes are fully merged under the same category, and men have as much respect for a reckless murderer as for the emperor Napoleon, till then, a system of maxims showing how by fraud and violence a man may reach, or rather retain when reached, the height of political power, is not to be confounded with a set of rules for thieves and assassins. When power and fame such as Alexander's and Caesar's actually cease to be desirable or to exist, Machiavelli's politics will be exploded, and not till then.

If it is charged that his system as developed in "The Prince," is one of pure selfishness, it is admitted. It professes to be nothing more. And it has this merit beyond many other systems which at bottom are not in the least its betters, that it is *unvarnished* selfishness; it shows itself in all its nakedness and deformity. Hence the violence with which many have attacked it.

They have seen in it too lively a picture of their conscious selves; they have *felt* the exposure, as though the secrets of their own bosoms were betrayed to the world. "Many things are seen; many things exist and are not seen. Machiavelli was a most sagacious observer and a too ingenuous narrator of human depravity. He has candidly spoken out what many other statesmen and politicians not only think and firmly believe, but also practise, every day of their lives." "We ought to thank Machiavelli who has uttered openly and without dissembling what men are wont, not what they ought, to do."<sup>1</sup>

His system, therefore, must not be judged as a moral code, but as a system of worldly wisdom and mere expediency; everything else, right or wrong, good or bad, present pleasure or present pain, being regarded with indifference, except so far as it may subserve the designs of an aspiring, grasping ambition. It is the only consistent system of expediency that has ever been published to the world. Its "ought" implies not a moral duty, but the means to an end, as inferred from historical facts. Its rule is to do what your own interest requires.

Machiavelli starts with the assumption that men in general are wicked and selfish; that they are natural enemies, each endeavoring to make for himself the most he can out of all the rest. Considering them, therefore, as in a state of warfare, he sees nothing worse in fraud or perfidy as a means of victory, than in force; and in this he is a representative of Italian, in distinction from Saxon character. *We* despise a man who gains the advantage in a contest by deception or treachery, but have a certain respect for bold and heaven-daring bravery. We do not abhor "acting the beast" altogether, but we take the lion and reject the fox. Not so the Italian. *He* respects the man who gains his point by cunning and artifice, and thinks nothing can be greater folly than to expose one's life to his enemy only to secure fair play. Plainly it is not a question of Christian morals, but of mere prudence and folly; for Christianity as much forbids the open violence as the treacherous artifice. Educational, (or perhaps constitutional,) tastes and prejudices being set aside, is it so sure the Italian would not have the better of the argument? His view of the case gives the mind its due preponderance over the body. The man of feeble external force or means, but possessed of a subtle, acute, contriving intellect, is brought up to an

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<sup>1</sup> Bacon, De Augm. Sc. Lib. VII. c. II.

equality with his stronger but less cunning antagonist. Why should he forego the advantage which his mental endowments or acquisitions give him?

The maxim under consideration, as applied to international relations, comes to this, that it is as right, wise and honorable for a nation to gain an advantage over its antagonist by diplomatic cunning, or even downright perfidy, as by force and arms. And why not? If war be considered in its true character, as the highest sanction of the laws of nations, the ultimate means of checking and punishing international aggressions and injustice, then indeed is there a vast difference between the two sets of means in question. But if war be considered, as it was in Machiavelli's time, and always had been, as an instrument of national ambition and a means of national aggrandizement, then why is downright force any whit more justifiable than downright perfidy?

It is often said that in national conflicts the just cause will prevail. This prediction is made too much on mere theoretical and moral grounds. It would be practically true if mankind generally were virtuous, and if a sense of justice actually predominated in their minds over self-interest and passion. But on historical grounds Machiavelli denies it, yet not in such a sense as to assert that the unjust cause as such will prevail. On the contrary, he can consistently admit, what indeed is an unquestioned fact, that the justice of one's cause is an advantage, a very great advantage, but not an advantage to counterbalance all possible odds set against it. He can admit, therefore, all that can fairly and reasonably be claimed by the moralist, that *other things being equal* the just cause will prevail; and yet deny the universal or even general truth of the prediction. For the condition on which its fulfilment is thus made to depend, includes a wider range of circumstances than we at first sight are apt to think. In such a world as this has been, or at least, as it was in Machiavelli's times, it is not easy to suppose other things to be actually equal. And his doctrine seems to be that, taking things as they are, if two parties are opposed to each other of equal individual, external force and means, yet, as they never stand alone in the universe, but are surrounded by a multitude of others who take a greater or less interest in their struggle, that party which knows best how, by the arts of intrigue and political management, to play off the prejudices, passions and self-interest of his neighbors against his adversary, is likely to prevail, whether his original

cause be just or unjust. For here it must be borne in mind that he who conscientiously depends upon the justice of his cause, cannot consistently be supposed to use any but fair and honorable means; and thus it will be seen that, in the world as it is, other things can rarely be supposed perfectly equal.

If the question, whether a just cause supported by just and fair means, has generally prevailed over an unjust cause and foul play, be treated purely as a question of historical fact, its decision is a matter of moral indifference. Machiavelli may be right or wrong about it; it matters not which; only it is clear, no odium should be incurred by his opinion in regard to a mere matter of fact. And whatever is true in respect to the past, of course we cannot help, if we would, its application to the future. But if the doctrine that the just cause and just means prevail, is held as containing a moral motive, or is applied as a test to determine the character of passing events, then we maintain that it is a doctrine infinitely worse and more ruinous to all morality than any that has ever been ascribed to Machiavelli. For if the just cause prevails, then, considering this as a test, the cause which prevails is just; then, might makes right; then the defeated and oppressed are deprived even of the consolation of conscious rectitude. The worst doctrines of Machiavelli never could, never pretended to do that. Because he says fraud and injustice are successful in a wicked world, he never pretended they changed their nature and were justified. *Without* this moral application it is true this Anti-Machiavellian doctrine is no more odious, neither is it any less so, than that to which it is opposed; but *with* this application it is infinitely more odious and dangerous. We will not reply to it in the impious spirit of Frederic the Great, who used to say that "he always found Providence on the side of strong regiments." But impious as this is, it is but a natural inference from the common irreverence with which men are wont in their self-satisfaction, to ascribe their petty successes to the approving aid of Divine Providence. If the divine judgment is thus to be ascertained, a virtuous man would often take sides with Cato against it:

"*Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*"

*Whose was the just cause in the wars of the Alexanders and Caesars, of Turks and Tartars, of the Frederics and Ferdinands, of Cortes and Pizarro, of Russians with Circassians and Poles, or of the British with the East Indians?*

In modern history, as there is nothing, whether for the policy of the means or the grandeur of the result, to be compared with the conquests of the English in the East, so there is nothing which more perfectly illustrates and confirms the doctrines of Machiavelli. Such were the methods of achieving and maintaining these gigantic conquests, that Erskine is said to have replied, in substance, to the condemnatory voice of the public, that it was preposterous to bring to the standard of justice and humanity the exercise of a dominion founded upon violence and terror; and that her empire in the East would long since have been lost to Great Britain, if alternate fraud and force, if civil skill and military prowess had not united their efforts to support an authority which Heaven never gave, by means which Heaven never could sanction.

Nothing furnishes a more striking parallel to the course of the English in India, than the external policy of ancient Rome. And the success of this course in both cases is not to be concealed or denied. If, now, we should point to Rome's systematic intermeddling with the affairs of others, always so skilfully managed as to improve her own, to the concentrated selfishness, the insatiate cupidity, the crafty acts and consummate policy with which she cajoled city after city and State after State into pretended alliance, but real slavery; or to that steady perseverance and valor, that array of armies and navies with which, *per fas et nefas*, she compelled others to submit to her iron sway; and if we then should point to the precisely similar methods by which the English have extended their Indian dominions, and should say, "such is the way for nations to aggrandize themselves at the expense of their neighbors;" would it be fair to accuse us of recommending to other nations to imitate these examples? Rome had indeed great virtues and produced many great and good men; and so has England. The weak side, in the one case as in the other, lies in that patriotic selfishness which can hardly see injustice in anything which contributes largely to the national grandeur. The name of the best of the Romans is identified with the atrocious sentiment, *Delenda est Carthago*. Yet in the severest condemnation of the conduct of the East India Company's agents, we feel that we have with us the best and noblest hearts in England; although alas, as a nation, England has, by openly "receiving the plunder," if not approved that conduct, at least, assumed its responsibility. And let us observe what a perfect refinement of Machiavellian policy it is, for the

conquerors of India to assume the censorship of the world, and to administer the most indignant rebukes to other nations for their real or alleged acts of violence or perfidy. In practice, the argument which is best supported by the bayonet is the most irrefragable. But let us be thankful that, in theory, we have a better test of right than success.

Yet there is a school of philosophers at the present day, who talk long and learnedly about finding the retributive justice of God in the passing events of history. Take for example Alison's *History of the late revolutions and wars in Europe*, whose constant wearisome burden, the refrain of almost every chapter, is the judgment of God upon the impious efforts of all revolutionists and republicans, and the seal of his mighty approbation set upon the cause of England and of the old dynasties of Europe, in guiding it through all perils, and crowning it finally with glorious success. Impious and short-sighted man! presuming to grasp the thunders and distribute the retributions of the Almighty! Did he not see that a different lesson might have been read to the world after the peace of Tilsit? Or did he suppose that the battle of Waterloo was the consummation of all things? Did he forget the actually existing agitations of Ireland for the repeal of that very union, which was iniquitously and corruptly imposed upon the Irish for no better plea than that of necessity; the plea of tyrants, because England could not otherwise prosecute successfully those very wars with Napoleon? Did he forget the immense debt under which England hopelessly groans, contracted in those same wars? Had he never heard the thunders muttering in the horizon, and threatening a tempest of ruin to her who, like Tyre of old, sits a queen in the seas, and says in her heart, "I shall never be desolate, I shall never be a widow?"

Far distant be the day when that storm shall come. We wish no ill to England; rather, with her own poet, we can truly say, "with all her faults we love her." We are far from saying or believing, that in her contest with Napoleon her cause was unjust. We here object only to such a method of proving its justice, as that insisted on by Alison. Let not England flatter herself that she has already passed the historic ordeal, or, in her pride, presume that, in giving her success and prosperity, God has revealed his judgment upon her cause and character. In God's view and in God's time the right will surely prevail. But man sees not the end from the beginning; nay, he sees not the end at all.

God's hand is most assuredly to be acknowledged in history. The history of the world is a vast process of divine judgment. But God is not in haste to pronounce his sentences. As Guizot has well said, "The Almighty is not straitened for time. He moves through time as the gods of Homer through space. He takes a step, and ages have rolled away!" He generally speaks in a language, too, which ages alone can interpret. Time and Scripture, however, have placed the import of some of his sentences beyond all question. The Jewish nation has been judged; the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian and the Roman empires have been judged. They have received a righteous retribution; yet not so, be it carefully noted, not so that the successive instruments of this righteous retribution are justified for their agency in it. God employed the Assyrians as the rod of his anger to punish his rebellious people; yet we are distinctly told the Assyrian meant not so, neither did his heart think so. His designs were of ambition, injustice and devastation. "Wherefore it shall come to pass," saith the prophet, "that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks."

What was thus true of the Assyrian may safely be said of the Persian, Greek and Roman. It is plain, therefore, that, taking the most purely ethical, scriptural and Christian view of history, and taking those particular cases, too, in which the sentence of God's judgment has been most unequivocally expressed; that sentence is *not a decision on the comparative merits of two parties*, making the just cause to triumph over the unjust. It is altogether a different matter. And if we find this the case in regard to events, whose significance time has fully explained, and in our judgment of which passion can have no share, how ought we to shrink from that most audacious presumption, of undertaking so to interpret the passing, half-developed events of history as to forestall the divine judgment in our own favor!

God is wont to bring good out of evil, but that does not make the evil good, or justify it in any wise. Charlemagne gave the conquered Saxons the option of being baptized or drowned. Unquestionably it was an act of the most unchristian and outrageous tyranny; yet, in the providence of God, it has had an historical, causal connection with the existence of Christianity in Germany at the present day.

The English succeeded in their late war with China. There

are different opinions about the justice of that war; but for ourselves, in the face of that success, we are as fully convinced of its deep injustice on the part of England, as if the Chinese had taken London, instead of the English having taken Canton. Yet for all this, we doubt not God has dealt justly with the Chinese, and will cause many benefits to mankind to result from the success of English ambition and cupidity in that unholy war. Even though we might venture to say, therefore, that the French Revolution and Empire have been judged, yet the historical result thus interpreted, is far from proving the righteousness of the cause of England and her allies. It proves neither one thing nor another in this direction.

If we remember aright, Sir Walter Scott devotes about a hundredth part of his whole life of Napoleon, to a defence of the English for violating the peace of Amiens. No Englishman can see anything immoral in the violation of that treaty of peace, nor do we know that any thorough bred statesman whatever condemns it politically; yet no better defence could ever be manufactured for it, than that it was necessary to self-preservation. This is good Machiavellism, and nothing better. Ask any statesman or diplomatist, whether nations are bound by the strict rules of justice and good faith; and without doubt he will answer in the affirmative. But his actions belie his words, or show him to mean only that all nations are so bound except his own. He is very willing that all others should have advantage of being thus bound, but *he* prefers greater latitude. This willingness to make an exception in his own favor, shows distinctly his opinion of the practical expediency of obeying that obligation.

Let us next apply Machiavelli's doctrine to the case of political men considered individually. He says the wicked prosper, and in order to succeed and maintain themselves, princes and statesmen must be content to do wrong sometimes. The opposite doctrine is, that "honesty is the best policy." Which is true? I answer unhesitatingly, both are true, according to the different ends to which the policy in question is directed. But past history forces upon us the unwelcome conclusion, that Machiavelli's doctrine is true and the other false, in the sense in which that other is generally understood. If the object in view is no higher or purer than mere worldly aggrandizement, it may well be doubted whether a rigid adherence to the rules of strict integrity and justice, under all circumstances, is the surest road to success. Yet we suppose *this is the usual idea attached to that proverb.* If, on the other

hand, the object proposed is our highest happiness in this world and in the next, then doubtless, in its fullest sense, "honesty is the best policy," if "policy" can be mentioned at all in such a connection. We would by no means imply that good men should withdraw from the responsibilities of their civil relations. Rather, let them prepare themselves, and hold themselves always ready to perform all the duties to which their country may *call them*. But let them not be competitors with mere politicians for the emoluments and honors of office, neither let them seek office at all from personal views; and in the last analysis, are not *partizan* views almost always *personal*?

That men may be so excessively, foolishly or openly dishonest, as well as otherwise vicious, as effectually to preclude their worldly advancement, is undeniable; but Machiavelli's direction is only to practise dishonesty and wrong on occasion, and always with the greatest art and dissimulation. Whether such a course is the means of promoting one's worldly aggrandizement, is not a question of morals or of theory, but of fact and history. But let it not be forgotten, the question is between the success of perfect honesty and pure virtue on the one hand, and the success, not of the most open dishonesty and grossest wickedness on the other, but of such an artful mixture as Machiavelli has declared necessary. And let it be distinctly remembered likewise, that the whole discussion regards rather cases of contest and competition, the scramble for worldly power and distinction, than the quiet, natural progress of individual advancement.

What say the records of the past? Who are the men that in the struggles of active life and especially as princes and statesmen, have attained the greatest power, wealth and honor of the world? Cyrus the Great, one of the purest princes of ancient History, acquired the throne of universal empire, according to Xenophon, by two acts of fraud and perfidy. Xenophon's *historical* authority may be denied, but his *political* judgment is left unimpaired. Philip of Macedon made himself master of all Greece, vastly more by the wiles of a crooked policy than by superior force, and certainly not at all by justice. Alexander the Great attacked nation after nation without the shadow of a reason, and yet succeeded in every instance. Compare Julius Caesar with Cicero—which succeeded best in worldly aggrandizement? Octavianus Augustus was the most wily man of his times. *He* became emperor of the world, while Brutus fell on the plains of Pharsalia, and Cato opened his own veins in Utica.

When it was reported to Ferdinand the Catholic, that the king of France complained of having been deceived by him three times ; "the simple fool !" said Ferdinand, " I have deceived him more than a dozen times, and he has not known it." Of the success of this perfidious man we have already spoken. We need only name a Philip II. and an Oliver Cromwell, Mahomet and the Popes of Rome. Even of Napoleon we might make a strong case, for plainly it was not his perfidy, his artifices or his injustice that ruined him ; without them he never would have been Napoleon to be ruined ; ambition "overleaping itself," undertaking more than was within the bounds of human possibility, caused his ruin. Such is the testimony of history on this side. What names can be put in the opposite scale ? Washington and Columbus are those we should mention first ; both men who, with pure characters, won the palm from their competitors, secured the honor and esteem of mankind while they lived, and left an undying fame, and who, thus considered, are more than enough to weigh down all the others. As Americans, we are prouder to have them for our own, as they both in some sense are, than we should be to claim Napoleon or Caesar for our countrymen. Personally, we would rather be either of them than any or all the others. But considered in reference merely to worldly grandeur, they are not so heavy. Columbus, at least, cannot be said to have enjoyed any great worldly emoluments or to have led a very happy life. And if an objection is made to ranging Napoleon and some others on the other side, drawn from their unfortunate end, Columbus must surely be stricken from this side, for a similar reason. And it may well be doubted whether, if Washington had lived a few years longer, he could have retained his popularity and political influence. Other names might be mentioned but they would not alter the result.

Let us descend from these high places to the small trade of domestic politics among ourselves ; and what are the principles of our political men as inferrible from their general conduct and occasional verbal admissions ? Could a rigidly virtuous man of moderate abilities, but of fixed and independent principles, and independent they must be if they are fixed, live and rise in our political world ? Would he stand a fair chance with crafty men of loose principles, but not at all his superior in mental endowments or practical attainments ? Most assuredly not. Aristotle never uttered a more certain truth, than when he said that virtuous men must acknowledge the overwhelming preponderance of

their antagonists in the political arena, and, if they are wise, will retire from the unequal contest.

The same ~~rules~~ apply, to a great extent, in social and private relations. In almost every little village you may find one or more of Machiavelli's princes on a small scale. He is a man who prefers to be on the right, but is determined to be on the strongest side. Always ready to flatter the powerful, he will often patronize the weak, but tread mercilessly on a fallen opponent. He will conspire for the ruin of a neighbor, and, when he has accomplished it, will have the address to make him believe that he is his best friend, and leave all the odium on his coadjutors. He will dissemble, manage, intrigue, but always keep up good appearances and professions. Ever cool and calculating, he is guilty of no indiscretions of the heart. He knows well how to use others for his own purposes, and has his tools well-selected and drilled to facilitate his various manoeuvres. In his encroachments, he is too wary ever to overstep the limits prescribed by the laws of the land. No man more religious or orthodox than he. He can talk of the public good while he thinks of his own, and cover a private grudge under the garb of conscientiousness. Success is the first principle of his creed and his morals; hence his neighbors, having seen him always successful, resort to him for advice. He studiously avoids odium and contempt, would like to be loved, but is resolved to be feared; would have his friendship desirable, but his enmity annihilation.

In saying, with the author of "The Prince," that such are the men who prosper in the world, we trust we shall not be understood as defending Machiavellism, but only Machiavelli; not as maintaining that the course of conduct he has described is morally good or justifiable, but only that his doctrine of the success of such a course of conduct is true. Of this fact Machiavelli's own testimony is better evidence than that of a hundred mere philosophers, moralists and theorists to the contrary. A man of more extensive and varied experience than the crafty and much-tried Ulysses himself; of remarkable sagacity, close observation, cool judgment and profound knowledge of history; it would be difficult to find one better qualified to testify on this point as a matter of fact, at least so far as regards the history of the world down to, and especially *during* his own times.

It is true that in proportion as society in general is well ordered and virtuous, dishonesty and vice are less tempted by the prospect of success, or at least have need of a higher perfection in

the art of simulation and dissimulation. That society among us has already reached such a pitch of virtue that all intrigue and unprincipled selfishness are utterly discouraged, that every man and every cause are successful in proportion to their real merits without any temptation to depart from the perfectly open, truthful and straight forward course, we have no interest to deny; Machiavelli's justification does not require it to be denied. Would it were true! But up to the Christian era such had not been the case, as is evident from the whole drift of our Saviour's instructions; and Machiavelli honestly thought it had not been the case for 1500 years afterwards. But whenever and wherever such is the case, Machiavelli's doctrine ceases by its own limitations; for he says distinctly that if men in general were good, his rules of policy would not be good. Even now, looking at the past history of the world, and not at the present or future, we may safely say, there has never been among mankind any extensive society of long continuance, not even the visible church of Christ, taken as a whole, in which honest and simple virtue could compete on equal terms, for present honor, dignity and aggrandizement, with intrigue and selfishness.

But it is said that a man of integrity, gentleness, benevolence, truth, purity, piety, with a fair share of talents, cannot but succeed in the world; that his character must disarm opposition and win the universal esteem and favor. It is not to be denied, that in the quiet, natural course of things this is sometimes the case; and, besides, there are certain extraordinary conjunctures in human affairs, when the world cannot do without such men, and it instinctively resorts to them as its only succor and safety. All such cases are to be noted and thankfully acknowledged. When the result is otherwise, such a man has no reason to repent of his choice, for he possesses in his own character what is worth more than all the world can give. But when popularity and worldly emolument are so confidently predicted as the necessary or even ordinary consequence of such a character, it seems to us the general selfishness and depravity are too much lost sight of. We ask, then, why Jesus was crucified? We ask, why martyrs were burned? why Abel's blood still cries from the ground? why prophets and holy men, in general and not in a few instances, "were tortured, had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment? They were stoned, they were sawn in sunder, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented,

(of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth." We ask, who were the offscouring of all things in the Apostle's day? what means the blessing pronounced on those of whom all men, (i. e. the world in general,) should say all manner of evil, falsely indeed, but yet it was to be *said*; and what means the woe upon those of whom all men should speak well? And finally, what means the friendship of the world being enmity with God? Are all these antiquated principles and obsolete facts?

But it may be said, this doctrine must be a perversion of both history and Scripture, for it saps the foundations of morals, takes away the motives to virtue and piety, exalts and honors vice. We answer, show us a man who would not live a Christian life without such motives as those, and you have shown the man who would not live a Christian life with them. Has it indeed come to this? Are virtue, piety and Christianity to be degraded into mere means and appliances to gain the wealth and pomp and grandeur of this present world? Is a man to deny himself and take up his cross and follow his Saviour, only, chiefly, or at all, that he may be highly esteemed among men, and may secure the greater share of this world's goods and glories? Oh no! Let us not believe, let not the young be taught by way of additional encouragement, that God holds out the treasures and honors of earth as the reward of that life to which Christianity invites us. Different, far different is the reward he holds up to our view; a heavenly treasure, an incorruptible crown, immortal glory, eternal blessedness; a reward by the side of which that other vanishes into nothingness. Nor does he offer us both rewards, either in conjunction or succession. He bids us choose. We cannot serve God and mammon. We know of no holy Scripture in which worldly emolument is promised as the reward of a Christian life, nor do we know of any sound ethics in which worldly emolument is urged as the motive to a virtuous character. Indeed, without Christianity there can be no sound ethics. Epicureanism is the philosophy of this world; expediency is its morality. Heathen wisdom, by a happy inconsistency, may have sometimes reached to higher views, but it could never render them efficient.

But some one will ask, hath not godliness the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come? Yes; a most joyful and thankful *yes*. But does the life that now is, consist in worldly wealth, honor and grandeur? Is it possible that

a man who knows in his own consciousness what it is to be truly virtuous, not to use the term *Christian*, should have a view of life so mean and grovelling? "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Godliness has indeed the promise of the present life; and if you would know what that life is, read the epistle through, from which the promise is taken. The Apostle is far from teaching that gain is godliness. "But godliness," saith he, "with *contentment*, is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and *having food and raiment*, let us be therewith *content*. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is; not by securing to us the wealth and honors of the world, but by making us contented and happy without them as well as with them. Thus, when the selfishness and worldliness of Peter's heart broke forth in the question, "behold we have left all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?" our Saviour, having first referred to the eternal recompense of reward, assured him that every one who forsook houses, lands, parents and children for his sake, should receive an hundred fold in this present time, as well as in the world to come life everlasting. Now, no man will suppose our Saviour meant an hundred fold more of literal houses, lands, fathers, mothers, and so on; but, what should be equivalent to a hundred, yea, a thousand fold of them, in inward peace and joy, in pious communion and sympathy, in present holiness and glorious hopes of heaven.

The Proverbs of Solomon are often triumphantly adduced in confirmation of the opinion which we are disposed to controvert; and the great practical, not to say worldly, wisdom of the Hebrew sage, which inspired writers have so much extolled, though it can add nothing to the *authority* of his own inspiration, makes his testimony especially appropriate on such a subject as that here under discussion. The passages in which he is supposed to present the assurance of worldly aggrandizement as a motive to piety, are familiar, and, lest we should be thought to have overlooked them, we refer to some of them in the margin.<sup>1</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> *Prov.* c. iii. 1—10, (but conf. verses 11 and 12); c. iv. 5—19; c. x. 2, 3, 27—30, (but, for explanation, conf. c. xi. 7, c. xiii. 7, c. xiv. 32, and c. xviii. 7); c. xii. 21; c. xvi. 8 (and 9?); c. xxi. 21, etc.

it seems to us that he has placed the whole doctrine in its proper light in his eulogium of wisdom, contained in the third chapter: "For the merchandize of it," saith he, "is *better* than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is *more precious* than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." This, plainly, is recommending wisdom for what she is in herself, rather than for any external good which she may procure. It is true the wise man adds, "length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor;" but wisdom, appearing in her own person, has foreclosed all misapprehension of these words, in expressions perfectly parallel with those just cited, (chap. viii.): "Receive my instruction," saith she, "*and not silver*; and knowledge *rather than choice gold*," etc.; adding, "riches and honor are with me, yea, *durable riches and righteousness*." It is further worthy of note that, in both of the passages referred to, the crowning motive assigned for seeking after wisdom, is its divine and primeval dignity. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth." "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way." From the drift of these passages we infer that Solomon, so far from giving the assurance of worldly wealth as a motive for seeking true wisdom, has placed the two in direct antithesis and contrast; he teaches, indeed, that wisdom secures riches, but they are *durable riches*. Hath not the same Solomon said, (chap xxiii. 5.): "Riches (i. e. worldly riches) certainly make to themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle toward heaven?" Would he suggest the procuring of such riches as a motive for the attainment of wisdom? In the consideration of these points, we think we have a key to all the other apparently conflicting passages in the same book. It may not be amiss, further, to note the prayer, or "prophecy," of Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Here the whole matter is brought to its proper practical bearings. Solomon himself has given us the process as well as the result of his whole experience in the book of Ecclesiastes; whose inscription is, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity;" and whose conclusion, after showing that, as far as worldly things are concerned, evil as well as good, the same event happeneth to all, is this: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Here let us say, once for all, we do not go about to make use of the Scriptures to confirm the doctrine of Machiavelli; this would be to degrade them; nor do we adduce the doctrine of Machiavelli in confirmation of the teachings of the Scriptures; of this they have no need. But we would merely show that Machiavelli's doctrine, so far from being inconsistent with the Scriptures, is in perfect harmony with them. The Scriptures teach us, that we must abandon the world if we would secure the rewards of piety. Machiavelli teaches us, on the other hand, that we must abandon the ways of piety if we would secure the aggrandizement of the world. In both cases, "the world" is to be understood in the same sense; not so much present happiness, comfort, contentment and peace, but, what some have been pleased to call the highest fruit and fairest flower of this world's growth, its power, its wealth, its distinctions and honors.

Why should any think it important to maintain that a life of piety should guard a man from *social* evils, and secure to him *social* benefits; while it is acknowledged that, in his *physical* relations, the righteous is not exempted from the laws of the common lot? In the midst of a corrupt race the former would seem even less likely than the latter.

That the evils of life fall upon different men in proportion to the magnitude of their respective sins, was flatly contradicted by our Lord, when there were certain present, who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. But he directed his hearers to a greater and more general catastrophe, and to a final retribution when all shall receive according to their respective characters; of which final retribution, the extraordinary interventions of Divine Providence in the punishment of the guilty are to be regarded as premonitions. That, on the other hand, the evils of life, in their severest form, are sometimes sent upon the best of men, so that, when their faith and patience have been tried, they may receive a crown of life, is one of the lessons for the express inculcation of which the book of Job was written. Holding the opinion we are controverting as their premise, Job's friends are led by a natural consequence to accuse him of some enormous, though secret sin, and to maintain that, unless he had been guilty of some such sin, his sufferings would be an arraignment of the Divine Providence. Job denies this inference, and, of course, the premise from which it is drawn; and the arguments on either side constitute the theme of the discussion between the parties. And, though in some particulars

Job's expressions were warped by passion, yet, in comparison with his friends, we are expressly assured that God decided in his favor, telling them, "ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, like my servant Job."

The subsequent prosperity of the patriarch does not alter the primary instruction contained in his history. Certainly Job would not have been the loser, if the last act of his life had been to sit down among the ashes and take a potsherd to scrape himself withal. But this returning worldly prosperity was meant, in the general spirit of the old dispensation, to foreshadow and bring home to sensible apprehension the eternal sanction of God's law and the final recompense reserved for all the just. The ultimate scope of the Scriptures of the Old as well as of the New Testament is, to direct our attention to the *end* both of the righteous and of the wicked. The end, the end; this is the burden of the Divine Revelation. David was grieved at the prosperity of the wicked till he went into the sanctuary of God and saw their *end*. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the *end* of that man is peace;" or, as our older translation expressed the same sentiment, with equal faithfulness to the original, "keep innocency and take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace *at the last*." "Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward."

The agency of Satan, as recorded in Job's history—of him who in the New Testament, is still recognized as the prince and god of this world, is not to be slightly passed over in our theories of Providence, as though it was a piece of mere allegory or poetic machinery. When Satan offered our Lord all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, saying, "for these are delivered unto me and unto whomsoever I will, I give them,"—Jesus did not tell the tempter he lied, as some modern (wiser?) expositors would have done; for, had that been the case, what would have become of the temptation? but he simply rejected the mighty adversary's proffer on the highest of all possible grounds; the service of God was to be *preferred* to all worldly glory, honor, wealth and power. Let us pause a moment at this point in the history of the temptation, a point on which was suspended the question of human redemption. There stands the Saviour, his physical frame exhausted by long fasting, and his mental susceptibilities, (we may naturally suppose,) wrought up to the highest pitch of tension and sensitiveness. On the one hand, he sees

before him a life of sorrow and suffering, of poverty and contempt, with the bloody agony of Gethsemane and the ignominious cross of Golgotha to close the worldly scene; and on the other, the artful tempter has conjured before his excited imagination all the grandeur and glory of the world, and pressed them upon his acceptance. The choice is to be made. Not a moment does the Holy Jesus waver, but, casting Satan and all his splendid gifts behind his back, he goes forth to do his Father's will and bear that cross of shame. Men have talked and written of the moral sublime, and have adduced one and another instance in its illustration; but we know of no instance to be for one moment compared with this. And who, who could wish to degrade that scene by going back to the Saviour with the paltry suggestion, that even popularity and worldly honor would after all be best secured by the worship and service of God?

Undoubtedly good men do sometimes possess a large share of the wealth and honors of the world; but they are given to such men not for their own sake, but that they may be used for the attainment of the true riches. Our Saviour clearly presumes that some of his followers may be possessed of the Mammon of unrighteousness, but, in designating it as the Mammon of unrighteousness, he as clearly indicates the general character either of its possessors or of the methods of its acquisition. And here let those who harshly condemn Machiavelli for not connecting his sentence of disapprobation with his rules of policy, consider that our Lord has given us the parable of the unjust steward without one word of condemnation or of warning. He tells us, the lord of the unjust steward commended him because he had done wisely, and then adds, himself, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." As our Lord sometimes compares himself to the nocturnal thief, our readers will bear with a momentary parallel with Machiavelli.

The truth seems to be just this: we ought thankfully to acknowledge riches, honors and all distinctions as the gift of God, not indeed to our merits, but out of his goodness; and we ought humbly to submit to injustice, contumely and persecutions, as the righteous punishment of our sins, not indeed in such a sense as to justify the agents in its infliction, but God, who employs them and can make their very wickedness contribute not only to the general good but to our own. But whoever hopes by a life of virtue and piety to secure the external pomp of this world, together

with the internal peace and eternal blessedness which Christ proffers, may be gratified, we are far from denying it, he may be gratified; but he looks beyond all the promises of Holy Writ. So far as such a hope influences his conduct, we hesitate not to say he is actuated by an unchristian motive; and though God may gratify his worldly desire, he will certainly send leanness if not death into his soul. "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily *thou shalt be fed.*" "The righteous shall not be forsaken, nor his seed left to *beggary.*" Such is the tenor of the promise. Every true and faithful Christian may be sure of enough of this world's good, as much as will conduce to his highest happiness here and hereafter. Do you ask for more? "Is not the life more than meat?" Is not the soul's peace more than all the rewards of ambition? Even the purer heathen philosophy got some glimpse of this; and Pope could write,

"One self-approving hour whole years outweighs  
Of stupid starers and of loud huzzas;  
And more true joy Marcellus exiled feels  
Than Caesar with a senate at his heels."

It is indeed written that "the meek shall inherit the earth." Under the Jewish dispensation worldly rewards were promised, if not to individuals, at least to the nation at large. Moreover, in the sense in which the prophet Habakkuk closed his sublime and glowing hymn of devout supplication, and in which David exclaimed, "I have a goodly heritage," it is true that the meek now and always inherit the earth. And whenever virtue shall everywhere prevail and selfishness be banished from the world, then in the fullest sense the meek shall inherit the earth. Meanwhile, in the actual enjoyment of all things, why should the Christian haggle for the technical possessory right? The time is indeed coming when "the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;" but that will be a very different order of things from the present; and he who, seeing the wicked prosper, complains that he has "cleansed his heart in vain and washed his hands in innocency," is as "foolish and ignorant" now, as David was when he made the same complaint.

Should any be disposed to find fault with Machiavelli or with us, as holding up temptations to vice, we beseech them to consider that Machiavelli can make nothing true by saying so. The only proper question concerns the *truth* of what he says. If he has

told the truth, why complain of *him*, and not rather that things are really so ordered and governed that such should be the truth? If this is thought to be *dangerous* doctrine, especially for the young, we confess we cannot see it so. If men will seek the world let them seek it on worldly principles. There are no other on which they reasonably can seek it. It can do no harm to show how ungodly these principles are. Surely God was not manifest in the flesh, to teach the means of attaining such an end. Let men not delude themselves with the fond hope of transmuting the cross of Christ into gold, or of piling up the world's goods around them on Calvary. "He that thus seeketh his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for Christ's sake shall preserve it unto life eternal. And what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" This is the safe doctrine for the young and for all. Let men make their election. Let them sit down and count the cost; and not endeavor to combine in one monstrous system two things so incongruous as this world and heaven. Even "this world and heaven" is not the strict antithesis. It is rather the *external* and the *internal*. Virtue is its own reward here and hereafter. It seeks not the loaves and fishes in this world; neither does it seek any external recompense as its great object in the world to come. There is indeed a recompense promised to patient continuance in well-doing, no less a recompense than eternal life. Our Saviour said, "great is your reward in heaven." The truth is equally removed, on the one hand, from the overstrained and unscriptural doctrine of those who hold that all idea and hope of reward is destructive of the nature of virtue, even among imperfect beings like ourselves; and, on the other hand, from the preposterous doctrine of Paley, who makes it of the very essence of a virtuous act, that its motive should be the view of eternal happiness. But the end proposed by Christianity is so exactly of the same nature with the means, and the one so constantly and imperceptibly runs into the other, that they cannot *really*, but only *figuratively* or *logically*, be separated. The polar developments of magnetism or electricity are not more indissolubly connected. Yet, in condescension to our weakness, and in accordance with the common usages of language and modes of human thought, Christianity often, and very properly presents them to us under a separate form. But in truth we know of no better life, no purer happiness, no higher heaven, which Christianity holds up before us as the reward of well-doing, than is involved and included in perfect holiness. It offers us no

Mohammedan Paradise, no Indian isle of bliss. Unless perfect holiness have charms to captivate our hearts, we know of no heaven Christianity has to tempt us with.

In short then, if men *will* have the world at all hazards; if, whatever it may cost, they are determined to join in the hot strife with men however unprincipled, for secular wealth, honors and distinctions; we say to such, we can indeed point out to you no road to certain success; you may be overreached and defeated after all your efforts, and the prize when obtained may vanish of itself or be wrested from your grasp. But, on the whole, as the world is, your shortest and surest way is to be ready to abandon principles, debase your characters, sear your consciences, sacrifice your peace and destroy your souls. But, as you value your highest happiness here or hereafter, enter not the lists in such a contest. Let the world have its own. Let Machiavelli be right. Let worldly men pursue a low object by base means; the means are naturally fitted to the end. Let us not wish to deny, let us not envy their success. But let us seek for the approbation of a good conscience, for that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

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## ARTICLE VII.

### THE TRUE DATE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

Translated from *Wieseler, Chronologische Synopse der vier Evangelien*. Hamburg, 1843.  
By Rev. George E. Day, Marlborough, Mass.

[The computation of time from the Christian era, universally adopted since the eighth century among Christian nations, is based upon the calculation of the year of Christ's birth, made in the sixth century by Dionysius Exiguus a Roman monk of Scythian extraction. That this calculation is incorrect, is now generally admitted. The church fathers had only an uncertain tradition and differed among themselves. In modern times, Pearson and Hug, have placed the birth of Christ one year before our era; Scaliger, agreeing with Eusebius, two years; Calvisius Vogel, Paulus, and Süsskind, agreeing with Jerome, three; Bengel and Anger, with Wieseler and the common view, four; Usher and Petavius, five; Sanclemente and Ideler, seven.

The present essay, in addition to comprising the results of the