

 A PENGUIN BOOK 6/-

10903  
NEW

# THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY

H. G. WELLS

his famous novel of a private agony  
that became a public scandal



**Penguin Book 575**  
**The New Machiavelli**

**H. G. Wells, B.Sc., D.Litt.,** was born in 1866 and educated at a private school at Bromley, Midurst Grammar School, and the Royal College of Science.

He had two years' apprenticeship in a draper's shop, of which he made good use in *Kipps* and *The History of Mr Polly*. He then insisted on cancelling indentures, became teacher, university coach, writer. His other novels include *Ann Veronica*, *Tono-Bungay*, *The World of William Clissold*, *Brynhild*, *Dolores*, *The Holy Terror*, and *The War of the Worlds*. He collaborated in a series of modern educational works, *The Outline of History*, *The Science of Life*, and *The Work, Wealth, and Happiness of Mankind*. He died in 1946.

His *Experiment in Autobiography* reviews his world. Sixteen volumes of his works have been published in Penguins.



H. G. Wells

# The New Machiavelli

A closer examination . . . shows  
that Abelard was a Nominalist under  
a new name.

G. H. Lewes, *Hist. Philos.*

It suffices for our immediate purpose  
that tender-minded and  
tough-minded people . . . do both exist.

William James, *Pragmatism*

Penguin Books

**Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth,  
Middlesex, England  
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood,  
Victoria, Australia**

**First published by The Bodley Head 1911  
Published in Penguin Books 1946  
Reissued 1966  
Copyright © the Estate of H. G. Wells, 1911**

**Made and printed in Great Britain by  
Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd, Aylesbury, Bucks.  
Set in Linotype Times**

**This book is sold subject to the condition that  
it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent,  
re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without  
the publisher's prior consent in any form of  
binding or cover other than that in which it is  
published and without a similar condition  
including this condition being imposed on the  
subsequent purchaser**

# Contents

## Book the First: The Making of a Man

- 1 Concerning a Book that was never Written 9
- 2 Bromstead and my Father 16
- 3 Scholastic 43
- 4 Adolescence 75

## Book the Second: Margaret

- 1 Margaret in Staffordshire 125
- 2 Margaret in London 152
- 3 Margaret in Venice 184
- 4 The House in Westminster 190

## Book the Third: The Heart of Politics

- 1 The Riddle for the Statesman 219
- 2 Seeking Associates 252
- 3 Secession 285
- 4 The Besetting of Sex 299

## Book the Fourth: Isabel

- 1 Love and Success 315
- 2 The Impossible Position 339
- 3 The Breaking Point 367



**Book the First**

**The Making of a Man**





## Chapter the First

### Concerning a Book that was never Written

#### 1

Since I came to this place I have been very restless, wasting my energies in the futile beginning of ill-conceived books. One does not settle down very readily at two-and-forty to a new way of living, and I have found myself with the teeming interests of the life I have abandoned still buzzing like a swarm of homeless bees in my head. My mind has been full of confused protests and justifications. In any case I should have found difficulties enough in expressing the complex thing I have to tell, but it has added greatly to my trouble that I have a great analogue, that a certain Niccolo Machiavelli chanced to fall out of politics at very much the age I have reached, and wrote a book to engage the restlessness of his mind, very much as I have wanted to do. He wrote about the relation of the great constructive spirit in politics to individual character and weaknesses, and so far his achievement lies like a deep rut in the road of my intention. It has taken me far astray. It is a matter of many weeks now – diversified indeed by some long drives into the mountains behind us and a memorable sail to Genoa across the blue and purple waters that drowned Shelley – since I began a laboured and futile imitation of 'The Prince'. I sat up late last night with the jumbled accumulation ; and at last made a little fire of olive twigs and burnt it all, sheet by sheet – to begin again clear this morning.

But incidentally I have re-read most of Machiavelli, not excepting those scandalous letters of his to Vettori, and it seems to me, now that I have released myself altogether from his literary precedent, that he still has his use for me. In spite of his vast prestige I claim kindred with him and set his name upon my title-page, in partial intimation of the matter of my story. He takes me with sympathy not only by reason of the dream he pursued and the humanity of his politics, but by the mixture of his nature. His vices come in, essential to my issue. He is dead

and gone, all his immediate correlations to party and faction have faded to insignificance, leaving only on the one hand his broad method and conceptions, and upon the other his intimate living personality, exposed down to its salacious corners as the soul of no contemporary can ever be exposed. Of those double strands it is I have to write, of the subtle protesting perplexing play of instinctive passion and desire against too abstract a dream of statesmanship. But things that seemed to lie very far apart in Machiavelli's time have come near to one another; it is no simple story of white passions struggling against the red that I have to tell.

The state-making dream is a very old dream indeed in the world's history. It plays too small a part in novels. Plato and Confucius are but the highest of a great host of minds that have had a kindred aspiration, have dreamt of a world of men better ordered, happier, finer, securer. They imagined cities grown more powerful and peoples made rich and multitudinous by their efforts, they thought in terms of harbours and shining navies, great roads engineered marvellously, jungles cleared and deserts conquered, the ending of muddle and diseases and dirt and misery; the ending of confusions that waste human possibilities; they thought of these things with passion and desire as other men think of the soft lines and tender beauty of women. Thousands of men there are today almost mastered by this white passion of statecraft, and in nearly every one who reads and thinks you could find, I suspect, some sort of answering response. But in every one it presents itself extraordinarily entangled and mixed up with other, more intimate things.

It was so with Machiavelli. I picture him at San Casciano as he lived in retirement upon his property after the fall of the Republic, perhaps with a twinge of the torture that punished his conspiracy still lurking in his limbs. Such twinges could not stop his dreaming. Then it was 'The Prince' was written. All day he went about his personal affairs, saw homely neighbours, dealt with his family, gave vent to everyday passions. He would sit in the shop of Donato del Corno gossiping curiously among vicious company, or pace the lonely woods of his estate, book in hand, full of bitter meditations. In the evening he returned home and went to his study. At the entrance, he says, he pulled

off his peasant clothes covered with the dust and dirt of that immediate life, washed himself, put on his 'noble court dress', closed the door on the world of toiling and getting, private loving, private hating and personal regrets, sat down with a sigh of contentment to those wider dreams.

I like to think of him so, with brown books before him lit by the light of candles in silver candlesticks, or heading some new chapter of 'The Prince', with a grey quill in his clean fine hand.

So writing, he becomes a symbol for me, and none the less because of his animal humour, his queer indecent side, and because of such lapses into utter meanness as that which made him sound the note of the begging-letter writer even in his 'Dedication', reminding His Magnificence very urgently, as if it were the gist of his matter, of the continued malignity of fortune in his affairs. These flaws complete him. They are my reason for preferring him as a symbol to Plato, of whose indelicate side we know nothing, and whose correspondence with Dionysius of Syracuse has perished; or to Confucius who travelled China in search of a Prince he might instruct, with lapses and indignities now lost in the mists of ages. They have achieved the apotheosis of individual forgetfulness, and Plato has the added glory of that acquired beauty, that bust of the Indian Bacchus which is now indissolubly mingled with his tradition. They have passed into the world of their ideal, and every humbug takes his freedoms with their names. But Machiavelli, more recent and less popular, is still all human and earthly, a fallen brother – and at the same time that nobly dressed and nobly dreaming writer at the desk.

That vision of the strengthened and perfected state is protagonist in my story. But as I re-read 'The Prince' and thought out the manner of my now abandoned project, I came to perceive how that stir and whirl of human thought one calls by way of embodiment the French Revolution has altered absolutely the approach to such a question. Machiavelli, like Plato and Pythagoras and Confucius two hundred odd decades before him, saw only one method by which a thinking man, himself not powerful, might do the work of state-building, and that was by seizing the imagination of a Prince. Directly these men turned their thoughts towards realization, their attitudes became – what shall I call it? – secretarial. Machiavelli, it is

true, had some little doubts about the particular Prince he wanted, whether it was Caesar Borgia or Giuliano or Lorenzo, but a Prince it had to be. Before I saw clearly the differences of our own time I searched my mind for the modern equivalent of a Prince. At various times I redrafted a parallel dedication to the Prince of Wales, to the Emperor William, to Mr Evesham, to a certain newspaper proprietor who was once my school-fellow at City Merchants', to Mr J. D. Rockefeller – all of them men, in their several ways and circumstances and possibilities, princely. Yet in every case my pen bent of its own accord towards irony because – because, although at first I did not realize it, I myself am just as free to be a prince. The appeal was unfair. The old sort of Prince, the old little principality has vanished from the world. The commonweal is one man's absolute estate and responsibility no more. In Machiavelli's time it was indeed to an extreme degree one man's affair. But the days of the Prince who planned and directed and was the source and centre of all power are ended. We are in a condition of affairs infinitely more complex, in which every prince and statesman is something of a servant and every intelligent human being something of a Prince. No magnificent pensive Lorenzos remain any more in this world for secretarial hopes.

In a sense it is wonderful how power has vanished, in a sense wonderful how it has increased. I sit here, an unarmed discredited man, at a small writing-table in a little defenceless dwelling among the vines, and no human being can stop my pen except by the deliberate self-immolation of murdering me, or destroy its fruits except by theft and crime. No King, no council, can seize and torture me ; no Church, no nation silence me. Such powers of ruthless and complete suppression have vanished. But that is not because power has diminished, but because it has increased and become multitudinous, because it has dispersed itself and specialized. It is no longer a negative power we have, but positive ; we cannot prevent, but we can do. This age, far beyond all previous ages, is full of powerful men, men who might, if they had the will for it, achieve stupendous things.

The things that might be done today ! The things indeed that are being done ! It is the latter that give one so vast a sense of the former. When I think of the progress of physical and mech-

anical science, of medicine and sanitation during the last century, when I measure the increase in general education and average efficiency, the power now available for human service, the merely physical increment, and compare it with anything that has ever been at man's disposal before, and when I think of what a little straggling, incidental, undisciplined and uncoordinated minority of inventors, experimenters, educators, writers and organizers has achieved this development of human possibilities, achieved it in spite of the disregard and aimlessness of the huge majority, and the passionate resistance of the active dull, my imagination grows giddy with dazzling intimations of the human splendours the justly organized state may yet attain. I glimpse for a bewildering instant the heights that may be scaled, the splendid enterprises made possible. . . .

But the appeal goes out now in other forms, in a book that catches at thousands of readers for the eye of a Prince diffused. It is the old appeal indeed for the unification of human effort, the ending of confusions, but instead of the Machiavellian deference to a flattered lord, a man cries out of his heart to the unseen fellowship about him. The last written dedication of all those I burnt last night was to no single man, but to the socially constructive passion – in any man. . . .

There is, moreover, a second great difference in kind between my world and Machiavelli's. We are discovering women. It is as if they had come across a vast interval since his time, into the very chamber of the statesman.

## 2

In Machiavelli's outlook the interest of womanhood was in a region of life almost infinitely remote from his statecraft. They were the vehicle of children, but only Imperial Rome and the new world of today have ever had an inkling of the significance that might give them in the state. They did their work, he thought, as the ploughed earth bears its crops. Apart from their function of fertility they gave a humorous twist to life, stimulated worthy men to toil, and wasted the hours of Princes. He left the thought of women outside with his other dusty things when he went into his study to write, dismissed them from his mind. But our modern world is burthened with its sense of the

immense, now half articulate, significance of women. They stand now, as it were, close beside the silver candlesticks, speaking as Machiavelli writes, until he stays his pen and turns to discuss his writing with them.

It is this gradual discovery of sex as a thing collectively portentous that I have to mingle with my statecraft if my picture is to be true, which has turned me at length from a treatise to the telling of my own story. In my life I have paralleled very closely the slow realizations that are going on in the world about me. I began life ignoring women, they came to me at first perplexing and dishonouring ; only very slowly and very late in my life and after misadventure, did I gauge the power and beauty of the love of man and woman and learnt how it must needs frame a justifiable vision of the ordered world. Love has brought me to disaster, because my career had been planned regardless of its possibility and value. But Machiavelli, it seems to me, when he went into his study, left not only the earth of life outside but its unsuspected soul. . . .

### 3

Like Machiavelli at San Casciano, if I may take this analogy one step further, I too am an exile. Office and leading are closed to me. The political career that promised so much for me is shattered and ended for ever.

I look out from this vine-wreathed veranda under the branches of a stone pine ; I see wide and far across a purple valley whose sides are terraced and set with houses of pink and ivory, the Gulf of Liguria gleaming sapphire blue, and cloud-like baseless mountains hanging in the sky, and I think of lank and coaly steamships heaving on the grey rollers of the English Channel and darkling streets wet with rain, I recall as if I were back there the busy exit from Charing Cross, the cross and the money-changers' offices, the splendid grime of giant London and the crowds going perpetually to and fro, the lights by night and the urgency and eventfulness of that great rain-swept heart of the modern world.

It is difficult to think we have left that – for many years if not for ever. In thought I walk once more in Palace Yard and hear the clink and clatter of hansoms and the quick quiet whirr

of motors ; I go in vivid recent memories through the stir in the lobbies, I sit again at eventful dinners in those old dining-rooms like cellars below the House – dinners that ended with shrill division bells, I think of huge clubs swarming and excited by the bulletins of that electoral battle that was for me the opening opportunity. I see the stencilled names and numbers go up on the green baize, constituency after constituency, amidst murmurs or loud shouting. . . .

It is over now for me and vanished. That opportunity will come no more. Very probably you have heard already some crude inaccurate version of our story and why I did not take office, and have formed your partial judgement on me. And so it is I sit now at my stone table, half out of life already, in a warm, large, shadowy leisure, splashed with sunlight and hung with vine tendrils, with paper before me to distil such wisdom as I can, as Machiavelli in his exile sought to do, from the things I have learnt and felt during the career that has ended now in my divorce.

I climbed high and fast from small beginnings. I had the mind of my party. I do not know where I might not have ended, but for this red blaze that came out of my unguarded nature and closed my career for ever.



## Bromstead and my Father

### 1

I dreamt first of states and cities and political things when I was a little boy in knickerbockers.

When I think of how such things began in my mind, there comes back to me the memory of an enormous bleak room with its ceiling going up to heaven and its floor covered irregularly with patched and defective oilcloth and a dingy mat or so and a 'surround', as they call it, of dark stained wood. Here and there against the wall are trunks and boxes. There are cupboards on either side of the fireplace and bookshelves with books above them, and on the wall and rather tattered is a large yellow-varnished geological map of the South of England. Over the mantel is a huge lump of white coral rock and several big fossil bones, and above that hangs the portrait of a brainy gentleman, sliced in half and displaying an interior of intricate detail and much vigour of colouring. It is the floor I think of chiefly; over the oilcloth of which, assumed to be land, spread towns and villages and forts of wooden bricks; there are steep square hills (geologically, volumes of Orr's *Cyclopaedia of the Sciences*) and the cracks and spaces of the floor and the bare brown surround were the water channels and open sea of that continent of mine.

I still remember with infinite gratitude the great-uncle to whom I owe my bricks. He must have been one of those rare adults who have not forgotten the chagrins and dreams of childhood. He was a prosperous west of England builder; including my father he had three nephews, and for each of them he caused a box of bricks to be made by an out-of-work carpenter, not the insufficient supply of the toyshop, you understand, but a really adequate quantity of bricks made out of oak and shaped and smoothed, bricks about five inches by two and a half by one, and half-bricks and quarter-bricks to correspond. There were hundreds of them, many hundreds. I could build six