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### **The Works of George Lord Lyttleton**

**Lyttelton, George <Lord>**

**London, 1774**

Observations on the Life of Cicero.

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O B S E R V A T I O N S

O N

T H E L I F E

O F

C I C E R O.

Μετὰ μάλιστα θεός ἔσθ' ἀνθρώπων τὸ πᾶν γένος· τὸ δὲ ἐπιλεγόμενον αἰθέρα· ἢ γὰρ ἐν σκοτῷ ὑμᾶς οἱ  
θεοὶ ἀποκρύπτουσι, ἀλλ' ἐμφανῆ πάντων ἀνάγκη εἶναι τὰ ὑμέτερα ἔργα.

ΞΕΝΟΦΩΝ.

VOL. I.

B

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

ARTHUR & THOMAS

SECRETARYS of the HOUSE of COMMONS

SIR

THE honour I do consist of addressing these thanks to you, is a great one, and I am in the possession of your friendship; if they have any other claim on your regard, it is only from a sense of duty, which, when ever it appears, is always true of your favour and protection. The subject of this, which is the Liberty of the Press, is a subject of great importance, and one that has the most excellent General all eyes on, and bore the most eminent character in the Roman Empire, while it remained free, and was worthy of that name.

I am, with the most perfect respect and esteem, Sir, your most obliged

SIR

Your most obliged

S. J. and well obedient

humble servant

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

ARTHUR ONSLOW,

SPEAKER of the HOUSE of COMMONS.

S I R,

THE honour I do myself of addressing these remarks to you, is a proof how confident I am in the partiality of your friendship; if they have any other claim to your regard, it is only from a spirit of liberty, which, where-ever it appears, is always sure of your favour and protection. The subject of them, which is the Life of Cicero, must be doubly interesting to you, as he was the most excellent Orator of all antiquity, and bore the most eminent character in the Roman Senate, while it remained free, and was worthy of that name.

I am, with the most perfect respect, and highest sense of your favours to me,

S I R,

Your most obliged,

and most obedient

humble Servant,

B 2

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

THE LIFE OF

THE

MONTAGUE

By

JOHN

WILSON

ESQ.

OF

THE

BAR

AT

THE

INNER

TEMPLE

IN

THE

YEAR

1754

AND

1755

BY

JOHN

WILSON

ESQ.

## O B S E R V A T I O N S

O N

## T H E L I F E O F C I C E R O .

**A**MONG all the celebrated characters in the Roman History, there are none more worthy our attention, than those great men who were at the head of the Republick when she was arrived at her highest degree of power and glory, and by a natural consequence of excessive prosperity was fallen into those vices and corruptions, which soon after produced a change of government, and brought her into an infamous slavery. This revolution was either hastened or delayed according as they who had the management of affairs were more or less infected with the general depravity: some there were who preserved themselves quite untainted; who gallantly stood in the breach, and struggled hard for liberty. Such were Marcus Cato, Quintus Hortensius, Quintus Catulus, and Marcus Brutus; whose virtues were the more valuable to their country, because they were exerted at a juncture when she found herself most in need of their assistance: with these Cicero has generally been placed, and if we may take his own word,

Rome:

Rome had not a more unspotted patriot to boast of than himself: but I doubt, when we look strictly into his conduct, we shall often find it very different from theirs who really deserve that name; and it will appear even from the testimony of his own letters, in which he spoke more naturally and with less vanity than he does in his orations, that his publick character was far from being perfect; that he acted upon many occasions more like an ambitious orator than a philosophical republican; that his virtues were blended with many weaknesses and pernicious failings; and that, notwithstanding his exalted notions of integrity, he sometimes yielded to the corruption of the age, and sacrificed the welfare of his country to his private interests and passions. What makes him the less excusable is, that none ever understood the rules of virtue or saw the beauty of it more than he: his writings are the noblest lessons of publick honesty, disinterestedness, and the love of liberty, that are to be found in all antiquity: and it is the excellent and almost divine spirit which appears in those books, that has made the majority of readers conclude the author of them to have been in his own practice, what he takes so much pains to recommend, and inculcates with such force of eloquence. And, to do him right, in many parts of his administration he was the patriot he describes: the Commonwealth had great obligations to him; no less than its preservation at one crisis: but there wanted a steadiness and uniformity in his conduct, which alone could entitle him to the reputation he was so desirous of obtaining, and that has been given him rather by the partiality of learned men, than from the suffrage of historical justice.

I shall endeavour in the following observations to set his actions in their proper light, and, without aggravating or softening any thing, consider them as they were directed to the advantage or prejudice of his country; in doing which, I shall dwell only upon such circumstances as are important to his character,

character, passing by a great number of other facts which have no relation to my design.

The first cause of moment that he undertook was the defence of Roscius Amerinus, in which he gained great honour by his opposition to Sylla, who was the prosecutor, and whose power had frightened every body else from appearing in his behalf: such a spirit in a young man at his first entrance into publick business was admired by all the world, and seemed to promise something very extraordinary: but though the danger of offending the tyrant could not deter him from pleading for Roscius, yet he thought it not prudent to expose himself to his resentment afterwards; but left Rome, and retired into Greece, under pretence of travelling for his health. He there applied himself to the study of eloquence; and having the advantage of the best masters in the world, he made such improvements in it, that when he came to the bar upon his return to Rome, he soon eclipsed all his competitors, even Hortensius himself, who could not see without uneasiness the superiority he was gaining over him, though they afterwards became very good friends; the conformity of their sentiments upon publick business, and the interests of the Commonwealth, having united them notwithstanding their emulation. This great ability in speaking could not fail to raise him very high in a government where every thing was disposed of by the favour of the people; and for the first proof of their good-will towards him, he was sent to Sicily in the office of quaestor, where he behaved himself with so much justice, integrity, and moderation, that his reputation as a magistrate was not inferior to that which he had obtained before as an orator. To ingratiate himself still further with the Sicilians, he engaged in the prosecution of Verres, who, during his praetorship in their island, had drawn upon himself an universal hatred by his rapaciousness, insolence, and other crimes, which were too often committed with impunity by the Roman governours: and Verres himself, infa-



mous as he was, did not want the countenance and protection of some of the most considerable men in Rome, who endeavoured to shelter him from justice for a reason obvious enough, because they were unwilling any enquiry should be made into offences of that publick nature, in the guilt of which so many of their friends, and perhaps they themselves, were too much involved. But the eloquence and credit of Cicero condemned Verres in spite of their opposition; and the Sicilians were so pleased with the service he had done them upon that occasion, that they put themselves wholly under his protection, and continued their esteem and affection to the end of his life.

Soon after his success in this affair, which recommended him extremely to the Roman people, who were always glad to see magistrates prosecuted for male-administration, he was made edile; and having gone through that office with a deserved applause, he was unanimously chosen prætor. As that dignity was the second in the Commonwealth, the possession of it inspired him with higher thoughts and more aspiring hopes than he had entertained before: he then began to take such measures as he judged most likely to contribute to his advancement: and as Pompey was more capable than any body of assisting him in that design, he sought all means of gaining him to his interests; and with that view pronounced his famous oration *pro Lege Manilia*, in which he entirely forsook his former character of a lover of his country, and became a principal instrument of illegal and arbitrary power. As the part that Cicero acted in this affair deserves a very particular consideration, I shall set it in as full a light as possible; the more, because Plutarch takes no notice of it, which it is not very easy to account for, considering his usual impartiality.

The extravagant affection of the people, in committing to Pompey the command of the war against the pirates, had vested him with so exorbitant a power, that it utterly

destroyed

destroyed the equality essential to a Commonwealth. His commission gave him an absolute authority over the whole length of the Mediterranean as far as Hercules's pillars, and along all the coasts of it to the distance of fifty miles from the sea: he was impowered to take what money he thought fit out of the publick treasury without accounting for it, and to raise as many soldiers and mariners as he judged convenient. Besides this, he had a liberty of chusing out of the body of the senate, fifteen persons to serve him as lieutenants, to whom he assigned their provinces at his own discretion. In vain did the consuls, with most of the senators, oppose this prodigious authority, so contrary to the maxims of their government: their resistance served only to inflame the people, and occasioned them to add to their decree, that Pompey should have power to fit out five hundred sail of ships, to raise an army of an hundred and twenty six thousand men, and that he should have twenty four senators and two quaestors to obey his orders.

With this force he soon reduced the pirates; and his victory was hardly known at Rome, when Manilius, one of the tribunes of the people, to gratify his insatiable ambition, proposed the giving him the government of Lucullus and the command of that general's army then carrying on the war with Mithridates, and that he should still retain the whole extent of that authority which had been granted him by the former decree, though the reasons for which it had been given were entirely ceased. This was nothing less than delivering to him all the forces both by sea and land, and making him absolute master of the Roman empire: what rendered the favourers of this decree more inexcusable was, that they had not the least pretence of publick necessity to justify the proposing it, as they seemed to have had in the commission they gave him against the pirates, who were at that time very formidable enemies: but Lucullus, who commanded in Asia, had overcome

Mithridates in several battles, and was as capable of finishing the war as he whom they appointed to be his successor. Such an excessive power entrusted to one man, where there was so little occasion for it, appeared to the senate an utter subversion of the constitution; but such was their fear of Pompey, whose greatness was become no less terrible than that of Sylla, that except Quintus Catulus and Hortensius none durst contradict the passing of it. These two great men, one of which was beyond dispute the second orator in Rome, spoke with much warmth and force against the decree, endeavouring to persuade the people of the unreasonableness and danger of it; and perhaps they would have made some impression, if Pompey's faction, apprehending the effect their orations might have produced, had not set up an abler speaker than either of them to harangue on their side of the question. Cicero mounted the *rostrum*, and with an eloquence worthy of a better cause, most artfully reflected on Lucullus, whose reputation, as well as his authority, was to be made a sacrifice to the envy of Pompey; then he proceeded to descant upon Pompey's character, which he set off with all the ornaments of rhetoric, attributing to him the whole success not only of the African, Spanish, and Piratick wars, but even of that against the slaves, the honour of which was solely due to Crassus. Thus by cruelly injuring two of the greatest generals that were then in the Commonwealth; by a most servile flattery of the man who was manifestly overturning all its liberties: he brought the people to consent to the Manilian Law, which, had a regard to the interest of his country been his constant principle, he ought to have opposed as violently as he did afterwards the Agrarian, or any other attempt against the safety and freedom of the state. It is certain that these extraordinary honours conferred on Pompey, as they broke the balance of the Republick, so they irritated the ambition of Caesar, and afterwards furnished him

him with a pretence of demanding as great a power for himself, and seizing it by force when it was refused.

I come now to speak of his consullhip, which really deserves all the praises that not only the Greek and Roman historians have bestowed upon it, but even those which he himself is so lavish of whenever he has an opportunity to mention it. His opposition to the law proposed by Rullus, which was presented to the people in a form they were always easy to be caught with, was a matter of the most delicate nature; and nothing less than his consummate address in the managing those assemblies, could possibly have hindered its being carried by the artful contrivers of it: but by shewing the people that under the notion of a popular decree they were really setting up a private tyranny, from which no advantage could arise to the poor, for whose sake alone this law was pretended to be formed, but the revenues of the publick would be dissipated and its liberty destroyed; he stopped the execution of their designs, and saved the Commonwealth from the yoke which was just ready to be imposed upon it. I believe no affair was ever managed with greater prudence, nor ever so much skill exerted in any oration as in those he made upon this occasion, which are certainly master-pieces in their kind, though others of a more pompous stile are generally more admired. His conduct in Catiline's conspiracy is too well known to be repeated here: the vigilance, firmness, and activity, with which he discovered and prevented that design, can never be too much extolled; nor could any thing have depreciated the services he then did his country, but his being so sensible of them himself. As to the charge brought against him by his enemies of having violated the Porcian law, by putting to death the chief of the conspirators without allowing them a trial, he was abundantly justified in so doing by the urgent necessity of affairs, and by the order of the senate, *That he should take care the Republick might receive no detriment.* This commission vested him with

something like a dictatorial power, and the extream danger of the Commonwealth required it; for the least delay would have been fatal. But as the people were always jealous of any stretch of authority in the senate, they were more easily wrought upon to take umbrage at this extraordinary act, which Cicero himself calls in one of his letters *Invidiosa Potentia*.— After the expiration of his consulship all mens eyes were turned upon him, as one who they hoped would continue to be the chief support of those that were affectionate to the Commonwealth. What engagements he then entered into, what friendship he cultivated, what policy he observed, demands a very strict examination, though this period of his life, from the death of Catiline to his banishment by Clodius, has been passed lightly over by historians; and therefore many parts of it are only to be collected from his private letters, in which he gives a very particular account of every step he took, and of the many changes both in his sentiments and behaviour that happened during that remarkable interval. We shall find him sometimes devoted to Pompey, sometimes at variance with him; sometimes imploring his protection, sometimes despising his power; now resolved to stand or fall with the Commonwealth, now making his terms with its tyrants; almost always reasoning differently, and yet frequently reasoning better than he could prevail upon himself to act. When he was to make an oration to the people upon quitting the consulship, the secret enemies of his administration declared themselves, and Cæsar, who was one of the prætors, together with Metullus and Bestia, two tribunes, would not suffer him to give an account of his conduct as was always usual, but commanded him to abjure his office, and leave the rostrum. This they grounded upon his having put to death some Roman citizens without a legal trial; and they thought it would be a great mortification to Cicero's vanity, to deprive him of so fair an opportunity of making his own panegyrick: but the readiness of his wit found a way

a way to disappoint their malice; for he took the oath in a new-invented form, and instead of swearing that he had acted nothing contrary to the interests of the republick, he swore that he had saved the city and the whole state from ruin. As extraordinary as this oath was, all the people took it after him in the same words, and the affront that his enemies would have done him fell entirely upon themselves. The next day he complained of them in the senate, and prevailed upon that order to pass a decree, *That no prosecution should be brought against him for what he had executed by virtue of the power which they had given him.* This drove the cabal against him to propose a law for the calling home Pompey with the army under his command, to secure the liberties of the people against the pretended tyranny of Cicero: but by the invincible opposition of Cato this project failed. However, it made such an impression upon the mind of Cicero, that he resolved to neglect no methods of binding Pompey more strongly to his interests, who had already very great obligations to him, as has been shewn before. Accordingly when that general was preparing to return to Rome, he writ to him: and having complained of his want of friendship, in not congratulating him upon what he had done during his absence for the service of the state; he compares Pompey to the younger Scipio, and himself to Lelius, desiring that their union might be as strict as was the famous one between those two great men. This produced an appearance of amity towards him, but he himself suspected it not to be sincere, as is evident from his 13th epistle to Atticus, in which he says of Pompey, That indeed he made great professions of esteem and consideration for him, and affected openly to support and praise him; but it was easy enough to see he envied him, though he endeavoured to conceal it. Cicero's vanity makes him call that envy, which was really ill-will, for Pompey could not be a friend to any body that had declared himself in the interests of the Republick.

lic. The character that Cicero gives of him in the same letter is very different from that of Scipio, to whom he had compared him a little before: his words are, speaking of his conduct, *Nihil come, nihil simplex, nihil ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖσι honestum, nihil illustre, nihil forte, nihil liberum.* And again in the 20th of the same book, *Is vir nihil habet amplum, nihil excelsum, nihil non summissum & popolare.* Would one believe, that the hero of the fine oration *pro lege Manilia*, and the Pompey thus described, was the same man? Had he nothing great? nothing elevated? nothing but what was mean and vulgar? was there neither dignity, nor spirit, nor freedom, nor candour, nor honesty, nor good-nature in his whole behaviour? But to this person, such as he is here represented, Cicero earnestly laboured to recommend himself: and he had soon after more need than ever of his protection in the famous quarrel with Clodius, which he entered into more to satisfy the ill humour of his wife Terentia, who was jealous of an intrigue between him and Clodia, than out of any regard to the ceremonies of the *Bona Dea*. Had he known the parts and capacity of Clodius as well as he did afterwards when he came to feel them, in all probability he would not have exposed himself to the enmity of a man so able to do him mischief, and with whom he had always lived before in a degree of friendship. But besides that he thought his ruin infallible from the evidence he brought against him, the perpetual riot and debauchery in which he passed his time, made him apprehend no great consequences from his resentment: but he was soon convinced, that a turn to pleasure does not always render those that follow it unfit for business, especially when they are excited to action by any violent passion. Clodius found means to corrupt his judges, and was no sooner acquitted but he turned all his thoughts to the pursuit of his revenge upon Cicero, and kept him in continual alarms till he got an opportunity of compassing it, which obliged him to court Pompey more and more, though such  
a conduct

a conduct was extremely inconsistent with his principles of liberty. As much distrust as he had expressed of that great man's friendship in the letter to Atticus I mentioned first, he now deceived himself into an entire dependance on it, and most of his letters were filled with boasts of his good policy in securing such a powerful protector against Clodius and all his faction. How little foundation he had for so much confidence, will appear by the sequel of that affair. In the mean time there was a business brought before the senate, which, as it very much affected one of the main points of Cicero's policy, it will be necessary to give some account of. It had always been his favourite system, through the whole course of his administration, to strengthen the power of the senate, by a close union with the equestrian order, they making a very considerable body, and carrying a great weight along with them to whichever side they inclined. He succeeded so well in this design, that during the conspiracy of Catiline they were a constant guard to the senate, and ready upon all occasions to support the resolutions of that house. This was certainly a very important service to the Commonwealth, and it was no small honour to Cicero to have been the author of it: but most of this order being employed in collecting the taxes of the Re-L. II, Ep. i. public, or in farming of its revenues, there were grievous complaints made against them from all parts of the empire for the frequent abuses of their office, in all which Cicero was forced to defend them contrary to truth and equity, for fear of alienating them from the senate. But soon after the affair of Clodius, Cato who did not understand those managements, accused the judges who absolved him of corruption, many of which were Roman knights, and obtained a decree against them. This was resented as an affront upon the whole body, and Cicero to pacify them again, was obliged to speak in the senate against the decree. But a much worse matter that followed shortly after, involved him in a new trouble upon their  
account.



account. Many of them who had farmed the Asian revenues of the censor, whose office it was to sett them, had taken them at too high a price, out of emulation to go beyond the other bidders; and afterwards repenting of their bargain, made a most impudent request to the senate, that they might be discharged of so much of their rents as they thought would burthen them too much. It was impossible for Cato to be patient under such a demand: he opposed it with all his might, and on the other side Cicero, who knew of what consequence it was not to disoblige the order, supported them no less vigorously: the dispute between them lasted a good while, but at length Cato, who had justice and reason entirely on his side, got the better, and the petition was rejected. Experience soon shewed how much more useful it would have been for the Commonwealth to have followed Cicero's advice. The knights, exasperated at the severity of the senate, abandoned their party, and gave themselves up to Cæsar, who knew very well how to turn this division to his own advantage. It was the fault of Cato not to see that publick affairs are incapable of perfection, and that it is impossible to govern a state without submitting lesser interests to greater: hence it was that with admirable intentions for the service of his country, he sometimes did a great deal of mischief, for want of distinguishing between what was good in speculation, and what in practice. This was seldom the case with Cicero: when he departed from the interests of the Republick, it was for the most part with his eyes open, and without the excuse of error. During these wrangles between him and Cato, the triumvirate was secretly forming, and Cæsar, under the specious pretence of reconciling Pompey and Crassus, was working himself into a share of power with them which he knew better than they did how to support. Cicero perceived it, and takes notice to Atticus of his growing greatness. But as dangerous as this union was to the Commonwealth, he did not think fit to oppose it, or break with

L. II. Ep. i. port. Cicero perceived it, and takes notice to Atticus of his growing greatness. But as dangerous as this union was to the Commonwealth, he did not think fit to oppose it, or break with

with Pompey upon that account; though he makes the strongest declarations of his resolution not to abandon the good cause, but ever to maintain it at all events. It seems he flattered himself with an unaccountable chimæra of being able to govern them both, as he tells Atticus in the first epistle of the second book. And again, in the third of the same book, he informs his friend that Cæsar had assured him he would do nothing but by his advice: possibly Cæsar, being sensible of his foible, might have soothed his vanity in making him believe so; but it is much more likely, that his conduct was owing to other motives which are mentioned in that letter, viz. *Reditus in gratiam cum inimicis, pax cum multitudine, senectutis otium*. Thus he manifestly gave up the care of the Commonwealth to a precarious safety and shameful ease; but he could not help reproaching himself for it at the end of the letter, and acknowledging that this was acting very differently from the virtuous maxims of his consulship, and very much beneath his reputation.

The fifth letter of the second book is so extraordinary a confession of his weakness, not to give it a worse name, that I am surprized how it came to drop from him even to so intimate a friend as Atticus. He very ingenuously tells him, That if they whom he afterwards calls Tyrants, would have bribed him with the place of augur, they had it in their power to have gained him. *Quo quidem uno (Auguratu scil.) ego ab istis capi possum; vide levitatem meam*. But, being disappointed in the object of his ambition, he resolves, out of the abundance of his virtue, to retire from business, and philosophize: accordingly he went in to the country; and in the letters he wrote from thence, treats both Clodius and Pompey with great contempt, and even threatens the last with a publick recantation of all the fine things he had said of him. While he was absent, Pompey married Cæsar's daughter; upon which, Cicero, whose penetration saw all this consequences of the fatal alliance, re-

turned to Rome, and, joining with Curio and other opposers of Caesar in the senate, endeavoured to obstruct his designs, though without offending Pompey, with whom he still kept up a shew of friendship. But the storm which had hung over him so long now broke upon his head: Caesar, to be revenged, assisted Clodius, and got him to be chosen tribune of the people. No sooner was he entered upon this office, but he openly menaced Cicero with a prosecution for the death of the conspirators. This threw him into one of his usual terrors; but Pompey flattered him with repeated assurances that he would not suffer Clodius to proceed: at first he gave credit to these promises; but finding that the design against him still went on, he began to suspect that he was betrayed. His affairs were in this disagreeable posture, when Caesar, who desired only to draw him off from giving him trouble at Rome, offered to carry him his lieutenant into Gaul, for which province he was ready to set out. Plutarch says he solicited it himself, but the letters to Atticus expressly affirm that the proposal came from Caesar. Be it how it will, there could nothing more advantageous have happened to Cicero at that time. The employment was very honourable, and would have effectually secured him from the malice and power of his enemies: being sensible of this himself, he was inclined to accept of it, and would have gone with Caesar, if Clodius, perceiving that he was in danger of losing his revenge, had not very artfully changed his conduct, and, by affecting to seem moderate and void of rancour, persuaded people that he had laid aside his resentment, and was even disposed to a reconciliation if sought for. Cicero was weak enough to be duped by this behaviour, and refused the lieutenantancy of Caesar, who thereupon insisted with Pompey upon giving him up to the fury of Clodius, and declared in an assembly of the people, that he thought Cicero had acted illegally in putting to death the accomplices of Catiline. Clodius pushed the affair so vigorously, that Cicero soon found he had  
undone

undone himself in not making use of Cæsar's offer. He fell into a most unmanly dejection, changing his robe, and walking about the streets in a sordid habit, to move the compassion of the people, while Clodius insulted and reviled him for his want of spirit. The senate indeed, and the whole equestrian order, gave him all the marks he could desire of affection and concern; but the faction against him was the stronger: Crassus was his enemy upon many accounts, Catulus was dead, Lucullus retired from business: Pompey was his only resource, and he still counted upon some return for the many services he had done him in the course of his administration. But it is the just punishment of those who make themselves the tools of other men's ambition, *That whenever the interests of those they serve may happen to demand it, they are sure to be sacrificed: for no very ambitious man was ever grateful any further than it was useful to him to be so.* This Cicero most cruelly experienced, when, going to Pompey to implore his protection, he, to avoid his importunities or reproaches, refused to see him. Upon this he utterly lost all hopes, and, abandoning himself to the most abject complaints, consulted with his friends what he should do to avoid the present danger. Most of them advised him to go voluntarily into banishment, as the only means to prevent a Civil War; which council he resolved to follow, as most conformable to his own genius and circumstances.

In how spiritless and effeminate a manner he behaved during his exile, is sufficiently known to all the world: the stain that is left upon his character was too great to be varnished over by all the glory of his triumphant return, which he chiefly owed to the imprudence of Clodius in quarreling with Pompey, though the vigorous proceeding of his friend Milo and the firmness of the senate were of no small service to him. As soon as he was re-established in his former dignities, he linked himself more closely than ever in friendship with Pompey, making his court to Cæsar at the same time, whom he found it

was not safe for him to offend. This complaisance had the effect that he proposed from it; he obtained the place of augur which he desired so passionately, and not long after the government of Cilicia. His behaviour in the administration of this province would have done him a great deal of honour, if he could have been content with the reputation he had acquired of a wise and upright magistrate, without aiming at the glory of a soldier, to which he was far from having so good a title. Cato's answer to the letter, in which he solicits him to get a triumph decreed him by the senate, is a very handsome reproof of his vanity, and a more gentle one than one would have expected from the roughness of that great man's character. But notwithstanding all the pains he took to soften his denial, Cicero was grievously offended at it; which ill disposition of his, the enemies of Cato, particularly Caesar, omitted no endeavours to confirm. Upon his return to Rome he found the Civil War just ready to break out between him and Pompey: this extremely embarrassed him, for he was very desirous to be upon good terms with both, and both equally courted him to their party. At first he attempted to bring them to some agreement, but he soon found that design impracticable; for ambition, which had formerly made them friends, now made them enemies: then he laboured to dissuade Pompey in particular from hazarding a war, by representing to him the inequality of their forces, and that it was now too late to quarrel with the man whom he himself had made so strong: these arguments, just and reasonable as they were, had no effect upon Pompey, who was infatuated with a vain conceit of his own power, and a false confidence which betrayed him to his ruin. All his efforts towards preventing a rupture meeting with no success, Cicero found himself in the greatest perplexities for which of the two factions he should declare. On one side he saw a general without authority, troops without obedience, neglect of all necessary preparation, and a continual series of mistakes;

L. VII  
Ep. i, ii.

mistakes; on the other an active leader, a well-disciplined army, great courage, and admirable conduct: whichever got the better, the Commonwealth was almost equally sure of being inflaved. That this was the case, very plainly appears from many passages in his Epistles to Atticus, where he says, That let the success of the Civil War be what it would, the consequence of it would certainly be a tyrant. I shall only cite one, which is in the 7th letter of the 7th book, *Depugna, inquis, potius quam servias: ut quid? si victus eris, proscribare; si viceris, tamen servias.* The only difference was, That the tyranny of Pompey would be established upon the authority of the senate, and Cæsar chose rather to build his upon the favour of the people. Under these difficulties Cicero remained some time, in a most uneasy situation; at last he tells Atticus the conclusion of all his reasonings in the following words: *Quid ergo, inquis, acturus es? Idem quod pecudes quæ depulse sui generis sequuntur greges: ut bos armenta, sic ego bonos viros, aut eos qui dicuntur boni, sequar, etiam si ruent.* He resolves to herd with his own kind; that is, to follow those who had the reputation of being the honest party, the majority of senators, and the men whose dignity was most eminent in the Commonwealth. But though he had taken this resolution, he delayed a good while to execute it, from the natural timidity of his temper. In the mean time, some of his friends that were in Cæsar's army, and Cæsar himself, were very earnest with him to stand neuter at least, if he would not join with them, which conduct they persuaded him would be most for his honour, as well as infinitely for his advantage. But Pompey pressed him to come immediately to his camp, and in such a manner as let him see, that he resented the uncertainty of his behaviour. This alarmed him, and he began to declare himself according to his first intention, though he every day saw more reason to apprehend the ill success of their party. But what determined him at last was the severity with which Pompey threatened to proceed against

L. VII.  
Ep. vii.

all

all who remained unactive and neuters in the quarrel; *Crueliter*  
*minabitur otiosis*, says he in a letter to one of his friends. And  
 in another to Atticus he tells him, that the least he (Atticus)  
 would suffer if Pompey should be victorious, was a confiscation  
 of all his fortune; and that as many as continued in the same  
 neutrality must expect to come off no better. He himself  
 therefore, upon the report of some disadvantage Caesar lay under  
 in Spain (which, contrary to the expectation of his enemies, he  
 soon surmounted), set sail, and joined Pompey at his camp in  
 Greece, who received him coldly, as knowing he came thither  
 very much against his will. He endeavoured to revenge him-  
 self by bitter raileries upon the ill management of their  
 affairs, and so derided the weakness of the party, that it  
 drew from Pompey this severe reproof, *Pass into Caesar's*  
*camp, and then you will give over ridiculing us, and begin*  
*to fear us.* Cicero so far followed his advice, that he with-  
 drew himself before the battle of Pharsalia, and immediately  
 after that decisive action made his peace with the conqueror.  
 From that time to the death of Caesar, he led a most inglorious  
 and dishonourable life, courting the usurper, whom in his heart  
 he hated, with the most abject and servile adulations, entirely  
 forgetting the dignity of his former character, and not even  
 hiding the disgraceful circumstances of his present situation by  
 a prudent and modest retreat, but exposing them to the eyes  
 of the publick, and braving the censures of mankind. Yet in  
 this unworthy and contemptible scene of action, which brought  
 such a cloud upon his reputation, one merit he still preserved,  
 that in his flatteries to Caesar he shewed a regard to the interests  
 of his friends, and the safety of those who had faithfully served  
 the Commonwealth. Such a conduct shews there were yet  
 some sparks of virtue remaining in him; and though it does  
 not atone for the mean homage which he paid to the tyrant of  
 his country, yet it certainly lessens the guilt and takes off  
 from the infamy of his crime. The conspiracy against Caesar,  
 which

which was formed and executed without his participation, is a plain proof how low he was then fallen in the opinion of honest men; for who was so fit to have engaged in a design against the life of an usurper, as the destroyer of Catiline and his accomplices? from whom could the Republick so properly expect her freedom, as from him who had before defended it in so imminent a danger? But they who espoused that cause which he had deserted, saw and knew that he had no longer spirit enough for so great an undertaking; and therefore they contented themselves with requiring his approbation afterwards, which they were satisfied he would not refuse them when the blow was struck; and then indeed, as they expected he would do, he returned to the maxims of his former policy, and his character in some measure recovered its former lustre. He entered into the interests of the conspirators, and did them all the service he was able, the particular instances of which it will not be necessary to mention here. But when he found that all was going again to wreck by the cabals of Antony and other friends of Cæsar, when Brutus and the other heads of the conspiracy were obliged to yield to the violence of the conjuncture and abandon Italy, he too judged it prudent to retire, and took shipping to go into Greece; but, meeting with contrary winds, he was driven back, once or twice to shore; by which delay, time was given to his friends in Rome to acquaint him with Antony's having made a decree, for the perpetual abolishment of the dictatorship, which Sylla and Cæsar had made so odious, and some other popular acts, that gave them hopes he would return to his duty, and no longer hinder the restoration of the Commonwealth. Being thus called back by, what he terms himself, the general voice of his country, and looking upon the accidents which had delayed his passage as miraculous declarations of the will of Providence to command his return, he made what haste he could to Rome, where he was received by the whole city with uncommon honours. But the good opinion

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he had conceived of Antony did not last long: some harsh words he spoke in the senate concerning him, occasioned a very sharp reply, which Antony resenting, loudly threatened him in his oration, and accused him as an accomplice of Cæsar's murder. Cicero from that moment kept no measures with him; but, arming himself with all the thunder of his eloquence, poured forth those terrible invectives which compelled the senate to declare war upon Antony, and soon after drove him out of Italy. This was certainly a very great action, and one of the shining parts of Cicero's life; but possibly he would have done the state more service, in the situation it then was, if his animosity against Antony had been less violent, because it precipitated the execution of those designs which ended in the ruin of the Commonwealth; at least this was the opinion of Brutus, as appears by several passages in his letters. But there is another part of his conduct, which it will be more difficult to know how to justify. I mean his committing the safety of the Republick to an ambitious boy, who, from the near relation he bore to Cæsar, could never be a proper person to defend it in conjunction with his father's murderers. At first indeed it might look like good policy, to make use of his credit among the friends and soldiers of Julius Cæsar, against the more formidable greatness of Mark Antony; but when he afterwards grew so powerful, it was a most inconsiderate and fatal mistake to continue him any longer in employment, and put the last stake of liberty into the hands of one who had so great temptations to betray it. It seems Octavius, unexperienced as he was, had discovered the old man's weak side, and, by flattering and persuading him that he would always act subservient to his authority, had engaged him to that excessive confidence which his friends saw the danger of, though he did not. Brutus in particular, whose eyes were ever open to all that might affect the Commonwealth, made him strong and frequent instances to have a care of setting up one tyrant while he was pulling down another: but

but when, without any regard to these remonstrances, he carried his servility so far as even to supplicate Octavius for the lives of Brutus and the other conspirators, that truly great and free-spirited Roman could not help venting his indignation against him in two letters, one to Atticus, and the other to Cicero himself, which are at the same time the noblest monuments of the heroick virtue of him that wrote them, and the most unanswerable condemnations of that conduct which gave occasion to them. And indeed he had too much reason to say, that Cicero acted as if he was not so sollicitous about securing the liberty of his country, as to chuse a master who would be favourable to himself. But what most of all exasperated Brutus was, that in the excess of his complaisance for Octavius, he had even reflected upon Casca, whose cause had been espoused by him with so much warmth, and upon whose action he had bestowed such high encomiums, while he had freedom and courage to speak his mind. Of this Brutus, whose reputation was strongly linkt to that of Casca, most grievously complains to Atticus, and tells him with a noble contempt, that though he and his associates, in the generous design of delivering the whole world from slavery, did not boast so much of the *Ides of March* as Cicero of the *Nones of December*\*, yet their glory was not inferior to his, nor their characters less sacred. I must transcribe both the letters, if I were to repeat all the admirable reproofs which they contain of Cicero's baseness and indiscretion, in so meanly courting the enemy of the Commonwealth, and for having planted and supported a tyranny, whose roots were like to strike deeper, and grow more strongly, than that of Antony; which he valued himself upon having attempted to destroy. All that can be alledged in his excuse is, that he believed he should be able to deprive Octavius of the power he had given him, when the interest of the state should require it: there are some passages in the history of those times, which seem to favour

Ep. xvi, xvii.  
ad Brutum.

\* At which time Cicero quashed the conspiracy of Catiline.

this supposition, and even to assure us, that he intended doing it, when he was prevented by the sudden forming of the triumvirate. It is said that Pansa, who received a mortal wound at the battle of Modena, declared at his death, to the young Cæsar, that the senate only made use of him as an instrument of their vengeance upon Antony, and that they were determined to make him the next sacrifice to the jealousy of the republic. There was also an expression of Cicero reported to him, in which, by an equivocation easily understood, there was intimated a design to cut him off (*laudandum juvenem ornandum tollendum*) as soon as he had served their turn; upon which, he openly declared that he would take care to put it out of their power. If this was the case, it very much takes off from the ingratitude of Octavius, in consenting to the death of his benefactor, since such double dealing could hardly deserve the name of an obligation, let the effects of it be ever so advantageous. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think, that though his behaviour in regard to Cæsar was productive of infinite mischiefs, yet he meant well in it to the Commonwealth, and that the fault was rather of his judgment than his heart: but to whatever cause it is to be ascribed, he suffered death as a punishment for it, and fell himself the earliest victim to that tyranny his mismanagement had established. There was something mean in the circumstances that immediately preceded his murder; but at the instant of death itself he behaved with dignity, and shewed a firmness not unworthy of a Roman.

See Plutarch.

In his private character he was very amiable, only sometimes too much given to raillery, a fault which very witty men are seldom wise enough to shun. I cannot pass so severe a censure as some have done upon his grief for the death of his daughter Tullia, whose extraordinary merit is a sufficient answer to those who reproach it with the name of weakness. Great minds are most sensible of such losses; and the sentiments of humanity and affection are usually most

tender, where in every other respect there is the greatest strength of reason.

I shall close these observations with one remark upon the works of Cicero, that they are a strong proof how essential freedom is to the excellency of writing, particularly in the two most manly kinds of it, philosophy and oratory; since, after the loss of the Roman liberties, they were so far from ever being equalled, that all attempts which were made to imitate them, served only to demonstrate that the genius and learning of Rome were sunk together with its constitution. Poetry indeed, and other parts of literature which are only proper for amusement, may possibly flourish under the smiles of an arbitrary Prince; but force and solidity of reasoning, or a sublime and commanding eloquence, are inconsistent with slavish restraint, or timorous dependancy.

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THE LIFE OF CICERO

under, when he came into the world, the  
strength of reason  
I shall state that Cicero was not  
born in the excellence of wisdom, but that  
most nearly kind of it, he had by nature  
lost. But he has by his own industry  
equalled, that all attempts which were made to make them  
proved only to demonstrate that the genius and faculty of Cicero  
were lost together with his constitution. Poetry, history, and  
other parts of literature which are not properly for his nature, but  
may possibly flourish under the genius of an inferior person, he  
has with industry of reasoning, or a tedious and common  
eloquence, are inconsistent with his nature, or his

ROMAN HISTORY

From a Manuscript of the late Lord Lyttleton, communicated  
by William Henry Lyttleton, Esq.