Sallust

dominions, that the test of experience decided the ancient controversy: brains were shown to be more important than brawn. It is a pity that kings and rulers do not apply their mental powers as effectively to the preservation of peace as to the prosecution of war. If they did, human life would be less chequered and unstable than it is: we should not see everything drifting to and fro in change and confusion. Sovereignty can easily be maintained by the same qualities as enable a man to acquire it. But when idleness replaces industry, when self-restraint and justice give place to lust and arrogance, the moral deterioration brings loss of station in its train. A degenerate ruler is always supplanted by a better man than himself.

Success in agriculture, seafaring, or building always depends on human excellence. But many are the men who, slaves of gluttony and sloth, have gone through life ignorant and uncivilized, as if they were mere sojourners in a foreign land, reversing, surely, the order of nature by treating their bodies as means of gratification and their souls as mere encumbrances. It makes no odds, to my mind, whether such men live or die; alive or dead, no one ever hears of them. The truth is that no man really lives or gets any satisfaction out of life, unless he devotes all his energies to some task and seeks fame by some notable achievement or by the cultivation of some admirable gift.

The field is wide, and men follow their natural bent in choosing this path or that. It is noble to serve the state by action, and even to use a gift of eloquence on its behalf is no mean thing. Peace, no less than war, offers men a chance of fame: they can win praise by describing exploits as well as by achieving them. And although the narrator earns much less renown than the doer, the writing of history is, in my opinion, a peculiarly difficult task. You must work hard to find words worthy of your subject. And if you censure misdeeds, most people will accuse you of envy and malice. When you write of the out-

standing merit and glory of good men, people are quite ready to accept what they think they could easily do themselves; but anything beyond that is dismissed as an improbable fiction.

My earliest inclinations led me, like many other young men, to throw myself wholeheartedly into politics. There I found many things against me. Self-restraint, integrity, and virtue were disregarded; unscrupulous conduct, bribery, and profit-seeking were rife. And although, being a stranger to the vices that I saw practised on every hand, I looked on them with scorn, I was led astray by ambition and, with a young man's weakness, could not tear myself away. However much I tried to dissociate myself from the prevailing corruption, my craving for advancement exposed me to the same odium and slander as all my rivals.

After suffering manifold perils and hardships, peace of mind at last returned to me, and I decided that I must bid farewell to politics for good. But I had no intention of wasting my precious leisure in idleness and sloth, or of devoting my time to agriculture or hunting – tasks fit only for slaves. I had formerly been interested in history, and some work which I began in that field had been interrupted by my misguided political ambitions. I therefore took this up again, and decided to write accounts of some episodes in Roman history that seemed particularly worthy of record – a task for which I felt myself the better qualified inasmuch as I was unprejudiced by the hopes and fears of the party man.

It is my intention to give a brief account, as accurate as I can make it, of the conspiracy of Catiline, a criminal enterprise which I consider specially memorable as being unprecedented in itself and fraught with unprecedented dangers to Rome. I must preface my narrative by a short description of Catiline's character.

Lucius Catiline was of noble birth. He had a powerful intellect and great physical strength, but a vicious and depraved

nature. From his youth he had delighted in civil war, bloodshed, robbery, and political strife, and it was in such occupations that he spent his early manhood. He could endure hunger, cold, and want of sleep to an incredible extent. His mind was daring, crafty, and versatile, capable of any pretence and dissimulation. A man of flaming passions, he was as covetous of other men's possessions as he was prodigal of his own; an eloquent speaker, but lacking in wisdom. His monstrous ambition hankered continually after things extravagant, impossible, beyond his reach. After the dictatorship of Lucius Sulla, Catiline had been possessed by an overmastering desire for despotic power, to gratify which he was prepared to use any and every means. His headstrong spirit was tormented more and more every day by poverty and a guilty conscience, both of which were aggravated by the evil practices I have referred to. He was incited also by the corruption of a society plagued by two opposite but equally disastrous vices – love of luxury and love of money.

Since I have had occasion to mention public morality, it seems appropriate to go back further and briefly describe the principles by which our ancestors guided their conduct in peace and war, their method of governing the state which they made so great before bequeathing it to their successors, and the gradual degeneration of its noble character into vice and corruption.

The city of Rome, as far as I can make out, was founded and first inhabited by Trojan exiles who, led by Aeneas, were wandering without a settled home, and by rustic natives who lived in a state of anarchy uncontrolled by laws or government. When once they had come to live together in a walled town, despite different origins, languages, and habits of life, they coalesced with amazing ease, and before long what had been a heterogeneous mob of migrants was welded into a united nation.

When however, with the growth of their population, civilization, and territory, it was seen that they had become powerful and prosperous, they had the same experience as most people have who are possessors of this world's goods: their wealth aroused envy. Neighbouring kings and peoples attacked them, and but few of their friends aided them; the rest were scared at the prospect of danger and held aloof. The Romans, however, were alert both at home and abroad. They girded themselves in haste and with mutual encouragement marched forth to meet their foes, protecting by force of arms their liberty, country, and parents. Then, after bravely warding off the dangers that beset them, they lent aid to their allies and friends, and made new friends by a greater readiness to render services than to accept help from others.

Their government was a constitutional monarchy. Picked men, in whom the physical weakness of age was compensated by outstanding wisdom, formed a council of state, and were called 'Fathers', either on account of their age or because their duties resembled those of the father of a family. In course of time the monarchy, which originally had served to safeguard liberty and enhance the prestige of the state, degenerated into an oppressive despotism. Thereupon they instituted a new régime in which authority was divided between two annually elected rulers;* this limitation of their power, it was thought, would prevent their being tempted to abuse it.

It was in this period that individuals were first able to distinguish themselves and display their talents to greater advantage; for kings are more suspicious of good men than of bad, and always fear men of merit. Indeed, it almost passes belief what rapid progress was made by the whole state when once it had gained its liberty; such was the desire for glory that had possessed men's hearts. Young men no sooner reached the age

* Traditionally in 510 B.C.; these are the magistrates who in the following century began to be called consuls.

when they were fit for military service than they went to camp and learnt the art of soldiering in the school of laborious experience, taking more delight in costly armour and chargers than in loose women or the pleasures of the table. To such men no toil came amiss, no ground was too steep or rugged, no armed foe formidable; courage had taught them to overcome all obstacles. To win honour they competed eagerly among themselves, each man seeking the first opportunity to cut down an enemy or scale a rampart before his comrades' eyes. It was by such exploits that they thought a man could win true wealth – good repute and high nobility. Their thirst for glory, and ever more glory, was insatiable; as for money, their only ambition was to come by it honourably and spend it openhandedly. I could mention places where vast enemy hosts were routed by a handful of Romans, and towns of great natural strength that they took by assault. But I must not digress too far from my proper theme.

There can be no question that Fortune is supreme in all human affairs. It is a capricious power, which makes men's actions famous or leaves them in obscurity without regard to their true worth. I do not doubt, for instance, that the exploits of the Athenians were splendid and impressive; but I think they are much overrated. It is because she produced historians of genius that the achievement of Athens is so renowned all the world over; for the merit of successful men is rated according to the brilliance of the authors who extol it. The Romans never had this advantage, because at Rome the cleverest men were also the busiest. No one was a thinker without being a man of action as well. Their leading citizens preferred deeds to words, and chose rather to do something that others might justly praise than merely to tell of what others did.

In peace and war, as I have said, virtue was held in high esteem. The closest unity prevailed, and avarice was a thing almost unknown. Justice and righteousness were upheld not

so much by law as by natural instinct. They quarrelled and fought with their country's foes; between themselves the citizens contended only for honour. In making offerings to the gods they spared no expense; at home they lived frugally and never betrayed a friend. By combining boldness in war with fair dealing when peace was restored, they protected themselves and the state. There are convincing proofs of this. In time of war, soldiers were often punished for attacking against orders or for being slow to obey a signal of recall from battle, whereas few ever ventured to desert their standards or to give ground when hard pressed. In peace, they governed by conferring benefits on their subjects, not by intimidation; and when wronged they would rather pardon than seek vengeance.

Thus by hard work and just dealing the power of the state increased. Mighty kings were vanquished, savage tribes and huge nations were brought to their knees; and when Carthage, Rome's rival in her quest for empire, had been annihilated,* every land and sea lay open to her. It was then that fortune turned unkind and confounded all her enterprises. To the men who had so easily endured toil and peril, anxiety and adversity, the leisure and riches which are generally regarded as so desirable proved a burden and a curse. Growing love of money, and the lust for power which followed it, engendered every kind of evil. Avarice destroyed honour, integrity, and every other virtue, and instead taught men to be proud and cruel, to neglect religion, and to hold nothing too sacred to sell. Ambition tempted many to be false, to have one thought hidden in their hearts, another ready on their tongues, to become a man's friend or enemy not because they judged him worthy or unworthy but because they thought it would pay them, and to put on the semblance of virtues that they had not. At first these vices grew slowly and sometimes met with punishment; later on, when the disease had spread like a plague, Rome changed:

* In 146 B.C.

her government, once so just and admirable, became harsh and unendurable.

At first, however, it was not so much avarice as ambition that disturbed men's minds – a fault which after all comes nearer to being a virtue. For distinction, preferment, and power are the desire of good and bad alike – only, the one strives to reach his goal by honourable means, while the other, being destitute of good qualities, falls back on craft and deceit. Avarice is different: it means setting your heart on money, a thing that no wise man ever did. It is a kind of deadly poison, which ruins a man's health and weakens his moral fibre. It knows no bounds and can never be satisfied: he that has not, wants; and he that has, wants more. After Sulla had used armed force to make himself dictator, and after a good beginning turned out a bad ruler,* there was universal robbery and pillage. One man coveted a house, another an estate; and the victors behaved without restraint or moderation, committing foul and inhuman outrages against their fellow citizens. To make matters worse, Sulla had sought to secure the loyalty of the army he commanded in Asia by allowing it a degree of luxury and indulgence that would not have been tolerated by his predecessors, and the pleasures they enjoyed during leisure hours in those attractive lands soon enervated the men's warlike spirit. It was there that Roman soldiers first learnt to indulge in wine and women, and to cultivate a taste for statues, pictures, and embossed plate, which they stole from private houses and public buildings, plundering temples and profaning everything sacred and secular alike. When victory was won, as might be expected of such troops, they stripped their enemy bare. Since even philosophers cannot always resist the temptations of success, how should these demoralized men show restraint in their hour of triumph?

As soon as wealth came to be a mark of distinction and an

* See Introduction, p. 155.

easy way to renown, military commands, and political power, virtue began to decline. Poverty was now looked on as a disgrace and a blameless life as a sign of ill nature. Riches made the younger generation a prey to luxury, avarice, and pride. Squandering with one hand what they grabbed with the other, they set small value on their own property while they coveted that of others. Honour and modesty, all laws divine and human, were alike disregarded in a spirit of recklessness and intemperance. To one familiar with mansions and villas reared aloft on such a scale that they look like so many towns, it is instructive to visit the temples built by our godfearing ancestors. In those days piety was the ornament of shrines; glory, of men's dwellings. When they conquered a foe, they took nothing from him save his power to harm. But their base successors stuck at no crime to rob subject peoples of all that those brave conquerors had left them, as though oppression were the only possible method of ruling an empire. I need not remind you of some enterprises that no one but an eyewitness will believe – how private citizens have often levelled mountains and paved seas for their building operations. Such men, it seems to me, have treated their wealth as a mere plaything: instead of making honourable use of it, they have shamefully misused it on the first wasteful project that occurred to them. Equally strong was their passion for fornication, guzzling, and other forms of sensuality. Men prostituted themselves like women, and women sold their chastity to every comer. To please their palates they ransacked land and sea. They went to bed before they needed sleep, and instead of waiting until they felt hungry, thirsty, cold, or tired, they forestalled their bodies' needs by self-indulgence. Such practices incited young men who had run through their property to have recourse to crime. Because their vicious natures found it hard to forgo sensual pleasures, they resorted more and more recklessly to every means of getting and spending.

CHAPTER II

CATILINE'S FIRST ATTEMPTS AT REVOLUTION

AMID the corruption of the great city Catiline could easily surround himself, as with a bodyguard, with gangs of profligates and criminals. Debauchees, adulterers, and gamblers, who had squandered their inheritances in gaming-dens, pot-houses, and brothels; anyone who had bankrupted himself to buy impunity for his infamous or criminal acts; men convicted anywhere of murder or sacrilege, or living in fear of conviction; cut-throats and perjurers, too, who made a trade of bearing false witness or shedding the blood of fellow citizens; in short, all who were in disgrace or afflicted by poverty or consciousness of guilt, were Catiline's intimate associates. And if anyone as yet innocent happened to become friendly with him, the temptations to which daily intercourse with Catiline exposed him soon made him as evil a ruffian as the rest. It was above all the young whose intimacy he sought; their minds, being still impressionable and changeable, were easily ensnared. In order to gratify the youthful desires of each, he procured mistresses for some, bought dogs and horses for others, and spared neither his purse nor his honour to put them under obligations and make them his faithful followers. Some,* I know, have believed that the young men who resorted to Catiline's house practised unnatural lewdness; but this rumour was credited rather because the rest of their conduct made it seem a likely inference than because anyone knew it to be so. For one thing, Catiline had in his early days engaged in many scandalous intrigues – one with a maiden of noble birth, another with a priestess of Vesta, not

* Among these was Cicero – if he really believed the assertions to that effect which he made in his speeches against Catiline.

to mention similar offences against law and morality. He ended by falling in love with Aurelia Orestilla, a woman in whom no respectable man ever found anything to praise except her beauty, and it is generally accepted as a fact that when she hesitated to marry him because she was afraid of his grown-up son by a previous marriage, he murdered his son in order to clear the house of an impediment to this unhallowed union. Indeed, I think it was principally this deed that determined him to postpone his criminal attempt no longer. His unclean mind, hating god and fellow man alike, could find rest neither waking nor sleeping: so cruelly did remorse torture his frenzied soul. His complexion was pallid, his eyes hideous, his gait now hurried and now slow. Face and expression plainly marked him as a man distraught.

To the youths he had entrapped in the way I have described, he taught many kinds of wickedness. From their ranks he would provide men to commit perjury or to affix their seals to a forged document. He thought nothing of damaging their credit and their fortunes or of exposing them to peril; then, having ruined their reputations and stripped them of all sense of shame, he made bigger demands upon them. Even if he had no immediate motive for wrongdoing, he caused inoffensive persons to be attacked or killed with as much malevolence as if they had been guilty of injuring him. Rather than allow his pupils to lose their skill or nerve through lack of practice, he would have them commit needless outrages.

With such friends and allies to rely on, with the whole empire bankrupt and most of Sulla's veterans, ruined by extravagant living, looking back regretfully to the loot which past victories had brought them and longing for civil war, Catiline planned a revolution. There were no troops in Italy, and Pompey was fighting in far distant lands.* Catiline himself

* Against Mithridates, king of Pontus; see Introduction, p. 161.

been in too great a hurry to give the signal to his accomplices in front of the Senate House, that day would have seen the commission of the most heinous crime in the annals of Rome. As it was, the armed conspirators had not yet mustered in force; so the plan failed.* Piso was afterwards sent as quaestor with praetorian powers to Eastern Spain. His appointment was strongly urged by Crassus, because he knew Piso to be a bitter enemy of Pompey. At the same time the Senate was quite willing to assign him the province, since they were glad to remove such an unprincipled character to a distance from Rome. Moreover many good citizens thought he would be a protection against the already formidable power of Pompey. Piso was killed, in the course of a journey through his province, by some Spanish horsemen who formed part of his army. Some say that the natives could not tolerate the injustice, arrogance, and cruelty of his conduct as governor. Others maintain that the horsemen were old and devoted retainers of Pompey and were set on by him to attack Piso: they point out that the Spaniards never committed any other such crime and had patiently endured much oppression. I shall leave this point open and shall say no more about this earlier conspiracy.

When Catiline had assembled the men whom I mentioned,† although he had often had long conferences with each of them individually, he thought it advisable to address an exhortation to the whole company. Accordingly he made them withdraw into a remote part of the house and, after excluding all witnesses, spoke to the following effect:

'Were I not assured of your courage and loyalty, I could not use this favourable opportunity that fortune has vouchsafed me. However high our hopes, however easy it might have seemed for us to seize power, all would have been in vain. For with only cowards or triflers to rely on, I for one would not

* Neither Cicero nor any other writer mentions this second attempt.

† See above, section 17; Sallust now reverts to the events of 64 B.C.

throw away a certainty to grasp at a hazardous chance. It is because I have found you brave and faithful to me on many important occasions, that I venture to embark on a great and noble enterprise; also because I have observed that what seems good or bad to me seems so to you: for identity of likes and dislikes is the one solid foundation of friendship.

'The projects which I have been turning over in my mind have already been explained to each of you separately. But for my own part, every passing day kindles my enthusiasm more and more when I think what will be our lot unless we ourselves assert our claim to liberty. Ever since the state came under the jurisdiction and control of a powerful oligarchy, it is always they who receive tribute from foreign kings and princes and rake in taxes from every people and tribe. The rest of us, however energetic and virtuous we may be, whether our birth be noble or base, are but a crowd of nobodies without influence or authority, subservient to men who in a soundly governed state would stand in awe of us. Thus all influence, power, office, and wealth are in their hands or where they choose to bestow them; all they leave for us is danger, defeat, prosecutions, and poverty. How long, brave comrades, will you endure it? Is it not better to die courageously and have done with it, than to drag out lives of misery and dishonour as the playthings of other men's insolence, until we lose them ignominiously in the end? But in truth – I call on gods and men to witness it – victory is within our grasp. We have the strength of youth and we have stout hearts, whereas our opponents are enfeebled by age and soft living. We have but to make a start: the rest will follow easily. Can anyone who has the spirit of a man endure that they should have a superfluity of riches to waste in building out into the sea and levelling mountains, while we lack means to buy necessities? They have two, three, or four houses joined together, when we have not a home to call our own. Though they buy pictures, statues, and

vessels of chased metal, though they pull down new houses to build others, laying waste their wealth and making inroads upon it in every imaginable way, yet all their extravagance cannot exhaust it. For us there is destitution at home and debts everywhere else; misery now, and a still worse future to look forward to; we have nothing left, in fact, save the breath we draw in our wretchedness.

'Awake, then! Here, here before your eyes, is the liberty that you have often yearned for, and withal affluence, honour, and glory, all of which fortune offers as the prizes of victory. Consider your situation and your opportunity, the peril and want that beset you, and the rich spoils that may be won in war: these plead more strongly than any words of mine. Use me as your commander or as a soldier in the ranks: my heart and my hands shall be at your service. These are the objects I hope to help you achieve when I am your consul – unless indeed I deceive myself and you are content to be slaves instead of masters.'

This speech was addressed to men who were afflicted with manifold misfortunes and had nothing good to enjoy or to hope for; and to them the disturbance of the peace was in itself a highly attractive proposition. Most of them, however, asked Catiline to explain on what lines he intended to conduct the war, what were the prizes they would be fighting for, and what help they could count on or might hope to obtain from various quarters. Thereupon Catiline promised them the cancellation of debts and a proscription of the rich; magistracies and priesthoods; opportunities of plunder, and all the other desirable things with which war satisfies the greed of victors. In Eastern Spain, he added, was Piso; in Mauretania, Publius Sittius of Nocera* at the head of an army – both of them accomplices in the plot. Moreover, one of the consular candidates was Gaius Antonius,† whom he hoped to have as his

* A town in Campania, north-west of Salerno. † Uncle of Mark Antony.

colleague in that office; and since Antonius, besides being his intimate friend, was in desperate straits, he could count on his co-operation when, as consul, he began to execute his plans. Then he proceeded to heap abuse on all honest citizens, and, praising each of his adherents by name, reminded them either of their needy condition or of their ambitions, of the prosecutions that threatened them or the disgrace they had incurred, of Sulla's victory and the spoil with which it had enriched them. All were now thoroughly roused; whereupon, after an urgent appeal for their help at the forthcoming election, he dismissed the meeting. There was a rumour current at the time that when Catiline, on the conclusion of his speech, called on the associates of his plot to swear an oath, he passed round bowls of human blood mixed with wine; and when all had tasted of it after invoking a curse upon themselves if they broke faith, in accordance with the usual practice at such solemn ceremonies, he revealed the details of his scheme. This he is said to have done in order that the consciousness of having jointly participated in such an abomination might make them more loyal to one another. Others however thought that this story, like many others, was invented by people who believed that the odium which afterwards arose against Cicero could be lessened by imputing hideous crimes to those whom he had punished. For my part, I think such a grave charge needs better proof than is forthcoming.

Among the conspirators was one Quintus Curius, a man of good birth but sunk over head and ears in infamy and crime, whom the censors had expelled from the Senate for immoral conduct. As unreliable as he was reckless, he could neither hold his tongue about what he heard nor even keep dark his own misdeeds, being utterly regardless of what he said or did. A woman of good family named Fulvia had long been his mistress; and when he found himself less in favour with her because lack of means compelled him to be less lavish with his

be adjourned to a later meeting and the guards strengthened in the meantime.) Caesar, when his turn came to be called on by the consul, spoke to the following effect:

'Whoever, gentlemen, is deliberating upon a difficult question ought to clear his mind of hatred and affection and of anger and compassion. It is not easy to discern the truth when one's view is obstructed by such emotions, and all experience proves that those who yield to passion never make politic decisions. If you concentrate your mind on a problem, it can exert its full powers; once let passion come in, it will take control of you and reduce your mind to impotence. There are plenty of examples that I could cite of kings and peoples who have allowed anger or pity to lead them into error. But I would rather mention some cases in which our own ancestors, by controlling their emotions, acted wisely and properly. In the war which Rome fought against King Perseus of Macedon,* the powerful and wealthy state of Rhodes, which our support had made what it was, proved disloyal and turned against us. At the end of the war, when the matter came up for discussion, the Romans feared that if they annexed the island it might be said that they had gone to war to enrich themselves rather than to punish King Perseus for his wrongful conduct; so they let the Rhodians go unpunished.† Similarly, in the whole series of wars with Carthage, in spite of many outrages committed by the Carthaginians in time of peace or during a truce, they never retaliated in kind, even when they had the chance. Such conduct they regarded as unworthy of Romans, even if it might be justifiable as a reprisal. You also, gentlemen, must take care that the guilt of Publius Lentulus and the others does not outweigh your sense of what is fitting, and that you do not indulge your resentment at the expense of your reputation. If a

* In 171–168 B.C.

† Not entirely so: they were deprived of Lycia and Caria, their provinces on the mainland.

punishment can be found that is really adequate to their crimes, I am willing to support a departure from precedent; but if the enormity of their wickedness is such that no one could devise a fitting penalty, then I think we should content ourselves with those provided by the laws.

'Most of the previous speakers have delivered elaborate and impressive speeches in which they deplored the miserable condition of our country. They have dwelt upon the horrors of war and the fate that awaits the vanquished: how girls and boys are ravished, children torn from their parents' arms, wives subjected to the lusts of conquerors, temples and homes pillaged; how amid fire and slaughter, with weapons, corpses, and blood on every side, a cry of universal mourning goes up. But what, in God's name, was the purpose of all this eloquence? Was it to make you detest the conspiracy? As if a man whom the grisly reality has failed to move could be roused by an eloquent speech! That can never be: no mortal man minimizes his own wrongs; many, indeed, resent them more than they ought. But not everyone, gentlemen, is equally free to show his resentment. If humble men, who pass their lives in obscurity, are provoked by anger to do wrong, few know of it, because few know anything about such unimportant people. But men in positions of great power live, as it were, on an eminence, and their actions are known to all the world. The higher our station, the less is our freedom of action. We must avoid partiality and hatred, and above all anger; for what in others would be called merely an outburst of temper, in those who bear rule is called arrogance and cruelty.

'For my own part, gentlemen, I think that any torture would be less than these men's crimes deserve. But most people remember only what happens last: when criminals are brought to justice, they forget their guilt and talk only of their punishment, if it is of unusual severity. I am sure that Decimus Silanus spoke on this serious matter with the best interests of

his country at heart, and not from a desire to please anyone or to gratify feelings of personal enmity; for I know him as both a gallant patriot and a man of wise discretion. Yet his proposal strikes me – I will not say, as harsh, for in dealing with such men nothing could properly be described as harsh – but as out of keeping with the traditions of our Republic.

'Surely, Silanus, it must have been either fear or a sense of outrage that impelled you, a consul elect, to suggest a form of punishment that is without precedent. Fear can be left out of the question, especially as, thanks to the precautions taken by our distinguished consul, we have such strong guards under arms. As regards the penalty you proposed, it would be relevant to observe that to men in grief and wretchedness death comes as a release from suffering, not as a punishment to be endured, because it puts an end to all the ills that flesh is heir to, and beyond it there is no place for either tears or rejoicing. But what I want to ask is, Why in heaven's name did you not also propose that the prisoners should be flogged before being executed? Was it because the Porcian law* forbids it? But there are other laws which provide that convicted citizens shall not be put to death, but shall be permitted to go into exile. Was it, then, because flogging is a severer punishment than death? But what penalty can be regarded as harsh or excessive for men found guilty of such a crime? If however it was because you thought flogging a lighter punishment, how can it be logical to respect the law in a comparatively small matter when you have disregarded it in a more important point?

'It may be asked: Who will take exception to any sentence that is passed upon traitors? The lapse of time and the caprice of fortune, which controls the destinies of all men, will one day

* This *lex Porcia*, forbidding the scourging of Roman citizens without allowing an appeal to the people, was proposed, probably in 198 B.C., by the famous censor Marcus Porcius Cato, great-grandfather of the Cato whose speech is recorded in section 52.

produce a change of feeling. These particular men will have richly deserved whatever happens to them. But you, gentlemen, must consider the precedent that you establish for others. All bad precedents originate from measures good in themselves. When power passes into the hands of ignorant or unworthy men, the precedent which you establish by inflicting an extraordinary penalty on guilty men who deserve it will be used against innocent men who do not deserve it. The Spartans, for example, set up in Athens, when they had conquered it, an oligarchy of thirty members.* These men began by executing without trial notorious malefactors whom everyone loathed, and the people rejoiced and said it was well done. After a time they began to act more and more irresponsibly, killing good and bad alike as the whim took them, and intimidating all the rest. Thus Athens was oppressed and enslaved, and paid a heavy price for its foolish rejoicing. In our own times, when the victorious Sulla ordered the execution of Damasippus† and other adventurers whom national calamities had raised to high positions, who did not approve his action? The men were criminals and trouble-makers, whose revolutionary intrigues had harassed the state, and it was agreed that they deserved to die. But those executions were the first step that led to a ghastly calamity. For before long, if anyone coveted a man's mansion or villa – or in the end merely his household plate or wearing-apparel – he found means to have him put on the list of proscribed persons. So those who rejoiced at the death of Damasippus were soon haled off to execution themselves, and the killing did not stop till Sulla had glutted all his followers with riches. I am not afraid that any such action will be taken by Cicero, or in this present age. But in a

* In 404 B.C., at the end of the Peloponnesian war.

† The *cognomen* of Lucius Junius Brutus, praetor 82 B.C.; one of the worst killers among the supporters of Sulla's enemy Marius, he was himself killed by Sulla.

great nation like ours there are many men, with many different characters. It may be that on some future occasion, when another consul has, like him, an armed force at his disposal, some false report will be accepted as true; and when, with this precedent before him, a consul draws the sword in obedience to a senatorial decree, who will there be to restrain him or to stay his hand?

'Our ancestors, gentlemen, never lacked wisdom or courage, and they were never too proud to take over a sound institution from another country. They borrowed most of their armour and weapons from the Samnites, and most of their magisterial insignia from the Etruscans. In short, if they thought anything that an ally or an enemy had was likely to suit them, they enthusiastically adopted it at Rome; for they would rather copy a good thing than be consumed with envy because they had not got it. In this period of imitation they followed the Greek custom of flogging citizens and executing convicted criminals. However, with the growth of the state, and the development of party strife resulting from the increase of population, innocent people were victimized, and other similar abuses grew up. To check them, the Porcian law was enacted, and other laws which allowed condemned persons the alternative of going into exile. This seems to me, gentlemen, a particularly strong argument against our making any innovation. For I cannot but think that there was greater virtue and wisdom in our predecessors, who with such small resources created such a vast empire, than there is in us, who find it as much as we can do to keep what they so nobly won.

'Am I suggesting, you will ask, that the prisoners be released to go and swell Catiline's army? By no means. My advice is that their goods be confiscated, and that they be imprisoned in such towns as are best provided to undertake their custody. Further, that their case shall not thereafter be debated in the Senate or brought before a public assembly; if anyone contra-

venes this prohibition, the Senate should, I suggest, register its opinion that his action will be treasonable and contrary to the public interest.'

Now Cato (Younger) Speaks

After Caesar's speech most of the other senators contented themselves with a formal expression of agreement with one proposal or the other. But Marcus Porcius Cato, when asked his opinion, spoke to the following effect:

'When I turn, gentlemen, from contemplating the dangerous situation in which we stand to reflect upon the opinions of some of the previous speakers, the impression made on my mind is very different. If I understood them rightly, they were discussing the punishment to be meted out to these men who have planned to make war on their country, parents, altars, and hearths. But the situation warns us rather to take precautions against them than to deliberate what sentence we shall pass on them. Other crimes can be punished when they have been committed; but with a crime like this, unless you take measures to prevent its being committed, it is too late: once it has been done, it is useless to invoke the law. When a city is captured, its defeated inhabitants lose everything.

'I will address myself for a moment to those of you who have always been more concerned for your houses, villas, statues, and pictures, than you have for your country. In heaven's name, men, if you want to keep those cherished possessions, whatever they may be, if you want to have peace and quiet for the enjoyment of your pleasures, wake up while there is still time and lend a hand to defend the Republic. It is not a matter of misappropriated taxes, or wrongs done to subject peoples; it is our liberty and lives that are at stake.

'Many a time, gentlemen, have I spoken at length in this House; many a time have I reproached our fellow citizens for their self-indulgence and greed – and by so doing have made many enemies; for as I had never, in my own conscience, excused myself for any wrongdoing, I found it hard to pardon

the sins which other men's passions led them to commit. You took little notice of my remonstrances; but the stability of the state was not impaired by your indifference, because of its great prosperity. Now, however, it is not the question whether our morals are good or bad, nor is it the size and grandeur of the Roman empire that we have to consider. The issue is whether that empire, whatever we may think of it, is going to remain ours, or whether we and it together are to fall into the hands of enemies. In such a crisis does anyone talk to me of clemency and compassion? For a long time now we have ceased to call things by their proper names. To give away other people's property is called generosity; criminal daring goes by the name of courage. That is why our affairs have come to such a pass. However, since such is our standard of morality, let Romans be liberal, if they want to, at the expense of our subjects, let them be merciful to plunderers of the exchequer. But let them not make a present of our life-blood, and by sparing a handful of criminals go the way to destroy all honest men.

'It was an eloquent and polished lecture that Gaius Caesar delivered to you a few minutes ago on the subject of life and death. Evidently he disbelieves the account men give of the next world – how the wicked go a different way from the good, and inhabit a place of horror, fear, and noisome desolation. Therefore he recommended that the property of the accused should be confiscated and that they should be imprisoned in various towns. No doubt he feared that if they remained in Rome, either the adherents of the conspiracy or a hired mob might rescue them by force. What does he think? Are there bad characters and criminals only at Rome, and not all over Italy? Is reckless violence not more likely to succeed where there is less strength to resist it? His proposals are useless if he apprehends danger from the conspirators; and if amid such universal fear he alone is not afraid, I have the more reason to

be afraid for myself and for you.* In making your decision about Publius Lentulus and the other prisoners, you must realize that you will also be determining the fate of Catiline's army and of the whole body of conspirators. The more energetically you act, the more will their courage be shaken. Show the slightest weakness, and you will soon have the whole pack of them here barking defiance at you.

'Do not imagine that it was by force of arms that our ancestors transformed a petty state into this great Republic. If it were so, it would now be at the height of its glory, since we have more subjects and citizens, more arms and horses, than they had. It was something quite different that made them great – something that we are entirely lacking in. They were hard workers at home, just rulers abroad; and to the council-chamber they brought untrammelled minds, neither racked by consciousness of guilt nor enslaved by passion. We have lost these virtues. We pile up riches for ourselves while the state is bankrupt. We sing the praises of prosperity – and idle away our lives. Good men or bad – it is all one: all the prizes that merit ought to win are carried off by ambitious intriguers. And no wonder, when each one of you schemes only for himself, when in your private lives you are slaves to pleasure, and here in the Senate House the tools of money or influence. The result is that when an assault is made upon the Republic, there is no one there to defend it.

'I will say no more on that subject. A plot has been hatched by citizens of the highest rank to set fire to their native city. Gauls, the deadliest foes of everything Roman, have been called to arms. The hostile army and its leader are ready to descend upon us. And are you still hesitating and unable to decide how to treat public enemies taken within your walls? I suggest you take pity on them – they are young men led

* A plain hint that Cato believed Caesar to have been privy to Catiline's schemes.

astray by ambition; armed though they are, let them go. But mind what you are doing with your clemency and compassion: if they unsheathe the sword, you may have reason to regret your attitude. Oh yes, you say, the situation is certainly ugly, but you are not afraid of it. On the contrary, you are shaking in your shoes; but you are so indolent and weak that you stand irresolute, each waiting for someone else to act – trusting, doubtless, to the gods, who have often preserved our Republic in times of deadly peril. I tell you that vows and womanish supplications will not secure divine aid; it is by vigilance, action, and wise counsel, that all success is achieved. If you give way to sloth and cowardice, the gods turn a deaf ear to your entreaties: their wrath makes them your enemies.

'In bygone days, during a war with the Gauls, Aulus Manlius Torquatus had his son put to death for fighting the enemy against orders.* That noble youth paid with his life for an excess of valour; and do you, who are trying a set of ruthless traitors to their country, hesitate about the appropriate sentence to pass? If their past lives are urged in extenuation of their crime, by their past lives let them be judged. Spare Lentulus for his high rank – if he ever spared his own chastity and good name, or showed any respect for god or man. Pardon the youth Cethegus – if this is not already the second time he has made war on his country.† As for Gabinius, Statilius, and Caeparius, if they had not been utterly unscrupulous, they would never have plotted as they did against the state.

'To conclude, gentlemen: if we could afford to risk the consequences of making a mistake, I should be quite willing to let experience convince you of your folly, since you scorn

* This statement is incorrect in its details. His *praenomen* was Titus, not Aulus, and it was not in the war which he fought against the Gauls, but in a war against the Latins (340 B.C.), that the incident occurred.

† It is not known what action of Cethegus is here referred to. He may have been concerned in the abortive plot of 66 B.C. (section 18), though none of the authorities mentions him in connexion with it.

advice. But we are completely encircled. Catiline and his army are ready to grip us by the throat, and there are other foes within the walls, in the very heart of our city. We can make no plans or preparations without its being known – an additional reason for acting quickly. This therefore is my recommendation. Whereas by the criminal designs of wicked citizens the Republic has been subjected to serious danger; and whereas, by the testimony of Titus Volturcius and the envoys of the Allobroges, confirmed by the prisoners' own confession, they stand convicted of having planned massacre, arson, and other foul atrocities against their fellow citizens and their country: that, having admitted their criminal intention, they should be put to death as if they had been caught in the actual commission of capital offences, in accordance with ancient custom.'

When Cato sat down, all the senators of consular rank and a large number of others expressed approval of his proposal and praised his courage to the skies, reproaching one another for their faintheartedness. Cato was now regarded as a great and illustrious citizen, and a decree of the Senate was passed in the terms of his resolution.

Reading and hearing much of the glorious exploits of the Roman people in peace and war, on land and sea, I was attracted by the problem of discovering what particular qualities enabled them to carry through such great undertakings. I knew that on many occasions they had only small forces to pit against huge enemy armies, and slender resources with which to do battle against rich and powerful kings; that Fortune had often dealt them cruel blows; and that just as the Greeks were superior to them in eloquence, so the Gauls had formerly outstripped them in martial prowess. After much thought I reached the conclusion that the pre-eminent merit of a few citizens had made all these achievements possible, enabling poor men to conquer rich, a handful to subdue a

land and their children, their homes and the altars of their gods. He was a good soldier, who for more than thirty years had served with great distinction as military tribune, prefect, lieutenant, and commander; and he knew many of the men personally and remembered their gallant feats of arms. By recalling these he kindled their fighting-spirit.

When he had satisfied himself on every point, he sounded the trumpet-signal and ordered his cohorts to advance slowly, and the enemy's army did the same. As soon as they had come close enough for the light-armed troops to engage, the two armies raised loud shouts and charged together *en masse*. The soldiers threw down their spears and fought with their swords. The veterans, remembering their old-time valour, pressed the enemy vigorously at close quarters. They were bravely withstood, and a struggle of the utmost violence ensued, during which Catiline with his light troops went to and fro in the front line, supporting those who were in difficulties, summoning fresh men to replace the wounded, and attending to everything. Meanwhile he fought hard himself and killed or wounded many of his opponents, performing simultaneously the duties of a hardworking soldier and a good general. Petreius, when he saw Catiline resisting with such unexpected vigour, led the picked men who formed his bodyguard against the enemy's centre, which, thrown into confusion by this attack and able to offer only a sporadic resistance, suffered heavy casualties. Then Petreius made flank attacks on both wings of Catiline's army. Manlius and the officer from Fiesole fell fighting in the front line. Catiline, when he saw his army routed and himself left with a handful of men, remembering his noble birth and the high rank he had once held, plunged into the serried mass of his enemies and fought on till he was pierced through and through.

Only when the battle was over could the daring and ferocity with which Catiline's troops had fought be fully

appreciated. Practically every man lay dead on the battle station which he had occupied while he lived. Only some of those in the centre, whom Petreius's bodyguard had dislodged from their position, had fallen a little distance away; and although they had been forced back, they all had their wounds in front. Catiline himself was found far from his own men among the dead bodies of his adversaries. He was still just breathing, and his face retained the look of haughty defiance that had marked him all through his life. Of that whole army which fought and fled, not a single free-born citizen was taken prisoner: all were as careless of their own as of their enemies' lives. The victory of the government forces, however, was not gained without blood and tears: all the best fighters had either been killed in the action or come out of it badly wounded. Many who came from the camp to view the battlefield or to loot, as they went about turning over the rebels' corpses, found friends, relatives, or men who had been their guests or their hosts. Some also recognized the face of an enemy. Thus diverse feelings affected all the army: gladness and rejoicing were tempered by grief and lamentation.