

Schemes For Appointing A Democratic Military Dictatorship

In this policy they again coincided with Crassus, to whom no course was left for encountering his envied and hated rival but that of allying himself afresh, and more closely than before, with the democracy. Already in the first coalition a special approximation had taken place between Caesar and Crassus as the two weaker parties; a common interest and a common danger tightened yet more the bond which joined the richest and the most insolvent of Romans in closest alliance. While in public the democrats described the absent general as the head and pride of their party and seemed to direct all their arrows against the aristocracy, preparations were secretly made against Pompeius; and these attempts of the democracy to escape from the impending military dictatorship have historically a far higher significance than the noisy agitation, for the most part employed only as a mask, against the nobility. It is true that they were carried on amidst a darkness, upon which our tradition allows only some stray gleams of light to fall; for not the present alone, but the succeeding age also had its reasons for throwing a veil over the matter. But in general both the course and the object of these efforts are completely clear. The military power could only be effectually checkmated by another military power. The design of the democrats was to possess themselves of the reins of government after the example of Marius and Cinna, then to entrust one of their leaders either with the conquest of Egypt or with the governorship of Spain or some similar ordinary or extraordinary office, and thus to find in him and his military force a counterpoise to Pompeius and his army. For this they required a revolution, which was directed immediately against the nominal government, but in reality against Pompeius as the designated monarch;(8) and, to effect this revolution, there was from the passing of the Gabinio-Manilian laws down to the return of Pompeius (688-692) perpetual conspiracy in Rome. The capital was in anxious suspense; the depressed temper of the capitalists, the suspensions of payment, the frequent bankruptcies were heralds of the fermenting revolution, which seemed as though it must at the same time produce a totally new position of parties. The project of the democracy, which pointed beyond the senate at Pompeius, suggested an approximation between that general and the senate. But the democracy in attempting to oppose to the dictatorship of Pompeius that of a man more agreeable to it, recognized, strictly speaking, on its part also the military government, and in reality drove out Satan by Beelzebub; the question of principles became in its hands a question of persons.

League Of The Democrats And The Anarchists

The first step towards the revolution projected by the leaders of the democracy was thus to be the overthrow of the existing government by means of an insurrection primarily instigated in Rome by democratic conspirators. The moral condition of the lowest as of the highest ranks of society in the capital presented the materials for this purpose in lamentable abundance. We need not here repeat what was the character of the free and the servile proletariat of the capital. The significant saying was already heard, that only the poor man was qualified to represent the poor; the idea was thus suggested, that the mass of the poor might constitute itself an independent power as well as the oligarchy of the rich, and instead of allowing itself to be tyrannized over, might perhaps in its own turn play the tyrant. But even in the circles of the young men of rank similar ideas found an echo. The fashionable life of the capital shattered not merely the fortunes of men, but also their vigour of body and mind. That elegant world of fragrant ringlets, of fashionable mustachios and ruffles--merry as were its doings in the dance and with the harp, and early and late at the wine-cup--yet concealed in its bosom an alarming abyss of moral and economic ruin, of well or ill concealed despair, and frantic or knavish resolves. These circles sighed without disguise for a return of the time of Cinna with its proscriptions and

confiscations and its annihilation of account-books for debt; there were people enough, including not a few of no mean descent and unusual abilities, who only waited the signal to fall like a gang of robbers on civil society and to recruit by pillage the fortune which they had squandered.

Catalina

The late praetor Lucius Catilina, and the quaestor Gnaeus Piso, were distinguished among their fellows not merely by their genteel birth and their superior rank. They had broken down the bridge completely behind them, and impressed their accomplices by their dissoluteness quite as much as by their talents. Catilina especially was one of the most wicked men in that wicked age. His villainies belong to the records of crime, not to history; but his very outward appearance--the pale countenance, the wild glance, the gait by turns sluggish and hurried--betrayed his dismal past. He possessed in a high degree the qualities which are required in the leader of such a band-- the faculty of enjoying all pleasures and of bearing all privations, courage, military talent, knowledge of men, the energy of a felon, and that horrible mastery of vice, which knows how to bring the weak to fall and how to train the fallen to crime.

To form out of such elements a conspiracy for the overthrow of the existing order of things could not be difficult to men who possessed money and political influence. Catilina, Piso, and their fellows entered readily into any plan which gave the prospect of proscriptions and cancelling of debtor-books; the former had moreover special hostility to the aristocracy, because it had opposed the candidature of that infamous and dangerous man for the consulship. As he had formerly in the character of an executioner of Sulla hunted the proscribed at the head of a band of Celts and had killed among others his own aged father-in-law with his own hand, he now readily consented to promise similar services to the opposite party. A secret league was formed. The number of individuals received into it is said to have exceeded 400; it included associates in all the districts and urban communities of Italy; besides which, as a matter of course, numerous recruits would flock unbidden from the ranks of the dissolute youth to an insurrection, which inscribed on its banner the seasonable programme of wiping out debts.

Failure Of The First Plans Of Conspiracy

In December 688--so we are told--the leaders of the league thought that they had found the fitting occasion for striking a blow. The two consuls chosen for 689, Publius Cornelius Sulla and Publius Autronius Paetus, had recently been judicially convicted of electoral bribery, and therefore had according to legal rule forfeited their expectancy of the highest office. Both thereupon joined the league. The conspirators resolved to procure the consulship for them by force, and thereby to put themselves in possession of the supreme power in the state. On the day when the new consuls should enter on their office--the 1st Jan. 689-- the senate-house was to be assailed by armed men, the new consuls and the victims otherwise designated were to be put to death, and Sulla and Paetus were to be proclaimed as consuls after the cancelling of the judicial sentence which excluded them. Crassus was then to be invested with the dictatorship and Caesar with the mastership of the horse, doubtless with a view to raise an imposing military force, while Pompeius was employed afar off at the Caucasus. Captains and common soldiers were hired and instructed; Catilina waited on the appointed day in the neighbourhood of the senate- house for the concerted signal, which was to be given him by Caesar on a hint from Crassus. But he waited in vain; Crassus was absent from the decisive sitting of the senate, and for this time the projected insurrection failed. A similar still more comprehensive plan of murder was then concerted for the 5th Feb.; but this too was frustrated, because Catilina gave the signal too early, before the bandits who were bespoken had all arrived. Thereupon the secret was divulged. The government did not venture openly to proceed against the conspiracy, but it assigned a guard to the

consuls who were primarily threatened, and it opposed to the band of the conspirators a band paid by the government. To remove Piso, the proposal was made that he should be sent as quaestor with praetorian powers to Hither Spain; to which Crassus consented, in the hope of securing through him the resources of that important province for the insurrection. Proposals going farther were prevented by the tribunes.

So runs the account that has come down to us, which evidently gives the version current in the government circles, and the credibility of which in detail must, in the absence of any means of checking it, be left an open question. As to the main matter--the participation of Caesar and Crassus--the testimony of their political opponents certainly cannot be regarded as sufficient evidence of it. But their notorious action at this epoch corresponds with striking exactness to the secret action which this report ascribes to them. The attempt of Crassus, who in this year was censor, officially to enrol the Transpadanes in the burgess-list(9) was of itself directly a revolutionary enterprise. It is still more remarkable, that Crassus on the same occasion made preparations to enrol Egypt and Cyprus in the list of Roman domains,(10) and that Caesar about the same time (689 or 690) got a proposal submitted by some tribunes to the burgesses to send him to Egypt, in order to reinstate king Ptolemaeus whom the Alexandrians had expelled. These machinations suspiciously coincide with the charges raised by their antagonists. Certainty cannot be attained on the point; but there is a great probability that Crassus and Caesar had projected a plan to possess themselves of the military dictatorship during the absence of Pompeius; that Egypt was selected as the basis of this democratic military power; and that, in fine, the insurrectionary attempt of 689 had been contrived to realize these projects, and Catilina and Piso had thus been tools in the hands of Crassus and Caesar.

Resumption Of The Conspiracy

For a moment the conspiracy came to a standstill. The elections for 690 took place without Crassus and Caesar renewing their attempt to get possession of the consulate; which may have been partly owing to the fact that a relative of the leader of the democracy, Lucius Caesar, a weak man who was not unfrequently employed by his kinsman as a tool, was on this occasion a candidate for the consulship. But the reports from Asia urged them to make haste. The affairs of Asia Minor and Armenia were already completely arranged. However clearly democratic strategists showed that the Mithradatic war could only be regarded as terminated by the capture of the king, and that it was therefore necessary to undertake the pursuit round the Black Sea, and above all things to keep aloof from Syria(11)--Pompeius, not concerning himself about such talk, had set out in the spring of 690 from Armenia and marched towards Syria. If Egypt was really selected as the headquarters of the democracy, there was no time to be lost; otherwise Pompeius might easily arrive in Egypt sooner than Caesar. The conspiracy of 688, far from being broken up by the lax and timid measures of repression, was again astir when the consular elections for 691 approached. The persons were, it may be presumed, substantially the same, and the plan was but little altered. The leaders of the movement again kept in the background. On this occasion they had set up as candidates for the consulship Catilina himself and Gaius Antonius, the younger son of the orator and a brother of the general who had an ill repute from Crete. They were sure of Catilina; Antonius, originally a Sullan like Catilina and like the latter brought to trial on that account some years before by the democratic party and ejected from the senate(12)--otherwise an indolent, insignificant man, in no respect called to be a leader, and utterly bankrupt--willingly lent himself as a tool to the democrats for the prize of the consulship and the advantages attached to it. Through these consuls the heads of the conspiracy intended to seize the government, to arrest the children of Pompeius, who remained behind in the capital, as hostages, and to take up arms in Italy and the provinces against Pompeius. On the first news of the blow struck in the capital, the governor Gnaeus Piso was to raise the banner of insurrection in Hither Spain. Communication could not be held with him

by way of the sea, since Pompeius commanded the seas. For this purpose they reckoned on the Transpadanes the old clients of the democracy-- among whom there was great agitation, and who would of course have at once received the franchise--and, further, on different Celtic tribes.(13) The threads of this combination reached as far as Mauretania. One of the conspirators, the Roman speculator Publius Sittius from Nuceria, compelled by financial embarrassments to keep aloof from Italy, had armed a troop of desperadoes there and in Spain, and with these wandered about as a leader of free-lances in western Africa, where he had old commercial connections.

Consular Elections Cicero Elected Instead Of Catalina

The party put forth all its energies for the struggle of the election. Crassus and Caesar staked their money--whether their own or borrowed--and their connections to procure the consulship for Catilina and Antonius; the comrades of Catilina strained every nerve to bring to the helm the man who promised them the magistracies and priesthoods, the palaces and country-estates of their opponents, and above all deliverance from their debts, and who, they knew, would keep his word. The aristocracy was in great perplexity, chiefly because it was not able even to start counter-candidates. That such a candidate risked his head, was obvious; and the times were past when the post of danger allured the burgess--now even ambition was hushed in presence of fear. Accordingly the nobility contented themselves with making a feeble attempt to check electioneering intrigues by issuing a new law respecting the purchase of votes--which, however, was thwarted by the veto of a tribune of the people--and with turning over their votes to a candidate who, although not acceptable to them, was at least inoffensive. This was Marcus Cicero, notoriously a political trimmer,(14) accustomed to flirt at times with the democrats, at times with Pompeius, at times from a somewhat greater distance with the aristocracy, and to lend his services as an advocate to every influential man under impeachment without distinction of person or party (he numbered even Catilina among his clients); belonging properly to no party or--which was much the same--to the party of material interests, which was dominant in the courts and was pleased with the eloquent pleader and the courtly and witty companion. He had connections enough in the capital and the country towns to have a chance alongside of the candidates proposed by the democracy; and as the nobility, although with reluctance, and the Pompeians voted for him, he was elected by a great majority. The two candidates of the democracy obtained almost the same number of votes; but a few more fell to Antonius, whose family was of more consideration than that of his fellow-candidate. This accident frustrated the election of Catilina and saved Rome from a second Cinna. A little before this Piso had--it was said at the instigation of his political and personal enemy Pompeius-- been put to death in Spain by his native escort.(15) With the consul Antonius alone nothing could be done; Cicero broke the loose bond which attached him to the conspiracy, even before they entered on their offices, inasmuch as he renounced his legal privilege of having the consular provinces determined by lot, and handed over to his deeply-embarrassed colleague the lucrative governorship of Macedonia. The essential preliminary conditions of this project also had therefore miscarried.

New Projects Of The Conspirators

Meanwhile the development of Oriental affairs grew daily more perilous for the democracy.

The settlement of Syria rapidly advanced; already invitations had been addressed to Pompeius from Egypt to march thither and occupy the country for Rome; they could not but be afraid that they would next hear of Pompeius in person having taken possession of the valley of the Nile. It was by this very apprehension probably that the attempt of Caesar to get himself sent by the people to Egypt for the purpose of aiding the king against his rebellious subjects(16) was called forth; it failed, apparently, through the disinclination of great and small to undertake anything whatever against the interest of

Pompeius. His return home, and the probable catastrophe which it involved, were always drawing the nearer; often as the string of the bow had been broken, it was necessary that there should be a fresh attempt to bend it. The city was in sullen ferment; frequent conferences of the heads of the movement indicated that some step was again contemplated.

The Servilian Agrarian Law

What they wished became manifest when the new tribunes of the people entered on their office (10 Dec. 690), and one of them, Publius Servilius Rullus, immediately proposed an agrarian law, which was designed to procure for the leaders of the democrats a position similar to that which Pompeius occupied in consequence of the Gabinio-Manilian proposals. The nominal object was the founding of colonies in Italy. The ground for these, however, was not to be gained by dispossession; on the contrary all existing private rights were guaranteed, and even the illegal occupations of the most recent times⁽¹⁷⁾ were converted into full property. The leased Campanian domain alone was to be parcelled out and colonized; in other cases the government was to acquire the land destined for assignation by ordinary purchase. To procure the sums necessary for this purpose, the remaining Italian, and more especially all the extra-Italian, domain-land was successively to be brought to sale; which was understood to include the former royal hunting domains in Macedonia, the Thracian Chersonese, Bithynia, Pontus, Cyrene, and also the territories of the cities acquired in full property by right of war in Spain, Africa, Sicily, Hellas, and Cilicia. Everything was likewise to be sold which the state had acquired in moveable and immoveable property since the year 666, and of which it had not previously disposed; this was aimed chiefly at Egypt and Cyprus. For the same purpose all subject communities, with the exception of the towns with Latin rights and the other free cities, were burdened with very high rates of taxes and tithes. Lastly there was likewise destined for those purchases the produce of the new provincial revenues, to be reckoned from 692, and the proceeds of the whole booty not yet legally applied; which regulations had reference to the new sources of taxation opened up by Pompeius in the east and to the public moneys that might be found in the hands of Pompeius and the heirs of Sulla. For the execution of this measure decemvirs with a special jurisdiction and special -imperium- were to be nominated, who were to remain five years in office and to surround themselves with 200 subalterns from the equestrian order; but in the election of the decemvirs only those candidates who should personally announce themselves were to be taken into account, and, as in the elections of priests,⁽¹⁸⁾ only seventeen tribes to be fixed by lot out of the thirty-five were to make the election. It needed no great acuteness to discern that in this decemviral college it was intended to create a power after the model of that of Pompeius, only with somewhat less of a military and more of a democratic hue. The jurisdiction was especially needed for the sake of deciding the Egyptian question, the military power for the sake of arming against Pompeius; the clause, which forbade the choice of an absent person, excluded Pompeius; and the diminution of the tribes entitled to vote as well as the manipulation of the balloting were designed to facilitate the management of the election in accordance with the views of the democracy.

But this attempt totally missed its aim. The multitude, finding it more agreeable to have their corn measured out to them under the shade of Roman porticoes from the public magazines than to cultivate it for themselves in the sweat of their brow, received even the proposal in itself with complete indifference. They soon came also to feel that Pompeius would never acquiesce in such a resolution offensive to him in every respect, and that matters could not stand well with a party which in its painful alarm condescended to offers so extravagant. Under such circumstances it was not difficult for the government to frustrate the proposal; the new consul Cicero perceived the opportunity of exhibiting here too his talent for giving a finishing stroke to the beaten party; even before the tribunes who stood ready exercised their veto, the author himself withdrew his proposal (1 Jan. 691). The democracy had

gained nothing but the unpleasant lesson, that the great multitude out of love or fear still continued to adhere to Pompeius, and that every proposal was certain to fail which the public perceived to be directed against him.

Preparations Of The Anarchists In Etruria

Wearied by all this vain agitation and scheming without result, Catilina determined to push the matter to a decision and make an end of it once for all. He took his measures in the course of the summer to open the civil war. Faesulae (Fiesole), a very strong town situated in Etruria--which swarmed with the impoverished and conspirators--and fifteen years before the centre of the rising of Lepidus, was again selected as the headquarters of the insurrection. Thither were despatched the consignments of money, for which especially the ladies of quality in the capital implicated in the conspiracy furnished the means; there arms and soldiers were collected; and there an old Sullan captain, Gaius Manlius, as brave and as free from scruples of conscience as was ever any soldier of fortune, took temporarily the chief command. Similar though less extensive warlike preparations were made at other points of Italy.

The Transpadanes were so excited that they seemed only waiting for the signal to strike. In the Bruttian country, on the east coast of Italy, in Capua--wherever great bodies of slaves were accumulated--a second slave insurrection like that of Spartacus seemed on the eve of arising. Even in the capital there was something brewing; those who saw the haughty bearing with which the summoned debtors appeared before the urban praetor, could not but remember the scenes which had preceded the murder of Asellio.(19) The capitalists were in unutterable anxiety; it seemed needful to enforce the prohibition of the export of gold and silver, and to set a watch over the principal ports. The plan of the conspirators was--on occasion of the consular election for 692, for which Catilina had again announced himself--summarily to put to death the consul conducting the election as well as the inconvenient rival candidates, and to carry the election of Catilina at any price; in case of necessity, even to bring armed bands from Faesulae and the other rallying points against the capital, and with their help to crush resistance.

Election Of Catalina As Consul Again Frustrated

Cicero, who was always quickly and completely informed by his agents male and female of the transactions of the conspirators, on the day fixed for the election (20 Oct.) denounced the conspiracy in the full senate and in presence of its principal leaders. Catilina did not condescend to deny it; he answered haughtily that, if the election for consul should fall on him, the great headless party would certainly no longer want a leader against the small party led by wretched heads. But as palpable evidences of the plot were not before them, nothing farther was to be got from the timid senate, except that it gave its previous sanction in the usual way to the exceptional measures which the magistrates might deem suitable (21 Oct.). Thus the election battle approached-- on this occasion more a battle than an election; for Cicero too had formed for himself an armed bodyguard out of the younger men, more especially of the mercantile order; and it was his armed force that covered and dominated the Campus Martius on the 28th October, the day to which the election had been postponed by the senate. The conspirators were not successful either in killing the consul conducting the election, or in deciding the elections according to their mind.

Outbreak Of The Insurrection In Etruria Repressive Measures Of The Government

But meanwhile the civil war had begun. On the 27th Oct. Gaius Manlius had planted at Faesulae the eagle round which the army of the insurrection was to flock--it was one of the Marian eagles from the

Cimbrian war--and he had summoned the robbers from the mountains as well as the country people to join him. His proclamations, following the old traditions of the popular party, demanded liberation from the oppressive load of debt and a modification of the procedure in insolvency, which, if the amount of the debt actually exceeded the estate, certainly still involved in law the forfeiture of the debtor's freedom. It seemed as though the rabble of the capital, in coming forward as if it were the legitimate successor of the old plebeian farmers and fighting its battles under the glorious eagles of the Cimbrian war, wished to cast a stain not only on the present but on the past of Rome. This rising, however, remained isolated; at the other places of rendezvous the conspiracy did not go beyond the collection of arms and the institution of secret conferences, as resolute leaders were everywhere wanting. This was fortunate for the government; for, although the impending civil war had been for a considerable time openly announced, its own irresolution and the clumsiness of the rusty machinery of administration had not allowed it to make any military preparations whatever. It was only now that the general levy was called out, and superior officers were ordered to the several regions of Italy that each might suppress the insurrection in his own district; while at the same time the gladiatorial slaves were ejected from the capital, and patrols were ordered on account of the apprehension of incendiarism.

The Conspirators In Rome

Catilina was in a painful position. According to his design there should have been a simultaneous rising in the capital and in Etruria on occasion of the consular elections; the failure of the former and the outbreak of the latter movement endangered his person as well as the whole success of his undertaking. Now that his partisans at Faesulae had once risen in arms against the government, he could no longer remain in the capital; and yet not only did everything depend on his inducing the conspirators of the capital now at least to strike quickly, but this had to be done even before he left Rome--for he knew his helpmates too well to rely on them for that matter. The more considerable of the conspirators--Publius Lentulus Sura consul in 683, afterwards expelled from the senate and now, in order to get back into the senate, praetor for the second time, and the two former praetors Publius Autronius and Lucius Cassius--were incapable men; Lentulus an ordinary aristocrat of big words and great pretensions, but slow in conception and irresolute in action; Autronius distinguished for nothing but his powerful screaming voice; while as to Lucius Cassius no one comprehended how a man so corpulent and so simple had fallen among the conspirators. But Catilina could not venture to place his abler partisans, such as the young senator Gaius Cethegus and the equites Lucius Statilius and Publius Gabinius Capito, at the head of the movement; for even among the conspirators the traditional hierarchy of rank held its ground, and the very anarchists thought that they should be unable to carry the day unless a consular or at least a praetorian were at their head. Therefore, however urgently the army of the insurrection might long for its general, and however perilous it was for the latter to remain longer at the seat of government after the outbreak of the revolt, Catilina nevertheless resolved still to remain for a time in Rome.

Accustomed to impose on his cowardly opponents by his audacious insolence, he showed himself publicly in the Forum and in the senate-house and replied to the threats which were there addressed to him, that they should beware of pushing him to extremities; that, if they should set the house on fire, he would be compelled to extinguish the conflagration in ruins. In reality neither private persons nor officials ventured to lay hands on the dangerous man; it was almost a matter of indifference when a young nobleman brought him to trial on account of violence, for long before the process could come to an end, the question could not but be decided elsewhere. But the projects of Catilina failed; chiefly because the agents of the government had made their way into the circle of the conspirators and kept it accurately informed of every detail of the plot. When, for instance, the conspirators appeared before the strong Praeneste (1 Nov.), which they had hoped to surprise by a -coup de main-, they found the inhabitants warned and armed; and in a similar way everything miscarried. Catilina with all his

temerity now found it advisable to fix his departure for one of the ensuing days; but previously on his urgent exhortation, at a last conference of the conspirators in the night between the 6th and 7th Nov. it was resolved to assassinate the consul Cicero, who was the principal director of the countermines, before the departure of their leader, and, in order to obviate any treachery, to carry the resolve at once into execution. Early on the morning of the 7th Nov., accordingly, the selected murderers knocked at the house of the consul; but they found the guard reinforced and themselves repulsed--on this occasion too the spies of the government had outdone the conspirators.

Catalina Proceed To Etruria

On the following day (8 Nov.) Cicero convoked the senate. Even now Catilina ventured to appear and to attempt a defence against the indignant attacks of the consul, who unveiled before his face the events of the last few days; but men no longer listened to him, and in the neighbourhood of the place where he sat the benches became empty. He left the sitting, and proceeded, as he would doubtless have done even apart from this incident, in accordance with the agreement, to Etruria. Here he proclaimed himself consul, and assumed an attitude of waiting, in order to put his troops in motion against the capital on the first announcement of the outbreak of the insurrection there. The government declared the two leaders Catilina and Manlius, as well as those of their comrades who should not have laid down their arms by a certain day, to be outlaws, and called out new levies; but at the head of the army destined against Catilina was placed the consul Gaius Antonius, who was notoriously implicated in the conspiracy, and with whose character it was wholly a matter of accident whether he would lead his troops against Catilina or over to his side. They seemed to have directly laid their plans towards converting this Antonius into a second Lepidus. As little were steps taken against the leaders of the conspiracy who had remained behind in the capital, although every one pointed the finger at them and the insurrection in the capital was far from being abandoned by the conspirators--on the contrary the plan of it had been settled by Catilina himself before his departure from Rome. A tribune was to give the signal by calling an assembly of the people; in the following night Cethegus was to despatch the consul Cicero; Gabinius and Statilius were to set the city simultaneously on fire at twelve places; and a communication was to be established as speedily as possible with the army of Catilina, which should have meanwhile advanced. Had the urgent representations of Cethegus borne fruit and had Lentulus, who after Catilina's departure was placed at the head of the conspirators, resolved on rapidly striking a blow, the conspiracy might even now have been successful. But the conspirators were just as incapable and as cowardly as their opponents; weeks elapsed and the matter came to no decisive issue.

Conviction And Arrest Of The Conspirators In The Capital

At length the countermines brought about a decision. Lentulus in his tedious fashion, which sought to cover negligence in regard to what was immediate and necessary by the projection of large and distant plans, had entered into relations with the deputies of a Celtic canton, the Allobroges, now present in Rome; had attempted to implicate these--the representatives of a thoroughly disorganized commonwealth and themselves deeply involved in debt--in the conspiracy; and had given them on their departure messages and letters to his confidants. The Allobroges left Rome, but were arrested in the night between 2nd and 3rd Dec. close to the gates by the Roman authorities, and their papers were taken from them. It was obvious that the Allobrogian deputies had lent themselves as spies to the Roman government, and had carried on the negotiations only with a view to convey into the hands of the latter the desired proofs implicating the ringleaders of the conspiracy. On the following morning orders were issued with the utmost secrecy by Cicero for the arrest of the most dangerous leaders of the plot, and executed in regard to Lentulus, Cethegus, Gabinius, and Statilius, while some others escaped from seizure by flight. The guilt of those arrested as well as of the fugitives was completely evident.

Immediately after the arrest the letters seized, the seals and handwriting of which the prisoners could not avoid acknowledging, were laid before the senate, and the captives and witnesses were heard; further confirmatory facts, deposits of arms in the houses of the conspirators, threatening expressions which they had employed, were presently forthcoming; the actual subsistence of the conspiracy was fully and validly established, and the most important documents were immediately on the suggestion of Cicero published as news-sheets.

The indignation against the anarchist conspiracy was general. Gladly would the oligarchic party have made use of the revelations to settle accounts with the democracy generally and Caesar in particular, but it was far too thoroughly broken to be able to accomplish this, and to prepare for him the fate which it had formerly prepared for the two Gracchi and Saturninus; in this respect the matter went no farther than good will. The multitude of the capital was especially shocked by the incendiary schemes of the conspirators. The merchants and the whole party of material interests naturally perceived in this war of the debtors against the creditors a struggle for their very existence; in tumultuous excitement their youth crowded, with swords in their hands, round the senate-house and brandished them against the open and secret partisans of Catilina. In fact, the conspiracy was for the moment paralyzed; though its ultimate authors perhaps were still at liberty, the whole staff entrusted with its execution were either captured or had fled; the band assembled at Faesulae could not possibly accomplish much, unless supported by an insurrection in the capital.

Discussions In The Senate As To The Execution Of Those Arrested

In a tolerably well-ordered commonwealth the matter would now have been politically at an end, and the military and the tribunals would have undertaken the rest. But in Rome matters had come to such a pitch, that the government was not even in a position to keep a couple of noblemen of note in safe custody. The slaves and freedmen of Lentulus and of the others arrested were stirring; plans, it was alleged, were contrived to liberate them by force from the private houses in which they were detained; there was no lack-- thanks to the anarchist doings of recent years--of ringleaders in Rome who contracted at a certain rate for riots and deeds of violence; Catilina, in fine, was informed of what had occurred, and was near enough to attempt a coup de main with his bands. How much of these rumours was true, we cannot tell; but there was ground for apprehension, because, agreeably to the constitution, neither troops nor even a respectable police force were at the command of the government in the capital, and it was in reality left at the mercy of every gang of banditti. The idea was suggested of precluding all possible attempts at liberation by the immediate execution of the prisoners. Constitutionally, this was not possible. According to the ancient and sacred right of appeal, a sentence of death could only be pronounced against the Roman burgess by the whole body of burgesses, and not by any other authority; and, as the courts formed by the body of burgesses had themselves become antiquated, a capital sentence was no longer pronounced at all. Cicero would gladly have rejected the hazardous suggestion; indifferent as in itself the legal question might be to the advocate, he knew well how very useful it is to an advocate to be called liberal, and he showed little desire to separate himself for ever from the democratic party by shedding this blood. But those around him, and particularly his genteel wife, urged him to crown his services to his country by this bold step; the consul like all cowards anxiously endeavouring to avoid the appearance of cowardice, and yet trembling before the formidable responsibility, in his distress convoked the senate, and left it to that body to decide as to the life or death of the four prisoners. This indeed had no meaning; for as the senate was constitutionally even less entitled to act than the consul, all the responsibility still devolved rightfully on the latter: but when was cowardice ever consistent? Caesar made every exertion to save the prisoners, and his speech, full of covert threats as to the future inevitable vengeance of the democracy, made the deepest impression. Although all the consulars and the great majority of the senate had already declared for the

execution, most of them, with Cicero at their head, seemed now once more inclined to keep within the limits of the law. But when Cato in pettifogging fashion brought the champions of the milder view into suspicion of being accomplices of the plot, and pointed to the preparations for liberating the prisoners by a street-riot, he succeeded in throwing the waverers into a fresh alarm, and in securing a majority for the immediate execution of the transgressors.

Execution Of The Catalinarians

The execution of the decree naturally devolved on the consul, who had called it forth. Late on the evening of the 5th of December the prisoners were brought from their previous quarters, and conducted across the market-place still densely crowded by men to the prison in which criminals condemned to death were wont to be kept. It was a subterranean vault, twelve feet deep, at the foot of the Capitol, which formerly had served as a well-house. The consul himself conducted Lentulus, and praetors the others, all attended by strong guards; but the attempt at rescue, which had been expected, did not take place. No one knew whether the prisoners were being conveyed to a secure place of custody or to the scene of execution. At the door of the prison they were handed over to the -tresviri- who conducted the executions, and were strangled in the subterranean vault by torchlight. The consul had waited before the door till the executions were accomplished, and then with his loud well-known voice proclaimed over the Forum to the multitude waiting in silence, "They are dead." Till far on in the night the crowds moved through the streets and exultingly saluted the consul, to whom they believed that they owed the security of their houses and their property. The senate ordered public festivals of gratitude, and the first men of the nobility, Marcus Cato and Quintus Catulus, saluted the author of the sentence of death with the name--now heard for the first time--of a "father of his fatherland."

But it was a dreadful deed, and all the more dreadful that it appeared to a whole people great and praiseworthy.

Never perhaps has a commonwealth more lamentably declared itself bankrupt, than did Rome through this resolution--adopted in cold blood by the majority of the government and approved by public opinion-- to put to death in all haste a few political prisoners, who were no doubt culpable according to the laws, but had not forfeited life; because, forsooth, the security of the prisons was not to be trusted, and there was no sufficient police. It was the humorous trait seldom wanting to a historical tragedy, that this act of the most brutal tyranny had to be carried out by the most unstable and timid of all Roman statesmen, and that the "first democratic consul" was selected to destroy the palladium of the ancient freedom of the Roman commonwealth, the right of -provocatio-.

Suppression Of The Etruscan Insurrection

After the conspiracy had been thus stifled in the capital even before it came to an outbreak, there remained the task of putting an end to the insurrection in Etruria. The army amounting to about 2000 men, which Catilina found on his arrival, had increased nearly fivefold by the numerous recruits who flocked in, and already formed two tolerably full legions, in which however only about a fourth part of the men were sufficiently armed. Catilina had thrown himself with his force into the mountains and avoided a battle with the troops of Antonius, with the view of completing the organization of his bands and awaiting the outbreak of the insurrection in Rome. But the news of its failure broke up the army of the insurgents; the mass of the less compromised thereupon returned home. The remnant of resolute, or rather desperate, men that were left made an attempt to cut their way through the Apennine passes into Gaul; but when the little band arrived at the foot of the mountains near Pistoria (Pistoja), it found itself here caught between two armies. In front of it was the corps of Quintus Metellus, which had come up

from Ravenna and Ariminum to occupy the northern slope of the Apennines; behind it was the army of Antonius, who had at length yielded to the urgency of his officers and agreed to a winter campaign. Catilina was wedged in on both sides, and his supplies came to an end; nothing was left but to throw himself on the nearest foe, which was Antonius. In a narrow valley enclosed by rocky mountains the conflict took place between the insurgents and the troops of Antonius, which the latter, in order not to be under the necessity of at least personally performing execution on his former allies, had under a pretext entrusted for this day to a brave officer who had grown gray under arms, Marcus Petreius. The superior strength of the government army was of little account, owing to the nature of the field of battle. Both Catilina and Petreius placed their most trusty men in the foremost ranks; quarter was neither given nor received. The conflict lasted long, and many brave men fell on both sides; Catilina, who before the beginning of the battle had sent back his horse and those of all his officers, showed on this day that nature had destined him for no ordinary things, and that he knew at once how to command as a general and how to fight as a soldier. At length Petreius with his guard broke the centre of the enemy, and, after having overthrown this, attacked the two wings from within. This decided the victory. The corpses of the Catilinarians--there were counted 3000 of them--covered, as it were in rank and file, the ground where they had fought; the officers and the general himself had, when all was lost, thrown themselves headlong on the enemy and thus sought and found death (beginning of 692). Antonius was on account of this victory stamped by the senate with the title of Imperator, and new thanksgiving-festivals showed that the government and the governed were beginning to become accustomed to civil war.

Attitude Of Crassus And Caesar Toward The Anarchists

The anarchist plot had thus been suppressed in the capital as in Italy with bloody violence; people were still reminded of it merely by the criminal processes which in the Etruscan country towns and in the capital thinned the ranks of those affiliated to the beaten party, and by the large accessions to the robber-bands of Italy-- one of which, for instance, formed out of the remains of the armies of Spartacus and Catilina, was destroyed by a military force in 694 in the territory of Thurii. But it is important to keep in view that the blow fell by no means merely on the anarchists proper, who had conspired to set the capital on fire and had fought at Pistoria, but on the whole democratic party. That this party, and in particular Crassus and Caesar, had a hand in the game on the present occasion as well as in the plot of 688, may be regarded--not in a juristic, but in a historical, point of view-- as an ascertained fact. The circumstance, indeed, that Catulus and the other heads of the senatorial party accused the leader of the democrats of complicity in the anarchist plot, and that the latter as senator spoke and voted against the brutal judicial murder contemplated by the oligarchy, could only be urged by partisan sophistry as any valid proof of his participation in the plans of Catilina. But a series of other facts is of more weight. According to express and irrefragable testimonies it was especially Crassus and Caesar that supported the candidature of Catilina for the consulship. When Caesar in 690 brought the executioners of Sulla before the commission for murder(20) he allowed the rest to be condemned, but the most guilty and infamous of all, Catilina, to be acquitted. In the revelations of the 3rd of December, it is true, Cicero did not include among the names of the conspirators of whom he had information those of the two influential men; but it is notorious that the informers denounced not merely those against whom subsequently investigation was directed, but "many innocent" persons besides, whom the consul Cicero thought proper to erase from the list; and in later years, when he had no reason to disguise the truth, he expressly named Caesar among the accomplices.

An indirect but very intelligible inculcation is implied also in the circumstance, that of the four persons arrested on the 3rd of December the two least dangerous, Statilius and Gabinius, were handed over to be guarded by the senators Caesar and Crassus; it was manifestly intended that these should either, if

they allowed them to escape, be compromised in the view of public opinion as accessories, or, if they really detained them, be compromised in the view of their fellow-conspirators as renegades.

The following scene which occurred in the senate shows significantly how matters stood. Immediately after the arrest of Lentulus and his comrades, a messenger despatched by the conspirators in the capital to Catilina was seized by the agents of the government, and, after having been assured of impunity, was induced to make a comprehensive confession in a full meeting of the senate. But when he came to the critical portions of his confession and in particular named Crassus as having commissioned him, he was interrupted by the senators, and on the suggestion of Cicero it was resolved to cancel the whole statement without farther inquiry, but to imprison its author notwithstanding the amnesty assured to him, until such time as he should have not merely retracted the statement, but should have also confessed who had instigated him to give such false testimony! Here it is abundantly clear, not merely that that man had a very accurate knowledge of the state of matters who, when summoned to make an attack upon Crassus, replied that he had no desire to provoke the bull of the herd, but also that the majority of the senate with Cicero at their head were agreed in not permitting the revelations to go beyond a certain limit. The public was not so nice; the young men, who had taken up arms to ward off the incendiaries, were exasperated against no one so much as against Caesar, on the 5th of December, when he left the senate, they pointed their swords at his breast and even now he narrowly escaped with his life on the same spot where the fatal blow fell on him seventeen years afterwards; he did not again for a considerable time enter the senate-house. Any one who impartially considers the course of the conspiracy will not be able to resist the suspicion that during all this time Catilina was backed by more powerful men, who--relying on the want of a legally complete chain of evidence and on the lukewarmness and cowardice of the majority of the senate, which was but half-initiated and greedily caught at any pretext for inaction--knew how to hinder any serious interference with the conspiracy on the part of the authorities, to procure free departure for the chief of the insurgents, and even so to manage the declaration of war and the sending of troops against the insurrection that it was almost equivalent to the sending of an auxiliary army. While the course of the events themselves thus testifies that the threads of the Catilinarian plot reached far higher than Lentulus and Catilina, it deserves also to be noticed, that at a much later period, when Caesar had got to the head of the state, he was in the closest alliance with the only Catilinarian still surviving, Publius Sittius the leader of the Mauretanian free bands, and that he modified the law of debt quite in the sense that the proclamations of Manlius demanded.

All these pieces of evidence speak clearly enough; but, even were it not so, the desperate position of the democracy in presence of the military power--which since the Gabinio-Manilian laws assumed by its side an attitude more threatening than ever--renders it almost a certainty that, as usually happens in such cases, it sought a last resource in secret plots and in alliance with anarchy. The circumstances were very similar to those of the Cinnan times. While in the east Pompeius occupied a position nearly such as Sulla then did, Crassus and Caesar sought to raise over against him a power in Italy like that which Marius and Cinna had possessed, with the view of employing it if possible better than they had done. The way to this result lay once more through terrorism and anarchy, and to pave that way Catilina was certainly the fitting man. Naturally the more reputable leaders of the democracy kept themselves as far as possible in the background, and left to their unclean associates the execution of the unclean work, the political results of which they hoped afterwards to appropriate. Still more naturally, when the enterprise had failed, the partners of higher position applied every effort to conceal their participation in it. And at a later period, when the former conspirator had himself become the target of political plots, the veil was for that very reason drawn only the more closely over those darker years in the life of the great man, and even special apologies for him were written with that very object.(21)