

FOURTH ORATION AGAINST CATILINE

by Marcus Tullius Cicero

translated by Charles Duke Yonge, A.B.

ARGUMENT

THE ARGUMENT

The night after the events mentioned in the argument to the preceding oration, Cicero's wife Terentia, with the vestal virgins, was performing at home the mystic rites of the Bona Dea, while Cicero was deliberating with his friends on the best mode of punishing the conspirators. Terentia interrupted their deliberations by coming in to inform them of a prodigy which had just happened; that after the sacrifice in which she had been engaged was over, the fire revived spontaneously; on which the vestal virgins had sent her to him, to inform him of it, and to bid him pursue what he was then thinking of and intending for the good of his country, since the goddess had given this sign that she was watching over his safety and glory.

The next day the Senate ordered public rewards to the ambassadors and to Vulturcius; and showed signs of intending to proceed with extreme rigor against the conspirators; when, on a sudden, rumors arose of plots having been formed by the slaves of Lentulus and Cethegus for their masters' rescue; which obliged Cicero to double all the guards, and determined him to prevent any repetition of such attempts by bringing before the Senate without delay the question of the punishment of the prisoners. On which account he summoned the Senate to meet the next morning.

There were many difficulties in the matter. Capital punishments were unusual and very unpopular at Rome. And there was an old law of Porcius Lecca, a tribune of the people, which granted to all criminals who were capitally condemned an appeal to the people; and also a law had been passed, since his time, by Caius Gracchus, to prohibit the taking away the life of any citizen without a formal hearing before the people. And these considerations had so much weight with some of the senators, that they absented themselves from the Senate during this debate, in order to have no share in sentencing prisoners of such high rank to death. The debate was opened by Silanus, the consul-elect, who declared his opinion, that those in custody, and those also who should be taken subsequently, should all be put to death. Everyone who followed him agreed with him, till Julius Caesar, the praetor-elect (who has been often suspected of having been, at least to some extent, privy to the conspiracy), rose, and in an elaborate speech proposed that they should not be put to death, but that their estates should be confiscated, and they themselves kept in perpetual confinement. Cato opposed him with great earnestness. But some of Cicero's friends appeared inclined to Caesar's motion, thinking it a safer measure for Cicero himself; but when Cicero perceived this, he rose himself, and discussed the opinions both of Silanus and Caesar in the following speech, which decided the Senate to vote for their condemnation. And as soon as

the vote had passed, Cicero went immediately from the senate-house, took Lentulus from the custody of his kinsman Lentulus Spinther, and delivered him to the executioner. The other conspirators, Cethegus, Statilius, Gabinius, etc., were in like manner conducted to execution by the praetors; and Cicero was conducted home to his house in triumph by the whole body of the Senate and by the knights, the whole multitude following him, and saluting him as their deliverer.

FOURTH_ORATION_AGAINST_CATILINE

FOURTH ORATION AGAINST CATILINE

I SEE, O conscript fathers, that the looks and eyes of you all are turned toward me; I see that you are anxious not only for your own danger and that of the republic, but even, if that be removed, for mine. Your good-will is delightful to one amid evils and pleasing amid grief; but I entreat you, in the name of the immortal gods, lay it aside now, and, forgetting my safety, think of yourselves and of your children. If, indeed, this condition of the consulship has been allotted to me, that I should bear all bitterness, all pains and tortures, I will bear them not only bravely, but even cheerfully, provided that by my toils dignity and safety are procured for you and for the Roman people.

I am that consul, O conscript fathers, to whom neither the forum in which all justice is contained, nor the Campus Martius, * consecrated to the consular assemblies, nor the senate-house, the chief assistance of all nations, nor my own home, the common refuge of all men, nor my bed devoted to rest, in short, not even this seat of honor, this curule chair, has ever been free from the danger of death, or from plots and treachery. I have been silent about many things, I have borne much, I have conceded much, I have remedied many things with some pain to myself, amid the alarm of you all. Now if the immortal gods have determined that there shall be this end to my consulship, that I should snatch you, O conscript fathers, and the Roman people from miserable slaughter, your wives and children and the vestal virgins from most bitter distress, the temples and shrines of the gods, and this most lovely country of all of us, from impious flames, all Italy from war and devastation; then, whatever fortune is laid up for me by myself, it shall be borne. If, indeed, Publius Lentulus, being led on by soothsayers, believed that his name was connected by destiny with the destruction of the republic, why should not I rejoice that my consulship has taken place almost by the express appointment of fate for the preservation of the republic?

* The Campus Martius was consecrated or restored to Mars after the expulsion of the Tarquins; the comitia centuriata at which all magistrates were created were held there.

Wherefore, O conscript fathers, consult the welfare of yourselves, provide for that of the republic; preserve yourselves, your wives, your children, and your fortunes; defend the name and safety of the Roman people; cease to spare me, and to think of me. For, in the first place, I ought to hope that all the gods who preside over this city

will show me gratitude in proportion as I deserve it; and in the second place, if anything does happen to me, I shall fall with a contented and prepared mind; and, indeed, death cannot be disgraceful to a brave man, nor premature to one of consular rank, nor miserable to a wise man. Not that I am a man of so iron a disposition as not to be moved by the grief of a most dear and affectionate brother now present, and by the tears of all these men by whom you now see me surrounded. Nor does my fainting wife, my daughter prostrate with fear, and my little son whom the republic seems to me to embrace as a sort of hostage for my consulship, the son-in-law who, awaiting the end of that day, is now standing in my sight, fail often to recall my mind to my home. I am moved by all these circumstances, but in such a direction as to wish that they all may be safe together with you, even if some violence overwhelms me, rather than that both they and we should perish together with the republic.

Wherefore, O conscript fathers, attend to the safety of the republic; look around upon all the storms which are impending, unless you guard against them. It is not Tiberius Gracchus, who wished to be made a second time a tribune of the people; it is not Caius Gracchus, who endeavored to excite the partisans of the agrarian law; it is not Lucius Saturninus, who slew Memmius, who is now in some danger, who is now brought before the tribunal of your severity. They are now in your hands who withstood all Rome, with the object of bringing conflagration on the whole city, massacre on all of you, and of receiving Catiline; their letters are in your possession, their seals, their handwriting, and the confession of each individual of them; the Allobroges are tampered with, the slaves are excited, Catiline is sent for; the design is actually begun to be put in execution, that all should be put to death, so that no one should be left even to mourn the name of the republic, and to lament over the downfall of so mighty a dominion.

All these things the witnesses have informed you of, the prisoners have confessed, you by many judgments have already decided; first, because you have thanked me in unprecedented language, and have passed a vote that the conspiracy of abandoned men has been laid open by my virtue and diligence; secondly, because you have compelled Publius Lentulus to abdicate the praetorship; again, because you have voted that he and the others about whom you have decided should be given into custody; and, above all, because you have decreed a supplication in my name, an honor which has never been paid to anyone before acting in a civil capacity; last of all, because yesterday you gave most ample rewards to the ambassadors of the Allobroges and to Titus Vulturcius; all which acts are such that they, who have been given into custody by name, without any doubt seem already condemned by you.

But I have determined to refer the business to you as a fresh matter, O conscript fathers, both as to the fact, what you think of it, and as to the punishment, what you vote. I will state what it behoves the consul to state. I have seen for a long time great

madness existing in the republic, and new designs being formed, and evil passions being stirred up, but I never thought that so great, so destructive a conspiracy as this was being meditated by citizens. Now to whatever point your minds and opinions incline, you must decide before night. You see how great a crime has been made known to you; if you think that but few are implicated in it you are greatly mistaken; this evil has spread wider than you think; it has spread not only throughout Italy, but it has even crossed the Alps, and creeping stealthily on, it has already occupied many of the provinces; it can by no means be crushed by tolerating it, and by temporizing with it; however you determine on chastising it, you must act with promptitude.

I see that as yet there are two opinions. One that of Decius Silanus, who thinks that those who have endeavored to destroy all these things should be punished with death; the other, that of Caius Caesar, who objects to the punishment of death, but adopts the most extreme severity of all other punishment. Each acts in a manner suitable to his own dignity and to the magnitude of the business with the greatest severity. The one thinks that it is not right that those, who have attempted to deprive all of us and the whole Roman people of life, to destroy the empire, to extinguish the name of the Roman people, should enjoy life and the breath of heaven common to us all, for one moment; and he remembers that this sort of punishment has often been employed against worthless citizens in this republic. The other feels that death was not appointed by the immortal gods for the sake of punishment, but that it is either a necessity of nature, or a rest from toils and miseries; therefore, wise men have never met it unwillingly, brave men have often encountered it even voluntarily. But imprisonment, and that too perpetual was certainly invented for the extraordinary punishment of nefarious wickedness; therefore he proposes that they should be distributed among the municipal towns. This proposition seems to have in it injustice if you command it, difficulty if you request it; however, let it be so decreed if you like.

For I will undertake, and as I hope, I shall find one who will not think it suitable to his dignity to refuse what you decide on for the sake of the universal safety. He imposes besides a severe punishment of the burgesses of the municipal town if any of the prisoners escape; he surrounds them with the most terrible guard, and with everything worthy of the wickedness of abandoned men. And he proposes to establish a decree that no one shall be able to alleviate the punishment of those whom he is condemning by a vote of either the Senate or the people. He takes away even hope, which alone can comfort men in their miseries; besides this, he votes that their goods should be confiscated; he leaves life alone to these infamous men, and if he had taken that away, he would have relieved them by one pang of many tortures of mind and body, and of all the punishment of their crimes. Therefore, that there might be some dread in life to the wicked, men of old have believed that there

were some punishments of that sort appointed for the wicked in the shades below; because in truth they perceived that if this were taken away death itself would not be terrible.

Now, O conscript fathers, I see what is my interest; if you follow the opinion of Caius Caesar (since he has adopted this path in the republic which is accounted the popular one), perhaps since he is the author and promoter of this opinion, the popular violence will be less to be dreaded by me; if you adopt the other opinion, I know not whether I am not likely to have more trouble; but still let the advantage of the republic outweigh the consideration of my danger. For we have from Caius Caesar, as his own dignity and as the illustrious character of his ancestors demanded, a vote as a hostage of his lasting good-will to the republic; it has been clearly seen how great is the difference between the lenity of demagogues, and a disposition really attached to the interests of the people. I see that of those men who wish to be considered attached to the people one man is absent, that they may not seem forsooth to give a vote about the lives of Roman citizens. He only three days ago gave Roman citizens into custody, and decreed me a supplication, and voted most magnificent rewards to the witnesses only yesterday. It is not now doubtful to anyone what he, who voted for the imprisonment of the criminals, congratulation to him who had detected them, and rewards to those who had proved the crime, thinks of the whole matter, and of the cause. But Caius Caesar considers that the Sempronian * law was passed about Roman citizens, but that he who is an enemy of the republic can by no means be a citizen; and moreover, that the very proposer of the Sempronian law suffered punishment by the command of the people. He also denies that Lentulus, a briber and a spendthrift, after he has formed such cruel and bitter plans about the destruction of the Roman people, and the ruin of this city, can be called a friend of the people. Therefore this most gentle and merciful man does not hesitate to commit Publius Lentulus to eternal darkness and imprisonment, and establishes a law to all posterity that no one shall be able to boast of alleviating his punishment, or hereafter to appear a friend of the people to the destruction of the Roman people. He adds also the confiscation of their goods, so that want also and beggary may be added to all the torments of mind and body.

* The Sempronian law was proposed by Caius Gracchus, B.C. 123, and enacted that the people only should decide respecting the life or civil condition of a citizen. It is alluded to also in the oration Pro Rabir. c. 4, where Cicero says, "Caius Gracchus passed a law that no decision should be come to about the life of a Roman citizen without your command," speaking to the Quirites.

Wherefore, if you decide on this you give me a companion in my address, dear and acceptable to the Roman people; or if you prefer to adopt the opinion of Silanus, you will easily defend me and yourselves from the reproach of cruelty, and I will prevail that it shall be much lighter. Although, O conscript fathers, what cruelty can there be in chastising the enormity of such excessive wickedness?

For I decide from my own feeling. For so may I be allowed to enjoy the republic in safety in your company, as I am not moved to be somewhat vehement in this cause by any severity of disposition (for who is more merciful than I am?), but rather by a singular humanity and mercifulness. For I seem to myself to see this city, the light of the world, and the citadel of all nations, falling on a sudden by one conflagration. I see in my mind's eye miserable and unburied heaps of cities in my buried country; the sight of Cethegus and his madness raging amid your slaughter is ever present to my sight. But when I have set before myself Lentulus reigning, as he himself confesses that he had hoped was his destiny, and this Gabinius arrayed in the purple, and Catiline arrived with his army, then I shudder at the lamentation of matrons, and the flight of virgins and of boys, and the insults of the vestal virgins; and because these things appear to me exceedingly miserable and pitiable, therefore I show myself severe and rigorous to those who have wished to bring about this state of things. I ask, forsooth, if any father of a family, supposing his children had been slain by a slave, his wife murdered, his house burned, were not to inflict on his slaves the severest possible punishment, would he appear clement and merciful, or most inhuman and cruel? To me he would seem unnatural and hard-hearted who did not soothe his own pain and anguish by the pain and torture of the criminal. And so we, in the case of these men who desired to murder us, and our wives, and our children- who endeavored to destroy the houses of every individual among us, and also the republic, the home of all- who designed to place the nation of the Allobroges on the relics of this city, and on the ashes of the empire destroyed by fire; if we are very rigorous, we shall be considered merciful; if we choose to be lax, we must endure the character of the greatest cruelty, to the damage of our country and our fellow-citizens.

Unless, indeed, Lucius * Caesar, a thoroughly brave man, and of the best disposition toward the republic, seemed to anyone to be too cruel three days ago, when he said that the husband of his own sister, a most excellent woman (in his presence and in his hearing), ought to be deprived of life- when he said that his grandfather had been put to death by command of the consul, and his youthful son, sent as an ambassador by his father, had been put to death in prison. And what deed had they done like these men? had they formed any plan for destroying the republic? At that time great corruption was rife in the republic, and there was the greatest strike between parties. And, at that time, the grandfather of this Lentulus, a most illustrious man, put on his armor and pursued Gracchus; he even received a severe wound that there might be no diminution of the great dignity of the republic. But this man, his grandson, invited the Gauls to overthrow the foundations of the republic; he stirred up the slaves, he summoned Catiline, he distributed us to Cethegus to be massacred, and the rest of the citizens to Gabinius to be assassinated, the city he allotted to Cassius to burn, and the plundering and devastating of all Italy he assigned to Catiline. You fear, I think, lest in the case

of such unheard-of and abominable wickedness you should seem to decide anything with too great severity; when we ought much more to fear lest by being remiss in punishing we should appear cruel to our country, rather than appear by the severity of our irritation too rigorous to its most bitter enemies.

* The brother-in-law of Lucius Caesar was Marcus Fulvius, whose death, at the command of Opimius the consul, is referred to in the First Oration Against Catiline. He sent his son to the consul to treat for his surrender, whom Opimius sent back the first time, and forbade to return to him; when he did return, he put him to death.

But, O conscript fathers, I cannot conceal what I hear; for sayings are bruited about, which come to my ears, of those men who seem to fear that I may not have force enough to put in execution the things which you determine on this day. Everything is provided for, and prepared, and arranged, O conscript fathers, both by my exceeding care and diligence, and also by the still greater zeal of the Roman people for the retaining of their supreme dominion, and for the preserving of the fortunes of all. All men of all ranks are present, and of all ages; the forum is full, the temples around the forum are full, all the approaches to this place and to this temple are full. For this is the only cause that has ever been known since the first foundation of the city, in which all men were of one and the same opinion- except those, who, as they saw they must be ruined, preferred to perish in company with all the world rather than by themselves.

These men I except, and I willingly set them apart from the rest; for I do not think that they should be classed in the number of worthless citizens, but in that of the most bitter enemies. But, as for the rest; O ye immortal gods! in what crowds, with what zeal, with what virtue do they agree in defence of the common dignity and safety. Why should I here speak of the Roman knights? who yield to you the supremacy in rank and wisdom, in order to vie with you in love for the republic- whom this day and this cause now reunite with you in alliance and unanimity with your body, reconciled after a disagreement of many years. And if we can preserve forever in the republic this union now established in my consulship, I pledge myself to you that no civil and domestic calamity can hereafter reach any part of the republic. I see that the tribunes of the treasury- excellent men- have united with similar zeal in defence of the republic, and all the notaries. * For as this day had by chance brought them in crowds to the treasury, I see that they were diverted from an anxiety for the money due to them, from an expectation of their capital, to a regard for the common safety. The entire multitude of honest men, even the poorest, is present; for who is there to whom these temples, the sight of the city, the possession of liberty- in short, this light and this soil of his, common to us all, is not both dear and pleasant and delightful?

* The notaries at Rome were in the pay of the state; they were chiefly employed in making up the public accounts. In the time of

Cicero it seems to have been lawful for anyone to obtain the office of scriba by purchase (see Cic. in Verr. ii. 79), and freedmen and their sons frequently availed themselves of this privilege.

It is worth while, O conscript fathers, to know the inclinations of the freedmen; who, having by their good fortune obtained the rights of citizens, consider this to be really their country, which some who have been born here, and born in the highest rank, have considered to be not their own country, but a city of enemies. But why should I speak of men of this body whom their private fortunes, whom their common republic, whom, in short, that liberty which is the most delightful has called forth to defend the safety of their country? There is no slave who is only in an endurable condition of slavery who does not shudder at the audacity of citizens, who does not desire that these things may stand, who does not contribute all the good-will that he can, and all that he dares, to the common safety.

Wherefore, if this consideration moves anyone, that it has been heard that some tool of Lentulus is running about the shops- is hoping that the minds of some poor and ignorant men may be corrupted by bribery; that, indeed, has been attempted and begun, but none have been found either so wretched in their fortune or so abandoned in their inclination as not to wish the place of their seat and work and daily gain, their chamber and their bed, and, in short, the tranquil course of their lives, to be still preserved to them. And far the greater part of those who are in the shops- ay, indeed (for that is the more correct way of speaking), the whole of this class is of all the most attached to tranquillity; their whole stock, forsooth, their whole employment and livelihood, exists by the peaceful intercourse of the citizens, and is wholly supported by peace. And if their gains are diminished whenever their shops are shut, what will they be when they are burned? And, as this is the case, O conscript fathers, the protection of the Roman people is not wanting to you; do you take care that you do not seem to be wanting to the Roman people.

You have a consul preserved out of many dangers and plots, and from death itself, not for his own life, but for your safety. All ranks agree for the preservation of the republic with heart and will, with zeal, with virtue, with their voice. Your common country, besieged by the hands and weapons of an impious conspiracy, stretches forth her hands to you as a suppliant; to you she recommends herself, to you she recommends the lives of all the citizens, and the citadel, and the Capitol, and the altars of the household gods, and the eternal unextinguishable fire of Vesta, and all the temples of all the gods, and the altars and the walls and the houses of the city. Moreover, your own lives, those of your wives and children, the fortunes of all men, your homes, your hearths, are this day interested in your decision.

You have a leader mindful of you, forgetful of himself- an opportunity which is not always given to men; you have all ranks, all individuals, the whole Roman people (a thing which in civil

transactions we see this day for the first time), full of one and the same feeling. Think with what great labor this our dominion was founded, by what virtue this our liberty was established, by what kind favor of the gods our fortunes were aggrandized and ennobled, and how nearly one night destroyed them all. That this may never hereafter be able not only to be done, but not even to be thought of, you must this day take care. And I have spoken thus, not in order to stir you up who almost outrun me myself, but that my voice, which ought to be the chief voice in the republic, may appear to have fulfilled the duty which belongs to me as consul.

Now, before I return to the decision, I will say a few words concerning myself. As numerous as is the band of conspirators- and you see that it is very great- so numerous a multitude of enemies do I see that I have brought upon myself. But I consider them base and powerless and despicable and abject. But if at any time that band shall be excited by the wickedness and madness of anyone, and shall show itself more powerful than your dignity and that of the republic, yet, O conscript fathers, I shall never repent of my actions and of my advice. Death, indeed, which they perhaps threaten me with, is prepared for all men; such glory during life as you have honored me with by your decrees no one has ever attained to. For you have passed votes of congratulation to others for having governed the republic successfully, but to me alone for having saved it.

Let Scipio be thought illustrious, he by whose wisdom and valor Hannibal was compelled to return into Africa, and to depart from Italy. Let the second Africanus be extolled with conspicuous praise, who destroyed two cities most hostile to this empire, Carthage and Numantia. Let Lucius Paullus be thought a great man, he whose triumphal car was graced by Perses, previously a most powerful and noble monarch. Let Marius be held in eternal honor, who twice delivered Italy from siege, and from the fear of slavery. Let Pompey be preferred to them all- Pompey, whose exploits and whose virtues are bounded by the same districts and limits as the course of the sun. There will be, forsooth, among the praises of these men, some room for my glory, unless haply it be a greater deed to open to us provinces whither we may fly, than to take care that those who are at a distance may, when conquerors, have a home to return to.

Although in one point the circumstances of foreign triumph are better than those of domestic victory; because foreign enemies, either if they be crushed, become one's servants, or if they be received into the state, think themselves bound to us by obligation; but those of the number of citizens who become depraved by madness and once begin to be enemies to their country- those men, when you have defeated their attempts to injure the republic, you can neither restrain by force nor conciliate by kindness. So that I see that an eternal war with all wicked citizens has been undertaken by me; which, however, I am confident can easily be driven back from me and mine by your aid, and by that of all good men, and by the memory of such great dangers, which will remain, not only among this people which has

been saved, but in the discourse and minds of all nations forever. Nor, in truth, can any power be found which will be able to undermine and destroy your union with the Roman knights, and such unanimity as exists among all good men.

As, then, this is the case, O conscript fathers, instead of my military command- instead of the army- instead of the province * which I have neglected, and the other badges of honor which have been rejected by me for the sake of protecting the city and your safety- in place of the ties of clientship and hospitality with citizens in the provinces, which, however, by my influence in the city, I study to preserve with as much toil as I labor to acquire them- in place of all these things, and in reward for my singular zeal in your behalf, and for this diligence in saving the republic which you behold, I ask nothing of you but the recollection of this time and of my whole consulship. And as long as that is fixed in your minds, I shall think I am fenced round by the strongest wall. But if the violence of wicked men shall deceive and overpower my expectations, I recommend to you my little son, to whom, in truth, it will be protection enough, not only for his safety, but even for his dignity, if you recollect that he is the son of him who has saved all these things at his own single risk.

* Cicero, in order to tempt Antonius to aid him in counteracting the treasonable designs of Catiline, had given up to him the province of Macedonia, which had fallen to his own lot; and having accepted that of Cisalpine Gaul in exchange for it, he gave that also to Quintus Metellus; being resolved to receive no emolument, directly or indirectly, from his consulship.

Wherefore, O conscript fathers, determine with care, as you have begun, and boldly, concerning your own safety, and that of the Roman people, and concerning your wives and children; concerning your altars and your hearths, your shrines and temples; concerning the houses and homes of the whole city; concerning your dominion, your liberty, and the safety of Italy and the whole republic. For you have a consul who will not hesitate to obey your decrees, and who will be able, as long as he lives, to defend what you decide on, and of his own power to execute it. *

* This speech was spoken, and the criminals executed, on the fifth of December. But Catiline was not yet entirely overcome. He had with him in Etruria two legions- about twelve thousand men; of which, however, not above one-quarter were regularly armed. For some time by marches and countermarches he eluded Antonius, but when the news reached his army of the fate of the rest of the conspirators, it began to desert him in great numbers. He attempted to escape into Gaul, but found himself intercepted by Metellus, who had been sent thither by Cicero with three legions. Antonius is supposed not to have been disinclined to connive at his escape, if he had not been compelled as it were by his quaestor Sextus and his lieutenant Petreius to force him to a battle, in which, however, Antonius himself, being ill of the gout, did not take the command, which devolved on Petreius, who

after a severe action destroyed Catiline and his whole army, of which every man is said to have been slain in the battle.

THE END OF FOURTH ORATION AGAINST CATILINE