

THE CONSPIRACY OF CATILINE

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The Conspiracy of Catiline by Sallust

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SALLUST

**THE CONSPIRACY
OF CATILINE**

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CONSPIRACY OF CATILINE

AS RELATED BY

SALLUST

EDITED BY J. H. AND W. F. ALLEN AND J. B. GREENOUGH

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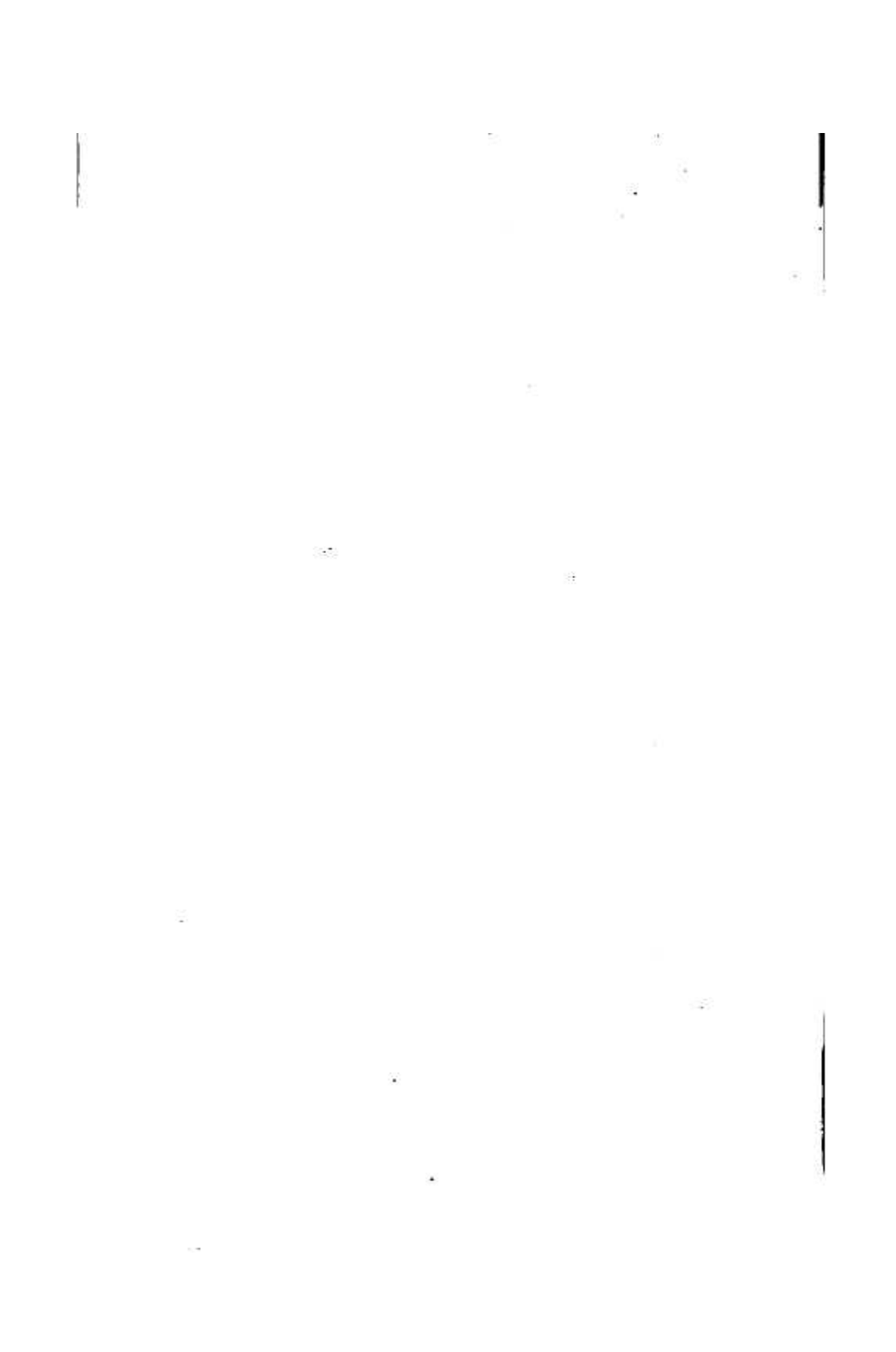
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NOTE.

THIS edition follows strictly the text of the fourth edition of DIETSCH, with a few slight changes to secure a consistent orthography. It is one of a series of classics prepared under the same joint editorship with the *select Orations of Cicero*, published in June, 1873.

CAMBRIDGE, January 1, 1874.



INTRODUCTION.

LUCIUS SERGIUS CATILINA was an old soldier and partisan of Sulla, a man of profligate character, broken fortunes, and headstrong ambition. About twelve years after Sulla's death, he formed a scheme to better his estate by political adventure. His confederates were, some of them, men of good family and high official standing; the larger number, probably, needy and reckless fortune-hunters. His plan was to get himself into power in the ordinary way of popular elections; then, by the spoils and chances of office, to secure his own predominance, and reward the service of his adherents. Probably his plans did not differ much from those of most political soldiers of fortune. They seem to have been ripened as early as B. C. 66. Two years later, he was defeated in a close race for the consulship by Cicero and Caius Antonius. Renewing his attempt at the next elections, he was again defeated, and, when driven from the city by the invective of Cicero, he raised the standard of open insurrection. His confederates in the city were seized and put to death, and in the following January, a month later, he was beaten in battle, and his armed force completely annihilated.

The Conspiracy of Catiline, so called, was the principal political event in Rome from the dictatorship of Sulla down to that of Julius Cæsar; and, in point of time, was almost exactly half way between the two. It was not—what the name generally means—a conspiracy to overthrow the existing government. It was a scheme, on the part of a few needy and desperate politicians, to get themselves elected

in regular form, and then to carry on the government to their own advantage. Apart from the character of the men who engaged in it, it does not seem to have been any more criminal in its origin or plans than any "ring" or cabal by which a personal interest seeks its ends through the forms of constitutional election. Only when, after three years' attempt, it was finally defeated at the polls, and appealed to armed insurrection, did it take the shape of treason. And even then it kept the formalities of civil and military authority, and rejected the help of slaves; claiming that its real object was to rid the state of an oppressive and selfish oligarchy. That its real aim was to destroy the state — which Cicero asserts — was, at any rate, so well disguised, that the party which succeeded in overcoming it fell into odium as enemies of the people, and found their own ruin in its defeat.

These circumstances have made the true character and aims of the conspiracy one of the riddles of Roman politics. Cicero, in a well-known passage (*Cat. II.*), ranges the conspirators in five "dangerous classes," of which the most respectable were men of large estates heavily mortgaged, whose debts made them ready to welcome any sort of change. But they, as he shows, could have no real interest in a revolution. And it may be safe, perhaps, along with many critics, to dismiss the stories of bloody rites, criminal oaths, and desperate designs of massacre and conflagration, as the tales of frightened fancy and political hate. But of the reckless and criminal character of its leaders, and the mischief they would have done if they had got into office, there seems no reason for doubt. As candidate, Cicero had beaten them fairly in a hard-fought battle at the polls. As consul, he had worked, actively and effectually, to block their further political game. When they were finally defeated, in the fall elections of his consular year, and lost heart to try again, he was vigilant, shrewd, intrepid, and successful, in tracking their schemes of open violence, and forcing the development of their plot beyond the walls.

His colleague Antonius — whom, half by bribery and half by flattery or threats, he had turned against them — was compelled, with whatever reluctance, to take the field to fight them; and, though conveniently lame on the day of battle, had forced upon him the military glory of their defeat. The conspiracy proper was quite annihilated by this blow. No avowed leader or accomplice in it seems to have been left in Rome. And it was not till the coalition of Cæsar, Pompey, and Crassus, three years later, gave new hope to the enemies of the Senate, and Clodius succeeded Catiline as the leader of what was most ferocious and desperate in Rome, that Cicero met the penalty of his great political error, the illegal death of the conspirators.

In the logic of events, this conspiracy was a sequel to the revolution of Sulla, and a prelude to the overthrow of the republic by Cæsar. While nominally a conservative, Sulla had been, in reality, an innovator of the most dangerous type. He had set himself in armed opposition to a reform, which, though disfigured from the times of the Gracchi by many acts of violence, might yet have saved for many generations the free political life of Rome. The great political crime of Sulla was that he deliberately destroyed the existing constitution, to restore by force that which had been outgrown a hundred years before. A still more fatal policy was to subvert the popular life of the Italian communities, and to destroy, as far as he could, the remains of that free yeomanry which — though in arms against Rome in the "Social War" — made now the best hope of the Republic. The dictator must provide landed estates for his veterans, whatever came of it; and the wide-spread ruin and despair that rose from this made the chief reliance of the conspiracy. The horrible civil war, with its massacres on one side and its proscriptions on the other, had fatally corrupted the very springs of political morality. It had even destroyed (so to speak) the political sense. Politics had been bad enough before. Party controversies had often resulted in assassination, massacre, and exile. Now, it was