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CICERO  
LETTERS TO FRIENDS  
VOLUME I



*Edited and Translated by*  
D. R. SHACKLETON BAILEY

# CICERO

LETTERS TO FRIENDS

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藏书章

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY

D. R. SHACKLETON BAILEY



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**CICERO'S  
LETTERS TO FRIENDS**

# CONTENTS

## VOLUME I

INTRODUCTION	1
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	20
THE FRIENDS	21
LETTERS 1-113	35

## VOLUME II

LETTERS 114-280
-----------------

## VOLUME III

LETTERS 281-435
-----------------

### APPENDIX

Dates. Money. Roman Names. Consuls

### CONCORDANCE

### GLOSSARY

### INDEX

### MAPS

## INTRODUCTION

The Roman, at any rate the upper-class Roman, was a letter writer. In ancient Greece a man's circle was apt to be mainly confined to a single small town and the countryside adjoining. But the well-to-do Roman might well have connections up and down Italy as well as in the provinces. He himself spent much time in his country houses (villas). Business, public or private, might take him abroad for long periods. Although there was no postal system, bearers could usually be found: his own slaves, his friends' slaves, casual travellers, or the couriers of business companies.

Hardly any specimens of this activity survive except for Cicero's correspondence, consisting almost entirely of private letters written without any idea of future publication and published, as it seems, almost exactly as they stood. (The omission in one letter to Atticus of a scandalous story about Cicero's nephew may have been deliberate, but it is hard to find any other evidence of expurgation, let alone falsification.) As such they are uniquely interesting, even apart from their value as a source of historical and other kinds of information.

What remains of Cicero's correspondence has come down in two large collections, the Letters to Atticus and the so-called Letters to Friends, and two much smaller

## INTRODUCTION

ones, to his brother Quintus and to M. Brutus. Many more were extant in antiquity of which only stray fragments now survive. Except for a few of the earliest letters to Atticus they were all written in the last twenty years of Cicero's life. We know from Cornelius Nepos that Atticus preserved Cicero's letters dating from his consulship in 63 in eleven papyrus rolls and that friends were allowed to read them. What happened after his death is unknown, but they were probably not published until the middle of the first century A.D., though the rest of the correspondence seems to have come out much earlier.

The collection of Letters to Friends (*Epistulae ad Familiares*) did not originally appear as such. Our MSS have it in sixteen "Books." Some of these consist entirely or mainly of letters to or from a single correspondent: Lentulus Spinther in Book I, Appius Claudius in Book III, Caelius in Book VIII, Terentia or Terentia and children in Book XIV, Tiro in Book XVI. Book XIII consists of letters of recommendation, Books X–XII of correspondence relating to the struggle with Antony in 44–43. The rest show more or less internal cohesion. Evidence suggests that they were arranged and published separately or in groups during the Augustan period by a single editor, who was in all probability Cicero's faithful secretary, Tiro; he is also likely to have produced the now lost collections of letters to individual correspondents other than Atticus known to have existed in antiquity: Caesar, Pompey, Octavian, and others, as well as those surviving to Quintus Cicero and Marcus Brutus. At what time the collection of sixteen books came into being is unknown. The title "Letters to Friends" seems to be no older than the Renaissance.

The "friends" are a motley group. Some of them, like

## INTRODUCTION

Trebatius Testa, Caelius, and Papirius Paetus, really were familiars, to whom Cicero could write as informally, though not as intimately, as to Atticus or to his brother. With powerful aristocrats like Cato, Lentulus Spinther, and Appius Claudius he was on no such easy footing, so that his letters to them are in as elaborate a style as his published works. The high sentiments, stately flatteries, and courteously veiled rebukes might have transposed naturally into eighteenth-century English, but put a modern translator at a disadvantage. Other letters fall somewhere in between these two types, including two dispatches from Cilicia, both models of elegant, straightforward language. Cicero's correspondents are briefly described in the register of *The Friends* that follows.

Cicero's letters only come fully to life against a historical and biographical background, though a bare outline is all that can be offered here.<sup>1</sup>

### *Historical Background*

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born on 3 January 106 B.C. at his family home near the hill town of Arpinum (still Arpino) about seventy miles to the east of Rome. For nearly a century the Arpinates had been citizens of Rome, a status attained by most of Italy south of the Po only after the bloody 'Social War' of 90–88. The family was old and well-to-do, and like many locally prominent Italian families, had good Roman connections; but from the standpoint of a Roman aristocrat Cicero was a nobody, a 'new

<sup>1</sup> The Historical Background that follows is reproduced from my Loeb Classical Library edition of the *Letters to Atticus*.



## INTRODUCTION

man,' a fact of lasting practical and psychological importance.

About ten years after Cicero's birth his father took up residence in a fashionable part of Rome. Cicero and his younger brother received the best education money could buy, and he is said to have easily outshone his socially superior classmates. On coming of age at sixteen or seventeen he served for a short time in the Roman army against the insurgent Italian allies. He lived in stormy times. Roman political institutions were turning out to be inadequate for the government of an already large empire. The authority of the Senate, the only permanent governing body, had been seriously shaken in the last three decades of the second century. The career of the great general Marius, also a native of Arpinum and a family connection of the Ciceros, had pointed the way to future army commanders who were to build positions of personal power on the loyalty of their troops.

The Social War was followed by the terrible internal struggles of the eighties. In 88 the Consul Sulla, a brilliant general from an impoverished noble family who combined conservative sympathies with a contempt for constitutional forms, set a fateful precedent by marching his army on the capital in rebuttal of a personal injustice. His chief opponents were killed or, like Marius, escaped into exile. But Sulla had business elsewhere. Later in the year he left for the East to deal with a foreign enemy, the redoubtable Mithridates of Pontus. Turmoil ensued. Rome stood a siege before being captured again by the forces of the anti-Sullan Consul Cinna and old Marius, emerging from banishment like an avenging ghost. The resulting massacre

## INTRODUCTION

was the bloodiest of its kind so far known in Roman history. Marius died a few months later, but Rome and Italy remained under the control of Cinna and his associates for the next four years.

In 83 Sulla brought his victorious legions home. Fighting followed up and down the peninsula, and Rome had another Marian bloodbath before Sulla came out master of the situation. His ruthless reprisals left a grim memory, but to people of traditional outlook he was the restorer of the Republic. As Dictator he produced a new constitution guaranteeing control of affairs to an enlarged Senate, and, this task completed, he retired voluntarily into private life (79). His work was not wholly undone for thirty years.

Despite close Marian connections Cicero seems to have disliked and despised Cinna's regime and only began his public career, as an advocate, after Sulla's victory. He scored a sensational triumph with his defence of a certain Roscius, the victim of persecution by an influential freedman of Sulla's, and his services in court became much in demand. But in 79 his voice was suffering from overstrain and for this and perhaps other reasons he left Rome for three years of travel in Greece and Asia Minor. After a fresh start in 76 his star rose rapidly and steadily. The next thirteen years brought him the two great objects of his ambition, primacy at the Roman bar and a political career culminating in the Consulship. Without one setback he climbed the official ladder, elected Quaestor, Plebeian Aedile, and Praetor by handsome majorities and at the earliest age allowed by law. The Consulship at this period was almost a preserve of the nobility, consisting of descendants of Consuls, though now and again a man of praeto-

## INTRODUCTION

rian family was let in. For more than a generation before Cicero's candidature in 64 new men had been excluded. Nevertheless he easily topped the poll.

His year of office would not have been particularly memorable but for a timely attempt at a coup d'état by his unsuccessful fellow candidate Catiline, a patrician champion of the bankrupt and disinherited. The plot was discovered and suppressed by Cicero. Catiline had left Rome to join his armed followers, and had to be defeated and killed next year, but five of his chief associates were arrested and brought before the Senate. After a memorable debate they were executed under Cicero's supervision. In and out of the Senate he was hailed as the saviour of Rome, but the legality of the action was disputed, and it brought him into lasting unpopularity with the have-nots.

Cicero's prestige had reached a peak (from which it gradually declined), but the principal figure of the Roman world was not in Rome. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey the Great) rose early to fame by his brilliant military exploits against the adversaries of Sulla. His reputation was consolidated by years of finally successful warfare against the Marian leader Sertorius in Spain and the suppression of Spartacus' slave revolt in Italy. In 70 he became Consul in defiance of legal qualifications as to age and previous offices. Three years later, against the opposition of the senatorial leaders, he received an extraordinary commission to clear the Mediterranean of piracy. Prompt and complete success was followed by something even bigger — an overall command in the East where Mithridates and his ally the King of Armenia were still defying the empire. Pompey's campaigns established Roman control over a vast area of western Asia, which he reorganized as he saw fit.

## INTRODUCTION

In 62 he returned to Italy and, to the relief of the home authorities, at once disbanded his army.

Pompey had two demands, both reasonable: ratification of his arrangements in the East and land for his veteran soldiers. But the senatorial conservatives, now tending to centre around a strong-minded young nobleman called M. Porcius Cato, distrusted his intentions and resented a career so conspicuously out of conformity with oligarchical norms. Several, in particular his predecessor in the eastern command, L. Lucullus, and a Metellus (Creticus) who had fallen foul of him in Crete, nursed bitter personal grudges. Their unwisely stubborn obstructiveness resulted in a coalition between Pompey and two prominent politicians, both out of sympathy with the post-Sullan establishment: C. Julius Caesar and M. Licinius Crassus. The former, son of a Marian Praetor and former son-in-law of Cinna, was a favourite with the city populace, none the less so because he came from one of Rome's most ancient families; the latter, also a nobleman and Pompey's colleague in 70, was, next to Pompey himself, the richest man in Rome. This alliance, often called the First Triumvirate though it had no official status, dominated the scene for years to come. Cicero could have made a fourth, but although much dissatisfied with the 'optimates,' who were apt to remember his origins rather than the public services of which he so often reminded them, his principles would not let him take part in a conspiracy against the constitution.

In 59 Caesar became Consul. Almost literally over the dead body of his optimate colleague Bibulus, in defiance of senatorial opposition and constitutional procedures, he pushed through a legislative program which satisfied his two associates and gave himself a five-year command in

## INTRODUCTION

northern Italy and Gaul. In the event it lasted until 49 and enabled him to annex modern France (apart from the old Roman province in the south) and Belgium to the Roman empire. There were even expeditions across the Rhine and the English Channel. Before leaving Rome he had arranged for the elimination of Cicero, who had rejected several tempting overtures. Early in 58 the patrician demagogue and Tribune P. Clodius Pulcher, following a personal vendetta, was allowed to drive him into exile with the passive connivance of Pompey, despite earlier professions of friendship and support. Distraught and desperate, Cicero fled to Greece. Eighteen months later the tide had turned. Clodius had fallen out with Pompey, who, with Caesar's rather reluctant consent, arranged for a triumphal restoration. For a while thereafter Cicero tried to play an independent political hand, taking advantage of rifts in the triumviral solidarity. But these were patched up at the Conference of Luca (Lucca) in 56, and Cicero received a sharp warning from Pompey, which took prompt effect. A eulogy of Caesar's victories in the Senate, described by himself as a palinode, was his last important political gesture for several years. He continued active forensically, but his choice of clients now had to include creatures of the dynasts, some of them enemies of his own. Meanwhile his personal relations with Caesar developed a new cordiality, and in 54 his brother Quintus went to Gaul to make a military reputation and, as he hoped, his fortune as one of Caesar's lieutenant generals.

The year 55 saw Pompey and Crassus together again in the Consulship. Caesar's tenure in Gaul was extended for another quinquennium, and the Consuls were appointed to commands in Spain and Syria for a like period (Pompey

## INTRODUCTION

remained in Italy, governing Spain through deputies). But the later fifties produced a realignment. Pompey was the devoted husband of Caesar's daughter Julia; she died in 54 and in the following year Crassus was defeated and killed by the Parthians. Caesar and Pompey were left in what began to look like confrontation. After the conquest of Gaul Pompey could no longer feel secure in his position of senior while at the same time Cato and his friends were losing their hostility to Pompey in face of the threat from Caesar. The rapprochement between Pompey and Senate, which Cicero had once unsuccessfully tried to promote, came about under the pressure of events. In 52, at the behest of the Catonians, Pompey took power as sole Consul (the term Dictator was avoided) to restore law and order, which had broken down in a welter of street warfare and electoral corruption. This accomplished with no less efficiency than the clearance of the seas in 67, the question of Caesar's future came uppermost. After protracted manoeuvring the upshot was another civil war, which broke out at the beginning of 49, when Caesar led his troops across the river Rubicon into the homeland. Hardly more than two months later, after Caesar had encircled and captured a large republican army at Corfinium, Pompey, the Consuls, and a large part of the Senate crossed the Adriatic with their remaining troops, leaving Caesar in undisputed control of Italy and Rome.

Cicero had missed the political preliminaries. In 51 he found himself unexpectedly saddled with the government of a province (a thing he had twice avoided in the past), namely Cilicia, comprising almost all the southern seaboard of Asia Minor and a large part of the interior, together with the island of Cyprus. He entered it at the end

## INTRODUCTION

of July for his year's tenure. He proved an excellent, if reluctant, governor and with the assistance of his brother and other experienced military men on his staff he even campaigned against the untamed people of the mountains with enough success to win the title of Imperator from his troops and a Supplication (Thanksgiving) from the Senate — the usual preliminaries to a Triumph. Arriving in Italy during the final stage of the crisis he pleaded for peace in public and in private. When that failed, after many waverings recorded in almost daily letters to Atticus, he sailed from Italy in June and is next heard of early the following year in Pompey's camp near Dyrrachium (Durazzo).

Caesar's victory at Pharsalia<sup>2</sup> in August 48 was virtually the end of Pompey, who was killed shortly afterwards in Egypt, but it was not the end of the Civil War. Thinking it was, Cicero accepted Caesar's invitation (conveyed through his own son-in-law Dolabella) to return to Italy and spent an unhappy year in Brundisium (Brindisi) pending decisions on his future, while Caesar was involved in Egypt and Asia. On Caesar's return in September 47 his anxieties were relieved in a gracious interview and he was able to take up life again in Rome.

It was almost entirely a private life. Caesar showed him much kindness and he was on outwardly friendly social terms with most of Caesar's principal followers, but his advice was not required and he rarely appeared in the Forum or the Senate House. Paradoxically he now had most

<sup>2</sup> 'Pharsalus, the modern title of the battlefield, is not merely in itself an error both gross and gratuitous; it is implicated with another that is more serious still': J. P. Postgate; see his discussion in *Lucan, De Bello Civili VIII* (Cambridge 1917), Excursus C.

## INTRODUCTION

to fear from a republican victory. For Cato and others had established a new position of strength in Africa, where Caesar's lieutenant Curio had lost his life and army early in the war; and after that was destroyed by another Caesarian victory at Thapsus in April 46, Pompey's sons were able to fight another day in Spain. Even their defeat in the hard-fought battle of Munda (March 45) was not the end.

Meanwhile, especially after his daughter's death in February 45, Cicero took refuge in literary work. In his young days he had published verse, with temporary acclaim, and many carefully edited speeches. The works *On the Orator* and *On the Republic* appeared in the fifties. In 46-44 he turned to philosophy. Without any pretensions to original thought, he put the ideas he found in his Greek sources into elegant Latin in a rapid succession of treatises which made a greater impact on the minds of men to come than perhaps any other secular writings of antiquity.

Cicero had no prior knowledge of the conspiracy against Caesar's life in 44, though its leader M. Brutus was his intimate friend. But when Caesar fell in the Senate House on the Ides of March, Brutus waved his blood-stained dagger and shouted Cicero's name. Certainly the act had Cicero's wholehearted approval. But a little while later he ruefully recognized that though the king was dead the monarchy survived. The conspirators, an assortment of republican loyalists and disgruntled place-seekers, had not planned ahead, and the Consul Mark Antony, who in Cicero's opinion ought to have been eliminated along with his colleague Caesar, soon made it evident that he intended to take Caesar's place. The 'liberators' were driven out of Rome by mob violence.

Disgusted at the scene, Cicero set out in July for



## INTRODUCTION

Greece, where his son was a student in Athens, but reports from Rome made him turn back. On 2 September he delivered in the Senate the first of a series of attacks on Antony which he jestingly called Philippics, after Demosthenes' speeches against Philip of Macedon. There were no immediate consequences and for some time Cicero again lay low. But by the end of the year the situation had been transformed. Antony was at Mutina (Modena) besieging the legal governor of Cisalpine Gaul, Decimus Brutus, who was one of Caesar's assassins. Soon he found himself opposed by three republican armies. Their commanders were the two Consuls of 43, Hirtius and Pansa, both Caesarians but hostile to Antony's ambitions, and Caesar's youthful grandnephew and adopted son, Caesar Octavianus, who had returned to Italy the previous April and emerged as Antony's rival for the loyalty of Caesar's veterans. At this time Cicero professed complete confidence in Octavian's loyalty to the Republic. Meanwhile, he himself had taken the lead in Rome as the acknowledged embodiment of the Senate and People's will to resist the new despotism. M. Brutus and his brother-in-law and co-conspirator Cassius had left for the East, where they succeeded in taking over the entire Roman empire east of the Adriatic in the republican interest. The West, however, was in the hands of four Caesarian governors, none of whom, except perhaps Cornificius in Africa, was wholly reliable from Cicero's standpoint. It was his business to make the Senate a focus for their loyalties and to maintain a stream of hortatory correspondence.

In April the situation at Mutina was resolved. Antony suffered two heavy defeats and was forced to raise the siege