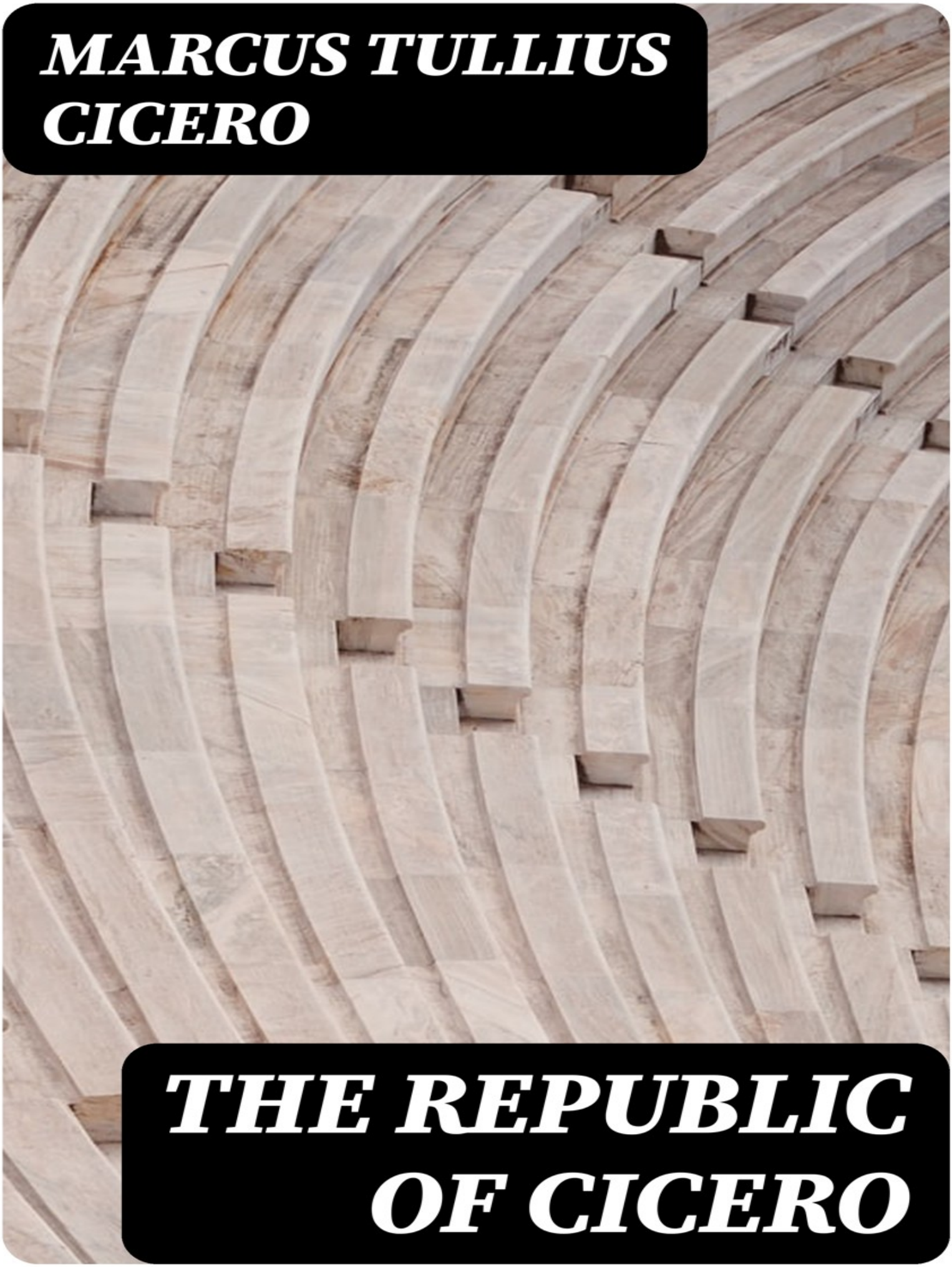
MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO
THE REPUBLIC OF CICERO

Marcus Tullius Cicero

The republic of Cicero

Translated from the Latin; and Accompanied With a Critical and Historical Introduction

EAN 8596547252368

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

I am not aware that any translation of the Republic of Cicero into the English tongue has been made.

Believing that it cannot but excite a deep interest with generous minds, as well on account of the high nature of the subject, the illustrious name of Cicero, as of the great motives which led him to compose this work, I venture to offer a translation of it to the public.

In this extensive republic, where every individual reads, it appears peculiarly proper, that an English dress should be given to a work, of which almost every page teaches that public happiness depends upon individual virtue.

Cicero’s definition of a republic, that it is an association of the people for the defence and advancement of the common interest; will be understood here, which may be doubtingly said of any other republics now in existence.

A bare translation of the fragments of this mutilated work, unassisted by any commentary, could not but have been unsatisfactory. The deficiencies of the original are somewhat compensated to us, not alone in the grandeur of thought which pervades it, but in the majesty of diction, precise, elevated, as it frequently is, and always governed by the most refined taste. It would be a vain effort to attempt the dignity of the Latin tongue, when adorned with the elegancies of the Ciceronian style. Humbly as the translation may deserve to be considered, it will perhaps be deemed sufficiently faithful: and that the translator has not

altogether failed in pointing out to grave and reflecting minds, the immediate cause of the ruin of a noble Republic.

He has therefore prefixed a brief historical introduction; the which, whether it will be thought too long, or not sufficiently detailed, will probably depend upon the reader’s historical recollections. The motive for drawing it up was to render the work more generally useful and acceptable.

INTRODUCTION.

Table of Contents

The imperfect manuscript, a translation of which is now presented to the American public, was discovered in the Library of the Vatican, by Professor Angelo Mai; a person of singular ingenuity in the detection of those Palimpsests whose contents were written upon ancient writings partially erased. A fac simile of part of the MSS. accompanies this work. The Republic of Cicero was greatly cherished by those who lived in and near his times; of which occasional evidences are found in the writings of antiquity. But the tyranny of the emperors bridled the Romans so soon after its appearance, that Horace, Virgil, Seneca, Quintilian, Pliny, and even Tacitus, have not dared to praise it, lest they should bring down vengeance upon themselves. It is remarkable that while despotism was rapidly extinguishing philosophy and letters, and the very existence of these precious monuments of better times was scarcely thought of; the Christian religion was gradually raising up amidst the persecutions of the primitive church, new champions for truth and justice; to whose works we are indebted for many valuable fragments of the best writers of antiquity, and for almost all the passages of Cicero’s Republic which we were acquainted with, until the late discovery of professor Mai. It is in the works of St. Augustin and of Lactantius that these passages most abound; and they are appealed to by them as most eloquent arguments, in support of just government, and virtuous conduct. Scipio’s Dream, forming the only part of the sixth book which has been preserved, and which is

one of the most splendid passages that has been saved from antiquity, has long had a place in the works of Macrobius, a writer at the beginning of the fifth century, addicted to the Pythagorean mysticisms; and who has preserved it probably on account of the occult astronomical relation of numbers contained in it. Notwithstanding the mutilated state of the MSS., the order of the books is distinctly preserved, the general plan of the work is obvious, and we have much greater reason to rejoice at what we possess, than to regret what is wanting. The disordered state of the government and the republic at large, evidently suggested to Cicero this patriotic and bold attempt to stem the influence of bad men, and raise the falling liberties of his country. In this highly philosophical discourse he sought to recall the Romans from the interests of ambitious individuals, and fix their attention upon the greater interests of the country, where each man had a stake: to revive their veneration for the simplicity of the early institutions of Rome, and for the men who had made themselves illustrious by their virtues: and to guard the people more effectually against the innovations and factions now succeeding each other with so much rapidity, he invests those ancient times with a perfection, that the attractions of his eloquence alone can excuse.

Of the original simplicity of the government, some evidences are afforded by this work; as where it is stated that lands were assigned to the sovereign, and cultivated for him by the people, that he might have nothing to do but administer justice. The principal men too of the state in those early times lived in the vicinity of Rome, cultivating a

small possession. The illustrious names of Fabius, Lentulus, Cicero, &c., were perhaps given to those husbandmen who excelled in the cultivation of those vegetables; such was the opinion of Pliny.[1]

The censor had the power of reprimanding those whose fields were slovenly cultivated. Many customs of those antique times are found in Cato's curious Treatise on Rural Affairs. "Our ancestors constituted and ordained thus in their Laws: A thief was condemned to double restitution; an usurer to quadruple. You may judge from this how much worse a citizen they deemed the usurer to be than the thief. And when they praised a worthy man, they spoke thus of him: 'that he was a good farmer, an excellent husbandman.' He that was commended in these terms, was thought to be praised enough."[2] And again speaking of a good husbandman, he says, "He should part with his old cattle, his weaned calves and lambs, his wool, his skins, his old carts and worn out irons, his old slaves, and his sick ones; and if he has got any thing else he does not want, let him sell it. A father of a family ought always to sell and never to buy." Dion says that a messenger summoned the patricians by name, but that the people were convened *by the blowing of a horn*.[3] But the splendid military government which soon grew up, gave both state employment and riches to that class once distinguished for their industry and frugality. Agriculture was abandoned to slaves, and men branded for crimes: it was no longer deemed an honourable employment. Luxury and habits of profusion made it necessary for conspicuous men to acquire the means of indulging in them, at the expense of principle and

patriotism. At length when sensual gratifications became dearer to a majority of the Romans than liberty, the republic was overthrown, and military despotism accomplished the circle of military influence; extinguished every spark of light and liberty; stripped the empire of its moral and physical power, and left it unmindful of its past glorious existence, to perish in a blind and helpless old age.

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born at Arpinum, a city of the Samnites, which had long enjoyed the freedom of Rome. His family was an ancient one, and of the equestrian order; which comprehended the most respectable gentry of the empire, who were only inferior in rank to the patricians. Having assumed the manly gown at his sixteenth year, he immediately began to acquire a knowledge of the laws of his country, under the two Scævolas, eminent persons of that day. The Marsian war, and the civil broils of Marius and Sylla, the former of whom was also a native of Arpinum, occurred during the prosecution of his civil studies; and although they gave some interruption to them, yet these violent contentions falling immediately under his observation, he became at an early period accustomed to consider the political situation of his country. These circumstances no doubt had some influence in deciding his future career; although the rare natural activity of his mind would perhaps have led him under any situation to the investigation of all moral and physical relations. Prompted by this impulse, he now began the study of Grecian philosophy under the learned Athenians who fled to Rome from the persecutions of Mithridates, and afterwards perfected himself in it under Molo the Rhodian; a man so

distinguished, that he was permitted to address the Roman Senate in the Greek tongue without an interpreter. About the age of twenty-six, with his mind filled with all the knowledge taught at that period, he first began to plead at the Forum. His celebrated successful defence of S. Roscius was made soon after, in which he braved, what the other Roman orators had not dared to do, the resentment of Sylla. By this bold measure, the generosity of his character, as well as the force of his talents, were developed, and his reputation established as the most powerful orator of Rome. He visited Athens not long after this period, partly to avoid the displeasure of Sylla, and partly to renew the study of philosophy, which he here pursued with great ardour. His friend Atticus, who was at Athens at the same time, had embraced the Epicurean doctrines; but Cicero appears at this early period to have believed in a future state; a doctrine which at a later period he has most eloquently recorded in his celebrated Dream of Scipio. At the end of two years, he returned to Rome, greatly improved by his intercourse with the philosophers and orators of Greece and Asia.

In his thirty-first year, and not long after his marriage, he was elected to the quæstorship, which opened his way to the Senate. One of the provinces of Sicily fell to him by lot, and he exercised his quæstorial functions with such moderation and ability, as to induce the Sicilians to confer extraordinary honours upon him at the termination of his year; when he returned to Rome, determined henceforward to withdraw himself as little as possible from the eyes of the Roman people. In his thirty-seventh year he received the

unanimous suffrages of all the tribes for the edileship, which introduced him into the magistracy. The exhibition of the shows and games, which was the province of the ediles, was conducted by Cicero with great satisfaction to the people, and without injuring materially his own private fortune. In this he achieved a difficult point, which marks his great prudence and address. So great had the affection of the people now become for him, that at three different elections for prætor, he was each time placed at the head of the list by the unanimous vote of all the centuries. In his forty-third year, having been very diligent in strengthening his interest, he became a candidate for the consulship with others; among whom were L. Sergius Cataline: but such was his popularity that he was saluted consul by acclamation of the people before the votes were counted. He received also a strong support from the patricians, who had uniformly been opposed to his advancement; but Cicero's reputation for knowledge and probity was so great, and the times were becoming so critical, that they deemed the government safe in his hands. The patricians at this time were of the faction of Sylla, to which also Cataline belonged: and the Tribunes and the people were of the Marian faction; at the head of which was Julius Cæsar, a near relation to Marius. Although Cæsar, and Cicero were both on the popular side, yet they were not united upon any common principles of order. Cæsar was always individually opposed to him: and when Cicero being consul, was endeavouring in the senate to bring the associates of Cataline to punishment; Cæsar defended them, and even indirectly encouraged their cause, by declaring his disbelief in the immortality of the soul. The

suppression of this conspiracy of Cataline, Cethegus, Lentulus and many others, among whom Cæsar was generally numbered, raised the reputation of Cicero to the greatest height. By his incessant vigilance, Rome was saved from the horrors of a general massacre and pillage. The greatest honours were paid him by the senate and equestrian order: and for the first time the sublime epithet of “Father of his Country” was addressed to a Roman citizen in the senate, in the person of Cicero.[4] This great action of his life he most feelingly alludes to in the introduction to his first book of the Republic. “Nor is my name forgotten,” &c. The feelings too which the circumstances attending the very last act of his consulship excited in him, are eloquently pourtrayed in a passage immediately following. It was the custom for the consul at the expiration of his office, to make a speech in the assembly of the people, and to swear that he had executed his duties with fidelity. When he was already in the rostra, and was about to address the whole people assembled on this interesting occasion; Metellus, a new tribune, prompted by the officious spirit of popular authority, which often delights to mortify the great and good, forbade the consul to address the people, alleging that Cicero having caused Lentulus and the rest to suffer death without being heard in their defence, did not deserve to be heard himself. Whereat with an enthusiastic presence of mind peculiar to himself, he swore with a loud voice that he had saved the republic: and the multitude moved by a generous feeling which the demagogues had no time to tamper with, more than atoned to him for the intended affront from their tribune, by a simultaneous shout that he