

of the Senate and the people. The real contest lay between Catiline and Cicero. Catiline was of high birth, a patrician; he was a genial, good-natured fellow with everyone, and though Cicero might get a majority of the people, the Senatorial power would be against him. But there was one recommendation Cicero had in his favour—he was a man of good morals, of well-known integrity and honesty. The other candidates had no such merit. They were both worthless, dishonest men; known as frequenters of the vilest haunts in the city; profligate and dissolute in every way,—especially Catiline, pictures of whose enormities are cleverly and scathingly drawn by Cicero himself. To the lasting honour of the Roman State be it said that this turned the scale. The Senate thought that they might stand one consul of depraved habits, but two would be subversive of all decency and order, and even dangerous to the State. Here is an instance, then, in which virtue was its own reward. The Senate gave Catiline the cold shoulder, and threw all its influence in favour of Cicero, who, with its power and the great hold he had upon the affections of the people, was returned triumphantly at the head of the poll, outstripping, to the surprise of all, even Antonius. It has been said that Cicero was not altogether above blame in this election—that he made a corrupt proposal to Antonius that if he would use his influence with the Senate in his favour against Catiline he would in turn give Antonius a rich Province at the termination of their year of office for him to plunder and fleece. This may be so. We can scarcely answer for what men will sometimes do to procure an election, especially when that is to be the one great election of their life. Cicero lived in an atmosphere of corruption. The taint of it was on every side of him. He

may have thought that by procuring his election he would save the State from the foul clutches of a monster like Catiline, and the subtle argument that the “end justifies the means” may have prevailed with him. It may have been so, though there is no proof, and it does not seem likely that one profligate aristocrat would desert another for the purpose of befriending a powerful upstart so honest that no hope of peculation or rapine could be entertained with him as a colleague. Sure of his own election, it would certainly seem more likely, on the plea that “birds of a feather flock together,” that he would choose Catiline rather than Cicero—for the rich province, in the end, would be his all the same.

At all events, the dear object of Cicero's life was attained. He had risen honourably through the successive steps of *quæstor*, *ædile*, *prætor*, till the grand consular robe graced his form, and the high rank gave dignity and power to his eloquent tongue. But the sudden and generous support of the Senate threw Cicero somewhat on the horns of a dilemma. He was alike beholden to them and to the people—*i.e.*, we may say, to Conservatives and Reformers; and if at times Cicero seemed now to favour one and now another—in a word, to be, to some extent, a time server, we must remember that he owed a debt of gratitude to both parties. I do not think Cicero was ever a strong party man. Some never can be party men; their ideas are too generous—their grasp of intellect too wide. They see good measures on both sides. They love their country more than their party, and therefore pet names are called them sometimes—“time servers,” “weathercocks,” “trimmers,” and all that. Still we all honour men who will at times rise above party and exclaim, “It is not that I love my party less, but my country more.”