



***GAIUS SALLUSTIUS
CRISPUS***

***CONSPIRACY
OF CATILINE***

Gaius Sallustius Crispus

Conspiracy of Catiline

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I

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It becomes all men, who desire to excel other animals, to strive, to the utmost of their power, not to pass through life in obscurity, like the beasts of the field, which nature has formed groveling and subservient to appetite. All our power is situated in the mind and in the body. Of the mind we rather employ the government; of the body, the service. The one is common to us with the gods; the other with the brutes. It appears to me, therefore, more reasonable to pursue glory by means of the intellect than of bodily strength, and, since the life which we enjoy is short, to make the remembrance of us as lasting as possible. For the glory of wealth and beauty is fleeting and perishable; that of intellectual power is illustrious and immortal.

Yet it was long a subject of dispute among mankind, whether military efforts were more advanced by strength of body, or by force of intellect. For, in affairs of war, it is necessary to plan before beginning to act, and, after planning, to act with promptitude and vigor. Thus, each being insufficient of itself, the one requires the assistance of the other.

II

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In early times, accordingly, kings (for that was the first title of sovereignty in the world) applied themselves in different ways; some exercised the mind, others the body. At

that period, however, the life of man was passed without covetousness; every one was satisfied with his own. But after Cyrus in Asia, and the Lacedaemonians and Athenians in Greece, began to subjugate cities and nations, to deem the lust of dominion a reason for war, and to imagine the greatest glory to be in the most extensive empire, it was then at length discovered, by proof and experience, that mental power has the greatest effect in military operations. And, indeed, if the intellectual ability of kings and magistrates were exerted to the same degree in peace as in war, human affairs would be more orderly and settled, and you would not see governments shifted from hand to hand, and things universally changed and confused. For dominion is easily secured by those qualities by which it was at first obtained. But when sloth has introduced itself in the place of industry, and covetousness and pride in that of moderation and equity, the fortune of a state is altered together with its morals; and thus authority is always transferred from the less to the more deserving.

Even in agriculture, in navigation, and in architecture, whatever man performs owns the dominion of intellect. Yet many human beings, resigned to sensuality and indolence, uninstructed and unimproved, have passed through life like travelers in a strange country; to whom, certainly, contrary to the intention of nature, the body was a gratification, and the mind a burden. Of these I hold the life and death in equal estimations, for silence is maintained concerning both. But he only, indeed, seems to me to live, and to enjoy life, who, intent upon some employment, seeks reputation from some ennobling enterprise, or honorable pursuit.