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Cicero: Letters To Atticus: Volume II



Synopsis

This second volume of Cicero's Letters to Atticus embraces one of the most important epochs in Roman history, the fall of the Republic in the struggle between Pompey and Caesar. The storm which had long been brewing broke just as Cicero returned from Cilicia over the question of Caesar's resignation of office. By the agreement made in 56 B.C. Caesar's governorship of Gaul was renewed for five years and he was then to be re-elected to the consulship in 48 B.C. As the renewal dated from March 1, 54 B.C., his term of office would naturally expire on March 1, 49 B.C.: but according to the rule in vogue at the time of the reappointment he would not be superseded until Jan. 1, 48 B.C., the date on which he would enter on the consulship. He would therefore hold office continually, and his enemies, the Senatorial party, would have no chance of bringing a prosecution against him, which might be fatal to his career. But in 52 B.C. they had induced Pompey to bring forward a new law by which ex-magistrates did not proceed to a province as soon as their office ended but after an interval of five years. Consequently for the next five years special appointments had to be made by the Senate – for example Cicero's appointment to Cilicia – and, as they could be made at any time, it would be perfectly easy to supersede Caesar on March 1, 49, and secure his prosecution, condemnation and downfall before he could enter on the consulship.

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