

51 BC

**SPEECH IN BEHALF OF MARCUS
CLAUDIUS MARCELLUS**

Marcus Tullius Cicero

translated by Charles Duke Yonge, A.B.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius (106-43 BC) - Rome's greatest orator, philosopher, and rhetorician, he developed a style of speaking that was emulated for centuries thereafter. Cicero was influential in the development of Latin as more than just a utilitarian language. **Speech in Behalf of Marcus Claudius Marcellus (51 BC)** - This speech was written to thank Caesar for his magnanimity in pardoning Marcellus who had made a motion in the senate to strip Caesar of his power.

THE ARGUMENT

Marcus Claudius Marcellus was descended from the most illustrious families at Rome, and had been consul with Servius Sulpicius Rufus; in which office he had given great offence to Caesar by making a motion in the Senate to deprive him of his command; and in the civil war he espoused the side of Pompeius, and had been present at the battle of Pharsalia, after which he retired to Lesbos. But after some time the whole Senate interceded with Caesar to pardon him, and to allow him to return to his country. And when he yielded to their entreaties, Cicero made the following speech, thanking Caesar for his magnanimity; though he had, as he says himself (Ep. Fam. iv. 4), determined to say nothing; but he was afraid that if he continued silent Caesar would interpret it as a proof that he despaired of the republic.

Caesar, though he saw the Senate unanimous in their petition for Marcellus, yet had the motion for his pardon put to the vote, and called for the opinion of every individual senator on it. Cicero appears at this time to have believed that Caesar intended to restore the republic, as he mentions in his letters (Ep. Fam. xiii. 68).

SPEECH IN BEHALF OF MARCUS CLAUDIUS MARCELLUS

THIS day, O conscript fathers, has brought with it an end to the long silence in which I have of late indulged; not out of any fear, but partly from sorrow, partly from modesty; and at the same time it has revived in me my ancient habit of saying what my wishes and opinions are. For I cannot by any means pass over in silence such great humanity, such unprecedented and unheard-of clemency, such moderation in the exercise of supreme and universal power, such incredible and almost godlike wisdom. For now that Marcus Marcellus, O conscript fathers, has been restored to you and the republic, I think that not only his voice and authority are preserved and restored to you and to the republic, but my own also.

For I was concerned, O conscript fathers, and most exceedingly grieved, when I saw such a man as he is, who had espoused the same cause which I myself had, not enjoying the same good fortune as myself; nor was I able to persuade myself to think it right or fair that I should be going on in my usual routine, while that rival and imitator of my zeal and labors, who had been a companion and comrade of mine throughout, was separated from me. Therefore, you, O Caius Caesar, have reopened to me my former habits of life, which were closed up, and you have raised, as it were, a standard to all these men, as a sort of token to lead them to entertain hopes of the general welfare of the republic. For it was seen by me before in many instances, and especially in my own, and now it is clearly under-

stood by everybody, since you have granted Marcus Marcellus to the Senate and people of Rome, in spite of your recollection of all the injuries you have received at his hands, that you prefer the authority of this order and the dignity of the republic to the indulgence of your own resentment or your own suspicions.

He, indeed, has this day reaped the greatest possible reward for the virtuous tenor of his previous life; in the great unanimity of the Senate in his favor, and also in your own most dignified and important opinion of him. And from this you, in truth, must perceive what great credit there is in conferring a kindness, when there is such glory to be got even by receiving one. And he, too, is fortunate whose safety is now the cause of scarcely less joy to all other men than it will be to himself when he is informed of it. And this honor was deservedly and most rightfully fallen to his lot. For who is superior to him either in nobleness of birth, or in honesty, or in zeal for virtuous studies, or in purity of life, or in any description whatever of excellence?

No one is blessed with such a stream of genius, no one is endowed with such vigor and richness of eloquence, either as a speaker, or as a writer, as to be able, I will not say to extol, but even, O Caius Caesar, plainly to relate all your achievements. Nevertheless, I assert, and with your leave I maintain, that in all of them you never gained greater and truer glory than you have acquired this day. I am accustomed often to keep this idea before my eyes, and often to affirm in frequent conversations, that all the exploits of our own generals, all those of foreign nations and of most powerful states, all the mighty deeds of the most illustrious

monarchs, can be compared with yours neither in the magnitude of your wars, nor in the number of your battles, nor in the variety of countries which you have conquered, nor in the rapidity of your conquests, nor in the great difference of character with which your wars have been marked; and that those countries the most remote from each other could not be travelled over more rapidly by anyone in a journey, than they have been visited by your, I will not say, journeys, but victories. And if I were not to admit, that those actions are so great that scarcely any man's mind or comprehension is capable of doing justice to them, I should be very senseless. But there are other actions greater than those. For some people are in the habit of disparaging military glory, and of denying the whole if it to the generals, and of giving the multitude a share of it also, so that it may not be the peculiar property of the commanders. And, no doubt, in the affairs of war, the valor of the troops, the advantages of situation, the assistance of allies, fleets, and supplies, have great influence; and a most important share in all such transactions, Fortune claims for herself, as of her right; and whatever has been done successfully she considers almost entirely as her own work.

But in this glory, O Caius Caesar, which you have just earned, you have no partner. The whole of this, however great it may be- and surely it is as great as possible- the whole of it, I say, is your own. The centurion can claim for himself no share of that praise, neither can the prefect, nor the battalion, nor the squadron. Nay, even that very mistress of all human affairs, Fortune herself, cannot thrust herself into any participation in that glory; she yields to you; she confesses that it

is all your own, your peculiar private desert. For rashness is never united with wisdom, nor is chance ever admitted to regulate affairs conducted with prudence.

You have subdued nations, savage in their barbarism, countless in their numbers, boundless, if we regard the extent of country peopled by them, and rich in every kind of resource; but still you were only conquering things, the nature and condition of which was such that they could be overcome by force. For there is no strength so great that it cannot be weakened and broken by arms and violence. But to subdue one's inclinations, to master one's angry feelings, to be moderate in the hour of victory, to not merely raise from the ground a prostrate adversary, eminent for noble birth, for genius, and for virtue, but even to increase his previous dignity- they are actions of such a nature, that the man who does them, I do not compare to the most illustrious man, but I consider equal to God.

Therefore, O Caius Caesar, those military glory of yours will be celebrated not only in our own literature and language, but in those of almost all nations; nor is there any age which will ever be silent about your praises. But still, deeds of that sort, somehow or other, even when they are read, appear to be overwhelmed with the cries of the soldiers and the sound of the trumpets. But when we hear or read of anything which has been done with clemency, with humanity, with justice, with moderation, and with wisdom, especially in a time of anger, which is very adverse to prudence, and in the hour of victory, which is naturally insolent and haughty, with what ardor are we then inflamed (even if the actions are not such as have really been performed, but are only fabulous), so as often to love those

whom we have never seen! But as for you, whom we behold present among us, whose mind, and feelings, and countenance, we at this moment see to be such, that you wish to preserve everything which the fortune of war has left to the republic, oh, with what praises must we extol you? with what zeal must we follow you? with what affection must we devote ourselves to you? The very walls, I declare, the very walls of this senate-house appear to me eager to return you thanks; because, in a short time, you will have restored their ancient authority to this venerable abode of themselves and of their ancestors.

In truth, O conscript fathers, when I just now, in common with you, beheld the tears of Caius Marcellus, a most virtuous man, endowed with a never-to-be-forgotten affection for his brother, the recollection of all the Marcelli presented itself to my heart. For you, O Caesar, have, by preserving Marcus Marcellus, restored their dignity even to those Marcelli who are dead, and you have saved that most noble family, now reduced to a small number, from perishing. You, therefore, justly prefer this day to all the splendid and innumerable congratulations which at different times have been addressed to you. For this exploit is your own alone; the other achievements which have been performed by you as general, were great indeed, but still they were performed by the agency of a great and numerous band of comrades. But in this exploit you are the general, and you are your own sole comrade: and the act itself is such that no lapse of time will ever put an end to your monuments and trophies; for there is nothing which is wrought by manual labor which time will not sometime or other impair or destroy; but this

justice and lenity of yours will every day grow brighter and brighter, so that, in proportion as time takes away from the effect of your deed, in the same degree it will add to your glory. And you had already surpassed all other conquerors in civil wars, in equity, and clemency, but this day you have surpassed even yourself. I fear this which I am saying cannot, when it is only heard, be understood as fully as I myself think and feel it; you appear to have surpassed victory itself, since you have remitted in favor of the conquered those things which victory had put in your power. For though by the conditions of the victory itself, we who were conquered were all ruined, we still have been preserved by the deliberate decision of your clemency. You, therefore, deserve to be the only man who is never conquered, since you conquer the conditions and the violent privileges of victory itself. And, O conscript fathers, remark how widely this decision of Caius Caesar extends. For by it, all of us who, under the compulsion of some miserable and fatal destiny of the republic, were driven to take up arms as we did, though we are still not free from the fault of having erred as men may, are at all events released from all imputation of wickedness. For when, at your entreaty, he preserved Marcus Marcellus to the republic, he, at the same time, restored me to myself and to the republic though no one entreated him in my favor, and he restored all the other most honorable men who were in the same case to ourselves and to their country; whom you now behold in numbers and dignity present in this very assembly. He has not brought his enemies into the senate-house; but he has decided that the war was undertaken by most of them rather out of ignorance, and because

of some ungrounded and empty fear, than out of either any depraved desires or cruelty.

And in that war, I always thought it right to listen to all proposals that gave any hope of peace, and I always grieved, that not only peace, but that even the language of those citizens who asked for peace, should be rejected. For I never approved of either that or of any civil war whatever; and my counsels were always allied to peace and peaceful measures, not to war and arms. I followed the man from my own private feelings, not because of my judgment of his public conduct; and the faithful recollection of the grateful disposition which I cherish had so much influence with me, that though I had not only no desire for victory, but no hope even of it, I rushed on, knowingly, and with my eyes open, as it were, to a voluntary death. And, indeed, my sentiments in the matter were not at all concealed; for in this assembly, before any decisive steps were taken either way, I said many things in favor of peace, and even while the war was going on I retained the same opinions, even at the risk of my life. And from this fact, no one will form so unjust an opinion as to doubt what Caesar's own inclination respecting the war was, when, the moment that it was in his power, he declared his opinion in favor of saving the advisers of peace, but showed his anger against the others. And, perhaps, that was not very strange at a time when the event of the war was still uncertain, and its fortune still undecided. But he who, when victorious, attaches himself to the advisers of peace, plainly declares that he would have preferred having no war at all even to conquering.

And in this matter I myself am a witness in favor of Marcus Marcellus. For as our opinions have at all times agreed in time of peace, so did they then in respect of that war. How often have I seen him affected with the deepest grief at the insolence of certain men, and dreading also the ferocity of victory! On which account your liberality, O Caius Caesar, ought to be more acceptable to us who have seen those things. For now we may compare, not the causes of the two parties together, but the use which each would have made of victory. We have seen your victory terminated at once by the result of your battles; we have seen no sword un-sheathed in the city. The citizens whom we have lost were stricken down by the force of Mars, not by evil feelings let loose by victory; so that no man can doubt that Caius Caesar would even raise many from the dead if that were possible, since he does preserve all those of that army that he can.

But of the other party I will say no more than what we were all afraid of at the time, namely, that theirs would have been too angry a victory. For some of them were in the habit of indulging in threats not only against those of their enemies who were in arms, but even against those who remained quiet; and they used to say that the matter to be considered was not what each man had thought, but where he had been. So that it appears to me that the immortal gods, even if they were inflicting punishment on the Roman people for some offense, when they stirred up so serious and melancholy a civil war, are at length appeased, or at all events satiated, and have now made all our hopes of safety depend on the clemency and wisdom of the conqueror.

Rejoice, then, in that admirable and virtuous disposition of yours; and enjoy not only your fortune and glory, but also your own natural good qualities, and amiable inclinations and manners; for those are the things which produce the greatest fruit and pleasure to a wise man. When you call to mind your other achievements, although you will often congratulate yourself on your valor, still you will often have reason to thank your good fortune also. But as often as you think of us whom you have chosen to live safely in the republic as well as yourself, you will be thinking at the same time of your own exceeding kindness, of your own incredible liberality, of your own unexampled wisdom; qualities which I will venture to call not only the greatest, but the only real blessings. For there is so much splendor in genuine glory, so much dignity in magnanimity and real practical wisdom, that these qualities appear to be given to a man by virtue, while all other advantages seem only lent to him by fortune.

Be not wearied then in the preservation of virtuous men; especially of those who have fallen, not from any evil desires, or depravity of disposition, but merely from an opinion of their duty- a foolish and erroneous one perhaps, but certainly not a wicked one- and because they were misled by imaginary claims which they fancied the republic had on them. For it is no fault of yours if some people were afraid of you; and, on the other hand, it is your greatest praise that they have now felt that they had no reason to fear you. But now I come to those severe complaints, and to those most terrible suspicions that you have given utterance to; of dangers which should be guarded against not more by you yourself than by all the

citizens, and most especially by us who have been preserved by you. And although I trust that the suspicion is an ungrounded one, still I will not speak so as to make light of it. For caution for you is caution for ourselves. So that, if we must err on one side or the other, I would rather appear too fearful, than not sufficiently prudent. But still, who is there so frantic? Anyone of your own friends? And yet who are more your friends than those to whom you have restored safety which they did not venture to hope for? Anyone of that number who were with you? It is not credible that any man should be so insane as not to prefer the life of that man who was his general when he obtained the greatest advantages of all sorts, to his own. But if your friends have no thoughts of wickedness, need you take precautions lest your enemies may be entertaining such? Who are they? For all those men who were your enemies have either already lost their lives through their obstinacy, or else have preserved them through your mercy; so that either none of your enemies survive, or those who do survive are your most devoted friends. But still, as there are so many hiding-places and so many dark corners in men's minds, let us increase your suspicions, for by so doing we shall at the same time increase your diligence. For who is there so ignorant of everything, so very new to the affairs of the republic, so entirely destitute of thought either for his own or for the general safety, as not to understand that his own safety is bound up with yours? that the lives of all men depend on your single existence? I myself, in truth, while I think of you day and night- as I ought to do- fear only the chances to which all men are liable, and the uncertain events of health and the frail tenure of our common nature, and I grieve that, while the republic ought to be immortal,

it depends wholly on the life of one mortal man. But if to the chances of human life and the uncertain condition of man's health there were to be added also any conspiracy of wickedness and treachery, then what god should we think able to assist the republic, even if he were to desire to do so?

All things, O Caius Caesar, which you now see lying stricken and prostrate- as it was inevitable that they should be- through the violence of war, must now be raised up again by you alone. The courts of justice must be reestablished, confidence must be restored, licentiousness must be repressed, the increase of population must be encouraged, everything which has become lax and disordered must be braced up and strengthened by strict laws. In so vast a civil war, when there was such ardor of feeling and of warlike preparation on both sides, it was impossible but that- whatever the ultimate result of the war might be- the republic which had been violently shaken by it should lose many ornaments of its dignity and many bulwarks of its security, and that each general should do many things while in arms, which he would have forbidden to have been done while clad in the garb of peace. And all those wounds of war thus inflicted now require your attention, and there is no one except you who is able to heal them. Therefore, I was concerned when I heard that celebrated and wise saying of yours, "I have lived long enough to satisfy either nature or glory." Sufficiently long, if you please, for nature, and I will add, if you like, for glory; but, which is of the greatest consequence of all, certainly not long enough for your country.

Give up then, I entreat you, that wisdom of learned men shown in their contempt of death; do not be wise at our expense. For it has often come to my ears that you are in the habit of using that expression much too frequently- that you have lived long enough for yourself. I dare say you have; but I could only be willing to hear you say so if you lived for yourself alone, or if you had been born for yourself alone. But as it is, as your exploits have brought the safety of all the citizens and the entire republic to a dependence on you, you are so far from having completed your greatest labors, that you have not even laid the foundations which you design to lay. And will you then limit your life, not by the welfare of the republic, but by the tranquillity of your own mind? What will you do, if that is not even sufficient for your glory, of which- wise men though you be- you will not deny that you are exceedingly desirous? "Is it then," you will say, "but small glory that we shall leave behind us?" It may, indeed, be sufficient for others, however many they may be, and insufficient for you alone. For whatever it is, however ample it may be, it certainly is insufficient, as long as there is anything greater still. And if, O Caius Caesar, this was to be the result of your immortal achievements, that after conquering all your enemies, you were to leave the republic in the state in which it now is; then beware, I beg of you, lest your virtue should earn admiration rather than solid glory; since the glory which is illustrious and which is celebrated abroad, is the fame of many and great services done either to one's own friends, or to one's country, or to the whole race of mankind.

This, then, is the part which remains to you; this is the cause which you have before you; this is what you must now labor at- to settle the republic, and to enjoy it yourself, as the first of its citizens, in the greatest tranquillity and peacefulness. And then, if you please, when you have discharged the obligations which you owe to your country, and when you have satisfied nature herself with the devotion of your life, then you may say that you have lived long enough. For what is the meaning of this very word “long” when applied to what has an end? And when the end comes, then all past pleasure is to be accounted as nothing, because there is none to come after it. Although that spirit of yours has never been content with this narrow space which nature has afforded us to live in; but has always been inflamed with a desire of immortality. Nor is this to be considered your life which is contained in your body and in your breath. That- that, I say, is your life, which will flourish in the memory of all ages; which posterity will cherish; which eternity itself will always preserve. This is what you must be subservient to; it is to this that you ought to display yourself; which indeed has long ago had many actions of yours to admire, and which now is expecting some which it may also praise.

Unquestionably, posterity will stand amazed when they hear and read of your military commands; of the provinces which you have added to the empire; of the Rhine, of the ocean, of the Nile, all made subject to us; of your countless battles, of your incredible victories, of your innumerable monuments and triumphs. But unless this city is now securely settled by your counsels and by your institutions,

your name will indeed be talked about very extensively, but your glory will have no secure abode, no sure home in which to repose. There will be also among those who shall be born hereafter, as there has been among us, great disputes, when some with their praises will extol your exploits to the skies, and others, perhaps, will miss something in them- and that, too, the most important thing of all- unless you extinguish the conflagration of civil war by the safety of the country, so that the one shall appear to have been the effect of destiny and the other the work of your own practical wisdom. Have regard, then, to those judges who will judge you many ages afterward, and who will very likely judge you more honestly than we can. For their judgment will be unbiased by affection or by ambition, and at the same time it will be untainted by hatred or by envy. And even if it will be incapable of affecting you at that time (which is the false opinion held by some men), at all events, it concerns you now to conduct yourself in such a manner that no oblivion shall ever be able to obscure your praises.

The inclinations of the citizens have been very diverse, and their opinions much distracted; for we showed our variance, not only by our counsels and desires, but by arms and warlike operations. And there was no obscurity in the designs of, and contention between, the most illustrious generals: many doubted which was the best side; many, what was expedient for themselves; many, what was becoming; some even felt uncertain as to what it was in their power to do. The republic has at last come to the end of this miserable and fatal war; that man has been victorious who has not allowed his animosities to be inflamed by good

fortune, but who has mitigated them by the goodness of his disposition; and who did not consider all those with whom he was displeased deserving on that account of exile or of death. Arms were laid aside by some, were wrested from the hands of others. He is an ungrateful and an unjust citizen, who, when released from the danger of arms, still retains, as it were, an armed spirit, so that that man is better who fell in battle, who spent his life in the cause. For that which seems obstinacy to some people may appear constancy in others. But now all dissension is crushed by the arms and extinguished by the justice of the conqueror; it only remains for all men for the future to be animated by one wish, all at least who have not only any wisdom at all, but who are at all in their senses. Unless you, O Caius Caesar, continue safe, and also in the same sentiments as you have displayed on previous occasions, and on this day most eminently, we can not be safe either. Wherefore we all- we who wish this constitution and these things around us to be safe- exhort and entreat you to take care of your own life, to consult your own safety; and we all promise to you (that I may say also on behalf of others what I feel respecting myself), since you think that there is still something concealed, against which it is necessary to guard- we promise you, I say, not only our vigilance and our wariness also to assist in those precautions, but we promise to oppose our sides and our bodies as a shield against every danger which can threaten you.

But let my speech end with the same sentiment as it began. We all, O Caius Caesar, render you the greatest thanks, and we feel even deeper gratitude that we express; for all feel the same thing, as you might have perceived from the entreat-

ies and tears of all. But because it is not necessary for all of them to stand up and say so, they wish it at all events that by me, who am forced in some degree to rise and speak, should be expressed both all that they feel, and all that is becoming, and all that I myself consider due to Marcus Marcellus, who is thus by you restored to this order, and to the Roman people, and to the republic. For I feel that all men are exulting, not in the safety of one individual alone, but in the general safety of all. And as it becomes the greatest possible affection, such as I was always well known by all men to have toward him, so that I scarcely yielded to Caius Marcellus, his most excellent and affectionate brother, and certainly to no one except him, that love for him which I displayed by my solicitude, by my anxiety, and my exertions, as long as there was a doubt of his safety, I certainly ought to display at this present time, now that I am relieved from my great care and distress and misery on his account.

Therefore, O Caius Caesar, I thank you, as if- though I have not only been preserved in every sort of manner, but also loaded with distinctions by you- still, by this action of yours, a crowning kindness of the greatest importance was added to the already innumerable benefits which you have heaped upon me, which I did not before believe were capable of any augmentation.

THE END OF SPEECH IN BEHALF OF MARCUS CLAUDIUS MARCELLUS