

CICERO AND THE ROMAN CIVIC SPIRIT IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND EARLY RENAISSANCE.¹

BY HANS BARON, PH.D.,

FORMERLY LECTURER IN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN.

WHSOEVER studies the influence of Cicero on later generations, will be surprised by the variety of effects which were produced in history by this one figure. Although modern scholars have frequently investigated this influence, important aspects of it have as yet remained undiscovered.

During the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance, one of these aspects was that of Cicero as a Roman statesman who lived his life in the service of the 'Respublica', and wrote his literary works in order to create a culture and a practical philosophy suitable to citizens in the midst of an active life. Although in the modern descriptions of medieval and Renaissance culture this part of Cicero's influence is scarcely mentioned,² knowledge of it is indispensable for a correct interpretation of humanism.

In the course of history there has perhaps been no other philosophic writer whose thinking was as closely connected with the exigencies of civic life as that of Cicero. When the Roman Empire came into contact with the culture of the Hellenistic world, a tendency prevailed in Greek philosophy to seek the inner independence of the 'sage' through tranquil studies in a private existence, far from the cares of public life. In Cicero's

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² This is even true of the two most important works on Cicero's influence, Th. Zielinski, *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte*, 4th ed., Leipzig, 1929; and A. Hortis, 'M. T. Cicerone nelle opere del Petrarca e del Boccaccio', in *Archeografo Triestino*, N.S. vol. VI, 1879-80.

days, amid the confusion of the endless civil wars, many Romans were anxious to learn from Greek philosophy that there was another worthy life to be led, besides that of a politically minded Roman citizen. It was Cicero's work as a writer to counteract this development in Rome. His ethics recalled citizens to public life. He set himself the task of adapting the Greek spirit of philosophical investigation to the needs of Roman citizens who did not turn away from public work and political action.

All the expressions of a politically minded philosophy which could be found in Greek literature, in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Dicaearchus and Panaitios, were carefully collected in Cicero's writings. Whenever it was possible, they were given a Roman setting. Corresponding utterances were frequently ascribed to the Great Romans of the past. In *De Republica* and in the *Tusculans* Cicero attributes to the elder Brutus and to the Pontifex maximus Scipio Nasica these words: 'The sage is never a private individual' ('numquam privatum esse sapientem'); 'when the liberty of the citizens is at stake, nobody can remain a private person'. In *De Officiis* 'prudentia', the virtue fundamental to a life of contemplation and scholarship, is described as inferior to 'iustitia', 'fortitudo' and 'moderatio', the virtues of active life. Whoever thinks it to be the duty of a philosopher to disdain civic ambition for honours in the army and the state, does not deserve admiration but blame. It may be that a man who withdraws from public activities for the sake of studies and literary work sometimes leads a valuable life. But 'more fruitful to mankind, and more suitable to greatness and renown', so runs the Roman creed of *De Officiis*, 'are the lives of those who apply themselves to statecraft and to great enterprises'. Such passages were read together with the famous words in the *Somnium Scipionis*, in which Cicero says that 'nothing on this earth is more agreeable to the God who rules the Universe, than the "concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati quae civitates appellantur"'.¹ All these expressions of Cicero's Roman thought were to leave a deep impression on the minds of later generations.

¹ *De Rep.* II, 25, 46; *Tusc.* IV, 23, 51; *De Off.* I, 6, 19; I, 21, 70-71; *De Rep. (Somn. Scip.)*, VI, 13.

The study of philosophy could only be justified in Roman eyes in the light of the interpretation that intellectual work was in itself 'activity', and that it led to an exertion of human energy no less than the activity of civic life. Such a conception of intellectual work was by no means incompatible with the spirit of Greek philosophy. Among the early followers of Aristotle there had already been a dispute on the respective merits of contemplative and active life. Theophrastus, wishing to extol contemplation, had formulated the impressive paradox that the sage is never less lonely than in solitude. In solitude his intellect comes into contact with the wise men of all times; while he is far from human companionship, he is near to God.¹ In Rome, Scipio Africanus Maior was said to have used the same paradox to justify his own leisure after his great political deeds. In Cicero's *De Republica* this paradox is the key to the true Roman 'otium'. 'He was never less alone than when he was alone', says Scipio Africanus of himself in *De Republica*, he 'never did more than when he was doing nothing'.² From this Cicero concluded at that time that Scipio, the great statesman, had found in philosophic studies in solitude a new source of highest intellectual activity.

But Cicero continued to probe the problem of this active Roman leisure. Ten years later, in *De Officiis*, he achieved another explanation of Scipio's paradox and gave it the form in which it was known to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when for many centuries *De Republica* was lost. The Cicero of *De Officiis* perceived that the victor of Zama could not have

¹ 'Sapiens autem numquam solus esse potest. Habet secum omnes qui sunt, qui umquam fuerunt boni, et animum liberum quocumque vult transfert. Quod corpore non potest, cogitatione complectitur. Et si hominum inopia fuerit, loquitur cum Deo. Numquam minus solus erit, quam cum solus erit.' These ideas of Theophrastus have been preserved in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, cf. p. 79 n. 3 below. That Scipio's paradox, handed down by Cicero (and by Cato before him, in Cato's *Origines*), was suggested by Theophrastus is obvious. It is sufficient to compare Cicero's text (cf. next note) with the words of Theophrastus in the form given to them by Jerome, and to remember that Cicero was familiar with the dispute between Theophrastus and Dicaearchus as to the respective merits of 'vita activa' and 'vita contemplativa'.

² *De Rep.* I, 17, 27 ('Africanum . . . scribit Cato solitum esse dicere . . . de se . . . numquam se plus agere, quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse, quam cum solus esset').

pursued literary aims in his 'otium'. If he attained to highest activity in solitude, this could only mean that he devoted his 'otium' to consideration of the vast plans which guided him in building up the Roman Empire. 'In otio de negotio cogitabat.' Cicero himself, in his long enforced 'otium' during the civil wars, did indeed lead a life of literary activity in the solitude of his country-house. But he could boast that he had not used this solitude merely to gain forgetfulness of his unhappy fate or inner quietude through contemplation. The chief task of his 'otium' had been the work of a Roman citizen for Rome. He had laid the foundations of a Latin literature, preparing the Empire of the Latin language, after statesmen had built up the political Empire of Rome. He now proudly compared his literary Roman 'otium' with the statesman-like 'otium' of Scipio. 'Leisure and solitude', he said, referring to Scipio's paradox, 'which serve to make others idle, in Scipio's case acted as a goad.' He wanted his readers to understand that they had also acted as a goad in his own literary work for Rome.¹

He wanted them to see that he himself had fulfilled the ideals he had set up in his early writings. In *De Legibus* he had already looked upon it as his own task 'to bring learning out of the gloomy depths of the studies and out of scholarly leisure, not merely into the sunlight and the dust, but also into the fighting line and the centre of the conflict'. In *De Oratore* he had shown in the figures of the great Romans of the past what culture could mean to a citizen in the midst of his daily life. Cato Censorius was here described as the type of a citizen who knew how to unite theory and practice, private and public interests. Legal studies did not prevent him from being a busy lawyer; private business never alienated him from his duties as an orator in the Forum or as a member of the Senate. Marcus Crassus, the leading speaker in the dialogue, had never discontinued his activity in the law courts for theoretical studies, and had yet attained an exceptional degree of intellectual development. He sets up as a model the citizen 'who does not impress others as

¹ *De Off.* III, 1, 1-4 ('... numquam se minus otiosum esse, quam cum otiosus, nec minus solum, quam cum solus esset'. 'Ita duae res, quae languorem adferunt ceteris, illum acuebant, otium et solitudo.')

pursuing philosophical studies, and yet is studying'. This, indeed, was and remained Cicero's own highest ideal of civic culture. When, in later years, he defended himself against those who questioned his ability for philosophic work after a life-long political career, he boasted that he too 'had been studying philosophy most earnestly at the very time when he seemed to be doing so least'.¹

During the Middle Ages, when the bearers of culture were chiefly clerics and monks, which part of Cicero's legacy could be less appreciated than all this Roman craving for activity and for a civic culture? Again—when in the dawn of the Renaissance the citizens of the Italian city-states longed for a laic literature and moral ideals suitable to citizens who led an active life, where could they find a better ally? The most dramatic episodes in the history of Cicero's influence were to develop from this Roman aspect of *De Oratore* and *De Legibus*, *De Somnio Scipionis* and *De Officiis*.

Generalisation in history is always difficult, and even the conception that the medieval mind was averse to Cicero as a Roman is only half the truth. As a rule the civic world of Rome was entirely forgotten in the Middle Ages. It fills us with amazement to see how often the historical figure of the Roman thinker was strangely disguised. Even in a clerical and monastic milieu, and in medieval disguise, however, we meet again and again with surprising after-effects of Cicero's Roman spirit. These effects are only like the high lights in a picture, the general tone of which is faint and uniform. But it is these exceptions which, at an early stage, reveal the tendencies destined to lead to the revival of Cicero the Roman in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Some of these high-lights were due to the commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, which Macrobius wrote about 400. Macrobius was a heathen, at a time when neo-platonic contemplation was gaining the ascendancy in the ancient world, and his immediate aim was to prove that Cicero, in spite of his championship of active political life, had already known that

¹ *De Leg.* III, 6, 14; *De Oratore*, III, 33, 135; III, 22, 72-83, 89; *De Nat. Deor.* I, 3, 6.

religious contemplation was on a higher plane. Nevertheless the outcome of this disguise was not an unlimited triumph for Plotinus' neo-platonic contemplation. In Plotinus' original conception the 'vita politica' was nothing but a platform from which the human mind must rise as quickly as possible to religious contemplation and to the purification of the soul. Macrobius read in the philosophy of Plotinus that the path through the 'otiosae' virtues of contemplation is certainly the higher one, but that the 'negotiosae' virtues also lead to happiness, and that the best thing is to pursue both the higher and the lower path. Like Cicero himself, he found his models in the great Romans of the past, Numa the king, the two Catos and Scipio Africanus, who all combined 'sapientia' and political action. Moreover, Macrobius adopted from Scipio's dream the vision of a particular reward which awaits the good citizens and statesmen in heaven. He stressed the Ciceronian words that 'nothing on this earth is more agreeable to God' than life as lived in the 'civitates'.¹ Thus some of the most distinctively Roman conceptions of Cicero came down to the Middle Ages among the ideas and reflections of a neo-platonic philosopher. When in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries scholasticism once more had recourse to neo-platonic ideas in building up a powerful synthesis between religion and the politico-social sphere, Macrobius' modification of the neo-platonic flight from life (and not Plotinus' own philosophy) was the source from which Schostics drew their inspiration.² In the following centuries humanistic readers of the commentary felt the true Roman spirit behind Macrobius' transformation and liberated it from its neo-platonic disguise.

A similar source of true Ciceronian influence throughout the Middle Ages was the adaptation of *De Officiis* as a guide for the use of medieval clerics and laymen by St. Ambrose. This recast of Cicero's text was also primarily intended to replace the purely civic attitude of Ciceronian ethics. In St. Ambrose's *De Officiis Ministrorum* the pre-eminence of the political and social

¹ *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* I, 8, 3-12; II, 17, 4-9.

² Cf. H. van Lieshout, *La Théorie Plotinienne de la vertu. Essai sur la genèse d'un article de la somme théologique de saint Thomas*, Freiburg i. Switzerland, 1926, pp. 124 ff.

virtues is destroyed. 'Sapientia-prudentia', in open contradiction to Cicero's Roman sentiment, now ranks above all the virtues of active life. Nevertheless, in this adaptation by one of the Fathers of the Church, no less than in the commentary of the follower of neo-platonism, many features of the original Cicero have outlasted the changing times. As St. Ambrose more than any other of the Church Fathers was a Roman at heart, expressions of Cicero's Roman patriotism and civic spirit of activity frequently survived in the details of his book.

Characteristic of the method followed by St. Ambrose is the fate of the symbol which Cicero had created in the 'otium' of Scipio. Cicero's praise of an active leisure found a response in the heart of a Christian writer. St. Ambrose felt a kindred spirit in the teaching of Cicero that the best gift of solitude is not only contemplation and inward peace but the highest exertion of mental energy as a spur to action in life. Like Cicero he contrasted an 'otium' of activity with the despised leisure of men 'who distract their minds from activity in order to indulge in idleness and recreation'. But in contradiction to *De Officiis* he declared that it was not Scipio but Moses and the prophets who were the first to teach this leisure of activity. While they appeared to be alone and idle, they were listening to the voice of God and gaining strength to accomplish miracles beyond human power.¹

St. Ambrose was the first of the medieval readers of *De Officiis* who found inspiration in Scipio's tireless 'activity' in solitude for their own conception of a life of living faith in monastic seclusion. In Carolingian times, the abbot Paschasius Radbertus introduced the Roman symbol into one of the fundamental works of medieval theology. If Scipio the Roman, he said in his *Commentary on St. Matthew*, was never less idle than when he was at leisure, because in his 'otium' he was wont to think of the exigencies of his 'negotia'—'how much less should we, who have been subjected to heavenly discipline, grow weary in our "otium" of meditating on divine matters'? To whom, he said, could Scipio's words be more suitable and more necessary

¹ *De Off. Min.* III, 1 (Migne, PL. 16, 145).

than to monks in the uninterrupted 'otium' of the monastery?¹ In the end this line of thought led to the humanistic ideals of Petrarch.²

In the general picture of the early Middle Ages such highlights of genuine Ciceronian thought are few and far between. As a rule, the Cicero of the Middle Ages down to the twelfth century was disguised as a monastic scholar. The Roman citizen was doomed to be represented as a despiser of marriage and of woman, and of the cares of an active life.

The founder of this typical early medieval figure of Cicero was St. Jerome, the father of scholarly monastic humanism. Jerome, in his defence of chastity and monastic life, collected all the classical witnesses against the married state. To Cicero he ascribed the saying 'non posse se uxori et philosophiae pariter operam dare'. He even went further back and quoted Theophrastus' praise of learned solitude which Cicero in *De Officiis* had so eagerly transformed into a Roman praise of restless activity for the community. Jerome preserved for the monastic humanists of the Middle Ages Theophrastus' words that the true sage is nowhere less lonely than in solitude, where the human intellect comes into contact with the wise men of all times, and with God Himself. This utterance seemed to Jerome to be in agreement with the pseudo-Ciceronian warning against family life and woman.³

Both passages remained united in the literature of the Middle Ages. Up to the twelfth century the typical medieval Cicero was a teacher of misogyny and flight from active life. Scholars like John of Salisbury and Walter Map, following Jerome, attributed to Cicero the opinion that the true sage must live in solitude

¹ *Expos. in Matthaeum*, Prologus in lib. XI (Mon. Germ. Hist. Ep. VI, p. 148s). Similarly Radbertus makes use of the Scipio paradox in *Expos. in Psalm 44*, Praefatio (Migne, PL. 120, 995).

² An example from the later Middle Ages (twelfth century) is to be found in Giraldus Cambrensis' *Symbolum Electorum*, Ep. 24 (Vol. I, p. 281, in Brewer's edition in *Rer. Brit. M. Aev. SS.*), where the saying 'se nunquam minus solum quam cum solus extiterat esse' is, strange to say, ascribed to Socrates. With regard to Petrarch cf. p. 87 n. 1 below.

³ *Adversus Jovinianum*, lib. I, c. 47-48 (Migne, PL. 23, 276 ff.), cf. p. 74 n. 1 above.

and far from household cares.¹ A scholar like Abélard made Cicero an open opponent of the toil of active life ; he ascribed to him these words : ' quod (est) laboriosum, non statim (est) praeclarum ' and ' gloriosum '—thus impugning the belief that the laborious life of a secular cleric is worthier of reward than the calm contemplation of a coenobite, the struggle with the temptations of life more meritorious than monastic seclusion.² Even our finest evidence of the widespread and often enthusiastic interest in Cicero's works in the twelfth century, the well-known *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum*, does not break the bounds of this early medieval thought. Although it literally repeats the Ciceronian decision that ' prudentia ' is inferior to the three other cardinal virtues, the motive of Cicero's choice remains undiscovered. Of ' iustitia ', ' fortitudo ' and ' temperantia ', the last is given the precedence, because this virtue has the least connection with communal life. By means of ' temperantia ', says the anonymous author, man rules himself, by courage and justice he rules over family and state ; ' but it is better for man to govern himself than to exercise any external dominion '.³

Not till the thirteenth century did Cicero begin once more to be recognised as a Roman thinker.

At first sight it may seem strange that it was the thirteenth century which saw this change. At that time loving absorption in the works of the ancient authors was not increasing but declining. In the great age of scholasticism and the medieval universities new interests were everywhere springing up. The study of the classical authors was, as it were, restricted to a small

¹ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium* (ed. M. R. James, in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Mediæval and Mod. Ser. XIV, p. 150) ; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* (ed. Webb, Vol. II, p. 298). Webb's reference to *De Off.* III, 1, is a mistake ; the whole section of the *Policraticus* is literally taken over from Jerome's *Adv. Jov.* I, c. 47-48. William of Malmesbury, too, in his *Historia Regum Anglorum* (ed. Stubbs, Vol. II, p. 65, ' Lucubrat—sc. Beda—ipse sibi pernox in gratiarum actione et psalmodum cantu, implens sapientissimi viri dictum, ut nunquam minus solus esset quam cum solus esset '), had recourse not to *De Off.* III, 1, as Stubbs believes, but obviously to Jerome.

² Abélard, *Opera*, ed. Cousin, I, pp. 693 f. ; II, p. 621.

³ *Moral. Dogma Phil.*, ed. J. Homburg (in *Arbeten utgivna med Understöd av Vilhelm Ekman Universitetsfond, Uppsala*, Vol. 37), p. 53.

room in an imposing edifice, the largest halls of which became the homes of the new theology, jurisprudence and science. Even in ethics and politics Aristotle, the great philosopher, came to the fore, detracting from the admiration for Cicero's stylistic splendour. It was, however, this immense extension of the intellectual horizon which threw new light on the ancient world. Like every other branch of learning, the study of the classical 'auctores' grew and increased,¹ although nobody was any longer inclined to base modern ethics on *De Officiis*, as St. Ambrose and the author of the *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum* had done in earlier centuries. Seen from a certain distance, Cicero's teachings were now compared with those of Aristotle, the Fathers, and the new medieval philosophers. In the end his Roman characteristics became visible for the first time.

Let us look at the most widely circulated encyclopædia of the thirteenth century, the *Speculum* of Vincent de Beauvais. Jerome's allegation that Cicero had said he could not serve both philosophy and woman has not been forgotten. It serves, in addition to a few other misleading statements on his political career, as the chief contribution to the characterisation of his personality. Moreover, no attempt is made to 'comprehend Cicero's doctrines as a unity. In order to illustrate the contrast between 'vita socialis' and 'vita contemplativa', Cicero's various sayings, detached from their context, are divided up as supporting either active or contemplative life. On the other hand, knowledge of many of Cicero's works is in advance of that of the twelfth century. The paradox of Scipio from *De Officiis* is referred to in the *Speculum Doctrinale* as well as in the *Speculum Historiale*. As evidence for the merits of active life the whole of Cicero's utterance is quoted, that 'otium' may be useful to some philosophers, but that 'more fruitful to mankind, and more suitable to greatness and renown are the lives of those who apply themselves to statecraft and to great enterprises'.²

¹ This has been proved by E. K. Rand, in "The Classics in the Thirteenth Century", *Speculum*, IV, 1929, and in "A Friend of the Classics in the Times of St. Thomas Aquinas", *Bibliothèque Thomiste*, XIV, 1930.

² *Speculum Historiale*, lib. VI, c. 8 and 11 (ed. Duaci, 1624, pp. 175, 177); *Speculum Doctrinale*, lib. V, c. 41.—True, if the copious *Extracts* taken from Ciceronian works by a certain Hadoardus had really been put together in the

The cause of this first reappearance of Cicero's civic attitude was that in the thirteenth century civic society was beginning to play a part again in literature and culture. The widening of the intellectual horizon was due to the fact that scholars and popular writers now looked upon the world from the point of view both of the citizen and of the knight, both of the secular cleric and of the monk. A cleric, writing in civic surroundings, would contemplate his studies in quite a different light from a writer in a monastic cell. He would not feel them to be a secular parallel to religious contemplation; he would consider his own literary work as a service to the community—as a parallel in the intellectual sphere to the politico-social work of a citizen.

As early as 1118 Guido, a cleric of Pisa—at that time one of the most flourishing maritime cities in Italy—had adapted a medieval cosmography to the Mediterranean interests of the citizens of Pisa. He justified his work by saying that, as Nature herself had constituted human society, the greatest part of human 'negotia et studia' ought to be devoted to its service. This was not only his personal opinion, he said, it was confirmed by the teachings of St. Ambrose, who had referred to Cicero's *De Officiis* as his authority and to other ancient writers. According to these precepts he had tried to make his contribution to human society through his literary work.¹

A hundred years later, Italian citizens began to give expression in writing to their moral ideals. In one of the earliest creations of this laic literature, the *Libro della Dilezione di Dio e del Prossimo*, written by the judge Albertano da Brescia in 1238 (i.e. a few decades before the publication of Vincent de Beauvais' encyclopædia), we find the Cicero of *De Officiis* quoted as a

Carolingian period, as it was long supposed, the knowledge of Cicero's writings in the early Middle Ages might have been greater than that shown in the thirteenth century in Vincent de Beauvais' encyclopædia. But as R. Mollweide, in *Wiener Studien*, 1911-1915, has proved, these extracts can hardly have been taken in the ninth, or tenth century; their compilation must be attributed to the last period of antiquity, probably to learned pupils of St. Jerome in Gaul, in the sixth century. Cf. also the confirmation of Mollweide's research by A. Lörcher, in *Bursian's Jahresberichte der klass. Altertumswissenschaft*, 203, 1925, 153 f.

¹ *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia, et Guidonis Geographica*, ed. M. Pinder and G. Parthey, Berlin, 1860.

decisive authority in the discussion on the two different ways of life. All the other spiritual and secular authorities, it is admitted in the book, agree in favouring contemplation and the flight from active life. Christ's preference of Mary to Martha; the teachings of the Son of Sirach and those of the apostles; the stoic contempt of the material world, and several sayings of Cicero himself—all these warn us not to consume our human energy in toil for this transient existence. On the opposite side there is only the Cicero of *De Officiis*, boldly claiming that an existence spent in 'cose comunali e grandi' should be considered as 'more fruitful' than the easy life of contemplation, and that a noble mind should choose unrest and exertion in order to help the world, rather than happiness in untroubled solitude. In the eyes of this layman this one and only witness balances all the other authorities of the Middle Ages. Man, he concludes, may freely choose between the two ways of life.¹ To the judge of Brescia the Roman civic spirit and medieval contemplation are of equal value.

This civic revival of the Roman Cicero was in full swing when, in the middle of the thirteenth century, scholastic learning reached its zenith. We have a record of the textbooks which were used in the arts faculty of Paris for the baccalaureate examination at that time.² 'Moral philosophy' was divided into two sections. As far as man was considered with regard to his inner life and moral self-education, the Aristotelian *Ethics* served as a textbook. But in the sphere in which 'the human soul lives "in bono aliorum"', i.e. in social ethics, in addition to the practical study of the 'Leges et Decreta' Cicero's *De Officiis* was the guide.

The work of St. Thomas Aquinas reflects this historical position. In his *Commentary on the Sentences* as well as in his *Summa Theologiae* the chapters dealing with the importance of contemplation and active life point to the Cicero of *De Officiis* as to the sole champion of active life, just as the Judge of Brescia

¹ *Il libro dell'amore e della dilezione di Dio e del prossimo e dell'altre cose, e della forma dell'onesta vita*, ed. Milano, 1830, cap. 65.

² Recently discovered by M. Grabmann in a MS. of the *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*; cf. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, Vol. II, 1936, pp. 193 f.

had done a few decades before. By his claim that 'iustitia' should be placed at the head of all the virtues, and that there was no excuse for any contempt of positions in the state and in the army, Cicero is in disagreement with all the authorities acknowledged by St. Thomas. But Thomas, the great scholastic philosopher, with his calm and well-balanced mind, does not consider Cicero's lonely championship a dangerous challenge to the traditional picture. It is easily absorbed into the vast synthesis of thirteenth-century culture. The fair balance, Thomas decides, was long before achieved by St. Augustine and Gregory the Great, by Aristotle, who crowned his ethics with the concession of first place to the 'Bios theoretikos', and by Macrobius, who modified Cicero's Roman view with the neoplatonic teaching that a well-ordered life must leave room for a certain 'measure of escape from human affairs'.¹ The famous Ciceronian maxim from the *Somnium Scipionis*: 'nothing is more agreeable to God than the "concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati quae civitates appellantur"' loses its Roman rigour. It is transformed, or imitated and replaced by the words that 'no sacrifice is more agreeable to God than the "regimen animarum"'.²

Would this scholastic equilibrium endure, if the pendulum were to swing back to the humanistic enthusiasm of the twelfth century, if Cicero, who had now become known to the Middle Ages as the Roman thinker, were once more to be the centre of close personal interest? In the second half of the thirteenth and during the fourteenth century the civic world of the Italian city-states came to the fore in European culture, and in this civic world Cicero was soon to become a most important guide in moral life, as he had been in the monastic humanism of the twelfth century.

In an anonymous Italian biography of Cicero, written after

¹ *Comm. in Sent.*, III dist. 35 q. 1, art. 4; *Summa Theol.* 1-2, q. 61, art. 5.

² It is true that St. Thomas, in *Comm. in Sent.*, loc. cit., ascribes this saying to Gregorius Magnus, *Super Ezech.*, *Homil. XII*. I have, however, only found the version 'Nullum quippe omnipotenti Deo tale est sacrificium, quale est zelus animarum' there (Migne, PL. 76, 932), which does not yet show any resemblance to the words of the *Somnium Scipionis*.

1300,¹ we can observe how far the faint knowledge of Cicero's personality in Vincent de Beauvais' encyclopædia had now been intensified. Although the facts of Cicero's political career remain unknown, Cicero in this fourteenth-century biography is a Roman statesman as well as an author. 'Though Cicero devoted himself so whole-heartedly to administrative affairs and the protection of the Republic', says the anonymous biographer, full of admiration, and though he was such a busy lawyer 'that it is almost impossible to believe that human strength could suffice for all his labours, he was also filled . . . with such a desire to study and to write that it seems wonderful how he was able to develop such tremendous activity in both these spheres.'

When this historical appreciation of Cicero the Roman encountered the medieval conceptions, what could be the result but a dramatic struggle? This struggle came about with the advent of Petrarch.

Petrarch was the heir both to the culture of the Italian city-states and to medieval traditions. Although a Florentine citizen, he was born and bred in exile; he preferred, during his decisive years, life in the isolated Alpine valley of Vaucluse in southern France to that of a Florentine citizen; he was in contact with the Franciscan movement and even more with the monastic literature of the twelfth century. So it fell to his lot to wage the historic conflict, which was to emerge from the scholastic synthesis of the thirteenth century. This struggle grew all the fiercer because Petrarch, the great philologist, discovered a new key to a deeper knowledge of Cicero's personality—a key unknown throughout the Middle Ages: Cicero's intimate *Letters to Atticus*.

In 1345, when Petrarch made this discovery in Verona, he saw the historical Cicero face to face for the first time. He saw a Roman citizen, who had given up his offices in the state under compulsion, in consequence of Caesar's victory; a citizen who,

¹ It is the *Epythoma de vita, gestis, scientie prestantia* . . . *Ciceronis* in the famous Cicero Codex in Troyes, from Petrarch's library, partly printed in P. de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2nd ed., 1907 Vol. I, pp. 227 ff. De Nolhac, *loc. cit.*, p. 231, gives reasons why the biography cannot have been written by Petrarch himself in his youth, but must be the work of a writer of the early fourteenth century.

from his rural retreat, followed political events feverishly, and who, after the murder of Caesar, returned to the confusion of the civil war, to his own ruin. Petrarch, the semi-cleric and hermit of the Vaucluse, shrank back in horror from this discovery. He wrote a letter full of accusation to the shade of Cicero in Hades—as strange as it was moving. ‘Why didst thou desire so much efforts’, thus he reproached his fallen idol, ‘and forsake the calm so becoming to thy age, thy position and thy destiny? What vain splendour of renown drove thee . . . to a death unworthy of a sage? . . . Oh, how much more suitable would it have been if thou, philosopher as thou wast, hadst grown old in rural surroundings, and there hadst meditated upon eternal life and not upon this trifling existence here below!’¹

However much Petrarch admired Cicero’s eloquence, his precepts for a cultured life, his independence of dogmatism, superstition and the errors of polytheism—Cicero’s civic spirit was to him nothing but an offence against all the traditions of the Middle Ages. In his humanistic works written in the solitude of the Vaucluse, Petrarch endeavoured to stress the contrast between Cicero’s vain and restless political activities and the fruitful solitude of his old age. In *De Rebus Memorandis*, and even more in *De Vita Solitaria*, Cicero is presented as the historic example of a citizen who, against his own will, became a witness to the superiority of a solitary life. Petrarch insists that all the literary works of Cicero were written in the ‘solitudo gloriosa’ of his old age. ‘It was solitude which caused this man’s mind to open out, moreover—this is the strange and wonderful thing—it was a solitude obnoxious to him. What, one may think, would it have accomplished if he had desired it, or how greatly should a man long for that which brings such great benefit even to one who is unwilling to endure it!’²

The Cicero whom Petrarch, like his medieval forerunners, admired, was the follower of Scipio in his praise of true ‘otium’. So closely did Petrarch adhere to the medieval tradition that he adopted, side by side with Scipio’s words from *De Officiis*, St.

¹ Ep. fam. XXIV, 3.

² *De Reb. Mem.*, I, tr. 1, c. 4; I, tr. 2, c. 5; III, tr. 3, c. 13; *De Vita Solitaria*, I, tr. 3, c. 2; II, tr. 8, c. 2; II, tr. 10, c. 7.

Jerome's and Theophrastus' description of the 'sage' to whom solitude means flight from woman, marriage and communal life. The Scipio of *De Officiis* and St. Jerome are the heroes of the book *De Vita Solitaria*. But it is Scipio who is called the 'standard-bearer' ('signifer') of the new humanistic 'otium', because to Petrarch the highest aim of leisure is intellectual activity. In the book *De Vita Solitaria* Scipio's paradox from *De Officiis* is used as a leitmotif. The words of Scipio, said Petrarch, indicated what kind of solitude his choice of 'vita solitaria' meant. It did not mean relaxation or idleness, but concentrated exertion of all the mental faculties, to a higher degree than was possible in the distractions of civic life. 'The body may have its holidays, but the mind must not rest in "otium" longer than is necessary for the attainment of fresh energy.' True 'otium', said Petrarch, is the leisure which is not 'iners nec inutile, sed quod e solitudine prosit multis'.¹

This was the summit of Cicero's medieval influence. But at the same time it marked the beginning of a new development, beyond the bounds of medieval tradition. In *De Otio Religiosorum* Petrarch places humanistic solitude side by side with monastic seclusion. A quiet, comfortable life, free from anxiety, he says, would be as harmful to the hermit as to the man of the world. Struggle and exertion are necessary to test the powers of every human being. The decline of the Roman Empire is a lasting proof of the dangers of peace and quietude. When Rome had no longer to struggle for her existence, carefree security, thirst for pleasure and luxury, ruined the energy of the Roman people.²

By referring to Roman history in order to prove the necessity of inward struggle and exertion even in solitude, Petrarch reveals the links which connect his conception of active leisure with the civic world of Rome. Wherever we observe his humanism, we see his ideas slowly growing up from the medieval past. But he had covered the old ground with new seeds—seeds which were only waiting for a propitious wind to carry them to a new and

¹ *De Reb. Mem.*, I, tr. 1, c. 1 and 2; *De Vita Solitaria*, II, tr. 9, c. 5 and 6; II, tr. 10, c. 9; *Ep. sen.* II, 5.

² *De Otio Relig.*, in *Opera*, Basileae, 1581, p. 301. More details are to be found in my paper 'Das Erwachen des Historischen Denkens im Humanismus des Quattrocento', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 147, 1932, pp. 6 f.

more favourable soil. Petrarch rejected a life of action in the community and in the family, but he praised activity itself more highly than anybody else had done since Roman times. As soon as this praise of activity found full response in the circles of citizens who were leading a civic life ; as soon as the world of the Italian city-states, which had been developing since the twelfth century, reached cultural maturity—the time had come for the complete return of the Roman spirit. At this point, the slow process of medieval evolution was to develop into a sudden revolution.

The old conception of the Renaissance as a fundamental break with medieval traditions, as a new edifice on changed foundations, was not entirely wrong. It was only erroneous in so far as that break was placed at too early a date. A complete revolution in intellectual life did indeed take place, but not until the end of the fourteenth century, not until the very moment when Petrarch's humanism was transplanted into civic surroundings—first and foremost into the civic world of Florence.

Coluccio Salutati, Petrarch's pupil and an ardent Florentine patriot, Chancellor of Florence from 1375 to 1406, is the first example of the citizen-humanists who now made their appearance. In his youth Salutati had intended to reply to Petrarch's idealisation of the ' *vita solitaria* ' with a book, *De Vita Associabili et Operativa*. True, this work was never published. But his kinship with the Roman civic spirit was soon revealed on another occasion. Just as Petrarch had unexpectedly found himself face to face with Cicero's personality, thanks to his discovery of Cicero's *Epistolae ad Atticum*, so was Cicero's personality revealed to Salutati in 1392, through the discovery of the *Epistolae Familiares*. But whereas Petrarch's first joy had soon turned to increasing disappointment, the Florentine Chancellor honoured and admired those very characteristics of Cicero which Petrarch had considered unworthy of a philosopher. He admired the part which Cicero played in political life, his participation in the civil war and his thirst for political renown.

Cicero himself had said that nobody ought to remain a private individual when the liberty of the citizens was at stake. Salutati

understood his master well. Wishing to justify him for taking part in the civil wars, Salutati declared that, according to the *Noctes Atticae* of Gellius, Solon had already decreed that a citizen who in time of civic unrest continued leading his private life, was to be considered unfaithful to his city and expelled. Cicero, therefore, had not been oblivious of the duties of a 'sage' when he took part in the struggle for the liberty of the 'Respublica'. He had acted as a true philosopher and as a Roman like Brutus and Cassius, neither of whom thought it was permissible for Roman citizens to retire into solitude while the world was in flames.¹

Two years later one of Salutati's pupils, Pier Paolo Vergerio, wrote, in the name of Cicero, a reply to Petrarch's letter of accusation addressed to Cicero in Hades. It was the true voice of a Roman citizen which spoke in this answer 'from the Elysian fields'. 'Why didst thou forsake the calm so becoming to thy age, thy position and thy destiny?'—this was the indignant question which Petrarch had put to his master. 'My "otium"', Vergerio makes Cicero reply, 'my age, position and destiny intended me for a man who was to live his life in the midst of activity.' In my conception philosophy and culture 'were not meant to serve my own self-gratifying leisure, but to be used for the benefit of the community'. 'Ea enim mihi matura semper et praestans philosophia visa est, quae in urbibus habitat et solitudinem fugit.' The doctrine which I always upheld in my writings, was that he is the worthiest 'who takes upon himself work for the state and the cares which are demanded by the "salus omnium"'. I lived for the 'Respublica' as long as a Roman citizen could work for her. When Caesar set up his tyranny, a Roman citizen was not allowed to ask whether Caesar was a great man or not, or whether he was 'full of clemency'. I had to face the fact that Caesar made the state, in which 'the Law and the Senate' were called upon to govern, dependent on the 'clemency' or 'cruelty' of a single man.²

¹ Ep. VIII, 7 (Salutati's *Epistolario*, ed. Novati, in *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, Vol. II, p. 389); Ep. IX, 3 and 4 (Vol. III, pp. 25 f. and 50).

² Vergerio's *Epistolario*, ed. L. Smith, 1934, in *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, pp. 439 ff.

About 1415 Leonardo Bruni Aretino, Salutati's pupil and Vergerio's friend, and later on Salutati's successor as Florentine chancellor, built up on these foundations his biography of Cicero—the standard biography for the Renaissance. It was entitled *Cicero Novus*, because it was intended to replace Plutarch's *Lives of Demosthenes and Cicero*, which seemed to Bruni to favour the Greek orator. But the title *Cicero Novus* also acquired a deeper meaning. In contradiction to the 'old Cicero' of the Middle Ages and of Petrarch, this 'new Cicero' of the Florentine Renaissance no longer rested on the ostensible contrast between Cicero's political career, full of calamitous passions, and his fruitful philosophic life in the haven of quiet solitude. It was the trend of thought first revealed by the anonymous Italian biographer in the fourteenth century which now attained maturity. The new conception was based on the admiration of a citizen for the ideal union of political action and literary creation in Cicero's life. 'No one seeing Cicero's literary legacy', says Bruni, 'would believe that he had had any time for dealing with men; anyone reviewing his political deeds, his speeches, his occupations and his struggles both in public and private life, would imagine he could never have had leisure for reading and writing.'

Bruni found the explanation in the discovery that Cicero's literary and political activities were two parts of one and the same task: the work of a Roman citizen for his 'patria' and the Latin Empire of Rome. It was not so much that Cicero's philosophical studies simply followed his political activity in his old age, as that the Roman statesman was guided in his civic actions by his philosophy. 'Ex eodem philosophiae sacrario et facta ad rem publicam gubernandam et dicta ad scribendum praecipiendumque aliis depromebat.' This double trend gave Cicero his strength. He became capable, 'in spite of the great claims made on him by a state which ruled the world, of writing more than philosophers whose lives are spent in leisure and in study; and on the other hand, in spite of intense pre-occupation with his studies and his literary work, he was capable of accomplishing more practical work than people unburdened with interest in literary matters'. The clue to Cicero's place in

history must be sought here. The task of his life was a two-fold work for Rome. As a consul and as an orator Cicero served the state; as a thinker and writer he created a Latin philosophy, previously unknown to the Roman world. 'Ita solus, ut credo, hominum duo maxima munera et difficillima adimplevit.'¹

From that time onward Cicero taught the Renaissance these two things: the primary task of man is action and service for the community; and, the contact of the spirit with active life does not distract his powers but stimulates his highest energy.

It was in civic circles, of course, that these teachings called forth the strongest response.

More than any other Italian city, Venice in the fifteenth century was a counterpart of Rome in the days of Cicero. The Venetian city-state was ruled, like the Rome of Cicero, by patricians whose lives were spent in the administration of a vast Mediterranean Empire, and who, at the same time, endeavoured to combine civic culture with their political work. In 1417, Francesco Barbaro, the champion of humanism in Venice, said that enthusiasm for the culture and political teachings of antiquity had now pervaded the Venetian aristocracy. Although natural efficiency would develop without learned lore, the Roman teachings and examples would make Venetian citizens 'wiser and more courageous in the administration of their state'. Barbaro sent the letter on the administration of the Roman provinces, written by Cicero to his brother Quintus, to a friend who had

¹ Bruni's *Cicero Novus seu Ciceronis Vita*, in Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron, Leipzig, 1928, pp. 114 f. A scholarly amplification of this biographical outline, derived, like Bruni's work, from the mature historical consciousness of the fifteenth century, was the voluminous biography of Cicero in Sicco Polenton's *Scriptorum Illustrum Latinae Linguae Libri XVIII*, lib. X-XVI. Taking Bruni's conception of Cicero as his starting-point, Sicco endeavoured to collect every single fact concerning Cicero's career as a writer, orator and statesman in order to create a biography as comprehensive as Cicero's historical personality itself. To Sicco, as to Bruni, Cicero's literary 'otium' in his old age was not a haven which he never should have left, but one to which he returned 'when contrary winds and waves had prevented him from sailing to the destination that he had fixed for himself.' The activities of the 'Forum' and the 'Curia' were now replaced by philosophic studies, 'ut scribendo saltem prodesset quibus dicendo, ut soleret, bene consulere tempora prohiberent.' (Edited by B. L. Ullman, in *Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. VI, 1928, pp. 265 f., 407, 408.)

been appointed governor of Zara. Those of us who read Cicero's works, was Barbaro's comment, will render better service to our Republic, and will be grateful to the Roman writer.¹

When, in the following year, Leonardo Giustiniani delivered the funeral sermon for Carlo Zeno, the great Venetian statesman, he described the life of the deceased citizen in much the same way as Cicero himself would have done. After devoting the best years of his life to the state, Zeno had withdrawn to 'otium' and humanistic studies. But even in these studies 'hic noster ita modeste versatus est, ut . . . nunquam tamen neque patriae neque amicis privato consilio defuerit'. He had applied 'otium ad negotia' and had become perfect in both, remaining useful to the community in his old age. It was in this Venetian atmosphere that Barbaro renewed Cicero's own formula, proclaiming it to be the task of Venetian citizen-humanists 'to bring philosophy out of the gloomy depths of the studies and out of scholarly leisure into the fighting line and the centre of the conflict'.²

Florence, the most flourishing seat of civic culture in the fifteenth century, was destined to bring this revival of Cicero's Roman genius to maturity.³

In Florence, soon after 1400, men of the old school complained that the young generation were beginning to gather from Cicero's *De Officiis* that 'happiness and virtue were bound up with position and reputation in political life'. They were forgetting the philosophic truth that the 'perfect life' is contemplation and inner peace.⁴

In the fourteen-thirties Matteo Palmieri, Bruni's closest follower among the citizens, restored the civic attitude of *De*

¹ *Centotrenta lettere inedite di Francesco Barbaro*, ed. R. Sabbadini, Salerno, 1884, ep. 1.

² L. Giustiniani's *Funebris Oratio*, in Muratori, *Script. Rer. Ital.*, XIX, col. 375 f.; *Centotrenta lettere di Barbaro*, op. cit., ep. 95; *Franc. Barbari Epistolae*, ed. Querini, Brescia, 1743, Appendix, ep. 50.

³ The reasons for the growth of the communal spirit and civic culture in Florence during the fifteenth century are discussed in my paper, 'The Historical Background of the Florentine Renaissance', in *History*, N. Ser., XXII, 1937-1938.

⁴ Cino Rinuccini, *Invettiva contro a certi calunniatori di Dante . . . Petrarca . . . Boccacci*, in A. Wesselofsky, *Il paradiso degli Alberti*, Vol. I, part 2 (Bologna, 1867), p. 314.

Officiis as a whole. Just as St. Ambrose had done at the beginning of the Middle Ages, Palmieri wrote an adaptation of the Ciceronian work, which made allowance for the needs of his own century. This adaptation was entitled *Della Vita Civile, On Civic Life*.

It would be interesting to observe in detail how, in this book, the Ciceronian faith in action and in a communal life was finally restored.¹ In the crowning chapter, the deepest impression is created by combining the vision of the *Somnium Scipionis* with the doctrines of *De Officiis*. Palmieri transfers Scipio's dream from Roman to Florentine history. In place of Scipio, Dante (who as the wanderer through heaven and hell is best qualified to report on the reward of souls after death) receives the message from the Hereafter on the battle-field of Campaldino, on the day of one of the greatest Florentine victories. This message is nothing but the Ciceronian teaching from the *Somnium Scipionis*. 'I saw in heaven [says Dante's fallen friend, returned to life for a short hour] the souls of all the citizens who had ruled their states justly on earth, and among them I recognised Fabricius, Curius, and Fabius Maximus, Scipio and Metellus, and many others who for the sake of their country forgot themselves and their possessions.' 'No human work can be better than care for the welfare of the "patria", the maintenance of the "città", and the preservation of unity and harmony in a rightly ordered community'—with this passage in imitation of Cicero the messenger from the Beyond exhorts the Florentine poet.²

From the libraries and studies where Cicero's dialogues were read and adapted to Florentine needs; we step out on to the Piazza Signoria, the centre of the political life of Florence. There, in 1427, the 'Capitano del Popolo', Stefano Porcari, delivered a public oration before the authorities. It was full of

¹ *Della vita civile*, printed in Milan, 1830. Such an analysis has in part been made in my publications "La Rinascita dell' Etica Statale Romana nell' Umanesimo Fiorentino", *Civiltà Moderna*, VII, Florence, 1935, pp. 11 f, 27; and "Franciscan Poverty and Civic Wealth as Factors in the Rise of Humanistic Thought," *Speculum*, XIII, 1938, pp. 23 f.—The first words of the work, in which Palmieri describes the ideal union of a civic and a studious life, almost literally repeat, without confessing it, the introductory words of *De Oratore*, I, 1, 1.

² *Della vita civile*, loc. cit., pp. 220 f., 228 f.

admiration for the state, prosperity and civic spirit of Florence. In such surroundings, said the 'Capitano del Popolo', every citizen ought to feel that he owed to the community all his happiness, all his intellectual and material possessions. Even in solitude no good citizen would forget his duties of gratitude. He recalled the example of Scipio Africanus Maior, quoting the paradox, handed down by Cicero, on Scipio's tireless activity in leisure. In this scene in the piazza of Florence, all the interpretations of Scipio's words from the medieval monasteries are forgotten. Porcari, the humanist of the fifteenth century, interprets as follows: Scipio's paradox meant that in the silence of his solitude 'he was wont to think of the incomparable and glorious gifts he had received from the commonwealth; he then spurred on all his energies, to deserve them by his deeds and persistent efforts'.¹

This moving civic interpretation actually went beyond the ideas expressed by Cicero in *De Officiis*. But it was in the direction which Cicero, the Roman statesman, had shown. Anyone who knows the long historical process which we have been contemplating, cannot but recognise the dawn of an age which in many respects was more akin to the world of ancient Rome than all the centuries of the Middle Ages. Petrarch's conception of Scipio discovering, after his victories, that philosophical studies in solitude have equal or even higher value for the noble mind than all the victories and honours in the world, had lost its power in the fifteenth century. Either the 'otium' of Scipio was now interpreted as that of a citizen who from loneliness will soon return with added strength to his civic duties, or—the old symbol of Scipio's flight into solitude was repudiated and replaced by the ideal of a civic culture which needs no scholarly retreat but thrives amid the very activities of daily life.

It was Vergerio who introduced this challenge into the pedagogics of the fifteenth century. In his *De Ingeniis Moribus et Liberalibus Studiis Adolescentiae* (the first famous outline of humanistic pedagogy, written in 1402-3) he called the 'otium' of Scipio an example which should not be followed by ordinary

¹ Ed. (attributed to a wrong author) in *Prose del giovane Buonaccorso da Montemagno*, Bologna, 1874, p. 18.

men. Perhaps (he said) Scipio Africanus, a man of unique virtues, was able to find his true self in loneliness, after exceptional exertions, and in his old age. 'And yet he does not seem to me to be of lesser worth, who, in contrast thereto, knows how to maintain his solitude amid the turbulence of crowds, his inner calm in the midst of action.' Vergerio's practical advice was that man should preserve his natural elasticity within the framework of his daily life, by gymnastic exercises, hunting and fishing. In this way he should render any flight into solitude superfluous. The symbol of Scipio, gaining new energy in loneliness, was replaced by the memory of Cato. For Cato, said Vergerio, was able to concentrate his mind in the midst of public affairs. He had learnt to study in the Curia, while the Senate was assembling, and was thus fitting himself to give political advice which was beneficial to the 'patria' not only for the fleeting moment but for all time.¹

What was this ideal of the fifteenth-century humanist but the old doctrine of the orator Crassus in Cicero's *De Oratore*? 'What cannot be learnt quickly', Crassus had said, 'will never be learnt at all.' A citizen therefore should not withdraw from civic duties to scholarly work. His fellow-citizens should not feel that he was devoting himself to studies.²

In the fifteenth century the time had come for the rebirth of these ideas from *De Oratore*. In 1421, in the Cathedral of Lodi in Northern Italy, a complete text of Cicero's work was discovered. It included the words of Crassus which had been missing, like many other paragraphs of *De Oratore*, in the manuscripts known to the Middle Ages.³ This rediscovery of *De Oratore* did not only lead to new doctrines in the pedagogy of the Renaissance. It also helped the Florentine citizens in their historical reinterpretation of Dante from the point of view of fifteenth-century Florence. Cicero, whose greatest strength had

¹ *De Ingeniis Moribus*, ed. Gnesotto, in *Atti e Memorie della R. Accad. di Padova*, XXXIV, 1918, pp. 119 and 142.

² *De Oratore*, III, 22, 82-23, 89; cf. p. 76 n 1 above ('... ut, nisi quod quisque cito potuerit, numquam omnino possit perdiscere').

³ The §§ 18-109 of the third book of *De Oratore* had been unknown to the Middle Ages. Cf. R. Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, Vol. I, 1905, pp. 100 and 218.

lain in his close contact with the great figures of Roman history, was now to teach Florentine citizens how to contemplate the greatest figure of their own past. Just as Scipio the Elder had been the model for Cicero, so Dante became the symbol of civic culture for Florence.

Before the revival of Ciceronian thought Dante had not yet been considered in this light. To the fourteenth century he had been a philosopher, who kept aloof from the common world. Giovanni Villani, in his *Chronicle*, had called him 'presumptuous and reserved because of his learning, careless of graces as philosophers are', and 'not knowing very well how to converse with the unlearned'. Boccaccio, Petrarch's follower, had even reproached the Florentine poet for not having remained faithful to the retired life of a philosopher. In his biography of Dante, Boccaccio had interpreted Dante's unhappy fate as that of a philosopher who, in the civic atmosphere of Florence, forgot 'what obstacles to a studious life women are'. Thus Dante forfeited his intellectual peace through marriage and was drawn into the whirlpool of domestic and public cares which destroyed his life.¹

The civic ideals of the fifteenth century led Leonardo Bruni to discover Dante's political career in Florence and his share in the citizen army in the battle of Campaldino. Bruni, in his *Vita di Dante* (written in 1436); stressed these facts and pointed out that Dante, as a true citizen, had had a wife and children. The greatest philosophers (said Bruni), Aristotle, Cicero, Cato, Seneca and Varro, were fathers of families and served their states. Petrarch lived only to himself; this was the weak point in his personality. Dante taught citizens that true intellectual work never led men to idle solitude. After the battle of Campaldino 'he applied himself to his studies with greater zeal than ever; nevertheless he did not neglect the intercourse with his fellow-citizens. And it was a marvellous thing: although Dante studied continuously, nobody would have gained the impression that he was studying.'

'And here', said Bruni, 'I should like to rectify the mistake

¹ Giov. Villani, *Cronica*, lib. IX, 136; Boccaccio, in the *Trattatello in laude di Dante* as well as in the *Compendio della origine, vita, costumi e studii di Dante*.

of many ignorant people. They believe that nobody is a student who does not bury himself in solitude and leisure. Among the stay-at-homes, withdrawn from human society, I have never seen one who could count up to three. A lofty and distinguished mind does not need such fetters. On the contrary, the true conclusion is: Whatever does not find expression at once, will never do so.¹

Thus, in the figure of Dante, the ideas, even the words of the Crassus of *De Oratore* had reappeared, not in mere imitation of a literary model but extended and transformed, with the naive and powerful self-confidence of the fifteenth century.

Bruni's biography of Dante was circulated more widely and used more frequently by other writers than any other literary work of the Early Renaissance. Almost everyone who gave his mind to Dante during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, stood upon Bruni's shoulders: Gianozzo Manetti, in the age of Cosimo dei Medici, Cristoforo Landino in the period of Platonism, Alessandro Vellutello, the leading Dante-scholar in the first half of the sixteenth century. All these biographers of Dante took over from Bruni the conception of Dante as a symbol of the union of thought and action, of studious and civic life. They were all dependent, through Bruni, on the civic spirit of Cicero's *De Oratore*.

Thus, after fifteen centuries, the ideal which Cicero had set up for Roman citizens was restored for modern times—re-created in fifteenth-century Florence in the figure of the Florentine poet.

¹ Bruni's *Le vite di Dante e di Petrarca*, in *L. Bruni Aretino, Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften, op. cit.*, pp. 53 f. ('E era cosa miracolosa, che, studiando continuamente, a niuna persona sarebbe paruto, che egli studiasse. . . . Anzi è vera conclusione e certissima, che quello, che non appare tosto, non appare mai.')