

P. CORNELIUS LENTULUS SPINTHER AND
CN. CORNELIUS LENTULUS MARCELLINUS:
CICERO, *AD FAM.* 1. 1. 2

The reader of the first letter of the *Epistulae ad Familiares* addressed to (P. Cornelius) Lentulus (Spintther) is brought to a puzzled halt in section 2 by the sentence

Marcellinum tibi esse iratum scis; is hac regia causa excepta ceteris in rebus se acerrimum tui defensorem fore ostendit.

This is the reading of the MSS and is printed by Tyrrell (1886), Purser (1901), C. W. F. Müller (1904), and Sjögren (1925), except that the last punctuates after *scis* with a full-stop instead of a semi-colon.

The reader not acquainted with the details of the complex and protracted debate in the early months of 56 B. C. on who, and with what powers, should go to Alexandria to restore Ptolemy Auletes, will simply be disconcerted by the startling transition in 'You know that Marcellinus is angry with you; he promises to be your most vigorous supporter in other matters apart from this affair of the king'. If his historical curiosity gets the better of him, he may wish to know why (Cn. Cornelius Lentulus) Marcellinus was angry with Lentulus, and what *ceteris in rebus* can possibly refer to if the sole question at issue is the *regia causa*.

Tyrrell (*The Correspondence of Cicero*, ii, note *ad loc.*) suggests that we know of no reason why Marcellinus (especially) should have been angry with Lentulus, and he proposes to replace *iratum* by *gratum* or *non ingratum* to remedy the otherwise intolerably abrupt transition. His proposal has not found much support. J. S. Reid (*C. R.* xi [1897], 244-6) cites *ad Q. Fr.* 2. 3 *Sine dubio res a Lentulo remota videtur esse cum magno meo dolore, quamquam multa fecit qua re, si fas esset, iure ei suscitare possemus* as evidence that Lentulus had given offence to many senators, including Marcellinus, who, he hints, is also alluded to shortly before in the same letter in the phrase *per obtrectatores Lentuli calumnia extracta est* (this of course

simply pushes the matter one stage further back: what was Lentulus's offence?). Reid however recognises the affront to logic and ends: 'If *tibi* be correct, as I think it is, some adversative particle, such as *tamen* must have fallen out between *is* and *hac*' (which is palaeographically quite unconvincing). L. G. Pocock (*C. R.* xxxviii [1924], 170—171) defends the paradox: Marcellinus was angry with Lentulus because he suspected that he was acting in collusion with Pompey since he had induced the senate to vote him the five years' corn-commission, and Lentulus was quite aware of Marcellinus's antagonism (a reason already rejected by Tyrrell as insufficient); as regards the style: 'No difficulty would have been felt if Cicero had written, *'Marcellinum tibi esse iratum scis, sed is hac regia causa excepta ...'* etc. But there is a good reason for the asyndeton (chiasmus), and no awkwardness, I think, is felt if only the sentence is regarded as a whole.' (But Cicero did not write *sed*, and the awkwardness, I think, remains.)

Commentators are reluctant to venture any explanation of the phrase *ceteris in rebus*, although on any reading of the text this is crucial: if 'the other matters' were of no real concern to Lentulus, it would be cold comfort to be told that even the consul would give him most vigorous support in them; if they were of real concern, as they must have been if Cicero's remark is not entirely fatuous, what were they? To discover them we must, I think, re-examine part of the course of the *regia causa*. The early months of the consulship of Marcellinus and L. Marcius Philippus in 56 B. C. had as their political focus the struggle between Pompey and the *optimates*, and the chief issues around which the battle was fought were the hostility of Milo and P. Clodius, and the restoration of Ptolemy Auletes. In both cases Pompey lost: the acquittal of Sextus Clodius, prosecuted by Milo for riot, at the end of March, was a sign of the lengths to which his senatorial enemies would go to thwart him (*ad Q. Fr.* 2. 5. 4. (Watt, O. C. T.)). The more important issue, the case of Ptolemy, dragged on indecisively; all parties realised that anyone commissioned to restore him by military force would inevitably acquire a dominating position not only by virtue of his army but also through Ptolemy's gratitude financially expressed. The *optimates* behind Bibulus were determined not to let this plum fall into Pompey's lap. But Pompey was not the only one who wished to go to Alexandria: the consul

of 57 B. C. and now proconsul of Cilicia, Lentulus, had a prior, and legal, claim.

During his consulship Lentulus had obliged both Cicero, by promoting his recall from exile, and Pompey, by securing for him an extraordinary commission for five years to reorganise the corn-supply. His policy aimed at reconciling Pompey with the senate, and winning the gratitude and support of both. Also during his consulship he had proposed and carried a bill empowering himself to restore Ptolemy (*ad Fam.* 1. 1. 3... *ex illo senatus consulto, quod te referente factum est, tibi decernit ut regem reducas, quod commodo rei p. facere possis, ut exercitum religio tollat, te auctorem senatus retineat*): he no doubt hoped to have secured enough *gratia* to be able to carry out his commission undisturbed by the time he left for his province probably before the end of 57 B. C.

What Pompey's attitude had been to Lentulus's bill we do not know, but in all probability he had felt bound openly to support him out of gratitude, as he later did privately and publicly before Jan. 13 56 B. C. (*ad Fam.* 1. 1. 2), and in dinner-table conversation with Cicero on Jan. 16 (*ad Fam.* 1. 2. 3); he was, however, suspected of secretly coveting the command himself as early as Jan. 13 (*ad Fam.* 1. 1. 3); by Feb. 18 his supporters knew what was expected of them (*ad Q. Fr.* 2. 2. 3 *In ea re Pompeius quid velit non dispicio; familiares eius quid cupiant omnes vident*), and by March his ingratitude to Lentulus had become evident (*ad Q. Fr.* 2. 5. 3). It seems likely that even at the time Lentulus carried his measure, Pompey's true wishes must have been suspected by his friends and enemies alike, and his friends would be preparing to obstruct Lentulus (*ad Fam.* 1. 1. 4 and 1. 2. 3). The pronouncement of the Sibylline Books, therefore, that Ptolemy should not be restored by military force, was welcomed by the *optimates* as baulking Pompey as well as Lentulus, his presumed partisan. Even before Jan. 13 Lentulus's expectations rested on no secure foundations: those who were for Pompey were necessarily against him, and those who were against Pompey were against him also (*ad Fam.* 1. 1. 3 *cui (sc. Pompeio) qui nolunt, idem tibi, quod eum ornasti, non sunt amici*).

So when the matter was brought before the senate before Jan. 13, Cicero, Hortensius and Lucullus had to give way to the religious obstruction and simply propose that in accordance

with his own bill Lentulus should restore Ptolemy, but without military force — which suggests that Lentulus's bill had originally empowered him to use his proconsular *imperium* and his army for the king's restoration. Among other proposals on this occasion Bibulus suggested an embassy of three without *imperium*, and Pompey's friends supported the motion of the tribune Lupus that Pompey should be given the commission (presumably while retaining the *imperium* he possessed by virtue of the corn-commission). Nothing was settled then or on the 13th itself, when, according to Cicero (*ad Fam.* 1. 2. 1) Bibulus enforced the religious objection to an army, but failed to win support for his embassy of three, in spite of the fact that the consuls were in favour of it (at *ad Fam.* 1. 2. 2 *multi rogantur, atque id ipsum consulibus invitis, nam ei Bibuli sententiam cupierunt* the *ei* cannot possibly refer to *multi* as suggested by R. H. Gretton (*C. R.* xi [1897], 108—9)). Marcellinus's policy on that day was to drag out proceedings and prevent any decision from being taken: with the rest of Bibulus's party he probably felt that if the embassy of three was not acceptable, the best course was not to let anyone restore the king, as the *senatus auctoritas* of the following day decreed (*ad Fam.* 1. 7. 4 and 1. 2. 4).

Before Feb. 12 the tribune C. Porcius Cato, whose loyalty Lentulus had tried to secure (*ad Fam.* 1. 9. 2 *tuis maximis beneficiis ornatus*), proposed a bill to deprive Lentulus of his *imperium* (*ad Q. Fr.* 2. 3. 1). It was not unprecedented to deprive a proconsul of his *imperium* (cf. How's note on p. 192), but this *nefaria Catonis promulgatio* (*ad Fam.* 1. 5a. 2) had no apparent justification and was foiled by the consul Marcellinus, obviously an adept at obstructive practices, at the end of March (*ad Q. Fr.* 2. 5. 3). Marcellinus showed himself friendly to Lentulus in this matter and in this lies the solution to the original problem. By the bill carried in his consulship Lentulus had drawn the *regia causa* into close dependence on his proconsular *imperium*: he had hoped to restore Ptolemy by military force. Pompey's supporters would have known before Jan. 13 that Lentulus could only be effectively stopped from restoring the king by a measure which specifically appointed someone else; he could not in any case use an army, but he could still win power and prestige as proconsul of Cilicia if he did carry out the restoration. Since therefore he had not been specifically superseded before Feb. 12, the only way to thwart him effec-

tively was to deprive him of his *imperium*; in the unlikely event of his still being nominated as Ptolemy's restorer, he would only be a *privatus* and could acquire no real power as a result. Lentulus, in trying to kill two birds with one stone, almost missed both. It seems highly likely that the possibility of depriving him of his *imperium* was in the wind before Jan. 13, and that Marcellinus and Cicero, and Lentulus too, knew of it. At that time Cicero was anxious to secure as much for Lentulus as he possibly could without giving too much offence to Pompey. Pompey in any case publicly supported Lentulus; and the consul Marcellinus? He like Bibulus's party as a whole did not want to see anyone with *imperium* restore Ptolemy, either Pompey or his presumed supporter Lentulus; but he was indebted to Pompey and so was reluctant to give open offence to either of them. Although opposition to Lentulus had already become evident among the senatorial oligarchy, on Jan. 14 Cicero received the impression that the senate had again become favourable to him (*ad Fam.* 1. 2. 1 *videbatur enim reconciliata nobis voluntas senatus esse*). Marcellinus may well have wondered how far his optimate friends would push their hostility; he wavered; in his indecision as to what course to adopt he urged the religious objection against Lentulus, but was not prepared to see constitutional government so flouted that Lentulus should be deprived of his command; he led or followed Bibulus's party on Jan. 14, favouring Lentulus's continued command in Cilicia. I believe therefore that as early as the middle of January the *regia causa* was not the only problem which worried Lentulus: his proconsular *imperium* itself was in jeopardy and it is this latter which is alluded to in the phrase *ceteris in rebus*.

This interpretation also explains another neglected phrase. On Jan. 14 the *senatus auctoritas* '*ne quis omnino regem reduceret*' was passed, but Cicero ends his letter to Lentulus describing events in the senate on Jan. 15 (*ad Fam.* 1. 4) with the sentence *vi excepta possum confirmare te et senatus et populi Romani summo studio amplitudinem tuam retenturum*. If these words are not merely an empty protestation, they only have meaning if *amplitudinem* is a delicate complimentary equivalent of the more brutally frank *imperium*.

A slight objection might be raised to the above interpretation on the basis of *ad Fam.* 1. 5. 2 *subito exorta est nefaria*

Catonis promulgatio; but the suddenness of Cato's proposal hardly implies that it was totally unexpected.

To return to the sentence in question. There have been attempts to locate the difficulty not in the word *iratum* but in the word *tibi*. Corradus records as the conjecture of some anonymous scholar *regi* (which is palaeographically quite unacceptable); and to secure the same sense there is the highly ingenious *tibicini* (= αὐλητῆς, a reference to Ptolemy) in the margin of Cratander's MS, which is accepted by Constans (1935). But it is difficult to see why Marcellinus especially was angry with Ptolemy: as a supporter of Bibulus's party he probably shared the senate's hatred towards the king because of his bribery (*ad Fam.* 1. 1. 1), and hatred may have expressed itself in anger. The sense is tolerable, but the chief objection to *tibicini* is, as How *ad loc.* points out, that a witty allusion of this kind is quite out of keeping with the formal tone of the letter.

In fact the style of the letter is one of uneasy and constrained formality. Cicero is not writing in a vein of chatty intimacy because he is in the difficult position of having to explain to a man to whom he was deeply indebted that one of his hopes was now definitely disappointed and his others threatened with frustration. In this style the colloquial fulness of expression in *hac regia causa excepta ceteris in rebus* may seem questionable: the second phrase is strictly redundant. I suggest that they should be attributed to different sentences; heavy punctuation should divide them because they contrast with each other - the first is emphatically last in the sentence, the second emphatically first. With this punctuation the *is* must of course go, and palaeographically it is no loss (dittography after *scis*). The sense of the first sentence will be generally equivalent to that of the second and amount to 'is favourable to you', both sentences referring to Marcellinus's favour shown in his pledged support for the legality of Lentulus's proconsular *imperium*.

Tyrrell's conjecture *gratum* secures the required sense and can be supported on palaeographic grounds by an exact parallel. At Seneca *de beneficiis* V. 1. 5 the oldest MS containing the work, cod. Nazarianus (Vat. Pal. 1547), probably of the ninth century, offers: *propositum optimi viri et ingentis animi tam diu ferre ingratum, donec feceris iratum* — a very

unSenecan sentiment. This is the original reading of all the other important MSS except Guelferbytanus 4579 (*olim* 274), of the twelfth century, which offers *gratum*, undoubtedly correct, even if almost certainly due to conjecture (cf. F. Préchac, *Sénèque, Les Bienfaits* I, intro. p. 53).

The resultant sentence, incorporating Tyrrell's conjecture, is: *Marcellinum tibi esse gratum scis [is] hac regia causa excepta; ceteris in rebus se acerrimum tui defensorem fore ostendit.*

Bedford College,
University of London

P. T. Eden