

## NOTE E CONTRIBUTI

### A NOTE ON THE 'PRO ROSCIO AMERINO'

It is generally believed that the Metelli organised the defence of young Sextus Roscius of Ameria purely out of a sense of personal obligation towards his father. It is possible, however, that they may have been acting from a more public-spirited motive. There is no doubt that the sort of thing that Chrysogonus had done was being done at this time by large numbers of the more unscrupulous among Sulla's supporters<sup>(1)</sup>, and it is not unlikely that the leader, or one of the leaders, of this set was Crassus; at any rate, he was without doubt the most successful practitioner amongst them. Now the Metelli stood for a fairly high standard of political behaviour; they had recently protested against the indiscriminate killing that had followed Sulla's victory<sup>(2)</sup>, and it is reasonable to suppose that they felt it their duty, as one of the leading Optimate families, to put an end, if possible, to the use of the proscriptions for private gain, a practice that was bringing the Optimate cause into disrepute. Under this interpretation, the defence of Roscius and the exposure of Chrysogonus can be regarded as an indirect attack on Crassus, with whom the leader of the Metelli, Metellus Pius, had recently quarrelled<sup>(3)</sup>. One result of the successful defence of Roscius was that Crassus, who had shortly before caused a man of Bruttium to be put on the proscription list solely in order to seize his estates, was compelled by Sulla to retire into private life<sup>(4)</sup>. This may well have been one of the sources of the deep-rooted hatred that Crassus felt for Pompey, who was now connected by marriage to the Metelli and may possibly have been associated with their attack on him.

As regards the position of Cicero himself, the results of his successful defence of Roscius were twofold. First, he, too, seems to have incurred the lasting hatred of Crassus. Even in 54 B.C., in spite of public reconciliations, there was very bad blood between them, to such an extent that Cicero can refer to Crassus as a 'hominem nequam' and talk about all the wrongs that he has suffered at his hands<sup>(5)</sup>. On the other hand, it is highly

(1) Plutarch, Sulla 31.5.

(2) *id.* 311.

(3) Plutarch, Crassus 6.2.

(4) *id.* 6.7.

(5) Cicero, ad Atticum 4.13.2; ad Fam. 1.9.20 *multarum eius in me iniuriarum.*

probable that, as a reward for his successful conduct of the case, Cicero was given the strong support of the Metelli in his candidatures for the quaestorship, aedileship, and praetorship. It is significant that Cicero, who was always sensitive to the claims of gratitude, went to some trouble in 63 B.C. to secure for Metellus Celer the consular province to which he had resigned his claim<sup>(6)</sup>, while the tone of the letter from Metellus Celer to Cicero at the beginning of the following year is more easily comprehensible if it is assumed that Metellus was writing to a man whom he had some reason to regard as being under considerable obligation towards himself and his family<sup>(7)</sup>. Finally, if this political connection between Cicero and the Metelli did exist during the years 80-63 B.C., then this would be a cogent reason for Cicero's making his first political speech, the 'Pro Lege Manilia', on behalf of Pompey, with whom at the time the Metelli had a very close connection.

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(6) Cicero, ad Fam. 5.2.3.

(7) Cicero, ad Fam. 5.1.