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F. E. Adcock
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BY

F. E. ADCOCK

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to emphasize the literary character of the writings of Caesar that have survived. The use of these works as an introduction to the translation of Latin is justified by the high degree of lucidity which they possess, and the comparatively limited vocabulary which they employ. But when they have served this practical purpose in schools, Caesar's writings tend to be neglected. The early introduction often does not lead to a further, more interested, acquaintanceship. There is a temptation to believe that the perusal of one or two of the *Commentaries* provides so fair a sample of them all that that is enough. And the appetite for reading Caesar's works for pleasure may have been dulled by the recollection of the effort once needed to read them at all. Finally, it is easy to believe that what was intelligible to the Fourth Form is not worthy of the attention of the Sixth, much less of the attention of undergraduates.

When I was reading for the Classical Tripos I was not urged to peruse any part of Caesar's *Commentaries*: I could be trusted to be generally aware of their contents from history books, and there were other more varied, more mellifluous, models of Latin prose style to assist my efforts at

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composition. And, unless my memory betrays me, no scholar in the University of Cambridge has, in the last half century, devoted even the shortest of lecture courses to the works of Caesar. There are, no doubt, other authors with a better claim on the attention of lecturers, either because of their greater literary appeal or because of their greater difficulty, or because they illuminate more clearly a phase of Latin literature or Roman thought. But, none the less, it is worth while to read Caesar; and, if he is read, he may be read with more interest and understanding if the reader can turn to some book or other which may assist him to appreciate, so far as the efforts of scholars have been fruitful, the literary character of Caesar's writings and the way in which they reflect his eminent personality.

In pursuit of this practical purpose it is convenient to begin with a brief Introduction to remind the reader of what Caesar was when his works were in the making. A complete account of his career and historical significance would pass beyond the scope of this particular study. This Introduction is followed by a discussion of the literary form to which the *Commentaries* belong, even though, as will be seen, they have qualities which are not narrowly limited by the convention of the form. Caesar was not concerned merely to follow a model or to be guided by a convention, but in so far as he did follow it, it is desirable to have an idea what the model was. Then follows a chapter on the purpose and content

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of the *Commentaries*, which may assist the reader to judge the effect of the convention on what Caesar wrote and the degree to which he goes beyond it. The recurrent theme of the *Commentaries* is war, and in the next chapter ‘The “Military Man”’ Caesar’s literary interpretation of war and of its protagonists is described. This leads on to the consideration of style as the revelation of Caesar’s personality as well as his way of writing.

These chapters, taken together, form the main stock of the book for most of the readers for whom it is intended. But there are certain questions which have been warmly debated by many scholars for many years. It is hard to study Caesar’s writings intensively for quite a long time without trying to be as sure as one can be about these matters, and the chapter entitled ‘Certain Problems’ is intended to offer arguments in support of some conclusions which appear the most probable. Finally, there is a short characterization of other works which belong to the Corpus of *Commentaries* on Caesar’s campaigns and may be compared and contrasted with his own writings.

The activity of scholars during the last hundred years or so has produced a very large literature on Caesar’s writing. I have tried to take account of most of this literature and am, needless to say, much indebted to it, but I have limited my references to it to the acknowledgements of some particular obligation or so as to suggest to a reader some work of

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particular importance. To add a bibliography which would be, in any sense, representative of the literature would add unduly to the size of the book. The Index of Passages, which follows the General Index, may be useful to some readers. The readings in these passages normally follow the latest edition of Klotz's Teubner text.

I have to acknowledge advice and criticism of many friends, either given in conversation or after reading parts or the whole of the book at various stages in its composition. In particular, I am indebted to my friends Mr G. T. Griffith, Mr N. G. L. Hammond, Dr A. H. McDonald and Professor E. T. Salmon in this respect. For errors of fact or doctrine I remain entirely responsible.

F. E. A

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