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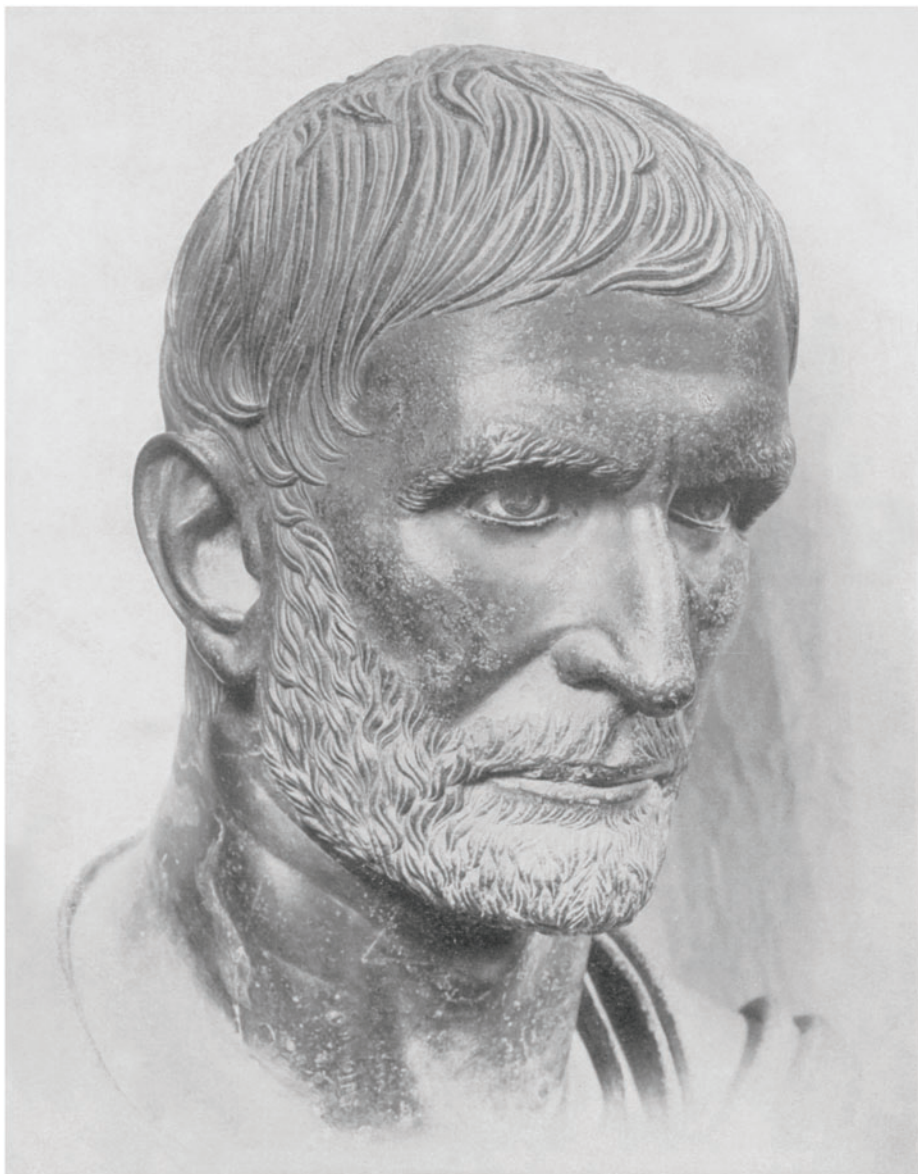
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A Roman

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ROMAN PANORAMA

A Background for To-day

BY

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*late Head Master of Bedford School,
and formerly of the Indian Civil Service*

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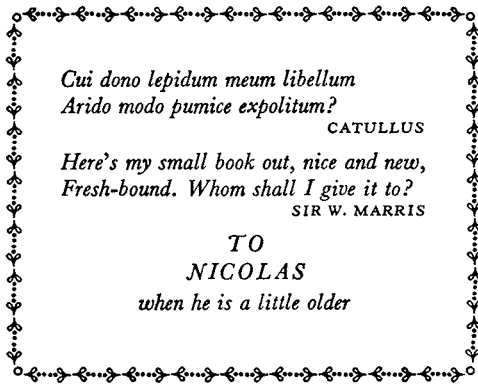
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*Cui dono lepidum meum libellum
Arido modo pumice expolitum?*
CATULLUS

*Here's my small book out, nice and new,
Fresh-bound. Whom shall I give it to?*
SIR W. MARRIS

TO
NICOLAS
when he is a little older

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PREFACE

I began to learn Latin 'as a treat' on my sixth birthday and I have been learning it ever since. My governess started me off by putting a Latin Grammar in front of me open at the declension of *mensa*; then, telling me that I had half an hour to learn it by heart, she left the room. I believe I learned it—after all, learning by heart was not so difficult 'when we were very young'—and I do not remember to have disliked this first Latin lesson as much as a more intelligent child probably would have. But I cannot say that I started to *enjoy* Latin till I knew something about the people who once spoke it—since when I have enjoyed it very much and never more than now.

In these days most people do not start Latin when they are quite so young, and many people never start it at all. But the languages, the literature and the life of to-day are still so much coloured by Latin and by the people who once spoke it, that no one, whether he learns Latin or not, can afford to know nothing about the Romans.

Those who are learning Latin sometimes find it dull because, as more and more subjects force their way into the curriculum, there is little time left for learning about the Romans. Many a boy who can accurately 'give the ablative singular and genitive plural of *senator*' has but a slight idea who a senator was or what he did, and still less what he and his doings have to do with the present day. For my part I am sure that a good education is necessary in order to get, and to give, the maximum enjoyment in life, and I believe that Latin is a necessary part of the best education. But I cannot see how people can be expected to enjoy learning a difficult subject like Latin, unless they understand why they are learning it and what it is all about. This book attempts to tell them.

Others, I hope, will read this book whose chance to learn Latin, now that they are grown up, is over. But their education has not stopped—it never does—and I think that they may still be interested by the Romans and in finding out how

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Roman is the world in which they are living—sufficiently perhaps to stop them asking “what is the *use* of Latin anyway?”

This book, then, has been written to help those who are learning Latin to enjoy the process, and those who have not learnt it to enjoy an important aspect of the world in which they live. The necessary facts are there, I hope; but they are presented in their setting. After all, we are dealing with a living people and we can get to know them best as they move about in their own surroundings, both of time and space, which are wider than any syllabus. Hence the attempt to give the impression of a panorama.

There are dates in the book as well as facts, but I hope that no one will try to learn them by heart. They are there only to give a sense of the passing of time. Sometimes I have put B.C. or A.D. after or before them, and sometimes not, if it seemed unnecessary. Even the facts are not selected (when I could avoid it) to illustrate this or that period of Roman history. What I have tried to do is to give a picture of the Romans, not buried beneath heaps of ‘Roman remains’ (or even of text-books), but alive and on the march.

That is how I like to think of them, and why I think it worth while to study Latin. I should hate to deserve the description which Charles Dickens gives of Cornelia Blimber.* “There was no light nonsense about Miss Blimber. . . . She was dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages. None of your live languages for Miss Blimber. They must be dead—stone dead—and then Miss Blimber would dig them up like a Ghoul.” I would rather agree with Mrs Blimber, her gushing mamma, that “if I could have known Cicero, and been his friend, and talked with him in his retirement at Tusculum (beautiful Tusculum) I could have died contented”. Only I should not make a habit of saying so, as she did, at ‘evening parties’.

A panorama is difficult enough to contrive without having one’s field of vision, so to speak, confined between the covers of one small book; and in thus attempting the impossible, I lay

* *Dombey and Son*, ch. 11.

PREFACE

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myself open to criticism both for what I have left out and for what I have put in. I cannot defend my selection on a strictly logical principle. I have put in what I thought necessary to illustrate the 'consecutiveness' of history, the growth of ideas and institutions, the evolution of society; what would give depth and colour to the picture; what is alive, and is affecting the lives of men and women to-day. In other words I have put in the things that I am specially interested in myself.

This 'principle' has led me to leave out, or only just to mention, some things which I personally find dull or think unimportant; and some other things which, though exciting and momentous enough, are dealt with fully and better in plenty of other books. By doing this I have been able to include some topics which have, frankly, no examination value at the earlier stages, but which are fascinating in themselves and matter tremendously to-day.

It is not that I ignore the importance of examinations. I hope, but only incidentally, that this book will help those who are taking Latin in the School or even the Higher Certificate, to obtain those indispensable passports to an examination-ridden world; but it makes no pretence of being an examination cram-book. It has been written primarily for enjoyment.

At all events I have enjoyed writing it. It has occupied nights of fire-watching and occasional half-holiday afternoons during three years of war; and amid the 'black-out' of so much that is true, lovely and of good report, I have found it a tonic and an anodyne. So may it prove to others for a little longer. The Romans knew what war was like, and they could 'take it'. Their civilization passed through its Dark Ages, and lived on to make a brilliant contribution to our own.

For the writing of each chapter I have had to consult many authorities—far too many to permit of my expressing here the debt which I owe to each one. When I have quoted them verbatim, I have used inverted commas and have acknowledged the source. But there are a few books to which I owe so much

that it would be sheer ingratitude not to mention them. Such are the 'Roman' volumes of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, and the *Cambridge Companion to Latin Studies*, indispensable throughout; for Part II, the volumes which cover Roman history from 753 to 146 B.C. and from 146 to 30 B.C. in Methuen's *History of the Greek and Roman World*, the former by H. H. Scullard and the latter by F. B. Marsh, and John Buchan's *Augustus*; for Part III, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*, by W. Warde Fowler, and *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, by Jerome Carcopino. I have found much enjoyment, as well as information, in reading them.

I am no less grateful for the help which I have had from people, again too many to mention individually; but I remember with special gratitude the advice and encouragement which I received from the late President of St John's College, Cambridge, the Rev. M. P. Charlesworth, as well as his kindness in reading the book in manuscript. How much it owes to my friend and colleague, Mr T. W. Snow, who has corrected the proofs, I am ashamed to admit.

H. G.-H.

August 1944