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The classical historian Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903) published his History of Rome between 1854 and 1856. His work was received with widespread acclaim by the scholarly community and the reading public. In 1902, in recognition of this monumental work, Mommsen was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and acclaimed as ‘the greatest living master of the art of historical writing’. Mommsen rejected traditional Enlightenment accounts, which glorified ancient Rome; instead, guided by a new and rigorous criticism of sources, Mommsen began the demythologisation of Roman history. In a vivacious and engaging style, using modern terms to express classical ideas, Mommsen drew bold parallels between the nineteenth century and classical Rome. Volume 1 begins with Rome’s earliest origins and ends with the unification of Italy; it contains separate chapters on religion, law and justice, art, and writing. This 1862 translation is based on the German third edition (1861).

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The History of Rome

VOLUME 1

THEODOR MOMMSEN



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THE
HISTORY OF ROME

BY
THEODOR MOMMSEN.

TRANSLATED,
WITH THE AUTHOR'S SANCTION AND ADDITIONS,
BY
THE REV. WILLIAM P. DICKSON
CLASSICAL EXAMINER IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS,
WITH A PREFACE BY DR. LEONHARD SCHMITZ.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1862.

P R E F A C E.



DR. THEODOR MOMMSEN'S researches into the languages, laws, and institutions of ancient Rome and Italy are now so well known and appreciated by the best scholars of this country, that it may seem presumptuous on my part to step forward for the purpose of introducing his work on Roman history to the English public. I should indeed have been glad to leave this duty to others, or have allowed the book to take its own chance, feeling quite sure that no words of mine are likely to attract readers, and that the work itself, in its English garb, will become as popular in this country as it is in the land of its birth. But several years ago, I was applied to by more than one enthusiastic admirer of Dr. Mommsen in Germany to do something towards making his History of Rome known in this country, and a repeated perusal of the German original led me to the conviction that its author richly deserved the admiration of his countrymen. I accordingly felt it both a duty and a pleasure, some years back, to prevail upon my friend, Mr. George Robertson, to give to the public at least a specimen of the book, in an English translation of the first, or introductory chapters, on the early inhabitants of Italy—a subject on which no man is better entitled to be listened to with respect and attention than Dr. Mommsen. The specimen which was then published would, I hoped, create a desire for the whole work, and in this hope I have not been disappointed. The result is the present translation; of its merits it does not become me to speak in this place. But

I may be permitted to remark that, unlike the common run of translations from the German, it was undertaken by Mr. Dickson entirely as a labour of love, and that his sole object has been to lay before his countrymen a masterwork of a foreign literature, and to spare no trouble to do justice to its author.

Here my functions might cease, and I might safely leave the book to tell its own tale; but for the younger generation of students I would fain venture to add one or two observations on the relation in which Mommsen's work stands to its predecessors, and especially to Niebuhr, for he himself scarcely ever enters into any controversial discussions with those who have laboured before him in the same field, and whose names he in fact hardly ever mentions. In regard to this point it ought to be borne in mind that Dr. Mommsen's work, though the production of a man of most profound and extensive learning and knowledge of the world, is not so much designed for the professional scholar as for intelligent readers of all classes, who take an interest in the history of bygone ages, and are inclined there to seek information that may guide them safely through the perplexing mazes of modern history. Much that could not but be obscure and unintelligible in the days of Niebuhr has since been made clear by the more extended researches of numerous scholars in this and other countries; many mistakes unavoidable to the first inquirers have been rectified; and many an hypothesis has been proved to be without solid foundation; but with all this the main results arrived at by the inquiries of Niebuhr, such as his views of the ancient population of Rome, the origin of the Plebs, the relation between the patricians and plebeians, the real nature of the *ager publicus*, and many other points of interest, have been acknowledged by all his successors, and however much some of them may be inclined to cavil at particular opinions, it must be owned that the main pillars of his grand structure are still unshaken, and are as such tacitly acknowledged by Dr. Mommsen, who in the present work has incorporated all that later researches have brought

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PREFACE.

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to light in the history not only of Rome, but of all other nations which in the course of time became subject to the City of the Seven Hills. Many points no doubt are still matters of mere conjecture, and Dr. Mommsen has nothing to offer in such cases but theories; but whatever ultimately their value may be found to be, they are at all events evidences of progress, and will act as a stimulus to the students of our days as did the views of Niebuhr to his contemporaries half a century ago.

L. SCHMITZ.

Edinburgh, December, 1861.

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PREFATORY NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

IN requesting English scholars to receive with indulgence this first portion of a translation of Dr. Mommsen's "Römische Geschichte," I am somewhat in the position of Albinus; who, when appealing to his readers to pardon the imperfections of the Roman History which he had written in indifferent Greek, was met by Cato with the rejoinder that he was not compelled to write at all—that, if the Amphictyonic Council had laid their commands on him, the case would have been different—but that it was quite out of place to ask the indulgence of his readers when his task had been self-imposed. I may state, however, that I did not undertake this task, until I had sought to ascertain whether it was likely to be taken up by any one more qualified to do justice to it. When Dr. Mommsen's work accidentally came into my hands some years after its first appearance, and revived my interest in studies which I had long laid aside for others more strictly professional, I had little doubt that its merits would have already attracted sufficient attention amidst the learned leisure of Oxford to induce some of her great scholars to clothe it in an English dress. But it appeared on inquiry that, while there was a great desire to see it translated, and the purpose of translating it had been entertained in more quarters than one, the projects had from various causes miscarried. Mr. George Robertson published an excellent translation (to which, so far as it goes, I desire to acknowledge my obligations) of the introductory chapters on the early inhabitants of Italy; but other studies

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and engagements did not permit him to proceed with it. I accordingly requested and obtained Dr. Mommsen's permission to translate his work.

The translation has been prepared from the *third* edition of the original, published in the spring of the present year at Berlin. The sheets have been transmitted to Dr. Mommsen, who has kindly communicated to me such suggestions as occurred to him. I have thus been enabled, more especially in the first volume, to correct those passages where I had misapprehended or failed to express the author's meaning, and to incorporate in the English work various additions and corrections which do not appear in the original. The author has also furnished me with some interesting notes, such as that on the Servian census at page 95, that on the word *vates* at page 240, and that on Appius Claudius at page 292. With reference to the latter I have inserted in an appendix Dr. Mommsen's more matured views as embodied by him in a paper on the Patrician Claudii recently read before the Prussian Academy. The note at page 442, on the treaties with Carthage, has been extracted from the author's work on Roman Chronology—a book which, in addition to its intrinsic merits, derives a peculiar interest from the fact, that it is written in friendly controversy with the author's own brother.

In executing the translation I have endeavoured to follow the original as closely as is consistent with a due regard to the difference of idiom. Many of our translations from the German are so literal as to reproduce the very order of the German sentence, so that they are, if not altogether unintelligible to the English reader, at least far from readable, while others deviate so entirely from the form of the original as to be no longer translations in the proper sense of the term. I have sought to pursue a middle course between a mere literal translation, which would be repulsive, and a loose paraphrase, which would be in the case of such a work peculiarly unsatisfactory. Those who are most conversant with the difficulties of such a task will probably be the most willing to show forbearance towards the shortcomings of my performance, and

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in particular towards the too numerous traces of the German idiom, which, on glancing over the sheets, I find it still to retain.

The reader may perhaps be startled by the occurrence now and then of modes of expression more familiar and colloquial than is usually the case in historical works. This, however, is a characteristic feature of the original, to which in fact it owes not a little of its charm. Dr. Mommsen often uses expressions that are not to be found in the dictionary, and he freely takes advantage of the unlimited facilities afforded by the German language for the coinage or the combination of words. I have not unfrequently, in deference to his wishes, used such combinations as "Carthagino-Sicilian, Romano-Hellenic," &c., although less congenial to our English idiom, for the sake of avoiding longer periphrases.

In Dr. Mommsen's book, as in every other German work that has occasion to touch on abstract matters, there occur sentences couched in a peculiar terminology and not very susceptible of translation. There are one or two sentences of this sort, more especially in the chapter on Religion in the 1st volume, and in the critique of Euripides in the last chapter of the 2nd volume, as to which I am not very confident that I have seized or succeeded in expressing the meaning. In these cases I have translated literally.

In the spelling of proper names I have generally adopted the Latin orthography as more familiar to scholars in this country, except in cases where the spelling adopted by Dr. Mommsen is marked by any special peculiarity. At the same time entire uniformity in this respect has not been aimed at.

I have ventured in various instances to break up the paragraphs of the original and to furnish them with additional marginal headings, and have carried out more fully the notation of the years B.C. on the margin.

Two more volumes of still deeper interest bring down the history to the fall of the Republic. Dr. Mommsen has expressed his intention of resuming the work and narrating the History of the Empire, but the execution of this plan has

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been suspended owing to his other engagements. He is at present occupied, under the auspices of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, in editing a great collection of Latin Inscriptions—a field of labour which he has made peculiarly his own.

It is due to Dr. Schmitz, who has kindly encouraged me in this undertaking, that I should state that I alone am responsible for the execution of the translation. Whatever may be thought of it in other respects, I venture to hope that it may convey to the English reader a tolerably accurate impression of the contents and general spirit of the book.

WILLIAM P. DICKSON.

*Manse of Cameron,
St. Andrews,
December, 1861.*

EXTRACT FROM DR. MOMMSEN'S PREFACE.

THE Varronian computation by years of the City is retained in the text; the figures on the margin indicate the corresponding year before the birth of Christ.

In calculating the corresponding years, the year 1 of the City has been assumed as identical with the year 753 B.C., and with Olymp. 6, 4; although, if we take into account the circumstance that the Roman solar year began with the 1st day of March, and the Greek with the 1st day of July, the year 1 of the City would according to more exact calculation correspond to the last ten months of 753 and the first two months of 752 B.C., and to the last four months of Ol. 6, 3 and the first eight of Ol. 6, 4.

The Roman and Greek money has uniformly been computed on the basis of assuming the *libral as* and *sestertius*, and the *denarius* and Attic *drachma*, respectively as equal, and taking for all sums above 100 *denarii* the present value in gold, and for all sums under 100 *denarii* the present value in silver, of the corresponding weight. The Roman pound (= 327.46 grammes) of gold, equal to 4000 sesterces, has thus according to the ratio of gold to silver 1 : 15.5 been reckoned at 286 Prussian *thalers* (about £41).

Kiepert's map will give a clearer idea of the military consolidation of Italy than can be conveyed by any description.

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DR. MOMMSEN

DEDICATES THE FIRST VOLUME OF HIS WORK

“TO HIS FRIEND,

MORIZ HAUPT, OF BERLIN.”

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