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APOLLODORUS
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VOLUME I



Translated by
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APOLLODORUS

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER

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VOLUME I



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APOLLODORUS

I

LCL 121

TO
MY OLD TEACHER AND FRIEND
HENRY JACKSON, O.M.

INTRODUCTION

I.—THE AUTHOR AND HIS BOOK.

Nothing is positively known, and little can be conjectured with any degree of probability, concerning the author of the *Library*. Writing in the ninth century of our era the patriarch Photius calls him Apollodorus the Grammarian,¹ and in the manuscripts of his book he is described as Apollodorus the Athenian, Grammarian. Hence we may conclude that Photius and the copyists identified our author with the eminent Athenian grammarian of that name, who flourished about 140 B.C. and wrote a number of learned works, now lost, including an elaborate treatise *On the Gods* in twenty-four books, and a poetical, or at all events versified, *Chronicle* in four books.² But in modern times good reasons have been given for rejecting this identification,³

¹ Photius, *Bibliotheca*, p. 142a, 37 sq., ed. Bekker.

² W. Christ, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur* (Nördlingen, 1889), pp. 455 sqq.; Schwartz, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, i. 2855 sqq. The fragments of Apollodorus are collected in C. Müller's *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, i. 428 sqq.

³ This was first fully done by Professor C. Robert in his learned and able dissertation *De Apollodori Bibliotheca* (Berlin, 1873). In what follows I accept in the main his arguments and conclusions.

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and the attribution of the *Library* to the Athenian grammarian is now generally abandoned. For the treatise *On the Gods* appears, from the surviving fragments and references, to have differed entirely in scope and method from the existing *Library*. The aim of the author of the book *On the Gods* seems to have been to explain the nature of the deities on rationalistic principles, resolving them either into personified powers of nature¹ or into dead men and women,² and in his dissections of the divine nature he appears to have operated freely with the very flexible instrument of etymology. Nothing could well be further from the spirit and method of the mythographer, who in the *Library* has given us a convenient summary of the traditional Greek mythology without making the smallest attempt either to explain or to criticize it. And apart from this general dissimilarity between the works of the grammarian and of the mythographer, it is possible from the surviving fragments of Apollodorus the Grammarian to point to many discrepancies and contradictions in detail.³

Another argument against the identification of the mythographer with the grammarian is that the author of the *Library* quotes the chronicler Castor;⁴

¹ Joannes Lydus, *De Mensibus*, iv. 27; *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, iv. 649.

² Athenagoras, *Supplicatio pro Christianis*, 28, p. 150, ed. Otto; *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, i. 431, frag. 12.

³ See C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 12 *sqq.*

⁴ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, ii. 1. 3.

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for this Castor is supposed to be a contemporary of Cicero and the author of a history which he brought down to the year 61 B.C.¹ If the chronicler's date is thus correctly fixed, and our author really quoted him, it follows that the *Library* is not a work of the Athenian grammarian Apollodorus, since it cannot have been composed earlier than about the middle of the first century B.C. But there seems to be no good ground for disputing either the date of the chronicler or the genuineness of our author's reference to him; hence we may take it as fairly certain that the middle of the first century B.C. is the earliest possible date that can be assigned to the composition of the *Library*.

Further than this we cannot go with any reasonable certainty in attempting to date the work. The author gives no account of himself and never refers to contemporary events: indeed the latest occurrences recorded by him are the death of Ulysses and the return of the Heraclids. Even Rome and the Romans are not once mentioned or alluded to by him. For all he says about them, he might have lived before Romulus and Remus had built the future capital of the world on the Seven Hills.

¹ Suidas, s.v. Κάστωρ; Strabo, xii. 5. 3, p. 568; W. Christ, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, p. 430. He married the daughter of King Deiotarus, whom Cicero defended in his speech *Pro rege Deiotaro*, but he was murdered, together with his wife, by his royal father-in-law. Among his writings, enumerated by Suidas, was a work *Χρονικά ἀγνοήματα*.

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And his silence on this head is all the more remarkable because the course of his work would naturally have led him more than once to touch on Roman legends. Thus he describes how Hercules traversed Italy with the cattle of Geryon from Liguria in the north to Rhegium in the south, and how from Rhegium he crossed the straits to Sicily.¹ Yet in this narrative he does not so much as mention Rome and Latium, far less tell the story of the hero's famous adventures in the eternal city. Again, after relating the capture and sack of Troy he devotes some space to describing the dispersal of the heroes and their settlement in many widely separated countries, including Italy and Sicily. But while he mentions the coming of Philoctetes to Campania,² and apparently recounted in some detail his wars and settlement in Southern Italy,³ he does not refer to the arrival of Aeneas in Latium, though he had told the familiar stories, so dear to Roman antiquaries, of that hero's birth from Aphrodite⁴ and his escape from Troy with his father Anchises on his back.⁵ From this remarkable silence we can hardly draw any other inference than that the writer was either unaware of the existence of Rome or deliberately resolved to ignore it. He

¹ The *Library*, ii. 5. 10.

² *Epitome*, vi. 15.

³ *Epitome*, vi. 15b. It is to be noted, however, that this passage is not found in our manuscripts of Apollodorus but has been conjecturally restored to his text from the *Scholia on Lycophron* of Tzetzes.

⁴ The *Library*, iii. 12. 2.

⁵ *Epitome*, iii. 21.

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cannot have been unaware of it if he wrote, as is now generally believed, under the Roman Empire. It remains to suppose that, living with the evidence of Roman power all around him, and familiar as he must have been with the claims which the Romans set up to Trojan descent,¹ he carefully abstained from noticing these claims, though the mention of them was naturally invited by the scope and tenor of his work. It must be confessed that such an obstinate refusal to recognize the masters of the world is somewhat puzzling, and that it presents a serious difficulty to the now prevalent view that the author was a citizen of the Roman empire. On the other hand it would be intelligible enough if he wrote in some quiet corner of the Greek world at a time when Rome was still a purely Italian power, when rumours of her wars had hardly begun to trickle across the Adriatic, and when Roman sails had not yet shown themselves in the Aegean.

As Apollodorus ignored his contemporaries, so apparently was he ignored by them and by posterity for many generations. The first known writer to quote him is Photius in the ninth century A.D., and the next are John and Isaac Tzetzes, the learned Byzantine grammarians of the twelfth century, who made much use of his book and often cite him by

¹ Juvenal repeatedly speaks of the old Roman nobility as *Troïngēnae* (i. 100, viii. 181, xi. 95); and the same term is used by Silius Italicus (*Punic.* xiv. 117, xvi. 658) as equivalent to Romans.

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name.¹ Our author is named and quoted by scholiasts on Homer,² Sophocles,³ and Euripides.⁴ Further, many passages of his work have been interpolated, though without the mention of their author's name, in the collection of proverbs which Zenobius composed in the time of Hadrian.⁵ But as we do not know when the scholiasts and the interpolator lived, their quotations furnish us with no clue for dating the *Library*.

Thus, so far as the external evidence goes, our author may have written at any time between the middle of the first century B.C. and the beginning of the ninth century A.D. When we turn to the internal evidence furnished by his language, which is the only remaining test open to us, we shall be disposed to place his book much nearer to the earlier than to the later of these dates. For his Greek style, apart from a few inaccuracies or solecisms, is fairly correct and such as might not discredit a writer of the first or second century of our era. Even turns or phrases, which at first sight strike the reader as undoubted symptoms of a late or degenerate Greek, may occasionally be defended by the example of earlier writers. For example, he

¹ See e.g. Tzetzes, *Scholia on Lycophron*, 178, 355, 440, 1327; *id.*, *Chiliades*, i. 557.

² Scholiast on Homer, *Il.* i. 42, 126, 195; ii. 103, 494.

³ Scholiast on Sophocles, *Antigone*, 981, ταῦτα δ' ἱστορεῖ Ἀπολλόδωρος ἐν τῇ Βιβλιοθήκῃ.

⁴ Scholiast on Euripides, *Alcestis*, 1.

⁵ As to the date of Zenobius, see Suidas, s.v. Ζηνόβιος.

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once uses the phrase *ταῖς ἀληθείαις* in the sense of "in very truth."¹ Unquestionably this use of the plural is common enough in late writers,² but it is not unknown in earlier writers, such as Polybius,³ Alcidamas,⁴ and even Isocrates.⁵ It occurs in some verses on the unity of God, which are attributed to Sophocles, but which appear to be undoubtedly spurious.⁶ More conclusive evidence of a late date is furnished by our author's use of the subjunctive with *ἵνα*, where more correct writers would have employed the infinitive;⁷ and by his occasional employment of rare words or words used in an unusual sense.⁸ But such blemishes are comparatively rare. On the whole we may say that the style of Apollodorus is generally pure and always clear,

¹ ii. 7. 7.

² For examples see Babrius, lxxv. 19, with Rutherford's note; Tzetzes, *Schol. on Lycophron*, 522; Scholiast on Homer, *Il.* ix. 557; Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius, ii. 178, iv. 815. ³ Polybius, x. 40. 5, ed. Dindorf.

⁴ Alcidamas, *Odysseus*, 13, p. 179 in Blass's edition of Antiphon. However the genuineness of the *Odysseus* is much disputed. See Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, i. 1536.

⁵ Isocrates, xv. 283, vol. ii. p. 168, ed. Benseler.

⁶ *The Fragments of Sophocles*, edited by A. C. Pearson (Cambridge, 1917), vol. iii. p. 172, frag. 1126, with Jebb's note, p. 174.

⁷ i. 4. 2, *συνθεμένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἵνα . . . διαθῇ*: i. 9. 15, *ῥτήσατο παρὰ μοιρῶν ἵνα . . . ἀπολυθῇ*: iii. 12. 6, *ποιησαμένου εὐχὰς Ἑρακλέους ἵνα αὐτῷ παῖς γένηται*: *Epitome*, v. 17, *δόξαν δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἵνα αὐτὸν ἐάσωσι*.

⁸ For example *ἐκτροχάζειν*, "to run out" (ii. 7. 3), *προσ-ανέχειν*, "to favour" (ii. 8. 4). For more instances see C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 42 sqq.

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simple, and unaffected, except in the very rare instances where he spangles his plain prose with a tag from one of his poetical sources.¹ But with all his simplicity and directness he is not an elegant writer. In particular the accumulation of participles, to which he is partial, loads and clogs the march of his sentences.

From a consideration of his style, and of all the other evidence, Professor C. Robert inclines to conclude that the author of the *Library* was a contemporary of Hadrian and lived in the earlier part of the first century A.D.² Another modern scholar, W. Christ, even suggested so late a date for the composition of the work as the reign of Alexander Severus in the third century A.D.³ To me it seems that we cannot safely say more than that the *Library* was probably written at some time in either the first or the second century of our era. Whether the author's name was really Apollodorus, or whether that name was foisted on him by the error or fraud of scribes, who mistook him or desired to palm him off on the public for the famous Athenian grammarian, we have no means of deciding. Nor, apart from the description of him by the copyists as "Apollodorus the Athenian," have

¹ See for example his description of the Cretan labyrinth as οἶκημα καμπαῖς πολυπλόκοις πλανῶν τὴν ἐξοδὸν (iii. 1. 3, compare iii. 15. 8); and his description of Typhon breathing fire, πολλὴν δὲ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος πυρὸς ἐξέβρασε ζάλην (i. 6. 3).

² C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 40 sq.

³ W. Christ, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, p. 571.

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we any clue to the land of his birth. He himself is silent on that as on every other topic concerning himself. But from some exceedingly slight indications Professor C. Robert conjectures that he was indeed an Athenian.¹

Turning now from the author to his book, we may describe the *Library* as a plain unvarnished summary of Greek myths and heroic legends, as these were recorded in literature; for the writer makes no claim to draw on oral tradition, nor is there the least evidence or probability that he did so: it may be taken as certain that he derived all his information from books alone. But he used excellent authorities and followed them faithfully, reporting, but seldom or never attempting to explain or reconcile, their discrepancies and contradictions.² Hence his book possesses documentary value as an accurate record of what the Greeks in general believed about the origin and early history of the world and of their race. The very defects of the writer are in a sense advantages which he possessed for the execution of the work he had taken in hand. He was neither a philosopher nor a rhetorician, and therefore lay under no temptation either to recast his materials under the influence of theory or to embellish them

¹ C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 34 sq. Amongst these indications is the author's acquaintance with the "sea of Erechtheus" and the sacred olive-tree on the Acropolis of Athens. See Apollodorus, iii. 14. 1.

² This is recognized by Professor C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, p. 54.

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for the sake of literary effect. He was a common man, who accepted the traditions of his country in their plain literal sense, apparently without any doubt or misgiving. Only twice, among the many discrepant or contradictory views which he reports without wincing, does he venture to express a preference for one over the other. The apples of the Hesperides, he says, were not, as some people supposed, in Libya but in the far north, in the land of the Hyperboreans; but of the existence of the wondrous fruit, and of the hundred-headed dragon which guarded them, he seemingly entertained no manner of doubt.¹ Again, he tells us that in the famous dispute between Poseidon and Athena for the possession of Attica, the judges whom Zeus appointed to adjudicate on the case were not, as some people said, Cecrops and Cranaus, nor yet Erysichthon, but the twelve gods in person.²

How closely Apollodorus followed his authorities may be seen by a comparison of his narratives with the extant originals from which he drew them, such as the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles,³ the *Alcestis*⁴ and *Medea*⁵ of Euripides, the *Odyssey*,⁶ and above all the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius.⁷ The

¹ Apollodorus, ii. 5. 11.

² Apollodorus, iii. 14. 1.

³ Apollodorus, iii. 3. 5. 7 *sqq.*

⁴ Apollodorus, i. 9. 15.

⁵ Apollodorus, i. 9. 28.

⁶ Apollodorus, *Epitome*, vii.

⁷ Apollodorus, ii. 9. 16-26. However, Apollodorus allowed himself occasionally to depart from the authority of Apollonius, for example, in regard to the death of Apsyrtus. See i. 19. 24 with the note; and for other variations, see C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 80 *sqq.*

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fidelity with which he reproduced or summarized the accounts of writers whose works are accessible to us inspires us with confidence in accepting his statements concerning others whose writings are lost. Among these, perhaps, the most important was Pherecydes of Leros, who lived at Athens in the first half of the fifth century B.C. and composed a long prose work on Greek myth and legend, which more than any other would seem to have served as the model and foundation for the *Library* of Apollodorus. It is unfortunate that the writings of Pherecydes have perished, for, if we may judge of them by the few fragments which survive, they appear to have been a treasure-house of Greek mythical and legendary lore, set forth with that air of simplicity and sincerity which charm us in Herodotus. The ground which he covered, and the method which he pursued in cultivating it, coincided to a large extent with those of our author. Thus he treated of the theogony, of the war of the gods and the giants, of Prometheus, of Hercules, of the Argive and the Cretan sagas, of the voyage of the Argo, and of the tribal or family legends of Arcadia, Laconia, and Attica; and like Apollodorus he seems to have paid great attention to genealogies.¹ Apollodorus often cites his opinion, and we cannot doubt that he owed much to the writings of his

¹ See W. Christ, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, p. 249; *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, i. 70 *sqq.*

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learned predecessor.¹ Other lost writers whom our author cites, and from whose works he derived materials for his book, are the early Boeotian genealogist Acusilaus, who seems to have lived about 500 B.C., and Asclepiades of Tragilus, a pupil of Isocrates, in the fourth century B.C., who composed a treatise on the themes of Greek tragedies.²

Compiled faithfully, if uncritically, from the best literary sources open to him, the *Library* of Apollodorus presents us with a history of the world, as it was conceived by the Greeks, from the dark beginning down to a time when the mists of fable began to lift and to disclose the real actors on the scene. In other words, Apollodorus conducts us from the purely mythical ages, which lie far beyond the reach of human memory, down to the borderland of history. For I see no reason to doubt that many, perhaps most, of the legendary persons recorded by him were not fabulous beings, but men of flesh and blood, the memory of whose fortunes and family relationships survived in oral

¹ As to the obligations of Apollodorus to Pherecydes, see C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 66 *sqq.*

² For the fragments of Acusilaus and Asclepiades, see *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C. Müller, i. 101 *sqq.*, iii. 301 *sqq.* Another passage of Acusilaus, with which Apollodorus would seem to have been acquainted, has lately been discovered in an Egyptian papyrus. See *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part XIII, edited by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (London, 1919), p. 133; and my note on Apollodorus, *Epitome*, i. 22, vol. ii. p. 151. As to the obligations of Apollodorus to Acusilaus and Asclepiades, see C. Robert, *De Apollodori Bibliotheca*, pp. 68 *sqq.*, 72 *sqq.*