A HISTORY OF ROMAN LITERATURE

FOWLER

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PREFACE

THIS book is intended primarily for use as a text-book in schools and colleges. I have therefore given more dates and more details about the lives of authors than are in themselves important, because dates are convenient aids to memory, as they enable the learner to connect his new knowledge with historical facts he may have learned before, while biographical details help to endow authors with something of concrete personality, to which the learner can attach what he learns of their literary and intellectual activity.

Extracts from Latin authors are given, with few exceptions, in English translation. I considered the advisability of giving them in Latin, but concluded that extracts in Latin would probably not be read by most young readers, and would therefore do less good than even imperfect translations. Moreover, the texts of the most important works are sure to be at hand in the schools, and books of selections, such as Cruttwell and Banton's *Specimens of Roman Literature*, Tyrrell's *Anthology of Latin Poetry*, and Gudeman's *Latin Literature of the Empire*, are readily accessible. I am responsible for all translations not accredited to some other translator. In making my translations, I have employed blank verse to represent Latin hexameters; but the selections from the *Æneid* are given in Conington's rhymed version, and in some other cases I have used translations of hexameters into metres other than blank verse.

In writing of the origin of Roman comedy, I have not mentioned the dramatic *satura*. Prof. George L. Hendrickson has pointed out (in the *American Journal of Philology*, vol. xv, pp. 1–30) that the dramatic *satura* never really existed, but was invented in Roman literary history because Aristotle, whose account of the origin of comedy was closely followed by the Roman writers, found the origin of Greek comedy in the satyr-drama.

The greater part of the book is naturally taken up with the extant literary works and their authors; but I have devoted some space to the lives and works of authors whose writings are lost. This I have done, not because I believe that the reader should burden his memory with useless details, but partly in order that this book may be of use as a book of reference, and partly because the mention of some of the lost works and their authors may impress upon the reader the fact that something is known of many writers whose works have survived, if at all, only in detached fragments. Not a few of these writers were important in their day, and exercised no little influence upon the progress of literature. Of the whole mass of Roman literary production only a small part—though fortunately in great measure the best part—now exists, and it is only by remembering how much has been lost that the modern reader can appreciate the continuity of Roman literature.

The literature of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries after Christ is treated less fully than that of the earlier times, but its importance to later European civilization has been so great that a summary treatment of it should be included even in a book of such limited scope as this.

The Bibliography will, I hope, be found useful. It is by no means exhaustive, but may serve as a guide to those who have not access to libraries. The purpose of the Chronological Table is not so much to serve as a finding-list of dates as to show at a glance what authors were living and working at any given time. In the Index the

names of all Latin writers mentioned in the book are to be found, together with references to numerous topics and to some of the more important historical persons.

Besides the works of the Roman authors, I have consulted the general works mentioned in the Bibliography and numerous other books and special articles. I have made most use of Teuffel's *History of Roman Literature*, Schanz's *Römische Litteraturgeschichte*, and Mackail's admirable *Latin Literature*.

My thanks are due to my colleague, Prof. Samuel Ball Platner, who read the book in manuscript and made many valuable suggestions, and to Professor Perrin, who read not only the manuscript, but also the proof, and suggested not a few desirable changes.

HAROLD N. FOWLER.

CLEVELAND, OHIO.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This is little more than a reprint of the first edition, the chief change being in the Bibliography which has, I hope, been in some measure brought up to date. In the text only a few minor corrections have been made.

H. N. F.

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Importance of Roman literature.

ROMAN literature, while it lacks the brilliant originality and the delicate beauty which characterize the works of the great Greek writers, is still one of the great literatures of the world, and it possesses an importance for us which is even greater than its intrinsic merits (great as they are) would naturally give it. In the first place, Roman literature has preserved to us, in Latin translations and adaptations, many important remains of Greek literature which would otherwise have been lost, and in the second place, the political power of the Romans, embracing nearly the whole known world, made the Latin language the most widely spread of all languages, and thus caused Latin literature to be read in all lands and to influence the literary development of all the peoples of Europe.

The Romans were a practical race, not gifted with much poetic imagination, but with great ability to organize their state and their army and to accomplish whatever they determined to do. They had come into Italy with a number of related tribes from the north and had settled in a place on the bank of the Tiber, where they were exposed to attacks from the Etruscans and other neighbors. They were thus forced from the beginning to fortify their city, and live close together within the walls. This made the early development of a form of city government both natural and necessary, and turned the Roman mind toward political organization. At the same time, the attacks of external enemies forced the Romans to pay attention to the organization and support of an army. So, from the time of the foundation of their city by the Tiber, the Romans turned their attention primarily to politics and war. The effect upon their language and literature is clearly seen. Their language is akin to Greek, and like Greek is one of the Indo-European family of languages, to which English and the other most important languages of Europe belong. It started with the same material as Greek, but while Greek developed constantly more variety, more delicacy, and more flexibility, Latin is fixed and rigid, a language adapted to laws and commands rather than to the lighter and more graceful kinds of utterance. Circumstances, aided no doubt by the natural bent of their minds, tended to make the Romans political, military, and practical, rather than artistic.

The Romans practical.

Attention to political and military affairs.

The Latin language.

Roman literature, as might be expected after what has just been said, is often not the spontaneous outpouring of literary genius, but the means by which some practical ends or purposes are to be attained. Almost from first to last, the writings of Roman authors have a political purpose, and the influence of political events upon the liter-

ature is most marked. Even those kinds of Roman literature which seem at first sight to have the least connection with political matters have nevertheless a political purpose. Plays were written to enhance the splendor of public festivals provided by office holders who were at the same time office seekers and hoped to win the favor of the people by successful entertainments; history was written to teach the proper methods of action for future use or (sometimes) to add to the influence of living leaders of the state by calling to mind the great deeds of their ancestors; epic and lyric poems were composed to glorify important persons at Rome, or at least to prove the right of Rome to the foremost place among the nations by giving her a literature worthy to rank with that of the Greeks.

Political purpose of Roman writings.

The development of Roman literature is closely connected with political events, and its three great divisions correspond to the divisions of Roman political history. The first or Republican Period extends from the beginning of Roman literature after the first Punic war (240 B. C.) to the battle of Actium in 31 B. C. The second or Augustan Period, from 31 B. C. to 14 A. D., is the period in which the institutions of the republic were transformed to serve the purposes of the monarchy. The "Golden Age" of Roman literature comprises the last part of the Republican Period and the whole Augustan Period, from 81 B. C. to 14 A. D. The third or Imperial Period lasts from 14 A. D. to the beginning of the Middle Ages. The first part of this period, from 14 to 117 A. D., is called the "Silver Age." In the first period the Romans learn to imitate Greek literature and develop their language until it is capable of fine literary treatment, and in the latter part of this time they produce some of their greatest works, especially in prose. The second period, made illustrious by Horace and Virgil, is the time when

Divisions of Roman literature.

Roman poetry reaches its greatest height. The third period is a time of decline, sometimes rapid, sometimes retarded for a while, during which Roman literature shows few great works and many of very slight literary value. Throughout the first and second periods, and even for the most part in the third period, Latin literature is produced almost entirely at Rome, is affected by changes in the city, and reflects the sentiments of the city population. It is therefore proper to speak of Roman literature, rather than Latin literature, for that which interests us is the literature of the city by the Tiber and of the civilization with which the city is identified, rather than works written in the Latin language.

Elements of native Roman literature.

The beginning of a real literature at Rome was made by a foreigner of Greek birth, and naturally took the form of an imitation of Greek works. This would undoubtedly have been the case, even if the first professional author had been a native Roman, for the Romans had for some time been in close touch with the Greeks of Italy, and Greek literature presented itself to them as a finished product, calling for their admiration and inciting them to imitate it. Nevertheless there were in existence at Rome in early times materials from which a native literature might have arisen if the Greek influence had not been so strong as to prevent their development. The early Romans sang songs at weddings and at harvest festivals, chanted hymns to the gods, and were familiar with rude popular performances which might have given rise to a native drama. The words of such songs and performances were of course, for the most part at least, rhythmical, but few if any of them were committed to writing until much later times. The art of writing was, however, known to the Romans as early as the sixth century B. C., for the Greek colonies on the coast of Italy must have had trade connections with the Romans at a very early time, and wri-

ting was thoroughly familiar to the Greeks by the time Rome was two centuries old.

From early times the Romans kept lists of officials, records of prodigies, lists of the *dies fasti*, i. e., of the days on which it was lawful to conduct public business, and other simple records. The twelve tables of the laws are said to have been written in 451 and 450 B. C., and these had some influence on Roman prose, for they were the first attempt at connected prose in the Latin language. No doubt other laws and probably also treaties were written in Latin and preserved at an early date. Funeral orations called for some practise in oratory, but probably not for careful preparation, and certainly not for composition in writing in the early days of Rome. The first Roman speech known to have been written out for publication is the speech delivered in 280 B. C., by the aged Appius Claudius Cæcus, in which he urged the rejection of the terms of peace offered by Pyrrhus. This speech was known and read at Rome for two centuries after the death of its author. A collection of sayings or proverbs was also current under the name of Claudius, and he was actively interested in adapting more perfectly to the Latin language the alphabet which the Romans had received from the Greeks, and in fixing the spelling of Latin words.

Appius Claudius Cæcus.

All this is, however, not so much literature as the material from which literature might have developed if Rome had been removed from the sphere of Greek influence. Since that was not the case, these first steps toward a national literature led to nothing, though they show that the Romans had some originality, and help us to understand some of the peculiarities of Roman literature as distinguished from its Greek prototype. Still Roman literature is a literature of imitation, and the beginning of it was made by a Greek named Andronicus, who was brought to Rome after the capture of Tarentum in

272 B. C. when he was still a boy. At Rome he was the slave of M. Livius Salinator, whose children he instructed in Greek and Latin. When set free, he took the name of Lucius Livius Andronicus, and continued to teach. As there were no Latin books which he could use in teaching, he conceived the idea of translating Homer's Odyssey into Latin, thereby making the beginning of Latin literature. His translation of the Odyssey was rude and imperfect. Andronicus made no attempt to reproduce in Latin the hexameter verse of Homer, but employed the native Saturnian verse (see page 7), probably because it seemed to him better fitted to the Latin language than the more stately hexameter. After the first Punic war, at the *Ludi Romani* in 240 B. C., Andronicus produced and put upon the stage Latin translations of a Greek tragedy and a Greek comedy. In these and his later dramas he retained the iambic and trochaic metres of the originals, and his example was followed by his successors. He also composed hymns for public occasions. Of his works only a few fragments are preserved, hardly more than enough to show that they had little real literary merit. But he had made a beginning, and long before his death, which took place about 204 B. C., his successors were advancing along the lines he had marked out.

L. Livius Andronicus.

Gnæus Nævius, a freeborn citizen of a Latin city in Campania, was the first native Latin poet of importance. He was a soldier in the first Punic war, at the end of which, while still a young man, he came to Rome, where he devoted himself to poetry. He was a man of independent spirit, not hesitating to attack in his comedies and other verses the most powerful Romans, especially the great family of the Metelli. For many years he maintained his position, but at last the Metelli brought about his imprisonment and banishment, and he died in exile in 199 B. C., at about

Gnæus Nævius.

seventy years of age. His dramatic works were numerous, both tragedies and comedies, for the most part translations and adaptations from the Greek, but alongside of these he produced also plays based upon Roman legends. These were called *fabulæ prætextæ* or *prætextatæ*, "plays of the purple stripe," because the characters wore Roman costumes. In one of these plays, the *Romulus* (or in two, if the *Lupus* or "Wolf" is not the *Romulus* under another title), he dramatized the story of Romulus and Remus, and in another, the *Clastidium*, the defeat (in 222 B. C.) of the Insubrians by M. Claudius Marcellus and Cn. Cornelius Scipio. In his later years he turned to epic poetry and wrote in Saturnian verse the history of the first Punic war, introduced by an account of the legendary history of Rome from the departure of Æneas for Italy after the fall of Troy. This poem was read and admired for many years, and parts of it were imitated by Virgil in the *Æneid*. Nævius also wrote other poems, called *Satires*, on various subjects, partly, but not entirely, in Saturnian metre. Of all these works only inconsiderable fragments remain. They show, however, that Nævius was a poet of real power, and that with him the Latin language was beginning to develop some fitness for literary use. His epitaph, preserved by Aulus Gellius, will serve not only to show the stiff and monotonous rhythm of the Saturnian verse, but also, since it was probably written by Nævius himself, to exhibit his proud consciousness of superiority:

Immórtalés mortáles sí forét fas flére
Flerént divaé Caménae Naéviúm poétam.
Itáque póstquam est Órci tráditús thesaúro
Obliti súnt Romái loquiér linguá Latína.

If it were right that mortals be wept for by immortals,
The goddess Muses would weep for Nævius the poet.
And so since to the treasure of Orcus he's departed,
The Romans have forgotten to speak the Latin language.

Nævius had a right to be proud. He had made literature a real force at Rome, able to contend with the great men of the city; he had invented the drama with Roman characters, and had written the first national epic poem. In doing all this he had at the same time added to the richness and grace of the still rude Latin language. But great as were the merits of Nævius, he was surpassed in every way by his successor.

Quintus Ennius.

Quintus Ennius, a poet of surprising versatility and power, was born at Rudiæ, in Calabria, in 239 B. C. While he was serving in the Roman army in Sardinia, in 204 B. C., he met with M. Porcius Cato, who took him home to Rome. Here Ennius gave lessons in Greek and translated Greek plays for the Roman stage. He became acquainted with several prominent Romans, among them the elder Scipio Africanus, went to Ætolia as a member of the staff of M. Fulvius Nobilior, and obtained full Roman citizenship in 184 B. C. His death was brought on by the gout in 169 B. C.

Various works of Ennius.

The works of Ennius were many and various, including tragedies, comedies, a great epic poem, a metrical treatise on natural philosophy, a translation of the work of Euhemerus, in which he explained the nature of the gods and declared that they are merely famous men of old times,[1] a poem on food and cooking, a series of *Precepts*, epigrams (in which the elegiac distich was used for the first time in Latin), and satires. His most important works were his tragedies and his great epic, the *Annales*.

The tragedies were, like those of Nævius, translations of the works of the great Greek tragedians and their less great, but equally popular, successors. The titles and

[1] Even if this work and some treatises on grammar should be ascribed to a later Ennius, which is not proved, the works of the great poet were sufficiently various.