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MACAULAY'S  
HISTORY OF ANCIENT ROME

EDITED BY

WILLIAM J. ROLFE

AND

JOHN C. ROLFE

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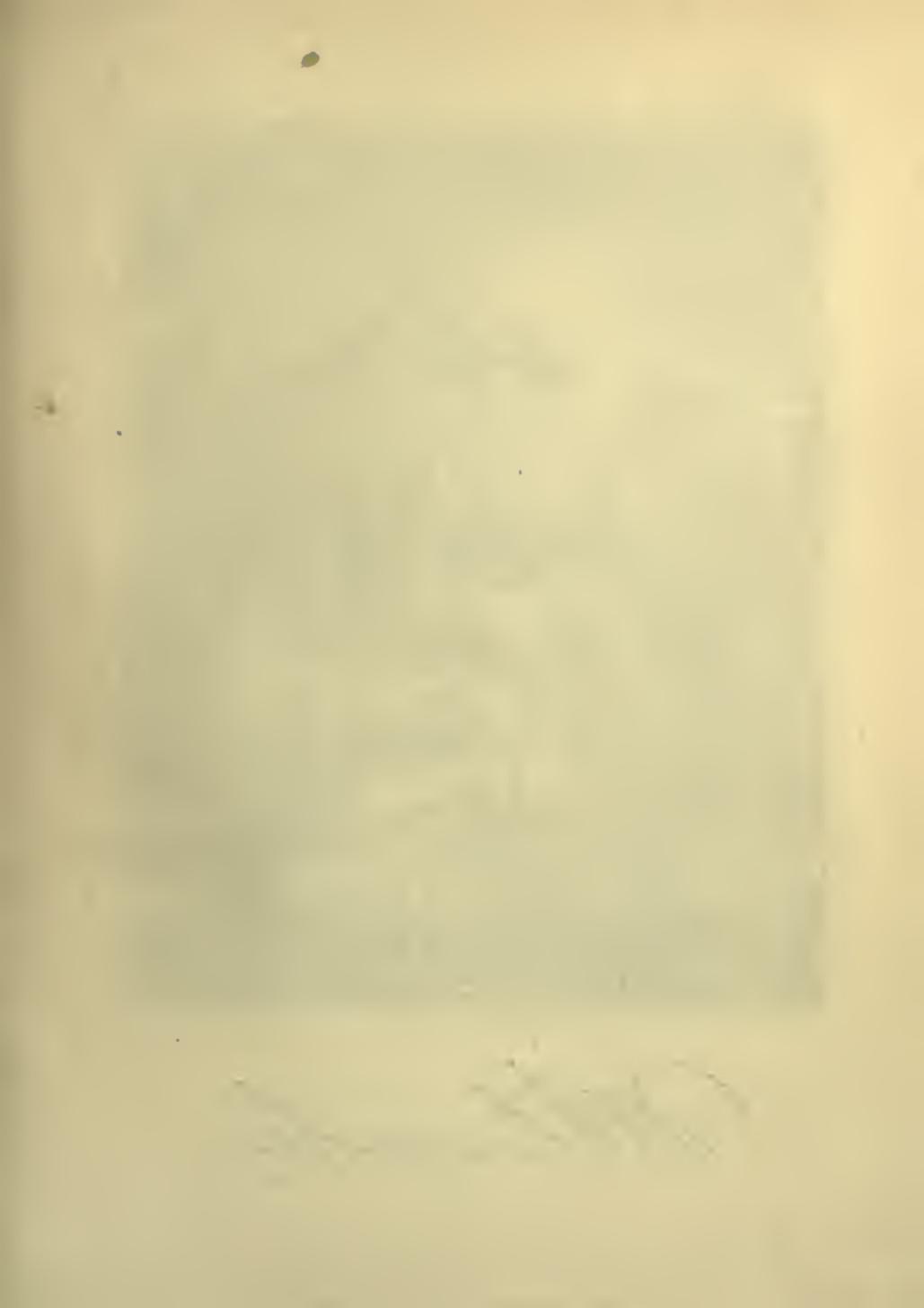






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*W. Maranley*

# LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME.

BY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY

WILLIAM J. ROLFE, LITT. D.,

AND

JOHN C. ROLFE, PH. D.

*WITH ENGRAVINGS.*



*NEW YORK:*

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1888.

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EDITED BY WM. J. ROLFE, A.M.

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## P R E F A C E.

At the request of the publishers, the first name on the title-page of this book is that of the editor of the "English Classics" series in which it is included; but the better part of the work has been done by his son, John C. Rolfe, teacher of Latin in the Hughes High School, Cincinnati, Ohio. The senior editor has arranged the introduction, compared the text with the English editions and revised its punctuation, and helped in seeing the book through the press. The Notes are almost entirely the junior editor's, having received only occasional revision in minor points at the hands of his senior.

The editors are fully agreed in the opinion that parallel reading in English should accompany the study of Latin in our high schools and academies, where, especially in the preparatory course for college, so little time can be given to purely literary training. For such reading Macaulay's *Lays* are particularly well-adapted, both on account of their subjects and their many allusions to Roman customs and habits, and also, to our thinking, for their poetical merit. Certain critics, of whom the late Matthew Arnold is perhaps the most noteworthy, tell us that the *Lays* are not poetry; but in this instance we are content to be wrong with John Stuart Mill and Henry Morley and "Christopher North" (see pages 140, 143 below) and Edmund Clarence Stedman, if they are wrong, rather than to be right with Matthew Arnold, if he is right. Every teacher who has used the *Lays* with his classes can testify that boys enjoy them heartily. They have long been a part of the *curriculum* in the Boston Latin School and other of our best preparatory schools, and are included in the English reading required for admission to Harvard and other colleges. No doubt they would have been more generally introduced into schools but for the lack of an annotated edition. As Macaulay says (page 29 below), the learned reader does not need notes on the *Lays*, and for the unlearned they would have little interest; but the schoolboy needs them, and the average teacher is not "learned" enough to dispense with them in all cases. In preparing the present volume the editors have

PREFACE.

repeatedly been compelled to hunt up for themselves allusions on which classical instructors and professors were unable to give them help.

The Notes being mainly intended for the schoolboy, the quotations from classical authors have been drawn as far as possible from those read in preparatory schools. Explanations are also given of many points in ancient geography, history, institutions, manners, etc., which, even if the young folk have already learned them or could look them up in other books, it may be well to make readily accessible—if only as a review—in connection with the text of the poems. The occasional notes on English etymology are intended only as hints to teachers who are not already in the habit of letting their pupils dig a little among vernacular “roots” as well as Greek and Latin ones.

W. J. R.

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 15, 1888.

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ROMAN SOLDIERS.



THE TIBER.

INTRODUCTION  
TO  
MACAULAY'S LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME.

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I. THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THAT what is called the history of the kings and early consuls of Rome is to a great extent fabulous, few scholars have, since the time of Beaufort, ventured to deny. It is certain that, more than three hundred and sixty years after the date ordinarily assigned for the foundation of the city, the public records were, with scarcely an exception, destroyed by the Gauls. It is certain that the oldest annals of the commonwealth were compiled more than a century and a half after this destruction of the records. It is certain, therefore, that the great Latin writers of the Augustan age did not possess those materials without which a trustworthy account of the infancy of the Republic could not possibly be framed.

Those writers own, indeed, that the chronicles to which they had access were filled with battles that were never fought and consuls that were never inaugurated ; and we have abundant proof that, in these chronicles, events of the greatest importance—such as the issue of the war with Porsena, and the issue of the war with Brennus—were grossly misrepresented. Under these circumstances, a wise man will look with great suspicion on the legend which has come down to us. He will, perhaps, be inclined to regard the princes who are said to have founded the civil and religious institutions of Rome, the son of Mars and the husband of Egeria, as mere mythological personages, of the same class with Perseus and Ixion. As he draws nearer and nearer to the confines of authentic history, he will become less and less hard of belief. He will admit that the most important parts of the narrative have some foundation in truth. But he will distrust almost all the details, not only because they seldom rest on any solid evidence, but also because he will constantly detect in them, even when they are within the limits of physical possibility, that peculiar character, more easily understood than defined, which distinguishes the creations of the imagination from the realities of the world in which we live.

The early history of Rome is indeed far more poetical than anything else in Latin literature. The loves of the Vestal and the God of War ; the cradle laid among the reeds of Tiber ; the fig-tree ; the she-wolf ; the shepherd's cabin ; the recognition ; the fratricide ; the rape of the Sabines ; the death of Tarpeia ; the fall of Hostus Hostilius ; the struggle of Mettus Curtius through the marsh ; the women rushing with torn raiment and dishevelled hair between their fathers and their husbands ; the nightly meetings of Numa and the Nymph by the well in the sacred grove ; the fight of the three Romans and the three Albans ; the purchase of the Sibylline books ; the crime of Tullia ; the simulated madness of Brutus ; the ambiguous reply of the Delphian oracle to the Tar-

quins ; the wrongs of Lucretia ; the heroic actions of Horatius Cocles, of Scævola, and of Clœlia ; the battle of Regillus, won by the aid of Castor and Pollux ; the defence of Cremera ; the touching story of Coriolanus ; the still more touching story of Virginia ; the wild legend about the draining of the Alban lake ; the combat between Valerius Corvus and the gigantic Gaul—are among the many instances which will at once suggest themselves to every reader.

In the narrative of Livy, who was a man of fine imagination, these stories retain much of their genuine character. Nor could even the tasteless Dionysius distort and mutilate them into mere prose. The poetry shines, in spite of him, through the dreary pedantry of his eleven books. It is discernible in the most tedious and in the most superficial modern works on the early times of Rome. It enlivens the dullness of the *Universal History*, and gives a charm to the most meagre abridgments of Goldsmith.

Even in the age of Plutarch there were discerning men who rejected the popular account of the foundation of Rome, because that account appeared to them to have the air, not of a history, but of a romance or a drama. Plutarch, who was displeased at their incredulity, had nothing better to say in reply to their arguments than that chance sometimes turns poet, and produces trains of events not to be distinguished from the most elaborate plots which are constructed by art.\* But though the existence of a poetical element in the early history of the Great City was detected so many ages ago,

\* "Υποπτον μὲν ἐνίοις, ἵστί τὸ ἐραματικὸν καὶ πλασματῶδες· οὐ δὲ δὲ ἀπιστεῖν, τὴν τύχην ὀρῶντας, οἷων ποιημάτων δημιουργός ἐστι. — *Rom.* viii. This remarkable passage has been more grossly misinterpreted than any other in the Greek language, where the sense was so obvious. The Latin version of Cruserius, the French version of Amyot, the old English version by several hands, and the later English version by Langhorne are all equally destitute of every trace of the meaning of the original. None of the translators saw even that *ποίημα* is a poem. They all render it an event.

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