
The Lives of the Twelve Caesars

Forester Thomas

Title: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars

Author: Forester Thomas

This is an exact replica of a book. The book reprint was manually improved by a team of professionals, as opposed to automatic/OCR processes used by some companies. However, the book may still have imperfections such as missing pages, poor pictures, errant marks, etc. that were a part of the original text. We appreciate your understanding of the imperfections which can not be improved, and hope you will enjoy reading this book.



7

BOHN'S CLASSICAL LIBRARY.

SUETONIUS.



THE LIVES
OF
THE TWELVE CÆSARS.

BY
C. SUETONIUS TRANQUILLUS;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
HIS LIVES OF THE GRAMMARIANS, RHETORICIANS,
AND POETS.

THE TRANSLATION OF
ALEXANDER THOMSON, M.D.

REVISED AND CORRECTED
By T. FORESTER, Esq., A.M.

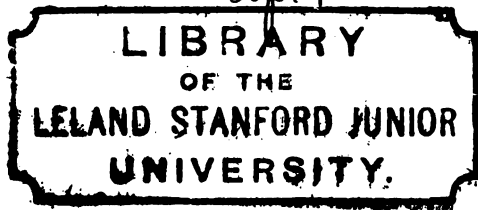
LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1890.

v

4

937
S944X
cop. 1



A 5266

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHEAPING CROSS.

P R E F A C E.

C. Suetonius Tranquillus was the son of a Roman knight who commanded a legion, on the side of Otho, at the battle which decided the fate of the empire in favour of Vitellius. From incidental notices in the following History, we learn that he was born towards the close of the reign of Vespasian, who died in the year 79 of the Christian era. He lived till the time of Hadrian, under whose administration he filled the office of secretary; until, with several others, he was dismissed for presuming on familiarities with the empress Sabina, of which we have no further account than that they were unbecoming his position in the imperial court. How long he survived this disgrace, which appears to have befallen him in the year 121, we are not informed; but we find that the leisure afforded him by his retirement, was employed in the composition of numerous works, of which the only portions now extant are collected in the present volume.

Several of the younger Pliny's letters are addressed to Suetonius, with whom he lived in the closest friendship. They afford some brief, but generally pleasant, glimpses of his habits and career; and in a letter, in which Pliny makes application on behalf of his friend to the emperor Trajan, for a mark of favour, he speaks of him as "a most excellent, honourable, and learned man, whom he had the pleasure of entertaining under his own roof, and with whom the

nearer he was brought into communion, the more he loved him."¹

The plan adopted by Suetonius in his Lives of the Twelve Cæsars, led him to be more diffuse on their personal conduct and habits than on public events. He writes Memoirs rather than History. He neither dwells on the civil wars which sealed the fall of the Republic, nor on the military expeditions which extended the frontiers of the empire; nor does he attempt to develop the causes of the great political changes which marked the period of which he treats.

When we stop to gaze in a museum or gallery on the antique busts of the Cæsars, we perhaps endeavour to trace in their sculptured physiognomy the characteristics of those princes, who, for good or evil, were in their times masters of the destinies of a large portion of the human race. The pages of Suetonius will amply gratify this natural curiosity. In them we find a series of individual portraits sketched to the life, with perfect truth and rigorous impartiality. La Harpe remarks of Suetonius, "He is scrupulously exact, and strictly methodical. He omits nothing which concerns the person whose life he is writing; he relates everything, but paints nothing. His work is, in some sense, a collection of anecdotes, but it is very curious to read and consult."²

Combining as it does amusement and information, Suetonius's "Lives of the Cæsars" was held in such estimation, that, so soon after the invention of printing as the year 1500, no fewer than eighteen editions had been published, and nearly one hundred have since been added to the number. Critics of the highest rank have devoted themselves to the task of correcting and

¹ Plin. Epist. i. 18, 24, iii. 8, v. 11, ix. 34, x. 95.

² Lycée, part I. liv. III. c. i.

commenting on the text, and the work has been translated into most European languages. Of the English translations, that of Dr. Alexander Thomson, published in 1796, has been made the basis of the present. He informs us in his Preface, that a version of Suetonius was with him only a secondary object, his principal design being to form a just estimate of Roman literature, and to elucidate the state of government, and the manners of the times; for which the work of Suetonius seemed a fitting vehicle. Dr. Thomson's remarks appended to each successive reign, are reprinted nearly verbatim in the present edition. His translation, however, was very diffuse, and retained most of the inaccuracies of that of Clarke, on which it was founded; considerable care therefore has been bestowed in correcting it, with the view of producing, as far as possible, a literal and faithful version.

To render the works of Suetonius, as far as they are extant, complete, his Lives of eminent Grammarians, Rhetoricians, and Poets, of which a translation has not before appeared in English, are added. These Lives abound with anecdote and curious information connected with learning and literary men during the period of which the author treats.

T. F.