

**THE STUDENT'S CICERO;
ADAPTED FROM THE GERMAN
OF DR. MUNK'S "GESCHICHTE
DER RÖMISCHEN LITERATURE"**

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The student's Cicero; adapted from the German of Dr. Munk's "Geschichte der Römischen literature" by W. Y. Fausset

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THE
STUDENT'S CICERO

ADAPTED FROM THE GERMAN OF DR. MUNK'S
"GESCHICHTE DER RÖMISCHEN LITERATUR"

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Editor of Cicero, Pro Cicerone

With a Frontispiece Portrait



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PREFACE.

THIS little book is a translation of the Section devoted to Cicero in the first volume of Dr. Munk's *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur*. It is a literary biography of the great master of Latin prose, who wielded his eloquence in a Rome which, in spite of Greek influences and a tottering Republic, was still Roman and free.

Nor can the literary life of Cicero be dissociated from his public activity. Like some great statesmen of our own century, he found in literary labours a rest from politics; and he might have applied to himself the words of Africanus the elder, "that he was never less at leisure than when he had nothing to do."* It is doubtful whether Cicero himself would have allowed that literary work at its best is separable from practical life. His philosophical treatises seem to do scant justice to the purely theoretical virtues; in his rhetorical treatises the practical qualifications and task of the orator are largely dwelt on.† The speeches of Cicero were written to be heard, not read: the same fact accounts for the exquisite lucidity of his style.

Dr. Munk has done well in collecting so much ancient testimony to the unique position which Cicero held among Roman writers, together with such unfavourable criticism as antiquity affords. It is not difficult to lay one's finger on the weak points of his style and his character; on the diffuseness of the one, the transparent egotism of the other. Tried by our modern standard of taste and even of honour, he may sometimes be found guilty of failings to which no public man would now like to confess. We do not, for example, like to find him asking Luceius to invest the doings of his consulship with more distinction than the strict laws of historical truth would allow.‡ In politics we know that he played a vacillating part, though it may be questioned whether it is fair to call him a "political trimmer."

But when Mommsen calls him "a dabbler, abounding in words, poor beyond all conception in ideas; nothing but an

* de off. iii. 2.

† E. g. de orat. i. § 202.

‡ ad fam. v. 12.

advocate and not a good one," we feel that it is well to go back to antiquity and ask whether there any anticipation of such a view is to be found. There is practically none; and Mommsen can only reply that the extravagant panegyrics of Caesar and Catullus* were rendered to the stylist Cicero, not to the author, still less to the statesman. Now to say nothing of the question whether the style can be thus separated from the man, whence came this marvellous fascination of style? For however the modern critic may exalt the Attic school of Calvus and the rest at the expense of Cicero, it is Cicero who has survived. Perhaps we may single out, among other excellences, the moral dignity of the Ciceronian style. St. Augustine tells us that it was the *Hortensius* which first inspired him with a burning desire for an immortal wisdom, and that by what the writer said, not by his manner of saying it.† Cicero is no impersonal writer; we do in fact see the man through all that he writes, sometimes to excess. We are interested even if we do not always admire. His philosophy, eclectic or not, is part of himself; what is noblest in the moral teaching of the schools attracts him by its kinship to his own spirit; he believes that virtue is always expedient, that a man is born not for himself alone but for his fatherland. At times he would accept the ascetic paradoxes of the Stoics, but that his intense humanity comes to the aid of his logic.‡

In what follows I have adhered to the text as closely as possible; save that it seemed well in the case of the large extracts from the Latin to go direct to the originals. It is hoped that these, which include some of the finest passages in our author, will be interesting both in themselves and as essays (they do not pretend to be more) in the art of translating Cicero. To the beginner in Latin prose composition Lord Macaulay's advice may not come amiss: "Soak your mind with Cicero."

N.B.—For the Notes I am alone responsible.

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W. Y. FAUSSET.

* *Carm.* xlix.

† *Conf.* iii. 7.

‡ For an impartial review of Cicero's character see *McClure Hist.* III. pp. 26-272; also *Reid Acad. introd.*; *Tyrell Letters* I. *introd.*

INTRODUCTION.

Vivit vivetque per omnem sæculorum memoriam ; dumque hoc rerum naturæ corpus, quod ille pæne solus Romanorum animo vidit, ingenio complexus est, eloquentia inluminavit, manebit incolume, comitem ævi sui laudem Ciceronis trahet, citiusque e mundo genus hominum quam Ciceronis gloria e memoria hominum cedet.—*Vell. Patercul., ii. 66.*

THE Roman republic, after subjugating the most powerful kingdoms in all three quarters of the globe, had attained an expansion which contrasted even more strikingly with its original constitution. Such a world-empire, composed of the most diverse countries and peoples, and distracted inwardly by party-strifes, could maintain its unity only by the commanding will of an individual, and from the time of Sulla's dictatorship the internal politics also of Rome tended ever more strongly to monarchy. During this time of transition and violent struggles, in which republican was transformed into monarchical Rome, political interests overpowered all others, and literature, which hitherto had exercised only an indirect action on life, was called upon to take a direct part in the general movement. This, however, holds good only for prose. The storms of the civil war were unfavourable to the growth of poetry, and the few blossoms which it did

put forth owed their birth to the private tastes of individuals. On the contrary, all the conditions of the time made for the classical perfection of prose.

Marcus Tullius Cicero by the favour of nature and of circumstances attained supremacy in the domain of literature and became the creator of classical expression in prose. With an unerring tact he knew how to bring into currency just what was suited to the needs and the taste of educated Romans. He stood as a man of, and not above, his own time; he did not trace fresh courses for art or science, but had the capacity of dexterously combining all the several elements of culture belonging to an earlier date, which he had absorbed by diligent study, in such a way that he appeared not as an imitator, but an independent creator. Gifted by nature with an energetic intellect of indefatigable endurance, he had harmoniously trained its several faculties. His lucid understanding, schooled in the reading of the Greek philosophers, gave to his writings that logical order, that clearness and definiteness of thought, by which they so readily adapt themselves to the comprehension of the majority of educated men. To plunge deep into the world of thought, and to bring up new ideas to the light was not within his power. Keen insight enabled him readily to discover others' weak points, and mother wit often served him for a weapon, where logical reasons failed him. Supported by a lively fancy in the rendering and depicting of the occurrences of actual life, he could not rise to poetic creation. An intimate knowledge of the human heart gave

him the means of arousing and allaying its feelings and passions as every occasion required. He had a fine ear for rhythm and sound, but only so far as prose speech required. His intellect no less than his ear was formed for symmetry; hence fine proportion is a marked feature alike in the composition of his works, and in the structure of the single sentences and periods. His chief excellence was his fine taste, which led him to avoid everything that might offend, whether in form or in matter. He is the founder and master of the "elegant style," carefully discarding all that is antiquated or obsolete, all that borders on the vulgar speech of the people.* On this account his writings became the source of correct and standard speech, a perfect storehouse of classical prose diction. He started from the principle that whatever was written should commend itself to all educated persons. (*Nobis autem videtur quicquid litteris mandetur, id commendari omnium eruditiorum lectioni decere.*—*Tusc. ii. § 8.*)

He himself avows that as an orator he was the product not of the lecture-rooms of the rhetoricians, but of the grounds of the Academy. (*Fateor me oratorem, si modo sim aut quicumque sim, non ex rhetorum officinis, sed ex Academiae spatiis exstitisse.*—*Orat. § 12.*)

* This is not to say that his language, above all in the Letters, is never colloquial: and, it must be added, it has occasional archaisms, which is natural enough if we remember his familiarity with the older poets of Rome. The student should read Professor Tyrrell's "Correspondence of Cic.," vol. i., introd. ii. § 2 "On the style of the Letters."