

**THE ROMAN EMPRESSES, OR, THE
HISTORY OF THE LIVES AND SECRET
INTRIGUES OF THE WIVES
OF THE TWELVE CAESARS WITH
HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL NOTES; IN
TWO VOLUMES - VOLUME I**

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The Roman Empresses, or, the History of the Lives and Secret Intrigues of the Wives of the Twelve Caesars with Historical and Critical Notes; In Two Volumes - Volume I by Jacques Roergas de Serviez

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JACQUES ROERGAS DE SERVIEZ

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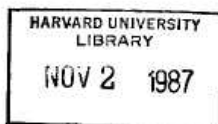


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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

THIS remarkable work, which was originally written in French, is from the pen of Jacques Roergas de Serviez, of whom some account is given further on. It passed through several editions, and it was not long before an English translation appeared—not more than five years after the publication of the first French edition. This, however, was not a complete version,* containing, according to the title-page, only *The Lives and Amours of the Empresses, Consorts to the First Twelve Cæsars of Rome* . . . translated by G. James, London, 1723. In 1752, a complete translation of the work was issued, the full title of which is: *The Roman Empresses, or the History of the Lives and Secret Intrigues of the Wives of the Twelve Cæsars, of those of the other Roman Emperors and of the Princesses of their Blood*, in which are introduced the most remarkable transactions of the Roman History, collected from ancient authors—Greek and Latin, with historical and critical notes . . . translated by the Hon. Byssie Molesworth. London, printed for R. Dodsley in Pall Mall, 1752. This work is an extremely rare one, and it is upon it that the present translation is based; considerable alterations and (it is to be hoped) improvements have, however, been made, antiquated orthography has been corrected, and such forms of expression as have become entirely obsolete have been altered, while, at the same time, care has been taken not to spoil the quaint flavour of the original translation. In some few cases, the translator appears to have mistaken the meaning or to have given too French a turn to the phraseology. The book is unique of its kind, and could hardly have been expected from any one but a Frenchman. Although the title is somewhat ambitious, it is in reality borne out by the work itself, which gives abundant evidence of diligent study of the authors dealing with the history of the period:—Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Herodian, the *Scriptores Historiæ Augustæ*, and others. The work, in fact, contains an interesting and essentially popular account of the times, while laying especial stress upon the virtues and vices of the *beau sexe*.

*Apparently, the complete French work was not published until 1722.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WHILST the republic of Rome maintained her liberties, the Roman ladies were not distinguished one from another but by their beauty and wit, their virtue and their courage. As they were excluded from dignities, it was only by their personal merit that they made themselves considerable, and acquired glory. Lucretia got herself a great name by her chastity in giving her husband, at the expense of her life, an heroic instance of her innocence; and, in the vengeance which she took on herself for the crime of Tarquin's son, she left the ladies a model of conjugal fidelity, which we do not find that many have afterwards copied.

Cloelia and her companions made themselves famous for their courage, boldness, and love for their country, as did Porcia, Cato's daughter, by swallowing burning coals, in order to procure to herself that death which her friends would have hindered her from; but she deceived the vigilance of those who watched her, by that action which has made so much noise in history. But, from the time that the Emperors made themselves absolute masters of the republic, their wives shared with them their grandeur, their glory, and their power; the Roman people, being then given up to flattery as much as they had formerly been jealous of their liberty, strove to give the Empreses pompous and magnificent titles, and to decree them extraordinary and excessive honours. One might then see the Emperors' wives honoured with the titles of August and Mothers of their Country. Some of them had a seat in the senate, governed Rome and the empire, gave audience to the ambassadors, and disposed of posts and employments; others were consecrated priestesses, and even exalted to the rank of goddesses.

It is of these Empreses that this book treats; and particular care has been taken to distinguish those who were of, or who were married into, Augustus's family, because they were the most remarkable. All the facts here reported are taken from original authors; and, for our justification, as much care as possible has been taken throughout, to quote our authorities.

In speaking of the Empreses, it would to be sure have been very difficult to be quite silent as to the Emperors; we have even enlarged upon some of these princes, because we do not doubt but many, who may peruse this book, will not be at all sorry to find in it a part of their history. If I have not mentioned all that might have been said of these Empreses, I believe I have, at least, reported as much as was necessary to make them known. To say the truth, I have been sometimes almost tempted to suppress a great many things which I have, nevertheless, been obliged to touch upon, but yet with all the regard to decency a man can have, who would be extremely sorry to offend against the rules of good manners. But I hope that nobody will have any great reason to blame me upon that subject, since, even in the most shameful passages of these Empreses' lives, I have carefully avoided making use of any shocking expressions: I choose rather to be a little obscure in some places, than to explain too well the meaning of the author by an over faithful translation.

BIOGRAPHICAL
NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR.

JACQUES ROERGAS DE SERVIEZ, Seigneur of Serviez, Sagde, Truscas and Campredon, Chevalier of the Royal Military and Hospitalier Orders of Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel, and of St. Lazare of Jerusalem, was born at St. Gervais, a little town of Languedoc, on the 16th of April, 1679. He belonged to an ancient and noble family. After having spent two years with the Bishop of St. Pons, the celebrated Montgaillard, who gave him a careful education, he continued his studies at the University under Causse, at the time one of the most illustrious professors in Europe.

After this, he travelled for some years, during which he stayed some time at Rome. Here, before the Sacred College, he pleaded the cause of Madame Guillermin, a Dominican nun, who protested against her vows. He succeeded in securing her freedom for her, although she had allowed the *quinquennium*, or period of five years, to elapse without protesting, and had been thirty-two years a nun.

On his return home, Serviez devoted himself entirely to study, especially that of history. The special patronage bestowed upon him by the Duc d'Orléans, and the urgent entreaty of highly-placed friends and a number of learned men, made him decide to settle in Paris, where he would have had better opportunities of devoting himself to his favourite pursuit, had not he been prematurely removed by death in January, 1727, at the early age of forty-eight. His published works are:—

1. *Les Impératrices Romaines, ou Histoire de la Vie et des Intrigues Secrètes des Femmes des Douze Premiers Césars*, Paris, 1720, 2 vols. This edition is really the second; the first was published in 1718, and is in *one* volume. The author was encouraged by the success of his work to complete it, and he left the materials for a third edition, which was published in 1728, in three volumes. It was reprinted in 1744 and 1758. The Abbé Lenglet-Dufresnoy, in his Chronological Tables, mentions it as one of the works indispensable for the study of history,