

**STUDIES IN
HISTORY
AND POLITICS**

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Studies in history and politics by Herbert Fisher

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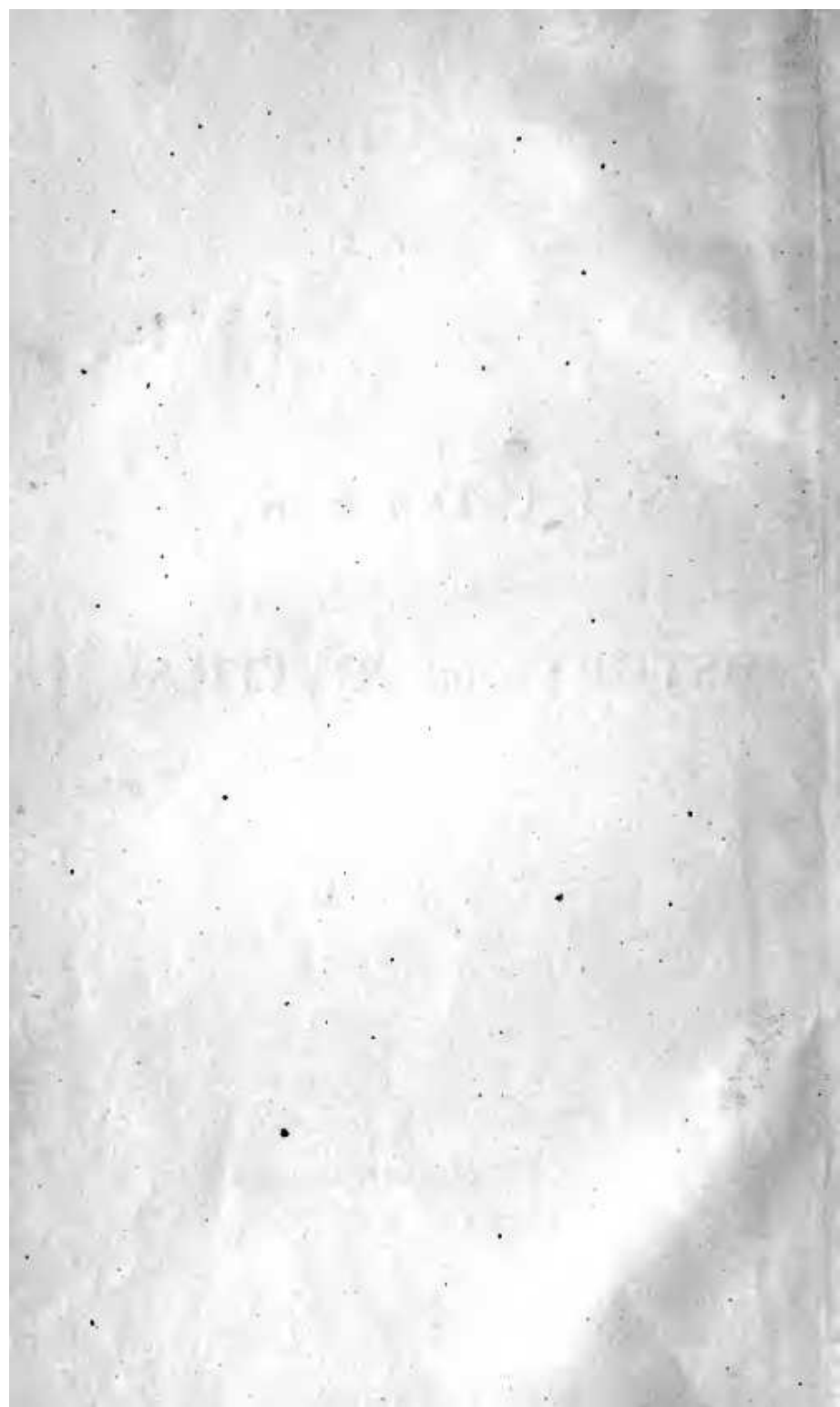
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HERBERT FISHER

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S T U D I E S
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HISTORY and POLITICS



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HISTORY and POLITICS

By

The Right Honourable

HERBERT FISHER

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PREFACE

IF within the modest circle of my readers there be those who surmise that these essays have been composed during the ample leisure of official life, let me hasten to disabuse their innocence. No such golden moments of lettered ease sweeten the austere labours of a member of His Majesty's administration, for though in the present crisis of the public nerves it would be unfashionable to assume that he (or any one else) earns his salary, it remains a sombre fact that for a Minister of the Crown an eight-hour day is a luxury beyond the wildest dreams of avarice. The papers, then, which have been here gathered together, belong to a previous, and more tranquil, stage of my existence, albeit one has been published and others have received some fresh critical touches since I was called upon to address myself to public affairs. The first, third, fifth, and sixth papers were brought out in the *Quarterly Review*, the second in the *Edinburgh Review*, the fourth in the *Contemporary Review*, the eighth in the *Hibbert Journal*. The paper on 'Imperial Administration' was read at King's College and has been published by Messrs. Macmillan in a volume entitled *The Empire and the Future*. The ninth paper on the 'Value of Small States' was contributed to the valuable series of war pamphlets issued by the Delegates of the Clarendon Press. Only the last two pieces in the volume have so far escaped the scrutiny of the printer, the proof-reader, and the public. For their substance I am indebted to a course of lectures delivered by me at Oxford in my capacity as Chichele Lecturer on Foreign History three years before the outbreak of the Great War.

To the publishers of the pieces which are here reprinted I owe sincere acknowledgements for their generous courtesy.

H. F.

Sept. 1919.

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*The Last of the Latin Historians*¹

A STERN and melancholy interest, hardly to be matched in any other epoch, attaches to the records of the Roman Empire in the fourth century of our era. The old world was passing away in storm and agony, its frontiers assailed, its creeds challenged and perplexed, its social tissue suffering a slow and steady process of degeneration, which the political science of that time might note but was impotent to analyse or to cure. It was an age of bitter factions, when the demise of an emperor gave the signal for turmoil, intrigue, or civil war; when, even within the Christian circle, sect contended with sect in savage and unrelenting animosity, and great political interests were often sacrificed to the vile machinations of the palace. And meanwhile the Empire was assaulted on all sides, by the Persians in Mesopotamia, by the Goths in Thrace, by the Germans on the Gaulish frontier—a contest waged with varying fortunes and exhibiting abundant proof that the legions of Rome had lost neither the discipline nor the coolness of their ancient renown, but nevertheless revealing to the

¹ 1. *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum libros qui supersunt recensuit rhythmicèque distinxit Carolus U. Clark.* Vol. I, libri xiv-xxv. Berlin: Weidmann, 1910.

2. *Die verlorenen Bücher des Ammianus Marcellinus.* By Hugo Michael. Breslau: Maruschke, 1880.

3. *Ammien Marcellin, sa vie et son œuvre.* By Jean Gimazane. Toulouse: Chauvin, 1889.

4. *Die geschichtliche Litteratur über die römische Kaiserzeit.* By H. Peter. Leipzig: Teubner, 1897.

5. *The Text Traditions of Ammianus Marcellinus.* By C. U. Clark. New Haven, 1904.

6. *Ammien Marcellin.* By L. Dautremer. Lille, 1899.

7. *Studien zu Ammianus Marcellinus.* By W. Klein. Leipzig: Weicher, 1914.