

**THE ROMANCE OF THE  
EMPEROR OCTAVIAN; NOW  
FIRST PUBLISHED FROM MSS.  
AT LINCOLN AND CAMBRIDGE**

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The Romance of the Emperor Octavian; Now First Published from MSS. at Lincoln and  
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EDITED BY

JAMES ORCHARD HALLIWELL, ESQ., F.R.S.

HON. M.A.I.A., HON. M.B.E.L.

And Corresponding Member of the Comité des Arts et Monuments.

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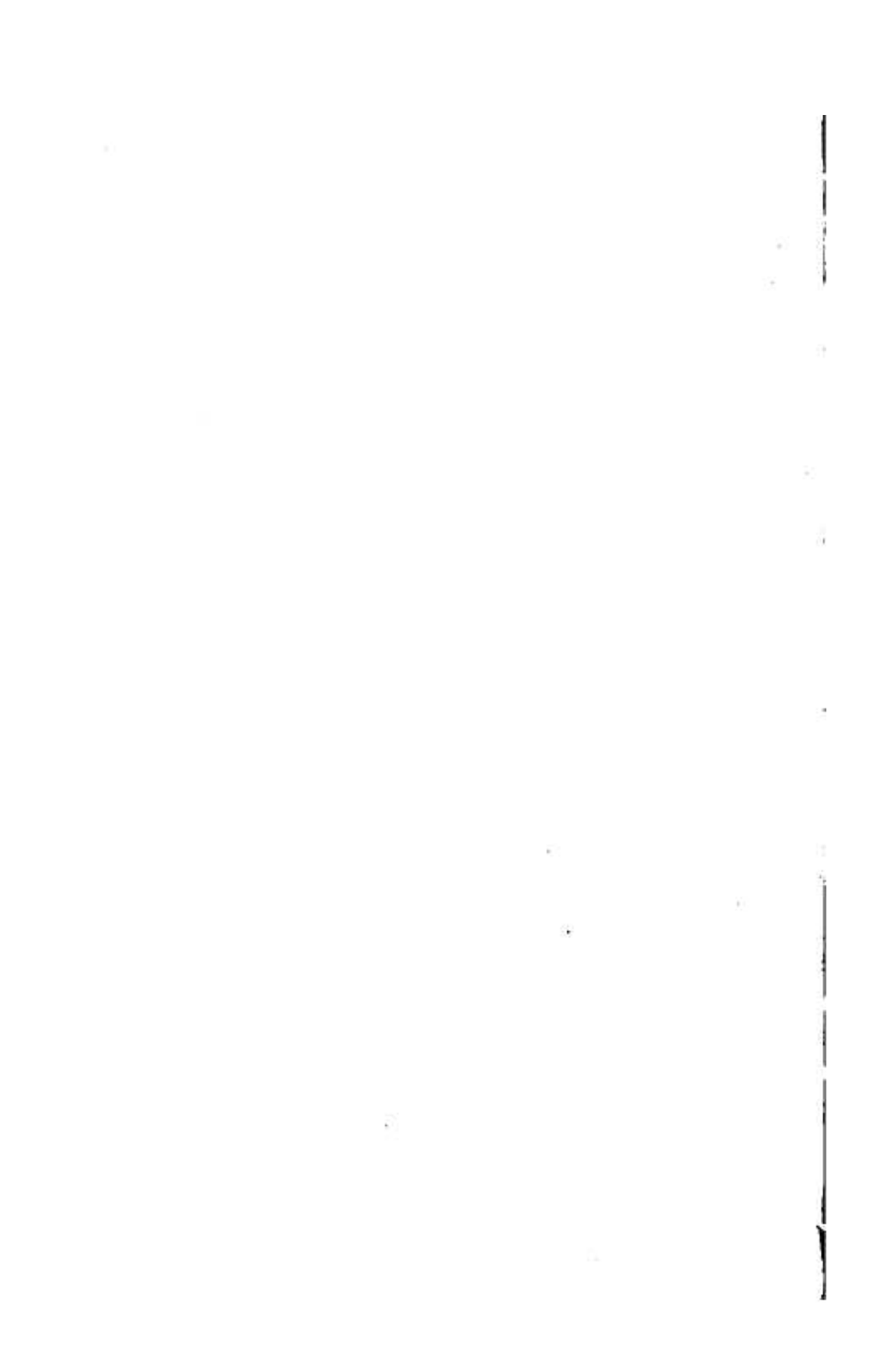
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## PREFACE.

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WHEN Weber printed the romance of Octovian from MS. Cotton. Calig. A. ii., he was not aware that the other copy which he mentioned as existing at Cambridge, in MS. More 690, was an entirely different version, or rather translation, of the French original. This fact was also unknown to Conybeare, who published an analysis of the Anglo-Norman romance, although with more caution, he alludes to it as "another poem with the same title;" referring to Warton, who had previously noticed that the commencing lines of the two MSS. differed. It does not, however, appear that either Percy, or any of these writers, had examined the Cambridge version, and as it completely differs from the other in its composition, and occasionally in the conduct of the story, it appeared to the editor well worthy of publication; and in the course of his task, he has had the advantage of comparing the text with another copy of the same version preserved in the Thornton manuscript, a very valuable volume in the

library of Lincoln Cathedral. The principal variations afforded by the Lincoln MS. will be found in the notes.

Only one copy of the French original is known to exist, a poem of about 5600 lines, in a MS. on vellum of the fourteenth century, in the Bodleian library, MS. Hatton 100. It commences as follows :—

*Içi commence la romanz de Othevien, empereor de Rome.*

Seigneur, preudom, or escoutés,  
 Qui les bones chançons amés ;  
 D'une tant bone oir porrés,  
 Jà de meilleur dire n'orrés,  
 Des grans merveilles qui sunt faites,  
 Et de Latin en Romanz traites.  
 Apres un jor qui jadis fu,  
 Ot à Paris un roi cremu,  
 Qui Dragonbers fu apelés.  
 Plus fiers home de lui ne fu nés,  
 Ne miex seust terre tenir,  
 Ne ses anemis estormir.  
 Famme prist de grant renon,  
 Gente de cors et de façon.  
 Un pere avoit de fier corage,  
 Car moult estoit de haut lignage,  
 Mult durement estoit preudon ;  
 Loteires fu només par non.  
 Dagonbers dont m'oiés conter,  
 Fist Sain Denis faire fonder.  
 Mult ama Diex mult fermement ;  
 Loteires fu de mult grant aage,  
 Et se chei en grant malage.

Famme pristuoit à sa fil doner,  
Et de le roiaume coroner.

From the sixth line it appears that the tale was originally composed in Latin; and this is partially confirmed by the following passage in Weber's version :—

“ Be Seyne water, *seyd the Latin*,  
Without bost,  
Maryners hym broghte to the maryn  
Of Gene cost.”

But the French is also referred to in the same piece, and there can be little doubt that both the English versions were derived immediately from the Anglo-Norman.

There are several early notices of this romance in English writers. William Nassyngton, in his “*Mirroure of Life*,” written before the year 1384, thus alludes to it :—

“ I warne ȝow ferst ate benyngnyng,  
I wyl make ȝow no veyn carpyng  
Of dethes, of armes, ne of amours,  
As doth menstrale and jestoures,  
That maketh carpyng in many place  
Of *Octonyane* and *Ysambrace*,  
And of many other gastes,  
Namely when they cum to festes ;  
Ne of the lyf of *Bewis of Hamptoun*,  
That was a knyȝt of gret renoun,  
Ne of syre *Gy of Werewyke*,  
Alle-ȝif hit myȝte som men lyke.”

*MS. Bodl. 48, f. 47.*