

**PORTRAITURES OF
JULIUS CAESAR; A
MONOGRAPH**

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Portraits of Julius Caesar; a monograph by Frank Jesup Scott

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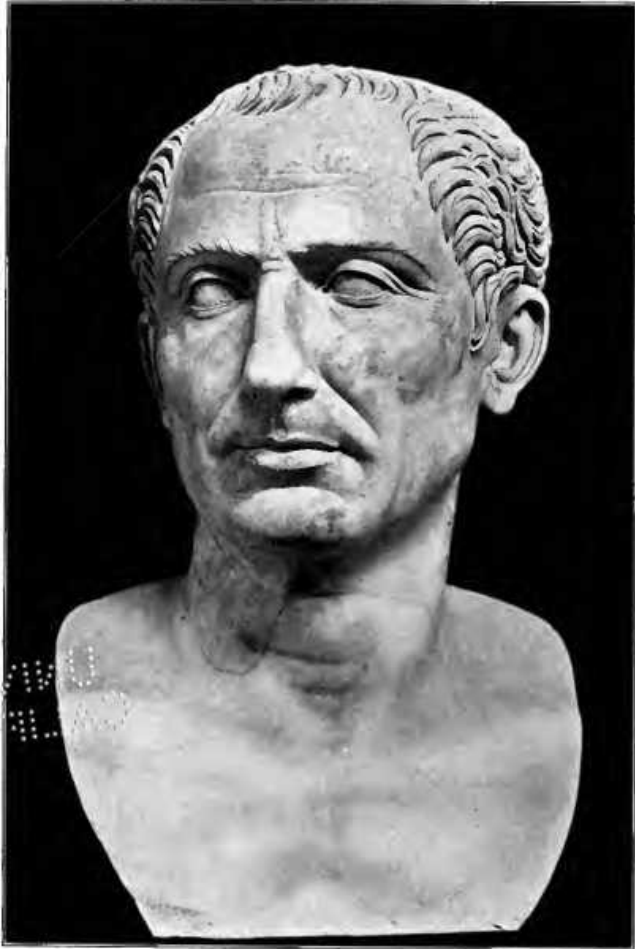
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FRANK JESUP SCOTT

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COLOSSAL BUST OF JULIUS CAESAR, OF THE MUSEUM OF NAPLES

PORTRAITURES OF JULIUS

CÆSAR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: DATA OF JUDGMENT OF PORTRAITS

ONE needs make no apology for admiration of great men, whether they lived thousands of years ago, or now influence the affairs of living nations. A man who made so great a mark upon ages far remote that the recorded facts of his career still reverberate through the halls of knowledge, and take on greater sound and significance the more they are known, is the man we may be very sure is worth studying. Reading the biographies of such men has a perpetual fascination for us, so that neither the narrowness of provincial conceit, nor — what is very like it — of national pride, can smother or much abate our appreciation; though the great ones be of nations or races quite alien to our own, and thousands of years in their ashes. Confucius, Moses, Rameses, Homer, Gautama, Solon, Plato, Archimedes, Alexander the Great, Demosthenes, Julius Cæsar, Christ, Charlemagne, Michael Angelo, Columbus, Francis Bacon, Shakespeare, Peter the Great, Martin Luther, Newton, Voltaire, Franklin, Washington, Mirabeau, Napoleon, Garibaldi, Thiers, Victor Hugo,

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Bismarck, Darwin, Lincoln, and a thousand others perhaps equally illustrious, scattered through all periods of historic time, derive very little additional interest from their nearness to, or remoteness from, our own time. Each has his special halo, and in general it beams with so wide a light that it must be a blinded mind that does not see in each life named something that has influenced the human race on every side with an undying influence. Curiosity prompts every wide-awake mind to know more and more of such men. How they lived, moved, and worked in their own times, what they did, how they did it, how they looked, what people about them said of them, if they were powerful or conspicuous; or how, if unknown and unappreciated in their lives, their influence became great only as the intelligence of succeeding ages enabled men to understand them,—all these things make the biographies of great men at once the most fascinating and the most instructive of reading. If the historical biographies concerning the great things they did contain also facts and incidents from which we learn their merely personal and commonplace peculiarities and habits, these give a greatly added zest to our interest. Even their faults and their foibles to some minds furnish the most piquant part of the biography; since they satisfy the vanity of the humblest reader by leaving in his mind the assurance that every great man was in some way just like himself.

In ancient times sculptures in stone and casts in bronze were the most approved means to preserve the

likenesses of men of distinction. Those fine arts only reached great perfection in portraiture in the prosperous era of Greece, though some approximation to good sculptural portraiture is found in previous Assyrian and Egyptian civilization. How early painting may have been used with skill and power to accurately portray distinguished people it is hard to determine, since the lesser durability and resistance of paint on plaster walls, or on wood and canvas, leaves us only guess-work as to what may have been done earlier than that era of the Roman Empire when the paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried; that is to say, painting as it was practised in the reigns of the first Roman emperors. Those paintings, preserved through eighteen hundred years without blemish, prove that in the delineation of graces of form, and plays of the imagination concerning the gods and goddesses of their mythology, as well as in the technique of painting, the artists of that day had little to learn from later times. But in portraits of their contemporaries, no matter how famous, those painters have left us but the smallest evidences of their skill; so that we may fairly infer that the art of sculpture which developed so marvellously in Greece many centuries before, and immortalized in stone so many of her citizens whose deeds were also commemorated in her literature, was the only art by which life-like portraits have been preserved.

Long before, in India, Assyria, Persia, and Egypt, it is true that profile portraits were cut with exquisite art in gems, and by the Etruscans before Rome was; but

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these can rarely be so perfect as portraits of larger size. Yet, in connection with the preserved coins of all ages, they furnish a vast mass of histrionic study in modern museums.

It was perhaps about a thousand years after Christ that out of the barbarism of the feudal ages the nebulae of the fine arts began to glow here and there in the cities of Europe. Religious subjects claimed right of way, but, in a few centuries after, the pencils that were particularly deft in the delineation of holy virgins, saints, and muscular deities, were not less perfect in portraiture; so that in the fifteenth century the very highest level of perfection was reached in Italy. Whoever had great rank, money, or other cause of celebrity, had no reason to be omitted from such immortality as the painters and sculptors of Italy could make for them. The arts of engraving followed; then printing. At last, in our own age, the Daguerrian and photographic arts enable all men women and children to be kept in remembrance so long as they are esteemed enough to have their pictures preserved from fire and the waste-basket. Many have an ephemeral life in albums and newspapers; a smaller number in good magazines; a still smaller number in books that may be permanent; and of the latter a selected few become the survivals of the fittest, and candidates for positions among the immortals. Each century sees a dropping out of a considerable part, so that the names which remain on the roll of fame two thousand years after they lived do not require the folios of

the modern biographical dictionary to contain them. It will be a puzzle to the antiquarians of two thousand years hence, recovering beautifully executed heads in marble or bronze of very interesting looking men, to decide whether they were nobodies in history, or if they may represent some of the names whose work has been immortalized in literature. In the days when Greece was the light of the world, all of her great men were done in marble, and well done. In Rome, afterwards, they were as generally done, but, I think, not quite so well done. As Rome overgrew Greece all the fine arts became its glory also. For a few centuries before and after Julius Cæsar, nearly every citizen who acquired reputation or notoriety in Rome was likely to be well or badly portrayed by some sculptor. Those who were very prominent in public affairs, especially if they were rich, were likely to find good artists; but this general rule was as likely to have had exceptions then as now. Distinguished sculptors sometimes make bad work in portraiture; and some periods do not develop great artists. Of most Greek and Roman celebrities there remain many good likenesses, while of Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, and Assyrian few, very few, portraits are found, though great men doubtless existed in as great proportion among those nations as among those who learned to crystallize them in stone or to embalm them in literature.

Julius Cæsar, born one hundred years before Christ, is distinguished apart from all the other great names of antiquity in being recognized as standing on the dividing

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line between the antique and the modern world. Anthony Trollope declares that his *Commentaries* are the beginning of modern history. He may be said, figuratively, to have set his heel on the old forms of government, and to have blazed the way for something new and untried, based on popular suffrage, guarded by a sufficient central power. He is among those extraordinary men of all time who not only came into life on a high plane, but was endowed to adorn that level. He was born great, educated to be great, had lofty ambitions to be useful to his country, as well as to be powerful in it, and worked with unflagging resolution to effect reforms in many ways. His personal presence seems to have been one to attract attention, to make friends, and to make enemies. He was early so conspicuous in Rome that before he had attained middle age he had filled every grade of Roman civil service, and had been elected to the highest religious office. Naturally we might expect such a man to be produced in marble by the sculptors even before his military career began. Afterwards, when military glory the most remarkable had placed him at the summit of human power, we know by the literature of his day, as we shall show further on, that his statues were set up in nearly every city on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Though himself never either king or emperor in Rome, his name became more illustrious in its history than that of any king, consul, or general who preceded him, and greater than any of the long line of historic emperors who followed him. Two thousand years have passed since he was the world's