

**OVID**

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Ovid by Alfred Church

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**ALFRED CHURCH**

**OVID**



# OVID

BY THE

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THE extracts from the 'Metamorphoses' are, with one exception (marked "C."), taken from Mr Henry King's admirable version of that poem (Blackwood & Sons, 1871). The translations in Chapter II marked "D.," are from a volume to which Dryden and others contributed. A passage from the Epistle of Laodamia to Protesilaus, and also the Elegy on the death of Tibullus, both in the same chapter, are taken—the former, from a little collection of Translations and Poems by Miss E. Garland (Liverpool, 1842); the latter (a translation by Professor Nichol) from Mr James Cranstoun's 'Elegies of Tibullus.' For the other translations, except where an obligation is specially acknowledged, I am myself responsible.

As regards the banishment of the Poet, I have to express my obligations to an article by Dr Dyer, published in the 'Classical Museum.'

A. C.

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# OVID.

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## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY LIFE—THE AUGUSTAN AGE OF ROMAN LOVE-POETRY.

OVID, like Horace, is his own biographer. In some respects he is even more communicative than his fellow-poet. Horace, for instance, is reticent, as a rule, about his own compositions. The writer of the Odes might, for all we know, be a different man from the author of the Satires or the author of the Epistles. Ovid, on the contrary, takes good care that his readers should be well acquainted with the list of his works. Then, again, there is something very shadowy and unreal about the beauties to whom Horace pours forth his passion or his reproaches. Lydia, Chloe, Barine, Lalage, Glyceria — there is scarcely one of them all whom we may venture to pronounce anything more than a creation of the poet's fancy. But Ovid's Corinna, the one mistress to whom he dedicates his song, is only too real. Who she was, of what rank

and character, the learned have disputed; but that she was a real personage no one doubts. And then he gives us the most copious and exact information about his birthplace, his family, his education, his marriage, his fortunes in general. Yet, for all this, the personality of the man himself seems to elude us. Some one has said that we should recognise Horace were we to meet him in the street. Short and corpulent, the sunny and cheerful youthfulness of his face belying his white hair, his gay figure seems familiar to us. We are acquainted with all his tastes and habits; he confesses his faults; his virtues show themselves. Ovid does not give us such confidences. The most exact statement that he ever makes about his own character—that though his verse was loose his life was pure—we must be permitted to disbelieve. The real Ovid is almost as unknown to us as is the real Virgil. Nevertheless, there is more to be said of him than can be contained within the limits of this volume. And here it may be said, once for all, that much will have to be omitted, not only for want of space, but for yet more imperative reasons of morality and good taste.

PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO was born at Sulmo, a town in Peligni, a district of Northern Italy which took its name from one of the Samnite tribes. The Samnites, Rome's stoutest antagonist in her early struggles for the supremacy of Italy, nearly overthrew her empire when it had been extended over all the shores of the Mediterranean. It was with the Marsi, the neighbours of the Peligni on the west, that the war of the

Italian allies against Rome, commonly called by historians the Social War, began. Ovid recounts, with a pride which may seem strange in a loyal Roman, the part which his own countrymen had taken in the struggle—

“Whom freedom's voice to noble warfare led,  
When their own allies were the Romans' dread.”

But in truth the poet was not venturing on any dangerous ground in thus writing. The cause of the allies had been closely connected with the cause of the democracy. And the Roman empire, like another empire of our own times, had inherited the democratic traditions. “Their cause,” says Velleius Paterculus, a younger contemporary of Ovid, and conspicuous for his flattery of Augustus and Tiberius, “was as righteous as their fate was terrible, for they sought to be citizens of the state whose sway they defended with their swords.” The emperors would find no offence in sympathy with the opponents of that aristocracy on the ruins of whose power their own throne was founded. The poet speaks more than once of the fertility and healthfulness of his native district. These blessings it chiefly owed to its copious and un-failing streams. Its pastures never dried up, even under the scorching suns of an Italian summer. Its water-meadows are specially mentioned. It produced wheat in abundance; and its light fine soil was even better adapted for the vine and the olive. The town of Sulmo boasted a high antiquity. A fanciful etymology found in the word the name of a companion of