

**BOOKS I. AND II. OF  
THE ANNALS  
OF TACITUS**

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Books I. and II. Of the Annals of Tacitus by A. H. Beesly

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**A. H. BEESLY**

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TACITUS.

BOOKS I. AND II.

*BOOKS I. AND II.*  
OF THE  
ANNALS OF TACITUS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH:

WITH

*NOTES AND MARGINAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTERS.*

BY

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## PREFACE.

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IT WAS LATELY ASKED, 'For whom does the great army of translators work?' And if we grant Roger Ascham's dictum that 'even the best translation is for mere necessity but an evil impeded thing to fly withal,' the question does not seem very easy to answer. I suppose, however, that any careful translation, though it must be a labour, is a labour of love, and that primarily the translator works to please himself. Good, bad, or indifferent as the present attempt to translate an author and a book, perhaps the least of all authors and books susceptible of translation, may be thought to be, this has certainly been the case with me. I have worked patiently through each chapter, sentence by sentence, never knowingly shirking any difficulty. Indeed, I am afraid that, as in making bread, too much handling of the dough spoils the loaves, I have often injured instead of improved renderings by repeated alterations.

At first I tried to reproduce every phrase, even military terms, by the nearest modern equivalent. But as I found that very few technical words admitted of uniform translation, I gave this up, and have left such words as *legio*, *centurio*, &c., un-



altered. Other words, such as 'legatus,' I have translated in various ways, according to the context.

I have made no attempt systematically to imitate Tacitus's style. My aim has been to preserve the sense at all costs, by terse translation if I could, if I could not, by amplification. I doubt very much whether any English translation could preserve the sense, and at the same time successfully imitate the artificial simplicity and Virgilian phraseology of a style which is at once epigrammatic, rhetorical, and poetic, unless it should contrive to combine harmoniously the characteristics of Gibbon with those of Mr. Kinglake and Mr. Carlyle.

On the other hand I may be thought to have reproduced too often the involutions of the Latin sentence. The chief difficulty of all translators is, of course, to steer with judgment between the Scylla and Charybdis of too bald and too free renderings. But to know beforehand that what you are reading is a translation is often a temptation to condemn its style unfairly. Parallels to every paragraph of which the English is good and the sentences are grammatical, might, I venture to think, be produced in abundance from almost any of our standard Histories. Let any one open at random a volume of some English Historian, and he will be surprised to find how numerous are the passages, which, unless he knew the contrary, he would, from the mere structure of the sentences, pronounce to be translations.

What I should be glad to think I had done, would be to enable an unclassical reader to take up this book and read it with something of the same interest

he would an English history. As the teaching of English becomes more and more prominent in schools, and the class educated in modern while uneducated in dead languages becomes every day larger, we may surely expect an increased demand for translations literal enough to represent fairly the original, and spirited enough to convey much of its interest. If I have failed, it is not for want of having striven at least to approach to such an ideal, and I have fully realised the truth of the Earl of Roscommon's lines :—

The men who labour and digest things most,  
Will be much apter to despond than boast.  
For if your author be profoundly good,  
T'will cost you dear before he's understood.

The text followed is that of Orelli.

A. H. B.

Marlborough College,  
Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1860.

