

INTRODUCTION

This book is devoted mainly to three little-known authors of the fourth century A.D. Their erroneous treatment of Roman history has been emphasized sufficiently often in the past to make it unnecessary for me to enlarge on the subject, far less to act as apologist.

The aim of this book is to elucidate the degree to which these historians may be considered authoritative for their own time, with special emphasis on one aspect, namely, the extent to which they reflect certain prevailing ideas about the Roman Empire and its history. This question has never yet, to my knowledge, been raised. In the case of the three historians to be discussed here, Aurelius Victor, Eutropius and Festus, the point is not only of interest in itself, but also in view of the fact that their works are far from similar, though they were written within about ten years of each other.

The first chapter is devoted to Florus, the first of the epitomists of Roman history to attain individual stature in our eyes. Numerous problems with which his successors had to deal two hundred years later are already to be found in his writings.

A considerable part of my spare time during the last seven years has been spent on this study. Some of the preliminary results have already been published in *Mnem.* 18 (1965) and *Mnem.* 21 (1968). Apart from the first chapter, however, no detail whatsoever has previously been published in its present form; even the first chapter has been revised in places.

In recent years I was granted several opportunities for discussing a number of problems that arise in this book with colleagues abroad, for whose helpfulness I am most grateful. I lectured on various aspects of the subject-matter in Munich, Erlangen, Würzburg, Rome, Leeds, and London. I recall with gratitude the illuminating discussions with many colleagues and their students in seminars held during my visits to a number of German and British universities. I profited greatly from my discussions with E. Badian, K. von Fritz, F. Klingner, S. Mazzarino, and A. D. Momigliano. To all of these, named and unnamed, I am greatly indebted.

The translation is the result of the combined efforts of Mrs I. Rike and Miss M. Jokel. The author is greatly in their debt for the skill with which they have avoided the numerous pitfalls involved in any work of translation. For any faults that in spite of their vigilance still remain I am of course responsible. The fact that this book can appear in 1972 is due to the kind assistance of Drs. E. Ch. L. van der Vliet and R. S. Brink of the Department of Ancient History at Leiden, who helped see this volume through the press during my absence in Ann Arbor in the academic year 1971-1972.

Thanks are due to the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.) for subsidising the work of translation. I should also like to express my gratitude to E. J. Brill and their Classical Editor, T. A. Edridge, for helping to make this publication possible.

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