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Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
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Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Vinci
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
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London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
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**Tacitus and Bracciolini The
Annals Forged in the XVth
Century**

John Wilson Ross

Imprint

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**I DEDICATE
TO MY ESTEEMED AND ESTIMABLE BROTHER ROBERT
DALRYMPLE ROSS**

This Research into The Authorship of the Annals of Tacitus

**AS A VERY SLIGHT TOKEN OF MY AFFECTION AND ALSO
OF MY ADMIRATION FOR HIS RARE ASSEMBLAGE OF
QUALITIES LOFTY MORAL RECTITUDE THE KINDLIEST
FEELINGS OF THE HEART DEVOTION TO HIGH OCCUPA-
TION APTITUDE FOR BOOKS AS FOR AFFAIRS**

AND

**A REFINED ENLIGHTENMENT TO APPRECIATE THE GENI-
US OF TACITUS AND OF BRACCIOLINI**

AND

**FULLY TO APPREHEND AN INVESTIGATION UNDERTAKEN
IN THE TRUE INTERESTS OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE.**

PREFACE

The theory broached in this book involves a charge of the grossest fraud against a most distinguished man, who rose to high posts in public affairs and won imperishable fame in letters. There being blots on his moral character, it would be censurable to fasten upon his memory this new imputation of dishonesty, were it not substantiated by irresistible evidence.

The title of this book quite explains what its design is,—to contribute something towards settling the authorship of the *Annals of Tacitus*, which encomiastic admirers imagine to be the most extraordinary history ever penned, and the writer "but one degree removed from inspiration, if not inspired." This wondrous writer I assert to be the famous Florentine of the Renaissance, Poggio Bracciolini, in favour of which view I have tried to make out a case by bringing forward a variety of passages from the "History" and the "Annals" to show an extensive series of contradictions as to facts and characters, departures from truth about matters connected with ancient Roman life, laches in grammar and use of words that never could have proceeded from any patrician or plebian of the world-renowned old Commonwealth, with a number of other things that will readily strike the intelligent and sober mind as utterly inconsistent with the existing belief of the "Annals" being the production of Tacitus. All this is case in the shade for the fullest light to be thrown on the subject, when not wishing to make my theory a matter of speculation but founded in common sense, I give a detailed history of the forgery, from its conception to its completion, the sum that was paid for it, the abbey where it was transcribed, and other such convincing minutiae taken from a correspondence that Poggio carried on with a familiar friend who resided in Florence.

A reader of acumen and critical faculty following a writer in an inquiry of this nature places himself in the position of a lawyer who will not accept the interpretation of an Act of Parliament, or even a

clause in it, as correct, except,—as his phrase goes,—it "runs upon all fours:" he knows that it is with a speculation in a literary matter as with a chapter of a statute: he struggles to raise only a single valid objection against what is advanced: if successful he at one destroys the whole of the theory, from thus exposing it to view as not "running upon all fours;" the fabric is, in fact, discovered to be reared on a false foundation; it must, therefore, fall as at the slightest breath a child's house built of cards; and the theory becomes one more added to the list of those that are apocryphal. If on examination it should be agreed that the theory in this book is without a flaw, I conceived that I shall have done not a small, but a considerable service to the cause of true history.

LONDON, *April 3, 1878.*

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BOOK THE FIRST.

TACITUS.

"Allusiones saepe subobscurae ... mihi conjectandi aliquando, et aliquando exploratae veritatis fundamento innitendi materiam praebuere."

DE TONELLIS. Praef. ad Poggii Epist.

TACITUS AND BRACCIOLINI.

CHAPTER I.

TACITUS COULD BARELY HAVE WRITTEN THE ANNALS.

I. From the chronological point of view.—II. The silence preserved about that work by all writers till the fifteenth century.—III. The age of the MSS. containing the Annals.

I. The Annals and the History of Tacitus are like two houses in ruins: dismantled of their original proportions they perpetuate the splendour of Roman historiography, as the crumbling remnants of the Coliseum preserve from oblivion the magnificence of Roman architecture. Some of the subtlest intellects, keen in criticism and expert in scholarship, have, for centuries, endeavoured with considerable pains, though not with success in every instance, to free the imperfect pieces from difficulties, as the priesthood of the Quindecimvirs, generation after generation, assiduously, yet vainly, strove

to clear from perplexities the mutilated books of the Sibyls. I purpose to bring,—parodying a passage of the good *Sieur Chanvalon*,—not freestone and marble for their restoration, but a critical hammer to knock down the loose bricks that, for more than four centuries, have shown large holes in several places.

Tacitus is raised by his genius to a height, which lifts him above the reach of the critic. He shines in the firmament of letters like a sun before whose lustre all, Parsee-like, bow down in worship. Preceding generations have read him with reverence and admiration: as one of the greatest masters of history, he must continue to be so read. But though neither praise nor censure can exalt or impair his fame, truth and justice call for a passionless inquiry into the nature and character of works presenting such difference in structure, and such contradictions in a variety of matters as the *History* and the *Annals*.

The belief is general that Tacitus wrote Roman history in the retrograde order, in which Hume wrote the *History of England*. Why Hume pursued that method is obvious: eager to gain fame in letters,—seeing his opportunity by supplying a good *History of England*,—knowing how interest attaches to times near us while all but absence of sympathy accompanies those that are remote,—and meaning to exclude from his plan the incompleting dynasty under which he lived,—he commenced with the House of Stuart, continued with that of Tudor, and finished with the remaining portion from the Roman Invasion to the Accession of Henry VII. But why Tacitus should have decided in favour of the inverse of chronological order is by no means clear. He could not have been actuated by any of the motives which influenced Hume. Rome, with respect to her history, was not in the position that England was, with respect to hers, in the middle of the last century. All the remarkable occurrences during the 820 years from her Foundation to the office of Emperor ceasing as the inheritance of the Julian Family on the death of Nero, had been recorded by many writers that rendered needless the further labours of the historian. Tacitus states this at the commencement of his history, and as a reason why he began that work with the accession of Galba: "*Initium mihi operis Servius Galba iterum, Titus Vinius consules erunt; nam post conditam urbem, octingentos et viginti prioris aevi annos multi auctores retulerunt.*"