

LECTURES
ON
THE HISTORY OF ROME,

FROM
THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE FALL OF THE
WESTERN EMPIRE.

BY
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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TO HIS MAJESTY
FREDERIC WILLIAM THE FOURTH,
KING OF PRUSSIA,

THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PUPIL OF NIEBUHR,
THE GENUINE AND MUNIFICENT ADMIRER OF HIS MERITS,

THIS WORK
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE EDITOR.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of the present lectures, published in 1844, was based entirely upon notes taken during their delivery in the University of Bonn, in the years 1828 and 1829, the last time that Niebuhr lectured on Roman history. When Dr. Isler was afterwards entrusted with the preparation of a German edition of the same lectures, he thought it right to avail himself also of the notes of an earlier course of lectures on the same subject, which Niebuhr had delivered during the winter of 1826 and 1827. In this earlier course, the historian did not embrace the whole history of Rome, but only the portion from the earliest times down to the death of Sertorius¹, and he was consequently enabled to treat his subject more in detail than in the later course. In preparing the new edition, I have made use of everything which Dr. Isler has thus incorporated in his edition from the course of 1826 and 1827. The amount of this additional matter is very considerable, occupying nearly one hundred pages of the present edition. In the lectures relating to the period subsequent to the death of Sertorius, the additions and corrections are less numerous and important; as for this portion of the history, the German editor had no other notes than such as had been taken during the course of 1828 and 1829; that part of the German edition therefore presents no other differences from the first English edition, than those arising from the fact, that the two editions were formed from sets of notes taken by different students.

In the latest part of the history, however, an important addition has been introduced from the German edition, namely, the history from the death of Constantine down to the overthrow of the Western Empire. The history of that period was not published in the first edition, because I had no manuscript notes referring to that time, having, along with most other students, left the university before Niebuhr ceased lecturing. This part has now been translated from the German edition,

¹ See Lecture lxxxix., vol. ii. p. 405. note 11.

and divided into eight lectures, from p. 320 to the end of Vol. III. As the German edition is not divided into lectures, I applied to Dr. Isler to inform me of the precise point at which each of these additional lectures begins; but it unfortunately happens, that in his own manuscript notes, the lectures are not marked. He kindly pointed out to me, however, the passages, where the different style of writing and the appearance of the ink, seemed to him to indicate the beginning of a new lecture. According to these hints, I have divided the additional portion of the history into eight lectures, without, however, being able to answer for the correctness of that division, which will appear the more doubtful when we consider the extreme brevity of those last lectures. It is, however, not impossible that this brevity may arise from the fact, that the students on whose notes they are based, were less anxious to take down every remark of Niebuhr, and noticed only the principal events mentioned by the lecturer. Few students, moreover, were present during the concluding part of the course, so that the manuscript notes collated by the German editor, were much fewer in number than those relating to the earlier history.

As regards the relation in which the present edition stands to that of Dr. Isler, it must be observed that I have incorporated in my edition, every word and sentiment in the German edition, which was not contained in my edition of 1844, so that the German work comprises nothing which is not to be found in the present volumes. Dr. Isler, who, in his edition, has not adhered to the form of lectures, has by that very circumstance, often been obliged to transfer passages from one place to another: this necessity did not exist for me, and hence I may lay claim to having produced a more faithful representation of the course of lectures, as actually delivered by Niebuhr, than Dr. Isler, who, I may observe by the way, declared to me last autumn, that if he had to do the work again, he would not be inclined to make those transpositions as often as he has done.

It may, perhaps, at first sight appear presumptuous when I assert that the present edition is even more complete than the German; but a comparison of the two editions will soon convince any one who will take the trouble, that in making that assertion, I do not go beyond the bounds of truth, and the

following facts will at once explain the matter. My first edition was founded upon a set of manuscript notes inaccessible to Dr. Isler: they were partly my own—partly those collected by me in Germany. Every one knows that notes taken by one student in a lecture-room may, and do differ widely from those taken by another, every one noting down only that which he happens to think important or interesting. Hence Dr. Isler found in his notes many statements which did not occur in mine, and I, on the other hand, found in my notes many things of which there was no trace in his. Now all such statements as I found in his edition, have been translated and transferred to the present edition: but Dr. Isler's position was different; for although in preparing his work he had my first edition before him, still when he met with a passage which did not occur in his notes, he was not at liberty to translate it from the English, as he was bound scrupulously to preserve the very words and expressions of Niebuhr; and how could he have done so by re-translating from the English into German? Thus it happens that a great many remarks and observations are found in the present edition, which do not appear in the German one.

Several errors occurring in my first edition have been corrected with the aid of Dr. Isler's edition, and some of the difficulties noticed by me in the former edition have been solved by the same means.

In now offering to the public Niebuhr's Lectures on Roman History in the completest form which it is rational to expect, in the circumstances of the case, they will ever be able to assume, I indulge the hope that they may contribute to keep alive and increase the interest in a branch of study which can never fail to be of the deepest interest to enlightened Englishmen.

L. SCHMITZ.

Edinburgh, May, 1849.

Note.—Wherever, in these volumes, reference is made simply to Vol. I., Vol. II., or Vol. III., the reader will understand, that these references are to the three volumes of Niebuhr's History of Rome, translated by Bishop Thirlwall, Archdeacon Haare, Dr. W. Smith, and myself.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

UPWARDS of thirteen years have now elapsed since the death of Niebuhr, and none of the many courses of lectures delivered by him have yet been published. It must at first sight, appear strange that those lectures, which, as far as their intrinsic merits and their suggestive nature are concerned, cannot easily be surpassed, should so long have been neglected by Niebuhr's countrymen; and it will probably appear still more strange that the first attempt to rescue these precious relics is made in this country. But there are circumstances which will account for this apparent neglect of a man, whose opinions on subjects of ancient history must be of the highest interest to every scholar. The main cause is the *pietas* which Niebuhr's pupils feel for their great master, and which has deterred them from publishing anything that might possibly place him before the public in an unfair light. This apprehension arises from the condition of the notes which were taken by his pupils in the lecture-room, and which are the only materials out of which the lectures can be re-constructed, for Niebuhr himself never committed them to paper. The difficulty of casting these confused, fragmentary, and sometimes unintelligible, notes into a proper and intelligible form is indeed so great, that this of itself would be sufficient to deter any one from undertaking a task which is far more irksome than that of producing an original work, and the result of which, however carefully it may be performed, cannot fail to be far indeed from completely satisfactory.

It is not indifference therefore on the part of Niebuhr's pupils, that has so long delayed the publication of any of his courses of lectures, but simply anxiety to do justice to his memory, and the difficulties which present themselves at almost every step. The anxiety to be just towards Niebuhr has gone so far indeed, that when I applied to one of his most eminent pupils to undertake the publication of the lectures on Roman history, or at least to give me his assistance, if he declined the task, he declared that no one ought to venture upon such an

undertaking, unless he felt that he could accomplish it in the manner in which Niebuhr himself would have done it, if the thought of publishing his lectures had occurred to him. Honourable as this feeling is, still, if we were to wait till any of Niebuhr's pupils could, without presumption, say that he was equal to his master, the lectures would in all probability remain buried for ever. I am as anxious as any one to do justice to Niebuhr; but although I am very far from believing that I have attained that competency which my late fellow-student regards as the *conditio sine qua non*, I have been induced by various favourable circumstances to undertake the task; and the completion of the work, with all its defects affords me at least this consolation,—that I have made my best efforts; and that I have spared neither time nor trouble to make the greatest possible use of my materials, without altering any of Niebuhr's sentiments and opinions. With regard to the difficulties of accomplishing this, I think I may say that I have felt them more strongly than others who have merely looked at, without actually trying to overcome them; and the reader of the present work will find indications enough of my inability to solve them in all instances. This fact would have deterred me, like other pupils of Niebuhr, from the undertaking, had I not been favoured by circumstances, among which I mention with gratitude the advice, encouragement, and assistance of my distinguished friends, Bishop Thirlwall, the Chevalier Bunsen, the Rev. Philip Smith, and Dr. William Smith.

In order to put the reader in a position fully to understand these preliminary remarks, it will be necessary for me to give some account of the materials I had to work upon, and of the principles I have endeavoured to follow. The notes, upon which the present work is founded, were made in the winter of 1828-29 and the summer of 1829, when Niebuhr gave a course of lectures on the History of Rome in the University of Bonn, the last time that he ever lectured on that subject. His intention was to relate the history of Rome from the earliest times to the downfall of the Western Empire, during the winter course of 1828-29: but though he delivered five lectures of three quarters of an hour each, every week, the time devoted to them proved insufficient, and he was not able to carry the history further than the reign of Augustus. In order to fulfil his engagement, he resumed the lectures in the summer of 1829,

when the history of the emperors was related, an hour each week being occupied with this subject.

It must be observed that Niebuhr delivered his lectures before young men who were supposed to be acquainted with the leading events of Roman history, or at least to possess an acquaintance with the ancient languages sufficient to enable them to read the Greek and Latin works which are the sources of our knowledge. It was therefore Niebuhr's object not so much to fill their memory with all the details of history, as to enable them to *understand* its important events, and to form correct notions of the men and institutions which occur in the history of Rome. Hence some events were passed over altogether, and others were only slightly alluded to, especially where he could refer his hearers to the ancients themselves for accurate and satisfactory information.

Niebuhr, as a lecturer, was a singular phenomenon; he delivered his discourses extempore, and without having any written notes before him to assist his memory. The form of his lectures was that of a familiar and lively conversation with friends, in which he made use of his most varied and inexhaustible stores of knowledge and personal experience to illustrate the subjects of his discourses, and abandoned himself without restraint to the expression of his strong feelings, as they might be called forth by the subjects under consideration. A few harsh expressions which escaped him under the influence of such passionate feelings have been softened down in the present work, for an expression when printed makes an impression very different from that which it conveys when spoken in the heat of the moment. When Niebuhr spoke, it always appeared as if the rapidity with which the thoughts occurred to him interfered with the power of communicating them in their regular order of succession. Nearly all his sentences, therefore, were anacoluths; for, before having finished one, he began another, perpetually mixing up one thought with another, so that few were completely expressed. This peculiarity was more particularly striking when he was labouring under any mental excitement, which occurred the oftener, as, with his great sensitiveness, he felt that warmth of interest in treating of the history of past ages, which we are accustomed to witness only in discussions on the political affairs of our own time and country. This singular manner of delivering his thoughts —

a deficiency of which Niebuhr himself was painfully conscious — rendered it often extremely difficult to understand him; and it may easily be inferred in what a state of confusion the notes are, which were taken by the students under such circumstances. But, notwithstanding this deficiency in Niebuhr as a lecturer, there was an indescribable charm in the manner in which he treated his subjects: the warmth of his feelings, the sympathy which he felt with the persons and things he was speaking of, his strong conviction of the truth of what he was saying, his earnestness, and, above all, the vividness with which he conceived and described the characters of the most prominent men, who were to him living realities, with souls, feelings, and passions like ourselves, carried his hearers away, and produced effects which are usually the results of the most powerful oratory only. Would that my materials had enabled me in all cases to preserve these features in the lectures which I am now bringing before the public!

Another circumstance, which gave rise to mistakes and confusion in the notes, was the ignorance of Niebuhr's hearers about a countless number of things which he introduced as illustrations of the history of Rome, and which were taken from the history of countries with whose languages we pupils were unacquainted. Hence proper names were constantly misunderstood or misspelt. Niebuhr, moreover, spoke very rapidly; and in addition to all this it must be remembered that students are not trained as short-hand writers, like the reporters of lectures in this country, and that every student notes down as much as he can, or as much as he may think proper or useful to himself, no one being able to write with the rapidity with which a lecturer like Niebuhr speaks. Some slight mistakes also were made by Niebuhr himself, but these were chiefly such as any one engaged in a lively conversation would be apt to commit: for example, the name of one person was occasionally mentioned for that of another, dates were confounded, or the order of events was reversed. Sometimes also he forgot to mention an event in its proper place, and afterwards, when the oversight occurred to him, he stated what he had omitted. All such mistakes, inaccuracies, and inconsistencies, I have endeavoured to remedy tacitly, wherever it was possible for me to do so. These corrections could of course be made only by tracing Niebuhr's statements to their sources,

justice; for Q. Valerius also commanded the fleet; and at a later time we find another praetor in Etruria; nor do we find in Livy, a praetor for the peregrini every year. The expression *praetor peregrinus* is barbarous; Livy, in his fourth decad, always paraphrases the title.¹⁶

Another great change which took place during the war has, from an accidental circumstance, not been fully recognised, and I almost think that I am the first that has drawn attention to it. Dionysius,¹⁷ who calls the first Punic war *Φοινικὸς πόλεμος*, says, that down to its commencement, the Roman commonwealth paid every year the sum of 50,000 minas to defray the expenses of the public festivals and games. This payment then ceased, but the festivals were not discontinued: from this time forward, wealthy individuals were obliged to cover the expenses of the great festivals, which is an imitation of the Greek system of liturgies, and we find it expressly stated, that the expenses were defrayed by the aediles. This was an important change, for as the aedileship was an introduction to the higher offices, this practice could not but produce the most serious consequences. I wonder that Polybius did not see its importance; for while he blames the Carthaginians for selling the highest state-offices, he says nothing about the Romans, who had in reality adopted the same practice; for if an aedile did not gain great popularity by the splendour of his games, he could scarcely hope to obtain any of the higher offices afterwards.

A short time before the beginning of the first Punic war a change had been made, which affected the character of the senate. Originally there had been two quaestors, but their number was doubled; and from the year 485 it was increased to eight.¹⁸ The quaestors were the *seminarium senatus*; he who had been quaestor had the right *sententiam dicendi in senatu*, and the censors were obliged to make him a senator as soon as a vacancy occurred, unless any thing was brought forward against him. The senate had, at first, been the representative of the gentes and curiae. After the plebeians had become eligible, it was left to the discretion of the censors to

¹⁶ This must be understood as follows. previously to the fourth decad, the office is not mentioned at all in Livy, but thenceforward, and in the fifth decad, it occurs more frequently. Respecting the paraphrase, see Sigonius on Livy, xxxiii. 21. 9. ¹⁷ vii. p. 475, ed. Sylburg. ¹⁸ Compare vol. iii. p. 551.

choose persons to fill the vacancies which occurred in it, and the Roman senate was, perhaps, at no time more beneficial to the state than during that period. But this now ceased. If it were possible to devise any means, by which the election of really great and good men could be secured, it would undoubtedly be better than to leave the elections in the hands of the *vulgus imperitum*; but that power of the censors was a dangerous anomaly, as the example of Appius Claudius had shewn. Thenceforth the senate was an assembly elected for life directly by the people. Eight quaestors were appointed every year; after the lapse of thirty years 240 persons had been quaestors, and a great number of men were thus made senators by popular election. The censors, however, continued to have the power of expelling an unworthy individual. At a later period, when the number of quaestors was still greater, and when the tribunes of the people also became senators by virtue of their office, the senate was altogether an assembly whose members were elected by the people.

It was of course not without great difficulty that, after the peace with Carthage, the Romans recovered from their exhaustion; for although they had not seen the enemy in their own country, immense treasures had been lost, and not less than seven hundred ships of war.¹⁹ We know very little of their plans and measures after the restoration of peace; but soon after that event, they had to carry on a war against the Faliscans, which, however, was brought to a close within six days.²⁰ It is an almost unaccountable phenomenon, that during the long period of the Punic war, Italy, with the exception of some isolated movements in Samnium, remained tranquil; and, that after its termination, an insignificant people like the Faliscans could venture to rise against the victorious giant. It may be, that a truce between them and the Romans had expired just at that time; and, that as the Romans may have been unwilling to renew or fulfil its conditions, those unfortunate men were induced by senseless individuals to resist the demands of the Romans by force. Their town was destroyed, as a warning example to the Italians.

Carthage was still worse off than Rome; she was in equal distress, and being the conquered party had to pay, every year a part of the heavy tribute, and the Romans were by no

¹⁹ Polybius, i. 63.

²⁰ Polybius, i. 65, Livy, *Ept. lib. xix.*

paid to them more irregularly than to the Romans. They chose an Umbrian and a Latin of Caes for their leaders, and gave them the title and the ensigns of Roman consuls, a fact mentioned by Zonaras, but passed over by Livy. In general they began to feel their own importance, and saw that, although they were not inferior to the Romans in war, they were disregarded by them on all occasions. The two consuls undertook the command, and entered into an understanding with the two Spanish princes: in short, the affair was of a very serious nature. But when the report of Scipio's recovery arrived in their camp, they immediately lost their courage, and his personal character exercised such an influence, that they gave up all thoughts of an insurrection, and spoke only of reconciliation. The deep cunning of Scipio deceived them: he persuaded them that, in reality, justice was on their side, that he would give them their pay, either as a body, or to every one separately at New Carthage; and, in order to inspire them with full confidence, he sent the trusty garrison of Romans out of the town. The rebels, therefore, believing that they would find Scipio alone in it came in a body; but the columns which were marching out received orders to halt at the gates. The leaders of the insurgents were invited to the houses of several distinguished Roman officers, and were arrested in the night: in the morning the others assembled in the market place without their arms, to receive their pay. The Roman garrison then returned in arms, and compelled the rebels to submit to the will of Scipio. He addressed them, explaining what punishment they deserved, but as he could not expect any advantage from excessive severity, he contented himself with putting to death thirty-five of the most guilty; the others received their pay and were pardoned. The continuation of the war against the Spaniards was easy; the two Spanish princes obtained pardon, on taking an oath that they would remain quiet.

These were Scipio's last actions in Spain; but, before he returned to Rome, he had ventured upon the romantic enterprise of paying a visit to Syphax, king of the Massesylians, or Masasylians, who inhabited the eastern and part of the western portions of Algeria, and whose capital was Cirta.³

³ Livy, xxviii. 17 foll.; Polybius, vii. 19.—The geography of these districts under the dominion of Carthage is most obscure.—N.

Syphax was not tributary to Carthage, but in that state of dependence in which we always find the princes of a barbarous nation when connected with a very wealthy, civilised, and powerful neighbouring state. He served them for money, and acknowledged their supremacy without resistance; and, as has always been the case with the barbarians in those countries, he was sometimes quite the subject of Carthage, while at another time he revolted from her, and soon afterwards again became reconciled with her. When Hasdrubal was in Spain, Syphax was at war with Carthage, made overtures to the Romans in Spain, and requested the Scipios to send over some Roman officers, that he might learn from them the art of conducting war in the manner of the Romans. But peace was concluded with Carthage, and these transactions were not followed by any results⁴, Syphax remaining neutral. Scipio was now induced, by his invitation, to cross over to Africa, and to enter into an alliance with him; for Scipio had, from the first, entertained the very just opinion, that the Carthaginians ought to be attacked in Africa. At the court of Syphax, Scipio met at a banquet Hasdrubal, the son of Gisgo, who had arrived there as ambassador from Carthage. The conduct of Syphax towards the Romans had, undoubtedly, no other object than to prevent the Carthaginians becoming too powerful, and to obtain from them as much money as possible. Surely, we have every reason to wonder, that Scipio was not sold to the Carthaginians for some enormous sum.

Everything was now finished in Spain, and Scipio returned to Italy, where, however, he obtained no triumph, because he had not been invested with a curule office during the war; but all honours were shown to him. He was still pro-consul; he had been aedile⁵, but not praetor, and he now offered himself as a candidate for the consulship. The *lex annalis* was already in force, and he had not yet attained the age prescribed by the law. But all the restrictions of the *lex annalis* were wisely set aside for the time that the war lasted, and Scipio was made consul by the unanimous votes of all the centuries⁶, for no other person enjoyed such a degree of popularity. The nation longed to see the end of the war, and all expected that he would bring it about. That the Roman aristocrats did not

⁴ Livy, xxiv. 48.

⁵ Livy, xxv. 2.

⁶ Livy, xxviii. 38.

his especial favour, and who were suspected of being the instigators of the attempt. His refusal caused the outbreak of the war, which did not last quite four years, from 581 to 584. The turn it took was quite different from what the Romans had anticipated; for they imagined that it might be brought to a close by a single campaign, like the first war against Macedonia, and that against Antiochus. The war itself, however, came very opportunely for them, for their wish was to overthrow the kingdom of Macedonia; and not merely this, but to place all the relations of those eastern countries upon a different basis, to remove the treaties by which they were restrained, and to introduce an altogether new order of things.

But Perseus began the war with extraordinary resources. Macedonia had for the first time enjoyed a peace of 25 years, and was in a prosperous condition, so that Perseus, independently of his allied troops and 4000 horsemen, had an army of 40,000 foot. As the last books of Livy are mutilated, we cannot form an accurate notion of one part of the operations, and are left in ignorance of their exact connexion. Considering the disproportion of the forces of the belligerent parties, the war lasted very long: but the fact is, that the Roman general conducted it extremely ill; and military talent seems to have been very much on the decline among the Romans at that time. P. Licinius Crassus appeared in Thessaly, where Perseus came to meet him²², and gained a considerable advantage over the cavalry of the Romans, who had many killed and taken prisoners. The king had conceived the mad hope that, by resolute conduct, he would obtain more favourable terms. His calculation, however, was wrong, for the Romans were faithful to their maxim, not to lay down their arms until their enemy was subdued. Negotiations were immediately entered into by the king; but the Romans demanded entire submission to whatever the senate might decide. A battle was then fought in Thessaly, near Sycurium, in which many Romans were slain, and still more were taken prisoners. This victory threw such a lustre around Perseus, that all Greece was on the point of joining him. The Roman fleet, it is true, was a great advantage to the Romans, and a curse to many of the Greek coast-towns. It was now, indeed, opposed by a

²² Livy, xlii. 55, foll.

Macedonian fleet, which was more effectual than had been anticipated; but that of the Romans was superior. With the exception of a few leading men, such as Charops in Epirus, who had been educated at Rome, and boasted of being able to speak Latin, Lyciscus in Actolia, and Callicrates in Achaia, all the Greeks were in favour of Perseus, and against the Romans. Rational men among the Greeks, such as Polybius (who no doubt hated the Romans as cordially as his father Lycortas, but their hatred was different from that of the ignorant multitude) and Philopoemen, wished indeed that the issue of the war might be such as to enable Perseus to maintain himself; but very few had confidence enough to act in reliance upon such an issue. The great mass of the people, however, fancied that it was impossible for Perseus not to conquer the Romans; and after the successful battle in Thessaly, all their heads were completely turned, so that the Greeks indulged in every kind of insolence towards the Romans.²³ We have seen a similar state of feeling in Germany, where a general exasperation against the dominion of the French was manifested, just at the time when their power had reached its height; and whenever the French sustained a trifling loss, some people were foolish enough to imagine that their power was on the decline, and to indulge in the most insulting language against them. Such was not the feeling of men like Polybius or Philopoemen, although they cannot surely have been deceived as to the personal character of Perseus.²⁴ Afterwards, when Polybius lived among the Romans, he resigned himself to his fate, saw the good in their character, and became reconciled to them. The state of affairs at that time, is quite clear from the fragments of his history. It was the hostile feeling towards the Romans which led the Greeks to their own ruin. On every occasion they gave vent to it; and such occasions occurred frequently. The Romans, therefore, likewise looked upon every Greek as an enemy, and acted with the greatest cruelty; the praetor Lucretius made himself particularly notorious. A number of maritime towns were taken, and destroyed or burned to ashes, and the inhabitants were carried away as slaves by the consul A. Hostilius Mancinus. Haliartus and Coronea, in Boeotia, were reduced to ashes. Had Perseus made good use of circumstances and pressed the consul, the

²³ Livy, xlii. 63.

²⁴ Polybius, xxviii. 10.

