

**COMPLETE WORKS OF
DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS
Illustrated
ROMAN ANTIQUITIES. ON
LITERARY COMPOSITION AND
OTHER**

ROMAN ANTIQUITIES

Translated by Earnest Cary

Dionysius of Halicarnassus was a Greek historian and teacher of rhetoric, who flourished during the reign of Caesar Augustus. He taught in Rome while studying the Latin language, collecting material for his history of Rome. His literary style was Atticistic — imitating the classical Greek of Herodotus. His major work, *Roman Antiquities*, embraced the history of Rome from the mythical period to the beginning of the First Punic War. Divided into twenty books, of which the first nine remain entire, while the tenth and eleventh are nearly complete, the remaining books exist in fragments in the excerpts of the Roman Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus and an epitome discovered by Angelo Mai in a Milan manuscript. The first three books of Appian, Plutarch's *Life of Camillus* and *Life of*

Coriolanus are believed to be largely indebted to Dionysius.



Of particular note is Dionysius' version of the Romulus and Remus myth, concerning the legendary founding of Rome. He relates an alternate, "non-fantastical" version of the twins' birth, survival and youth. Numitor manages to switch the twins at birth with two other infants. The twins are delivered by their grandfather to Faustulus to be fostered by him and his wife. Faustulus is descended from the first Greek colonists in Latium. He is the caretaker for Amulius' holdings around Palatine hill. He is then persuaded to

care for the twins by his brother Faustinus, who tends to the kings herds on nearby Aventine Hill. Their adopted mother is Faustus' wife Laurentia, a former prostitute. According to Plutarch, lupa (Latin for "wolf") was a common term for members of her profession and this gave rise to the she-wolf legend. The twins receive a proper education in the city of Gabii.

Dionysius' chief object was to reconcile the Greeks to the rule of Rome, expanding upon the good qualities of their conquerors, suggesting with the support of ancient sources that the Romans were genuine descendants of the older Greeks. According to Dionysius, history is philosophy teaching by examples — though some commentators have been quick to question his bias as a Greek rhetorician. Nevertheless, he carefully consults the best authorities and his work and that of Livy are the only connected and detailed extant accounts of early Roman history.

BOOK I

[1.1] Although it is much against my will to indulge in the explanatory statements usually given in the prefaces to histories, yet I am obliged to prefix to this work some remarks concerning myself. In doing this it is neither my intention to dwell too long on my own praise, which I know would be distasteful to the

reader, nor have I the purpose of censuring other historians, as Anaximenes and Theopompus did in the prefaces to their histories but I shall only show the reasons that induced me to undertake this work and give an accounting of the sources from which I gained the knowledge of the things that I am going to relate.

[2] For I am convinced that all who propose to leave such monuments of their minds to posterity as time shall not involve in one common ruin with their bodies, and particularly those who write histories, in which we have the right to assume that Truth, the source of both prudence and wisdom, is enshrined, ought, first of all, to make choice of noble and lofty subjects and such as will be of great utility to their readers, and then, with great care and pains, to provide themselves with the proper equipment for the treatment of their subject. [3]

For those who base historical works upon deeds inglorious or evil or unworthy of serious study, either because they crave to come to the knowledge of men and to get a name of some sort or other, or because they desire to display the wealth of their rhetoric, are neither admired by posterity for their fame nor praised for their eloquence; rather, they leave this opinion in the minds of all who take up their histories, that they themselves admired lives which were of a piece with the writings they published, since it is a just and a general opinion that a man's words are the images of his mind. [4] Those, on the other hand, who, while making choice of

the best subjects, are careless and indolent in compiling their narratives out of such reports as chance to come to their ears gain no praise by reason of that choice; for we do not deem it fitting that the histories of renowned cities and of men who have held supreme power should be written in an offhand or negligent manner. As I believe these considerations to be necessary and of the first importance to historians and as I have taken great care to observe them both, I have felt unwilling either to omit mention of them or to give it any other place than in the preface to my work.

[2.1] That I have indeed made choice of a subject noble, lofty and useful to many will not, I think, require any lengthy argument, at least for those who are not utterly unacquainted with universal history. For if anyone turns his attention to the successive supremacies both of cities and of nations, as accounts of them have been handed down from times past, and then, surveying them severally and comparing them together, wishes to determine which of them obtained the widest dominion and both in peace and war performed the most brilliant achievements, he will find that the supremacy of the Romans has far surpassed all those that are recorded from earlier times, not only in the extent of its dominion and in the splendor of its achievements — which no account has as yet worthily celebrated — but also in the length of time during which it has endured down to our day. [2] For the

empire of the Assyrians, ancient as it was and running back to legendary times, held sway over only a small part of Asia. That of the Medes, after overthrowing the Assyrian empire and obtaining a still wider dominion, did not hold it long, but was overthrown in the fourth generation. The Persians, who conquered the Medes, did, indeed, finally become masters of almost all Asia; but when they attacked the nations of Europe also, they did not reduce many of them to submission, and they continued in power not much above two hundred years. [3] The Macedonian dominion, which overthrew the might of the Persians, did, in the extent of its sway, exceed all its predecessors, yet even it did not flourish long, but after Alexander's death began to decline; for it was immediately partitioned among many commanders from the time of the Diadochi, and although after their time it was able to go on to the second or third generation, yet it was weakened by its own dissensions and at the last destroyed by the Romans. [4] But even the Macedonian power did not subjugate every country and every sea; for it neither conquered Libya, with the exception of the small portion bordering on Egypt, nor subdued all Europe, but in the North advanced only as far as Thrace and in the West down to the Adriatic Sea.

[3.1] Thus we see that the most famous of the earlier supremacies of which history has given us any account, after attaining to so great vigour and might,

were overthrown. As for the Greek powers, it is not fitting to compare them to those just mentioned, since they gained neither magnitude of empire nor duration of eminence equal to theirs. [2] For the Athenians ruled only the sea coast, during the space of sixty-eight years, nor did their sway extend even over all that, but only to the part between the Euxine and the Pamphylian seas, when their naval supremacy was at its height. The Lacedaemonians, when masters of the Peloponnesus and the rest of Greece, advanced their rule as far as Macedonia, but were checked by the Thebans before they had held it quite thirty years. [3] But Rome rules every country that is not inaccessible or uninhabited, and she is mistress of every sea, not only of that which lies inside the Pillars of Hercules but also of the Ocean, except that part of it which is not navigable; she is the first and the only State recorded in all time that ever made the risings and the settings of the sun the boundaries of her dominion. Nor has her supremacy been of short duration, but more lasting than that of any other commonwealth or kingdom. [4] For from the very beginning, immediately after her founding, she began to draw to herself the neighbouring nations, which were both numerous and warlike, and continually advanced, subjugating every rival. And it is now seven hundred and forty-five years from her foundation down to the consulship of Claudius Nero, consul for the second time, and of Calpurnius Piso, who were chosen in the

one hundred and ninety-third Olympiad. [5] From the time that she mastered the whole of Italy she was emboldened to aspire to govern all mankind, and after driving from off the sea the Carthaginians, whose maritime strength was superior to that of all others, and subduing Macedonia, which until then was reputed to be the most powerful nation on land, she no longer had as rival any nation either barbarian or Greek; and it is now in my day already the seventh generation that she has continued to hold sway over every region of the world, and there is no nation, as I may saw, that disputes her universal dominion or protests against being ruled by her. [6] However, to prove my statement that I have neither made choice of the most trivial of subjects nor proposed to treat of mean and insignificant deeds, but am undertaking to write not only about the most illustrious city but also about brilliant achievements to whose like no man could point, I know not what more I need say.

[4.1] But before I proceed, I desire to show in a few words that it is not without design and mature premeditation that I have turned to the early part of Rome's history, but that I have well-considered reasons to give for my choice, to forestall the censure of those who, fond of finding fault with everything and not as yet having heard of any of the matters which I am about to make known, may blame me because, in spite of the fact that this city, grown so famous in our days, had

very humble and inglorious beginnings, unworthy of historical record, and that it was but a few generations ago, that is, since her overthrow of the Macedonian powers and her success in the Punic wars, that she arrived at distinction and glory, nevertheless, when I was at liberty to choose one of the famous periods in her history for my theme, I turned aside to one so barren of distinction as her antiquarian lore. [2] For to this day almost all the Greeks are ignorant of the early history of Rome and the great majority of them have been imposed upon by sundry false opinions grounded upon stories which chance has brought to their ears and led to believe that, having come upon various vagabonds without house or home and barbarians, and even those not free men, as her founders, she in the course of time arrived at world domination, and this not through reverence for the gods and justice and every other virtue, but through some chance and the injustice of Fortune, which inconsiderately showers her greatest favours upon the most undeserving. And indeed the more malicious are wont to rail openly at Fortune for freely bestowing on the basest of barbarians the blessings of the Greeks. [3] And yet why should I mention men at large, when even some historians have dared to express such views in the writing they have left, taking this method of humouring barbarian kings who detested Rome's supremacy, — princes to whom they were ever servilely devoted and with whom they

associated as flatterers, — by presenting them with “histories” which were neither just nor true?

[5] In order, therefore, to remove these erroneous impressions, as I have called them, from the minds of many and to substitute true ones in their room, I shall in this Book show who the founders of the city were, at what periods the various groups came together and through what turns of fortune they left their native countries. [2] By this means I engage to prove that they were Greeks and came together from nations not the smallest nor least considerable. And beginning with the next Book I shall tell of the deeds they performed immediately after their founding of the city and of the customs and institutions by virtue of which their descendants advanced to so great dominion; and, so far as I am able, I shall omit nothing worthy of being recorded in history, to the end that I may instil in the minds of those who shall then be informed of the truth the fitting conception of this city, — unless they have already assumed an utterly violent and hostile attitude toward it, — and also that they may neither feel indignation at their present subjection, which is grounded on reason (for by an universal law of Nature, which time cannot destroy, it is ordained that superiors shall ever govern their inferiors), nor rail at Fortune for having wantonly bestowed upon an undeserving city a supremacy so great and already of so long continuance, [3] particularly when they shall have learned from my