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The History of the Title Imperator under the Roman Empire by Donald McFayden

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own day. These are not trivial matters; they are fundamental, and on many of them the judgment of Mommsen's predecessor, the wise Schwegeler, had been perfectly sound.

Much, if not all, of this Dr. Warde Fowler would, I am sure, himself admit, though in the lecture he speaks of Mommsen's 'humanity,' explaining it to mean 'that all history was to him charged with human life.' But the word 'humanity' surely implies some sympathy with human beings, a quality in which I can only confess that forty years' study of what Mommsen wrote has convinced me that he was almost entirely lacking. It was this cast-iron quality which made him at once so trenchant an iconoclast, so untiring a pursuer of the truth of things; and on the other hand so useless, or worse than useless, as an interpreter of men.<sup>1</sup> It was this, in the pages both of the *Corpus Inscriptionum* and of the learned periodicals of his own country, that often gave a stamp of brutality to his treatment of his contemporaries, especially his younger contemporaries, who had dared to criticise his views. This is not to diminish the admiration with which his colossal service to the study of antiquity must be regarded. But it is meant as a serious protest against the continual corruption of truth which is involved in the wide use of his so-called 'History.'

Some apology may be needed for attaching this protest to a notice of Dr. Warde Fowler's beautiful book. But I trust that that revered scholar himself, though he may not approve of this conclusion, will at least forgive me for pleading that even our gratitude for what Mommsen accomplished ought not to make us forgive the outrage which Mommsen rejoiced to commit upon Cicero, upon Livy and, wherever he could find opportunity, upon Vergil.

R. S. CONWAY.

THE HISTORY OF THE TITLE IMPERATOR UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE. By DONALD MCFAYDEN. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois. 1920.

The question of the exact origin of that use of the word 'Imperator' from which our word 'Emperor' is derived has a considerable interest for every student of Roman history—an interest quite independent of the special fascination which so intricate a problem possesses for the specialist. Mr. McFayden, by his able and comprehensive treatment of the subject, has made a valuable contribution to our knowledge. While not neglecting the evidence of the historians he has, with sound judgment, laid stress on the testimony of the inscriptions and coins and, from a judicious comparison of these two main sources, has succeeded in presenting us with an ingenious and well-documented case. It must not be construed as any lack of appreciation of the soundness of Mr. McFayden's method and the solid value of his work if we subject some portions of his argument to a searching criticism. Our object is rather to indicate some of the difficulties with which the student of imperial history has to contend and the need for further pioneer work on many of the sources used.

Suetonius and Dio, it will be remembered, attribute the use of 'imperator' as a special and distinctive title of the holder of supreme power to Julius Caesar, though Suetonius alone describes this title as a praenomen. Dio proceeds to tell us that in 29 B.C. Augustus adopted the same title himself—thus entering into the possession of what the senate had voted in perpetuity to Julius Caesar and his successors. Mr. McFayden has no difficulty in showing that these statements cannot be accepted without qualification and that Mommsen was fully justified in his attempt to find an interpretation of them consonant with the epigraphic evidence. He rejects Mommsen's own suggested solution—in our opinion, quite rightly—but hardly succeeds himself in explaining how the inexact literary tradition arose. He has some excellent remarks on the use of the title 'imperator' in the provinces and on its gradual encroachment on the constitutional title 'princeps'

<sup>1</sup> This distinction was actually drawn by Mommsen's own colleague, Prof. Harnack, in his Funeral Oration.

in Rome itself. His survey extends as far as the reign of Vespasian, who, in his view, by making the 'praenomen imperatoris' an integral part of the imperial title, marked the definite end of the principate established by Augustus. In the main Mr. McFayden succeeds, we believe, in getting very near the truth of the matter. He fails, firstly in not fully accounting for the origin of the title, secondly in not indicating with sufficient precision the relation of the title 'imperator' as praenomen to its use as cognomen under the empire, and thirdly in leaving unexplained some interesting points of usage under Nero, Galba, Vitellius and Vespasian himself. Our special criticism will be concerned mainly with the coins: they are a first-rate source of evidence here and, in the absence of an adequate up-to-date handbook, are peculiarly liable to misinterpretation.

The coins certainly afford strong support for the view that the 'praenomen imperatoris' was first used by Octavian, not by Julius Caesar, and that in the year 38 B.C. But Mr. McFayden is quite wrong in making the use of this title on coins by Octavian nearly continuous from 38–29 B.C. The great majority of the 'IMP. CAESAR' coins of Octavian are to be dated to the period after Actium, probably 29–27 B.C., and this certainly suggests that Dio's statement quoted above contains a germ of truth. Between this series and the coins of 38 B.C. a large series with the title 'CAESAR DIVI F.' intervenes. On p. 43 the writer quotes as evidence a coin (MARS VLTOR—CAESAR AVGVSTVS SIGN. RECE.) which is probably a pure invention, at best a hybrid. We simply quote this as an illustration of the deficiencies of Cohen as a scientific authority. On p. 46 the question as to the exact sense in which 'IMP' can be called praenomen is discussed. It appears to us that it was certainly a part of Augustus' personal name and that, inasmuch as it was used by him in place of his own praenomen 'Gaius,' we had better simply accept it as a "praenomen." To speak of it as being 'sensed as a mere proper name' is to mistake the issue; it, of course, implied more than the ordinary praenomen could imply, but was none the less a praenomen for that. Some interesting remarks on the feeling of the provincials for the emperor follow (pp. 50, 51); but there was something much more than mere servility involved—there was gratitude for the inauguration of better government and some degree of confidence in its future continuance. On p. 58 we are told that Nero 'for the most part avoided' the 'praenomen imperatoris.' On his coins its use can be traced more accurately than this; it was, in all probability, adopted by him in A.D. 66, after he had been acclaimed 'imperator' on the reception of Tiridates in Rome, and continued in use for the rest of the reign. Before A.D. 66 it appears frequently as a cognomen but without any number attached. Galba uses the 'praenomen imperatoris' freely on his Roman coins, but very seldom on his provincial, which were mainly struck early in the reign. Vitellius used two main styles—'A. Vitellius Imp. Germanicus' and 'A. Vitellius Germanicus Imp.'; but, on the coins at least, the two are not interchangeable and the style 'Imp. Germanicus' probably marked out Vitellius as 'the commander of the German legions' in a manner likely to offend Roman sentiment at large. It is noteworthy that this style is almost unknown on his Roman coins. The curious use of the title 'IMP' by Titus and the interesting, though disputed, style of 'DES(ignatus) IMP(erator)' given him on a sestertius might well have been discussed in detail. In discussing coins in general, it is important to remember that the issues of gold and silver are primarily issues of the emperor as 'imperator' and hence tend to stress that side of his position; the copper coinage, issued by the senate, stresses the constitutional side and lays particular emphasis on the tribunician power. And here we may remember that 'TR. POT' is used, not only with a number to date the coin to a particular year, but also by itself to denote in general that side of the emperor's position; so too is the cognomen 'IMP,' and between the cognomen 'IMP' without a number and the 'praenomen imperatoris' there is probably no very great distinction of meaning—a point which might have been rather more fully discussed in the text. These imperfections of detail, however, in no way affect the general value of Mr. McFayden's work. Such a combination of close knowledge of sources with independence of judgment as we find in him deserves, and seldom fails to command, success.

H. MATTINGLY.