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TACITUS

VOLUME I

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THE ANNALS OF TACITUS

BOOKS 1-6

EDITED WITH A COMMENTARY

BY

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PREFACE

This edition with commentary of Tacitus, *Annals* 1. 1–52, the first of a series of four volumes which I hope to complete within about ten years, is intended to be reasonably full and to give attention equally to text, style, and subject-matter. So vast, however, is the number of modern writings on Tacitus, and so extensive the ramification of problems arising from his works, that a truly comprehensive edition and commentary would be almost impossible to compile and quite intolerable to read: selection of some kind is necessary and desirable. And so I have omitted much which might have been included, often no doubt from mere ignorance, but often too from choice. Sometimes important general questions have been discussed only briefly in this volume, because they will be treated more fully later. The appropriate scale of treatment for historical matters has not been easy to determine. In general I have written at length only of those historical questions which are closely associated with the interpretation of Tacitus' text. Being no historian, I still fear reproach for trespassing even thus far upon alien territory.

E. Koestermann's commentary on the *Annals* has appeared while this book was in preparation. There is much in Koestermann's work which I admire. If he had dealt as successfully with text and language as with historiography, I should perhaps have looked for another field of research. And yet there is in English no full-scale commentary on the *Annals* since Furneaux's, which is now some eighty years out of date and, for all its very real merits, rather limited in scope.

After much irresolution I decided to make my critical apparatus extremely brief and selective. This seemed justifiable in view of the very generous treatment of textual problems in the commentary. For those who want to know

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more about the errors of the Medicean manuscript, fuller information is provided in an appendix.

It was no less difficult to decide upon the form of bibliography to be adopted. To have listed all important modern writings on Tacitus would have been a very large task, and probably a superfluous one too, since S. Borzsák's valuable survey has so recently appeared. I have therefore recorded only works cited in this volume. Even so the list is quite a long one, and perhaps it could have been shortened by the omission of such items as pertain very indirectly to Tacitus. But, though at first I tried to exclude these items, no clear dividing-line was to be found, and in the end it seemed best to include everything, apart from general works of reference, editions, and commentaries. Editorial work on the *Annals* is described at some length in the second section of the introduction. And, of course, supplementary lists of works cited will be provided in future volumes of this edition.

In all references to published opinions I use only surnames (with or without initials), never adding styles or titles. Whenever such nomenclature is used, it indicates that I am reporting opinions privately communicated to me.

It remains as my most pleasant task to express, as best I can, my gratitude to all who have helped to bring this book into the light of day. Queens' College, Cambridge, gave me ideal surroundings and ample opportunity to begin my work, and Bedford College, London, for its continuation. The Classical Faculty Board of the University of Cambridge provided funds for the purchase of certain necessary material. Several friends have advised over details: acknowledgments of their assistance will be found in various footnotes. But to three friends my debt is immense, to Charles Brink, for his encouragement from the start, for his wise advice and infinite patience, and, above all, for his example, to John Crook, for reading early drafts of part of the commentary and by so doing saving me from some serious errors, for much constructive criticism, and for several original and con-

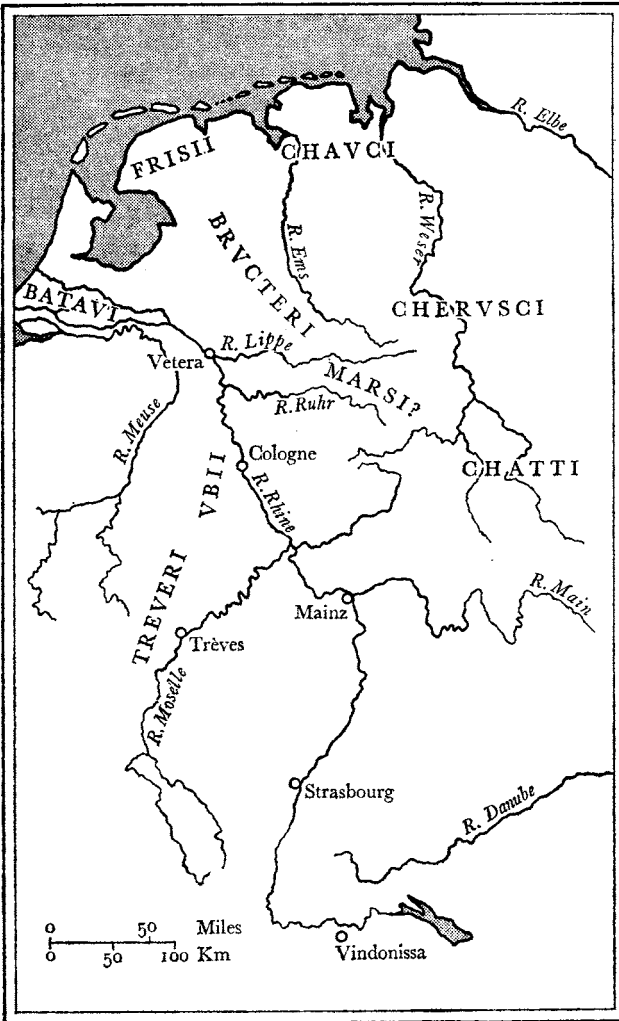
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vincing ideas, and to Ronald Martin, of all scholars the most deeply versed in the intricacies of Tacitus' style, for reading almost the whole commentary in a late draft, for numerous perceptive and illuminating comments on it, and for explaining to me so much of what I shall in the following pages try to explain to others. Of course those who have so generously sustained and counselled me have no responsibility at all for the views I have expressed. Finally, I am most grateful to Joan Booth and James Diggle for assistance in the correction of the proofs, to my wife for help in preparing the map, and to the staff of the Cambridge University Press for their invariable kindness, patience, and efficiency.

Bedford College, London
January 1972

F.R.D.G.



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