

A HISTORY *and* DE-  
SCRIPTION *of* ROMAN  
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

BY

FRANK FROST ABBOTT

PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



BOSTON, U.S.A., AND LONDON

GINN & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS

*The Athenæum Press*

1901

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL

---

COPYRIGHT, 1901

---

By FRANK FROST ABBOTT

---

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## PREFACE

THIS book is intended to serve as an introduction to the study of Roman political institutions for those who may wish to carry on more extended investigations in that field, and to give a reasonable acquaintance with the subject to the student of Roman life and literature. It may be said with truth that the art and literature of Rome never had a distinctively national character. Both are hybrid products. Her political institutions, however, are essentially her own, and are, one might almost say, the only characteristic product of the Roman genius. We have tacitly recognized how large a place they fill in Roman history, and how valuable an inheritance they have been to modern civilization, but strangely enough we have almost entirely neglected the study of them in this country. This neglect seems the more surprising since, from the disciplinary point of view, perhaps no subject furnishes a better training in practical logic or gives us a clearer insight into the workings of the average human mind. These facts have been mentioned, not for the purpose of offering a plea for the study of Roman political institutions, but rather in explanation of the reasons which led to the writing of this book.

My aim has been to give a connected view of the development of the constitution from the earliest times down through the accession of Diocletian. Each one of the three

periods in its history, — the monarchical, the republican, and the imperial, — is presented as a unit, and its institutions are treated first on the historical, then on the descriptive, side. The historical treatment seemed to me necessary because without it one cannot get a conception of the constitution as an organic whole nor can one understand how the relation of the several parts to one another determined in large measure the development of each. On the other hand, few students will get a complete view and a clear idea of any one institution without a separate description of it. The book is so arranged, however, that teachers who wish to do so may use either the historical or the descriptive part separately.

The brevity at which I have aimed has made it necessary at times in discussing controverted questions to content myself with stating what seemed to me the most probable theory. It has possibly at other points led to the omission of certain details whose presentation might modify the reader's conception of the institution in question. If this has given a dogmatic tone to any part of the work, I hope that the defect has been corrected by the fact that reference has been made to the sources for almost every important statement, and that modern literature has been freely cited, so that the reader may form an independent judgment or may acquaint himself with the views held by others on the matter in question.

Of the works which I have found of service in the preparation of this book I would mention my great indebtedness

PREFACE

v

to the treatises on the Roman constitution by Mommsen, Herzog, Willems, and Schiller, and to the general histories of Niese, Schiller, and Pelham. I wish also to express my gratitude to Professor F. G. Moore, of Dartmouth College, to Professor Edward Capps and Dr. E. A. Bechtel, of the University of Chicago, for the many valuable suggestions which they have made while the book was passing through the press, and to Dr. J. D. Wolcott and Mr. Tenny Frank, of the University of Chicago, and to Dr. W. K. Clement, of the Northwestern University, for assistance in verifying the references.

FRANK FROST ABBOTT

CHICAGO, July 1, 1901