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Julius Caesar

Jacob Abbott



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Pyrrhus Press specializes in bringing books long out of date back to life, allowing today's readers access to yesterday's treasures.

Jacob Abbott was a well-known 19th century historian who wrote biographies on various leaders and famous individuals, including this one about Julius Caesar. Possibly the most important man of antiquity, and even all of history, was Julius Caesar. Alexander Hamilton, the famous American patriot, once remarked that "the greatest man who ever lived was Julius Caesar". Such a tribute, coming from one of the Founding Fathers of the quintessential modern democracy in reference to a man who destroyed the Roman Republic, is testament to the enduring mark that Caesar left upon the world. The ultimate conqueror, statesman, dictator, visionary, and opportunist, during his time in power Caesar expanded the borders of Rome to almost twice their previous size, revolutionized the infrastructure of the Roman state, and destroyed the Roman Republic for good, leaving a line of emperors in its place. His legacy is so strong that his name has become, in many languages, synonymous with power: the Emperors of Austria and Germany bore the title Kaiser, and the Czars of Russia also owe the etymology of their title to Caesar. His name also crept further eastward out of Europe, even cropping up in Hindi and Urdu, where the term for "Emperor" is Kaisar.

Even in his time, Caesar was in many ways larger than life, and because of his legacy as virtual founder of the Roman Empire, much of what was written about – and by – him during his life and immediately after his assassination was politically motivated. His successor, Octavian Augustus, had a strong interest in ensuring that Caesar's life be painted in a favorable light, while Caesar's political enemies attempted to paint him as a corrupt, undemocratic dictator who was destroying the old order of the Republic. This makes it exceedingly difficult to separate historical fact from apocryphal interjection, as the writings of Cicero (a rival of Caesar's) and the later biographies of Suetonius and Plutarch can be misleading. Nonetheless, along with Caesar's De Bello Gallico, his famous notes on his campaign against the Gauls, they remain our chief sources for Caesar's life – a life everyone agreed was nothing short of remarkable and changed the course of history forever.

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