character of the German peoples, and dwells particularly on their fierce and independent spirit, which the author evidently felt to be a standing menace to the empire. The geography is its weak point; much of this was no doubt gathered from vague hearsay. Tacitus dwells on the contrast between barbarian freedom and simplicity on the one hand, and the servility and degeneracy of Roman life on the other.

The *Histories,* as originally composed in twelve books, brought the history of the empire from Galba in 69 down to the close of Domitian’s reign in 97. The first four books, and a small fragment of the fifth, giving us a very minute account of the eventful year of revolution, 69, and the brief reigns of Galba, Otho and Vitellius, are all that remain to us. In the fragment of the fifth book we have a curious but entirely inaccurate account of the Jewish nation, of their character, customs and religion, from a cultivated Roman’s point of view, which we see at once was a strongly prejudiced one.

The *Annals—*a title for which there is no ancient authority, and which there is no reason for supposing Tacitus gave dis­tinctively to the work—record the history of the emperors of the Julian line from Tiberius to Nero, comprising thus a period from A.D. 14 to 68. Of these, nine books have come down to us entire; of books v., xi. and xvi. we have but fragments, and the whole of the reign of Gaius (Caligula), the first six years of Claudius, and the last three years of Nero are wanting. Out of a period of fifty-four years we thus have the history of forty years.

The principal MSS. of Tacitus are known as the “ first ’’and “ second ” Medicean—both of the 10th or 11th centuries. The first six books of the *Annals* exist nowhere but in the “ first Medicean ” MS., and an attempt was made in 1878 to prove that the *Annals* are a forgery by Poggio Bracciolini, an Italian scholar of the 15th century, but their genuineness is confirmed by their agreement@@1 in various minute details with coins and in­scriptions discovered since that period. Moreover, Ruodolphus, a monk, writing in the 9th century, shows that he is acquainted with a MS. of Tacitus containing at least the two first books. Add to this the testimony of Jerome that Tacitus wrote in thirty books the lives of the Caesars and the evidence of style, and there can be no doubt that in the *Annals* we have a genuine work of Tacitus.

Much of the history of the period described by him, especially of the earlier Caesars, must have been obscure and locked up with the emperor’s private papers and memoranda. As we should expect, there was a vast amount of floating gossip, which an historian would have to sift and utilize as best he might. Tacitus, as a man of good social position, no doubt had access to the best information, and must have talked matters over with the most eminent men of the day. There were several writers and chroniclers, whom he occasionally cites but not very often; there were memoirs of distinguished persons—those, for example, of the younger Agrippina, of Thrasea, and Helvidius. There were several collections of letters, like those of the younger Pliny; a number, too, of funeral orations; and the “ acta senatus ” and the “ acta populi ” or “ acta diurna,” the first a record of proceedings in the senate, the latter a kind of gazette or journal. Thus there were the materials for history in considerable abundance, and Tacitus was certainly a man who knew how to turn them to good account. He has given us a striking, and on the whole doubtless a true, picture of the empire in the 1st century. The rhetorical tendency which characterizes the “ silver age ” of Roman literature, gives perhaps exaggerated expression to his undoubtedly strong sense of the badness of individual emperors, but he assuredly wrote with a high aim, and we may accept his own account of it: “ I regard@@2 it as history’s highest function to rescue merit from oblivion, and to hold up as a terror to base words and actions the repro­bation of posterity.” He is convinced of the degeneracy of the age, though it be relieved by the existence of truly noble virtues: and he connects this degeneracy more or less directly with the

imperial régime. But it is difficult to dogmatize as to Tacitus’s political ideals. He is primarily concerned rather with ethics than with politics; though he may feel that the world is out of joint—with whatever sentimental sympathy he may regard the age of “ liberty,” and admire the heroic epoch of the republic—yet he appears to realize that the empire is a practical necessity, and to the provinces even a benefit. Like the Stoics, with whom otherwise he has little in common, he censures rather individual rulers than the imperial system. But “ the key to the interpretation of Tacitus,” it has been well said,@@3 “ is to regard him as a moralist rather than a politician.” Perhaps the strongest work in the *Annals* and *Histories* is the delineation of character.

Tacitus gives us no certain clue to his religious belief. His expressions of opinion about the government of the universe are difficult to reconcile with each other. There seems to have been a strange tinge of superstition about him, and he could not divest himself of some belief@@4 in astrology and revelations of the future through omens and portents, though he held these were often misunderstood and misinterpreted by charlatans and impostors. On the whole he appears to have inclined to the philosophical theory of “ necessitarianism,” that every man’s future is fixed from his birth; but we must not fasten on him any particular theory of the world or of the universe. Some­times he speaks as a believer in a divine overruling Providence, and we may say confidently that with the Epicurean doctrine he had no sort of sympathy.

Tacitus’s style is discussed in the article Latin Language. Whatever judgment may be passed on it, it is certainly that of a man of genius, and cannot fail to make a deep impression on the studious reader. Tacitean brevity has become proverbial, and with this are closely allied an occasional obscurity and a rhetorical affectation which his warmest admirers must admit. He has been compared to Carlyle: and both certainly affect singularity of expression. But they are alike only in the brevity of sentences; and the brevity of Carlyle is not that of an artist in epigram. Tacitus was probably never a popular author; to be understood and appreciated he must be read again and again, or the point of some of his acutest remarks will be quite missed.

Tacitus has been many times translated, in spite of the very great difficulty of the task; the number of versions of the whole or part is stated as 393.

Murphy’s translation (we should call it a paraphrase) was for long one of the best known; it was published early in the 19th century. On this was based the so-called Oxford translation, published by Bohn in a revised edition. Messrs Church and Brodribb's transla­tion, and Professor Ramsay’s (1904) (the latter of *Annals* i.-iv.) are much better. The best known foreign translation is Davanzati's (Italian), printed about 1600 and frequently re-published. The French versions by Louandre and Burnouf (about the middle of the last century) are also good. Among the very numerous modern commentaries, the most important are Ruperti’s (1839); Orelli’s (1859: the *Histories, Germania, Agricola,* and *Dialogues* were revised and re-edited by Meiser and Andersen between 1877 and 1895); Ritter’s (1864); Nipperdey's (1879); Heräus’s *(Histories,* 1885); Furneaux’s *(Annals,* i.-vi., 1884; xi.-xvi., 1891; *Germania,* 1894); Spooner’s *(Histories,* 1891). The last two editors’ intro­ductions are particularly useful. Of works relating to Tacitean Latinity, Draeger’s *Syntax und Stil des Tacitus* is the best.

(W. J. B.; A. D. G.).

**TACITUS, MARCUS CLAUDIUS,** Roman emperor from the 25th of September a.d. 275 to April 276, was a native of Inter- amna (Terni) in Umbria. In the course of his long life he held various civil offices, including that of consul in 273, with universal respect. Six months after the assassination of Aurelian he was chosen by the senate to succeed him, and the choice was cordially ratified by the army. During his brief reign he set on foot some domestic reforms, and sought to revive the authority of the senate, but, after a victory over the Goths in Cilicia, he succumbed to hardship and fatigue (or was slain by his own soldiers) at Tyana in Cappadocia. Tacitus, besides being a man of immense wealth (which he bequeathed to the state),

@@@1 See Introduction to vol. i. of Furneaux’s edition of the *Annals* of Tacitus, Clarendon Press Series, 1884.

@@@2 *Ann.* iii. 65.

@@@3 Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius,* Bk. i. ch. i

*@@@4 Ann.* vi. 21,22.