



The Gracchi, Marius, and Sulla

A.H. Beesley

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From the preface: "It would be scarcely possible for anyone writing on the period embraced in this volume, to perform his task adequately without making himself familiar with Mr. Long's 'History of the Decline of the Roman Republic' and Mommsen's 'History of Rome.' To do over again (as though the work had never been attempted) what has been done once for all accurately and well, would be mere prudery of punctiliousness. But while I acknowledge my debt of gratitude to both these eminent historians, I must add that for the whole period I have carefully examined the original authorities, often coming to conclusions widely differing from those of Mr. Long. And I venture to hope that from the advantage I have had in being able to compare the works of two writers, one of whom has well-nigh exhausted the theories as the other has the facts of the subject, I have succeeded in giving a more consistent and faithful account of the leaders and legislation of the revolutionary era than has hitherto been written. Certainly there could be no more instructive commentary on either history than the study of the other, for each supplements the other and emphasizes its defects. If Mommsen at times pushes conjecture to the verge of invention, as in his account of the junction of the Helvetii and Cimbri, Mr. Long, in his dogged determination never to swerve from facts to inference, falls into the opposite extreme, resorting to somewhat Cyclopean architecture in his detestation of stucco. But my admiration for his history is but slightly qualified by such considerations, and to any student who may be stimulated by the volumes of this series to acquire what would virtually amount to an acquaintance first-hand with the narratives of ancient writers, I would say 'Read Mr. Long's history.' To do so is to learn not only knowledge but a lesson in historical study generally. For the writings of a man with whom style is not the first object are as refreshing as his scorn for romancing history is wholesome, and the grave irony with which he records its slips amusing."

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