

He aimed to establish a great philosophy and incidentally to write poetry. What he was intent upon doing has perished, and what he was indifferent about remains. The poem of Lucretius preserved to us is "*De Rerum Natura*." In this he attempts to explain the universe. It is quite worthless from a scientific standpoint, but is valuable as containing true poetry, of which the invocation of Venus is a most delightful example.

We now pass on to what has been termed the Classical period, and which embraces the well-known Golden and Silver ages.

Cicero was, perhaps, the most brilliant example of the Golden age. Had we his speeches alone, we should rank him with Demosthenes as a master of oratory and as one who had reached the highest literary ideal. We should think of him as the creator and master of Latin style—the writer by whom the full, passionate, living power of the language had been called forth and combined into a great literary organ. But Cicero is more than an orator, he is a philosopher, not indeed as an originator of new theories, but as an interpreter of those branches of philosophy which are capable of practical application. His expositions, too, are not mere abstract discussions. They are most eloquent appeals to the world to accept hopeful views on human destiny and to adopt principles of conduct most conducive to elevation and integrity of character.

The letters of Cicero are among the most delightful, not only of the Latin, but of any literature whatever. They are thoroughly natural. They let us into the secret of his most serious thoughts and cares, and they give a natural outlet to his vivacity of observation, wit humor, and kindness of heart. Here we are once for all convinced that the language which so often seems heavy and inflexible, can, while complying with the conditions of perfect literary taste, do full justice to his passionate flow of oratory, to the rhythmic flow of his philosophical meditation, and to the natural interchange

of thought and feeling in the every-day intercourse of life.

From Cicero we pass to one who was not only his rival in oratory, but seemed equally fitted to excel in everything; to the one whom Brutus, his assassin, is made by Shakespeare to call "the foremost man of all this world." As a literary character, Caesar is known to us almost solely through his "*Commentaries*" on his wars in Gaul. These are memoirs of his eight years' campaigns in that northern province, stories of great achievements, hardly, but triumphantly, performed. Whatever may be our estimation of this great man's character, we cannot but admire his clear, straightforward, simple, forceful style. Caesar writes constantly in the third person, and there is hardly anything in the book more remarkable than the impersonal form under which the strong personality of writer and actor is forced to appear. From merely reading the book, you could scarcely guess that the writer is the one who furnished the matter of action which the book was written to report. Given the fact that Caesar is the author, you then immediately feel that the author could have been no other than he.

Sallust, a prose writer of note, though much less able than Caesar, wrote three historical works: *The Conspiracy of Cataline*, *The Jugurthine War*, and *A History of Rome from the Death of Sulla to the Mithridatic War*. This last, the most important of the three, with the exception of a few fragments, has utterly perished.

His style aims at effectiveness by pregnant expression, sententiousness, and archaism. He produces the impression of caring more for the manner of the saying than for its truth. Yet he has great value as a painter of historical portraits, and gives us, from a popular side, the views of a contemporary on the politics of his time.

The past of Rome had always a peculiar fascination for Roman writers, and Virgil in a supreme degree, and Horace and Ovid in a less degree, had expressed