

# EXPLANATORY CHAPTERS

ON

THE TWO BOOKS ON THE WATER SUPPLY OF  
THE CITY OF ROME OF

(SEXTUS) JULIUS FRONTINUS



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## CHAPTER I

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF  
SEXTUS JULIUS FRONTINUS

About A. D. 35 to about 103 or 104

Impensa monumenti supervacua est; memoria nostri durabit, si vita meruimus.

PLINY, *Epist.* viii. 19.

The expense of a monument is superfluous; remembrance will endure, if the life shall have merited it.

*Frontinus' own words, quoted by Pliny.*

Imago animi sermo est; qualis vir, talis oratio.

PS.-SENECA, *De moribus*, 72, 73.

Speech is the image of the soul; as is the man, so will his language be.

**T**HE sources of our knowledge concerning the man Frontinus are naturally few, disjointed, and largely indefinite. Nevertheless, a fair idea of his personality can be gained from references to him made by his contemporaries and by succeeding generations, supplemented by his own writings.

He is first mentioned in history, A. D. 70, by Tacitus, "Histories," Book IV., chap. xxxix: "On the Calends of January (A. D. 70) in the Senate convened by Julius Frontinus, the city praetor, a vote of thanks was passed. . . . Upon the resignation of Frontinus, Caesar Domitian received the praetorship." This was done, says Suetonius ("Life of Domitian," chap. i.), so that Domitian as praetor could also act as consul in the absence from the city of his father, the then Emperor

Vespasian, and of Vespasian's other son, Titus,—absent on the conquest of Judaea,— who were consuls that year. One way of fixing the date of Frontinus' birth is from this fact of his having been



EMPEROR CAESAR *VESPASIANUS* AUGUSTUS.<sup>1</sup>

Reigned A. D. 69-79.

praetor in the year 70, being then presumably thirty-four or thirty-five years old; that is, born A. D. 36 or 35. As will be seen later on, it is necessary to assume that he was born not much earlier, so as to enable him to have gone to the wars with Trajan while not much over sixty years old.

<sup>1</sup> Ancient work of art. In the Vatican Museum.

Others have argued from a statement of Cicero, made one hundred years previously ("Fifth Philippic," 17, 48) as follows: "Did not the Macedonian Alexander, having begun to perform mighty deeds from his earliest youth, die when he was only in his thirty-third year? And that age is ten years less than that fixed by our laws for a man to be eligible for the consulship;" and as Frontinus was made consul in 73 or 74, that he was then forty-two years old, or was born in 31 or 32. The force of this argument is destroyed, however, by considering that laws and customs change. Only thirty-seven years after Cicero's death Augustus was already making his grandson Gaius, then fourteen years old, a consul, with the proviso that he was not to serve until he was nineteen, all of which duly came to pass.

On the other hand, some writers think Frontinus was born as late as A. D. 40; so that, under all these circumstances, I have assumed that Frontinus was born about A. D. 35, and this assumption is in all probability not more than five years out of the way. As a mathematician or engineer would say, Frontinus was born A. D.  $35 \pm 5$ .

At the age of thirty-five, therefore, he was a city praetor (*praetor urbanus*) in the city of Rome. This was a highly honorable office, generally held in Frontinus' time by patricians, and endowed with both judicial and executive functions. This office, still higher offices subsequently held by Frontinus, such as the consulship three times, the governorship of Britain, and, as he himself points out, his holding the office of water commissioner, "from olden time exercised by the most distinguished citizens,"<sup>1</sup>—all these things mark him as sprung from a patrician or noble family, which is also indicated by the name Julius.

The place of his birth is not known with certainty; but as a treatise of one Julius Frontinus Siculus on Metes and Bounds is classed with his other writings, it is assumed that he was so called in this manuscript because he was born in Sicily, unless, indeed, this could be the improbable case of a writer on a class of subjects on which our Frontinus wrote who happened to be named Julius Frontinus Siculus.

It had been part of the policy of Vespasian, on becoming emperor, to give to able and distinguished men from the provinces positions in

<sup>1</sup> *De Aquis*, 1.

the Roman government. Frontinus' writings on surveying, so far as we have knowledge of them, betray the teaching of the Alexandrian school of mathematicians, especially of Hero of Alexandria. A supposition

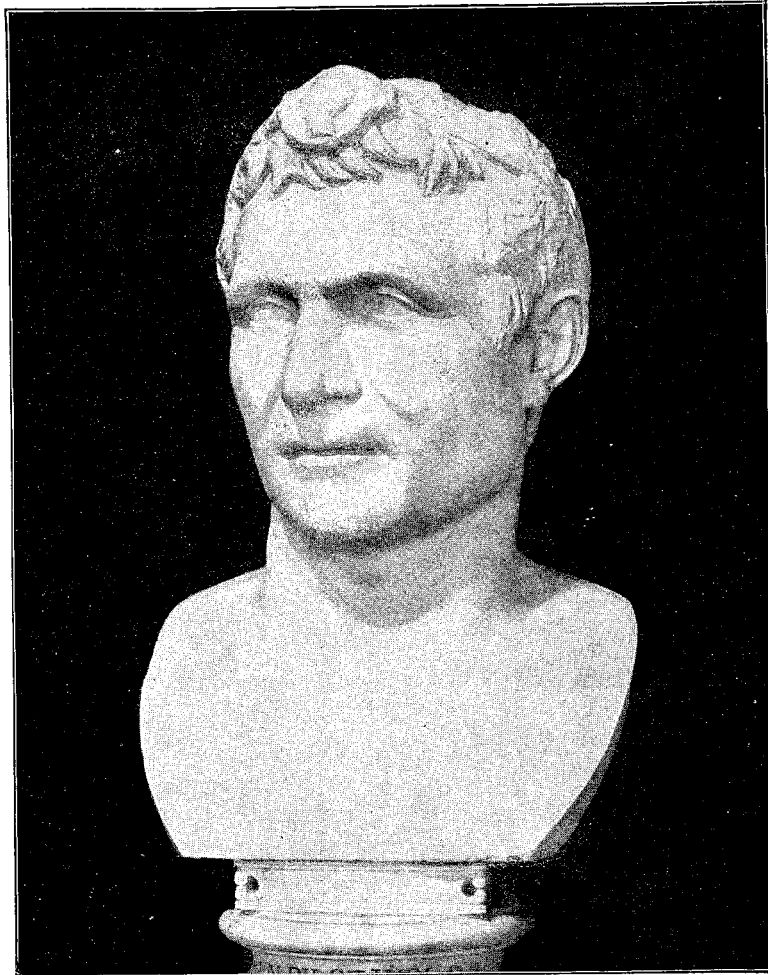


EMPEROR *TITUS* VESPASIANUS CAESAR AUGUSTUS.<sup>1</sup>  
Reigned A. D. 71-81.

that Frontinus, educated in Alexandria, had distinguished himself in Sicily by his writings and services as a surveyor, and had been thereupon called to Rome and been made *praetor urbanus* and later *consul suffectus* at the instance of Vespasian, would therefore be an entirely reasonable one.

<sup>1</sup> Ancient work of art. In the Vatican Museum.

The date of Frontinus' death is approximately determined from the fact that Pliny succeeded him in the office of *augur*, which was a life appointment; and Pliny's letters referring to this succession<sup>1</sup> have



EMPEROR CAESAR AUGUSTUS.<sup>2</sup>

Reigned 31 B. C. — A. D. 14.

caused students to fix upon A. D. 103 or 104 as the date of Frontinus' death, he being then about sixty-nine years of age.

We now ask ourselves the question, What was the state of the world, and particularly of the Roman world, during these years A. D. 35 to 104? Whereabouts on the shores of the stream of time are these

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *Epist.*, iv, 8, 3; and 10, 13, his application to Trajan to be appointed augur.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient work of art. In the Vatican Museum.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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