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This book is a companion volume to *The Greek World*, published as a Pelican in 1965. As in that volume, the essays in *Roman Civilization* are written by distinguished modern classicists. But in contrast to *The Greek World*, which was mainly concerned with the Greek achievement in art, literature and thought, the most important chapters in this book are devoted to Roman imperial administration, Roman law, and Roman architecture and engineering. This reflects the essential practicality of the Romans, whose influence in such matters still pervades western civilization. Yet the more private life of the Romans is also considered in this Pelican, and there are chapters on Roman religion up to Christianity's triumph over paganism, Roman education, great Roman poetry (with particular reference to Catullus, Lucretius and Virgil), Roman humour and satire, and the general shape of the Roman's life and leisure.

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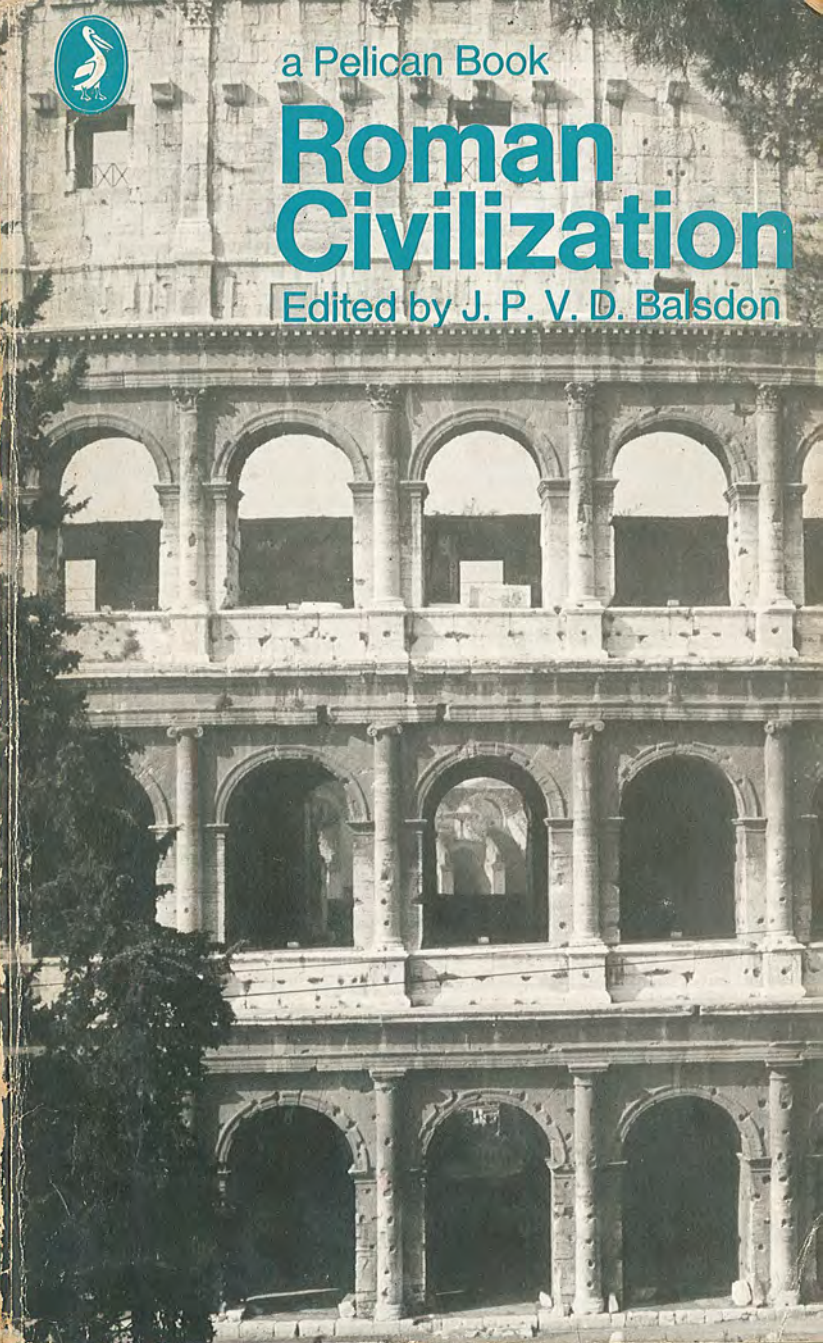
Roman Civilization

Edited by J. P. V. D. Balsdon

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PREFACE

THIS book is a companion to *The Greek World*, published in Pelican Books in 1965. A comparison of the chapter headings of the two books illustrates the profound difference between the two peoples. While *The Greek World* was concerned in the main with the Greek achievement in art, literature and abstract thought, the largest chapters in the present book are devoted to Roman imperial administration, Roman law and Roman architecture and engineering.

That I have been singularly fortunate in persuading scholars of such great distinction to join in the writing of the book, is obvious; and I only regret that my own part in the book is far larger than I had intended. I had hoped that the chapter on Religion would be written by an expert on the subject, but to my great regret I was not sufficiently persuasive. I must, however, express my great debt to my friend Dr S. Weinstock for the generous help which he gave me when I found that I had to write the chapter myself. I had hoped that the chapter on Humour and Satire would be written by a foreign scholar but, because of an unanticipated misfortune, I had, in the space of a few days, to write it myself.

The content of a book is not unrelated to its length. Outside the fundamental subjects, of whose importance there can be no dispute, other editors in more than one case would have chosen different chapter subjects. Many would have included a chapter on the Roman army instead of leaving its story to be told in a number of separate chapters. A strong case could be made out for a chapter on Roman portrait sculpture and for another on the spread of the Latin language which, once spoken by only a handful of people in central Italy, was to become the first language of half the Roman Empire, largely understood, where it was not spoken, by the other half – and which is the foundation of more

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