



Solon the Athenian (Classic Reprint)

Ivan M. Linforth

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Excerpt from Solon the Athenian

The present work falls into two distinct parts, a biography of Solon and an edition of the fragments of his poems. The biographical essay should not be regarded as an introduction to the text of the poems and the commentary upon them. Since our knowledge of Solon's life is not extensive and since the fragments of his poems are few, it is possible to include within one small book two things which in other cases would offer material for two separate books. This is in one sense a happy circumstance, because the reader can have before him in brief space all that can be brought together about Solon.

The biographical essay presents the results of a critical study of all the evidence available on the life of Solon. A sceptical attitude has been adopted alike toward ancient legend and modern hypothesis. If the attitude seems oversceptical, this is not much to be regretted; it is better in such a business to tell nothing but the truth than to risk falsehood through fear of not telling the whole truth. But whatever has been rejected has received due consideration in footnotes or appendices.

No critical discussion is offered of Solon's code of laws; indeed, it is not certain that such a discussion would be really fruitful. None at any rate has yet been made. No one has even taken the first step in the investigation and subjected to critical examination all the laws which in ancient times passed as the laws of Solon, with a view to determining just which are authentic and which are not. It may be that so few would be recognized as genuinely Solonian that the next step in the investigation would be impossible.

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