



J. P. V. D. BALSDON

*B. J. Harris*

# JOHN PERCY VYVIAN DACRE BALSDON

1901-1977

## I

**D**ACRE, as everyone called him, even (somewhat to his resentment) those whom he hardly knew, was a Devon man, born on 4 November 1901, the son of a farmer near Bideford. In later life he could give a fine rendering of the Devon dialect, which you would not guess from his usual speech. It astonished and amused him to repeat with the strange modulations and exaggerated emphasis which were all his own the question asked in the pub of the Oxfordshire village to which he retired: 'where did—you—pick up that—quite—extra-ordinary way of speaking?'; he had become altogether unconscious of its mannerisms. Nor would anyone have taken him for a farmer's son, yet his boyhood gave him a lasting knowledge and delight in the countryside; and in his retirement he liked to think that on his acre of ground he was returning to ancestral pursuits in the cultivation of his trees and flowers, fruit and vegetables.

He went to Exeter School, of which in later years he was a devoted Governor, and thence in 1920 to Exeter College, Oxford, founded for west-countrymen by Bishop Stapeldon, whose birthplace was close to his own. Hard work obtained him a Stapeldon Scholarship in Classics, and he secured first classes in Honour Moderations in Classics in 1922 and in Greats in 1924. L. R. Farnell was then Rector of Exeter (1913-28; and Dacre's tutors were in philosophy R. R. Marett (Rector 1928-43), in literature E. A. Barber (Rector 1943-56), and in ancient history B. W. Henderson. His last book was dedicated to their memory, and he used to speak of all with love and admiration, though sometimes quizzically: Henderson, for instance, had an unexpected veneration for St. Francis which others found tiresome, and Dacre would tell how once Marett, entering a room where Henderson was saying 'And now St. Francis was left alone with his God', remarked 'How boring for God' and walked out. Professor Nevill Coghill was Dacre's contemporary, and later his colleague, and recalls how on meeting him 'we fell into a delightful conversation which continued intermittently until his recent death'; he was already

'a swift and witty talker; full of amusing and sharp jokes and explosions of laughter'.

'In those days', Coghill writes, 'he had sleek sable hair (later to turn a totally silver-white), deep brown eyes, which pouched a little as he grew older, increasing the twinkle of mockery in them, habitual in his expression was this look of kindly satire'. I might add that the expression could also be grave and compassionate. His face in later years was rather weather-beaten. He was of medium height and strongly built, tending to corpulence, yet even in his sixties he would play squash, and could walk all day in the Westmorland hills.

After graduation Dacre became an assistant master at Sedbergh College; he returned to Oxford as tutor in ancient history at Keble in 1926. Keble was not yet a self-governing institution, and it was only natural that Dacre should in 1927 accept a Fellowship at Exeter, where he remained till retirement. By a practice peculiar to that College the disciplinary duties which in other colleges are discharged by Deans fall to the Sub-Rector, who is vice-gerent, and who also presides over the Senior Common Room. They are best performed by a bachelor. Dacre was, and remained, unmarried, and the prestigious office was given him from the first. He held it for twenty years (though absent in the war) and was later Bursar and then Senior Tutor. Thus he always took a leading part in College administration. In particular he was the prime mover in the rebuilding of Exeter's corner site, and in founding and organizing the Exeter College Association. But in Coghill's view his favourite of the numerous College committees he attended was the Garden Committee.

In 1939 he became Junior Proctor, but his service to the University in that capacity was terminated after six months by his joining the Ministry of Labour as a temporary Principal; he stayed there till the end of the war, rising to be Assistant Secretary, and conceiving a deep admiration for Ernest Bevin. After the war he sat for several years on the General Board of the Faculties. The then Secretary used to recall how he pricked many bubbles with a few sharp words. He was a good man of business, practical in committees, acute and prompt of despatch. It is obvious that he devoted much of his time to administration. Other dons who had a taste and talent for this work seized the opportunity that the war offered to give up the delights of their academies for those of Whitehall. Dacre was not tempted. He was too deeply attached both to the society and education of the young and to the study of the ancient world.

In his *Oxford Now and Then* he writes baldly of undergraduates: 'they are, as they always have been, the cream of the University, its most interesting and by far its most important section' (p. 159). The changes in their social origins since the war, of which he certainly did not disapprove, and in their modes of behaviour, about which he had mixed feelings, never altered his conviction on that point. In the late sixties they were often no longer proud, like Dacre, to inherit Oxford's past, but 'on fire to build Oxford's future out of its ruins. They would like to reform the place, as they would like to reform the world. And in this they are nothing new at all; they are in the best Oxford tradition, only they are more violent and more impatient.' Neither the new iconoclasm nor his own advancing years diminished his zest in their company or his desire to understand them. It was dons, not undergraduates, whom he would class as 'stimulants, depressants and neutrals' (p. 127); the irony with which he often viewed the young never excluded kindly concern. 'I would never recommend anyone to go to that College', he once said to me, pointing to a place of ancient fame: 'the Fellows there take no interest in the undergraduates'. Marriage, or rather the post-war conditions of marriage without servants, which made entertainment harder, he diagnosed as one cause of estrangement. That could not be helped: it was otherwise when men were appointed to teaching posts who cared *only* for research and writing (though his own practice showed how little he despised either), or worse still, neglected their pupils for outside work in government committees and broadcasting.

For Dacre teaching was the single most important part of the don's task. He was a lucid and amusing lecturer, and (I am told) a rigorous tutor. He had no sympathy for idleness, but he also discerned a profound diffidence in most undergraduates: 'undergraduates respond to affection, admiration, interest. They hate thinking that they are not being taken sufficiently seriously . . . You will never harm an undergraduate, if you are his tutor, by praising him to his face' (p. 159). High standards were demanded. He had an enthusiasm for the ancient world, and never appeared weary of subjects on which he had heard essays for years but which were new to his pupils, and on which fresh thoughts would often occur to him, although in his view the prime function of the tutor was not to give instruction but to make the pupil think for himself (pp. 154 f.).

But for Dacre a don's responsibility was not confined to teaching. The College was, as Coghill wrote in a valedictory poem

'his life, his family, his home', and Dacre was 'this century's image of the College'. Warm and comfortable, filled with books, strewn with papers, and adorned with pictures, his room was always a place of welcome and lavish hospitality to all Exeter men, and talk flowed freely, on sport (he would unfailingly watch the College matches, and the University playing cricket or hockey in the Parks), on affairs of the day (but without any partisan spirit), on foreign lands, art, music, the theatre; he himself delighted in travel, visiting museums, galleries, ancient sites; he was assiduous at concerts and plays. It was perhaps unfair if he criticized others for failing to do as a duty what was to him a delight, not least from his simple love of finding out what other human beings were like. The young could get sound and benign advice from him if that were needed, but what he sought was not a paternal relationship but friendship, and in many cases it was a lifelong friendship that he achieved, extending to wives and families.

Of course it was not only the young who enjoyed his conviviality and what I found when travelling with him in Italy to be the inexhaustible variety of his conversation. At High Table and in the Senior Common Room discussion of common scholarly interests was subject to conventional taboo; at other times one could debate them with him seriously for hours, and if you met him, taking his daily constitutional in the Parks or Meadows or by the river-bank, he would be apt to say, as you came within earshot: 'what *can* Cicero have meant . . .?', without so much as a 'good afternoon'. While gazing with delight on the changing beauties of the scene his mind was ever ruminating on historical problems. He was always finding something amusing, which few others would have noticed, in the classical texts or the works of modern scholarship. For many days in the Parks between the overs of a cricket match he would, while meditating a review of Sir Ronald Syme's *Tacitus*, entertain his companions with draft quips, or parodies of the great work, which would have made the review more memorable than the very sober piece that ultimately appeared. Of course he had a strong sense of decorum: jesting would not do for the *Classical Review*.

The gaiety of his conversation is perpetuated in his novels and books on Oxford: there was also a perhaps too clever book for children: *The Pheasant Fights Back* (1949). (Dacre loved children, and one would think that he was an ideal uncle.) The novels (which he chose not to name in his very laconic

entry in *Who's Who*) are humorous and sometimes gently satirical fantasies, which achieved a deserved success: *Have a New Master* (based on his experience as a schoolmaster), 1935, *Sell England*, 1936, *Charity Bazaar*, 1938, *Bedlam House*, 1947 (ridiculing the civil service). In *Freshman's Folly*, 1952, he made fun of Oxford Colleges (there is a delightful skit on a meeting of a Governing Body), and first introduced the eccentric dons of St. George's, who recur in fictional episodes of his two books on Oxford; Mr Botteaux is a self-portrait, which shows that Dacre could be conscious of his own oddities. *Oxford Life* (first edition, 1957, second, 1962), depicts Oxford affectionately 'as a living organism' through the academic year and the changing seasons, and is more faithful to the University of his own youth than to the time at which it was written; by contrast *Oxford Now and Then* (1970) alternates between vignettes of a more remote past and comments on the contemporary scene. The nostalgic encomium there on 'College servants of the old type' is particularly characteristic; Dacre loved them hardly less than undergraduates. (He would take his former scout for a drive every week.) Like his last novel, *The Day they burned Miss Termag*, 1961, this book reflects some bitterness at new tendencies among dons, but the satire on undergraduates' job-hunting shows how he never lost his sympathy for the young in a generation which he surely found harder to comprehend.

Artistically interspersed in the Oxford books there are not only little historical excursions but much that is revealing about the way that the University and Colleges conduct their affairs and about the teaching practices of the time, which will be of use to the future historian who wishes to bring to life the era of the Franks Report and who can discern the truth that lies beneath the comic fictional episodes.

Dacre hoped that when Barber retired in 1956 he would succeed to the Rectorship. He was by then a scholar of some note, and his services to the College were very great. However, the Fellows preferred a somewhat younger man, who had no previous connection with the College, but whose distinction was incomparably greater, Sir Kenneth Wheare. Dacre did not conceal his disappointment. The new Rector told me, some time later, that none the less Dacre gave him generous and unflinching help. But his relations with some of his colleagues were impaired, and he found himself less and less in sympathy with College decisions. His discontent culminated in the refusal to replace him on retirement. Since he claimed that his teaching

load was as heavy as that of other tutors, he ascribed this to new-fangled prejudice against classical studies. The College was doubtless apprehensive that the need for teaching in his subject might fade away in the lifetime of a successor.

No outsider can penetrate the *arcana* of College affairs. But it would not be candid to veil the fact that Dacre inspired strong dislike, which he could reciprocate, as well as warm affection. He spoke his mind freely; he ridiculed to your face what he took to be folly, and though his manner was normally urbane, he could be curtly dismissive even to friends, and make remarks more wounding than he intended. These were readily forgiven by those who knew him well and realized that there was no malice in him. There were others who could not penetrate the dilettante façade, and found him overbearing. His incisive mind and ready wit made him hard to match in debate. In faculty business one could sometimes see how his instinctive respect for tradition might conflict with a rational accessibility to new ideas, and a Fellow of Exeter, whom he regarded as his leading adversary but who would speak very kindly of him behind his back, told me that he was unpredictable in College affairs. He himself caricatures this feature of his own behaviour in *Oxford Now and Then* when he supposes that the Governing Body of St. George's are discussing a proposal to admit women: old Botteaux, 'the most conservative of men' unexpectedly gives his support; but he would go further: it would be only just if after 550 years men should altogether give place to women for a comparable period, or better still, to black women.

With less influence in his College, Dacre employed his administrative talent in another way. From 1959 to 1963 he was Chairman of the Faculty of Archaeology, History, and Letters of the British School at Rome, and, as such, a member of the Executive Committee, which in fact administers the School's affairs. With the help of the Treasurer, Maurice Lush, he raised £20,000 by sheer personal effort to provide for an underground extension of the library. He remained for many more years on the Executive Committee. He loved Italy and seldom let a year pass without travelling there. At the School itself he was a particularly welcome visitor because of the keen interest he took in all the students, not least the artists: one observer remarked that he liked seeing their work, and loved *their* reaction to his own idiosyncrasies. I remember that on one occasion there was a penniless poet staying there, supported by one of the artists; Dacre was always drawing him out, not without a little

well-concealed fun, in intense curiosity to learn of a mode of life quite outside all his other experiences of the young. The then Director, Mr Ward-Perkins, says that he had an endearing habit of seeing all the best in the students. Under his will the School was to inherit not only a great many of his books but money which has enabled it to found a Balsdon Senior Fellowship, whose holder is required to take an interest in the work of the Scholars, particularly in fields close to his own. It would have pleased Dacre that the first holder should be a musical scholar, his former friend and colleague, Dr F. W. Sternfeld. Nothing could be a better memorial not only to the services he rendered to the School but to the predominant aim of his whole life.

Dacre had been a Vice-President of the Roman Society since 1954 and he became its President in 1968 to 1971. Genial in the chair and efficient in the administration, he did much in launching the new periodical *Britannia*. The honour of the Presidency he valued highly, and he felt it proper to the prestige of the Society that its President should be a Doctor of Letters, a degree for which he 'supplicated', in Oxford parlance, in 1968. He had been elected a Fellow of the Academy in the previous year, and was given honorary doctorates by Dalhousie University (1964) and Exeter University (1975). I turn now to his work as a scholar.

## II

In the nineteenth century Dacre might have been well content with a life of teaching, cultivated social enjoyment, and persistent reading of the ancient authors. Although he wrote of research that dons 'with any life and sense . . . have always done it for the pleasure of the thing itself', his counterparts in those days, for all the dominance of classical studies at Oxford, seldom attempted it systematically, or disseminated their learning in publications. In Dacre's own time the spirit of Mark Pattison had triumphed over that of Benjamin Jowett. Dacre was a man responsive to his milieu. Farnell urged the duty of research upon him when he was newly elected a Fellow, and as examples there were his own tutors, all men of scholarly distinction, and in the Faculty at Oxford, the awe-inspiring erudition of Hugh Last, who first evoked his special interest in Cicero's letters. He would often recall how much he owed to, and how much he missed, that exact and acute scholar, the late Charles Hignett, to whom he would submit each typescript of a projected publication. A ritual then followed: Hignett returned it the next day

with a note that if he were to reveal his opinions, it would be the end of a beautiful friendship; Dacre implored him to comment unsparingly; and then he did. (Dacre was himself to be very prompt and helpful in criticizing the drafts of younger scholars—and more encouraging.) But the historian he most admired among his contemporaries was Matthias Gelzer; in reviewing at length his *Kleine Schriften* (*Gnomon* 1965), Dacre declares himself as one of the great man's *epigoni*, and draws particular attention to his 'wise and balanced caution in the use of ancient evidence'. That was an ideal that he did not invariably live up to: he could at times be carried away by a taste for paradox. But his work commanded Gelzer's own respect.

The image of the dilettante concealed the fact that Dacre was a hard-working student, who organized his time carefully. During terms teaching might occupy sixteen hours or more a week; there were also administrative and social duties to perform, but certain hours could still be set aside for systematic reading, and of course there were the vacations. Although research was never his main concern, it had an essential place in his conception of the well-rounded life for a man in his position, and he enjoyed it. Much of it flowed from his teaching. The subjects he taught turned up difficulties for which he had to find his own solutions. And, as he wrote in 1969, 'my own intense interest in ancient history has been sharpened and stimulated over all these years by my own pupils in Greats and by the men and women who have patiently sat out my lectures. I often wonder if young people realize the degree to which they themselves determine the quality of the lectures to which they listen' (*Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome*, p. 10).

His first work, however, *The Emperor Gaius* (1934), which was supplemented by two ancillary articles, hardly derived from his tutorials or lectures, as the brief reign of that eccentric ruler is generally almost ignored in teaching at Oxford. Balsdon<sup>1</sup> deliberately chose not to call Gaius by the common nickname of Caligula, which would have implied condemnation *ab initio*. In the ancient sources he appears as a paranoiac tyrant, and his uncle and successor, Claudius, referred to 'the derangement of his wits'. By a critical analysis of the contradictions and occasionally demonstrable falsehoods in the evidence, Balsdon sought to represent him as 'a wilful, but sane, though indiscreet autocrat'. The work is thus a specimen of the twentieth-century fashion of

<sup>1</sup> He signed all scholarly works 'J. P. V. D. Balsdon', using 'Dacre Balsdon' for his other publications.

reversing ancient judgements on Roman emperors, and to my mind is more ingenious than convincing. But no such essay in apologetics has been written with greater grace and charm. Here, as in all his later scholarly writings, Balsdon displays a rare gift for limpid and deftly economical exposition, marked by unobtrusive wit. Moreover, the author's accuracy and candour enables the reader to control without difficulty the reasonableness of his own interpretation. As the fullest account of the reign, and for the light it casts on sundry detailed problems, the work has not been superseded.

Gaius (we are told) aspired to being recognized as a god in his own lifetime. It was perhaps this aspect of his behaviour that first interested Balsdon in the ancient practice of honouring rulers as gods. At one time he designed a book on the subject, which would have filled a gap for English-speaking students. All that came out of this were two articles, one concerned with Sulla's adoption of the quasi-sacral name of Felix (*JRS* 1951) and a much more important piece (*Historia* 1950), which greatly advanced our understanding of problems connected with the deification of Alexander. It was characteristic of Balsdon that he could readily sympathize with the loyalty that might find expression in pompous ceremonial and extravagant honours but that he found it hard to believe that any gifted ruler could behave irrationally and actually claim godhead. Just as he had rationalized Gaius' conduct, so he would deny that Alexander or Caesar sought recognition of his own divinity.

In the meantime Balsdon had published his fundamental treatment of an important and intricate question, *History of the Extortion Court at Rome 123-70 B.C.* (*Papers of the British School at Rome*, 1938) and two articles (*JRS* 1939-40) on the terminal date of Caesar's command in Gaul. For Mommsen and others a solution to this problem determined whether Caesar or his adversaries should be saddled with guilt for the civil war that precipitated the fall of the Roman Republic. Balsdon was later to see that it had no such great significance; what he did in 1939-40 was to propound a new solution, which he came to think himself was not quite right, but also to transform permanently the terms in which any solution had to be found; his refutation of the basic presupposition in Mommsen's account also invalidated his then universally accepted doctrine on the constitutional position of Augustus in 27 BC, though Balsdon admittedly did not point this out.

After the war there were many more articles and reviews

mainly devoted to problems of the last two centuries of the Roman Republic and stimulated by his teaching. The reviews are mostly bent on describing a book's contents and merits rather than castigating defects, and even in his decisive refutation of Carcopino's hypothesis on the 'Secrets of Cicero's Correspondence' (*CR* 1952) Balsdon cannot withhold generous acknowledgement of the author's cleverness. In *JRS* 1954 and in some other pieces he made notable attacks on the orthodox interpretation of Roman policy towards the Greek world in the early second century, which derived chiefly from the brilliant writings of Maurice Holleaux. More of his work concerned the age of Cicero, but the only conspectus he gave is to be found in the little book on *Julius Caesar* (1967) designed for the general reader, and the fine and balanced essay on 'Cicero the Man' in *Cicero* (1965), a volume edited by T. A. Dorey. His researches necessarily led him to inquire into the characteristics of ancient historians, and he meditated a book on Greek and Roman historiography. This too was never written; besides some reviews, short notes, or *obiter dicta*, we have an article (*JRS* 1971), in which he discredited fashionable attempts to discover some first-century political pamphlet in Dionysius' account of Romulus, and masterly pages in his last book on supposedly anti-Roman historians (*Romans and Aliens*, chapters 12 f.). With robust good sense he protested against dogmatic hypotheses on the characteristics of histories now lost. Given that we have almost nothing of Posidonius' work and only a small part of Polybius' last 34 books, 'it is not particularly profitable to speculate about the aspects of Rome and Roman history which may have been neglected by either writer' (p. 197). Obvious as this may seem, the *conoscenti* will know how rife such speculations are among the most erudite.

Quite apart from the studies incidental to his teaching, Balsdon would read ancient authors through from cover to cover, one after another. He delighted to ramble down bypaths, rather like a naturalist collecting curious fauna and flora. Points that would not have been noticed by most readers evoked fresh questions in his mind. Three of his books including his last publication (*infra*) were in part the fruit of this wide reading. *Roman Women, their History and Habits* (1963), which went into four impressions by 1974, and *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (1969) were both addressed to the general reader but are extensively annotated for the benefit of students. The former work, without claiming to be one of 'deep and learned

scholarship', at least traverses ground no one had entirely traversed before. For the second he could and did draw on familiar handbooks, adding new material, but he adopted an original plan, recalling the first of his books on Oxford, by trying to recreate a typical day in the life of a Roman and then examining the special days of festival in the Roman year. In both books (the first assembles a gallery of individual portraits) the reader may be reminded of those freschi in which a Ghirlandaio brings before one's eyes the outward appearance of men and women in the actual setting of their lives. They are not indeed profound historical works; much in them is of a merely antiquarian interest. Thus he hardly tries to explain the independent status to which Roman women of the upper class could attain. The second book is much more concerned with leisure than with the hard economic facts of life. But few could fail to profit from much out-of-the-way information, and he can even make an account of the Roman calendar readable. He was well aware that most of what we know pertains to the very small class of the relatively well-to-do in Rome and Italy, and here and there he warns us of this.

Thus one notable passage in *Life and Leisure* discredits the misconception propagated even in standard works that the urban proletariat at Rome cared for nothing but '*panem et circenses*' and that 'nearly a third of the whole population were kept alive by corn doles and the frenzied excitement of public spectacles' (pp. 267 ff.). Even the recipients of the doles, he shows, had to work, perhaps a 42-hour week, for the rest of their subsistence; the theatres could only accommodate small numbers, the Colosseum 'one person in every twenty—if he had a ticket'; and if more could watch the chariot races, they occurred under Augustus only on seventeen days in the year and never on more than sixty-six. How did this differ from attendance at football matches? (Balsdon liked modern analogies from England and Italy.) In his Introduction he asks 'what was life like—*for whom?*', and lists all sorts of categories, in which life must have been very different. This was the right question to ask in such a book, and for the urban plebs at least, as well as for the upper class, he supplied much of the answer.

### III

Dacre's Fellowship expired in 1969. He had hoped to live on in the College, a concession now seldom made at Oxford to retired bachelor dons, and not accorded to him. It could hardly

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have been a happy arrangement. The final chapter in *Oxford Now and Then*, which describes the departure of Mr. Botteaux from St. George's, is in some degree autobiographical; at once funny and poignant, it reveals the bitterness of his feelings at the time. (It is the *chef d'œuvre* of all his non-scholarly pieces.) Like Mr. Botteaux, Dacre had the abounding consolation of a dinner and presentation given to him by a hundred and thirty of his former pupils. Mr. Botteaux was to leave for Stanza University where he was to be Professor for life of the Art of Living—'haec amplissima omnium artium, bene vivendi disciplina'. Dacre, after a year as visiting professor at the University of Texas, practised the art in his tastefully modernized cottage at Great Haseley near Oxford. He found splendid help in a neighbour, Mrs Cheesman, whom he never tired of praising, and although he had been waited on in college for over forty years, he was not at all helpless himself; he was soon justly priding himself on his cookery. He had visitors to stay almost every week. It was a joy to him to have Sir Philip and Lady Hendy as near neighbours, but he was also a general favourite in the village, drinking his pint every day in the pub opposite, and taking a part in the local life. The years of his retirement were probably the happiest he had passed for a long time, although he was more and more afflicted with arthritis, which he would not allow to cripple his activities. Early in the summer of 1977 he had a hip operation from which he convalesced but slowly. On 18 September he died peacefully after a brief illness.

They had not been idle years. He had chosen to live near Oxford, chiefly that he might have easy access to the libraries. In 1965 he had already edited and contributed to a popular work on *The Romans*: now in 1970 he published *Rome, The Story of an Empire*, a brief work for the general public. He also provided material for courses in the Open University. But in addition he was engaged 'in intervals of gardening and cooking' on a major work, *Romans and Aliens*, which was sent to the printers a few months before his death and did not appear until autumn 1979.<sup>1</sup> That too was not the end. His *Nachlaß* contained notes and drafts for a book on Roman Slavery, on which he was working to the last.

The purpose of his posthumous book was 'to enquire how Romans regarded other peoples and indeed how they regarded themselves, and how other peoples regarded the Romans; how

<sup>1</sup> This delay explains the late appearance of the present obituary notice.

they communicated and how they infected one another, given the marked differences in their background and customs'. It covers a vast range and is the kind of book which could only be written on the basis of a lifetime's reading and reflection. Once more Balsdon seems to have had the general public intermittently in mind, since he explains matters which are familiar to every scholar, yet he presupposes knowledge where the layman is likely to be ignorant. Some parts like the chapter on Roman nomenclature again illustrate his antiquarian interests and consort oddly with discussions of great historical themes such as the Roman view of their own past. At times he fails to examine these themes as fully as one would have liked and as he himself could have done. One could without difficulty point to gaps in his citation of texts and of modern discussions. But in other places he has delved deeply and assembled material usefully. Moreover, the account of the diffusion of Greek and Latin is the best general survey I know. It would not be easy to find a more balanced treatment of pro- and anti-Roman attitudes in antiquity than in chapters 12 and 13, and they imply a no less balanced judgement on what was good and bad in Roman government. He is more explicit than most historians of Rome have been that we know little or nothing of the sentiments of the masses. It is a characteristic of the book that it is full of questions, deliberately left unanswered or half-answered, to stimulate thought or further inquiry, or to indicate what really remains, and probably will always remain, beyond our ken or reasonable conjecture.

On the whole it cannot be said that Dacre made as great contributions to our knowledge or understanding of the ancient world as his own enduring interest in it, intellectual perspicacity, common sense, and freshness of vision would have qualified him to make, if he had devoted his energies whole-heartedly to this purpose. In his farewell speech Mr Botteaux says: 'A don's business, I have always thought, was with the young and, scholarship apart, I have devoted my life to the young and profited greatly by so doing. All my life I have tried to understand them, and if I have never completely succeeded, I have never thought that an adequate reason for ceasing to try.' 'Scholarship apart'; but it was not something totally apart. It was his task to teach, and therefore to keep his subject alive in his own mind with unceasing inquiries, which afforded their own pleasure and continued when his teaching had been done. Still, they had been subsidiary in his art of life. And so his name

will not be recorded in so many learned footnotes as it might have been, but few scholars will be so long and affectionately remembered by the many who knew and valued him. *Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus tam cari capitis?*

P. A. BRUNT

I write chiefly from personal recollections going back to 1951. Dacre's pupil, Dr Oswyn Murray, Fellow of Balliol College, kindly lent me the booklet commemorating Dacre's farewell dinner, which contains the verses by Professor Coghill from which I quote, as also from his appreciation of Dacre in the *Exeter College Register*. I am also indebted for reminiscences to his former colleagues at Exeter, Professor W. C. Kneale and Professor Herbert Nicholas, to Mr J. B. Ward-Perkins, Mr Michael Crawford, and to Mr F. A. Lepper, whose tribute to Dacre appeared in *JRS* 1978. At various times I have learned from his pupils of the impression he made as a tutor.