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O. M. DALTON

ORMONDE MADDOCK DALTON

1866-1945

ORMONDE MADDOCK DALTON was born at Cardiff on 30 January 1866, the second son of Thomas Masters Dalton, solicitor and Justice of the Peace. He was sent to school at Harrow from 1878 to 1884; thence he passed as an Exhibitioner to New College, Oxford, to read for Classical Moderations and Literae Humaniores, in each of which he took a first class. The next few years were spent at first partly in France and Germany, then in India, whence he returned through the Far East and the United States. After a year's schoolmastering, he was appointed to an Assistantship in the British Museum. He began work there in 1895 under Sir Wollaston Franks in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities, in which at that time what afterwards became the Department of Ceramics and Ethnography was included. Sir Wollaston retired in 1896 (to die in 1897) and was succeeded by Hercules Read. Dalton's great abilities were speedily recognized, and won for him special promotion to a first-class Assistantship in October 1901, and to what was then called Assistant (now Deputy) Keepership in 1909. On Read's retirement Ceramics and Ethnography (which also comprised Oriental Antiquities) were budded off into a separate Department, and Dalton was left Keeper of what were still called British and Medieval Antiquities, but were really a vast conglomeration of objects of Prehistoric, Romano-British, British and Medieval, Renaissance, and later date. After nearly thirty-three years of service under the Trustees, but less than seven as Keeper of the Department, he retired in January 1928. He went to live at Bath, with a country cottage at Holford in the Quantocks; to the latter place he eventually retreated altogether, dying there in 1945.

Such is the bare outline of a career to which the reticence characteristic of the man makes it peculiarly difficult to do justice; for even to members of his family, and to those who were in his later years his more or less intimate friends he did not talk about his earlier life, except with a detachment that sometimes made it doubtful how far he was drawing upon personal experience. He was one of six children; there were an elder and a younger brother, and three sisters. The elder brother, A. M. Dalton, became a civil engineer of some distinction, was one of

Sir Francis Fox's chief assistants in the sinking of the Mersey Tunnel, and later was engaged on railways in the Argentine and on bridge building for the United States Government. He died some fifteen years ago. His younger brother Thomas Laurence's tastes were for art and music and for travel, in the course of which he visited every part of the world, writing descriptive articles for the *Indian Press*. From his father, who is described as living a quiet life, devoted to his hobby of painting sea-pieces, Ormonde may have inherited that retiring nature and that love of study and contemplation which made him shrink from ordinary society. His reticence has deprived us of practically all knowledge of his early years, except the little that can be drawn from one source of information, about which a word must be said in preface; and that is to be found in one of the three pseudonymous books, the authorship of which he never publicly admitted, although equally he never denied it. One of his closest friends, it is true, has expressed some doubt as to his authorship; but from another—who is indeed the anonymous friend to whom the *Apologia Diffidentis* is dedicated—he did not attempt to conceal it. In these circumstances his biographer is justified in making use of the books for his own immediate purposes; indeed, if out of a false sense of delicacy he should respect their secret and ignore them, he would produce a distorted picture of the man. An estimate of the value of the books as a contribution to English literature will not be attempted here; the time will perhaps come when judgement on that point will be passed by a competent literary critic; indeed, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, it is about due.

At this date it is naturally not easy to trace survivors among those who were his contemporaries at school. From one of them, however, Mr. A. Newnham Davis, who was in the same house (Rendall's), and saw a great deal of him, though a year his senior, we learn that 'he was of a retiring disposition, and not particularly keen on games, but that did not interfere with his popularity, as everyone liked him. . . . He had marked ability and a keen power of discernment and of criticizing whatever in the school regime he thought right to disagree with.' Evidently the schoolboy, as afterwards the man, kept his troubles to himself, and did not allow his inner discontent to flaw the geniality which marked his relations with his fellows. A younger brother, Mr. Stuart G. Davis, who was his contemporary in Rendall's, also confirms the impression that there is no reason to suppose that he was miserable at Harrow.

Yet that there was discontent, and that in no small measure, must be admitted in the light of the significant words in the *Apologia*: 'I shall say nothing of the miseries which embittered the life of the diffident boy. But'; he goes on, in a passage which must be quoted at length, for it says practically all that is known of the matter:

I cannot pass in silence the deeper trouble of earliest manhood, when my soul first awoke to the dread that though other clouds might drift westward and dissolve, one would impend over me for ever. It was at the university that this vague misgiving crept upon me like a chill mist, until the hopes and aspirations of youth were one by one extinguished, as to a sailor putting out to sea the comfortable harbour lights vanish in the wracks of a tempestuous winter morning. I turned my face away from the gracious young life amidst which I moved, like a man possessed of a dark secret to his undoing. My heart, yet eager for the joy of living and yearning for affection, was daily starved of its need as by a power of deliberate and feline cruelty; and with every expansive impulse instantly restrained by this daemonic force, I was left at last unresponsive as a maltreated child, who flings his arms round no-one, but shrinks back into his own world of solitary fancies. I think there is no misery so great as that of youth surrounded by all opportunities for wholesome fellowship, endowed with natural faculties for enjoyment, yet repressed and thwarted at every turn by invincible self-consciousness and mistrust: surely no lost opportunities of manhood leave such aching voids as these.

There is some confirmation of this plaint from an outside source. 'He definitely did not like Oxford and was quite unhappy in his four years at New College, during which time I first made his acquaintance', writes Dr. Robert Moon—one of the very few men with whom he was intimate at New, perhaps indeed the only one. So that when the four years were over he had no wish for an academic career in what he afterwards called his 'prison city'. But he had not made up his mind in any other direction. Moon had thoughts of the diplomatic service, and Dalton agreed to follow his example and study with that in view; though it is hard to conceive that one of so retiring a disposition would have found the atmosphere of the service congenial. However, the two young men went at different times and to different places in France and Germany, corresponding with each other in the language of the country. With his younger brother, Laurence, he went to Paris early in 1889, read hard and took French lessons; he lived also in private families near Château Thierry and Besançon, speaking always French with his hosts, and at the same time keeping up his classics. He

travelled here and there in east and south-east France. In the autumn of 1889 he stayed in Hanover for two months, then went to Dresden for three, working hard at the German language and literature, and visiting occasionally other places of interest, such as Nuremberg and Hildesheim. Incidentally, in the winter, he took to skating, at which he became very proficient. The two friends joined each other for a time at Eisenach.

Early in 1890 it became obvious that there would be no examination for the diplomatic service or the Foreign Office until they were both over age, and that they must make other plans. Moon chose medicine; Dalton was still uncertain. After returning to England in the spring of 1890, he went with his family to the Rhine and then to Italy (Florence and Rome). His brother Laurence having decided to take up coffee-planting in India, Dalton agreed to join him, and they reached Mysore in the middle of the year. The estate on which they were to learn their work was at North Coorg, where they built their own bungalow and indeed invested money in the business. But his heart was not in coffee-planting. True, he had found tranquillity and release from the conflict of the world, social embarrassments, and the like, which had been so irksome to him. 'All conditions that a recluse might crave seemed now to be fulfilled for my benefit'; he had found 'a quiet happiness never known before'. He read a great deal, poring over the sacred books of the East and striving to master the Vedanta philosophy. He never cared, his brother says, for sport of any kind, such as shooting or fishing. Work—which certainly seems to have been light—on the plantation was varied by journeys in ox-carts through the countryside, or longer expeditions by land or sea, to Cochin or Mangalore or Calicut or other places on the Malabar coast, to Ceylon. But he began to wake from his dream, to realize that 'it was inevitable that the bland ease of such a contemplative life should bring no enduring satisfaction to the mind; it was not an end in itself, but a mere means to serenity, a breathing-space useful to the recovery of a long-lost fortitude'. A long letter—in German—to Moon (29 August 1891) tells how he was excited by reading in Rudyard Kipling's 'Light that failed' the passage where Dick Helder watches the *Barralong* steam away on its voyage to Australia. 'Just reading it has made the idea of travelling stick in my head.' He grew restless, he must get moving. The same letter shows that he was not shutting his eyes to political trends in the home country, and gives vent to his disgust with the stupid elements in democracy,

the lack of moral strength in the Liberals, and the general ignorance about the colonies in the House of Commons. The letter is typical of the critical attitude towards people and institutions, of which traces were, as we have seen, visible even in the school-boy, and which, as a colleague afterwards put it, was sometimes expressed with a plaintive and aggrieved air.

He was still in south India in July 1893 when he wrote to Moon enthusiastically about the *Journal Intime* of Amiel, which he had found a real revelation, making clear much that had hitherto been obscure to him. This discovery of a kindred spirit is interesting. Amiel, too, as Edmond Scherer in his introduction to the *Journal* tells us, had a very unhappy boyhood. But to those who knew him later he was a delightful companion, and his deep-seated melancholy only found expression in the *Journal* published after his death. There is a certain parallel between the two men; but, in spite of the *Apologia*, Dalton will not go down to posterity as one of the *grands mélancoliques*.

Finally, he made up his mind to come home, taking on his way the Straits, China, Japan, Canada, and the United States (where his elder brother, then in New York, showed him something of American life). Of his impressions of these countries there is no record. He had been three and a half years in the East.

Moon was interested in the school founded on original lines by Dr. Reddie at Abbotsholme in Derbyshire, and in 1894 persuaded Dalton to try the experiment of schoolmastering under that remarkable man. He seems to have been reasonably contented there, but that was not his line of life, and when a year later a chance came of a nomination for the British Museum, he seized it, was nominated on 6 March 1895, was successful over two competitors in the examination, and began work on 13 June. He was rather older than the average entrant to the Museum, being nearly thirty, but he had an experience of foreign lands and languages which must have been greatly in his favour. Sir Wollaston Franks was then on the point of retiring. Whether it was definitely intended that the new Assistant should devote himself to the ethnographical section of the Department, cannot now be stated. But his travels in the East, though they had not lasted long, may have inclined him in that direction. It was characteristic of his philosophic bent that, as he once confessed, it was the psychological side of ethnography that interested him. In any case, on to the ethnographical collections he was set. His anthropological work is described and estimated

by the most competent judges elsewhere.¹ Here it is sufficient to record that he became a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1895, a member of its Council in 1898, and Hon. Secretary and Hon. Editor of the Institute's *Journal* for 1896 and 1897. His not infrequent contributions to the *Journal* and to *Man* range from 1898 to 1912, and some of them, as those on the Easter Island script in 1904, were weighty. But the work in this field for which he is best known, at least to others than specialists, is that in which he collaborated with Sir Hercules Read, on *Antiquities from the City of Benin* (1899). (The first detailed report on the Benin collections was read at the Anthropological Institute and published in its *Journal*.) What proportion of the credit for this stately folio should be allotted to each of the two collaborators can only be guessed, and Dalton, always loyal to his chief, would not have wished it to be the subject of speculation. He continued to be actively concerned with the ethnographical collections until the assistance of Thomas Joyce, who was appointed to the Department in July 1902, gradually relieved him of this work. The two collaborated in the very useful *Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections*, which was published by the Trustees in 1910.

In 1899 he was elected to the Society of Antiquaries, and was to serve four times on its Council from 1900 to 1922; although he characteristically refused to allow himself to be nominated a Vice-President, he took a lively interest in its proceedings, though more as a listener than a speaker, and his contributions to its publications—some ten important articles in *Archaeologia* alone—are evidence of his regard for the Society. Like his predecessors, Franks and Read, he considered the service of the Society a legitimate facet of the work of his Department.

Before the end of the century he had begun to turn his attention to what had been hitherto a somewhat neglected portion of the collections. The first-fruits of his work on Early Christian Antiquities, which was by a natural process to develop into those studies which placed him among the leading Byzantine archaeologists of his time, were seen in the *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East* (1901). For the small but important exhibition which he brought together he provided in 1903 the official *Guide to Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities*. From now on, for some years, his publications were to be mainly concerned with these subjects; though he

¹ By Sir John Myres and Mr. H. J. Brauholtz in *Man*. I owe a bibliography of his contributions on Anthropology to Mr. Brauholtz.

covered, as it were in his stride, the extraordinarily difficult and tricky problem of the Oxus Treasure, which the bold and far-seeing policy of Sir Wollaston Franks had secured years before, and which came with his other bequests to the Museum. The *Treasure of the Oxus*, published by the Trustees in 1905, was a fine example of scholarly discrimination, tactfully penetrating the fog in which everything that passed through the corridor of Rawalpindi seemed to be enveloped, and revealing a solid structure of archaeological facts, which remained in all essentials unshaken when the book went into a second edition in 1926.

At this time interest in things Byzantine was growing in this country. Partly it was fostered by a suspicion, however unwarranted, that classical archaeology was becoming exhausted; and this, combined perhaps with a decline in the study of classical languages and literature, sent students and amateurs further afield. Young would-be archaeologists were turning increasingly to prehistoric antiquities, a 'soft option' which required little knowledge of Greek or Latin, and as to which, at the time, scientific treatment being still in a primitive stage, no one could say you were wrong. On the other hand, coming down to post-classical times, there were scholars who were attracted by the combination of grandeur of scale with richness of decoration which is the characteristic feature of Byzantine art. In time the movement was to shake off the few amateurs who thought it necessary to abuse classical art in order to justify their admiration of its successor. The serious students, partly inspired it would seem by Dalton's own enthusiasm, got together, and the 'Byzantine Research and Publication Fund' was established. Printed reports of its work, if they exist, have evaded inquiries. But it is known that Sir Hercules Read was President; Dalton and the distinguished architect Robert Weir Schultz (afterwards Schultz-Weir) were joint Secretaries. The Fund was from the beginning associated with the British School at Athens, the Director of which was a member of the Committee. Other members were W. R. Lethaby, H. A. Cruso, and Arthur Hamilton Smith. The policy of the Committee was to encourage the study of Byzantine art, especially architecture, and promising young architectural students were helped financially to survey monuments and their reports were printed. The first publication was the Report on *The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem*, edited by R. Weir Schultz, with contributions by W. Harvey, Lethaby, Dalton, Cruso, and A. C. Headlam (afterwards Bishop of Gloucester), which appeared in 1910. *The Church of Saint*

Eirene at Constantinople, by A. Van Millingen, A. M. Woodward, and A. J. B. Wace, followed in 1913. Adequate support was, however, lacking, and the first World War naturally stopped the work, although *The Church of Our Lady of the Hundred Gates*, by H. H. Jewell and F. W. Hasluck, appeared as late as 1920. Differences had arisen among the Committee; Dalton, who hated squabbles, did not formally withdraw but ceased to take an active interest; the President resigned; and the failure of an organization which had promised well had to be recognized. It was a bitter personal disappointment to Dalton and his fellow enthusiasts. As Mr. Cruso writes, it had the effect of fortifying him in a pessimism which was never far from his outlook and in this case was not entirely justified; for the Fund had to its credit a number of publications on monuments, all of which had been the subject of careful study on the spot by trained observers and often by young architects sent out and financed by it.

The remainder of the funds and the store of drawings which had accumulated but not been published were eventually handed over to the British School at Athens, which still administers (if that is the right word) the Byzantine Research Fund in a state of suspended animation.

During the first twelve years of the century Dalton's publications on Byzantine archaeology, though not numerous, were important. The *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities* (1901) has already been mentioned. The great Cyprus Treasure of silver plate of the sixth century was treated by him in *Archaeologia* in 1900 (the British Museum portion) and 1906 (the Pierpont Morgan and Nicosia portions), as well as in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1907.¹ As to the place of origin, he was doubtful; at first he thought of Cyprus, but later, in a note in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1906), he preferred Syria or Egypt. He was able to include the recently acquired British Museum portion of the Treasure in the *Guide to the Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities* (1903) already mentioned.

The official *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era* which he produced in 1909 covered not only the Roman, Early Christian, and Byzantine, but the Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and later periods, and included also examples of Moham-

¹ Dalton contributed to the Magazine from 1904 to 1926, and was a member of its Consultative Committee from 1916 to 1927, 'when, retiring from the British Museum he also retired from this Magazine, ever consistent in that tending towards self-effacement which gave the very key-note to his character' (*Burl. Mag.*, March 1945).

medan art and carvings in bone. But the culmination of his achievement was reached in 1911 with the *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, published by the Clarendon Press in 1911. It is by this work, which is a sort of Bible for Byzantine archaeologists (although they may not all be 'fundamentalists' in this respect) that he will especially be remembered. The colossal amount of information, which he has collected and methodically and lucidly marshalled, would have been enough to overwhelm any ordinary scholar, working as he did single-handed, and enough to place him in the first rank of Byzantinists, had he produced nothing else. Where he has given us so much, it seems ungrateful to complain that he found himself forced to exclude architecture from his survey; but to have done otherwise might have made the book half as long again. Besides, he knew that he was not a trained architect.

The next year (1912) saw, besides an article in the *Burlington Magazine* on Byzantine Enamels in the Pierpont Morgan collection, the official *Catalogue of Finger Rings, Early Christian, Byzantine, Teutonic, Medieval and Later*, and the *Catalogue of Medieval Ivories, Enamels and Jewels, Gems &c. in the McClean Bequest*, which he compiled for the Fitzwilliam Museum. He had already begun in 1909, as we have seen, to range beyond Byzantine limits into the field of the arts in western Europe in the Middle Ages.

The title 'Catalogue', to a reader who has not consulted the massive volumes which issued from Dalton's workshop during these years, conveys the idea of a mechanical compilation, put together with (or even without) the help of the most obvious books of reference. But a tradition had been formed at the British Museum in accordance with which the preparation of Departmental Catalogues involved not merely accuracy of description but intensive research and the exercise of the critical faculty, so that the volumes came in effect to be standard works on the subjects concerned. Of this tradition Dalton's Catalogues are outstanding monuments. Astonishment at the industry and power of concentration which he displayed grows when one realizes that there was another aspect of his mental activity which is not revealed in these publications. It was in 1908 that John Lane published the first of the three books which he wrote under the pseudonym of W. Compton Leith (W., it has been conjectured, for Wimbledon, where he lived, Compton for the village in Surrey with the Watts picture-gallery, which evoked a beautiful passage in the *Apologia*, and Leith for the hill on whose slopes he loved to wander and often to sleep in the open).

The *Apologia Diffidentis* is often painful reading; this sort of self-vivisection sometimes hurts the looker-on as much as the victim, who may find some relief in liberating his soul. But the book, though pathetic, is not morbid, for the writer's intellectual control is never relaxed or his sanity ever in danger. As to the style, reviewers amused themselves (and us) by comparing Sir Thomas Browne and Stevenson and Pater and even A. C. Benson. All that need be said here is that it is not artificial, in the sense of not being the expression of genuine feeling. If ever Buffon's saying about style is true, it is in this case. The proof lies in many a passage in Dalton's private letters, which were written *currente calamo* and without any intention of publication.

In 1913 appeared *Sirenica*, also from John Lane's house. There is less perhaps to be said of this, the least striking, to one reader's mind, of the trilogy. But it is an interesting study of the escape of the mind of man from the closed intellectual horizon of Greek thought, from 'the possessed and measurable land into the uncharted kingdom of the Vague. For the Sirens mean Romance.' It is written with the same mastery of the English language, and is somewhat more allusive than its predecessor; but it is perhaps, though never tedious, never easy to lay down, a little long drawn out.¹

The first World War broke in upon these manifold activities, although it was possible for the Trustees of the Museum to publish in 1915 the *Catalogue of Engraved Gems of Post-Classical Periods*, on which Dalton had been engaged for some time previously. In the summer of 1912, for instance, he made a special journey to Italy to study the post-classical engraved gems. He had occasional difficulty, like others who have worked in Italian Museums, in tracking down skilfully elusive directors; but he was able to examine the collections at Naples and Florence, which preserve the remains of the Medici Cabinet.

Another book which appeared in 1915 introduces us to a new phase of Dalton's activity. This was the translation of the *Letters of Sidonius Apollinaris*, published in two small volumes by the Clarendon Press. The first volume contains an Introduction of 160 pages, in which he presents a clear and attractive picture of the man, 'Gallo-Roman noble, Prefect and Patrician, Visigothic subject, bishop and Saint'; of his relations with the 28 bishops and the rest of his 109 correspondents; of the political

¹ One would like to know whether it is one of Mr. F. L. Lucas's 11,396 books on Romanticism, and how it appealed to him (*The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal*, p. 3).

and social conditions of the time; of the writer's atrocious style, which yet does not detract from his value to the historian of the period. This Introduction is a model of the way in which such a subject should be handled; there is not a superfluous word, while nothing of value that can be extracted from the convolutions of the text is allowed to escape notice.

During the war, like many other members of the Museum staff he was transferred to another civilian office, working for the Admiralty at the preparation of maps and guides for some of the less well-known regions involved in or affected by hostilities. One morning, as he crossed the road to the Royal Geographical Society's building, he was knocked over by a motor-car. A careless house-surgeon, who examined him at the hospital to which he was carried, failed to diagnose a broken thigh, and sent him on an excruciating journey in a taxi-cab all the way to his lodgings in Wimbledon. It was several months before he came out of the local hospital, fortunately only very slightly lame, and still able to take the long walks in the country which were his favourite relaxation. To this period of enforced retirement we owe the third book of the Compton Leith trilogy, *Domus Doloris* (Lane, 1919). It is a brilliant penetrating study of the members of the staff of a hospital, with some amusing character studies; its real theme is the value of the discipline imposed on body and mind in the House of Pain; and it ends on a note of hope for a better age; 'for there the spirit of best promise for times hereafter is manifest and actual now'.

A spiteful fate, noting his favourable impression of the hospital, decided to send him back to it. After he had returned to his duties at the Museum, and even before *Domus Doloris* appeared in print, he was attacked by an obstinate skin ailment, and went on sick leave from 1 January to 6 June 1919. This setback, and the lengthy task of restoring the normal routine of the Department, to which some of the staff had not yet returned, may explain why his pace slackened. We note only the second edition of the *Guide to Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities*, which bears the date 1921. Later in that year, on Sir Hercules Read's retirement, he succeeded to the Keepership of the 'British and Medieval Antiquities'. The Department, it should be explained, had originated in the effort of the Trustees about 1850 to meet the demand for a Museum of National Antiquities by the creation of a department which was to function as such a museum within the framework of the British Museum. That accounts for such a feature as the section of Roman Britain, the

inclusion of which in the Department has sometimes puzzled classical archaeologists. In course of time it attracted to itself, more or less by accident, much that lay outside its original horizon. Now, with the change of Keeper, the opportunity was taken to lighten and tidy up to some extent the amorphous bulk of the Department by the separation from it of the Ceramic, Ethnographical, and Oriental Antiquities. But a vast mass remained, and the administrative duties of the Keepership left Dalton less time for research. The happiest man in any Department of the British Museum, if he has a taste for research, is the Deputy Keeper, who is spared the drudgery which falls on some of the juniors, and is involved in administration only in his chief's absence.

Dalton took his task very seriously, how seriously cannot be better expressed than in the words which I am allowed to quote from Mr. Kendrick:

I should like to pay a tribute to Dalton as a most competent and discerning Keeper. He shirked no part of the task, and he was deeply respected for his charmingly courteous and sympathetic treatment of his subordinates. He was in fact, particularly successful with the junior members of the work room, and with them he seemed to have no shyness of an embarrassing kind. He worked hard to buy many things that a less conscientious Keeper might have let slip (e.g. the De Baye Collection of S. Russian antiquities), and it was entirely due to his energy that the British Museum got the 'St. George' Byzantine enamel and the Limoges 'St. Anthony' enamel, a pair to one already in the Museum. O. M. D. possessed an enviable store of flair, taste, and knowledge, and the quality of even his more ordinary acquisitions is an example that we still try to keep in mind. His gallery-work was impeccable, and he took enormous pains over all matters of exhibition and arrangement. Furthermore, he had a very clear sense of the general purpose and destiny of the Department. He understood the growing ascendancy of prehistoric studies, and he planned the popular handbook 'Flints' (written by Reginald Smith) at *6d.*, a real British Museum innovation and a most successful venture.

Another colleague also stresses his essential kindness; helpfulness towards junior colleagues and lower grades (not merely official); geniality; humour; high sense of duty; dislike of administrative work.

In 1922 the British Academy elected Dalton a Fellow—almost the only public recognition as a scholar that he seems to have received—or at least accepted. He could truly claim, in the words of a poet-antiquary,

my naked name
 Provokes not half the jumbled alphabet
 To jostle in its train across the page
 Of scientific annals.

In 1923, in collaboration with his junior colleague H. J. Braunholtz, he produced a translation of Josef Strzygowski's *Origins of Christian Church Art* (Clarendon Press). He had read and seen the interest of the *Ursprung der christlichen Kirchenkunst: Neue Tatsachen und Grundsätze der Kunstforschung* on its appearance in 1920. The translators, taking each one half of the book, effected a readable version of the craggy Austro-German text of the protagonist of the 'Los von Rom' movement. Since the volume entitled *East Christian Art: a Survey of the Monuments* appeared from the Clarendon Press only two years later, in 1925, it is probable that its author was already preparing it when he tackled the translation of Strzygowski's work. The book covers the same ground as *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, with the inclusion of something that was missing in the earlier volume, the Architecture; but that the point of view is different is indicated by the title itself, from which the word Byzantine has disappeared. Neither Byzantium, still less a decadent Rome, could any longer be considered as the foundation on which Christian art was based. Admirably written, like everything else from Dalton's pen, the book nevertheless gives the impression of having been suggested to the author rather than springing from his own choice. It did not, of course, pretend to be a work of reference, like its predecessor, which scholars will probably always rank the higher of the two. And although there is a chapter on the Architecture, Dalton's unwillingness to plunge into problems of which he had not the first-hand knowledge which an architectural training might have given him is illustrated by the fact that among the illustrations there is not a single plan of a building.

As already observed he had begun to turn his mind to later periods. The unpretending *Guide to Medieval Antiquities and Objects of Later Date* (1924), patchy as must inevitably be any handbook based on a single collection, however large, is nevertheless one of the most useful and informative of British Museum *Guides*. It was the successor (with alterations, omissions, and additions) of the *Guide to the Medieval Room* which he had produced in 1907. In the same year we note the scholarly little monograph on the *Royal Gold Cup*. *East Christian Art*, already mentioned, and the second edition of the *Treasure of the Oxus*

(1926), next occupied him. The introduction to the latter had to be almost entirely rewritten; the last twenty years had seen much research which had to be taken into account. In this country especially the *Scythians and Greeks* of E. H. Minns had brought the Scythian problem into prominence. The Museum had also acquired since 1905 a number of examples of early metal-work, from Armenia, Persia, Bactria, Siberia, and NW. India, so that the second, supplementary part of the Catalogue was expanded to more than twice its original length, with a corresponding development of the introduction, dealing with the art of NW. India and the Sassanians.

On a visit to Italy, one of the various wanderings on which it was my privilege to accompany him, he was shown by the Director of the Museum at Brescia a Byzantine astrolabe; this was the subject of his only contribution (if we except the short biographical notice of Sir Hercules Read in 1930) to the Proceedings of the British Academy (1926). It was also his last contact with Byzantine studies; and his literary career was about to close. It did so in what is something of a *tour de force*, the translation of the *History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours, which the Clarendon Press published in June 1927. This book is very much on the same plan as the *Sidonius Apollinaris*, like it in two volumes, but on a larger scale, the historical introduction occupying as much space as the translation and notes. This Introduction, in 450 pages, is an able study of Gregory himself and the chief characters in his book, including Queen Fredegund, the 'wickedest woman of her day', of the history and organization of the Merovingian kingdoms and Church, and of the social life and culture of the period. The abstract of early Merovingian history in less than fifty pages is, it must be admitted, too closely packed to be easily assimilated, but more indigestible material it would be difficult to find. There is probably no better sketch in the English language (one need not except the works of Dill) of the social history of Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries than is provided by these two Introductions.

The *Gregory of Tours* shows Dalton's scholarship at its most mature; unfortunately it was to bear no more fruit. With his retirement in January 1928, the deep regret that was felt by all his colleagues was tempered by the hope that he would continue to use his pen unhampered by the cares of office. But they were to be disappointed. Leaving London, to the bustle and clamour of which he never returned except for a rare flying visit of the inside of a day, he settled at Bath, in a flat in Sydney

Place, with a country cottage on the fringe of the Quantocks at Holford. Quitting the Museum, he regarded a long chapter of his life as closed, and never reopened it. His was not the case of the official who takes no interest in his work, however conscientiously he performs it; the quality, as well as the quantity, of his output proves that it gave his intellect that exercise in which the scholar's happiness subsists. But for thirty-three years other tastes and inclinations had been kept under rigorous control; now he was free to indulge them. Writing to E. H. Minns, who had recently been appointed to a professorial chair, he remarked (22 January 1928): 'As for me, I seem infinitely remote from all such things. It is very curious, but sometimes I ask myself whether I was ever in the B.M. at all, so completely have I reverted to the freer existence of pre-Museum days. What I am enjoying most for the time being is the beauty of West Somerset in winter.' . . .

A long letter, written on 28 December 1927, throws much light on his state of mind at this time and sets forth his reasons for the premature retirement for which I had reproached him. In the course of it he wrote:

. . . the φιλέρημος held on until the fear of insomnia gave him a reason for departure unconnected with his natural bias. . . . I want to reaffirm the opinion that the B.M. suffers no essential loss by my disappearance. I may have exaggerated when I once told you that the long Byzantine furrow had broken my back; but it has permanently bowed it! For some time now I have been stale, and a living institution has no use for stale men. Sapped of enthusiasm, I have been at a dead end in my Department; my work had become flat and unprofitable. Then, there was another consideration. The mediaeval side of the Department inevitably wanes by the drying up of sources of supply. The prehistoric side waxes in importance. It was quite time that the representative of this side should hold the Keepership, more especially as he has always done his full share in those Councils, Committees &c., which I have as consistently shirked. And while one is on the subject of gain to the Museum, how can I be said to have disserved the republic by bringing a freshet into the dull stream of promotion? My 'Thirdly' is of more general application. I find that the intensive practice of archaeology, like that of other specialisms, makes such demands on time and energy that a man who honestly keeps official hours must have more vigour than I now possess if he is to avoid a deadening of the senses and of the mind in other provinces. Archaeology becomes an old man of the sea; if you let it lock its skinny legs too tightly, it prevents you from leaving its somewhat arid sands. One has no lengthy span of life remaining; though one may not be philosopher enough to contem-

plate all time and all existence, one may at least renew acquaintance with provinces from which a jealous Archaeology has barred one out too long. A partly contemplative life in comparative solitude need not imply a loss of interest in one's kind or a refusal to serve it in inconspicuous ways: the *fallentis semita vitae* leads to places to which the motor-road does not penetrate. I will end by saying that my resolve to retire was taken after due deliberation, and not as the result of any sudden whim or access of perversity. I have aims which draw me on, as well as the health-motive propelling from behind. Having no intention of living aimless, though I may live obscure, I regard myself as an object of compassion from no point of view but one: I am removed in space from the company of a few friends among whom I like to count yourself. And even here there is no room for much pity, for bodily propinquity is not all in friendship, and were it so there will yet be occasions in which we may meet, and ἤλιον ἐν λέσχη καταδύναι, as your Callimachus sings. . . .

His colleagues would not have endorsed his estimate of the waning of his faculties; but experience of the reluctance of many officials to retire before they must suggests that if he was wrong, he erred on the right side.

As to his last sentence, those who visited him at Bath and Holford found that he was indeed always glad to see old friends, and invitations to visit him were regular and frequent. He was a most delightful and assiduous host; as one of these visitors says, 'they will remember his geniality and kindness, enlivened by a sometimes exuberant humour, his hospitality and his generosity, at least as vividly as any malaise or awkwardness of manner arising from a retiring and hermit disposition'. The aims which, he said, drew him on were still, it would seem at least partly, of a literary kind; he was evidently contemplating more translation. His interest in Byzantine matters had faded, to put it mildly; he felt unable to support the scheme for excavation at Constantinople which was set on foot; in an undated letter, apparently of 1929, he says 'it is true that my soul is still deadly weary of Byz. archaeology. I may recover in time, but at present I feel as if I would rather subscribe to *anything* else'.¹ The same letter, however, tells us that he had dallied with Fortunatus, but found him too terribly dull; and his thoughts of the Dialogues and Letters of Sulpicius Severus led him as far as completing

¹ Mr. Cruso records that as late as 1939 he agreed to serve on the 'British Byzantine Archaeological Committee', of which the President was the Marquess of Lothian and Mr. Cruso treasurer. He made the condition that he was not to be bothered with active attendance, &c., but his advice was very useful. The war of course put an end to this movement.

(in 1929) a translation of them in the rough, but he found this writer much duller than he had seemed at the first perusal.¹ He was reading a good deal of Greek—Plato and the Tragedians—which gave him great pleasure; and he hoped to be of use in a small way in helping the Bath City Library to get books along definite lines.

At Bath he saw much of Walter Crum, and something of the veteran collector Whitcombe Greene, of conversations with whom, under conditions of some difficulty (for he owned to ninety years and was stone deaf), he gave amusing accounts. He left his flat in Sydney Place, which was becoming noisy, early in 1934 and went to Uplands, on Bathwick Hill. When even Bath became affected by war conditions, he gave up that house, in April 1940, and retired altogether to the White Cottage at Holford. He took an interest in local affairs, and having acquired some twenty acres of land opposite the Cottage, handed them over to the National Trust, to secure that beauty-spot at any rate from being spoiled by the builder. At Holford he had from the beginning enjoyed the *tunicata quies*, and found it a delight to get into immediate touch with the English countryside once more, in one of the finest parts of the Quantocks, which began at his garden door. He was no longer forced, as he had been in London, to put up with the discords of sound and colour which his sensitive ear and eye abhorred—though he did find, even in the country, that tarmac roads 'spoil the values of the greens'. But he could get away from them, to walk ten miles at a stretch along the ridge of the Quantocks without going off heather and turf. It is pleasant to feel that his last years were passed, as there is every reason to suppose they were, in such peace and contentment as the echoes of the war permitted, in the sort of surroundings that he loved. He died at the White Cottage on 2 February 1945.

The sources of the information, on which this very inadequate narrative of the life of a remarkable, rare, and attractive personality is based, have been for the most part indicated in its course; but it owes a special debt to Dalton's surviving Museum colleagues Messrs. Kendrick, Tonnochy, and Braunholtz; to his younger brother, Mr. T. L. Dalton; to Dr. Robert Moon; and to Mr. H. A. Cruso.

GEORGE HILL

¹ The Life of St. Martin by Sulpicius Severus seemed to me anything but dull. I had tried but failed to persuade Dalton to undertake the translation.