ALBERT CURTIS CLARK

1859–1937

ALBERT CURTIS CLARK was born at Salisbury on 21 February 1859. His father, Albert Charles Clark, was 'writing-master' at Haileybury College and took the lowest form in Latin and English. He was an able and amiable man, liked by the boys, but not a distinguished scholar nor possessed of great force of character; he is said to have had difficulties in keeping order. Clark's early education was given him by his father and it appears that he afterwards attended Hertford Grammar School. Later on E. H. Bradby, the Headmaster of Haileybury, who recognized Clark's ability, permitted him to attend lessons with the sixth form; he was apparently never in the full sense a member of the College, though he afterwards became a member of the Old Haileyburian Society and always took a great interest in the doings of the school. Recollections of his boyhood have been difficult to come by, but it is recorded that he was naturally studious and devoted to his work. His one hobby was butterflies, of which he formed a scientifically arranged collection. Games never came within his horizon, though in later life he took to fencing and to a bicycle, on which he was often to be met in the lanes round Oxford.

In November 1877 Clark was elected to a Classical Exhibition at Balliol and came into residence in the following Hilary Term, as did also two of the scholars just elected, Samuel Alexander and J. A. Hamilton (Lord Sumner). It was in the earlier days of Jowett's Mastership, and among Clark's contemporaries were P. E. Matheson and Cecil Spring-Rice, and in the following year J. W. Mackail and H. C. Beeching. Clark does not seem to have played a prominent part in the life of the College, though he became President of the newly founded Brackenbury Society. His

boyish appearance and 'staccato' utterance were a source of amusement, but he was respected for his scholarship and his wit. He made, it would appear, no very intimate friendships; perhaps the closest was with Claude Montefiore, who has described an occasion when he and Clark stayed with Jowett at Malvern before 'Greats' and were made to do a full-dress 'Greats' paper every day. The friendship lasted till Clark's death.

Academically Clark's career was brilliant. Besides his firsts in Moderations and in 'Greats' he was mentioned as *proxime accessit* for the Hertford Scholarship in 1879, won the Ireland in the same year, and was elected Craven Scholar in 1882. His 'pure scholarship', which had been fostered at Balliol by De Paravicini, remained with him in later life, even if it was outshone by his specialist learning, and for many years he was in request as an examiner for the University classical scholarships and prizes. On taking his degree he was elected a Fellow of Queen's College, where he was Lecturer in Classics till 1887, and Tutor from then until his appointment as Corpus Professor in 1913; he also acted for a short period in the 'eighties as Junior Bursar and from 1897 to 1904 as Dean. Magrath was Provost when Clark became a Fellow, and Sayce, Armstrong, and E. M. Walker, and later T. W. Allen and B. P. Grenfell, were among his colleagues. During the thirty years at Queen's Clark's reputation as a tutor, lecturer, and a man of learning continued to grow. Pupils of many generations speak of the value of his teaching, always careful and conscientious and enlivened by the wit which endeared him to them and enabled him, though naturally ill-suited for the task, to carry out successfully his duties as Dean. 'The office once undertaken', says an old Queen's man, 'was discharged in a manner faintly ludicrous, highly characteristic, and (as I now think) unexpectedly successful.' His lectures appealed to a wider audience and were frequented by men from other colleges even before lectures were thrown open to all. They were always popular and highly

valued. 'I suppose', writes a pupil of the 'nineties, 'that it was the verbal felicity combined with profound erudition that impressed us most.' In 1909 Clark's unique position among Latin scholars in the University led to his appointment as University Reader in Latin, and in 1913 on the death of Robinson Ellis it was a foregone conclusion that Clark would be his successor as Corpus Christi Professor. Though he always kept up a close tie with Queen's, he migrated to Corpus, and retained his rooms there until his resignation in 1934, when failing eyesight and general ill health caused him to retire. He moved to London and lived with his married sister in Chiswick, but weakness and discomfort increased, and on 5 February 1937 he died in a nursing home. Such is the brief record of his life. Many recognitions of his eminence in Latin scholarship came to him; he was an Hon. D.Litt. of Oxford, Durham, Dublin, and Manchester, and Corresponding Member of the Istituto Lombardo. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1916, and President of the Classical Association in 1930. He was also an honorary Fellow of his three colleges, Balliol, Queen's, and Corpus Christi.

Clark's lectures in the early years at Queen's were on Theocritus and Cicero's Letters, both subjects well adapted to his fine scholarship, his wit, his learning, and his interest in textual criticism, a subject which was then beginning to be scientifically treated. On Theocritus he continued to lecture so long as he was at Queen's, and had accumulated an unrivalled knowledge of his author and his text. His friends had hoped that this would some day be embodied in a full-dress edition, but, when he became professor, he held that he should devote himself entirely to Latin; the lectures were discontinued and the edition never put in hand. It is said that the edition of R. J. Cholmeley owes much to Clark's inspiration. On the other hand the lectures on Cicero were the foundation of his life's work. They soon extended to the Speeches, and when the 'Oxford Classical Texts' were projected by the Clarendon Press, Clark was

asked to undertake the edition of Cicero's *Orations*. The *Verrines* and later on the *Post Reditum* speeches were placed in the hands of Professor W. Peterson, but Clark was responsible for the rest. They appeared in four volumes between 1900 and 1911. The speeches are not arranged chronologically, as in most editions, but palaeographically in relation to the MS. evidence. In the preparation of each volume Clark made a systematic study of the MSS. involved, and in learned introductions examined the MSS. in relation to one another and discussed the transmission of the text. The text itself shows a cautious judgement with a sparing, but often brilliant use of emendation, based largely on the principles which he evolved in the course of his work. Each volume, as it came out, enhanced his reputation, and Clark's text was accepted as the standard and classical edition.

His *apparatus criticus* was not based on the reports of previous editors, but on his personal scrutiny of the great majority of the MSS. In the course of his work he made himself an expert palaeographer, and frequently travelled to Italy, France, and elsewhere to carry out his investigations. His general conclusions are embodied not only in his introductions, but in a series of independent publications. In 1891, when he first set to work on the British Museum MSS., he published *Collations from the Harleian MS. of Cicero* and in 1905, at the time of the issue of his second volume, a much more important treatise on *The Vetus Cluniacensis of Poggio*, a MS. containing, as Clark showed, the *Pro Milone*, the *pro Cluentio*, *pro Murena*, *pro Sex. Roscio* and *pro Caelio*. It was discovered by Poggio at Cluni, brought back by him to Florence and subsequently lost. By a series of acute deductions, supported by a wealth of evidence obtained from the collation of many MSS., Clark not only demonstrated the character of the lost MS., but showed that it was best represented by a Paris MS., Σ, which he proved to have been copied from the Cluniacensis before it was removed from Cluni by Poggio. He made

further deductions as to the Italian MSS. which were nearest in affinity to the Cluniacensis, and showed the steps which led to the gradual establishment of an Italian vulgate represented by the Munich MS. S, which together with the Wolfenbuttelanus had previously been regarded as the best tradition. Clark's argument clearly deposed these two codices from their primacy.

In the course of his argument he calls attention to certain features, on which he was to lay more stress in his later work, such as the omission of passages owing to homoeoteleuton, or of passages occupying exactly one or more lines in an archetype. On these grounds he insisted on the genuineness of passages previously supposed to be interpolations. The monograph, perhaps, represents the high-water mark of Clark's acumen and judgement; the unremitting labour which lies behind it is amazing.

In 1909 appeared *Inventa Italorum*, which stands in the same relation to the *Pro Quinctio* volume published in that year as the *Vetus Cluniacensis* does to the earlier volume. Its results are not so important or exciting, but it contains a full collation of three of the MSS. involved and an interesting introduction, in which he shows that M (Laur. Conv. Soppr. 13) must be taken to represent Poggio's transcript.

The series of texts was completed in 1911, and other interests, as will be seen, intervened, but Clark returned to his earlier theme in *The Descent of Manuscripts* (1918), published and largely written during the War. It is again a monument of learning and labour, but is less satisfactory as a book than his earlier work. Its general object, as stated in the preface, 'is to show how internal evidence furnished by MSS. can be utilized to cast light upon the filiation of *codices* and in some cases upon the archetype from which they are derived; also to apply such knowledge to the criticism and emendation of the text'. The argument, as the author points out, rests mainly upon two principles: (1) the regularity of writing in ancient MSS. which, as a rule,

contain a similar, or even the same, number of letters to a line, (2) the frequency of line-omissions in MSS. A chapter dealing with such omission is followed by discussions on the omission marks in MSS. and on the evidence of marginalia. Ten chapters are then devoted to illustrating the principles reached from the MSS. of Cicero and of Asconius, the commentator on Cicero's speeches, whom Clark had also edited for the Oxford Classical Texts in 1907, and, in order to show that his principles are equally applicable to Greek, from the MSS. of Demosthenes and from the Paris MS. of Plato. There is of course a fund of detailed and valuable information, but one has the impression that Clark was becoming almost too 'single-eyed', and that, in looking for his favourite cause of corruption, he was sometimes turning a blind eye to other aspects of MS. criticism. The scholarship is not so all-round as in the *Vetus Cluniacensis*, nor the results of such general application.

Clark frequently lectured to small classes on Latin textual criticism and used the results of his investigations on the Ciceronian MSS. 'He took us through his own text of Cicero's Philippics', writes a pupil of his later years, 'in a way which opened up the vast possibilities of Textual Criticism. We saw the possibilities of his own special methods and it is still second nature, when faced with a textual dislocation, to count the letters (with or without the help of a pin).'

Needless to say that the English classical journals referred any book on Cicero—and indeed on many other Latin authors—to Clark for review, and the volumes of the *Classical Review* from 1900 onwards have numerous contributions from him. He gave to a review the minute accuracy which he demanded of himself in his original work.

A new and fruitful line of investigation was started in Clark's mind by the publication of Zielinski's *Clausalgesetz* in 1904. In this book the author sought to demonstrate not only the rhythm, but also the actual scansion of the

clausula of the Ciceronian sentence. He established that in the overwhelming majority of cases there was a cretic 'base', with a trochaic cadence of varying length (–⏑–: –⏑, –⏑–, –⏑–⏑ &c.); within this general scheme certain variations were admissible in the resolution of long syllables, the substitution of long for short and so on. This discovery, Zielinski argued, would sometimes determine the reading in doubtful cases and sometimes settle a doubtful quantity, as, for instance, in the name of Cicero's client, Caecĭna, not, as had previously been supposed, Caecīna. Clark in a long and able notice of the book in the *Classical Review* (xix, April 1905) enthusiastically embraced the theory, worked on it in the subsequent volumes of the Speeches, and in a series of small pamphlets elaborated the whole question. In *Fontes Prosae Numerosae* (1909) he collected the evidence in ancient writers as to Latin prose rhythm; in *The Cursus in Mediaeval and Vulgar Latin* (1910) he showed that the rhythms in colloquial Latin, such as the Letters to Atticus, Petronius, Vitruvius, and Frontinus, and again the *cursus* in medieval Latin were the same as in the Speeches, except that scansion was regulated not by quantity but by accent; this demonstration provided a new and valuable link between vulgar and ecclesiastical Latin. Finally in *Prose Rhythm in English* (1913) he inquired how far the principles of Latin rhythm were applicable in English, being started on the inquiry, as he said, by an examination of 'that very rhythmical author, Mr. Lloyd George'. He showed that the writers of the Prayer Book adopted liturgical rhythms from the Breviary and the Missal, and then, criticizing Saintsbury's theory that the secret of English rhythm was 'variety', he argued by an examination of selected passages ranging from Sir Thomas Browne to Pater, that the rhythms of the Latin *clausula* largely survived, though the Latin tradition was often mastered by the natural tendency of English to trochaic rhythm and stressed monosyllables. The lecture is a *tour de force*, but not altogether convincing. The whole episode of the *clausulae* is characteristic both of Clark's

enthusiasm and of his persistence in following up a discovery to the bitter end.

In the course of his researches into the Ciceronian MSS. Clark naturally came to know the scholars of the Italian Renaissance. He was not content to know their work, but studied their biographies and their personalities. Most familiar to him was Poggio, whose name was so often on his lips, that some of his friends used to speak endearingly of Clark himself as 'Poggio'. After he became Professor he often gave a series of lectures on the Italian scholars, in which, as one who attended them remarks, 'he introduced us in a vivid and amusing way to a world of which we were ignorant, but where he was almost as thoroughly at home as in his own College Common Room'. His presidential lecture to the Classical Association in 1920 on 'Petrarch and the Renaissance' was a characteristic study, and a unique specimen of Clark's freer and more literary style, as well as of his subtle humour.

In the later years of his life Clark's attention was largely diverted from the MSS. of Cicero to those of the New Testament. Here was an obvious field for the application of the principles of stichometry, which he had evolved in the study of Cicero. The New Testament MSS. may roughly be divided into two classes, the great Greek uncials (which Clark refers to collectively as Γ = Graeci) of which the chief representatives are the Sinaiticus (א) and the Vatican (B), and the 'western' (which Clark regards as a misnomer and prefers the non-committal title Z) of which the main representative is the Codex Bezae (D), supported by some other Greek MSS. together with versions in Syriac and Latin. The main divergence between the two classes is that the text of Z is longer than that of Γ and frequently contains passages of varying length which do not occur in Γ. The traditional view, represented in England by Hort, was that Γ contains the genuine text and that the amplifications of Z are interpolations. Clark, after his experience of the frequency of omissions in the Ciceronian

MSS., was naturally led to contest this view and in *The Primitive Text of the Gospels and Acts* (1914) made a reasoned attack on it.

Starting from the general principle that 'it is not so easy to invent as to omit' and challenging the traditional precept *brevior lectio potior*, Clark argued that omission is usually due to the dropping of a line or lines in transcription, owing sometimes to ὁμοιότης (including not only homoeoteleuton, but also similarity at the beginning or in the course of a line), sometimes to mere carelessness. Similarly a column, a page, or a whole folio may be omitted. The best test is arithmetical; if it appears that the passages which occur in the longer but not in the shorter version consistently show approximately the same number of letters or a multiple of that number, then the inference is that they are genuine, and represent lines in the original omitted in the shorter version. Applying this principle to the text of the Gospels Clark found that the passages in question are of ten to twelve letters or a multiple; he therefore inferred that they were accidentally omitted in the 'Greek' texts and that D represents the primitive text; the process has been one of contraction, not of expansion. The weak point in this theory is that there is no evidence among extant papyri (which represent the earliest period in the textual history of the New Testament books) of manuscripts with lines so short. Moreover with short lines and with such a margin of variability numerical calculations lose their cogency for passages of more than one or two lines. In regard to the *Acts* the text of D suggested a different line of argument. D is written not in lines of equal length, but in στίχοι, cola or commata, i.e. 'sense-lines' of varying length; but here again Clark concluded that the contractions in Γ represent the omission of στίχοι in a primitive text. 'All MSS.,' he inferred, 'including D, are descended from an ancestor written not in lines of equal length, as in the case of the Gospels, but in "sense-lines", such as those found in D.' In Γ there was frequent omission, followed

in many cases by modification or 'botching' to restore sense, which the omissions had destroyed.

The next twenty years Clark devoted to the preparation of a monumental edition of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which appeared in 1933, and which the author hoped would convince New Testament critics of the truth of his contention for the superiority of the text of Z. In the introduction he sets out his principles once again. He now, however, lays less stress on the numerical argument and on scribal errors and attributes the variations to deliberate editorial revision; the transcriber intentionally left out clauses or passages which he considered otiose, or which contained details, especially topographical information, in which he was not interested. This is followed by the text with a full critical apparatus, the passages contained in D, but not in Γ, being printed in heavy leaded type, so that they can be immediately detected by the reader. There are full notes on technical points and valuable appendices. In one Clark decides that the provenance of D is not 'western', but that it came not, as he had argued in 1914, from Caesarea, but from Egypt; in another he discusses the authorship of the Gospel according to St. Luke and of the Acts, and concludes on stylistic grounds, especially the use of prepositions and particles, that the two books are not by the same author, though he admits that against this conclusion stands the great difficulty of the prefaces, which link the two books together.

The reception of this great work—for such in its learning and its scholarship it must certainly be called—was the great disappointment of Clark's life. B. H. Streeter, in the *Oxford Magazine* (9 March 1933), welcomed it with confidence; 'this time he has broken the enemy's line and firmly established his main position'. Other reviewers, without attempting to refute Clark's main contention in detail, pointed out—what is no doubt true—that the text of the Acts cannot be determined merely on stichometric principles, but that other questions, which, as Clark himself admitted,

were outside his province, must be taken into consideration. Some of his incidental suggestions were received with favour, and in particular the reading Δοβήριος (based on D's δουβ||ριος) for the 'Greek' Δερβαῖος in Acts xx. 4. Some of the appendices, especially that on the 'Witnesses to the Z text', were recognized as of lasting value and offering new material. What hurt Clark most was that the majority of the New Testament critics remained silent. He did not, perhaps, realize that such a far-reaching theory required time to be digested and that an immediate answer was hardly to be expected.

The truth is that with all his learning, his patience, and his scholarly acumen, Clark's later work is marked by a certain narrowness of outlook. His discovery of one of the main causes of omissions in MSS. became something of an 'obsession' and blinded him to other factors. He did not realize, for instance, that the assertion that 'omissions' in the Acts were those of cola and commata really weakened his case; for a clause which makes complete sense in itself is much more likely to be an interpolation than a casual line of ten to twelve letters taken out of the middle of a sentence. Nor does he face the difficulty that there is no evidence of the existence of MSS. written in cola and commata at the early period postulated, and that his theory, if applicable at all, should apply equally to the Gospels, where the characteristics of the Z text are different. The fact is that though Clark was intimately acquainted with the medieval manuscripts and the ways of their scribes, he had not the same personal knowledge of the papyrus period, on which the textual criticism of the New Testament ultimately rests. In the earlier days of the Cicero texts and the *Vetus Cluniacensis* Clark's view was wider and more soundly based and all his gifts and resources were called into play. These will probably be the lasting monuments of a scholar who is bound to take a very high place in the records of classical work of the early twentieth century.

Something must be said of Clark's other activities and

of his personality. He never took a prominent part in University politics at Oxford, though his sympathies were mostly on the conservative side. He was, however, for some years a useful member of the Hebdomadal Council and for long a valued Curator of the Bodleian; the incisive and often witty speeches with which he would introduce a decree for the loan of a manuscript to some foreign scholar were always enjoyed by Congregation. As Professor he was an *ex officio* member of the Board of the Faculty of Literae Humaniores, and for a long period he acted as Chairman of the 'Mods' sub-Faculty; his courteous and humorous conduct of its meetings did much to assuage its occasional controversies. Outside the University he was one of the earliest supporters of the Classical Association and for long a member—and for some years Treasurer—of the Classical Journals Board.

He never attempted to exercise an influence in the University or among classical students in general, but to his pupils and to those who attended his lectures he communicated imperceptibly a high standard of scholarly refinement and accuracy. He did not consider it his duty as Professor to 'organize' the studies of the younger dons, but to many he suggested subjects on which they might work, and it is said that it was he who first proposed to Grenfell that he should not be content to rely on the chance finds of dealers and of Arabs, but dig for papyri on his own account. His conversation was always full of his own interests at the moment, the *Cluniacensis*, Zielinski, the Codex Bezae, or the Dreyfus trial, on which he became an expert, but he could throw himself into the scholarly pursuits of others and both sympathize and advise.

Clark was in every sense of the word *urbanus*. The peculiar utterance, which was the delight of his friends and the subject of many imitations—it earned him in early Queen's days the nickname of 'Clark-ah'—added a spice to his wit by making his audience wait for the *mot juste*. Always a bachelor, and a good Common Room man, Clark was a

first-class raconteur, and many of his best stories were of his travels abroad in search of MSS. He was something of a *bon vivant* and prided himself on his knowledge of wines. This side of his character the Public Orator attempted to depict in presenting him for his honorary D.Litt. in 1935: 'fingamus hominem lepidum vel ipsius Ciceronis ad mensam accubantem vel Poggiano alicui convivio adsidentem, exquisitos delibantem Bacchi liquores, φιλόλογα multa ut inter pares facetius disserentem'. Added to this was an old-world courtesy, and behind it a sympathetic, if shy, understanding and affection for his friends, which often showed itself in little acts of kindness and generosity. Clark was always the scholar, but a very humane scholar both in his interests and in his attitude to life.

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