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Dill's Roman Society *Roman Society in the last century of the Western Empire*. By Samuel Dill, M.A., Professor of Greek in Queen's College, Belfast; sometime Fellow and Tutor of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Second edition, revised. London : Macmillan. 495 pages. Price 8s. Qd. net.

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REVIEWS.

DILL'S *ROMAN SOCIETY*.

Roman Society in the last century of the Western Empire. By SAMUEL DILL, M.A., Professor of Greek in Queen's College, Belfast; sometime Fellow and Tutor of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Second edition, revised. London: Macmillan. 495 pages. Price 8s. 6d. net.

It is gratifying that Professor Dill's work, which is important both for the points of view presented and for the accuracy of its details, should so soon have reached a second edition. The period to which it refers is, for all those who have studied it at all, a most interesting one, full of parallels with the conditions prevalent at the present day. It is the great merit of this book that the interest will be brought home by it to a much wider circle of readers than have hitherto felt its influence. The author's aim is to discover 'how men lived and what were their thoughts and private fortunes during this period of momentous change.' Several circumstances combine to make the task far from easy. In the first place, the materials are, as Professor Dill remarks, widely scattered. They belong also to two great groups, Christian and non-Christian, and writers have been apt to confine themselves to one or other of the two. The classical scholar has been in the habit of reading Claudian and Ausonius, perhaps also Rutilius, and of treating them out of relation to their environment; or, so far as he has endeavoured to reconstruct that environment, he has been apt to overlook the really valuable evidence to be gained from writings like S. Jerome's letters, which have been left to the department of the theologian. Those interested in theological questions have not been equally neglectful of the pagan sources, but their works have been unjustly ignored by many of those who approach the subject from the opposite side. Professor Dill has succeeded in utilizing all that is most important for his purpose, whether Christian or not. Then again, the historian of this period requires wide sympathies of a rather unusual kind. He has not only to feel interest both in Christian dogmatic controversialists of various types and also in Julian's attempted reaction and its

following; he has also to bear with those whose conduct was less heroic and who gave a half-hearted adhesion to the dominant side. Professor Dill disclaims any intention of dealing with the general history of the time; yet this cannot fail to be present as a background, and it is no small thing that men of such different types as Symmachus, S. Ambrose, Stilicho, Rutilius, Sidonius, are all presented to us, when there is occasion to refer to them, in a just and favourable light.

Yet even for one who is prepared to use every kind of available material and to treat the sources with sufficient sympathy to extract the utmost from them, the problem remains a hard one. How are we to tell how men lived and what they thought, at this time? The historian of an obscure period, when he finds himself unable to provide an answer to his main question as a whole, will show his ingenuity by dividing it and selecting such portions of it as admit of an answer, in the hope that he may be able ultimately to effect something towards a complete answer by putting these partial answers together. In the Five Books of this work, Professor Dill asks practically five such partial questions.

(1) What were the causes of the continued vitality of Paganism in spite of militant Christianity and of severe penal laws? As to the *fact* we have abundant evidence: in the openly pagan sympathies of a large number of the Senate at a time when we should least expect it, in the frequent though ineffective pagan revivals, in the aggressively pagan character of many among the most distinguished Imperial officials, in the 'latent force of pagan sentiment' to which witness is borne by the *De Civitate Dei* and the History of Orosius, as well as by the respectful treatment with which paganism meets in many of the writings of S. Augustine and in some even of S. Jerome. Unfortunately, the *causes* are not easy to discover, and perhaps Professor Dill does little more than illustrate the fact from various sides. If Imperial edicts against paganism had to be administered by pagan governors, they may well have produced little effect; but why were those governors pagans? The approach

of paganism to Christianity, though Mithra or Isis as interpreted by philosophers, may help to lessen our surprise at an enthusiasm which the Roman state religion (in the form which it had long since assumed) could not have inspired, but why, if the two were in some respects so similar, did many prefer Mithraism to Christianity, in spite of obvious reasons for preferring the latter? The past history of Rome and the continuity of tradition accounts for something; but S. Augustine at least was a good Roman patriot. To many persons, especially those who pride themselves on intellectual eminence, the fact that a religion is adopted by the masses of the people, is in itself a reason for not adopting it; this aristocratic feeling, strong enough among ourselves, was perhaps still stronger in Rome. And, in spite of our abundant evidence, may not that evidence (if the expression be allowed) be in excess of the fact? The opposition to the early Roman Empire plays a large part in the literary tradition of that epoch, yet it is fairly certain that that opposition was not only ineffective but insignificant in extent; may it not be the case that we hear more of paganism than we ought, owing to the accident that many of the writers on whom we are compelled to draw, were pagan or semi-pagan in sympathy? Perhaps Professor Dill might have developed more fully points such as these, though he hints at them in his work.

(2) What was the moral state of society at this time? The denunciations of Ammianus, S. Jerome, or Salvian, suggest the question whether, if Christianity had really so little moral effect on society, we may not find here another reason for the permanence of pagan sentiment? Men of high ideals might possibly give up old associations for the sake of a real moral reformation; but what were the signs that such a moral reformation would take place? Our impression is modified when we turn to Symmachus, Ausonius, Paulinus of Pella, and Sidonius. Professor Dill gives a most interesting account of the light thrown by their works on this question, and it is clear that individual morality stands in most respects on as high a level as would be revealed by almost any other stage of social history about which we might happen to have similar information, and that abnormal vice is rare. At the same time we discover from these writings an almost startling absence of interest in the great political events of the time, although three out of the four authors are in various degrees

politicians. On the other hand, Christian asceticism (which, if not in S. Jerome himself, at any rate in some even of his immediate followers, takes a practically Manichaean form) is beginning, in its despair of a speedy reformation of the world, to exalt retirement from active life and to draw off many of the best and highest-minded men from their proper sphere in the business of the state.

(3) We need not look further, in order to face the third question: how came the administration of the Empire to fail so completely? If literary studies and solitary retirement absorb the whole interest of so many men, pressing political problems are neglected by both classes; mercantile and commercial pursuits called for a thorough and systematic reorganisation, but the state occupies itself with precautions to prevent the attempts of the mercantile and commercial class to evade the impossible regulations which the state has itself imposed. This period only requires to be known to provide the economist with some of his most striking lessons on the dangers of governmental interference with the normal development of social and commercial facts, and to warn socialists that a state-system, however carefully contrived, is of little value unless it is met and supplemented by patriotic impulses in the individual and a zeal for the common good. To the high-minded character of the government during the greater part of the century under consideration and of Majorian in particular, Prof. Dill does full justice, and this portion of his book may be selected, especially in the dearth of English literature on the subject, as that from which the scholar will gain most.

(4) Was the distinction between Roman and barbarian an ultimate one and felt to be such those who lived in this period? A careful analysis shows this to be by no means the case: while the Romans have become very cosmopolitan, the barbarians are above all things desirous to stand well with the great power, and to act as its servants. If there is little that is new in Prof. Dill's Fourth Book, which deals to a large extent with purely political history, yet the selection of events is good and the presentation of them is always interesting. We are left, however, with the disappointed feeling (produced by most modern works on this subject) that the simplest and most natural conception of the fall of the Western Empire has been removed and that nothing has been substituted in its place.

(5) What were the vital elements of Roman culture at this period? The literary student, interested in the historical development of his subject, will find much useful matter in the answer to this question. All such students know that this was an age of extreme conservatism, with a mania for style and with small success in its cultivation, exhibiting a sound taste in the choice of its favourite poets, if not of its prose writers, boasting of simplicity, yet absorbed in artificiality; but they will find these general characteristics illustrated here from a wide field, and also a collection of references which ought to lead to the increased study (to mention only English works) of Prof. Nettleship's *Lectures and Essays* and Mr. Capes' brilliant lectures on *University Life in Ancient Athens*.

Apart from a good deal of repetition, which was perhaps unavoidable, there is little fault to find with Prof. Dill's carefully constructed answers to these questions; but has he shown what result these answers give with reference to the whole question

before him? In a sense his work may be said rather to provide materials for the investigation of men's lives and thoughts during this epoch than to conduct such an investigation. Probably an author of Prof. Dill's literary skill, with his great knowledge of the available literature, will be able to do more in the future towards telling us 'how men lived and what their thoughts were' during his century, and his wide sympathies might help him to work out the parallels between the last century of the Western Empire and our own day with great advantage to contemporary social philosophy.

A table of dates has been prefixed to the second edition, forming a useful addition to a book dealing with a period the events of which are so little known to the general reader. The work has been carefully revised; the references, a valuable feature, have been improved in some details, and the whole, apart from a few quite unimportant misprints, is remarkably accurate and free from blemish.

P. V. M. BENECKE.

ROTHERT'S KARTEN UND SKIZZEN.

PROF. E. ROTHERT, *Karten und Skizzen aus der Geschichte des Altertums*. [Düsseldorf, 1897. Reissue.] 5 m.

THE combination of a brief abstract of the history of a period or a movement with a clearly drawn and well coloured map, letterpress and map sharing the same face of the same sheet of paper,—this is the plan of Dr. Rothert. His aim is given in the words 'zur raschen und sichern Einprägung,' and few will deny that the aim is successfully achieved.

The maps are admirably clear and often very helpful. Those illustrative of the Second Punic War may be cited as instances. But it may be doubted whether it was necessary to add a plan of the battle of Cannae: and whether the one given is on the whole the most probable, is a further question. To me it seems that the insertion of battle-plans is a mistake. They are all very well in an exhaustive work, but this the book before us does not pretend to be. The case is different with the plan of the manipular legion given in No 14 'das Kriegswesen.' Here important principles are made clear by a judicious use of diagrams and colour.

The letterpress is generally remarkable for compressing much information into a small space. The selection is for the most part judicious, not seldom excellent. Yet there are places where it may fairly be thought that the true historical perspective would be better preserved by a different choice. For instance in No 10 we find the heading 'Thebens kurzdauernde Blüte.' This is divided into 'Thebens Emporkommen 379/361' and 'die Schlacht bei Leuktra 371,' the latter with a plan. That Thebes, oligarchic by natural bent, became democratic for a time out of sheer hatred of Sparta, seems to be ignored. That she went on to impose in her hour of triumph democratic constitutions upon non-democratic states such as the Achaean cities (Xen. *hell.* vii 1 §§ 42-3) of course is ignored also. Yet that such was Theban policy, and that too in defiance of the wishes of Epameinondas, is perhaps the most significant fact in the post-Leuktran history of Thebes. It illustrates her unfitness to be a leader in Hellas: it leads up to what is the next heading on the same page, 'Philipp und die Griechen,' in a way that an account of the battle of Leuktra, however good, does not and cannot do.