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Although Lehane’s biography of William Bede Dalley is far from being a great biography, it is an intriguing one. It’s not great largely because it rarely gets beyond the publicly available sources, which tend to the hagiographical and, for this reader, it lacks an argumentative spine. Having said that, it remains a great insight into colonial Sydney and that first generation of currency lads who made good within the first two decades of their lives: they lived rich (in every sense) lives which attested to the freedom from the convict stain of the sons of convicts, and in their avocations refuted notions of the colony as a culture-free zone.

William Bede Dalley was a legend in his lifetime for his charismatic speeches (unhappily, only the reported cheers in the florid Victorian newspaper reports remain, and these do not quite work for us in the twenty-first century). It’s hard to imagine audiences being prepared to endure public speeches that went for two hours, or sometimes even five, but oratory was Dalley’s calling card and it took him around the country to many a school speech-night, picnics on the upper reaches of the Nepean involving long journeys by steamship, and St. Patrick’s banquets. In his dandiacal top-hat and tails, white waistcoat, beflowered lapel, and with his lavender kid gloves and toffy vocabulary (‘old boy’, ‘old fellow’), Dalley was an ornament to many a formal occasion in Sydney in the course of his almost 60 years, and a generous patron to those in need.

His was an extraordinary trajectory for the son of a Dorset burglar (condemned to die, but commuted to transportation for life) and an unmarried single mother from Cork who was transported for shirt-stealing, but not unusual in the colony. His bosom-friend, while he lived, was the brilliant man of letters, Daniel Henry Deniehy, whose passage to success was a not dissimilar one—the law, the arts, the press, and parliament. Deniehy succumbed to drink; Dalley was luckier—heart disease and renal-failure eventually claimed him, and they did not get in the way of a lifetime of conviviality. ‘Hospitality’ was always on offer to Dalley. Dalley did much to keep Deniehy’s flame alight in public
memory, and lived (only just) to supervise his reinterment in Waverley Cemetery. He was a man with a gift for warm and sincere friendships, and sat at many prominent death-beds, for example, Archbishop Polding’s and Henry Kendall’s. He could even be generous to those with long political antipathy to him, like Henry Parkes.

Dalley made his pile as a criminal barrister (and invested it in baronial mansions in Vaucluse and later Manly), and no doubt, his long parliamentary career (unpaid) assisted his visibility at the Bar. He was a leader in law reform, in particular in having the death penalty for rape removed (though he agonised over this for decades), but also for improvements like not requiring houses and land to be sold to defray minor debt, and hearing the evidence of women in court. He did an overhaul of criminal law practice in New South Wales which continues to be the basis for modern practice (p. 194). Bushrangers and forging poets were on his list of clients, and he served them energetically and passionately in his professional capacity.

Although he visited Ireland and England only once, to tout for migrants, he identified closely with his mother’s Irishness, hoping for an Australian republic (p. 88). He supported the Irish-born in their efforts to raise money for a statue to Daniel O’Connell, and increased Irish content in the revamped Freeman’s Journal in 1865, and when the deranged Henry O’Farrell failed to assassinate the Prince Alfred, Dalley resisted Parkes’s attempts to inflame the Orange Lodges and Protestant organisations with allegations of Fenianism. Always a man inclined to heal sectarian divisions (he was a friend of J.D. Lang), he built links between Protestants and Catholics in a climate of sectarianism. His Irish identification may explain his unquestioned resistance to anglophilia early in his life, but later he strenuously defended Jews, the Chinese and Germans, and Pacific Islanders, and knew personally (and ministered to) the Aborigines who clung to their homelands in Vaucluse, in a period when race hostility to these groups was extreme.

He was touched by the politics of Empire: in response to the death of Gordon, Dalley was pre-eminently the architect of the dispatch of an Australian contingent to Sudan. He raised the funding for this first Australian imperial force, organised the men to be on the boats, and ghostwrote the Governor’s stirring farewell to the troops, all within three weeks (a record?), and, having unquestioningly responded to the imperial imperative, suffered subsequently from doubts about the operation and from the stigma attaching to its costs. It made inevitable similar imperial commitments of troops to the Boer war and to World Wars I and II. The ‘Boyzone’ enthusiasm generated by Sudan allowed even the Irish to defend it as proof of Irish desire, not to entrench Empire, but to extend civilisation to Africa—about a quarter of those enlisted were Catholics. Queen Victoria assumed Dalley was English,
and had to be told of both his Irishness and his imperial loyalty, though his actions made the case irrefutable. Dalley, however, lived to regret the exercise. He was, however, no one-eyed imperialist and also suffered for the view that the Pacific should be shared between the European powers, and his defence of German interests in New Guinea.

To be Irish in the colony was often to be a loyal churchman, and Dalley was a reliable support (moral and financial) for the Catholic hierarchy in Sydney. They had his support in the state aid debate, arguing the need for the state to support those with conscientious objections to secular education. He was, however, adamant about the need for Catholics to ‘respond calmly’ to the ‘blind fury’ of Protestants in the debates, and practised what he preached when the vote did not go the way the bishops hoped. He was painfully aware of the social dangers posed by increased sectarianism.

The biography raises many questions: not least, were Dalley’s appeasement policies a moral strength or a need to be loved and a celebrity? Why was he regarded as the ‘most cultured and most popular man in the southern hemisphere’ (p. 368), and why does history barely remember him? What was the basis for his charisma? How does one get under the skin of a man when only the public record remains? How to resist that charisma and write critically about him? It’s a fine biography, but more of a moment in Sydney’s cultural history than of a flesh-and-blood human being.

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FRANCES DEVLIN-GLASS
Bede was a prolific writer and many of his works have survived to the present day. His work was extremely influential in the generations after his death. Much of the book details the spread of Christianity in Britain, and Bede recounts the stories of early martyrs like Saint Alban. He also writes of Britain's struggles in the 4th and 5th centuries CE, describing in detail numerous imperial usurpations that shook Romano-British society. The translation of the Historia Ecclesiastica into Old English at the court of Alfred the Great in the 9th century has been seen as an important step in the development of English identity, as opposed to the number of unique regional identities of the earlier Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Things to do near William Bede Dalley PC. Photoh Night Photography Course. Big M Tours & Transfers. Sorry, there are no tours or activities available to book online for the date(s) you selected. Please choose a different date. William Bede Dalley PC. 8 Reviews. #443 of 578 things to do in Sydney. Monuments & Statues. Sorry, there are no tours or activities available to book online for the date(s) you selected. Please choose a different date. Top Selling Tours & Activities in and around Sydney. A 10-year-old castrated boxer with behavioural change due to a cerebellar meningioma was presented for intracranial surgery. As intracranial structures are virtually incompressible, anyâ€™ Expand. William Bede Dalley: Silver-tongued Pride of Old Sydney [Book Review]. Andrew Jd Bell. Medicine. 2007. Review(s) of: William Bede Dalley: Silver-Tongued Pride of Old Sydney, by Robert Lehane, Ginninderra Press, 2007. Save. Alert. All Categories Antiques Art Automotive Baby Books Business & Industrial Cameras & Photo Cell Phones & Accessories Clothing, Shoes & Accessories Coins & Paper Money Collectibles Computers/Tablets & Networking Consumer Electronics Crafts Dolls & Bears DVDs & Movies Entertainment Memorabilia Everything Else Gift Cards & Coupons Health & Beauty Home & Garden Jewellery & Watches Musical Instruments & Gear Pet Supplies Pottery & Glass Real Estate Specialty Services Sporting Goods Sports Mem, Cards & Fan Shop. William Bede Dalley - Silver-Tongued Pride of Old Sydney by Robert Lehane. Pre-Owned. Georgian by Towle Sterling Silver Teaspoon Souvenir Dalley City, Nd GW 5 5/8". C $76.87. Top Rated Seller. Bede was a monk who spent most of his life in the monastery of Saint Peter at Monkwearmouth and its companion monastery, Saint Paulâ€™s in what is now modern Jarrow, both situated in the Dark Age Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. He lived from 672-735. But Bede is best-known for his masterpiece, regularly described as the first and greatest work of English history, the Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum (The Ecclesiastical History of the English People). I have the old 1955 Penguin translation by Leo Sherley-Price, who translates the title as A History of the English Church and People. Bede is called the Father of English History for several reasons Structure of the Ecclesiastical History. The work is divided into five books, each of which covers a certain period.