

THE C.L.S.



BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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(Twenty-Fourth Year)

SEPTEMBER, 1958

FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY

It will have been apparent to all members that rising costs are creating a severe strain upon the finances of this Society—and it is not unique in this respect. The matter was very carefully investigated at a Council Meeting held on 7th May last when various suggestions were considered. As members will know the chief item of expenditure is the Bulletin. During the past six years the cost of the Bulletin has increased by over thirty per cent—and this is no reflection on our printers who produce our journal most economically. The Society's income has not, alas, increased by a similar proportion.

The Council was loth to place all the necessary economy measures on to the Bulletin, and therefore decided unanimously to recommend to the members that as from 1st. January 1959 the 10/- rate of subscription be increased to 12/6. Not a large increase as I think you will agree. This alteration will only affect "Town" members who do have the opportunity of attending the meetings of the Society from which our Provincial and Overseas members are debarred for geographical reasons. Where a husband and wife are members the new rate, if approved, will be 17/6 instead of 15/-. Provincial and Overseas members' subscriptions will not be affected. May I remind you that the last increase was in January 1952.

In order to cope with the present year's expenditure it has been considered desirable to reduce the size of the Bulletin, but it is the intention of your Council to revert to a normal size Bulletin as soon as possible.

Therefore I appeal to all those members who are likely to be affected by the new rate to make

every effort to attend the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting hereby called for **Monday, 13th October 1958 at 6-30 p.m.** to consider and approve the Council's recommendation. After the business has been transacted members will hear a lecture on "John Bunyan and the Modern World" by Miss Vera Brittain.

WALTER FARROW.

VISIT TO AVENUE HOUSE, AMPHILL: The Residence of Sir Albert and Lady Richardson, June 14th.

"By somewhat a circuitous route, taking the noble park at Luton in our way from Saint Alban's, we arrived at the spot of our anxious curiosity."

The members who took part in the visit to Avenue House, Ampthill, the residence of Sir Albert and Lady Richardson, on June 14th had an unforgettable experience. The weather was perfect, and on arrival Sir Albert welcomed the members and took charge of half the party, whilst his daughter, Mrs. Houfe, and her son Simon gallantly made themselves responsible for the remainder.

A first impression of the contents of the house would be that it was a private museum—that would be erroneous; one gradually came to the truth that it was a house with many mansions, each one an embodiment of the living art of an age what has vanished, but still to be recognised in the fine examples from the painters' brush, portraits, country scenes, architecture, the craftsman's skilful art in furniture and in articles wrought in silver, iron, copper, etc. A fine tradition from the Georgian and Early Victorian years, a standard of taste, an age of elegance, an age great in literature, an age that will never come again. In any case, this col-

LANDOR, A Replevin, by Malcolm Elwin, Mcdonald, 45s.

Malcolm Elwin, one of the leading contemporary biographers, is well aware of all the ingredients required for a good biography and of the pitfalls awaiting the unwary or unskilled writer in this field. As a result our expectations are fully realised, for the subject was certainly unusual and the author is certainly qualified.

The first 'life' of a person usually suffers from a lack of factual data while subsequent accounts only too often merely repeat what has gone before. Not so now though. Walter Savage Landor has been written about by many people. Mr. Elwin himself gave us a previous history of Mr. Landor in 1914 and, as recently as 1954, an excellent life appeared from the pen of Professor Super of Michigan U.S.A. And the mighty effort in two volumes by John Forster in 1869 must not be overlooked. So one is tempted to ask if still another biography was really necessary. The answer follows, not immediately, but as the book is read. It is 'Yes', for in this form it is a valuable addition to the literature on Landor, as well as to the contemporary scene.

But the author implies it is not a biography, for, says the title page, it is "a Replevin". By this Mr. Elwin wishes to convey the idea that we are being given an opportunity to reassess Landor's work after allowing obscurity to overtake it. I think this is stretching a legal term a little and the overwhelming majority of the book's readers (present reviewer included) may not know the meaning of the word and, after consulting the dictionary, will be little the wiser. Replevin or not it is still a biography and it certainly contains some petty gossip and, dare one suggest, a modicum of padding. If only a replevin was wanted then perhaps its length (461 pages plus appendices) could have been shortened.

Now for some items to look for and enjoy, or even criticise. The opening sentence of the book is surely contentious. It is a shaky generalisation, open to serious doubt and can be applied to many other nations with equal validity. It might be a debating point or even tolerable journalese but it can be but an unsatisfactory opening gambit for a book of this kind. This initial explosion is followed through pages 13 to 19 by what could be taken as a life of John Forster and it does seem that a quotation from *Bleak House* occupying three whole pages is overdoing things a little: after all, Landor did not write *Bleak House*! But the author adroitly avoids the charge of digression by suggesting in the chapter heading that he is yet only approaching the subject!

On pages 31 and 32 Elwin scores with a fine picture of the squirearchy of Landor's day.

Again, on page 390, he delights us with an epigram which deserves quotation, "eccentricity becomes exaggerated in the egocentricity of advancing age." Such a remark is worthy of the biographer of the man who penned those wonderful lines on his 74th birthday—

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife:

Nature I loved and, next to Nature, Art:

I warmed both hands before the fire of Life;

It sinks; and I am ready to depart."

Yet the writer of those lines, the author of 'Gebir,' 'Imaginary Conversations' and much exquisite verse could, and did, perpetrate a great deal of what can only be termed doggerel! Nevertheless he was capable of the most penetrating aphorisms and remarks. In his Preface to an edition of *Gebir* he wrote—"In the moral are exhibited the folly, the injustice and the punishment of Invasion, with the calamities which must ever attend the superfluous colonization of a peopled country" which is as applicable to-day as then. Again, Landor was unwell through getting up at night in the cold to put some thoughts on paper before they were forgotten; to Lady Blessington he wrote "Night is not the time to pin a butterfly on a blank leaf." His epigrammatic skill could be used with devastating effect when the occasion demanded. Witness his ending of a letter of protest to Lord Normanby during his declining years in Italy "... You by the favor of a minister are Marquis of Normanby, I by the grace of God am
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR."

Incidentally, on page 290 the author has got a little mixed in his historical note of Lord Normanby. He implies that he became Earl of Mulgrave. Surely the Earl of Mulgrave later became Marquis of Normanby? And, speaking of history, we learn on page 84 that, in common with others, Horne Tooke, who died in 1812, was tried for high treason in 1894! Actually this is the only printing error I have found in the volume.

The picture of Landor gained from Malcolm Elwin is a quiet, sensitive idealist, hiding his sensitivity under a very noisy cover occasionally. A scholar, humorist, animal and nature lover, a firm and honest friend, a lonely, lovable yet uncomfortable character holding uncompromising opinions. A veritable Boythorn as Dickens said and Elwin repeats: different from most of his fellows in scholarly attainments yet essentially one of them where his amours were concerned in earlier years.

The word 'years' reminds me of a weakness common to this book and many of its kind. As Mr. Elwin has been careful to keep his footnotes to a minimum and to marshal his facts in his text, it is disappointing to find he does not quote dates in full. We read on page after page that such an event took place on 13th August, 9th April and so on, leaving the bewildered reader to rack his memory, or wade back through the pages, to discover the years; so little trouble for the author to quote—so much for the reader to remember or check. This is meant in constructive vein only for it is a good book. It flows, it grips the interest and imagination. It tells of the people and the time when a man, who, going abroad and learning a passport was not ready, could say "never mind I shall go without one"!

Malcolm Elwin completes his book with lengthy lists of authorities, works and chronology. But his subject did live to be nearly 90 and did write to a correspondent who warned him, on his 70th birthday, that staying up late and rising early would give advantage to "the enemy" (death) some day—

"I don't invite him, but I shall receive him hospitably when he comes."

And he did!

G.C.

THE SOCIETYS CHRISTMAS CARD, 1958

May we remind members that, as it is necessary to instruct the printers early in September, any orders for the 1958 Christmas Card should be sent to Mr. Crowsley at once. No money should be sent until further advised.

It was interesting to hear recently from one of our members that a late colleague of his (editor of a Sports publication) on receiving his card last Christmas wrote that "the card was the most intelligent and well-selected of any received."

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OBITUARY—By the death of Arthur Lloyd-Jones on 22nd June last the Society has lost one of its Founder Members. The chief interest of Mr. Lloyd-Jones's leisure was the study of Samuel Johnson resulting in his becoming editor of the Journal published by the Johnson Society of London, of which society he finally became a Vice-President. He was also extremely interested in the Charles Lamb Society and had served on our Council for many years where his knowledge and experience was of great value, while his charm and friendliness endeared him to all who came into contact with him. Failing health had prevented him from attending our meetings in recent years but we were delighted to have his company at the January 1958 meeting which he thoroughly enjoyed and was delighted at meeting many old friends once again. A floral tribute was sent to the funeral at Chalfont St. Peter's by the Society.

NEW MEMBERS. Dr. P. Abrahams, 4 Harvard Court, Honeybourne Road, N.W.6.; Miss G. M. Fellows, 114 Louisville Road, Tooting Common, S.W.7.; Kalmar Public Library, Tlotsvagen 1, Kalmar, Sweden; Mr. and Mrs. K. Lenander, Fredrikskansgaten, 9, Kalmar, Sweden; Miss C. Tilney, M.A., "Gronville", Cardiff Road, Dinas Powis, Glam; The New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, New York 18, New York.

WINTER PROGRAMME 1958-1959

"You have much to learn that you have never been taught"

An interesting and varied programme of lectures has been arranged for the forthcoming winter and include addresses by Miss Vera Brittain on *John Bunyan*, Mr. John Wilson on *Robert Burns*, Miss R. Glynn Grylls on *Mary Wollstonecraft* and Mr. Basil Francis on *Harriot*

Mellon, while at the December meeting an Address will be given by our President. The opening lecture certainly provides an intriguing subject.

The Guest of Honour for the 1959 Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration is Sir Sydney C. Roberts, M.A., Hon. LL.D., F.R.S.L., the Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Copies of the complete programme are available from Miss F. S. Reeves, and particulars of the first two meetings are given hereunder:

Saturday, 13th September, 1958—"The Spy in the Committee of Public Safety"—Miss Vera Watson. *Chairman*: Miss Annette Park, M.A.

Monday, 13th, October 1958—"John Bunyan and the Modern World"—Miss Vera Brittain, M.A., D.Litt. *Chairman*: Mr. Walter Farrow. The lecture will be preceded by an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting

The Saturday meeting will be held in the Library of the Mary Ward Settlement, 5-7 Tavistock Place, W.C.1. at 2-45 p.m.; the Monday meeting will be held at Dr. William's Hall, 14 Gordon Square, W.C.1. at 6-30 p.m.

SUBSCRIPTION FOR 1958—It comes as a surprise and, indeed, a great disappointment to learn that some members have not yet paid their subscriptions for 1958 which were due on 1st January. As the subscription rates are so relatively small, and the Society's need urgent, it is earnestly hoped that those members will rectify their oversight without delay, by forwarding the appropriate amount to the Hon. Treasurer, Miss F. A. Parsons, 32 Carmel Court, Kings Drive, Wembley Park, Middx.

DRAMATIC GROUP

"Ladies if you will not hold your peace, not all the powers in heaven can make you."

Friday, 17th October—CONVERSAZIONE and BUFFET SUPPER to celebrate the Group's THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY at which **Mr. D. L. Murray, F.R.S.L.** will be the Guest of Honour. 6-45 for 7-0 p.m. Courtauld House. Tickets 8/- each are obtainable from Miss G. Edna Philpot, 26 Cranborne Avenue, Tolworth, Surrey.

Mr. Murray, a member of the Charles Lamb Society, is a well-known lecturer on the Regency period and the theatre of the period. For some years he was dramatic critic for *The Athenaeum* and editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*. Mr. Murray is the author of several novels, including "Regency", "Folly Bridge", "Leading Lady" and with Mr. W. Macqueen-Pope wrote "The Life and Times of Franz Lehar".

Friday, 14th November: PUPPETS AND DRAMA IN NEW ZEALAND by MRS. VIOLET POTTER. *Chairman*: Mr. Ernest G. Crowsley. 7 p.m. Courtauld House, Byng Place, W.C.1.

Mrs. Potter—Member of the Society—was the Wardrobe Mistress at the Group's last Production "TOM THUMB", and we feel sure that all members will accord her a hearty welcome.