

# THE C.L.S.



# BULLETIN

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## AN APPRECIATION OF THOMAS MANNING. 1772—1840

### AN ADDRESS by AUBREY NOAKES, March 11th

*"He is a dainty chiel—a man of great Power—an enchanter almost—far beyond Coleridge or any man in power of impressing—when he gets you alone he can act the wonders of Egypt. Only he is lazy and does not always put forth all his strength."*

In December 1799 Lamb and Manning met for the first time when Lamb was on a visit to Charles Lloyd then a student at Cambridge; Manning at that time was Lloyd's mathematical tutor. A friendship developed and persisted to the end of Lamb's days in spite of gaps in their correspondence. In May 1834 barely six months before his death Lamb replied to a letter from Manning:

*"You made me feel so funny, so happy-like, it was as if I was reading one of your old letters taken out at hazard any time between the last twenty years, 'twas so the same. Will nothing change you? We must meet somehow and drink a cup."*

Manning was then rustivating in Hertfordshire with his store of Chinese books having been the

first Englishman to visit the Dali Lama in Lhasa, yet he never attempted to capitalise his remarkable adventures on that journey. Lamb indeed wrote to Coleridge:

*"He (Manning) discloses not, save to select worshippers, and will leave the world without anyone hardly but me knowing how stupendous a creature he is."*

Manning's letters to Lamb are on the whole very ordinary, but Manning in one way and another drew the best out of Lamb, a sparkling return to his elusive, enigmatic friend.

Thomas Manning, born at Broome 8th November 1772 was the second son of the Rev. William Manning, Rector of Broome and Diss in Norfolk. Owing to delicate health he was educated at home before entering Caius College, Cambridge where he matriculated and distinguished himself in mathematics. Not being agreeable to subscribe to the usual religious oaths and tests he was not allowed to hold a University appointment or be granted a degree. Yet he stayed at Cambridge as a private tutor.

At Cambridge also he became interested in Chinese, a germ which led him to the determination to compile a Chinese dictionary. The idea never came to fruition. To equip himself for this task he went to Paris in 1801 studying chemistry and philology, and on his return in 1805 was granted the only passport signed by Napoleon for an Englishman to return to England after war was resumed between England and France. On his return he studied medicine at the Westminster Hospital, and approached the East India Company for transport to Canton, and also Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society for assistance in achieving his desire to visit China. Sir Joseph thereupon asked the East India Company to help Manning. In May 1806 Manning sailed in one of the East India Company's ships to their English factory at Canton. Here he remained studying China and its language and making himself familiar with its customs and the difficulties of penetrating the country.

In 1811 disguised as a Tatar doctor from Calcutta he set out with a Chinese servant to reach China through Tibet. En route he was stopped by a Chinese general but with whom he travelled the rest of the journey to Lhasa, his medical knowledge being a great asset to both of them. Manning wrote a Journal describing the peoples he met, his medical practice with them, and the arduous of the journey, culminating with his reception by the seven years old Dali Lama at the Palace of Postala. He arrived at Lhasa in the new year of 1812. The Journal is of course a mere skeleton of what he might have compiled on his return to Calcutta—but he left it as it was. Difficulties developed at Lhasa, suspicions as to his intentions arose and his servant was seized by the authorities. Manning thereupon decided to leave without delay; he left in April 1812 and reached Calcutta in June, going on by sea to Canton, staying there another four years and building up his library of Chinese books, later to become the property of the Royal Asiatic Society. In 1816 he was attached as an interpreter to Lord Amhurst's special Embassy to negotiate a commercial treaty between China and the East India Company and the party proceeded to Peking. Negotiating difficulties arose particularly on ceremonial usages and Lord Amhurst abandoned the mission and returned to England. Manning came back with the mission and at St. Helena had an interview with Napoleon, a memorable occasion. On his return to England Manning retired shell-like and secluded for the rest of his life. His waist-long beard and eccentric ways caused a certain amount of local fame and curiosity. Did he consider his Lhasa

adventure a failure thus depriving him of the effort to do justice on his own behalf to the enterprise, or was he merely indifferent to the rewards, literary and financial, which might have come to him? Whatever the answer one fact remains. He was the inspirer of much of Lamb's magical genius; he brought the best out of Lamb's mind in letters and essays. He was certainly one of the most interesting of Lamb's wide circle of friends.

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**JOHN TAYLOR, 1781—1864**  
and  
**JAMES AUGUSTUS HESSEY, 1785—1870**  
**A CENTENARY ADDRESS**  
by  
**JOANNA RICHARDSON, April 6th**

John Taylor born 1781 at Retford was the son of a bookseller of Scottish descent; James Augustus Hessey was born four years later and became the father of Archdeacon Hessey. Taylor and Hessey were to become life-long friends. Both knew Charles Wentworth Dilke and were friends of Leigh Hunt, and Charles Lamb in turn was acquainted with Keats's friend Charles Armitage Brown. The latter's grand-daughter Mrs. Osborne told a story of Lamb who was present at a Christmas lunch at Hunt's with Brown and his son. When the flaming Christmas pudding was brought in Lamb enquired how many sides the pudding had. Everyone present said the pudding was round and had no sides at all. "It has two sides" Lamb explained "the inside and the outside." Lamb indeed had two other good friends and those important too, for the publishers of *Endymion* and *Lamia* were also the publishers of the *Essays of Elia*: these two men were John Taylor and James Augustus Hessey.

Taylor had been trained to his father's bookselling business and at 21 years he went to London to seek fortune there. He got a job in a bookshop called The Temple of the Muses in Finsbury Square where he met "an apprentice of very genteel and wealthy Connexions", James Augustus Hessey, twenty-two years old. In a letter home Taylor described him as good-humoured, with a boyish appearance, conversation and manners lively, plays the flute, likes dancing, has wit and pleasing accomplishments. Taylor from a portrait, was dark, whiskered, elegant and somewhat shortsighted; he was also charming to women, and endowed with strong intellectual power and a sound business sense. Taylor never married. Hessey in 1813 married Kate Falkner who in 1814 gave birth to a son to whom Taylor was godfather.

In 1806 the two friends set up business together at 93 Fleet Street as publishers of serious books, though Taylor developed a flair for discovering writers of dazzling fame. In April 1817 the Olliers who had published Keats's first volume of poems announced their connection with Keats was at an end. Taylor had met Keats and recognised his poetical qualities; henceforth Taylor and Hessey would sponsor Keats's writings and would keep him in funds for the sake of poetry. Taylor indeed took an interest in the entire process of *Endymion* making constructive suggestions which Keats accepted; moreover, when Keats left for Italy in the autumn of 1820 Taylor advanced him money for the journey. Taylor and Hessey were staunch supporters of John Clare.

In 1821 came an important venture, namely, the acquisition of the *London Magazine*. Herein were to appear the *Essays of Elia*, and work by Hazlitt, Hood, De Quincey, Clare, Barry Cornwall and Carlyle—a galaxy of contributors, enabling the magazine to reach a zenith of literary distinction.

As the years passed Taylor and Hessey grew pious and their letters are full of resignation and aspiration, the Victorian attitude to calamity is clearly uppermost. Depression from time to time is noticeable, but relief would come as friendship's claims rose between them. On Taylor's death in July 1864 Francis Hessey wrote to his nephew "we have lost a truly good and great man. I scarcely know how to communicate to my father the sad tidings of his removal. They were indeed like brothers through life. There is one little memorial of him that I should like to possess—and one that will be valueless to anyone else. It is his spectacles. My eyes and his were of the same degree of shortsightedness." Hessey survived until 7th April 1870. It would be pleasant to think that his son wore those spectacles through which John Taylor had long before assessed the beauties of Bath, the unpublished works of John Keats and the *Essays of Elia*.

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MR. E. G. CROWSLEY in the Chair introduced Miss Richardson as the author of a book on Fanny Brawne and one on John Keats and his circle which is to appear in the autumn. And not many weeks ago she had been responsible for a delightful broadcast, *The True Elia*.

An animated discussion followed her address, in which she willingly joined. Mr. Dewsnap accorded thanks to her for a talk giving a fragrant insight into the byways of literature.

Miss H. Bandy gave the Elian reading, an extract from Lamb's letter of 6th October 1800

to Manning containing a vivid description of a visit to see a LIVE RATTLESNAKE.

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## THE TRUE ELIA

by

JOANNA RICHARDSON

On January 6th the B.B.C. broadcast *The True Elia* a radio essay on Charles Lamb by Miss Joanna Richardson, which was a delight to Elians with an appeal to listeners whose acquaintance with Lamb was perhaps somewhat slight. The narrator skilfully introduced Lamb from his schooldays at Christ's Hospital, manhood, the family tragedy in 1796, his devotion to his sister Mary, his friends some of them lifelong, his daily work and colleagues at the East India House, culminating at forty five years of age in those wonderful essays written under the pseudonym of ELIA, a name taken from an old Italian clerk at the South Sea House where Lamb worked 1791-92, and finally his retirement in 1825 with a pension of £441 a year for the remainder of his life.

The various phases of his life and his writings were exquisitely illustrated with extracts from his letters, those of his sister Mary and those of his friends, especially Coleridge, and from the *Essays of Elia* so delightfully personal of his likings, fancies and fears, in fact the man as a whole; all these were indeed delicately appreciative of his character and genius.

Charles Lamb and Elia were indivisible—no one can imitate him successfully. The true Elia is the spirit that fills the letters and the essays: gay and melancholy, antique and almost modern. The true Elia is a constant friend, always personal, so human and a model of humanity. He understood the normal failings of mankind, cheering to the lowly and companionable to the luckless, and "in love with this green earth". And with those words Miss Richardson concluded a worthy tribute to Charles Lamb.

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## MISS ANN WILSON, SINGER AND ACTRESS OF THE LAMB ERA

By FLORENCE S. REEVES

In the *Ladies Monthly Museum* 1821-22 there appeared a review of a performance of Artaxerxes at Drury Lane on January 18th, 1821, and among those in the cast was a Miss Ann Wilson, a young actress who had previously been a singer at various private parties. Little has been written about her though there are brief comments in contemporary magazines. In the June issue of the above magazine there is

an engraving depicting a pleasant young woman with full lips, large dark expressive eyes, and hair parted in the middle, piled high on the head with side curls, a commanding figure.

Born 10th May, 1803, at Spittal in Berwickshire, her parents soon left Scotland for London. As she grew up a liking for the theatre soon developed, particularly for the singing of Miss Kitty Stephens who had been trained by a Mr. Welch. With her father's permission Miss Wilson went to him for a year's gratuitous tuition after which serious training began, and Mr. Welch arranged for producer Elliston to engage her as principal singer at Drury Lane. She made her debut there on January 18th, 1821, in the role of Mandane in Arne's opera *Artaxerxes*. It is not known whether Lamb, an ardent playgoer, was at this performance, but his nostalgic backward look at *Artaxerxes* is for ever enshrined in *My First Play* when at six years of age he first saw it.

Miss Wilson's performance received praise, and the rich tones of her voice electrified the house, with applause to the echo. The *London Magazine* praised her full and powerful notes, her good execution and confidence. Elliston's biographer joined in somewhat half-heartedly, but nevertheless the audience was delighted to the full and her fame as singer and actress was established. She sang for 48 nights in three characters and received £1,218, including a benefit and 20 free nightly admissions.

Mrs. Siddons on one of the nights complimented Miss Wilson on her enchanting voice and superior acting, a combination surpassing any previous effort at Drury Lane. Others to compliment her were Mr. and Mrs. Coutts, Lord Erskine and Lord Yarmouth; In March His Majesty saw the opera and testified to the excellence of her performance. Mrs. Coutts gave the actress a fifty-pound note with which she purchased a silver tea service and presented it to Mr. Welch her singing master.

In 1827 she married him and so brought to an early close the remarkable talents she had shewn at Drury Lane.

From a talk at the Annual General Meeting of the Dramatic Group, 17th January, 1963.

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#### A POEM BY CHARLES LAMB, 1830— HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED

In the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum is a framed poem by Charles Lamb addressed to J. T. Smith in 1830. We are indebted to our member Mr. F. A. Whiting for its discovery and which, so far as we can ascertain, has not previously been published. Here it is:

**"To J. T. Smith Esq.**

Keeper of the prints of the British Museum.

Keeper of these rich Tomes, whose Graphic  
Art

Her aid to Painting lends, and doth impart  
A multiplied existence to each Work  
Divine, that else in Cabinets would lurk  
By half the world unseen! Great Raphael  
must

Titian, and tender sweet Correggio, trust  
A portion of their fame to thee, O ward  
Their offspring from destruction! Be the  
Guard

To these dead Beauties! Time herself is  
chary

To touch them in this sacred Sanctuary.

Charles Lamb

9th August 1830."

J. T. Smith (1766—1833) was Keeper of Drawings and Prints in the British Museum and the author of *Nollekens and his Times*, and *A Book for a Rainy Day or Recollections of the Events of the Years 1766—1833*, a picture of the artistic and literary life of the period. Lamb and Smith must have met on several occasions.

#### SUMMER PROGRAMME

##### SATURDAY, 16th June, 1963

Visit to Canonbury Tower, Islington where Charles Lamb used "to watch the setting sun and contemplate the starry heavens". Members should assemble at **2-30 p.m.** at Highbury Underground station, Highbury Corner, N.5. Cost of the Visit including tea 4/- per head.

Besides the Northern City Line and Broad Street, Richmond overland railway, Highbury Corner can be reached by the following bus services Nos. 4, 4A, 19, 30, 43, 104, 172 and 279

Please let Miss F. S. Reeves, 33 Alma Street, N.W.2. know immediately if you wish to join this visit.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**—The Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 18th May at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, W.C.1. at 2-45 p.m. Among the business to be transacted will be the consideration and approval of the Annual Report and Financial Statement (a copy of which accompanies this Bulletin), and the election of Officers and Council. Your presence at this important meeting is urgently requested.

After the business has been transacted Miss Florence S. Reeves will speak on "Sara Coleridge".