

THE C.L.S.



BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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WALTER FARROW. 1867-1964

THE PASSING OF A GREAT CHAIRMAN

With sincere regret we have to report the death on 23rd March of Mr. Walter Farrow at the ripe age of 96. He had been Chairman of the Society from its formation in February 1935 until his death. From the beginning his interest in the activities and welfare of the Society was continuous, in which Mrs. Farrow was in full co-operation. His business acumen was invaluable in guiding the Society to success in the many phases of its work. This was particularly noticeable at the Council meetings, and he usually summed up with an appropriate and humorous story. He presided at all our Annual General Meetings, and also at the Annual Charles Lamb Birthday Celebrations when Guests of Honour in every walk of life paid tribute to the work of Lamb; he himself was Guest of Honour at the 1955 Celebration.

In another direction pleasure took the place

of business and the Society was invited to Falaise, his Hertfordshire home, at Welwyn when hospitality was graciously provided by Mrs. Farrow and her daughter Mrs. Garrett. These visits took place on four occasions, the first in July 1938; the second was in July 1940 with an address by J. P. Collins; the third was in July 1946 when the Dramatic Group presented Lamb's play "The Wife's Trial" amid the setting of the charming garden. The fourth occasion was in June 1947 when the opportunity was taken to pay tribute to Mr. Farrow on his 80th birthday, and Mr. J. Lewis May on behalf of the Society presented him with a silver inkstand and an illuminated address inscribed:

"The Celebration of your 80th birthday provides us with an appropriate opportunity for recognising your devoted services as Chairman of this Society since its formation in February, 1935. Your wisdom has progressively guided the Society through years of War and Peace, your geniality and friendliness—true Elian qualities—have endeared you to us all. We can

never repay the services so selflessly and generously undertaken; but we ask your acceptance of this tribute as a memento of our affection and esteem."

The Dramatic Group showed their versatility by providing selections from Lamb and other writers to entertain the company which included Mr. Edmund Blunden. Other "At Homes" given by Mr. Farrow were in 1939 at Tyderwen, 1941 and 1942 at the Plane Tree Restaurant.

Another visit to Falaise was in October 1952 when the Officers and members of the Council were invited by Mr. Farrow to meet Professor Earl Leslie Griggs of the University of California who was then working on a definitive edition of Coleridge's letters, when he gave an illuminating talk on the trials and tribulations of a researcher into such a problem. No doubt Professor Griggs will remember the pleasure attending this visit.

One undertaking of the Society in which he had special interest was the acquisition by the Society in 1949 of Lamb's Hertfordshire cottage "Button Snap", and from then onwards he dealt with the legal and other formalities with admirable precision, becoming chairman of the trustees for the management of the property.

Mr. Farrow was born on 16th June 1867 at Islington. His educational activities included evening classes at various London Colleges as well as the London School of Economics. A keen follower and supporter of the Liberal Party he took an active part in the early years of this century in the party's work at Enfield and Edmonton. In the political field he attended meetings addressed by leading speakers of the day, including Gladstone, Chamberlain, Asquith, Balfour, Lloyd George, and others.

He was also interested in various voluntary public work and became Group Manager for the London School Board. His business activities were connected with the engineering and machine tool trades, and he acted as liaison officer with the Ministry of Munitions in both wars. It was not until he was 88 years of age that he retired from active life in the City.

Up to the last he was a pillar of the Society, active in body and mind, a staunch supporter of everything connected with the life and writings of Charles Lamb, and a warm friend to members of the Society.

H.G.S.

At the Annual General Meeting on the 9th May personal tributes to Mr. Farrow's steadfast

connection with and affection for the Society will be paid by Professor Geoffrey Tillotson, President of the Society since 1955, and Mr. Ernest G. Crowsley, Hon. General Secretary from the Society's foundation in February 1935, and by other members of the Society. The tributes will be included in the Bulletin for July next.

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**BERNARD BARTON, THE MAN AND
THE POET. (1784-1849)**
AN ADDRESS

by

MISS ANNETTE PARK, March 9th

On hearing that Barton was thinking of leaving his job at the bank and live by his pen—"Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you!!! Throw yourself rather from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash upon iron spikes. Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public. I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundations of Leadenhall . . . There is corn in Egypt while there is cash at Leadenhall. You and I are something besides being writers. Thank God." C.L.

After a brief biographical sketch of Bernard Barton the speaker drew conclusions about the different strains in him, namely, his sound North Country stock; the vigour that was diverted into industry; the reaction of his father towards a gentlemanly culture; and finally the isolating Quaker conditioning of his home life and education. Thus excluded from the majority of the arts—he had read only Shakespeare and Miss Baillie—Bernard Barton was a contradiction in terms—a Quaker poet. He settled at Woodbridge with the banking firm of Alexander (later Barclays) where he spent the rest of his life.

Coming to Bernard Barton the man, a bank clerk for forty years in the small Suffolk port of Woodbridge, one can deduce from specimens of his handwritting that he was glad to meet people, he was unselfconscious, unsuspecting, good-natured, sincere, naive, literal, loquacious, courageous, neither arrogant nor humble, with ideals and a love of beauty. Yet his letters and poems create much better the living image. Edward Fitzgerald of Omar Khayyam fame and who after Barton's death married Barton's daughter Lucy, wrote of him that his literary talents, tolerance and sociability made him respected and liked by his neighbours. At the bank he would greet them with open hand, a pinch of snuff from his snuff box, and a family

enquiry. At their tables too he was always welcome. When a schooner of 97 tons was built at Woodbridge and named BERNARD BARTON this gave him unaffected pleasure "the name was given to honour me. I have have a decided preference for humble fame of home growth." His range of friendships extended to the Barrack-master at Woodbridge, the curate J. J. Reynolds, Thomas Hurd of Beckford Hall a hearty old yeoman of 86, Tom Churchyard a local lawyer who painted and who could enjoy lots of palaver, smoking and laughing, and consume ale, wine, brandy, and the cheer of the dinner table.

And yet even Fitzgerald could be in two minds about him—this generous, worthy, simple-minded fellow, was also a strange character, "with a good deal of pride and caution, with a pretence of humility, perverse, strict, plain and unassuming in his dress." The pride and the pretence of humility lies beneath the person or mask, and may have arisen from his being a big frog in a little pond, the pond of Woodbridge, the pond of Quakerism!

His books of poems found favour and were often reprinted. From 1812-1845 he published ten volumes of verse. For one he obtained 129 subscribers, "a small but respectable list of subscribers", which included some bearing titled names, as well as the Poet Laureate, Southey and Wordsworth. The dedication of his "Household Verses" was to the Queen gratefully inscribed, somewhat fulsome in tone. Up to a point the success of his verses went to his head and criticism came badly to him, even from Lamb. And yet in a letter to a friend in 1835 he praised Elia's writings in the London Magazine, "a rich and racy vein of humour peculiarly his own, full of original thinking and abounding with deep glimpses and more profound conceptions of truth than almost any writings of his age." That he copied out 110 pages of Lamb's letters for immediate inclusion in a book dedicated to the memory of genius is another indication of Barton's being "a most extraordinary compound" in Fitzgerald's opinion. He was neither saint, prophet nor genius. Rather, one appreciates his simplicity, gentle egotism, unaffected enthusiasm, his tolerance and courage.

His poems were undoubtedly popular with the reading public of his day. "I have no alternative between not writing at all, and writing what first comes into my head", he mentions. The secret of his popularity as a poet was, that unlike Wordsworth, he gave the middle-class reading public what they wanted without their having to make any effort. Yet C. C. Benson truly and grimly remarks "he was

a most industrious composer of verse, only remarkable for its firm grasp of the obvious."

Miss Park then read extracts from poems she had selected as representing Barton at his various levels, some better, some worse, some lively, arranging the selections into four groups according to their technical deficiencies which arose out of their basic lack of imaginative experience. And yet his poem to the memory of Robert Bloomfield is exquisitely right when he relies simply on his Quaker faith, the man and the poet coincide. He is the vehicle of the word. Especially is this true in his poem "The Spiritual Law". Miss Park's reading of portions of poems and letters was infused with her exquisite feeling of the sensitive, the ridiculous and the humorous.

Miss Edna Timberlake was to have taken the Chair but was unfortunately prevented from so doing by indisposition. Mr. E. G. Crowsley stepped into the breach and remarked that Miss Park was well known to members through her work as producer for the Dramatic Group's theatrical presentations.

Discussion followed in which Mr. Eric Norris mentioned that he was in negotiation for the acquisition of the cottage in which Barton and his daughter Lucy lived for some years in Woodbridge.

Miss Park had brought five reproductions of Barton's portraits, etc. which were examined with pleasure by the members.

Miss Park mentioned that there are on record seven portraits of Bernard Barton. One of the originals was painted in 1824 by an unknown artist and sent to Barton's cousins near Carlisle in exchange for a portrait of his father. This together with the second when he is aged 47 is in the picture gallery at Ipswich. The third oil painting may be the one which was hanging in the Bank House of Barclay's Bank at Woodbridge until the end of the 19th century. The pastel by Samuel Laurence was kindly commissioned by Edward Fitzgerald who wrote in 1847 to the artist, "Barton pretends he dreads having his portrait done, which is all my eye. So come and do it." This portrait was most probably in the possession of his daughter till her death in 1898 in Croydon.

Mr. Crowsley in conclusion said he was very sorry to report that Mr. Farrow was seriously ill in hospital, and a letter signed by all present was drafted wishing him a speedy recovery.

The Elian Reading was given by Miss Gwen Jones, who had chosen one of the Popular Fallacies, *That we should rise with the Lark.*

JOHN CLARE. 1793-1864
TRADITION IN HIS CHARACTER AND
IN HIS POETRY

A Centenary Address by
ANNE TIBBLE, B.A. April 11th

Friend Lamb, thy choice was good, to love the lore
Of our old by-gone bards, whose racy page
Rich mellowing Time makes sweeter than before.
The blossom left—for the long garner'd store
Of fruitage, now right luscious in its age,
Although to fashion's taste austere—what more
Can be expected from the popular rage
For tinsel gauds that are to gold preferred?
Me much it grieves, as I did erst presage,
Vain fashion's toils had every heart deterred
From the warm, homely phrase of other days,
Until thy Woodvil's ancient voice I heard;
And now right fain, yet fearing, honest bard,
I pause to greet thee with so poor a praise.

John Clare to Charles Lamb, 1831.

John Clare was born at Helpstone the son of a Northamptonshire labourer on the 13th July 1793. The father could read a little in the Bible and his memory was stored with old ballads and songs, but his mother was illiterate, yet there was a strong bond of understanding between her and her son. Eventually the father was crippled with rheumatism and became unable to work, but though poverty was ever present the children through the mother's industry were not allowed to go short. John's boyhood was on the whole happy in spite of a weakness in health and he revelled in the sights and sounds of the countryside—his poems are full of his discoveries in the fields and hedges. His schooling was intermittent and he worked at various jobs for farmers to pay for this. He developed a love for reading, especially for Thomson's *Seasons*. And his aptitude for writing poetry started to develop, such efforts being scribbled on odd pieces of paper. Though his education had been only rudimentary he was not an uneducated man for he had a power of keen observation of natural phenomena.

Up to the present his poetry has been but barely appreciated, said Mrs. Tibble, but John Clare was one of the foremost *country* poets, a traditional poet in content and themes which belong to the literature of all human kind. He determined to find the true voice of his feeling. Curiously enough he had what one might call a pre-literate memory.

Mrs. Tibble here read extracts from his poems to illustrate his summer images, one of his sonnets to Charles Lamb on his essays, and his lines as a love poet. His first book *Poems descriptive of Country Life* was published in 1820 by Taylor & Hessey, and at their rooms

he was lionised, meeting the *London Magazine* contributors including Charles Lamb who referred to him as "Princely Clare". After a wonderful time in London he had to return to the isolation of Helpstone and contacts had to be made by letter, a disappointing climax. In the same year he married Martha Turner whom he always called "Patty" and tried to make a living out of poetry coupled with farm work but it was a hard life. At that time much natural poetry was being written by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake and Keats. Clare admired Wordsworth but could not understand much of Keats's poems which went beyond the merely natural element. As a change he tried writing essays and also a novel (never finished); more successfully he wrote ballads which he gave away and some sonnets. About this time he wrote that wonderful poem on the Nightingale. Mrs. Tibble confessed that in a countryside where many nightingales sing she had only once found a nightingale's nest! His book *The Rural Muse* was good but even it did not sell.

Moreover the fashion for country poems was passing and his second and third books did not sell. His health, too, began to decline with delusions intervening. Unfortunately his delusions increased and in 1837 he went into Dr. Allen's asylum at High Beach in Epping Forest, being kindly treated. Four years later he escaped and made a formidable journey to his home in Northamptonshire, almost without food, money and proper rest. The ballads he wrote at High Beach were afterwards transcribed by the Steward and bound into two volumes, now in the possession of the Northampton Library.

Clare's prime achievement is his passionate description of the countryside for he was a real country poet, combining accuracy with emotion. In religion he was of the Church of England persuasion and he could not accept Coleridge's theory of theological problems—traditionally he held a deeply religious point of view. Though his poems were apparently simple they represent the basis of life, even the basis of secret love. His poem *A Vision* is of the same element. Love was a positive thing beyond life itself. His thoughts were his own evolved from a long life of pain and distress, and these things are traditional in poetry; these original thoughts Clare has left for us. He was looked upon as mad, but he was true to the verities of life, and the language of poetry does not know the barriers of speech.

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On this occasion the Chair was to have been occupied by Mrs. Katharine Moore but unfortunately indisposition prevented this, and

Miss Annette Park at short notice took her place and introduced Mrs. Tibble to the members, recalling that in October 1951 Prof. J. W. Tibble addressed the Society on John Clare. Both Mr. and Mrs. Tibble had done much to place Clare in his right position in the English literary scene by editing his writings, etc., and this year is the centenary of Clare's death.

Transcripts of two of Clare's poems, *The Nightingale* and *A Vision* had been provided and a most interesting discussion followed Mrs. Tibble's address, at the close of which Mr. Arthur F. Bishop moved a warm vote of thanks to her for a moving and enlightening talk; her enthusiasm had been infectious. Mr. F. E. Sandry thanked Miss Park for her duties as Chairman.

Instead of the usual Elian Reading a pleasant musical item was substituted. This took the form of a piano solo entitled *The Colebrook Minuet* composed and presented to the Society by our member Mr. A. M. Davidson of Stonehaven. Our thanks to him for a charming musical offering, which was played by Miss K. Benning.

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**JOHN CLARE CENTENARY
COMMEMORATIONS**
at
NORTHAMPTON

Commencing May 20th

To commemorate the centenary of John Clare's death the Chief Librarian of Northampton and other interested parties have arranged for a comprehensive series of events commencing 20th May as a tribute to Clare's poetry and life.

A Civic Memorial Service at All Saints' Church will be followed on succeeding days by an Exhibition of his manuscripts, memoranda, books, etc., which will be on view in the Central Museum and Art Gallery, with readings from his poems. The Northampton Drama Club will also give a series of readings, and there will be an evening of popular music of his youth. A lecture on the birds of John Clare will be given by James Fisher, and Professor Edmund Blunden will deliver the John Clare Memorial Lecture.

Other memorial ceremonies will take place at Helpstone, Peterboro and Aldeburgh, full particulars of which can be obtained from the Chief Librarian, Central Library, Abington Street, Northampton.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—The Annual General Meeting will take place on

Saturday, 9th 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. The Council is proposing Mr. Arthur F. Bishop as Chairman of the Society and Mr. F. E. Sandry as Vice-Chairman. Your presence at this important meeting is urgently requested.

After the business has been completed Memorial Tributes will be paid to the late Walter Farrow (Chairman of the Society from 1935 to 1964).

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SUMMER PROGRAMME—SUNDAY, 14th JUNE, 1964—A whole day visit is being planned to Jane Austen's Cottage at Chawton conducted by Mr. T. Edward Carpenter. The party will travel by private coach starting about 9-30 a.m. Members who wish to participate in this visit should immediately notify Miss F. S. Reeves, 33 Alma Street, London, N.W.5, who will send full details to successful applicants.

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DRAMATIC GROUP

As announced in the March Bulletin the Dramatic Group's next production—"MODERN ANTIQUES" or "THE MERRY MOURNERS" by John O'Keeffe, is to take place at the Portcullis Theatre, Monck Street, Westminster, S.W.1 (Off Great Peter Street), on TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY, 12th and 13th MAY at 7-45 p.m. JOE MUNDEN was closely associated with "Modern Antiques" having played in this farce and Mr. Basil Francis will introduce and recall many interesting facts about the play. The Group will be assisted by the Greek Theatre Players with whom our Producer has been associated for many years.

As Miss Annette Park is leaving London this will, regrettably, be her last production for the Group, and we hope that as many Members and friends as possible will join us on the 12th and 13th May, not only because it is a Lamb "event" but as a mark of our appreciation and esteem of Miss Park's loyalty and devotion to the Group.

Tickets can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, Miss G. Edna Philpot, 26, Cranborne Avenue, Tolworth, Surrey at 3/6 and 5/6d. each.

Members and friends spent an enjoyable evening when the Group visited the Royalty Theatre Cinerama on 24th February to see "The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm".

AN ELIAN CAUSERIE FROM SAN FRANCISCO

Our member Mr. Arthur F. Bishop is an assiduous worker within the confines of the Society, and also outside its limits by giving talks and addresses to members of other cultural bodies—many of his efforts in this direction have been quoted from time to time in the pages of the *Bulletin*. A friend of his, Mr. Durden of San Francisco (also a member of the Society) has sent a page from THIS WEEK MAGAZINE, San Francisco December 1, 1963, containing an article with Lamb interest which we have the pleasure to reproduce:

* * *

HOW MANY THANKS?

by

DR. ROY PEARSON

Dean, Andover Newton Theological Seminary, Newton Centre, Mass.

"I own that I am disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in the course of the day besides my dinner. I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts—a grace before Milton—a grace before Shakespeare?"

CHARLES LAMB

It was on a rainy afternoon in Paris that I first read those words by Charles Lamb, and suddenly I found myself chastened. My wife and I had wanted to climb again the tower at Notre Dame and renew the memory of a glorious morning three years earlier when, wrapped in the autumn sunshine, we had stood there atop the storied cathedral and marvelled at the city spread below us. But almost without warning the rain had fallen heavily, and we had been driven back to our apartment.

Picking up a book at random, I stumbled on Lamb's words, and I was ashamed of my petulance. How easy it is, I said to myself, to resent our inconvenience and take our blessings for granted? How loudly we lament deprivations, and how silent we stand in the midst of riches which no money could buy!

Then my mind swept back across the weeks that we had been in Europe, and while the rain still beat on the window beside me, I remembered the golden evenings in the little English inn

at Windermere when, dinner over, we had talked so long with friends beside the fire. I woke again on that radiant October morning in the Bavarian Alps when the summer grass was green in the alleys, and the lower hills were thrust against the sky.

The haunting ruins of Stonehenge and Pompeii, the ancient wonders of Nimes and Orange, the soft loveliness of Delft and Harlingen, the treasures of the Louvre—all these had been ours to see and enjoy. And again I was ashamed of myself; for I could not recall a single "Thank you!" I had spoken at any point in our journey.

FOR HOW MANY FLOWERS I have seen have I been really thankful? For how many songs I have heard, or hands I have clasped, or hills I have climbed? For how many houses that have sheltered me, or tasks that have challenged me, or loved ones who have forgiven me?

Lamb suggested saying grace on twenty other occasions in the course of the day besides his dinner. Should it not be twenty times twenty?

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OBITUARY

We were very sorry to hear at the meeting on 11th April of the death the previous day of our esteemed member Frederick H. Postans in his 78th year. He joined the Society in 1945 and was a familiar figure at our meetings whilst at the Annual Lamb Celebrations he often acted as unofficial M.C. He was Founder and Secretary of the St. George's Rambling Society which was devoted to Historical and Archeological Research and as such was responsible for organising visits to places of such interest. Consequently on joining our Society he readily and enthusiastically undertook the arranging of and guidance to places associated with Charles Lamb and his friends. From 1947 to 1961 he was responsible for such visits on six occasions and his lively comments were fully appreciated by all who shared in those visits. He was also a member of the Society's Council and was a Correspondence Secretary for many years. We shall certainly miss his cheery voice and we extend our deep sympathy to Mrs. Postans and family. The funeral took place on 16th April at which the Society was represented by Mr. A. F. Bishop, Mr. E. G. Crowsley, Mr. H. G. Smith and other members.