

# THE C.L.S.



# BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

Founder Editor: SAMUEL MORRIS RICH 1935-1947

President: PROF. GEOFFREY TILLOTSON, M.A., B.LITT.

Vice Presidents: JOHN BETJEMAN, C.B.E., D.LITT.

EDMUND BLUNDEN, C.B.E., M.A., C.LITT.

T. EDWARD CARPENTER, B.A., LL.B.

E. LESLIE GRIGGS, PH.D.

BASIL WILLEY, F.B.A.

Chairman: ARTHUR F. BISHOP

Vice Chairman: F. E. SANDRY

Hon. Treasurer:

MISS F. A. PARSONS, 32 Carmel Court, King's Drive, Wembley Park, Middlesex.

Hon. Librarian

G. M. NOBLE, F.L.A., Central Library, Fore Street, Edmonton, N.9.

Dramatic Group:

Hon. Sec: MISS G. E. PHILPOT, 26 Cranborne Avenue, Tolworth.

Hon. Treas: MISS A. M. BAZELL, 9 Holland Park Mansions, Holland Park Gardens, W.14.

Membership Secretary:

MISS F. S. REEVES, 33 Alma Street, N.W.5.

Hon. General Secretary:

E. G. CROWSLEY, Woodstock Hotel, 11 Highbury Grange, London, N.5.

Editor of Bulletin:

H. G. SMITH, Blakesmoor, 61 Salisbury Avenue, St. Albans.

No. 180

(Twenty-Ninth Year)

NOVEMBER, 1964

## ON THE GENIUS AND CHARACTER OF HOGARTH: 1697-1764

### A BI-CENTENARY TRIBUTE

by

WILLIAM GAUNT, M.A.

William Hogarth, the bi-centenary of whose death occurred this year, was one of the greatest of English artists, and Charles Lamb's essay *On the Genius and Character of Hogarth* is one of the most magnificent pieces of art appreciation. Both Hogarth and Lamb were thoroughly English in their outlook. Hogarth's own statement is typical:

"I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer: my picture is my stage and men and women are my players, who by means of certain actions and gestures exhibit a dumb show."

Lamb of Hogarth's works wrote:

"His graphic representations are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful suggestive meaning of words. Other pictures we look at, his prints we read."

Hogarth's quality as a visual artist was undervalued by certain schools of criticism, yet in the mingling of comedy and tragedy he had many links with literature, and this Lamb realised as

akin to Shakespeare—e.g. *Timon of Athens* and *The Rake's Progress*, in story and moral both are nearly the same. There are indeed many links, and to find an ancestor, a literary precursor, to Hogarth what name is more natural than Defoe and the unique suddenness with which he appears in English art, one of the great revolutionaries. *Moll Flanders* is the equivalent of *Moll Hackabout*, and Lamb truly says:

"I never look at that wonderful assemblage of depraved beings who without a grain of pity or reverence in their perverted minds, are performing the sacred exteriors of duty to the relics of their departed partner in folly, but I am as much moved to sympathy from the very want of it in them, as I should be by the finest representation of a virtuous death-bed."

Fielding too admired Hogarth and when *Joseph Andrews* speaks of Virtue to the wanton *Lady Booby* . . . , no, not from the inimitable pencil of my friend Hogarth could you receive such an idea of surprise as would have entered it at your eyes had this never been drawn. Again in *Tom Jones* of Mrs. Allworthy:

"I would attempt to draw her picture but that is done already by a more able master, Mr. Hogarth himself, to whom she sat many years ago."

It is evident that Fielding and Smollett knew and savoured his prints, and it is more than likely that they were inspired to paint on a broad canvas with the same variety of scene and person.

Hogarth's great achievement was to animate a whole period, to depict a whole social order with all its range of character good and bad with all shades of human expression—a feat no artist had attempted before. In Lamb's time the appreciation of art tended to that grand manner and ideal subject propagated by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his discourses; low life was essentially inferior, and Hogarth's wonderful engraving of Gin Lane would be automatically condemned. Lamb attacked this outlook of the connoisseur; it is as true today as then that "we are for ever deceiving ourselves with names and theories"—putting them aside we may agree with Lamb that this print was "sublime". This was an example of Hogarth's morality, for he conveys the simple and practical lesson that dissipation leads to ruin, and that the industrious apprentice with hard work and a moderation in indulgence gains a comfortable and respectable position in the world.

From another angle, whilst certain advantage accrued to a painter tied to the needs of a patron yet the importance of engraving was that it was a means to economic independence, thus reaching a wide public and at the same time becoming a civilising influence. The satire and caricature that Hogarth portrayed, his realism, really appealed to Lamb. Finally, the influence and legacy left by Hogarth can be traced in England and in Europe—Rowlandson, Frith, the pre-Raphaelites, Goya, and many others up to the time of Daumier. 200 years after his death we realise his stature as artist and we can turn back to Lamb for his championings.

\* \* \*

Mr. Gaunt's address was amplified by slides thrown on the screen illustrating the many examples of Hogarth's genius, including *The Beggars Opera*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Gin Lane*, etc. Thanks to Mr. Gaunt for his striking and erudite address was accorded by Mr. F. E. Sandry, and Mr. A. G. Clarke thanked Mr. Arthur F. Bishop for his services as Chairman. The Elian Reading was given by Miss M. E. Brice with quotations from Lamb and Hogarth.

## HOGARTH'S SISTERS IN THE "HIGH STREET" OF CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

By

A. G. Clarke

So illuminating to us all was Mr. William Gaunt's account of Hogarth that this note can be counted as less than a glint. But it does offer a glimpse of the Hogarth family's link with the school of Charles Lamb.

Hogarth's sisters Mary and Ann, maiden ladies, for many years ran a frock shop (their own word for it), and their brother William designed an advertisement for the business. They were selling, by wholesale and retail, "ye best and most Fashionable Ready Made Frocks, sutes of Fustian, Ticken & Holland, stript Dimmity & Flanel Wastcoats." Not these only but also "blue and canvas Frocks & bluecoat Boys drars". The last term is the only contraction in an advertisement of 80 words; but surely its form was chosen not from sense of delicacy but from considerations of space (it ends a "tight" line of hand-drawn lettering).

The advertisement was designed in 1725. Not till 1736 were breeches introduced at Christ's Hospital (we learn from the school's historian E. H. Pearce). Made of leather, they were issued to the "sick and weakly" and only on the doctor's or surgeon's orders. But years before Lamb was put into uniform there was a general issue of breeches, of Russia drab—these to supplement the kersey, petticoat or smock of yellow worn, until 1865, below the blue gown that survives today.

Were, then, Blues of 1725 dependent on the good sense and good nature of their relatives and friends for such a luxury as "drars"? If so, the Misses Hogarth, now in their mid-twenties, were singularly well situated to do custom. For some time their shop was in Christ's Hospital itself: that is to say (as they announced) at "the corner of the Long Walk facing the Cloysters".

Now both those places were in Christ's Hospital itself: today, if the Long Walk had survived, it would have faced the Postmen's Park in King Edward Street. It was a common way. Shops fronted on the Long Walk had Cloisters, the public enjoyed uninterrupted passage, whether to buy dress and food or to go on to the Cloisters and turn into St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Here then, was the "High Street" of Christ's Hospital, sometimes a boys' escape route. And in 1725 the Hogarth sisters were announcing a move to fresh premises; but only down the street—to, in fact "ye Kings

Arms joyning to ye Little Britain gate near Long Walk".

More than half the advertisement is a drawing by Hogarth: a massive royal arms and, below, a shop interior where the sisters are showing, and trying on, a boy's coat while the same boy's parents wear (it seems) looks of despair.

### "OF CABBAGES AND KINGS"

#### Our Visit to the Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields

"CURIUSER and curiouser!" cried Alice (she was so much surprised that she quite forgot how to speak good English"). After swallowing the cake labelled "Eat Me", her neck had instantly sprouted so long that "she was now more than nine feet high."

Nothing quite so drastic happened to us. But we were in a place that bore a strong likeness to Wonderland. One wouldn't have thought it at all strange to see Lewis Carroll's little heroine, in her apron and striped stockings, come tripping round one of the innumerable corners; and if the Sultan's Grand Vizier from *The Arabian Nights* had accompanied her, that, too, would have seemed entirely natural. For on the radiant afternoon of September 12th, 1964, we were visiting that wonderland among show-places, Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

What a fantastic spot it is! Not so much the charming house itself as its contents. They are, in the true sense of that overworked word, fabulous. This must surely be the most original of all England's museums, this crowded, huddled collection of priceless pictures by Hogarth, Turner and Canaletto; of pretty, valueless mock Grecian statuettes; of centuries-old manuscript books glowing with gold leaf. Quaint little domes appeared suddenly over our amazed heads and a mediaeval monastic chapel, built by Sir John when the Middle Ages had long been dust, yawned under our feet. We mounted a high step to peer into the wonderfully engraved interior of a much-treasured Egyptian sarcophagus. Most fantastic of all in the crowded collection of "shoes and ships and sealing-wax", we glimpsed through railings an elaborate memorial to Mrs. Soane's pet dog, with its brass plate sighing "Alas, poor Fanny!"

An apt comment on this odd place was that of one of our party. She said to me, "How do they ever spring-clean it?"

We had the great privilege of being shown some of the Museum's chief treasures by its Curator, Sir John Summerson, the well-known

architect who has written a life of Soane. Many of us have heard his radio talks on architecture or listened to him "chairing" the Critics on Sunday mornings. This distinguished-looking man, with his pleasant voice and dry sense of humour, unfolded for our viewing concertina-like ranges of pictures, pressed one on another against an apparently normal wall. One of Soane's many ingenious space-saving ideas! What a splendid designer he would have been of modern one-room flatlets or holiday caravans!

Sir John told us that the other Sir John (1753-1837) built the gracious original house (there are now three) as his own home and amassed what was a purely personal collection. He bought rather indiscriminately first-class things of value and fakes which he thought attractive. He also purchased to help his friends, who included Turner and Flaxman. He left the house and its contents to the British nation and very grateful we are for it. We had a very happy afternoon there, afterwards enjoying a leisurely tea at the Bonnington Hotel.

AGNES MIALL.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### A STUDY OF CHARLES LAMB'S "ESSAYS OF ELIA", by Tsutomu Fukuda.

Published by The Hokuseido Press. Pp. 245, bibliography and index.

Mr. Fukuda's book is patently a labour of love, the fruit of many years' close study not only of Charles Lamb but also of his circle of friends and of the writers who influenced him. Many Western readers will be fascinated by this view of Lamb through Oriental eyes, and humbled by the erudition Mr. Fukuda displays in his knowledge of English literature. In his foreword Professor George Barnett draws attention to the closeness of the Japanese and Elian attitudes to literary creation—"amateur" in its true sense—and this underlying sympathy is reflected throughout the book.

The book is divided into two sections. In the first "Lamb, the Verbal Magician", the author makes a detailed study of Lamb's style, including his archaisms in words and grammar, his use of Latin words and phrases, alliteration and repetition, and he gives a wealth of examples. This is splendid material for those who delight in words as words, every page starting a fresh train of thought and re-calling half-forgotten felicities. The section on Lamb's puns is, perhaps understandably, less rewarding and rather too serious for such an effervescent subject. It is a brave man who would seek to explain the humour of "Is that thine own hare

or a wig?" and the examples which Mr. Fukuda quotes most approvingly are possibly not those which appeal most to Western readers.

When describing Lamb's use of hyperbole and pathos the author is on more congenial ground, and he quotes interesting parallels between Japanese and English usage.

In Part II, "Lamb, the frolic and the gentle", much biographical material, familiar to Elians, is woven into a description of the various facets of Lamb's character. The title of the chapter "Humour" is somewhat misleading, although Lamb would doubtless have approved this use of the word in its original connotation, in place of "Disposition" which we would probably use nowadays. The melancholy, wit and intelligence of Lamb are well illustrated, but certainly the most interesting and vivid passages are those on Lamb's love of Antiquity. Here again, one feels an especial "rapport" between the Elian and the Japanese mind; this is borne out by two beautiful translations of Japanese poems, simple yet poignant, expressing a wistful yearning for the past.

The volume includes photographs of three Lamb portraits and one of East India House, an extensive index and bibliography, and acknowledgements of the help given by Professors Edmund Blunden, Carl Woodring and George Barnett and our own Hon. General Secretary. Lamb himself wrote to a friend in New South Wales "It is a sort of presumption to expect one's thoughts should live so far". Mr. Fukuda has given us additional proof how far and how long those thoughts have indeed lived.

Mr. Fukuda is himself a member of our Society and will be known to many members who met him on our visit to Canonbury Tower. His book should widen the circle of his Elian friends in both hemispheres who will read it with both pleasure and profit.

M. R. HUXSTEP.

**FUTURE MEETINGS—Monday, 16th November, 1964**—"Wordsworth's 'Peele Castle'" by Professor Geoffrey Tillotson, M.A., B.Litt. (President of the Society). Chairman—Mrs. Katherine Moore. Please note that our President's lecture takes place on the *third* Monday in November.

**Saturday, 5th December, 1964**—"Mary Lamb A Bi-Centenary Tribute" by Mr. Edmund Blunden, C.B.E., M.A., C.Lit. (Vice-President of the Society). Chairman—Mr. A. G. Clarke. Members should note that the December meeting takes place on the *first* Saturday in the month.

The November meeting will be held at Dr. Williams's Hall, 14 Gordon Square, W.C.1 at 6-30 p.m. The December meeting will be held at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, W.C.1 at 2-45 p.m.

**CHRISTMAS CARDS**—Orders for the Society's Christmas Cards received by mid-October have now been dispatched. Further orders will be accepted while supplies are available. It is hoped that members will support, to their utmost, this project of the Society. The card contains an interesting illustration of Christ's Hospital in Lamb's day with a "key" identifying the various buildings. Cards, with envelopes, cost 7/- per dozen, but no money should be sent with the order.

#### NEW MEMBERS

Miss L. Dean, 66 Warwick Road, S.W.5; Mrs. W. Foden, Flat 7, Brandon House, 3 Nottingham Place, W.1; Mr. K. R. Jones, 89 Woodland Drive, Watford, Herts.; Mrs. M. Leatherhead, 22 Meadway, Barnet, Herts.; Cav. Dr. G. J. Gorlich, Vienne, III/40 Arsenal, Objekt V, III Stiege III/8, Autriche.

#### DRAMATIC GROUP

An account of the Group's Nineteenth Birthday Celebration on 19th October at which the Guest of Honour was Miss Margaret Brown will be given in the next issue of the Bulletin.

**FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR**—Mr. F. E. Sandry (Vice-Chairman of the Society) has been elected a Trustee of the "Button Snap" Foundation.

\* \* \*  
The Guest of Honour at the 1965 Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration will be Dr. Ian Jack who has written so illuminatingly and sympathetically on Charles Lamb, and is the author, *inter alia*, of "English Literature, 1815-1832", published by the Clarendon Press.

\* \* \*  
At the October meeting was displayed an authentic signature of William Wordsworth which had been loaned by our member Mr. A. M. Davidson who found it in a book acquired from an antiquarian bookseller. Thank you Mr. Davidson for letting us see it.

\* \* \*  
Congratulations to our member Mr. William Kean Seymour on celebrating his 77th birthday recently. Mr. and Mrs. Seymour are actively connected with the Moor Park College at Farnham where lectures and discussions on Creative Writing and other literary studies regularly take place. Mr. Seymour is also Vice President of the Poetry Society.