

THE C.L.S.



BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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No. 190

(Thirty-first Year)

JULY, 1966

A VISIT TO THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE WITHOUT NEW-GATE

Saturday, June 11th

Members of the Society had the pleasure of a visit to The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, situated between Holborn Viaduct and Giltspur Street, on the afternoon of Saturday, June 11th. The party was welcomed in the 15th century porch of the Church by the Rector, the Rev. Canon Richard Tydeman, M.A., who for the rest of the afternoon described in memorable detail the characteristic features of the Church. Originally dedicated to St. Edmund the Martyr-King of East Anglia it took its present title at the time of the Crusades, and from it the Crusaders set out on their mission to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels. The benefice was granted by Rahere the Prior of St. Bartholomew to Hagno the Clerk in 1137. The original building has vanished but parts of the present tower, porch and outer walls date from 1450 when the Church was re-edified and rebuilt in the reign of Henry VI. The Great Fire of London in 1666 almost destroyed the Church but portions of the walls were left for Sir Christopher Wren to complete a restoration in the style of his day. It was the last Church

to be burnt and one of the first to be rebuilt though its bells are not now rung; these bells are the "Bells of Old Bailey" in the nursery rhyme. During the last World War little damage was caused except to windows.

Today the Church contains many features, architectural and literary, of absorbing interest, Wren rounded windows, Gothic arches, etc. Of especial interest to Elians is the font, the cover of which was formerly in Christ Church, Newgate, and would doubtless have been familiar to Charles Lamb. When Christ Church suffered severe bomb damage a postman from the nearby G.P.O. building dashed into the Church and rescued the wooden font cover from the flames, and it was stored away until about two years ago when the Rector heard of its existence and obtained it, a very handsome addition.

In the Regimental Chapel of the Royal Fusiliers are preserved the colours of the Regiment, one of 1790; there is a 15th century piscina; the end of a tunnel leading to the old Newgate prison which adjoined the Church; two carved oak pulpits of 1670 attributed to Grinling Gibbons (shewing on one an open pea-pod) originally a three-decker but separated in 1850. There is a Banner of Parish Clerks of London, first charter granted in 1227 and known from Norman times as the Guild of St. Nicholas.

His *Night-Thoughts* published in 1742-6 became very popular. This poem published in separate parts over a period of four years was made up of two weakly-joined parts: one being the first four "Nights" (2500 lines), and the other being the five later "Nights" (7500 lines). The distinction between the two parts was set forth by Young in a preface to the first four "Nights" but in a passage later excised on the advice of the printer. In it he said he had finished "one principal and important theme, the subduing of our Fear of Death", adding that it was "uncertain whether Providence, or inclination" would "permit him to go any further". One of his merry contemporaries greeted the announcement of his "Consolation", advertised as "Night the Ninth and Last" with the epigram:

After so many dismal *Nights* were past
'Twas just that *Consolation* came at last.

The first part of Young's poem is a moving portrayal of the human predicament in the face of death. It begins in impassioned disturbance "where three deaths are mentioned", and ends in eloquent resolution; it introduced the bereaved poet in an uncomprehending world and ranging from meaningless temporality to the consolation of friendly discourse, recalling also the gratification of innocence and on to the deliberate espousal of religious faith. In all a well-rounded poem.

What occasioned this poem? He himself insisted on the reality of the occasion. The three deaths were publicly identified with the deaths of his wife, her daughter by a previous marriage, and that of the daughter's husband. These deaths occurred, not within the three months mentioned in the poem, but over a period of four years. Yet in his view the deaths were not the "occasion" of the poem but rather the "plan". The *Night-Thoughts* really arose from Young's own close brush with death in 1740. His wife's death in January of that year; his unsuccessful courtship of a successor to her in the spring; his own critical illness at Tunbridge Wells in August together with the death of a close friend, and his slow recovery and homecoming in December.

The Duchess of Portland having heard of Young's illhealth invited him to her home at Bulstrode. Two visits followed and the Duchess tried to turn his thoughts to marriage with an eligible widow, Mary Pendarves, 40 years old (she later became the wife of an Irish clergyman) It was a difficult situation but he managed to sidetrack the intended marriage and retained the Duchess's patronage for the rest of his life.

After an absence of six months from Welwyn he returned to the Rectory. He had probably already begun writing the *Night-Thoughts*. The early eighteenth century was a period of Occasional Sermons, Tracts, Verses and Political Offerings, and he rose to the occasion with Ocean, an Ode, occasioned by *His Majesty's late Encouragement of the Sea Services*—it was not a successful effort. In the "Night Thoughts" he achieved success by turning to advantage a real occasion in his own life.

The *Night-Thoughts* were an artistic complement to his philosophy that "all real Happiness is from Commerce of Particulars", thus conveying a backward glance to Pope's cult of personality. Indeed Pope proclaimed the *Night-Thoughts* as "the best thing . . . these twenty years". Probably his main reason was to turn to poetry for relief.

It is perhaps arguable that had Young finished his *Night-Thoughts* at the end of the fourth "Night" the poem might have been more palatable to succeeding generations. Indeed ecclesiastical preferment might have resulted—perhaps a bishopric. Shenstone the poet did not however offer much hope to him as a poet, for on the appearance of the Fifth "Night" his prescription was "rhubarb in powder, with a little nutmeg grated amongst it" for "wind in a great measure".

MRS. K. MOORE (in the Chair) welcomed PROF. PETTIT, and remarked that Charles Lamb was no traveller apart from sojourning in his beloved Hertfordshire; he would have been gratified to meet a friend from overseas. Other lands and regions are not so remote today and our literature has accordingly benefitted. Professor Pettit is from the University of Colorado. He has published a bibliography of Young's *Night-Thoughts* and is at present engaged on an edition of Young's letters. We shall without doubt have a most interesting account of a man who spent most of his life in "Hearty, homely, loving Hertfordshire".

After a very interesting discussion MR. BARNARD voiced the thanks of the members to Prof. Pettit and Mrs. Moore for an afternoon enlightening and enjoyable.

The Elian Reading by MISS PIGROME was from Lamb's letter of 24th July 1833 to Edward Moxon—"For God's sake give Emma no more watches".

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NEW MEMBER

Mrs. F. Knight, 16 Southcote Road, Reading.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—The Annual General Meeting was held on 21st May at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, London, W.C.1. Mr. Arthur F. Bishop (Chairman of the Society) presided and there was an attendance of over forty members. The Elian Reading was given by Mrs. E. M. Birch who chose Charles Lamb's letter to Wordsworth dated 30th January, 1801.

The Annual Report and Financial Statement was unanimously approved. The Officers and Council were duly elected including the three new nominees who were Mr. C. R. Dewsnap, Mr. S. L. G. Huxstep and Mrs. M. Letherland.

The proposal that Monday evening meetings, owing to poor attendance, should be discontinued, and that all meetings during the Winter Session should be held on **Saturday afternoons** was unanimously approved.

After the business had been transacted the Dramatic Group presented "The London Charles Lamb Loved" devised and directed by Miss Margaret Brown. By means of excellent coloured prints (from Miss Brown's collection) and an epidiascope we, in the company of Charles Lamb and Thomas Hood, made a tour of London commencing at Islington. Among the places "visited" were Colebrook Row, Islington Church, St. Paul's, Fleet Street, St. Dunstan's, Strand, Regent Street, the Royal Parks, Thames side.

As the pictures appeared on the screen members read appropriate passages from the works of Charles Lamb, Thomas Hood and others. Interspersed were the "Cries of London" sung, unaccompanied, by Miss Florence Reeves.

Altogether a very enjoyable and successful experiment. Miss Brown was warmly thanked for all the trouble she had taken in the preparation of "The London Charles Lamb Loved", while appreciation was expressed to the readers and soloist for co-ordinating their contributions with the pictures.

DRAMATIC GROUP

On Friday, 21st October, 1966 the Group will be holding its **Twenty-first Birthday Celebrations** in the Hewitt-Murray Room at the Royal Scottish Corporation, Fleur-de-lis Court, Fetter Lane, London, E.C.4 when it is hoped every member will make a **special effort** to attend on this occasion.

On Monday, 20th June a large party of Group members and friends saw "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen at The Arts Theatre Club.

SUMMER PROGRAMME 1966—On Sunday, 11th September a whole day visit to Hastings and district, including the Church in the Wood at Hollington so beloved of Charles Lamb, is being planned if sufficient support is forthcoming. Members will travel by private coach and the cost will be about 25/- per head which will include coach fare, tea and miscellaneous tips, but excluding luncheon. Members wishing to participate in this visit should notify Miss F. S. Reeves, 33 Alma Street, London, N.W.5 immediately.

WINTER PROGRAMME 1966-1967—Next Winter's Programme is now being prepared and full details will be given in the next Bulletin. Members might like to know that the Session will open on Saturday, 8th October with an Address by our President (Professor Geoffrey Tillotson). Members are also reminded that all the Winter Lectures will be held on Saturday afternoons at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, W.C.1 at 2-45 p.m.

CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR 1966—The Society will be publishing Christmas Cards this year. It will be most helpful if members will send in their orders to Mr. E. G. Crowsley as soon as possible so that an adequate order can be placed with the printers.

OBITUARY—We deeply regret to report the death of Mr. Joseph Wilfrid Fildes on 17th May after a long illness courageously borne. Mr. Fildes was a Foundation Member having joined the Society early in 1935 and ever since he had taken a keen and practical interest in the Society as was evident from the many interesting and encouraging letters we were privileged to receive from him. On 23rd January, 1957 our Dramatic Group read one of his plays entitled "The Elegant Trifler", which dealt with an incident in the life of Horace Walpole, and that was a delightful occasion. The Society sends its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Ellen W. Fildes and her family.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1966—The Hon. Treasurer informs us that there are still some unpaid subscriptions for this year, and so we earnestly appeal to members who have not paid their dues for 1966 to take appropriate action at once, and thereby save the Society unnecessary postage expenditure. Remittances should be sent to Miss F. A. Parsons, 32 Carmel Court, Kings Drive, Wembley Park.