

THE C.L.S. BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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With two Supplements.

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OUR SUPPLEMENTS.

Copies of the Society's Ninth Annual Report and Financial Statement are circulated with this issue of the BULLETIN, as is also the Programme for 1944. This latter should be kept for reference, as it is not proposed to re-issue this information as a whole during the year.

An Elia's Petition.

By EDMUND BLUNDEN.

There are two matters connected with the editions of Charles Lamb which I have for some time found a little puzzling, and wish they might be mended while I can still read a book. One is, that in this age of extraordinary precise editorship, we have not yet an edition of the *Essays of Elia* which takes full account of his own manuscripts. It is true that these beautiful pieces of penmanship are now, since the sale of John Taylor's collection in 1865, widely scattered, but that is where the delight of the scholarly chase begins; and I am sure that the whereabouts of many of these precious relics is not hard to ascertain. From what I have seen in facsimiles of parts of them, they would yield a great many touches of the Elia style and particularity which the text as it passed through the stages of *London Magazine*, and similar printings, and then the republication in the volumes of 1823 and 1833, does not preserve in their purity. I cannot help thinking what a fine edition Mr. Buxton Forman, for instance, could give us, using the standards of fidelity to his originals which he employed over the letters of Keats, if he were moved to edit *Elia*. He ought to be! In writing thus, let it not be construed that I feel no proper gratitude to E. V. Lucas for his splendid and beloved edition; but what I have in mind is something even more comprehensive and accurate in the subtleties—that is, in the essence of *Elia*—than he has left us.

My next desideratum is a similarly correct edition of the *Poems of Charles Lamb*. Here, another question arises: the capturing of such pieces as have been left in obscure print, and of others which seem not to have been printed at all. Messrs. Sotheran's catalogue commemorating Lamb's centenary—can it be already almost ten years since?—sufficiently showed that there are such poems in existence. I dare say that some are specimens of his leisure-hour or complimentary rhyming, but those are not all. In general, the investigation of Lamb's manuscripts is required in this field also, since in verse as in prose he "is no mean artist." Where are the M.S. originals of some of his poetic masterpieces! Surely somebody prized them from the beginning, for they were always known to have a peculiar excellence: the "Farewell to Tobacco," "Going or Gone," "Old Familiar Faces," "Living Without God in the World," and many besides, the sonnets especially. The man who wrote on the Swans in Kensington Gardens as Lamb did, cannot be dismissed as a proseman with a knack of verse. He is an original poet, knowing well the privilege of the poetic imagination as distinct from prose, and working in a tradition, so far as he does, quite deliberately chosen and distinct from that preferred by his contemporaries. He deserves, if I am not deceived by old affection, all the care with which modern editing honours the poets, who after many years still speak with impassioned sincerity and individual phrase and measure.

Report of Recent Meetings

BLAKE AND THE LAMB CIRCLE

Mr. Sandry (in the Chair) referred to Mr. Keynes' experience and knowledge as a Bibliographer of Blake and other literary celebrities, and prophesied for the audience of October 9th an interesting and informative discourse.

Mr. Geoffrey Keynes, M.A., in opening, referred to the intense interest he always found in speculating on the reactions upon one and another: that is why it is worth while trying to string together the could not appreciate the merits of another: that is why it is worth while trying to string together the links connecting William Blake and Charles Lamb and his friends and acquaintances.

Blake even today is not easily understood, so it is not to be wondered at that his contemporaries were not fully seized with the merits of his work as poet and artist, or were even antagonistic to it.

Blake was a mystic (though one hesitates to give a meaning to that word), and he employed a complicated system of symbolism in his work. Material and spiritual forces were ever before him, and there is a gulf to cross before an easy understanding between Blake and Lamb and his circle can be reached.

Blake was not known to Lamb until 1805, when Blake held an exhibition of his pictures and produced a catalogue containing a spirited defence of Chaucer. He had high hopes that the exhibition would spread his fame and grant his work its requisite recognition. But his hopes were dashed. The only publicity came from an article by Leigh Hunt, who described Blake as a lunatic and the catalogue as the sign of a fevered brain. Crabb Robinson, that inveterate gossip and diarist, and who will flit in and out of the story, attended the show and recorded how interested he had been; so much so that he took four copies of the catalogue, one to send to Germany and one for Lamb. Lamb and Southey afterwards visited the exhibition. Crabb Robinson met Blake in 1825, but there is no record that Lamb ever met Blake. Lamb wrote to Bernard Barton on May 15th, 1824, describing Blake's work and praising his qualities as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age. (Mr. E. F. Lewis read this letter as a prologue to the afternoon's proceedings.)

The final recorded incident connecting Blake and Lamb was when C. Robinson called on Mrs. Blake after her husband's death and obtained two pictures for Lamb.

Southey was one who had but faint praise, if nothing worse, for Blake, but it was easy to ridicule his pictures if the difficulties under which they were produced were not properly appreciated. In 1811 there was a party at Lamb's house, and Southey who had been to see Blake was there, but C. Robinson recorded that he spoke with diffidence about Blake and that his work would probably be misunderstood. It may be, of course, that Blake had sensed some antipathy in Southey and deliberately did not wish to impress his visitor on the importance of art and how it should be understood.

C. Robinson also recorded Hazlitt's opinion on Blake's illustrations to "Night Thoughts," which was that he did not see much in the designs; Blake had no sense of the ludicrous and was ruined by vain struggles to get rid of what was on his brain. Although Hazlitt's acute mind had seized on some of Blake's weak points he did appreciate the merits of his work.

Mr. Keynes said it was quite clear that Blake had no sense of humour, a deep seriousness pervaded all his thoughts and actions. He attempted impossibilities, but all the same he frequently succeeded. His designs for "Paradise Lost," the Book of Job and Dante would have made him appreciated anywhere. Blake's conversation was uncompromising in its assumption of his position as a visionary and prophet.

Coleridge thought highly of "Songs of Innocence" and there is a record of a meeting between Coleridge and Blake in 1818. Coleridge, Blake and Flaxman were the forerunners of a better time for philosophy and art.

Blake and Coleridge in company seemed like congenial beings of another world; but no echo of this talk has come down to us. "The Ancient Mariner," of Coleridge bears a great similarity to Blake's designs to the Book of Job in its underlying spirit, and the two men in their different media were sharing the same experience.

Blake may have met Keats through Haydon, but the evidence cannot be found. Nor is there any proof of Wordsworth and Blake having met, but Wordsworth was pleased with some of Blake's poems and put him above Scott and Byron. Blake asked C. Robinson if Wordsworth was a Pagan, but all the same had great praise for him as the greatest poet of the age. In 1826, C. Robinson wrote Dorothy Wordsworth that he had read "Intimations to Immortality" to Blake, who was delighted with the poem. Eighteen months later Blake was dead.

After his death, Blake suffered a greater eclipse than Lamb or Wordsworth or Hazlitt.

Interspersed through Mr. Keynes' address were numerous quotations from Blake's writings. Messrs. Sandry, Connely, Kent, Hallam, Bishop and Miss Brown took part in the subsequent discussion, and Mr. Farrow concluded by expressing thanks to Mr. Keynes for the excellent and stimulating address, which he considered should be put into permanent form. A vote of thanks to Mr. Sandry was proposed by Mr. H. G. Smith.

SOMETHING NEW AT THE C.L.S.

H.G.S.

Miss Margaret Brown read the preliminary passage from Lamb at the memorable 3th November meeting; and she chose the letter to Coleridge, written in 1824, which reproaches him for his book borrowings; Becky had reported the loss of "Luster's Tables." Then our Chairman, Mr. Walter Farrow, introduced the "C.L.S. Brains Trust." He explained that it would follow, in the main, the lines of the inferior body which is run by the B.B.C., as, for example, in the completely impromptu nature of its performance: but would not slavishly follow it; there would not be, with us, any handing out of cheques for twenty guineas; nor had our Secretary, with all his blandishments, been able to induce a lady member to join the panel. After lamenting the absence of Mr. S. M. Rich—"Joad-Huxley-Campbell-in-one,"—Mr. Farrow, as question Master, called upon the Trustees, giving a deft verbal silhouette of each one as he took his place at the table: Mr. Ernest G. Crowsley, Mr. A. F. Bishop, Mr. F. E. Sandry and Mr. H. G. Smith. Promptly and efficiently, the team set to work on the questions, sent in by Miss Margaret Brown, Sir Frank Brown, Miss D. E. Slater, Miss A. H. Park, Mr. F. J. Froom, Mr. Walter Farrow, Miss C. Creighton, Miss R. Budd, Miss Daphne Smith, Mr. J. H. McNulty, and Mr. B. Tinddle (of Victoria, Australia).

Here follows the Catechism which, abbreviated as it must be here, cannot do justice to the doctrine, or to its expositors, as, with great aplomb, they flashed their lights of wit and wisdom on its facets.

- In his declared dislike of office and county life was Charles Lamb something of a poseur?
- Q. On the whole, No.
- A. What was the state of the Drama in Lamb's day—was it really "milk and water"?
- Q. Agreed that the plays written at the time were poor; the standard of acting high.
- A. Charles Lamb and Mary liked and helped young people when possible; yet they do not seem to have mixed very much with either Shelley or Keats, in spite of their youth. Why was this?
- Q. There is ample evidence of Lamb's liking for young people; but Keats was so very much his junior, and Shelley (in any case) held such revolutionary opinions that his not being associated with them is explicable on those grounds.
- A. Does Lamb's flight from reality—his living in the past with Shakespeare, etc.,—reduce his literary powers?
- Q. Joad might well say, it depends what you mean by reality; but the answer is No.
- A. Does the mass of detail connected with Lamb's life—the drinking, punning, etc.—divert an undue proportion of attention from his writings?
- Q. No. The more we know about a writer's life, the better for the understanding and appreciation of his work; moreover, the cultivation of the Elia spirit of friendliness and humour, as manifested in Lamb's life, is one of the objects of our Society.
- A. What steps would the Brains Trust suggest for increasing public interest in the life and work of Charles Lamb?
- Q. In all modesty, none other than those represented by the activities and influence of this Society; the appeal of Lamb cannot be extended by advertisement: it rests on personal predilection.
- A. In these days, are there any people like Charles Lamb?
- Q. In his genius, No; in his personal characteristics, Yes; thanks be.
- A. To what must we attribute Charles Lamb's almost total non-participation in public affairs or political opinion?
- Q. Honours to the questioner.
- A. Lamb says Lear is impossible to be represented on the stage, but Shakespeare wrote the play to be acted. Is Charles Lamb or Shakespeare right?
- Q. In one sense, Shakespeare; for there have been powerful stage representations of Lear: in another sense, Lamb; for Shakespeare's conception transcends the actual.
- A. Who was the bookseller (bookbinder) whose funeral Lamb attended?
- Q. Nobody knows.

To the discussion which followed the session, Mr. H. C. Chapman, Mr. F. V. Hallam and Mr. J. P. Collins made interesting contributions; and, afterwards, Miss A. H. Park proposed, and Sir Frank Brown seconded, a most acceptable vote of thanks to the Trustees; while appreciation of Mr. Farrow's achievement as Question Master was voiced by Miss D. E. Slater, to the equal pleasure of those present.

Your reporter found his fellow listeners resolved not to miss the next C.L.S. Brains Trust; but it will have to be very good indeed to equal this one. The happiness of the occasion was heightened by the meeting with several new members in the large and interested audience.

E.F.L.

QUAKERISM.

A reading by Mr. Hallam from "A Quaker's Meeting," introduced Mr. J. P. Fletcher's address on "Quakerism," on December 11th. Mr. E. G. Crowsley presided. Revealing that the preparation of the address had pleasurably refreshed his acquaintance with Elia's Essays, Mr. Fletcher made it clear that the reading of the Life of George Fox made a profound impression on Charles Lamb. At the Friend's Library was preserved the copy of Sewell's History of the Quakers, which Lamb read and endorsed in his characteristic handwriting.

With quotations from the Everyman edition of George Fox's journal; Mr. Fletcher traced the development of Fox's spiritual pilgrimage and how he "persuaded" men and women to his faith, eventually leading to the foundation of the Society of Friends, which was essentially a religious society, as membership was on the basis of experience of direct revelation of the Spirit of God, thus breaking away from all sectarian formalism. Moreover, a Quaker's Yea was Yea, and his Nay, Nay, without any qualification, and members of the Society did not enter into political controversies, except on the basis of moral right. Fox was convinced that Quakerism's best results would come from the work of individuals or small organisations on the margin of society; consequently its work has been out of proportion to its volume of members, a leaven to save the world from total destruction. Fox's encounter with Oliver Cromwell following his arrest, when after long discussion the Protector was not converted, but nevertheless ordered Fox's release, was graphically described by Mr. Fletcher.

Lamb also referred in his Essay to James Naylor, who was arrested for creating a disturbance in Bristol, and was saved from being sentenced to death by a margin of only eight votes. James Naylor was last seen alive in Hertford, and a few days later was found dead on the roadside at Huntingdon.

For about forty years after its foundation, the Society's members underwent many persecutions and trials, but the lamp was kept burning. Then followed a period of quietude, and it was with this period that Charles Lamb was acquainted.

"Get the writings of John Woolman by heart," wrote Elia; Woolman was a striking example of obedience to conscience and his writings are most clear and helpful in this connection. Furthermore, Woolman was more responsible than any other American Quaker for convincing his fellow countrymen of the evil of keeping slaves, and all but three Friends liberated their slaves. Yet it was not until 80 years later that the State declared the keeping of slaves to be a criminal offence.

Charles Lamb saw the merits of Quakerism, but was put off from perfect sympathy and full appreciation by wrong speaking on the part of those who merely ranted. His Essay opens with praise of Silence. Silence is only a means to an end and not an end in itself. Fox and Woolman knew the value of silence, but, nevertheless, put forth their main energies in action.

Messrs. Crowsley, Cowell, Stephen K. Jones, and Miss Park took part in the subsequent discussion, and Mr. Fletcher concluded with a description of an enjoyable visit he paid last August to Button Snap Cottage and partook of tea, rounding off a perfect day for him. He also invited the Society on some future date to the Friends' House, so that some of the Library's treasures could be shown. Mr. S. K. Jones proposed thanks to the lecturer, and Mr. F. V. Hallam to the Chairman.

H.G.S.

New Members. The Officers and Council heartily welcome the following new members—
 Mr. G. A. T. Allan, Christ's Hospital, Horsham.
 Mrs. F. S. Kendall, 14, Church Rise, Forest Hill, S.E. 23.
 Mr. F. Longworth, 37, Tavistock Square, W.C.1.
 Mr. J. H. McNulty, 107, Walsingham Gardens, Stoneleigh, Surrey.
 Mrs. C. F. Quatermass, 13, Coombe Wood Hill, Purley.
 Mr. H. J. Quatermass, 13, Coombe Wood Hill, Purley.
 Mrs. Stevens, 91, Stetson Way Waban, Mass., U.S.A.

Gifts to the Society's Collection of Eliana:—

From Mr. E. G. Crowsley,
 Britain against Napoleon—Carola Oman (1943).
 Lamb's Barbara S—L. E. Holman (1935).

From Walter Farrow.
 Charles and Mary Lamb in hearty, homely, loving Hertfordshire.—W. Gravson (1943).
 Coloured etching of Fountain Court, Temple.

The Quarter's Meetings.

15th January. Annual General Meeting, followed by a Members' meeting, when papers will be given on "Some Favourite Books of Charles Lamb." (Chairman: Walter Farrow.)

5th February. See special announcement below.

11th March. "Christ's Hospital" G. A. T. Allan. (Chairman: Harold Edwards).

All meetings will be held at The Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Great Russell Street, W.C.1., and will commence at 2-45 p.m. precisely.

Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration. This Year's Birthday Celebration will be held in the Lounge of the Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Gt. Russell Street, W.C.1., on Saturday, 5th February, at 2-45 p.m., for 3 o'clock. The Guest of Honour will be Mr. James Agate, who will propose "The Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb." The meeting will be followed by tea. Will members kindly notify the hon. secretary immediately if they intend to be present. It is hoped that members will make every effort to attend this important meeting. Charge for tea, etc., 2s.

Subscriptions. Subscriptions for 1944 are now due, and should be remitted to the hon. treasurer, Mr. E. F. Lewis, 12, Christchurch Gardens, Epsom, as soon as possible.

Congratulations to the President: A letter signed by the Officers on behalf of the Society was sent to the President in November, congratulating him on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

CURRENT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES LAMB. FROM FEBRUARY 1st, 1935 (cont.)

(a) **Books and Pamphlets.**

Born under Saturn / A Biography of / William Hazlitt / by / Catherine Macdonald Maclean / Some-time Edmonstone-Aytoun Fellow of and Lecturer / in English in the University of Edinburgh / Collins Publishers / 48, Pall Mall, London / 1943 // Price, 21s.
 Pp. 608: illustrated. 91 references to the Lambs.

(c) **Reports of Lectures and Meetings.**

Enfield's Famous Men and Women: Charles and Mary Cowden Clark (sic) signed M.O. (*Enfield Gazette and Observer*: 24.9.1943).

(d) **Signed Reviews.**

PORTRAIT OF HAZLITT, by Edward Shanks (*Sunday Times*: 3.10.1943).
 THE GREATEST OF ALL CRITICS, by James Agate (*Express*: 10.10.1943).
 HAZLITT AND HIGHBROWS, by Desmond MacCarthy (*Sunday Times*: 10.10.1943).
 HAZLITT, THE MAN AND HIS WORK, by H. W. Dowling (*Western Mail*: 26.10.1943).
 by Robert Lynd (*News-Chronicle*: 11.10.1943).

(e) **Unsigned Reviews.**

HAZLITT WITH HIS DOG. An Author goes into Battle (*Times Literary Supplement*: 6.11.1943).
 *All in (d) and (e) of "Born under Saturn," by C. M. Maclean.

(f) **Letters to the Press.**

The Charles Lamb Society, from E. G. Crowsley to I. H. Harris (*Transvaal Educational News*: July, 1943).

(g) **Illustrations.**

HOOK & I: Fancy portrait of Lamb illustrating an advertisement (*Good House-Keeping*: Sept. 1943).

(h) **Short Notes.**

CHARLES LAMB AND HIS DOG (*Times*: 26.3.1935).
 *From *The Times* of 1835. About Dash, from the *Court Magazine*.
 THE JOYS OF ROAST PIG, by Charles Lamb (*Sunday Chronicle*: 26.9.1943).
 *A Little Piece of Peace—extract only.

WHERE LAMB WORSHIPPED (*Daily Telegraph*: 20.10.1943).

LAMB AND CROMWELL, extract from Barry Cornwall (*Manchester Guardian*: 6.3.1943).

(j) **Sales Announcements.**

Two autograph letters of Lamb to Taylor and Hessey, c. 1819, concerning a proposed alteration at the end of "my paper on witches." Price: £40. *Not in E.V.L.
 *No. 451, Francis Edwards, Ltd. October, 1943.

The Editor will be grateful for items of news of items for inclusion in this Bibliography. The co-operation of overseas members is especially solicited. Cuttings should be addressed to Mr. S. M. Rich, 67, Cricklade Avenue, London, S. W. 2.