

# THE C.L.S. BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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JULY, 1944

## Charles Lamb and the Old Bookstalls.

By AN OCTOGENARIAN *Bouquineur*.

(concluded)

In the Essay, "*Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*," Lamb concludes with a description of some of the frequenters of the old bookstalls, and relates that amusing story of Martin Burney's young days. Martin was getting through two volumes of "*Clarissa*" by daily instalments at a bookstall, when the owner damped his laudable ambition by asking him whether he intended to buy the book. Mary Lamb's charming poem on a poor boy and a churlish bookstall owner, forms a fitting *envoi* to the essay.

In "*The Superannuated Man*," the narrator complains that he has "no bookstalls to deliciously idle over;" but later he has to "digress into Soho to explore a bookstall," not with the ardour of his old working days, for he confesses he has been "thirty years a collector. There is nothing strange or new in it." Did Lamb at this time fear that the years were drawing nigh when, in the words of Ecclesiastes, he would say, "I have no pleasure in them?"

In the Essay on "*The Months*," written for his friend Hone's "Every Day Book," we have a glimpse of an old stall at a half book, half iron shop, in an alley leading from Wardour Street to Soho Square, where Lamb lights upon a ragged duodecimo which had been the strange light of his infancy, and which he had lost sight of for more than forty years. Lamb gives an interesting account of this little book, entitled "The Queen-like Closet or Rich Cabinet." His description of the dirty little vendor, whom he calls "a little squab duodecimo character," is a fascinating sketch.

Referring to Wardour Street, Leigh Hunt in "The Town" writes: "Charles Lamb was fond of this street. I have heard him expatiate on the pleasure of strolling up Wardour street on a summer's day." Moxon says that Lamb "preferred Wardour Street to Fields that were Elysian." The street is no longer the happy hunting ground for bookstalls, nor for the parvenu in search of portraits of his ancestors.

In that gem of an essay, "*Old China*," we are introduced to old Barker of Covent Garden of whom Lamb bought Beaumont and Fletcher in folio. I have been unsuccessful in finding anything concerning this old bookseller, beyond that his shop was at 19, Great Russell Street. There were a number of booksellers in this street at the beginning of the last century; but now it is an adjunct of Covent Garden market.

When Lamb went to Paris, it was "the mile and a half of print shops and bookstalls," along what he called "the Borough side of the Seine," which attracted him. He mournfully cries, "If the latter were but English!" John Hollingshead, on the authority of his great-aunt, who was Mary Lamb's nurse in Paris, relates that "in Paris, Lamb

disappeared sometimes all day, having lived mostly on the river quays on the Odeon side of the Seine, rummaging the bookstalls and print shops." Ah! those bookstalls along the Seine! What pleasant memories they evoke; halcyon days spent sauntering from one *bouquiniste* to another! The *bouquiniste* of the Paris Quais knows his *métier*, and will help the real lover of books in his quest.

Ere the curtain falls I would like to mention that gracious sonnet:—"O lift with reverent hand that tarnished flower," which was inspired by Lamb's discovery of a quarto volume of 1630, of the "Lives of the Saints," in a bookshop in Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields (later known as Sardinia Street). He found carefully inserted in one of the leaves, a painted flower, seemingly co-eval with the book itself. Later on he discovered that the flower opened in the middle, disclosing what he describes as "a very humble draught of St. Anne, with the Virgin and Child, doubtless the performance of some poor but pious Catholic, whose meditations it assisted." Whenever I read the Sonnet, I hear floating on the air, a gentle Pax Vobiscum!

My Elian sauntering is finished. May the old bookstalls and second-hand print and book shops remain a feature of London Streets! May there still be some tranquil backwaters behind the turbulent stream of London's traffic, where the book-hunter is not jostled by passers-by. May those stalls and shops where the impalpable ghosts of former owners of the books hover around the volumes they loved long ago, be long with us, and "trade's unfeeling train," and "the wild vicissitudes of taste," leave them for ever undisturbed!

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## REPORTS OF RECENT MEETINGS.\*

### THOMAS BARNES.

On April 15th Mr. Derek Hudson delivered a most interesting and informative address on "Thomas Barnes, Editor of the Times." Mr. Hudson spoke with authority, as he is the author of a recent biography of Barnes, published by the Cambridge University Press, which was most favourably reviewed. Mr. J. P. Collins presided, and (as usual), treated the meeting to a brilliant stream of witty reminiscence of journals and journalism of a later time. The reading from Lamb, given by Miss Annette H. Park, consisted of an extract from his criticism of King Lear, and Miss M. Brown, Messrs. W. Farrow, J. H. McNulty, A. Lloyd Jones, W. Kent, E. F. Lewis and S. M. Rich, took part in the animated discussion. Sir Frank Brown expressed the meeting's gratitude to Mr. Hudson for his notable address, and the vote of thanks to Mr. Collins was moved by Mr. L. Raymond. Photostat enlargements of an obituary notice of Lamb—probably by Barnes,—which appeared in the *Times*, were presented to members of the audience by Mr. Hudson.

### EDWARD VERRALL LUCAS.

Miss Margaret Brown presided at the May meeting, held on 13th, at which Mr. H. G. Smith read his paper on "E. V. Lucas as Essayist." The preliminary reading was given by Mrs. C. Badcock. The proceedings were opened by Mr. W. Farrow, as Chairman of the Council, expressing the Society's sense of loss at the death on the previous day of our President. His tribute is given elsewhere in this issue. Mr. Smith's address was well worthy of its subject; and Lamb's greatest Editor was presented in a manner that revealed the speaker's deep admiration of E.V.L. His paper, (a copy of which is available in the Society's archives), was much enjoyed. Miss A. F. Wedd, and Messrs. J. P. Collins, J. H. McNulty, L. Raymond and E. C. Thomas took part in the discussion. Mr. Harold Edwards thanked Mr. Smith for his appreciative address on behalf of the meeting, and a vote of thanks to the Chairman was adopted at the instance of Miss A. H. Park.

### ROBERT SOUTHEY.

Mr. H. W. Howe, M.A., was the speaker on 10th June. He delighted the Society with his felicitous address on "The Lighter Side of Robert Southey." Our Chairman for the occasion was that veteran Elian, Dr. Hubert J. Norman. Miss Florence Reeves gave the introductory reading from Lamb, and the following members contributed observations on Mr. Howe's enjoyable paper: Messrs. Walter Farrow, A. Lloyd Jones, J. H. McNulty, J. Lewis May, F. G. Pearce and E. G. Crowsley. The Speaker and Chairman were cordially thanked for a most enjoyable afternoon.

\*These reports would have been less 'scrappy,' and more worthy of the excellent meetings they record had the doodle-bugs refrained from damaging the home of the Editor on two recent occasions. Other shortcomings of this issue of the Bulletin are attributable to the same cause.

## OBITUARY.

*"Deaths over-set me, and put me out long after the recent grief."*

SIR ARTHUR THOMAS QUILLER-COUCH (1863-1944)

We record with deep regret the death on May 12th, 1944, of Sir A. T. Quiller Couch (Q), President of this Society. His remarkable address in proposing the Toast to the "Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb," on the occasion of our first Birthday Celebration on February 10th, 1936, will be long remembered by those who were present, for its charm, perception and humour. An abstract of the speech appeared in No. 9 of the *Bulletin*. Though prevented by distance and advancing years from attending our meetings, his interest in our progress was maintained; and to our issue for January, 1940 (No. 45) he contributed a short poem on Lamb.

On the occasion of 'Q's' 80th birthday, a letter of congratulation signed by the Officers on behalf of the Society was sent to him. Our Chairman, (Mr. W. Farrow), referred to our loss at a meeting held on the day following the President's death in the following terms: "The news of the death yesterday of our beloved President has called forth manifold expressions of regret in the Press and a notable tribute on the Radio. But I feel that we should not be doing justice to the feelings which are uppermost in our hearts, if we did not, as our first business to-day, offer a tribute to his memory as our own special mark of reverence and affection. It would be out of place to attempt to-day any appraisal of Sir Arthur's services to English literature or to this Society. It is sufficient at this moment to say that both the country and this Society are the poorer by his death. England has lost in him a man of letters who perhaps did more than any other to unlock to countless readers the treasure-house of English literature; and we ourselves have lost in him a President whose name alone served to give our Society a prestige that no other name would have gained us. Our President, full of years and honours, has gone from our midst, and we who remain and who owe so much to him may be sure that there is no tribute which would have been more welcome to him than one which, while expressing our admiration and gratitude also embodies our resolve to continue the good work to which Sir Arthur gave his benediction when he became our first President." A resolution of sympathy adopted at the meeting was communicated to Lady Quiller-Couch.

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### Production of "Charles and Mary."

"The New Players" of the City Literary Institute, Stukeley Street, Drury Lane, W.C.2. will present in the Institute Theatre on Saturday, 22nd July, Miss Joan Temple's famous play about the Lambs. It is anticipated that our members will be eager to see this production. Tickets, (2/6 and 1/6), are obtainable from Mr. E. G. Crowsley, who will notify members of time of the performance and ways of reaching the Institute.

### 1944 Subscriptions.

Half the year has passed; but some subscriptions, due on January 1st, have not yet reached our Treasurer. Will those who have not paid please remit them to Mr. E. F. Lewis, 12, Christchurch Gardens, Epsom, Surrey.

### The Quarter's Meetings.

8th July. "Romance of Sadler's Wells," W. G. Browne. (Chairman: F. V. Hallam).

12th August. No meeting.

9th September. "Why I Admire Charles Lamb." Dr. Ranjee G. Shahani. (Chairman: S. M. Rich).

### 1945 Programme.

The Hon. Secretary will welcome suggestions for the 1945 Programme, including subjects and lecturers.

### Charles Lamb and the Classics.

A year ago in these columns we quoted the opinion of a learned Oxford Professor that Lamb has a deservedly high place among the Pioneers of Scientific Discovery. To-day a Cambridge professor of not less fame gives Lamb front rank among those whose thoughts have run on the lines of classical lore and tradition. In his book "The Challenge of the Greek," Dr. T. R. Glover quoted Lamb more often (with two exceptions) than the many others whom he cites for analogies with the outstanding exponents of the Greek genius. What would Lamb have thought (and said) had he been told in 1830, that in 1944, his writings and opinions would be lavishly invoked to furnish the analogies and support the views of one of the greatest Greek scholars that Cambridge has produced since the days of Bentley and Porson?—W.F.

### Gifts.

The Hon. Librarian gratefully acknowledges the following additions to the Society's Collection of Eliana:—

From MR. S. AUSTEN—"Christ's Hospital—Recollections of Charles Lamb, S. T. Coleridge and Leigh Hunt," ed. by R. Brimley Johnson, (1896).  
"Christ's Hospital," by G. A. T. Allen, (1937).  
From MISS C. CREIGHTON—"Elia"—Supplement to John o'London's Weekly—December 1934.  
From MR. E. G. CROWSLEY—"The Charles Lamb Day Book," compiled by E. V. Lucas.  
"The Book of the Ranks and Dignities of British Society"—attributed to Charles Lamb.  
The years of Endurance (1783-1802) by A. Bryant.  
The Threshold of the Victorian Age,—G. Milner, (1934).  
From MISS A. FERRARO—"Lloyds 1928"—Description of the New Building.  
From MR. H. W. HOWE—"The Lighter Side of Robert Southey, (Typescript of lecture delivered on the 10th June, 1944).  
From MR. DEREK HUDSON—Reproduction of the Obituary Notice of Charles Lamb which appeared in the "Times."  
From MR. H. G. SMITH—"E. V. Lucas as Essayist," (Typescript of lecture delivered on the 13th May, 1944).

### New Members.

We heartily welcome the following, and hope they will share fully in the Society's activities:—

Mr. W. H. Bishop, 49, Shaftesbury Avenue, Southampton. Mr. K. A. Broadshaw, 95, Horn-castle Road, Lee, S.E.12. Mr. S. T. Collyer, 200, Creighton Avenue, N.2. Miss E. M. Davies, 75, Honeybrook Road, Balham, S.W.12. L/Cpl. Fountain. Prof. G. McLean Harper, A.M., Ph.D., 36, Mercer Street, Princeton, New Jersey. Mr. R. G. B. Henville, 97, Harberton Road, N.19. Mr. J. M. Hope, Giffnock House, Helensburgh. Mr. C. L. Ives, Holly House, Old Whittington, Chesterfield. Mrs. Dorothy Kilgour (Dorothy Hewlett), 11, West End Avenue, Pinner. Mr. Norman Kilgour, 11, West End Avenue, Pinner. Miss E. C. McDonald, 96, Durham Road, East Finchley, N.2. Mr. P. J. McLoughlin, Jun., Main Street, Castle Wellan, Co. Down. Mrs. M. Milton, 158, Kenning-ton Road, S.E.1. Mr. E. Nicholls, 4, Crane Court, Fleet Street, E.C.4. Mrs. J. Plater, Queens-berry Court Hotel, Queensberry Place, S.W.7. Miss D. M. Robson, 40, Roundways, West End Road, Ruislip. Mr. L. Raymond, 34, Queen's Gardens, Hyde Park, W.2. Mr. B. J. Saunders, 11, Walton Road, Sidcup. Dr. E. Smith, King's House, The Close, Salisbury. Miss E. H. Stanley, 810, 19 Avenue W., Calgary Alberta. Mr. L. A. G. Strong, Salterns, Eashing, Nr. Godalming. Major L. R. Swinhoe, 25, St. Margaret's Road, Oxford. Mr. H. H. Thomas, 35, Ingestre Flats, Regent Street, W.1. Mr. E. M. W. Tillyard, O.B.E., Litt.D., Jesus College, Cambridge. Miss A. F. Wedd, 58, Kensington Park Road, W.11. Miss P. Young, 155, Westcombe Hill, S.E.23.

### An Elian Clerihew.

From the *New Statesman*, (15-1-1944), a prize-winning entry by F.C.C. in a competition of cleri-hews on dishes:—

"I'd like a Roast Suckling,"  
Said Charles Lamb, chuckling,  
"But I'm sadly afraid  
That my fire insurance premium isn't paid!"

### A Dickens Letter.

On August 13th., 1866, Charles Dickens addressed the following letter to Barry Cornwall from Gad's Hill Place.

My dear Proctor,

I have read your biography of Charles Lamb with inexpressible pleasure and interest. I do not think it possible to tell a pathetic story with a more unaffected and manly tenderness. And as to the force and vigour of the style, if I did not know you I should have made sure that there was a printer's error in the opening of your introduction, and that the word 'seventy' occupied the place of 'forty.' Let me, my dear friend, most heartily congratulate you on your achievement. It is not an ordinary triumph to do such justice to the memory of such a man. And I venture to add that the fresh spirit with which you have done it, impresses me as being perfectly wonderful.

Ever affectionately yours.

\*"Charles Lamb: A Memoir," by Barry Cornwall, first appeared in the summer of 1866.

### Minced Veal or Prem.

Charles Lamb once wrote: "I shrink instinctively from one who professes to like minced veal:" but if Lamb were living to-day he would know that there are worse things than minced veal. "Coleridge," wrote Lamb, in another sentence, "holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who re-fuses apple dumplings." But has anyone ever refused an apple dumpling? Not, I am sure, in the year 1943.

Probably in the near future the Americans will become purer-minded and learn not to refuse saddle of mutton. They will discover that mutton is not only a food but a luxury, like onions and garlic and goat's milk cheese. Let them persevere and they will find in time that saddle of mutton is quite eatable—almost as good, in fact, as prem or spam. In any case they will not notice its flavour if they take plenty of red currant jelly.

ROBERT LYND, in 'The News Chronicle,' (12-6-1943).