

THE C.L.S. BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

President: LORD DAVID CECIL.
Vice-Presidents: EDMUND BLUNDEN and J. LEWIS MAY.
Chairman: WALTER FARROW. Vice-Chairman: S. M. RICH (Editor). Treasurer: E. F. LEWIS.
Hon. Secretary: E. G. CROWSLEY, Tavistock Residential Club, 37, Tavistock Sq., W.C.1.
Hon. Librarian: F. E. SANDRY, Central Library, Fore St., Edmonton, N.9.

No. 05 (Tenth Year)

WITH SUPPLEMENT.

JANUARY, 1945

SUPPLEMENT TO No. 65.

With this issue of THE BULLETIN members should receive a copy of the Tenth Annual Report, to be presented at the meeting on January 13th, 1945.

1935-1945. A Retrospect.

By WALTER FARROW (Chairman of Council, C.L.S.).

Ten years ago there was founded in this City of London a Society dedicated to the gospel and memory of St. Charles, and the Elian spirit of friendliness. At its inception a doubting Thomas expressed misgivings as to the need for such a Society and prophesied a short life for it. To-day none will question either its usefulness or its prospects of attaining a ripe old age. For alike in members, in activity and in influence it has each year gone from strength to strength until it now occupies a foremost place among the many Literary Associations which meet in this great Metropolis.

Few of those present at the Society's birth dreamed of a greater membership than 100, but this happy band to-day totals well over 300, and that number is still growing. The abounding vitality of our Society is even more remarkable. Modestly commencing its work with a course of Lectures on the Life and Writings of Charles Lamb, it has since branched out in many directions devoted to the welfare of its members or to spreading the influence of the man whose name our Society bears. We will allude to a few of these.

At our ordinary or special meetings men and women of high distinction in literature have addressed us. We have but to mention Viscount Finlay, Lord Plender, Sir William Foster, Miss Marjorie Bowen, Messrs. Frank Swinnerton, James Agate, Edmund Blunden, J. Lewis May, and Professor Boas to show that our claim of kinship with the spirit of Elia is shared by not a few whose intellectual attainments are universally recognised.

No single factor in our work has proved of greater importance than our publication, THE C.L.S. BULLETIN. Its pages have contained numerous articles of keen critical insight or fine literary grace upon many Elian subjects. Of scarcely less service is the contact it steadily maintains with our Provincial and Overseas members, whereby a strong bond of union has been forged between Elians living as far asunder as London is from Oklahoma, or the Transvaal from New Zealand.

The earlier years of our Society recall happy memories of pilgrimages to the homes and haunts of Charles Lamb. Perhaps the most notable of these was that paid to Christ's Hospital in 1939, when our first President, the late Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, unveiled the beautiful Memorial Plaque of Lamb, presented to his old School by our Society, the gift being made possible by the generosity and artistic skill of a member who bears the honoured name of Coleridge.

Space forbids allusion to the many other activities of our Society, such as its invaluable collection of Eliana now in Edmonton Library. But one exception to this limitation must be made. The stimulation of the Elian spirit of friendliness is an integral part of our Society's purpose, and we venture to claim that this has been faithfully fulfilled. Meetings, Pilgrimages and Writings, valuable as they are, have been transcended by the gain of those genial and abiding friendships which unite us all to each and each to all.

No Society can live on its past achievements, however notable these may be. Conscious of this, our Society has before it a programme of valuable developments and wider activities in the post-war era. So, while taking pride in, and giving thanks for, whatever has so far been accomplished, it is for us to dedicate ourselves anew to the task that lies before us, so that the inspiration that we ourselves have found in the life and work of St. Charles shall be shared in ever wider circles by those who love what is best in literature and best in life.

OUR NEW PRESIDENT

LORD DAVID CECIL has already won a place in the front rank of contemporary critics and biographers. Whether telling the life story of William Cowper, or charting the early career of Henry Lamb (who became Lord Melbourne), or assessing the achievements of the major Victorian novelists, or restoring Thomas Hardy to the company of the immortals, he shows (as James Agate has said), "the four qualities which go to make a great critic." He is perceptive, wise, witty and just.

Cecil is now busy on a book of imaginative reconstruction of two or three or four "private lives." Dealing with real people, informed with research and vital with understanding of human nature, this may well prove to be the most remarkable creation to date of a remarkable writer.

David Cecil is a Fellow of New College, Oxford, a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery and a member of one of the most prominent and talented of English families. THE BULLETIN, on behalf of the Charles Lamb Society, extends a very warm welcome to its new President.

REPORTS OF RECENT MEETINGS

A Great Editor of Lamb.

Mr. E. F. Lewis presided at the October meeting, at which Mr. Frank Swinnerton gave a notable address on "William Macdonald, Brave and Buoyant Spirit." The meeting opened by a reading of the concluding sonnet from S. M. Rich's "*Elia Miscellany*," given by Mrs. W. Farrow. Mr. Swinnerton's talk was a tribute, long overdue, to one of the greatest editors of Lamb. It contained little of the biographical detail usually looked for, but much detail of a more important kind, calculated to re-create for to-day Macdonald's fine personality. Through Mr. Swinnerton's eyes the audience was helped to see the wonderfully attractive mind that dwelt in Macdonald's tiny crippled body; and by quotations from the preface to his great 12 vol. edition of Lamb he was shown as a writer confident, aggressive, anti-conventional, but stimulating, pungent and trenchant in style. He could embrace a whole subject, and seize its essence with a power far beyond that of the mere dry-as-dust scholar. By such uncanny insight he had actually anticipated the discovery of Lamb's proposal to Fanny Kelly, for he recognised the personal implications in reviews of three of her performances. Further evidence of Macdonald's constructive criticisms could be seen in his comparison of the literary allusions in Lamb's early letters with those of later date, showing the stages by which he became a neo-Elizabethan. He was that rare phenomenon, an editor of imagination. No memoir of Lamb had made the man so comprehensible and so lovable as Macdonald's. Mr. Swinnerton also spoke of his own personal contacts with Macdonald and of the origins and copyright adventures of the great edition edited by him for Dent. One of the most interesting papers given to the Society was the verdict of those who joined in the discussion (Messrs. W. Farrow, E. J. Finch and J. H. McNulty), and of Mr. A. F. Bishop, who voiced the gratitude of the meeting to Mr. Swinnerton. A vote of thanks to the Chairman, proposed by Mr. H. G. Smith, concluded the proceedings.

Lamb's Poetical Career.

Miss Margaret Brown opened the proceedings at the November meeting by reading Lamb's sonnet on his name. The occasion was notable, as members were to hear an address from Mr. Edmund Blunden on "Charles Lamb's Poetical Career." The Chairman, Mr. A. F. Bishop, welcomed our Vice-President in his characteristically happy manner; the large audience listened with rapt attention to one of our foremost living poets while he appraised expertly, with lavish and apt quotation, the poetical career of Lamb. As the title suggests, Lamb's poems were considered chronologically, from the early sonnets and blank verse pieces, through verse produced in the period of his maturity, children's poems, album verses, down to "Satan in Search of a Wife," that "discordant" "long poem with comic genius sustaining it—a capricious fantasy with something of the quality of the Fools of Shakespeare deepening its tones." Thus, Mr. Blunden took the meeting through Lamb's poetry, concluding by hailing him as one of that race of poets who are "destined to take what comes, to hear from time to time a music in the air which does not necessarily follow on the music last heard, and to set it down without much question about the unity and continuity of a large moralisation." Through the kindness of Mr. H. G. Smith, a typescript of the address is available from the Society's Librarian. Miss Margaret Brown, and Messrs. S. K. Jones, J. P. Collins, W. Kent took part in the discussion, and a most pleasant occasion was crowned by cordial thanks to Mr. Blunden, proposed by Mr. E. G. Crowsley, and to the Chairman.

New Members.

On behalf of the Officers and Council, THE BULLETIN offers a hearty welcome to the following new members:—Mr. S. J. Bacon, 11, Elm Court, Nether Street, N.3; Mrs. H. M. Banks, 3, Queenborough Gardens, Ilford; Mr. and Mrs. V. Bridges, 6, Middleton Road, N.W.11; Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Brooks, Green Gables, Meluden Road, Prestatyn; Mr. R. Clements, c/o Toynbee Hall, 28, Commercial Street, E.1; Mr. A. W. Crichton and Mrs. R. E. Crichton, 45, Endymion Road, Hatfield; Mrs. K. Ford, 147, Beaconsfield Road, Enfield; Miss G. Hardwick, 23, Weston Way, Northampton; Miss G. Lineker, 70, Alexandra Crescent, Bromley; Sir Edward Marsh, K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G., Dene House, Yarnell's Hill, Oxford; Miss M. E. A. Morgan, 149, Glenwood Gardens, Ilford; Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Powys (Elizabeth Myers), Priestlands Cottage, Sherborne; Miss H. Singh, 15, The Avenue, N.W.6; Mr. H. Spooner, 21, Musgrave Crescent, S.W.6; Mrs. P. M. G. Stephens, 57, Laura Grove, Paignton; Miss W. L. Thoburn, 70, Alexandra Crescent, Bromley.

C.L.S. BRAINS TRUST, DECEMBER 9th, 1944

- The second meeting at which the C.L.S. Brains Trust officiated, with Mr. W. Farrow as Question Master, was opened by Miss Park, who contributed a reading from "The Old and New Schoolmaster." The Brains Trust on this occasion consisted of: Mrs. Oglethorpe, Miss Margaret Brown, Mr. J. P. Collins and Mr. S. M. Rich. The rules of the game were as before, and, with a witty commentary on each member, Mr. Farrow started the Trust on its task of replying to the questions received.
- Q. Are there comparable instances in English literary history to the East India Company's generosity to Charles Lamb? (Mrs. Farrow.)
- A. The pension granted was for faithful service and based on a recognised scale; not necessarily generous, but the value of the £ was greater then than now. Another instance was Thomas Love Peacock, also of the India House.
- Q. Which is the best book for study as introduction to Lamb's life and works? (Mrs. Farrow.)
- A. A wealth of material available; the shorter studies are preferable, viz., those of Flora Masson, Orlo Williams, Edmund Blunden: excellent is the "Memoir" by Barry Cornwall, who knew Lamb intimately. Talfourd's work was restricted by circumstances relative to Mary Lamb.
- Q. Should Charles Lamb's works be read in schools? (E. Blunden.)
- A. (a) Yes, provided the teacher sympathetically introduces them, otherwise later comes a feeling of dislike for Lamb. Poetry for Children, Adventures of Ulysses, and Tales from Shakespeare are quite suitable for young children; but (b) pupils should NOT BE EXAMINED in Lamb.
- Q. How can the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the C.L.S. Society best be celebrated next February? (E. G. Crowsley.)
- A. Two ways suggested: all previous Guests of Honour still living to be invited to take part in the Celebration; and, secondly, endeavour to make Lamb better known by a display of books.
- Q. A recent reviewer referred to Hazlitt's "unfortunate friendship with the inhuman Lamb." What is thought of this statement? (A. F. Bishop.)
- A. It would have been nearer truth to say "superhuman" Lamb; particularly as Hazlitt received from Lamb more tokens of friendship than from anyone else. Lamb was almost the only one of his friends to visit him on his deathbed; he remunerated his nurse, and went to his funeral.
- Q. Would Charles Lamb have been a conscientious objector had he been living to-day? (Miss Smith.)
- A. Certainly not; whilst his writings reveal nothing of his views on military service, his intimate friends included Admiral Burney and Wordsworth's brother, also a naval officer.
- Q. The Lamb circle included many persons with tragic lives; was this due to their artistic temperaments or to the age in which they lived? (Miss D. E. Slater.)
- A. Lamb chose his friends from some oddity in their characters; some were normal and some had an abnormality about them, often due to their own actions, but the proportion of the latter was small compared with the former. Whilst we, in retrospect, may regard some lives as tragic, they themselves were probably quite happy and without knowledge of anything "tragic."
- Q. What was the main quality in Charles Lamb's character which endeared him to his friends and associates? (H. G. Smith.)
- A. More than one quality; he was made up of friendliness, lack of pedantry and personal pride, possessing much humour, ready generosity, and a rare spirit of tolerance in all things. Lamb was the focal point for many differing characters, and at his "Wednesday" evenings he acted as the "yeast" of the meeting.
- Q. Was Charles Lamb's stammer a disability or a gain? (J. P. Collins.)
- A. Probably he converted his disability into an asset to enliven his audience and give point to his remarks. Had he not stammered at Christ's he might have proceeded "Grecian" and gone to Oxford or Cambridge and taken Holy Orders, with a possibility that "Elia" would never have been born.
- Q. Which period of Charles Lamb's life was his happiest? (J. P. Collins.)
- A. Very difficult to assess; even the person concerned often could not say, and retrospective views are rarely reliable. With our present knowledge of Lamb's life his early manhood was probably least happy, containing as it did the tragedy of his mother's death and his own renunciation of wife and children to ensure Mary's future welfare. His middle period was probably his happiest time, with hosts of friends and the capacity to enjoy the little things they relished; Manning also came into this period. On his retirement Lamb reaped disappointment.
- Q. Have foreign countries failed to recognise Lamb's greatness through difficulty of translation? (Miss A. H. Park.)
- A. France, Italy, Japan, Palestine, India and America have recognised Lamb by reprint, translation or critical comment. Translation into a foreign language is undoubtedly difficult.
- Q. Is there any other writer whose life is so familiar to the general reader as Lamb? (Miss Park.)
- A. Yes; Johnson through Boswell, Dickens, Browning, Keats, Shakespeare (with reservations), and many others. After all, Lamb has never been regarded as a popular writer, and the number of persons who have read his life must be small.
- Q. Do his letters or his essays or his life best reveal Lamb as a man?
- A. A famous literary critic put it in this order: (1) His talk, and fortunately a great deal has been preserved. (2) The letters. (3) The Essays—letters put into formal shape. (4) Other prose writings. (5) Poems. (6) Stories. But the authentic Lamb can be discovered mainly in his Talk.
- Messrs. McNulty, Raymond and Kent took part in the subsequent discussion, to which Mr. Rich adequately replied on behalf of the Trust. Mr. A. J. Ford proposed, and Mr. S. Huxstep seconded, a vote of thanks, which was carried with enthusiasm.

"Charles and Mary."

Miss Joan Temple's moving play on the Lambs was successfully produced at the Theatre Royal, York, on November 13th, for one week. The local press praises Miss Mary Williams in the part of Mary Lamb, and the York Repertory Company generally for a "worthy and artistic" performance. Those who saw the authoress as Mary in the original production at the Everyman Theatre possess the memory of an impersonation as remarkable as any of recent years.

1945 Programme.

Particulars of the meetings for the first quarter of the New Year are given hereunder:—

- 13th January:** Tenth Annual General Meeting, followed by short papers on "Lamb's Dramatic Specimens." (See article "Future Activities of the Society.")
- 10th February:** Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration. This year's celebration will take place on the actual anniversary of Lamb's birth and will be held in the Lounge of the Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Great Russell Street, W.C.1, on Saturday, 10th February, 1945, at 2-45 p.m., for 3 o'clock. As the occasion is also the C.L.S.'s 10th birthday, it is hoped that members will make a special effort to attend. The Guest of Honour will be the Society's new President, Lord David Cecil. The meeting will be followed by tea. Please notify Mr. Crowsley immediately of your intention to come. Inclusive charge, 2s. Messages from provincial members are especially welcomed at these Annual Celebrations.
- 10th March:** "The Romance of Sadlers Wells." Mr. W. G. Browne. (Chairman: Mr. H. V. Hallam.) Ordinary meetings held at the Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Great Russell Street, W.C.1, at 2-45.

Gifts.

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

- From Mrs. L. C. Powys (Elizabeth Myers).—
- The Works of Charles Lamb, in Two Volumes. London: Printed for C. J. Ollier, Vere Street, Bond Street. 1818.
- * A valuable addition to the Society's Collection.
- "Bon-Mots of Charles Lamb and Douglas Jerrold," edited by Walter Jerrold, with grotesques by Aubrey Beardsley. 1904.
- From the Editor, *London Hospital Gazette*.—
- Charles Lamb and his Doctors, by John Cahill (Reprinted from the *London Hospital Gazette*).
- From Mr. H. G. Smith.—
- Typescript of Edmund Blunden's Address on "Charles Lamb's Poetical Career."

Subscriptions.

Subscriptions for 1945 are now due; and should be remitted to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. E. F. Lewis, 12, Christchurch Gardens, Epsom, Surrey.

Future Activities of the Society.

On Saturday, 30th September, 1944, the Council held an important meeting, the main purpose of which was to consider a Report prepared by the Executive Officers on future activities of the Society. As a result, the undermentioned recommendations will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday, 13th January, 1945:—

With the exception of No. 4, the following items affect the constitution of the Society and will accordingly be voted upon at the Annual General Meeting. Members are, therefore, asked to consider these items carefully. Particularly shall we welcome the views of Provincial members and others unable to attend the meeting (we regret that there is not time for Overseas members to respond). Comments should be sent to Mr. Crowsley as soon as possible.

- 1. Readjustment of Annual Subscriptions.** Members residing within the Metropolitan Police Area, the annual subscription to be seven shillings and sixpence (7s. 6d.). Additional members of the same family, residing at the same address, five shillings (5s.). Provincial and Overseas members five shillings (5s.). Additional members of the same family residing at the same address, three shillings and sixpence (3s. 6d.) per annum. Such an increase will provide, among other benefits, the more frequent publication of THE BULLETIN (see item 4).
 - 2. Change of Council.** Each year, three members of the Council automatically resign, and are not eligible for re-election for twelve months, the resigning members to be chosen by ballot.
 - 3. Junior Membership.** Rule 3b should be deleted as being unnecessary. This rule reads: "Individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 may become associate members on payment of an annual subscription of 2s. 6d."
 - 4. The Bulletin.** THE BULLETIN should be published six times a year because of its interest.
 - 5. Corresponding Secretaries.** With an ever increasing membership, the Council felt the time had arrived for the appointment of Corresponding Secretaries whose function will be to correspond periodically with Provincial and Overseas members. The Council's nominations are Miss A. M. Ferraro and Mr. H. G. Smith. If members wish to suggest additional nominees, these should be forwarded, together with the name of the seconder, to the Honorary Secretary not later than 6th January, 1945, after ensuring that the nominee will stand.
- Other matters of interest discussed at the Council Meeting included the formation of a Dramatic Section, the publication of a catalogue of the Society's Collection of Eliana, the creation of Honorary Membership to be awarded to non-members who had rendered distinguished service to the Society, the formation of branches of the Society in this country and abroad. Full details will be issued to members as they become available.

Current Bibliography of Charles Lamb. From February 1st, 1935 (contd.).

- Charles Lamb in Leadenhall Street, by Albert C. Dabbs, F.S.A. (*Lloyd's Log.*, Vol. XV, No. 5, October, 1944.)
- Charles Lamb and his Doctors, by John Cahill. (*London Hospital Gazette*, June, 1944.)