

# 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. Treasurer: E. F. LEWIS.  
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No. 66 (Tenth Year)

APRIL, 1945

## PERCHANCE TO DREAM

By THE HON. GILBERT COLERIDGE.

Alexander Smith, the Scottish poet, once wrote that "dreams are the most curious asides and soliloquies of the soul," but they are more than that: they afford us glimpses of fantasy into the past, and, it is asserted, occasionally into the future. The brain is stored with visions of the past not bounded by a lifetime, like a library of history from which the hand of the visionary plucks a book from which his imagination conjures up scenes sometimes horrible and fearsome, at others gorgeous and gay. We are told that these dreams, however grotesque, are founded on fact; reproductions, out of focus perhaps, of something which has actually taken place, not necessarily to the dreamer, but which has come to his knowledge by reading or by relation to his waking hours.

It was night, and I found myself in a narrow street filled with rows of tiny shops, like an oriental bazaar, lit by naked gas jets. I recognised it as the street of the Holy Well. The houses above were so close that you could make love across the street, and there was a dull strip of dark sky between. In the dimly lit caverns on each side were to be seen millions of stratified books arranged in no order save that of size, like pebbles on the sea shore. Each one contained the essence of some man's thought, a message to his neighbour, thoughts of many kinds, some with clamant voices demanding attention, others in a whisper scarce heard above the roar of the thought market, some with solace for an idle hour, others a comfort to a sick patient.

Most had been read, some well thumbed, dog-eared, or marked in pencil or brown ink, cast aside for others to pick up and wonder what manner of man the annotator was, others unspotted by egotistical comment. Happy he who perchance has lit on the marginal notes of a Johnson or a Chesterton! Many a hint might a parson glean from the works of a Donne, or even a Sterns, and any might profit from a saying by Robert Burton, or a Sir Thomas Browne. Many a time and oft had I lingered in these cavernous treasuries of literature, picking up coins which had long since passed out of circulation—Thomson's "Seasons," Blake's illustrations of "*Blair's Grave*," and odd volumes of the *Tatler*.

And here I was again in the old haunt destroyed many years ago by the London County Council: there was a strange silence; the modern roar of London was absent, and the only outside noise was the clop, clop of horses in the Strand hard by. I was back again in the time of my remembrance, and all the old shops were there. I saw the shop where I had missed buying a book because my pocket was empty, and the book had gone next day. The old fragrant smell of leather bindings and yellow paper greeted me as I wandered slowly down the street toward the Temple, and I recognised the shop of Mr. Ridler on the right hand side—him with whom I had bargained for many an old book.

On the threshold stood a small man with a prominent nose, a small book in his hand, talking to one who was not Mr. Ridler. He was clad in a black old-fashioned coat and knee-breeches, and this caused me no surprise as I was back at the beginning of the last century, and the bookseller must have been some predecessor of Mr. Ridler, for he also wore breeches. The haggling, if there had been any, was over when I arrived, and the little man paid for the book which he clasped to his bosom as he hurried past me, murmuring "O tempora! O mores! "*Quarles*" for ninepence!" I tried to follow him, and cried out, "May I speak to you, Mr. Lamb?" but he had disappeared. What was it that I wished to say to him? It was that in my day I had bought a "*Quarles' Emblems*" at the same shop for three and six! A bargain indeed for the quaintest of books, with an engraving on every gilt-edged page, bound in ancient tooled leather. But dreams are better, for I have spoken with the wraith of Charles Lamb.

THE TENTH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION  
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY LORD DAVID CECIL.  
PRESENTATION TO MR. CROWSLEY.

The Annual Birthday Celebration took place on Saturday afternoon, the 10th February, the Guest of Honour being Lord David Cecil, who recently accepted the office of President of the Society in succession to the late Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. This year the Celebration fell on the actual date of Lamb's birthday, February 10th, and it also commemorated the tenth year of the Society's work since its foundation in February, 1935. About one hundred and fifty members and friends foregathered and, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Walter Farrow, prepared for a feast of things Elia and good. The Chairman was supported by Mr. Edmund Blunden (Vice-President), the Hon. Gilbert Coleridge, Sir Edward Marsh, Mr. S. M. Rich and Mr. E. F. Lewis. After mentioning the remarkable growth and present vigour of the Society, now ten years old, and that its founders builded better than they knew, Mr. Farrow expressed to Lord David Cecil the thanks of the Society for his acceptance of the Presidency; everyone would look forward with increasing interest to future progress under his guidance and influence.

The President's Address, copies of which will shortly be obtainable by members, illumined with rare insight the many-sided character of Lamb, and stressed the essential homeliness, sympathy, imagination, sincerity, tenderness, and literary genius, of a very lovable personality.

The Chairman, on behalf of all present, thanked the President for his inspiring address, to which it had been a joy to listen. Continuing, Mr. Farrow again referred to the fact that the Society had now a decade of achievement behind it, and that its success was due to the unceasing work and enthusiasm of the Honorary Secretary, Mr. E. G. Crowsley, who was also the founder of the Society. Some recognition of his labours was overdue, and it had been a pleasure to witness the response from all members who had been invited to support such recognition. In these war-time days it was difficult to choose an appropriate gift, and it has therefore been decided that the presentation should take the form of an illuminated address, in book form, embellished with a portrait of Lamb, and supplemented by the signatures of all members present, together with a draft on the Army and Navy Stores for the balance subscribed. The Address read as follows:—

TO ERNEST G. CROWSLEY, ESQ., FOUNDER AND HON. SECRETARY OF THE  
CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY.

The Tenth Anniversary of the Foundation by you of this Society offers us the opportunity of recognising your long and devoted services on its behalf. Not only does the Society owe its birth to you; from its inception you have been its mainstay and greatest strength. Its stability is a tribute to your organising genius whilst its prestige is in the main due to your splendid and disinterested labours on its behalf.

As the Hon. Secretary of our Society you have been, and are, indefatigable in every kind of activity to promote its welfare, and your geniality and courtesy have endeared you to every one of its members. What this Society collectively, and we individually, owe to you can never be repaid; we can only ask your acceptance of our gratitude for services rendered so faithfully, so generously and over so long a period. You have indeed banded us together into a City of Friends.

We are confident that whatever public work yet lies before you will be discharged with an enthusiasm and ability such as distinguished your efforts on our behalf and we pray that equal success and every happiness will attend your future career.

YOUR SINCERE FRIENDS.

The President thereupon asked Mr. Crowsley to accept the illuminated address and the draft as tokens of the members' gratitude for all that he had done for their profit and pleasure. Mr. Crowsley, who was greeted with musical honours on rising, remarked that he felt like Charles Lamb on the occasion of the dinner held in his honour and when called on to speak, said, "Gentlemen," and sat down. He went on to say that it would be wrong for all the credit for the astonishing development of the Society to be given to him. It had been the work of a team, not a one-man show, coupled with the splendid co-operation of the Council. Help had also come spontaneously from many members, in fact the Society was one happy family and from that spirit had come its present satisfactory condition. He thanked everyone for their kind words and assistance and would treasure the memory of the afternoon's proceedings.

Mr. S. M. Rich, in reminiscent mood, recalled what took place at that first meeting on February 1st, 1935, in Essex Hall, dim and gloomy, imperfectly lighted and heated (just as when Aunt Hetty worshipped there). One present was omniscient on London's story and yet entirely ignorant about Charles Lamb; another in Jeremiah mood foretold a speedy end to any Charles Lamb Society! How wrong he was was evident now; ten years old and still going strong, largely due to Secretarial zeal and endeavour, all honour to E.G.C. for it. Mr. Rich concluded by reading the following poem written for the occasion by Mr. Edmund Blunden:—

ON C. LAMB'S BIRTHDAY, 1945.

Speak, ELIA, from afar, with eyes still bent  
Upon this world, upon this London most,  
And say, though Fame's a dream, you are content  
That many still so love your gentle ghost.  
We have your blessing whom your genius here  
Assembles; honour springs beneath your name,  
And one in special finds it year by year,  
Who called for numbers, and the numbers came.  
One who has thought no drudgery too much,  
So he might spread the light which shone in you;  
Among your oldest friends we find some such,  
TALFOURD, HOOD, MOXON; add we CROWSLEY too.

What singing troops and sweet societies  
Surround you now we know not, we may guess  
You steal away from them to smile on his,  
And charmed by him might even agree to address  
The Meeting! But even now he waits to win  
New members to the fold, and rally old;  
You shall peruse his list—but you begin  
By penning CROWSLEY there in characters of gold.

Mr. E. F. Lewis spoke of strange things happening which resulted in his being requested to read a tribute in semi-humorous verse by an anonymous admirer of the Society and its Secretary, which he did, to the great satisfaction of all present.

The Hon. Gilbert Coleridge, commencing with a reference to the famous Mark Twain joke of "feeling far from well himself," went on to confess that as an old man he now dreamed dreams. He recounted one, which he later expanded into the article with which this issue opens. Mr. Coleridge concluded by declaring that the Society had been fortunate to obtain so worthy a successor to the late President, who was his old friend, and he hoped that members would always remember that beautiful character, Charles Lamb.

Sir Edward Marsh recollected an earlier Celebration at Cambridge in 1913 to which he was taken by his friend, Rupert Brooke. Of all outrages inflicted on London by the enemy he deplored most of all the damage to The Temple, with all its associations connected with Charles Lamb.

An amusing incident was recalled by Mr. Edmund Blunden:—On one occasion he had to deputise for a friend who was to receive a cheque as prize, but had, at short notice, been obliged to go to Paris. As Lord Lonsdale handed over the cheque he expressed the hope that "it would be spent religiously." A meeting such as had taken place that afternoon was unique and not likely to have happened in any other country, said Mr. Blunden, whilst the Presidential Address was beyond praise and indeed "out of old fields comes new corn." Lord Cecil's book on Cowper revealed a sympathy which augured well for a full understanding of Lamb as a man and a writer.

Mr. Crowsley read appreciative greetings from former Guests of Honour: Lord Plender (1937), Mr. Frank Swinnerton (1938), Viscount Finlay (1939), Prof. Connelly (1943), Mr. James Agate (1944), and from Mr. J. Lewis May (Vice-President), Mr. H. O. L. Flecker, Mr. A. C. Denham, and many others.

The Sentiment of Absent Friends was given by Mr. Sandry, who, in sympathetic vein, linked members present with those who for many reasons were unable to come to the proceedings but were nevertheless kept in memory with fraternal greetings.

Mr. A. F. Bishop, who was also present at the first meeting in 1936, with his usual bonhomie, paid a comprehensive tribute to Officers of the Society, especially the Chairman, Mr. Farrow, and stressed the tonic value of the monthly meetings; they dispersed all feelings of depression under present world conditions.

Miss Davies added charm to the proceedings by contributing two songs, "By thy Banks, dear Stour," and "The Lass with the Delicate Air."

And so concluded a Celebration which surpassed all previous ones in interest for the past, pleasure for the present, and hope for the future.

H.G.S.

## REPORTS OF RECENT MEETINGS

### Business and Pleasure.

At the Tenth Annual General Meeting on January 13th, the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour was most pronounced. The usual formal business was transacted, including the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statement already circulated. The recommendations of the Council, printed in No. 65 of THE BULLETIN, in connection with future activities of the Society, were all approved with minor emendations. Miss A. M. Ferraro and Mr. H. G. Smith were elected Corresponding Secretaries. With the exception of these appointments, it was agreed that the adopted proposals should be put into operation at such time as the Officers and Council deem fit.

Following the official business, Miss A. H. Park and Mr. S. M. Rich spoke on Charles Lamb's "Dramatic Specimens"; and Mr. H. G. Smith dealt eulogistically with the Charles Lamb enthusiasts' "Bible," the "Elian Miscellany." The meeting, over which Mr. Farrow presided, concluded with a reading by Miss Florence Reeves from "Old China."

E.G.C.

### The Romance of Sadlers Wells.

On March 19th, Mr. W. G. Browne delighted about sixty members and friends with a talk on "The Romance of Sadlers Wells Theatre." After the usual reading from Lamb—on this occasion a passage from the Dramatic Specimens—by Mr. Crowsley, the Chairman, Mr. F. V. Hallam, introduced the speaker, following some very appropriate references to Sadlers Wells and environs and the famous people who had lived and died there, as well as links with Charles and Mary Lamb and their friends, the Dibbins. Mr. Browne had had an unique experience as actor, stage manager and producer: in the latter capacity he had been responsible for a revival a few years ago of Charles Lamb's Farce, "Mr. H.," which had an appreciative reception.

The lecture, which the audience wished had been longer, dealt in most interesting fashion with the history of the various buildings that had occupied the site since the end of the 17th century, and of the long succession of proprietors, managers and actors from then until the present day. There was a display of prints illustrating the history of the Wells loaned by Mr. E. J. Finch.

The discussion which followed shewed a lively response to Mr. Browne's fascinating cross-section of theatrical history and called forth many personal reminiscences of dramatic enthusiasms. Those taking part included Mr. W. Kent, Miss Wedd, and Mr. Weeks (who had taken the title role in the "Mr. H." revival). A vote of thanks to Mr. Browne was proposed by Mr. Cowell, whilst Dr. Murdo Mackenzie did the honours on behalf of the Chairman. A really enjoyable afternoon, full of the glow such as Elia portrayed in "My First Play."

H.G.S.

### From Mr. Crowsley.

War-time conditions do not permit the Hon. Secretary to write a personal letter of thanks to every contributor to the recent testimonial as he would have wished. He hopes they will accept this general expression of his appreciation of their generosity and goodwill.

### A Carved Panel.

Mr. Francis D. Bedford has lately executed a carved panel of English oak (2 ft. 6 ins. by 1 ft. 9 ins.) depicting Charles and Mary Lamb. The design includes the Clock Figures at St. Dunstan's Church, and the Arms of the Inner Temple and Christ's Hospital. Mr. Bedford will be remembered as the designer of the cover of E. V. Lucas's small edition of Lamb's Works and Letters. The price of the work is fifty guineas, and it can be viewed by appointment with the artist at 29, Ladbroke Square, W.11.

### Send Subs. to Sussex.

Will those who have not yet remitted subscriptions for 1945, please note that Mr. E. F. Lewis's permanent address is now 13, Shakespeare Road, Worthing.

### New Members.

We extend a hearty welcome on behalf of the Officers and Council to the following new members: Mr. J. S. Cargill, 30 Bessborough St., S.W.1; Miss K. Casswell, 10, Hilgrave Rd., N.W.6; Mr. L. Collyer, 50, Lee Terrace, S.E.3; Miss D. A. Corvesor, 50, Upper Mall, W.6; Mr. A. C. Dabbs, Lincroft, North Lancing; Mr. W. A. Donaldson, 37, Tavistock Sq., W.C.1; Miss R. Entwistle, 14, Heath Court, N.W.3; Mr. A. W. Ford, 29, Lower Barn Rd., Purley; Rev. M. L. Foyle, 27, Tavistock Sq., W.C.1; Miss P. Hole, 31, Brick St., W.1; Mr. C. A. Humphrey, Lamb House, Christ's Hospital, Horsham; Miss M. E. Knott, 2, Derdy Rd., Paignton; Mrs. M. J. Lemon, 25, St. Margaret's Rd., Oxford; Miss I. A. Lewis, 56, Gordon Pl., W.8; Miss V. M. Lomas, 54, Margravine Gdns., W.6; Mr. J. Milligan, 15 York Pl., Edinburgh; Mr. C. Morgan, 16, Campden Hill Sq., W.8; Mr. C. A. Parker, 6 Shire Lane, Cholesbury, Miss M. Pearce, 28, Langley Rd., Iver; Mr. K. Preston, 22, Knyveton Rd., Bournemouth; Mr. T. T. Robinson, 49, Foxearth Rd., Selsden; Miss W. M. Swan, 147 Glenwood Gardens, Ilford; Mr. K. H. Taylor, "Llusty," Hollywell, N. Wales; Bertha Tebb, 16, Kemplay Rd., N.W.3.

### Gifts.

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

From the B.B.C.—Typescript of the Charles Lamb play, "The Man without a Foe," by Alec Macdonald and Phyllis Mann.

From Mrs. Dorothy Brooks:—Design for the Society's Book-plate. Block presented by Miss Annette H. Park.

From Miss B. Fairweather:—"English Diaries of the XIXth Century: (Selections) edited by James Aitken.

From Mrs. L. C. Powys (Elizabeth Myers):—"The Basilisk of the St. James's," by Elizabeth Myers (1945).

From Miss A. F. Wedd:—"The Love Letters of Mary Hays," by A. F. Wedd (1925) and "The Fate of the Fernsides," by A. F. Wedd (1927).

From Mr. Kennedy Williamson:—Photograph of the Charles Lamb Superannuation Centenary Dinner, held in the Inner Temple Hall, 30th March, 1925.

**Congratulations:** To Mr. David Greig of the Red House, Beckenham, on his 80th birthday.

**A Poem Portrait.** Among the tributes received by Mr. Crowsley on the occasion of the completion of ten years as Hon. Secretary of the C.L.S. was "A Poem Portrait of Mr. Ernest Crowsley," by Miss C. M. M. Scott.

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

#### (a) Books and Pamphlets.

The Singing of / John Braham / by / John Mewburn Levien / Price 7/6 / London: Novello and Company, Limited (1944).

Pp. 40. Front: 'Braham, aged 13 singing at Convent Garden,' (coloured): 2 more portraits of B. and one of Abraham Goldsmid.

#### (b) Articles.

New Judgments (*Times Literary Supplement*: 3.3.1945). Leader on Lord David Cecil's Presidential Address to the C.L.S.

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

They Remember Lamb (*Evening News*: 12.2.1945).

John Braham, Tenor: Lecture by J. M. Levien at Trinity College of Music (*Jewish Chronicle*: 16.2.45).

Charles Lamb Society (City Press: 16.2.1945).

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

Charles Lamb: The Two Societies: J. P. Collins (City Press: 23.2.1945).

#### (h) Short Notes.

Note on Elia (National Book Council News Sheet, March, 1944).

Memorabilia (Notes and Queries: 1.7.1944).

The Man without a Foe (*Radio Times*: 2.2.1945).

Elia Relic (*Daily Telegraph*: 17.2.1945).

#### (j) Sales Announcements.

£340 for Charles Lamb's Essays (*Evening News*: 24.2.1945).

Hodgson's, 23.2.45. Presentation copy (1823) to Southey, inscribed "With Lamb's friendly remembrances," and bound in scraps of an old cotton dress of Kate Southey's.