

# THE C.L.S. BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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No. 68 (Eleventh Year)

OCTOBER, 1945

SIX TIMES A YEAR

Beginning in 1946, the *Bulletin* will appear six times each year, January, March, May, July, September and November. It should reach members on or about the first of the month.

## IN EDITORIAL BOWERS

By W. KENT.

The gentleness of Charles Lamb, we are told, has been much exaggerated. At these sentimentalists even Birrell barked. He could sometimes rear, even roar, though perhaps only in the softer key of the "very gentle beast" represented by Bottom. Then he illustrated the odd phrase in the Book of Revelations about "the wrath of the Lamb."

Can it be that editors brought clouds to his benign brow? Of his contact with the tribe we know little. Apart from Dan Stuart of the *Morning Post*, what is known? It must have been hazardous to take jokes—made in early matutinal hours—to any editor. I trow they were not taken before breakfast, perhaps after tea. I hope too, that Lamb's sometimes unseemly wit—as to which a poet and a post office official could have testified—was never exhibited at an editor's expense. It is said that a poet, who had vainly wooed one to bring his muse to birth, once remarked "I saw something good in your paper last week." "Oh, what was that?" was the eager enquiry. "A pound of fish," was the reply. Lamb was capable of this. There was corn in Egypt whilst there was cash at Leadenhall and, like Scott, treating literature as a walking stick not as a crutch, he may have cast a contumelious stone at those who flourish flaming swords over the entrances to editorial Edens.

Erudite Elians produce Lamb's MS. carefully amended in his own hands. Has any been found that had been subjected to the editorial blue pencil? I do not press the hue. Fashions change in colours, even though John Burns failed to get any promised alteration in that of the tape at the Local Government Board. The promises of politicians, it is seasonable to mention, are as those of lovers—they woo us for our votes. Surely, at times, Lamb (I use a phrase beloved of Burns) must have fought with beasts in an editorial Ephesus. Consider his vocabulary! Was any editor equal to its rarity? "Mr. Lamb, what the Devil is a scaturient source?" I imagine one saying, "Place of my kindly engendure"—Mr. Lamb? Could you not assent to my substituting "Where first I saw the light"? You damn the age and say you will write for antiquity, but as yet we do not circulate amongst the dead." At the beginning, I am sure he had trouble. I do not envisage the pseudo-gentle Lamb as resorting to the operation of battery, carried out by Johnson on a publisher with folio volume and without anaesthetic. Lamb's stammer may happily have given him pause. Perhaps, as Dickens's Tattycoram was counselled to do, he counted twenty and his tied tongue never framed the offending words. Still he may have gone away with a grudge. If the secrets of all hearts could be made known—an appalling prospect promised at the day of Judgment when I was young—it would be found that no writer had loved an editor every day in every way for ever and ever.

"He was kind, even to contributors," said Sir Leslie Stephen of Dickens's editorial offices. That this kindness can still be manifest I can testify from a recent visit paid to the editorial bowers of this *Bulletin*. There was no prying to see if my pockets portentously protruded with poetry or prose designed for a furtive foisting on my host. There was in the Editor "a careless even deportment" a "beautiful reliance on Providence" that my visit had nothing sinister in its purpose. What I must emphasise for its readers is the perfect conditions under which this now ten-years old literary child has been reared. Not even the "Celestial Bed," at Adelphi Terrace, advertised by Lamb's contemporary Dr. Graham as designed for the propagation of beings of supermanly intelligence and beauty, could have been more blessed in its environment. The little editorial room was redolent of Lamb. Period furniture; various editions of his works in one case; books he had read in another. Editions—cheap and de luxe. Files of cuttings from countries as little known as "the position of New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land" to Elia. If the Parthians, Medes, or dwellers in Mesopotamia ever write of Lamb their disquisitions will descend upon S——m. Japanese editions, American editions, Braille editions of Lamb have already arrived there. Only write of Lamb, and he will give your efforts a life beyond life: he embalms at no expense to yourself or assigns.

Many there are who go into an editorial bower and take nothing into it save a proffered contribution and bring nothing away except the same. My experience was much happier. Choice cates was not my only portion; I brought home three cherished volumes. Let me hasten to say they were not proffered as a bribe for a bouquet. The chance of presenting it in this *Bulletin* had not then been vouchsafed to me.

Concluding, I hope that if ever I am stumped for matter I shall always be able to take a leaf from Bob Allen's Stock Manuscript and say:

"Walking yesterday morning casually down Streatham Hill, whom should we meet but Mr. Deputy-Chairman, Editor of the "Charles Lamb Society Bulletin" complete with Churchillian cigar! We rejoice to add that the worthy Deputy appeared to enjoy a good state of health. We do not remember ever to have seen him look better."

#### New Members.

Prof. E. Carver, The University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh 13, U.S.A., University of Chicago Libraries-Periodical Dept., Harker M.22, Chicago 37, U.S.A., (R. A. Geale); Miss G. B. K. Curteis, 7, Manson Place, Queen's Gate, S.W.7.; B. R. Davis, 71, Bishop Road, Bristol 7; Miss H. Dobinson, "Hollingbourne," Brook Street, Tonbridge; Mrs. M. G. Downing, 41 Rosslyn Hill, N.W.3.; Mr. and Mrs. T. D. Fitzgerald, Leicester Court Hotel, 41, Queen's Gate Gardens, S.W.7; Miss M. Gavegan, 101, Cleveland Road, Ealing; Miss M. M. R. Giles, "Hillburn," Links Road, Bridge O'Don, Aberdeen; Miss C. M. Maclean, M.A., Litt.D., 10, Melbourne Mansions, Queen's Club Gardens, W.14.; Miss O. Morgan, 8, Knole Street, Grangetown, Cardiff; F. H. Postans, 43, Hardwick Road, N.13; H. Read, 2 Fleet Street, Derby; W. Scott, 39, Flower Lane, N.W.7.; J. Simmons, Black Hill Copse, Boars Hill, Oxford; J. C. Smith, 46, Murrayfield Avenue, Edinburgh 12.; W. E. Waller, 79, The Broadway, N.W.2.; R. M. White, 8, Anderson Street, S.W.3.; P. M. Young, D.Mus., 129, Castlecroft Road, Wolverhampton.

#### Subscriptions for 1946.

"Good finance makes good friends." (French proverb).

It has long been apparent that the general rise in expenditure and the increased activity of our Society would entail some adjustment of our subscriptions. Our last annual meeting of members therefore approved a new scale for them and at a recent meeting of your Council decided that this shall come into effect on 1st January next. For 1946 and future years, subscriptions will be as follows:—

Members residing within a radius of fifteen miles of London the annual subscription to be seven shillings and sixpence (7/6). Additional members of the same family residing at the same address—five shillings (5/-).

Provincial members residing beyond a fifteen mile radius of London) and Overseas members the annual subscription to be five shillings (5/-). Additional members of the same family residing at the same address, 3/6.

During the war years our subscription rates were purely nominal considering the splendid programmes and attractive features we offered our members. We shall maintain the high quality of our programmes, widen our activities and in especial, shortly issue the BULLETIN every 2 months instead of every 3rd month. We are confident our members will recognise the value of these solid advantages by giving our Society an expression of the generous financial support that in the past has always been forthcoming.

Walter Farrow,  
Chairman of the Council.

## REPORTS OF RECENT MEETINGS

### J.P.C. on the Godwins.

The last meeting of the Society before the summer recess was held on July 14th, when Mr. J. P. Collins gave a lecture on "The Godwins," with Miss A. F. Wedd in the Chair.

The intense heat caused the audience to be somewhat smaller than usual. The subject was rather off the beaten track, and William Godwin's books are not very accessible and probably many readers have obtained whatever knowledge they possess from Hazlitt's Essay and Lamb's account of the first night of Godwin's Tragedy "Antonio."

Nevertheless the audience showed a keen interest in the subject. Mr. Collins brought a portrait of Godwin, showing his fine head and extraordinary nose. He gave an interesting, but unflattering account of Godwin and his works, and short sketches of his friends. Godwin, he said, was a believer in the principles of the French Revolution, in the perfectability of the human race, and held that private property was a crime. His chief novel was "Caleb Williams," a grim and morbid work, in which he beat Mrs. Ratcliffe in her own particular style. It was not a great novel, but had probably influenced Dickens in parts of "David Copperfield." His best known work was "Political Justice," but he also wrote plays, novels and a Life of Chaucer. His income from his works was nil and he received generous financial help from his friends.

The sketches of members of Godwin's circle were vivid and there were many passages of wit and humour, and occasional descriptions of real poetic beauty. The lively discussion that followed proved the interest of the audience and several letters of Godwin or his friends were exhibited.

J.H.M.

### Wisdom and Wisecracks.

Our friend, F. V. Hallam nobly came to the Society's rescue on September 8th, when, at very short notice, he filled the place of Mr. H. J. Cowell, who was compelled to postpone his address on "Thomas Fuller." Mr. Hallam's paper on "Lamb Puns and Other Puns" was a delight. It was not only amusing, it was informative, and was as full of wisdom as of wisecracks. A typescript of Mr. Hallam's paper will be available in the Society's collection at Edmonton. The usual preliminary reading was given by Miss Florence Reeves from the Elian essay, "All Fool's Day." The discussion seemed to establish the thesis that puns are catching, for a good selection was contributed by Miss A. F. Wedd, Messrs. W. Farrow, S. K. Jones, J. M. Levien, J. H. McNulty and S. M. Rich,—the last-named missing fire with his single contribution, because it was bi-lingual. A highly deserved vote of thanks to Mr. Hallam was proposed by Mr. Crowsley and the meeting's thanks to the Chairman (Mr. T. W. Hill) were expressed by Mr. J. H. McNulty.

S.M.R.

### Gifts.

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

From Mr. J. Mewburn Levien:—"Some Notes for Singers," (containing references to Charles Lamb and John Braham). "The life of John Braham," by J. M. Levien (1945).

From Miss P. G. Mann:—"Prince Dorus," by Charles Lamb, with coloured illustrations: introduction by A. W. Tuer, F.S.A. (1891).

From Miss Elizabeth Myers:—"Regency Roundabout," by D. M. Stuart (1943).

From Miss F. A. Parsons:—Prints of Christ's Hospital and South Sea House.

### The Bookman Circle.

A gratifying sign of the times is the proposed revival of the Bookman Circle, many of whose members have so loyally supported the Charles Lamb Society from its inception. We understand that meetings will be held monthly, on the third Wednesday of each month, during the Winter, and an interesting programme of lectures is being arranged.

The Bookman Circle was founded by the late A. St. John Adcock with the purpose of bringing readers and writers into friendly personal relationship. Full particulars of membership, etc., can be obtained from Mr. T. W. Hill, "Hillsden," Madeira Avenue, Bromley, Kent.

We wish the Bookman Circle every possible success.

### "It was August the Third."

And we hope that in 1895, on that date, "quite soft was the skies;" for it was the wedding day of our Chairman and Mrs. Farrow. On behalf of all, the BULLETIN congratulates them heartily on achieving the Fiftieth Anniversary of that day.

### Programme: October to December, 1945.

Monday, 8th October: "The Religion of Charles Lamb," S. M. Rich (Chairman: Rev. R. Thomas; M.A.).

Saturday, 10th November: "Tom Hood," Milton Waldman; (Chairman: Edmund Blunden).

Monday, 10th December: The C.L.S. Brains Trust; Question Master, Walter Farrow.

Note:—Monday meetings are held at University Hall, 14, Gordon Square, W.C.1, and commence at 7.30 p.m. Saturday meetings are held at the Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Gt. Russell Street, W.C.1, and commence at 2.45 p.m.

## SECOND-HAND SHOP

It suits my fancy, Elia, to find  
Your book among the derelicts in this place.  
A phrase leaps from the page with nimble grace  
Fresh as the day you wrought it; while behind  
That stack of mouldering pamphlets, or that case  
Of leaden tomes, wraithlike, there gleams a face,  
Brooding above some antique folio;  
For thus you haunted bookstalls long ago.

The hovering dealer looks with faint disdain  
At the small coin that buys my paltry prize.  
A shabby book indeed, but oh, how plain  
It brings all London back before my eyes:—  
London, without its travail and its pain,  
The London I shall never see again.

KATHERINE BUXBOAM

(College English: Chicago, Feby. 1943)

### Questions for the Brains Trust.

To be sent to Mr. Crowsley as soon as possible. He is sorry, but in no circumstances can questions be answered by post!

### Dramatic Section for the C.L.S.

It will be recalled that one of the future activities approved by the Council, was the formation of a Dramatic Section. Members interested are invited to attend a meeting at University Hall on Monday, October 8th, at 6-30 p.m. Those interested, but who cannot come, should notify Mr. Crowsley.

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

#### (b) Articles.

Famous Spinsters: Tragic Career of Mary Lamb: Triumph over Adversity, By G. T. (*Melbourne Age*: 26-5-1945).

Sparkling Jest of Elia, by F.W.B. (*Melbourne Age*: 10-7-1944).

Charles Lamb Visits the Rock, by W.E.W. (with abject apologies to Elia (*The Rock Magazine*: Gibraltar, June, 1944).

\*A fantasy, "in Lamb's clothing," by W. E. Waller.

#### (d) Signed Reviews.

Orestes and Electra by R. Ellis Roberts (*Saturday Review*: New York, 26-5-1945).

\*Of The Lambs by Katherine Anthony: (Knopf, 1945, 253 p.p., \$3.50.).

#### (e) Unsigned Reviews.

John Braham's Voice (*Times Literary Supplement*: 30-6-1945).

\*On John Newburn Levien's "The Singing of John Braham" (Novello 716).

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

From the Charles Lamb Society: E. G. Crowsley (*Our Time*: May, 1945).

A Request: S. M. Rich (*Inquirer*: 23-6-45).

\*George Dyer's "penny tract" on Unitarianism.