



(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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No. 69 (Eleventh Year)

WITH SUPPLEMENT

JANUARY, 1946

SUPPLEMENT TO NO. 69

With this issue of THE BULLETIN each member should receive a copy of the Eleventh Annual Report and Accounts, to be presented at the meeting on January 21st, 1946. A list of members is included.

TWO EARLY LAMB "NOTICES"

By AUTOLYCUS

Members who were present in November, 1944, when Edmund Blunden so gracefully and feelingly narrated the story of "Lamb's Poetical Career," will probably be interested in some criticisms in two well-known periodicals of the late 18th century, *The European Magazine* and *The Monthly Mirror*, at the time *Blank Verse* was published in 1798.

Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb, 12 mo., 1798, Arch: From this blank verse we learn that the first of these Authors is an admirer of the character of Mrs. Godwin, "whose undeserved sufferings (he says) have excited his admiration and pity, and whose virtues, both of heart and mind, have secured his warmest esteem." That a woman with talents like those of Mrs. Godwin should have deviated from the paths of propriety, and put herself on a level with those of her sex who are not entitled to the most respect, is certainly a subject calculated to excite both indignation and pity; but we apprehend those passions would be directed differently from what Mr. Lloyd would hope. We are not much surprised at this Gentleman's attachment to the Lady's memory, when we read that "the individuality of an attachment constitutes its chastity." For this remark (says he), to which I implicitly subscribe, I believe I am indebted to the "Emma Courtney" of Miss Hays. A very convenient sentiment for ladies of strong passions and loose principles, who, by acting according to it, are very likely to excite at least indignation, if not pity. The laxity of morals of late attempted to be introduced, *a la mode de Francaise*, we trust is too alien from the modesty of the English female character, ever to gain much ground, notwithstanding it may have received the sanction of Miss Hays's approbation, or Mrs. Godwin's example. Of the poems it may be said, they seldom rise to excellence, are chiefly on domestic subjects, and the verse is sometimes so familiar as scarce to be verse at all. The gratitude and affection both Authors shew to their relatives, however, deserve praise.

European Magazine, May, 1798.

Blank Verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb, 2s. 6d., 12 mo., Arch, 1798.

This *par nobile fratrum* continue to write poetry with the enthusiasm which was noticeable in their former production. Tolerable *blank verse* is a more difficult species of composition than tolerable *rhyme*. The contents of this volume, however, are very favourable specimens of the former: it is sufficiently altisonant, without being bombastical; and the pauses are varied so as to prevent satiety. There is also good sense, sound philosophy, and genuine piety, in the sentiments, which do honour to the judgment and feelings of the youthful coadjutors.

Monthly Mirror, August, 1798.

The strong bias shown by the *European Magazine* is only what was to be expected from a stalwart Anti-Jacobin periodical, whose office in Cornhill, by Cowper Court, had an appropriate political facade. On a ledge over the shop front was a stone pedestal supporting an open Bible, with the following lettering:—"Titus C.3 V.1, 2 and 3.—I Peter C.2 V. 13, 14 and 17." On top of this was a large folio marked on the edge:—"Joshua C I. V. 8, which in turn supported a Crown. (This last verse has a strong constitutional flavour about it.) The house was appropriately known as "The Bible, Crown and Constitution."

The *Monthly Mirror's* favourable criticism of *Blank Verse* appeared on the same page as a notice of a book by Mary Wollstonecroft Godwin, whose name was anathema to the *European Magazine*. The proprietor of the *Monthly Mirror* was a great book collector, one Thomas Hill, with whom Lamb became acquainted at a later period than 1798. He was Lamb's "dry-salter" friend. Hill had formerly been a dry-salter and, as a frequenter of the Sales at East India House, most probably made there business contact with Lamb. Hill, by the way, was the patron of Blomfield and Kirke White.

E. V. Lucas believed Hill was the original of Lamb's "Tom Pry." Theodore Hook, in his novel, *Gilbert Gurney*, presents him under the guise of the fussy good-natured

"Hull." Poole, the decimalist, took him as the original "Paul Pry" in his famous farce of that name. Tommie Hill, as he was called, lived to an advanced age. James Smith, of the "Rejected Addresses," used to say that the records of Hill's birth were lost in the Great Fire of London, but Hook suggested he might have been one of the little Hills recorded as skipping in the Psalms. As the names I have mentioned bring to memory numerous incidents in Lamb's career, this, I trust, will justify them having a place in THE BULLETIN.

New Members.

Mrs. D. Eastwood, 5, Sloane Court, S.W.3.; Lady Alatheia Eliot, 8, Carlyle Square, S.W.3.; Mr. R. Hine, "William Bury," Letchworth; Mr. G. A. Hodge, 62, Roseneath Road, S.W.11; Mr. T. Kennedy, 35, Devonshire Place Mews, N.W.1; Mrs. H. M. McKay, P.O. Box 7605, Johannesburg, S. Africa; Mrs. G. C. Major, 53, Gloucester Court, Kew Road, Kew Gardens; Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Neale, 43, Bower Hill, Epping; Mr. J. F. St. Lawrence, 148, Westbourne Grove, W.11; Miss E. M. Sheard, 16, Ashworth Road, W.9; Cpl. J. L. Springett, 12, Thaxted Road, S.E.9.

Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration, 1946.

This year's Celebration will take place on Saturday, 9th February, and will be held in the Queen Mary Hall at the Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Gt. Russell Street, W.C.1, at 2.45 p.m. for 3 o'clock. Tea will be served during the proceedings. Admission will be by ticket (2s. inclusive), to be obtained from Mr. E. G. Crowsley. It is hoped that members will make a special effort to attend. Guest of Honour: Mr. A. C. W. Edwards, M.A. (of Christ's Hospital).

C.L.S. Orchestra and Choir.

It is proposed to form an Orchestra and a Choir as further activities of the Society. Will those prepared to participate in either of these projects please communicate with Mr. E. G. Crowsley.

Resignation of Treasurer.

It is with the sincerest regret that we announce the resignation of Mr. E. F. Lewis as Hon. Treasurer of the Society, on the grounds of ill-health. Mr. Lewis has been Treasurer since February, 1938, and since his appointment he has carried out his duties with the utmost charm and ability. All members of the Society will wish Mr. Lewis as speedy a return to full health as possible, when we shall look forward to having him once more at our meetings and helping us in our deliberations.

Temporary Treasurer.

At a meeting of the Council, held on 10th December, Mr. S. L. G. Huxstep was unanimously nominated to act as temporary Treasurer until an election could be made at the Annual General Meeting.

Subscriptions for 1946.

Subscriptions for 1946 are now due and should be remitted to MR. S. L. G. HUXSTEP, at 37, TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1. Members are reminded that the revised subscriptions as detailed in the October BULLETIN are now in force. In view of the increased expenditure budgetted for 1946 members are earnestly requested to forward their subscriptions without delay.

Annual General Meeting.

At this important meeting (for date and venue see programme detailed on p.4) members will be asked to consider the following nominations made by the Council.

Hon. Treasurer: MR. S. L. G. HUXSTEP.

Hon. Registrar: MISS C. CREIGHTON.

Council (to replace retiring members): MISS R. M. BUDD, MR. B. FRANCIS.

Further nominations for any of the above positions should be forwarded to Mr. E. G. Crowsley by the **19th January**, 1946, after ensuring that nominees are prepared to stand. In connection with the new appointment of Registrar the Council consider that the time is now opportune for such an appointment to be made.

NOTE! The other Officers and Council are prepared to stand for re-election.

Death of Mr. Walter Wicks.

It has recently come to our notice that Mr. Walter Wicks, of Gt. Ellingham, Norfolk, died on the 18th May, 1944, as the result of a road accident. Mr. Wicks had been a member of this Society since 1935 and, although he had never attended any of the meetings, he was a keen Elian and very interested in the welfare of the Society, as shown by the charming letters received from time to time.

By profession he was associated with the insurance world, but he was also interested in politics, and a singer of local repute. Like Charles Lamb, he had a great love for books and longed to be with men more excellent than himself. Of the books he had written mention might be made of his "Inns and Taverns of Old Norfolk." The Society's condolences are extended to his widow.

LAMB FOR THE FOURTH FORM.

"She . . . walked on again, planning how best to make Elia attractive to the fourth form. It was difficult because she did not care much for Elia herself. Where others saw benignity she saw shallowness. Mrs. Battle on Whist was faintly amusing, but very much on the surface of life. Roast Pig was on the surface of life. Of course the poor unhappy man had such a grim *real* life that no doubt he wanted to get away from it; but were these escapist essays great literature?"

"Every-one seemed to say so. Carlotta was alone in her heresy. Definitely she did not see how a fourth form could be expected to care much for Lamb. Dream Children—what rot to real children! And if they did not care, they would not work well, for they were too young to take an interest in abstractions such as form and style. Ah, they'd care, perhaps, if she told them of his shadowed life and the unfortunate Mary. They had an appetite for horrors and griefs. She'd fix him in their minds that way, and they should pity if they could not love."—"Carlotta Green," by Doreen Wallace, Collins, 1944, P. 119.

REPORTS OF RECENT MEETINGS

Charles Lamb's Religion.

The meeting on October 8th was memorable for the reason that for the first occasion for six years it was possible for the members to renew acquaintance with their former rendezvous, University College Hall, when about seventy members and friends assembled. The customary reading was given by Miss Frances Jolly, who had chosen Lamb's poem, "The Grandame."

The Rev. A. Thomas, as Chairman, welcomed the Society and said it was with peculiar satisfaction that it was returning home to University Hall, a room founded by Crabb Robinson, "the man with forty-seven friends," whose portraits in fresco adorned the walls, and amongst those worthies Charles and Mary Lamb held an honoured place.

Mr. S. M. Rich had chosen for his discourse, "The Religion of Charles Lamb," a subject containing supreme difficulties if one endeavoured to place a label on Lamb's religion. The Essays throughout breathe the eternal spirit of religion and Lamb's life was truly one of religious action. But could any label be affixed to him? A careful reading of his letters and writings failed to give a definite answer. He was the friend and confidant of men of the most diverse leanings in religious thought and profession, and Mr. Rich amply justified this diversity by examples, ranging from Roman Catholicism through Quakerism to the Irvingite brand, including the Atheism of Manning. Again, from the family point of view, no definite indication could be formed. Lamb himself said he had been a One-Goddite from his early days, whilst his Aunt Hetty attended Church of England and Unitarian services and daily read Roman Catholic prayers—possibly a throwback to her early upbringing. His father, by reason of his service under the Inner Temple authorities, would obviously be a professed Churchman. The truth was that Lamb was interested, and intensely interested, in all religions and systems of religion, and his library was proof of his catholicity in this respect. By apt quotation from the letters at various ages Mr. Rich shewed a continuous strain of seriousness in Lamb's character, a sound religious feeling, and this seriousness was founded on a religious basis but of no particular sect; he could not be a sectarian, and made fun of such pretensions. Letters to Walter Wilson and Coleridge and his Essay on "the Religion of Actors" were quoted to confirm Lamb's underlying stratum of seriousness in all things pertaining to his inner life and sincerity and depth of purpose.

What, then, was the outcome? Mr. Rich, after a most brilliant exposition of his subject, accompanied by fine oratorical expression, left it to his audience to form their own conclusions, with the remark that when wise men are asked what their religion is, wise men never tell!

Discussion was initiated by Mr. J. P. Collins with confirmation of points made by Mr. Rich and with heartfelt reminiscences of Cardinal Newman's impact and influence on his own life (J.P.C.'s) by that sincere Christian. Other speakers included Mr. S. K. Jones and Miss A. H. Park. Mr. F. E. Sandry expressed the meeting's thanks to the speaker, and Mr. A. F. Bishop to the Chairman.

H.G.S.

Charles Lamb and the Bible.

The November meeting was one of the most memorable in the Society's career. Not only was there a record attendance, but those present were given an unexpected treat. They came to hear a lecture on "Tom Hood" and remained to enjoy and to hail with deserved praise a most thoughtful paper by H. G. Smith on "Charles Lamb and the Bible." On the shortest of short notices Mr. Smith filled the gap made by the sudden inability of Mr. Milton Waldman to attend. Mr. Edmund Blunden presided, and the opening Lamb reading was given by Mr. L. Raymond. Mr. Smith's paper traced in detail the influence of the Bible in Elia and in the letters, both by direct and indirect quotation. This far from easy task was not only adequately performed, but performed in a thoroughly interesting manner and with humour. As example followed example, not of quotation merely, but of "quotations held in solution," the question must have occurred to many members of the audience,—as to how much of Lamb would have remained had he never been a reader of the Bible. For Mr. Smith's paper established beyond doubt that Lamb's writings are permeated both with the spirit of the Scriptures and with the sonorousness and rhythm of the supreme literary form given to them by the translators of 1611. The Paper evoked one of the best discussions for a long time, in which Miss E. M. Davies and Messrs. A. Lloyd-Jones, J. H. McNulty, J. P. Collins, R. Bacon, L. Raymond, W. Kent, H. C. Chapman and A. J. Ford joined. Mr. Ford proposed thanks to the speaker and Mr. E. C. Thomas to the Chairman.

H.J.

The Brains Trust Again.

The third annual session of the Society's Brains Trust took place on Monday, December 10th, at University Hall, with Mr. Farrow in the Chair. The customary reading was given by Miss Creighton, with a passage from "Oxford in the Vacation." The Brains Trust comprised: Miss A. Park, Mr. A. F. Bishop, Mr. W. Kent and Mr. S. M. Rich, with Mr. Farrow as Question Master. Cold print cannot reproduce the warmth of the tributes paid, the sparkling sallies evoked, the fund of knowledge at call, and the penetrating insight into Lamb's life and writings revealed by the answers spontaneously given, including, of course, the Question Master's ready wit and apt story to cap the conclusions reached. This report can only attempt to summarise and give the bare bones of the body of thought. Here are the questions and responses:

- Q. Would Charles Lamb be included among the immortals, and, if so, on what grounds?
A. Yes; just as any other man would who had lived a real life and left something permanent in letters or art; Lamb created by his genius great literature, and at the same time provided future generations with a picture of himself. Shakespeare is an immortal, as also is Lamb, though his range was not so wide. His interest was in things which have an eternal appeal. His letters in particular have in them the stuff of survival.
- Q. Can Neil Bell's novel, "So Perish the Roses," be regarded as adhering closely to facts?
A. There are many errors in topographical detail; the lack of "source" indications for incidents in Charles' and Mary's lives depicted in the book is a weakness; the suggestion that Charles was in love with Emma Isola is against available evidence and psychologically erroneous; the general sex element introduced is unfounded.
- Q. Is there any indication in Lamb's writings that he shared Thackeray's unfavourable estimate of the Georges?

- A. Lamb's poem, "The Prince of Whales," satirised George IV and Lamb was also pro-Caroline, though he had little interest in politics. Some of his friends suffered for their seditious libels; Lamb escaped—possibly verse is less liable to legal retribution than prose.
4. Q. What would Charles think of the Charles Lamb Society?
A. "We should be modest for a modest man," was his own dictum; a Continental acquaintance of one of the Trust on being told of the Society and its objects remarked "It is a pity he knows not of all this fuss." Lamb was a convivial soul and favoured clubs and coteries, as witness his Wednesday evenings; he would have been inclined, therefore, to approve a Society formed to foster a literature worth preserving.
5. Q. What would Lamb think of cinema productions of Shakespeare's plays?
A. Provided the acting was good, he would doubtless approve films such as *Henry V.* but without such reservation he would not be interested.
6. Q. (a) What failings, if any, had Lamb as man and author?
(b) "He who hath not a dram of folly in his mixture hath pounds of much worse matter in his composition"—What dram of folly had Lamb?
A. Sometimes too fond of the cheerful glass but decidedly no drunkard: his "Confessions of a Drunkard" was a leg-pull. He had a propensity for punning and practical joking; played the antic on occasion; did not suffer fools gladly; apt to be satirical. As a writer he used incondite and obsolete words perhaps too freely, though examination reveals the words to be the aptest for the purpose in view.
7. Q. What type of dog was Charles Lamb's Dash?
A. Patmore described Dash as a large and handsome dog of a curious breed, and on one occasion held a board with "This House to be Let" on it in his jaws. Possibly a retriever of sorts.
8. Q. Have the books from Lamb's library been accounted for?
A. Lucas, in his *Life*, lists contents of Lamb's bookcase; many were given away or destroyed owing to their condition by Moxon after Mary's death; about sixty volumes were kept by Moxon and later sent by him to America for sale, fetching at auction 480 dollars (£108). Very few books owned by Lamb are likely to be found in this country.
9. Q. Which of Lamb's friends or characters would one most desire to meet?
A. John Rickman and Mrs. Conrady. (Mr. S. M. Rich.) Thomas Manning and John Morgan. (Miss A. Park.) Benjamin Haydon. (Mr. A. F. Bishop.) William Hazlitt. (Mr. W. Kent.)
10. Q. Suppose the "Essays of Elia" had never been written, what would have been Charles Lamb's position?
A. Much the same. Lamb the man would still have a great appeal.

The Trust was warmly thanked, on the motion of Mr. J. H. Postans, and the Question Master was congratulated on his conduct of the proceedings by Miss F. Jolly. Miss C. Creighton gave the reading from Lamb. At the conclusion, Mr. Farrow, on behalf of the Officers and Council, wished all members an enjoyable Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

H.G.S.

Programme for 1946.

- Monday, 21st January: Annual General Meeting, followed by a reading of "The Man Without a Foe," by the C.L.S. Dramatic Group.
- Saturday, 9th February: Birthday Celebration.
- Monday, 11th March: Robert Gittings, M.A., The Party at Haydon's (Chairman: A. F. Bishop).
- Saturday, 13th April: J. Mewburn Levien—John Braham. (Chairman: J. P. Collins.)
- Monday, 13th May: E. M. W. Tillyard, M.A., Litt.D.—Convictions and Fantasy in Elizabethan Literature. (Chairman: G. Rostrevor Hamilton.)
- Saturday, 8th June: Miss C. M. Maclean, M.A., D.Litt.—Concerning Hazlitt. (Chairman: L. Raymond.)
- July and August: No Meetings.
- Monday, 9th September: William Kent—London in the News in Charles Lamb's Time. (Chairman: J. H. McNulty.)
- Saturday, 12th October: P. M. Young, M.A., Mus.D.—Music in the Elia Circle. (Chairman: J. T. A. Burke.)
- Monday, 11th November: H. J. Cowell, F.R.S.L.—Thomas Fuller and His Worthies. (Chairman: L. M. Harrod.)
- Saturday, 14th December: C. L. S. Brains Trust. (Question Master: Walter Farrow.)
- 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. Copies of the above programme can be obtained from Mr. E. G. Crowsley.

Dramatic Section.

A Dramatic Section of the Society has just been formed; its first venture is to be a reading of "The Man without a Foe," at the Annual General Meeting on January 21st, a play which was first broadcast by the B.B.C. in February, 1945. The Dramatic Section has big ideas for the future. We are very anxious that a large number of members of C.L.S. will be identified with this new section, so will any who are in any way interested in amateur dramatics please write to the Secretary, Mr. A. J. Ford, 147, Beaconsfield Road, Enfield, Middlesex.

LAMB AN HORATIAN?

"Characters which strike one as Horatian are often to be met with in real life, but unless they are writers they leave no trace on the world at large. Many men of letters have inherited a portion of his spirit. I do not remember seeing Charles Lamb's name mentioned in this connection, and yet his gentle humour, his love of homely detail and his disarming egotism are essentially Horatian."—*"Horace and his Lyric Poetry,"* by L. P. Wilkinson, Cambridge University Press, 1945, P. 168.

Current Bibliography of Charles Lamb.

This feature, details of gifts to the Society's Collection of Eliana, and other matter, held over till our next issue, to appear March, 1946.