

THE C.L.S. BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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No. 70 (Eleventh Year)

MARCH, 1946

MR. A. G. W. EDWARDS on LAMB and EDUCATION

The Eleventh Annual Birthday Celebration of the Society took place on Saturday, February 9th, 1946, at the Central Club, Great Russell Street, London, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Walter Farrow, who was supported by Mr. Edmund Blunden and Mr. J. Lewis May.

The CHAIRMAN in his opening remarks said the members were met with a threefold object: to commemorate the 171st birthday of Charles Lamb; to celebrate the completion of the most successful year in the history of the Society; and to forge another link between the Society and the great School where Charles Lamb spent his early and most impressionable years. Seven years ago many present went on a pilgrimage to Horsham for the purpose of unveiling and presenting a memorial of Charles Lamb to his old School. That memorial, a bronze portrait plaque, was the work of a distinguished member, the Hon. Gilbert Coleridge, and those who went will never forget the kindness and hospitality received at the hands of Mr. Flecker, the masters and the scholars of Christ's Hospital. Today we have the honour of welcoming one of those masters, Mr. A. C. W. Edwards, M.A., who had presided for many years over the historical studies at the School.

MR. EDWARDS, who had brought with him two scholars—"young Lambs"—said he proposed to speak about Charles Lamb and Education, and about Christ's Hospital as it is today compared with that of Lamb's time. Lamb's famous one-word speech at the dinner of the Amicable Society of Blues in 1817 made him envious. Of his relations with schoolmasters Lamb had written on the whole in kindly terms. Ranging from William Bird, Captain Starkey, William Wales, James Boyer, and Matthew Field, he traced their idiosyncrasies, their good qualities and their bad practices. Boyer the disciplinarian of heavy hand, and addicted to the habit of beating a boy whilst as the same time reading the Parliamentary Debates, a blow and then a paragraph, and so on to the boy's mental and physical discomfort; Matthew Field who held his cane "like a dancer, more of an emblem than an instrument of authority;" William Wales, F.R.S., of the Mathematical School, a fine seaman and well calculated to preside over the First Order terrifying the smaller fry; Lamb had paid tribute to these and to the Lilys and the Linacres, old pedagogues "revolving in a perpetual cycle of declensions and conjugations, syntaxes and prosodies." Lamb admired the dignity with which these old schoolmasters approached their work, and he relished the savour of the Preface to Colet's *Accidence* with its final phrase "Wherein it is profitable that he (the pupil) can orderly decline *his* noun and *his* verb."

Lamb had definite ideas on education, witness his eulogy of Mary's upbringing, "she was tumbled into a closet of good old English reading and browsed at will on that fair and wholesome pasturage." Lamb regarded the pupil as the chief agent in his own education, and therefore favours the encouragement of the library habit. Educational methods should not be marked by too much direction or prohibition. Lamb's own subjects were the Classics and English, but though he may appear to condemn other subjects it is probably the factful, unimaginative, soul-killing methods by which they were taught that he despised. His schoolmaster must be humane, judicious, industrious and patient. He must think highly of his calling, and in order that he may approach his task with real zest he should not be expected to act as a nursemaid or a walking encyclopaedia. His main task is to give his pupils standards, not to cram them with facts, nor to allow them to criticise before they are acquainted with the noblest and best examples. He favours the boarding school and by implication we gather he rated very highly the value of religion

and friendship in the formation of character. Lamb admired the giants of literature—Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, and the Bible—he thought there should be a grace before Shakespeare and solemn music before Milton.

Would Lamb have made a good schoolmaster? He certainly understood children, as we know from his exquisite *Dream Children*, his *Praise of Chimney Sweepers*, and his fun with the pupils at Goddard House. His *Tales from Shakespeare* have lasted to these days and are still reprinted and read. Children, he said, require to be fed on fancies and fairies and imagination, not on facts. These have come to be modern ideas too. The aspirations and recommendations contained in the Hadow Report on Education would have struck a responsive chord in Lamb; he would have agreed with the idea of confirming and strengthening the character and the training of the taste to a dignified standard. Perhaps Charles Lamb would have made a perfect Oxford Don!

Turning to Christ's Hospital, MR. EDWARDS said the School was Lamb's best memorial and it would always live in English Literature with him. There are two Houses named after him, and he is also commemorated with Coleridge and Middleton in the statuary in the quadrangle; the silver medal awarded annually for the best English Essay bears Lamb's portrait. The distinctive Tudor costume of the boys, the old ranks of Grecian, deputy Grecian, Great Erasmus and Little Erasmus have all survived; whilst in the domestic realm there are the beds and settles (used by the "Gag-eater" of old) and the old pulpit from the Newgate Street School. The annual visit to the Mansion House on St. Matthew's Day and the Speech Day at the School in June still take place, when the Lord Mayor and Aldermen listen with keen interest to the eloquence of the head Grecian. Music is of a high standard and though Lamb said "I have no ear" he was speaking with his tongue in his cheek. Sundays at Horsham are not so drastic as of yore, two short services and one short Scripture preparation. The School Libraries are excellent and the Art School would have pleased Lamb. The main difference between the present-day Christ's and that of Lamb's time lies in greater liberty, in choice of subjects and careers, and in general outlook; there is a closer fellowship among the masters and the scholars: thought is more free and expression more voluble.

So long as Blues are Blues and books are read Lamb will be remembered. We will ever keep in mind the fortitude, the bounty, the loyalty, and the friendship of Charles Lamb, that great man; may we ever renew his "Immortal Memory."

MR. EDWARDS concluded by quoting an extract from another writer, one probably unknown to Charles Lamb: "The men! O what venerable and reverend creatures did the aged seem! Immortal cherubims! And the young men glittering and sparkling angels and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the street and playing were moving jewels. The streets were mine and so were the sun and the moon and the stars and all the world was mine and I the only spectator and enjoyed of it." (Thos. Traherne—*Centuries of Meditation*.)

Mr. Edwards had at ready command a fund of quotations and these were interspersed with such skill as to cause general admiration. The interest of the audience was further intensified by the eloquence of the two "young Lambs": D. C. Day with "The Old Familiar Faces," and C. D. Lee with Edmund Blunden's poem "Lines to Charles Lamb" written for the dedication of the Charles Lamb Memorial at Christ Church in November, 1935; Master Lee also read the "Graces" used daily at Christ's Hospital. Their clear tones and beautiful phrasing were a delight to the ear.

The CHAIRMAN on behalf of all present, thanked Mr. Edwards for an address engrossing, eloquent and witty, and the "young Lambs" for their excellence in reciting.

MR. EDMUND BLUNDEN (Vice President) referred to Mr. Edwards' invincible modesty, yet displaying so much knowledge with such delight to his listeners. The presence of the two boys from Christ's and their recitations had revived memories for him, but in the reading of the "Graces" he missed the ironic tones which formerly accompanied them! Mr. Edwards was also a good slow bowler in which his analytical powers also played a part. The friends of Charles Lamb were scattered world-wide, and the Indian branch of the Society of Blues was meeting in India as early as the 17th century. He extended cordial greetings to all absent members whether in the provinces or overseas, and wished they could have been present.

DR. YOUNG (Wolverhampton) referred to the six years he spent under the benign government of Mr. Edwards, a great schoolmaster, and the measure of affection in which he is held by all who were in his House is well-known. As one involved in education himself, he fancied that for Charles Lamb it was the irrelevant things that mattered—"I like to lose myself in other men's minds"—the capacity for mixing. Many specialists would be all the better if they would absorb the spirit of Lamb's writings. Could one imagine Lamb as a schoolmaster today filling up the multiplicity of forms considered so necessary to modern progress! Dublin would have pleased Lamb with its 18th century architecture, its old bookshops, fine food and fine wine, resembling his old London in many ways.

MR. J. LEWIS MAY (Vice President) said there were many pages of Lamb's writings that he read over and over again with sustained relish; his exquisite tenderness and humour, his wonderful powers of observation and criticism, his insight into human nature, and yet beyond all this there was something unexplainable and indefinable. Every great poet is like that, and Charles Lamb should be judged as a poet,—"dusty maps of Mexico and soundings of the Bay of Panama"—this is poetry, and when the grammarians and antiquaries have said their say, there is still something more, something of magic.

MISS MARGARET BROWN gave a reading of Lamb's "The Humble Petition of an Unfortunate Day." The afternoon's proceedings were given a pleasant musical addition by Miss MOLLY SANDS who sang in splendid voice "My mother bids me bind my hair," "The Sailor's Song," "My rising spirits thronging," and "Cherry Ripe," to the brilliant accompaniment of Miss MITCHELL, who had risen from a sick bed to attend the celebration.

H.G.S.

New Members.

Miss I. P. Baker, 37, Rockside Drive, Henleaze, Bristol; Mrs. C. M. Blunden, 7, Earls Court Square, S.W.5.; Miss K. M. E. Challis, 7, Elm Grove, N.8.; Miss D. R. Collins, 194, Sheen Road, Richmond; Mrs. H. M. Conoley, 2, Mansfield Road, Ilford; Mr. M. P. Curwen, 33, Lower Belgrave Street, S.W.1; Mr. R. A. Earthrowl, 6, Drake Road, S.E.4 (rejoined); Mrs. E. A. Eccles, 67, Emllyn Road, W.12; Mr. A. C. W. Edwards, Christ's Hospital, Horsham; Mr. P. J. Farmer, 29, Cricketts Lane, Chippenham; Dr. E. G. M. Fletcher, 3, Gray's Inn Place, Gray's Inn, W.C.1 (rejoined); Mr. V. A. Frisby 57, Elsenham Street, S.W.18; Mr. H. J. O. Harris, 70, Lancaster Road, St. Albans; Mrs. A. R. Hayes, 15a, Elder Avenue, N.8; Mr. R. W. Howell, 12, Philbeach Gardens, S.W.5; Mr. F. M. Jackson, 19, Campden Hill Road, W.6; The Misses D. and M. Joseph and Mr. J. Joseph, 13, Essenden Road, Sanderstead; Mr. J. A. McKay, 84, Southbank Road, Southport; Mr. J. H. Leaver, 52, Francis Road, Stedhford, Birmingham 9; Mr. F. J. Mills, 11, West View, Ashington; Miss C. E. M. Morgan, 2, Ordannce Hill, N.W.8 (rejoined); Mr. F. C. Owlett, 9, Holland Park, W.11 (rejoined); Mrs. G. Postans, 43, Hardwick Road, Palmers Green, N.13; Mr. A. P. Rudolf, 3, Dean Road, N.W.2; Rev. J. B. Russell, M.A., West Manse, Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire; Mr. C. P. Skinner, 4, Southampton Row, W.C.1; Miss M. G. F. Smelt, 59, Rosslyn Hill, N.W.3 (rejoined); Rev. R. Thomas, M.A., 14, Gordon Square, W.C.1; Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Webb, 15, Grove Terrace, Highgate Rd., N.W.5

OBITUARY.

... gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,"

MOLLIE OGLETHORPE (1899-1946).

We deeply regret to record the death on February 4th, of Mrs. Mollie Oglethorpe, wife of Mr. James N. Oglethorpe of Enfield, an active member of this Society since 1935, and a member of the Council for nearly ten years. We quote the following from an obituary appearing in the *Enfield Gazette*, published on the day of the funeral, Friday, February 8th, attended by Mr. E. G. Crowsley, representing the Society. "Four weeks after she had entered the Enfield War Memorial Hospital, Mrs. Mollie Oglethorpe died suddenly last Monday morning, a day after she had been visited by her husband, who in his own words, found the invalid 'very cheerful.' Mrs. Oglethorpe had been in ailing health for a year or more, but the suddenness of her passing was a great and altogether unexpected shock to her relatives and friends. When in full health and vigour, Mrs. Oglethorpe took a lively and practical interest in a number of social activities which touched on literature and art. In those days the deceased lady was one of the moving spirits in the promotion of local art through the medium of the Enfield Art Circle; and the *Gazette's* regular readers will remember her literary contributions to this journal."

We conclude with an Appreciation from Mrs. M. B. Sidebotham: "When I saw Barne's play, 'Mary Rose,' I thought of Mollie Oglethorpe. She was a fairy child who was never touched by the grossness of this earth, and who never seemed to grow older. So she lived; and so she died, with a loving word to everyone who saw her, and a smile upon her face, beautiful as if in sleep. The writings of Charles Lamb made a special appeal to her. I think she must have known every line he ever wrote, and no detail of his life was unknown to her. She never allowed him to be criticised in any adverse way. She loved him with all his faults, and took him to her heart. She was taken to the small War Memorial Hospital just four weeks before she died; 'only for rest' she told everyone."

Subscriptions.

The Treasurer would remind those members who have not yet remitted their subscriptions for 1946 that these are now due, and should be forwarded without delay to Mr. S. L. G. HUXSTEP, 37, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.

Forthcoming Meetings.

Monday, March 11th: Robert Gittings, M.A., "The Party at Haydon's" (Chairman: A. F. Bishop) at University Hall, 14, Gordon Square, W.C.1, at 7-30 p.m. Saturday, April 13th: J. Newburn Levien, Hon. F.R.A.M., "John Braham" (Chairman: J. P. Collins) at The Central Club (Y.W.C.A.) Great Russell Street, W.C.1, at 2-45 p.m.

Gifts.

The Hon. Librarian gratefully acknowledges the following additions to the Society's Collection of *Eliana*—From Mr. A. C. Denham: "Memoir of Charles Lamb" by Barry Cornwall, 1st Edition 1866 "Letters of Charles Lamb" edited by T. N. Talfourd, 2 vols., 1st edition, 1837. "Final Memorials of Charles Lamb" by T. N. Talfourd, 2 vols., 1st edition, 1848.

CHARLES LAMB and EMMA ISOLA.

Letter from MR. NEIL BELL to MR CROWSLEY.

"I notice your subscriptions has gone up so I had beter increase my annual tribute. The extra half-crown will perhaps entitle me to a word with your Brains Trust. A question was recently asked its members about my novel of the life and times of Charles Lamb *So Perish the Roses*. While not in the least admitting my "many errors" in topography nor my "lack of sources." I suggest that such errors in a biography are gross but in a novel trifling. But in the matter of the love between

Lamb and Emma Isola I submit that the answer of your Brains Trust was dishonest or ignorant. Crabb Robinson says that Mary told him that Charles and Emma loved one another but that the disparity in their ages was too great. And what does the Brains Trust mean by 'psychologically erroneous?' That a man of forty and a girl of fourteen could fall in love? Rubbish, it is a commonplace. All the evidence (except to the wilfully blind) points to the love of these two people for one another. (Perhaps the dishonest, ignorant, and wilfully blind Brains Trust had noted that Mary's remark was made on January 12th, 1835, when she had just returned from confinement, and that Robinson admitted that "every other judgment was utterly wild and groundless."—ED.)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DEBUT OF DRAMATIC GROUP.

Mr. Walter Farrow presided at the Annual General Meeting held at University Hall on January 21st. The customary reading from Lamb was given by Mr. Stephen K. Jones who chose the Lear passage from the Essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare." Before dealing with business matters the Chairman paid sympathetic tribute to the late Lord Plender who in 1937 was the Guest of Honour and was always in sympathy with the work of the Society. The Annual Report and Accounts (circulated with the January Bulletin) were approved, emphasis being laid on the following items therein: (a) list of members was now included after a lapse of some years, and contained seventy names enrolled in the first year of Society's existence; (b) the excellence of last year's programme of addresses; (c) the record attendance at the Birthday Celebration when the new President, Lord David Cecil, was installed and the presentation made to Mr. E. G. Crowsley; (d) the increase of 72 members, making a total of 380; (e) the revision of the subscription for London members to meet increased expenditure; (f) the devoted and brilliant work of Mr. S. M. Rich in maintaining the high standard of the Bulletin; (g) the unflinching help and unstinting labours of Mr. E. F. Lewis who by reason of ill health had been compelled to resign the office of Hon. Treasurer; (h) the formation of the new Dramatic Group. Nominations for the Election of Officers, Members of the Council, and an additional Corresponding Secretary were submitted and approved; Mr. S. L. G. Huxstep succeeds Mr. Lewis as Hon. Treasurer.

Then followed the first production of the recently formed Dramatic Group; the play selected was "The Man without a Foe" by Miss P. G. Mann and Mr. A. Macdonald, first produced by the B.B.C. in February last year. The Cast was as under:

CHARLES LAMB ..	Mr. F. V. Hallam	DIRECTOR ..	Mr. H. C. Chapman
MARY LAMB ..	Mrs. C. Badcock.	EMMA ISOLA ..	Miss R. M. Budd.
COLERIDGE ..	Mr. G. W. Panzetta.	ALICE ..	Miss A. M. Ferraro.
POSTMAN and MANAGER	Mr. B. Francis	BETSY ..	Miss E. C. McDonald.
MRS. NORRIS ..	Miss R. Collins.	MOXON ..	Mr. A. F. Bishop.
WADD and HENRY CARY	Mr. A. J. Ford.	NARRATOR ..	Mr. H. C. Chapman.
CHAIRMAN OF DIRECTORS ..	Mr. A. F. Bishop.	AT THE PIANO	Miss Gwen Jones.
		PRODUCER ..	Miss A. H. Park.

"I could never hate any man that I have once seen" said Charles Lamb to a friend on one occasion, and the object of the Play is to seize upon this characteristic attitude of Lamb and portray him as "The Man without a Foe." The Prologue was read by Miss A. Park: a poem appearing in *Temple Bar* (July, 1886) signed M.E.W.

And then the play ran its course of unfoelike traits. At the conclusion of the reading one member present at any rate felt that the Dramatic Group's rendering was better than the radio version, although the impression may have been due to the visual element. Where every participant was good it would be invidious to single out particular items of the play, but one may perhaps be allowed to remark that special pleasure was derived from the sympathetic treatment of Mr. Hallam in the difficult role with its many moods of Charles, and particularly in the exquisite telling of the story of the Babes in the Wood and the remainder of "Dream Children" to the three children Emma, Alice, and Betsy (Misses Budd, Ferraro and McDonald) who, listening intently with childlike enjoyment, found that they were only "what might have been; nothing, less than nothing, and dreams;" Mrs. Badcock as Mary preserved an old-world air befitting the part and was particularly telling in the incident of the finding of the cat and subsequent additional rooms adjoining their chambers; Mr. Panzetta invested the Samuel Taylor of 1796 with youthful vigour, bouyancy and a ready response to Charles' call for aid in his family trouble, shading off into the absent-mindedness of the maturer Coleridge; Miss Collins as Mrs. Norris spread an air of charming friendliness and kindness to Charles and her pupils at Goddard House; Mr. Francis as Postman and as Manager of the East India House was resonantly forthright in speech from which a sense of underlying humour had at times to escape; whilst Mr. Ford as Wadd and as Henry Cary, and Mr. Bishop as the Chairman of Directors and as Moxon dealt admirably with their parts (Mr. Bishop deputised at short notice for Mr. J. P. Collins unavoidably prevented from attending). Mr. Chapman imparted histrionic dignity to the roles of Narrator and Director; musical interludes by Miss Gwen Jones added a fitting note to the occasion. The dramatic atmosphere created by the players came over most effectively to the audience who were held in its spell. Miss Park, the Producer, had made excellent choice in casting the parts, Miss Mann, co-author of the play expressed her appreciation of the production, to which the Chairman added the thanks of those present. Our congratulations to the Dramatic Group for a splendid first venture and for a memorable evening.
B.R.B.

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

(b) Articles—

My Study Chair. A glance Around My Shelves, by Dr. F. W. Boreham. Charles Lamb (*Australian Christian World*, 14.9.1945).

"No Crabb, No Christmas," by Edmund Blunden (*Listener*: 14.2.1946).

Some British I Admire. III: Charles Lamb, by Ranjee G. Shahani. (*Asiatic Review*: October, 1945)

(c) Reports on Lectures and Meetings:

Charles Lamb Society: Birthday Celebrations (*Manchester Guardian*, 11.2.1946)