

THE C.L.S. BULLETIN

(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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No. 71 (Twelfth Year)

WITH SUPPLEMENT

MAY, 1946.

CHARLES LAMB'S OLD FAMILIAR PLACES

By W. KENT

I wish I could say of these, what Lamb's immortal liar said of the Colossus of Rhodes, that they are a little damaged. Alas, it is otherwise. Scarred would be an understatement: battered they are in truth. This particularly applies to the Temple, wed more to Lamb in the mind of the book-lover than to any other author. Truly did Arthur Adams write of it once:—

"It is a heart of silence in
The City's heart. Slip from the din
Knock at the little hidden door,
And peace and solitude begin."

We cannot feel the same now. Rather as we survey the ruins we could quote Keats,

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk."

Even the youngest of us will never see the Temple as it once was; it will be to all a mere memory of the haunts of the Victorian and the Edwardian eras of peace.

The one-time "cheerful Crown Office Row" is now a cheerless sight. The actual place of "kindly engendure" is no more. A small part of No. 10 was left, but this was demolished. The tablet, bearing the inscription just quoted, as Lamb might have said, was broken; even as the Ten Commandments. The "fine Elizabethan hall" was rather badly damaged. Happily its hammer-beam roof escaped, and restoration has already commenced. The Fountain, buried in brick for years, is now again much as Lamb saw it. The Temple Church is a ruin: the effigies of the knights have perished in unchivalric warfare. Here is one small mercy. The "grotesque Gothic heads," to the young Lamb "replete with devout meaning," remain intact. Lamb House, which was south of the Church—a charming building that took its name from the cognisance of the Middle Temple and not from Thackeray's "St. Charles"—has left nothing but a short flight of stone steps behind.

The Inner Temple Library, a post-Elia structure, has entirely disappeared. Its literary losses amounted to 45,000 volumes. On its staircase, about ten years ago was placed a carved winged horse—the "ancient badge and cognisance" referred to by Lamb. It had gone into oblivion for many years. Happily it has survived, though like the archangelic Coleridge, a little damaged. The very last Lamb memorial was removed out of harm's way. This was erected in the Temple Gardens in 1930. It was the stone figure of a boy who clasped a book, on the open page of which was a quotation from *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*—"Lawyers were children once." Lamb must surely have lingered at times in Brick Court where, less than a year before his birth, Oliver Goldsmith had died. Alas the chambers of the creator of "the Vicar of Content" have vanished under the Vandals from Germany, even as have those of Lamb in Crown Office Row.

What of Christ Church, Newgate, which for over two hundred years abutted upon

Christ's Hospital? It has suffered more damage than the Temple Church. It has no roof, and displays a bare ruined choir and nave. One of the only two surviving Wren churches with a gallery—the other was St. Bride's, Fleet Street—this too has gone. With it has disappeared the tall pews, like pulpits, in which sat the "Grecians," over-seering the other boys as they out-topped them in knowledge. Happily the bust of Lamb, unveiled by the late Lord Plender in 1935, has marvellously survived. To its escape from the bombs of Hitler one might apply Lamb's words of those who missed the blows of Boyer. "His thunder rolled innocuous for us; his storms came near but never touched us." The bust was removed to Horsham after the Church was hit.

Recently, with the architect of the Church, I explored the ruins. The flat gravestone of Boyer was still there, behind the line of the old altar rails. The inscription, stating that he was the master of the grammar school at Christ's Hospital and died in 1814, can still be read. In the vestibule still remains also a tablet bearing the following inscription: "Here Lyes A BENEFACTOR, Let no one Move his Bones." This was brought from the cloisters of Christ's Hospital, when it was demolished in 1902. It related to James St. Amand, who died in 1754. The wish was not fulfilled. In the former year the benefactor's bones were taken to the City Corporation Cemetery at Ilford. Lamb might have written prettily about this, quoting his and my beloved Sir Thomas Browne. "Who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? Who hath the oracle of his ashes or whither they are to be scattered." Also if Lamb could behold the sorry state of his once loved Temple, he might borrow from Browne again and say Better "this than the drums and tramlings of a German conquest."

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Mr. W. Kent's New Book on London.

Readers may like to know that Mr. Kent has recently published the fourth edition of his booklet on London's last galleried inn, the George, Southwark. It has 25 pages and 13 illustrations for a shilling. He is just also publishing *London for The Curious*, a pocket volume of 138 pages with a number of pictures for 2/6. Both can be obtained direct from the author, 71, Union Road, S.W.4.)

Forthcoming Meetings.

Monday 13th May: E. M. W. Tillyard, M.A., Litt.D. (Master of Jesus College, Cambridge) "Convictions and Fantasy in Elizabethan Literature" (Chairman: G. Rostrevor Hamilton, F.R.S.L.) University Hall, 14 Gordon Square, W.C.1, at 7-30 p.m. Saturday, 22nd June (*note change of date*): Miss Catherine M. Maclean, M.A., Litt.D.; "Hazlitt and the Challenge of our Time" (Chairman: L. Raymond), the Central Club (Y.W.C.A.), Gt. Russell Street, W.C.1, at 2-45 p.m.

Important Preliminary Notice.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Farrow cordially invite members to their home at "Falaise," Harmer Green Lane, Welwyn, Herts., on Saturday afternoon, 13th July 1946. Pre-war members will remember these delightful occasions. Full particulars will appear in the July BULLETIN.

Gifts.

The Hon. Librarian gratefully acknowledges the following additions to the Society's Collection of *Eliana*—From Mr. Edwin B. Hill: Miss L. J. Gurney's Notes on Bertram Dobell's, "Sidelights on Charles Lamb" (1903). From Miss Catherine M. Maclean: "The Making of a Poem—William Wordsworth's 'The Prelude'."

Subscriptions for 1946.

Have you paid your Subscription for 1946? If not, do please forward it now (7/6 or 5/- according to your locality) to the Treasurer, Mr. S. N. G. Huxstep, 37, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1.

The Wife's Trial.

The Dramatic Group's next venture is "The Wife's Trial", by Charles Lamb, to be given at our Chairman's "At Home" at Falaise, Welwyn, Herts., on 13th July, 1946.

Members of the Dramatic Group are advised that the subscription is 3/6 for active members and for those who do not wish to act but who are interested, and there are quite a number of these, the annual subscription is 1/-. Subscriptions should be sent to Miss Mary C. Henderson, 27, Hampstead High Street, N.W.3. Any member of The Charles Lamb Society may join the Group and any who wish to join either as active or as non-active members are asked to write to the Hon. Secretary, Mr. A. J. Ford, 147, Beaconsfield Road, Enfield, Middlesex.

New Members.

Mr. T. A. Critchley, 53, Buckingham Avenue, Whetstone, N.20; Mr. E. H. Day, Water End, Stokenchurch, High Wycombe, Bucks. (re-joined); Mrs. B. and Miss M. Francis, 115, Kenilworth Court, S.W.15; Dr. M. Gotz, 28, Pembridge Crescent, W.11; Miss D. Hammond, 7, Fawley Road, N.W.6; Miss M. Lawson, 38, Frognal, Hampstead, N.W.3; Mrs. W. S. Lea, The Bungalow, Hasborne Road, Cheadle, Nr. Stoke-on-Trent; Mr. E. C. Luin, Abney House, 21, Neon Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth; Mr. and Mrs. R. Martin, 7, Queen's Grove, Parkstone, Dorset; Cpl. E. J. Millar, Upton Hall, Nr. Macclesfield; Mr. J. E. Morpungo, 49B, Clanricarde Gardens, W.2; Tpr. E. J.



With cordial greetings from the Editor.

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Pinches, 5, Holdenhurst Avenue, N.12; Mr. W. H. Pine, 11, Edwards Road, Quinton, Birmingham
 32; Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Preston, Mitre Chambers, Mitre Street, E.C.3; Miss W. E. E. Stevens, 69,
 Drayton Bridge Road, Hanwell, W.7; Mr. I. L. Tibbs, 33, Colcocks Road, Banstead; Mr. N. I.
 White, 1003, Lamond Avenue, Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.; Gnr. J. L. Wilson, 37, Hargrave
 Park, N.19.

OBITUARY

"Two or three have died, and so many parts of me have been numbered."

THE REV. E. H. B. COLERIDGE (1882-1945.)

We regret to record the death, on November 24th last of the Rev. E. H. B. Coleridge, eldest son of Ernest Hartley Coleridge. He had been a member of the C.L.S. since March 1944. Graduating at Selwyn College, Cambridge, he was ordained in 1905, and was a curate at St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, for eight years before becoming Vicar of Swanscombe, Kent in 1913. He was appointed Vicar of Christ Church, Erith, in 1920, and of Leatherhead in 1926. On account of failing health he left Leatherhead in 1944 to become Vicar of Cornwood, a small parish on the southern slopes of Dartmoor. He gave the address at the Coleridge Centenary Service at Highgate in 1934. We offer sincere sympathy to his widow and his children.

MR. CHARLES LAMB

Mr. Charles Lamb of Wood Green, who died on January 5th last, was a frequent attendant at C.L.S. meetings since he joined us over three years ago. We shall miss his cheery presence, and the amused smile with which he invariably greeted references to the identity of his name with that of the Society's hero.

REPORTS OF RECENT MEETINGS.

Centenary Address on B. R. Haydon.

At the March Meeting Mr. ROBERT GITTINGS was the speaker and the subject "Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)." Prior to the address Mr. WALTER FARROW referred sympathetically to three members who had recently passed away: The Rev. G. H. B. Coleridge, Mrs. Mollie Oglethorpe, and Mr. Charles Lamb. Mr. STEPHEN K. JONES also mentioned the death of Mr. Matt, who had been caretaker of University Hall since 1890.

THE CHAIRMAN, Mr. A. F. Bishop, then called on Mr. Huxstep to read from Haydon's Autobiography the account of the famous party at which Lamb excelled himself at the expense of that remarkably wooden-headed Comptroller of Stamps, who has, like others, survived for our amusement solely through the reaction of Charles Lamb to life's oddities.

In introducing the speaker the CHAIRMAN said that Mr. Gittings had had the privilege of association with the late Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, a friendship much to be envied, and was the author of a radio play woven round the famous "party" produced by the B.B.C. in 1941.

MR. GITTINGS, whilst looking upon the party of 1817 as once of the high lights of Haydon's career developed his address as a general study and eulogy of Haydon to commemorate the centenary of his death. In 1817 Haydon was in his early thirties and at his best; his successful student days had been followed by commissions from noble patrons, and his most recent picture *The Judgment of Solomon* had sold well; now he was at work on *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* in his new and large studio in Lisson Grove. Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Reynolds and Keats had addressed sonnets to him; Hazlitt, himself a painter until he found his real forte in writing, had commended his work; the freedom of his native city, Plymouth, had been given to him, and his studio had been honoured by a visit from Canova, the celebrated Italian sculptor. Yet difficulties were ahead. At this period of the 19th century the old order in English society was changing and giving place to the new; for the industrial revolution was at work and the power of the nobility and land-owning class was passing into the hands of the new middle class with money to spend but possessing little or no taste as yet, for the true values of art. Haydon could not understand the new outlook. These latter-day people were not grand nor heroic, and he despised them even though some of them sat to him. Imbued with the teachings of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Haydon was obsessed with the classical tradition, and was determined to surpass the older painters with canvases composed on a more grandiose scale. His first venture, *The Assassination of Dentatus* was on such a scale, huge in size and subject. The new classes wanted smaller pictures for their smaller houses, and other painters, Crome, Cotman, Constable, and Turner were developing the English genius in the genre of landscape, and were finding favour. Haydon, however, pursued his designs on the grand scale, copying the old masters to such an extent that his paintings became composites of Rembrandt, Titian, Raphael and Rubens, and not good at that. The fact was that Haydon was only happy when confronted with the wide open spaces of the largest canvas he could obtain: as he said "There is nothing like a large canvas. Let me be penniless, helpless, hungry, thirsty, croaking or fierce, the blank even space of a large canvas restores me to happiness." Which meant that he moved from studio to larger studio as his canvases grew in size. Eventually circumstances forced him to smaller dimensions, the period of the portraits and the smaller subject pictures. Haydon, however, lacked the hall-mark of the real artist—humility. Later he ran a school of art, but this did not last long. He pestered Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington and Lord Melbourne, for commissions but in vain. Still with faith in the British public he organised an exhibition of his pictures which opened on a Bank Holiday; the public flocked to a rival freak show and Haydon's exhibition was a pitiful failure. Illusion fell from his eyes; he was not wanted and it broke him. He took his life in front of one of his canvases. The last entry in his Diary is significant: "June 22nd, 1846. God forgive me. Amen. Finis of B. R. Haydon. Stretch me no longer on this rough world. King Lear." Yet Haydon was not without merit. His unfinished autobiography was a success from the moment it was printed, and there is nothing like it in English literature; he painted in words and his des-

criptions of the Coronation of George the Fourth and of a Street Scene in Paris are telling examples of his vivid prose. He had a lively eye for significant detail.

Haydon had led a colourful life; his mind was like a steamboiler and ideas streamed out like sparks from a furnace; painting enormous canvases, now forgotten or lying mouldering in the vaults of galleries; writing up with absorbing energy his Journals out of which came his outstanding autobiography; enjoying vigorous health and good company; looking upon bills, partly paid or unpaid, with equal ingrained nonchalance; making himself unpopular with members of the Academy; lecturing with zest to eager art students; never losing hope that his difficulties would vanish and his ambitions be realised. His self-chosen motto from Tasso "At the heart, wings" was typical of the man.

In the discussion which followed Mrs. C. Badcock, the Rev. M. L. Foyle, and Messrs. Hallam, Kent, Raymond and Crowsley took part. The vote of thanks to the lecturer was moved in an apt speech by Mr. G. Rostrevor Hamilton, and to the Chairman by Mr. A. J. Ford.

H.G.S.

John Braham (1774-1856),

"Do you like Braham's singing?" asked Charles Lamb of his friend Manning in a letter written on February 26th, 1808. "The little Jew has bewitched me, I follow him like as the boys follow Tom the Piper. He cured me of melancholy as David cured Saul; but I don't throw stones at him as Saul did at David, in payment."

And it was "the brave little Jew" that Mr. J. M. LEVIEN set out to describe to our members at its meeting on April 13th. Born at Rotherhithe in 1774, Braham was as a boy in the choir at the Great Synagogue where his singing attracted the attention of Abraham Goldsmid, a leader in Israel, and "a pillar in the City" as the *Times* described him. Constituting himself Braham's patron Goldsmid placed him under the tuition of Meyer Leoni, and so well did the boy respond that at thirteen he was the wonder-boy soprano at Covent Garden Opera House. When his voice broke Braham taught the piano. The environment of the Goldsmid household must have been of cultural value to Braham, for in the Goldsmid circle were many famous musicians, including Haydn, Attwood, J. P. Salomon, Catalini, whilst friends of the family were Lord Nelson, Lady Hamilton, Lord Eldon; on one occasion King George III came to lunch, and George IV and his brothers often called.

His voice settling down into a fine tenor Braham went to Bath to study for three years with Rauzzini, now the monarch of music there after retiring as the leading singer in Italy of his day. This was followed by an appearance at Drury Lane in "Mahmoud," Then came a tour of the Continent: Paris, Florence, Milan, Genoa, Leghorn (where Braham dined with Nelson twice a week). After two years at Milan a return to Covent Garden was made via Trieste and Hamburg.

The possessor of robust health, Braham throughout his career hardly ever missed an engagement. He sang in Grand Opera—English and Italian—Ballad Operas, Oratorios, and in duets and trios with all the great artists of his time, always with success, whilst his patriotic songs expressed the high lights of national feeling. Even at seventy he could still give out notes from his great chest with immense power and dramatic force. Contemporary writers were full of praise for his purity of style and glorious renderings in oratorios, and averred that he was among the greatest singers of any age or country. Charles Lamb in "Imperfect Sympathies" takes Braham to task for forsaking the Jewish faith for another, but nevertheless awards him high praise for his singing: "The foundation of his vocal excellence is sense. He sings with understanding, as Kemble delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments, and give an appropriate character to each prohibition." Braham took a notable part in "Oberon" at Covent Garden and Weber said he was "the greatest singer in Europe." In florid music he was pre-eminent, and in simple melodies he could touch the hearts of his audience. An extraordinary quality of his voice was in the use of falsetto; it was impossible to detect where he took it or passed from it, so even was the transition.

In private life he was a delightful and interesting companion, and his artistic taste when singing before fastidious listeners was impeccable; before a miscellaneous audience he was apt to play to the gallery, with resultant thunderous applause. He amassed a fortune of £80,000 and in the latter part of his life put £40,000 of it into two theatres, and lost it. Abstemious, enormously industrious, most punctual and honorable in all his engagements, above envy in spite of his superior talent, he was also a good husband and father to his six children; three sons followed music, and a daughter became Countess of Waldegrave and was a leading social and political figure at Strawberry Hill, once the home of Horace Walpole. At sixty-seven he went to America and though the tour started none too well Braham soon roused his audiences to enthusiastic ovations. On his return he continued to sing until 1852, when he retired, though he could still sing with zest to friends. He died at Brompton on February 17th, 1856, and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery.

Mr. LEVIEN in conclusion said: I like to think that "the brave little Jew" not only bewitched Charles Lamb but brought consolation to his spirit; and it may be that in the day when, somewhere, all men and what they have done shall come up for judgment, we, with Charles Lamb, shall hear strains of Handel's "Messiah" sung from Vincent Novello's edition, with the ethereal voice of Jenny Lind in the soprano solos, and the full-throated, dramatic tones of Malibran in the contralto; Sir Charles Santley will sing with noble resonance and wondrous technique "Thus saith the Lord" and "Why do the nations," while Braham's voice will resound through the dome of Heaven in all its sensibility and glory: "And only the Master shall save us."

A musical interlude of Braham's songs followed when Mr. Gold sang "The Anchor's Weighed" and "Death of Nelson" with artistry and deep feeling: whilst to crown the afternoon's enjoyment Mr. Levién and Mr. Gold sang the duet "All's Well" right royally. Mr. Warwick accompanied.

A number of interesting exhibits, portraits, autographs, theatre bills, musical scores, etc., had been brought by Mr. Postans for inspection by the members, and in the subsequent discussion Messrs. Farrow, Emden, Chapman, Chadfield took part. The Elian reading was given by Miss Wedd.

Mr Raymond proposed the vote of thanks to Mr. Levién for his delightfully entertaining address, coupling with it Mr. Gold and Mr. Warwick for their music, and Mr. Crowsley seconded. A vote of thanks to Mr. J. P. Collins, as Chairman ever genial and humorous, was proposed by Mr. Bishop.

H.G.S.