



(Organ of THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY, founded 1935)

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### LOW MARKS FOR ELIA!

In Mr. George Sampson's latest volume, "Seven Essays": Cambridge University Press, 1947 (10/6), he comments wisely and amusingly on a Report, issued in 1941, on an Investigation carried out by a sub-Committee of the International Institute Examinations Enquiry Committee. The purpose of the Sub-Committee was to enquire into the marking of English essays at First School Examinations, and, if possible, to devise a scheme ensuring uniformity of marking. They therefore decided that selected examiners should set and mark test essays by selected children of the appropriate age group, each essay to be marked for the following categories: (i) Sense; (ii) Spelling; (iii) Punctuation, including Formal Paragraphing; (iv) Grammar; (v) Vocabulary; (vi) Sentence Structure; and (vii) General Impression; and that the mark for General Impression should be allotted after the other categories had been marked. In spite of this elaborate scheme, writes Mr. Sampson, "different examiners gave the same essay widely different marks in each of the categories, and at least one examiner gave the same essay a totally different assessment when it was presented to him (or her) a second time after a long interval." (Was this examination of examiners cricket?). Mr. Sampson draws the conclusion "that all concerned were trying to mark the unmarkable." As a test he invites us to try to mark, for the given categories, Lamb's essay *Old China*—certainly one of the most personal, most charming and most serious. What mark will you assign it for Sense? It is called *Old China*, but, save for some introductory sentences (which you will penalise for facetiousness) and one brief remark at the close, it has nothing to do with old china. Spelling? Well, the printer has seen to that. Punctuation, including Formal Paragraphing: Two consecutive paragraphs contain less than two lines; one paragraph contains a bare line and a half. Another contains twenty-six lines, others are of almost that length. The final paragraph contains nearly thirty-seven lines. Formal paragraphing is therefore Bad. In punctuation, the stop most frequently employed is the long dash—there are thirteen in one paragraph alone. Punctuation is therefore Bad. Grammar: in general correct, but so involved as to leave the reader uncertain of syntactical relations; some of the paragraphs would defy formal analysis. A high mark, therefore, cannot be given. Vocabulary: generally good, but sometimes over-elaborate, e.g. the use of 'optics' for 'eyes'. Nevertheless a good mark could be given for the attempt to use a variety of words. Sentence Structure: see Grammar, Formal Paragraphing and Punctuation. General Impression: A jumble of unrelated ideas—china, poverty, clothes, book-buying, print-buying, reminiscences of the theatre, walks, food, youth, age, etc. There is not the least evidence of a Plan, with duly co-related members; and the titular subject is never discussed. Well, that is how *Old China* is likely to fare in a First School Certificate Examination." All this is *delicious*; and so is the whole of Mr. Sampson's book of essays, which treat of varied aspects of literature, education and music.

## "AT HOME" AT "FALAISE"

### Presentation to Mr. Walter Farrow.

Saturday, June 14th, was a Red-letter Day in the annals of the Society; about ninety members accepted the invitation of the Chairman and Mrs. Farrow to their "At Home" at "Falaise", an opportunity for a presentation to be made to Mr. Farrow in recognition of his unwearying efforts as Chairman since the Society's formation in 1935, and also to celebrate his eightieth birthday. A fortnight of brilliant weather was unfortunately followed by continuous rain on the day for the visit, which prevented what could have been a real Garden-party in the lovely precincts of "Falaise"; nevertheless, that commodious homestead successfully enveloped the whole of the party to their content. Refreshments in remarkable variety provided by the indefatigable hostess were dispensed by a willing band of helpers amid the hum of conversation of an Elian informality. The conclusion of tea found groups of members being briskly rotated into the sun-room and there bidden to face the camera—and the future—with a smile; had the weather been kind the beautiful garden would have provided the perfect setting for this interlude.

Then came a series of items from members of the Dramatic Group, preceded by a Prologue, "Falaise, 1947", written and delivered by Mr. Basil Francis in honour of the occasion. Mr. Francis as compère, next introduced in breezy and witty terms the items: Miss Margaret Brown, in the well-known speech from Lamb's play "John Woodvil"; Miss Ferraro, in an extract from Lamb's "Defeat of Time"; Mr. Basil Francis, in one of Lamb's sonnets to Miss Frances Kelly; Mr. Postans, in "Masks and Faces"; an Elian fantasy by J. P. C.; Mr. J. P. Collins, in "An Address to an Egyptian Mummy", by Horace Smith; Miss Grimditch and Mr. Panzetta, in an extract from "The Lady of Pleasure" by James Shirley. All these revealed a versatility in selection and brought out in turn a sense of wistfulness, charm, sentiment, humour and wit, which highly delighted the audience. Mr. FARROW, in thanking the members for their entertainment said how gratifying it was to Mrs. Farrow and himself to see so many turn out in such unpropitious weather, and he welcomed two of the Vice-Presidents, Mr. Edmund Blunden and Mr. J. Lewis May; Mr. S. M. Rich was unfortunately unable to be present. As Chairman he had always had the loyal co-operation and ready helpfulness of the Officers, the Council and the general body of the members, which had rendered his task light and pleasurable. He hoped members would not take too narrow a view of the scope and purpose of the Society; whilst literary studies were delightful and profitable in many personal ways, they had little real effect unless they were made to react in one's daily life; particularly useful could the Society be in stemming attempts to deface the London of which Charles Lamb was so proud: Mr. William Kent's work in this connection was well known. In referring to his eightieth birthday Mr. Farrow recalled in his inimitable way many amusing experiences of earlier days, and in mentioning other long-lived personages resident in the Welwyn neighbourhood said that longevity was evidently endemic. All the work in the public interest he had been able to do and the success achieved was due to the loyal support and inspiration of Mrs. Farrow.

MR. A. F. BISHOP, as informal Chairman of the proceedings, hinted at the gloomy forebodings vouchsafed at the inaugural meeting of the Society in Essex Hall, yet today Mr. Farrow had the pleasure of a body of members almost five hundred strong behind him. The Chairman was no "man of decrepitude and silver hairs" as Lamb wrote in "The Superannuated Man"; on the contrary his youthfulness of mind and body belied his weight of years. Mr. Bishop read a message from the President, Lord David Cecil, and "The Character of a Perfect Chairman," by Mr. S. M. Rich, the latter being much appreciated.

MR. EDMUND BLUNDEN paid tribute to Mr. Farrow's qualities and said he was glad that he had stressed that members should take active steps in addition to their literary studies. It was true that the former fashion of sneering at and treating Lamb with slight contempt had died away, due no doubt to the liberal way in which the Society represented what Lamb stood for. We were a temperate Society and had something to contribute to the London beloved by Lamb, whilst in things that relate to thought and feeling the Society had played its part and could continue to do so.

MR. E. G. CROWSLEY read a letter received by him at Christmas 1934, stating that the writer would gladly join the suggested Charles Lamb Society, and concluding with the words, "Faithfully Yours, Walter Farrow." No better term than "Faithfully Yours" could be applied to Mr. Farrow; behind every activity of the Society had been his wisdom, geniality and experience, guiding it unobtrusively yet efficiently to the satisfactory position it held today. At Council Meetings one marvelled how he solved knotty problems with an easy charm which did not belittle another's inexperience. His personal friendship had been a privilege and an inspiration; he had been a friend to all, a revered Chairman and a true Elian.

MR. BISHOP then interposed to say it was the wish of the members that on this occasion Mr. Farrow should receive a token of their esteem and appreciation, and he called upon Mr. J. Lewis May to make the presentation. MR. J. LEWIS MAY recalled that "Falaise" was also the birthplace of William the Conqueror, who laid waste with fire and sword to make his captures; Mr. Farrow from his "Falaise" had captured our hearts during the twelve years he had served the Society; he was indeed a Prospero, that wise and kindly wizard and magician, with an attendant Ariel (E. G. C.); Caliban, however, symbolised all these people who did not care for Charles Lamb. "May Mr. Farrow long continue to preside over the fortunes of the Society", concluded Mr. May. The presentation consisted of a silver inkstand and an illuminated address in book form, which read as follows:

"The Celebration of your Eightieth Birthday provides us with an appropriate opportunity for recognising your devoted services as Chairman of this Society since its foundation in February, 1935. Your wisdom has progressively guided the Society through

years of War and Peace, and your geniality and friendliness—true Elian qualities—have endeared you to us all. We can never repay the services so selflessly and generously undertaken, but we ask your acceptance of this tribute as a memento of our affection and esteem.

Mr. Farrow briefly replied and renewed his thanks to all. Musical honours were then accorded to him in a freely adapted version by Mr. H. G. Smith of the song, "Father O'Flynn".

MISS ANNETTE PARK asked Mrs. Farrow to accept a basket of fruit as a token of love and esteem from a band of friends to Prospero's Miranda. Mrs. Farrow expressed her thanks and pleasure at having such a goodly company of friends round her.

Thus ended a delightful afternoon; and as the members walked along one of "the green lanes of pleasant Hertfordshire" towards a homeward train, the sun came out to make amends for playing truant and to pour a benediction on the departing guests from "Falaise".

H.G.S.

### From The Chairman: A Note to the Editors

My eightieth birthday evoked so many warm congratulations and goodwill expressions from my fellow Elians that it is impossible to acknowledge them individually. May I, therefore, send through your medium a message of heartfelt thanks to each and all of the friends who sent messages, letters or telegrams on this happy occasion? This opportunity must also be taken to send a message of gratitude to all our members who joined to present such splendid gifts to Mrs. Farrow and myself at the recent "Falaise" gathering. The tokens of affection which the sixteenth of June called forth will ever be highly treasured by us shewing as they do that cheerful service has won for us a place in all your hearts.

WALTER FARROW.

### Outing to the Keats Museum

On Saturday afternoon, May 12th, sixty members and friends visited Keats House and Museum; many members had pleasant recollections of a pre-war visit when the genial gusto of the late Mr. Fred Edgcumbe, who was then Curator enlivened the proceedings. The members were welcomed by the present Curator, Mr. J. H. Preston, and after Miss Ferraro had read an extract giving a piquant description of Fanny Browne sent by John Keats to his brother Tom, Mr. A. F. Bishop asked Mr. Preston to address those present. Mr. Preston recapitulated at some length the associations of Keats with Charles Armitage Brown and the Brawne family with the house which is now the Keats Museum, and brought out the genius of the poet whose life was unhappily cut so short. After a vote of thanks to Mr. Preston, the party inspected the various treasures donated by friends of Keats from all over the world, and also paid a visit to the nearby Library where an extensive collection of Keatsiana is housed. Under the influence of tea at a cafe in the vicinity came a flow of genial conversation, and the outing concluded with Miss Margaret Brown reading the Ode to a Nightingale.

### Bradford and District Branch

The last meeting of our first season was held at Laycock's Rooms on Wednesday, 23rd April, with Mr. Vint in the Chair. The snow and frost of previous weeks had gone, but instead, there was a strong gale blowing, driving the rain and hail fiercely at those of us who ventured forth.

In celebration of Mary Lamb's centenary, Mr. Elsy read a paper "Mary Lamb", by Mr. H. G. Smith, which showed a deep love and understanding of the subject, on the part of both writer and reader.

Mrs. Asquith contributed a reading of Lamb's letter to Coleridge, written in the summer of 1800, humorously describing the visits of Miss Benjey (or Benjee) and "a tribe of authoresses" who were wanting an introduction to Coleridge.

Mr. Vint thanked the readers, and then delighted his audience by producing two contributions of his own—Lamb's letter to Crabb Robinson, of 20th January, 1827, telling of the death of Norris, and containing the wistful phrase "I have none to call me Charley now" which was printed in the Literary Digest for April, 1947—and a short article on Lamb from "English Essayists" by Bonamy Dobrée, Professor of Literature at Leeds University.

The meeting concluded with a discussion and a general hope that the Branch would grow and flourish, and that the weather would perhaps be kinder to us next season.

K.C.A.

### New Members

- Miss A. M. E. Fosse Andrew, 14, Holland Villas Road, W.14.
- Mr. M. Doyle, 30, Raglan Street, Glasgow.
- Miss V. M. Ezard, 6, Lawrence Pountney Hill, E.C.4.
- Miss M. Frankland, 74, Holly Bank Road, Gt. Horton, Bradford.
- Mr. H. L. Kirkley, 11, Gledhow Wood Avenue, Leeds.
- Mrs. O. Leith, 6, Salisbury Road, Rose Bay, Sydney.
- Mr. B. P. Moore, 15, Elm Bank Mansions, S.W.13.
- Mr. J. Murdock, 10, Abbotsford Avenue, Rutherglen, Glasgow.
- Dr. R. Quara, Villa Quara, 5, Via Camandona, Turin.
- Miss E. Radcliffe, Birchfield, Mottram Road, Stalybridge.
- Mrs. M. Rice, 191, Randolph Avenue, Maida Vale, W.9.
- Mr. and Mrs. O. Roberts, 24, Fairway, Southgate, N.14.
- Mr. N. Hardy Wallis, Oak Hall, Haslemere.
- Mr. C. Wolf, 122, South Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

### Summer Visits: July and August, 1947

*Saturday, 12th July.* Visit to Old Edmonton conducted by Mr. F. H. Postans. Members should meet at Lower Edmonton Station at 3 o'clock. Trains from Liverpool Street Station. Buses from Kings Cross, Holborn and Finsbury Park.

Itinerary includes Lamb's Cottage, the Parish Church of All Saints, the Church Yard when a wreath will be placed on the Lambs' grave. Mr. F. E. Sandry, Borough Librarian of Edmonton, and the Society's Hon. Librarian, will arrange a display of Elia interest. Inclusive charge for Tea, tips, etc., 2s. 6d. Participating members should notify Mr. Crowsley by **7th July**.

*Saturday, 9th August.* Visit to Old Kensington ("The Old Court Suburb" of Leigh Hunt) conducted by Mr. F. V. Hallam. Members should meet at corner of Derry Street, between Derry and Toms and Barkers, Kensington High Street, at 2-45 p.m.

Itinerary includes Kensington Square, the "Dukeries", Holland House, Kensington Palace and "Millionaires Row". Inclusive charge for Tea, tips, etc., 2s. 6d.

**Party is limited to 25.** Participating members must notify Mr. Crowsley by **5th August**. Only those who exceed this number will be notified.

### The Johnsonians seek a Crowsley!

The Johnson Society of London was reminded at its annual meeting yeaterday that, like all groups of the kind, it is held together by the work of the hon. secretary, who, whether or not he is learned in the society's studies, must be diligent in business. To their consternation the Johnsonians found that their present hon. secretary, after five years successful work, is compelled to resign, and no successor has yet been found. The society's membership, now about 120, is increasing, and the secretarial office is no sinecure.

Other societies may have cause to reflect. The Charles Lamb Society, which is rather larger in membership than the Johnsonians, was brought into its present prosperity and animation by the assiduity and diplomacy during several years of its hon. secretary, as the members have handsomely recognised. The Johnsonians will no doubt find their man. After Saturday's rather anxious discussions they found relaxation in an amusing paper read by Mrs. H. N. Mundy on "Johnson and the Ladies."—*Manchester Guardian*: 21.4.1947.

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### Winter Programme, 1947/48.

Members may like to note in their diaries that the first meeting of Winter Session will be held on Monday, September 8th, 1947.

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### Dramatic Section

At the Annual General Meeting, held on March 10th, members present welcomed the affiliation with the British Drama League. The Spring number of the League's journal, "Drama" may be seen in the E. F. Lewis Memorial Library.

A Theatre party of 24 saw "The White Devil" on April 18th, and it is hoped to make up another party for the first night of Joan Temple's new play.

At the Play Reading on June 6th, those present enjoyed, "A Convivial Evening at Charles Lamb's" by F. V. Hallam. The next Reading will be at University Hall, on July 25th, when *Charles and Mary*, by Joan Temple, will be read. It is hoped that as many members as possible will come to take a part at this Reading, when a caste will be selected for the play to be performed at the end of the year. Miss M. Henderson would be grateful for outstanding subscriptions to the Section for 1947.—R.D.C.

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

#### (b) Articles

Charles Lamb's Best Friend (*Times Literary Supplement*: 24.5.1947).

\*Centenary Article on Mary Lamb, who died on May 20th, 1847.

A Link with Elia by Meadows White (*S.W.* 3: Number 22, 24.5.1947).

\*On Louisa Martin's Chelsea home; See Lamb's letter to her postmarked 11th July, 1830, No. 854 in Lucas. Illustration, signed Derrick Susper.

#### (d) Illustrations

Charles and Mary (*Radio Times*: 30.5.47).

\*Announcing a Radio Performance of Joan Temple's play on June 7th. Illustration showing Charles and Mary at a table, signed J. S. Goodall, he looking more like Coleridge.

#### (e) Reports of Lectures and Meetings

Johnsonians at a Loss (*Manchester Guardian*: 21.4.1947).

\*Quoted in this issue.

Charles Lamb Society: Presentation to Mr. Walter Farrow at Welwyn (*Herts. Advertiser*: 20.6.1947).

#### (h) Short Notes

Sees Charles Lamb as War Hero (*Star*: 16.12.1946).

\*On Mr. S. Mc Kechnie's researches into Lamb's first years at the E.I.H.

The Editor will be grateful for items or news of items for inclusion in this Bibliography. The co-operation of overseas members is especially solicited. Copies should be addressed to Mr. S. M. Rich, 67, Cricklade Avenue, London, S.W.2.