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CHARLES LAMB ON ACTING AND ARTIFICIAL COMEDY

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In his criticism on actors and the theatre Lamb discussed two opposed acting techniques which, as W E Houghton suggested, might be described as 'natural' and 'artificial'. Lamb commented on the natural acting of Bensley, Fanny Kelly, and Mrs Jordan, and on the artificial acting of Bannister and Palmer, and in August 1825, when he published the essay entitled 'Stage Illusion', he presented his mature ideas on the relationship between these acting techniques and dramatic illusion. I believe that these theories of acting determined the ideas in the essay 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century' where Lamb expressed his notorious judgement on the world of this comedy as 'altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is' (II, 143).¹

In 'Stage Illusion' Lamb did not refer to the concept of dramatic illusion as in any way connected with the elaborate scenery employed in contemporary attempts at verisimilitude in stage setting. He objected to the traditional method of judging how well a play was acted because he did not believe that the degree of scenical illusion produced provided a sound basis for judgement. He did not concern himself with neo-classical ideas of the 'necessity of literal delusion'.² His experience as a spectator in the theatre progressively convinced him that different degrees of 'scenical illusion' were required by different dramatic genres, and that consequently a well-acted play was one in which the degree of scenical illusion produced was appropriate to the kind of play performed. He distinguished between the scenical illusion demanded by a tragedy and that demanded by certain types of comedy, and his explanation of the idea stressed the central importance of the actor in establishing the illusion. The actor who was usually thought to produce the best illusion was he who,

appears wholly unconscious of the presence of spectators. In tragedy - in all which is to affect the feelings - this undivided attention to his stage business, seems indispensable... But, tragedy apart, it may be inquired whether, in certain characters in comedy, especially those which are a little extravagant, or which involve some notion repugnant to the moral sense, it is not a proof of the highest skill in the comedian when, without absolutely appealing to an audience, he keeps up a tacit understanding with them; and makes them, unconsciously to themselves, a party in the scene. (II, 163)

Lamb held in contempt those 'cleverest tragedians' who indulged in 'references to an audience' and who hindered the successful performance of tragedy. If they destroyed the illusion then they reduced the emotional response of the audience and deprived them of a full appreciation of the tragedy. Comedy required a more detached attitude of the audience, and an actor thus needed a different technique. In 'certain characters in comedy' an actor who manifested his consciousness of the audience could effectively improve his performance. Lamb discussed Bannister's manner of acting

cowards and argued that such a character, if presented too realistically, would revolt an audience and so interfere with its pleasure. But Bannister acted a coward in such a manner that an audience did not find the character distasteful.

We loved the rogues. How was this effected but by the exquisite art of the actor in a perpetual sub-insinuation to us, the spectators, even in the extremity of the shaking fit, that he was not half such a coward as we took him for?... Was this a genuine picture of a coward? or not rather a likeness, which the clever artist contrived to palm upon us instead of an original; while we secretly connived at the delusion for the purpose of greater pleasure, than a more genuine counterfeiting of the imbecility, helplessness, and utter self-desertion, which we know to be concomitants of cowardice in real life, could have given us? (II, 163-4)

Bannister's deliberately non-natural acting ensured his success, because such characters 'please by being done under the life, or beside it; not to the life' (II, 164). Lamb explained the failure of Emery in comic roles as the consequence of that actor's application of acting techniques which had succeeded in his tragic roles but which were totally unsuited to comic roles. Emery acted too naturally in his comic roles, for less credibility was required in comedy than in tragedy (II, 164-5).

Lamb's argument stressed that in certain representations an audience's pleasure depended upon their consciousness of the fiction. A similar point emerged in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Quince, Bottom, Flute, Snout, Starveling and Snug decided not to maintain scenical illusion in their playing of the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' story. They acknowledged that they could not present an unpleasant character like the lion too realistically because it might frighten the lady spectators. Bottom suggests that Snug must show that he is not a lion and declare: "If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such a thing; I am a man as other men are". And there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner' (III, i). By deliberately unrealistic acting they could create an attitude of detachment, but it was only with Lamb that artificial and natural acting techniques were directly related to 'certain kinds of comedy' and to tragedy respectively.

Actors who displayed those qualities which Lamb connected with the natural acting which he considered appropriate to tragedy included Robert Bensley, Fanny Kelly, and Mrs Jordan. In the essay 'On Some of the Old Actors' he praised Bensley's Iago because the actor was 'totally destitute of trick and artifice' and 'betrayed none of that cleverness which is the bane of serious acting' (II, 133). He maintained scenical illusion by a strict attention to his role, and did not engage in any 'by-intimations to make the audience fancy their own discernment so much greater than that of the Moor' (II, 134). Artificial acting would have debased the grandeur of the struggle between Othello and Iago. On 18 July 1813, when Lamb's first theatrical criticism on Fanny Kelly appeared in Leigh Hunt's *The Examiner*, he similarly praised her 'judicious attention to her part, with little or no reference to the spectators' and contrasted her with those contemporary actresses who seemed to set a fashion of facile tricks to draw the applause of the audience, and whom he called the 'Dalilahs of the stage' (I, 152). And in 1814 *The Examiner* printed Lamb's comments on Mrs Jordan's acting.

She has not an artificial tone... When we say she never did or could

play the *Fine Lady*, we mean it to her honour. Her mind is essentially above the thing. But if the term *Lady* implies anything of graceful or delicate in the highest sense of those female attributes, in that best sense it is due to her. She is one, not of Congreve's, or Sheridan's, but of Shakespeare's *Ladies*.³

This anticipated the idea which Lamb later expressed in the essay 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century' that the plays of Congreve or Sheridan could require an artificial acting technique. In 1819 in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* he also commented on Fanny Kelly's limitations in 'what are called fine lady parts'. Those parts demanded 'the entire repression of all genius and feeling' and Fanny Kelly's and Mrs Jordan's failure in them became a distinguishing mark of their excellence.

His examination of their acting techniques involved comment upon the relationship which these techniques established with the audience, and this looked forward to the essay on 'Stage Illusion'. In 'fine lady parts', Lamb wrote,

a performer must be haunted by a perpetual sub-reference: she must be always thinking of herself in the eyes of the spectators; whereas the delight of actresses of true feeling, and their chief power, is to elude the personal notice of the audience, to escape into their parts, and hide themselves under the hood of their assumed character. Their most graceful self-possession is in fact a self-forgetfulness; an oblivion alike of self and of spectators. (I, 186)

Fanny Kelly maintained dramatic illusion by a full concentration upon her role, and this technique ensured her success in tragic roles but hindered her in the 'fine lady parts' of artificial comedy which required a consciousness of the audience. She employed a natural and not an artificial acting technique. Thus these actresses excelled in the performance of tragic heroines or Shakespearean ladies like Viola and Helena but were unsuited to play the ladies created by Congreve and Sheridan. Fanny Kelly seemed with without artifice. She possessed that rarest and most valued of skills 'a wonderful force of imagination' (I, 185) and this enabled her to express the innermost thoughts and feelings of the character she acted. It was this projection of the inner self which most affected Lamb's sensibility and which evoked a deep sympathetic response. This acting was diametrically opposed to the artificial acting which formed the centre of Lamb's discussion in 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century'.

Lamb based this essay on his practical knowledge of theatrical performance, and attempted to defend artificial comedy against the charge of immorality. Whereas he willingly accepted the imaginative experience which the theatre offered and did not require the facile satisfaction of a 'notional justice, notional beneficence' (II, 146), he considered his contemporary audiences only too prone to the false application of moral judgement in the theatre. He did not believe that questions of moral judgements arose in what he called artificial comedy, because he thought that the world of the plays was 'altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is', and that the characters 'in their own sphere, do not offend my moral sense; in fact they do not appeal to it at all' (II, 143). He first developed the idea in the essay 'On Some of the Old Actors' where it evolved directly from a consideration of the acting techniques of Bannister and Palmer. Unlike the natural acting which Lamb praised in Bensley, Fanny Kelly and Mrs Jordan,

Palmer and Bannister occasionally employed an artificial mode of acting. Of Palmer Lamb wrote:

Jack had two voices, - both plausible, hypocritical and insinuating; but his secondary or supplemental voice still more decisively histrionic than his common one. It was reserved for the spectator; and the dramatic personae were supposed to know nothing at all about it. The *Lies* of young Wilding, and the *sentiments* in Joseph Surface, were thus marked out in a sort of italics to the audience. This secret correspondence with the company before the curtain (which is the bane and death of tragedy) has an extremely happy effect in some kinds of comedy, in the more highly artificial comedy of Congreve or of Sheridan especially, where the absolute sense of reality (so indispensable to scenes of interest) is not required, or would rather interfere to diminish your pleasure.

When Bannister played Ben, in *Love for Love*, and had to show in that character an 'insensibility which in real life would be revolting' (II, 140) he acted in such a manner as to create the impression of a 'delightful phantom - the creature dear to half-belief', and the result was that he did not 'wound the moral sense' of the spectator. An actor who played the part realistically, who made Ben into 'a downright concretion of a Wapping sailor - a jolly warmhearted Jack tar' (II, 141), disturbed the spectator's moral sense.

Lamb developed this discussion in the essay 'On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century'. Such comedy depicted the 'fictitious half-believed personages of the stage' (II, 142) in whose actions and feelings the audience's sympathies should not be fully engaged, and the actor had consequently to deliberately reduce the audience's emotional involvement, to create a psychological distance between them and the performance. Lamb's experience of the theatre had shown him that one way in which the actor could achieve this was by using two voices, as did Palmer in his acting of Joseph Surface: 'He was playing to you all the while that he was playing upon Sir Peter and his lady. You had the first intimation of a sentiment before it was upon his lips. His altered voice was meant to you, and you were to suppose that his fictitious co-flutterers on the stage perceived nothing at all of it'. The result of Palmer's 'highly artificial manner' was that it 'counteracted every disagreeable impression which you might have received from the contrast, supposing them real, between the two brothers'. Artificial acting took the character into 'the regions of pure comedy, where no cold moral reigns' (II, 145), and Lamb regretted that contemporary actors had abandoned the techniques of artificial acting. 'Sir Peter Teazle must be no longer the comic idea of a fretful old bachelor bridegroom, whose teasings (while King acted it) were evidently as much played off at you, as they were meant to concern any body on the stage, - he must be a real person' (II, 146).

At the same time as theatrical production changed characters like Joseph Surface into real people so it allowed the introduction of moral judgement. Lamb's argument implied that actors held much responsibility for this and could determine the nature of the audience's reaction; but, as he knew, there were always spectators who insisted on maintaining moral judgment in the theatre, like the reviewer in *The Public Advertiser* of 1 December 1787 who asked: 'But without a moral tendency, what advantage can possibly be gained from visiting the theatre?' Lamb considered artificial comedy as an entertainment and reproached those who 'dare not contemplate an Atlantis,

a scheme, out of which our coxcombical moral sense is for a little transitory ease excluded' (II, 144). The theatre offered freedom to the imagination rather than an obligation to live 'our toilsome lives twice over' (II, 142). Lamb distinguished between those moral standards which controlled his response to real life and those which operated when he saw artificial comedy, whereas the majority of spectators could not change their attitudes with this flexibility when they entered a theatre. As Houghton suggested, Lamb also made a crucial distinction between artificial comedy and modern 'drama of common life', and the former's unreality must be judged in comparison with the latter's reality. Lamb admitted that if one of the characters of artificial comedy appeared in 'a modern play' then 'my virtuous indignation shall rise against the profligate wretch as warmly as the Catos of the pit could desire; because in a modern play I am to judge of the right and the wrong' (II, 143). Thus, in a letter to Godwin Lamb objected to one of Godwin's ideas for a proposed play because he found the idea immoral in a contemporary play: 'Is it the best sort of feeling? Is it a feeling to be exposed on theatres to mothers and daughters?' (*Letters*, I, 275). Moral references in contemporary plays called the spectator's moral judgement into action. The characters had 'got into a moral world' (II, 143).

Lamb argued that in artificial comedy the characters engaged in actions which would have involved unpleasant consequences in the kind of world inhabited by the audience but that no such consequences were 'produced in *their* world'. Lamb declared that 'No deep affections are disquieted, - no holy wedlock bands are snapped asunder, - for affections depth and wedded faith are not of the growth of that soil' (II, 144). If the audience, sustained by the impression created by the actor, could be lead to suppose that no moral laws were violated because none existed amongst the characters on the stage, then moral values could only exist in the theatrical response if the audience insisted on applying the moral standards of their everyday life. They allowed the interference of a moral frame of reference. Lamb judged only by the effect which the play created upon him in the theatre, and thus he by-passed consideration of whether the play in itself was immoral. He argued that if the audience adopted the necessary attitudes then they would not *think* the play immoral. He concentrated his argument on audience response. He lamented that amongst his contemporaries there were 'no such middle emotions as dramatic interests left' (II, 141), and his view that artificial comedy presented the fictitious half-believed personages' suggested that the mode of comic response peculiar to artificial comedy depended upon the double perspective produced by an audience's willingness to believe and by its simultaneous consciousness of the fiction. Thus in the mind of the spectator there ideally existed neither complete illusion nor a thoroughly detached judgement of the play's fictitiousness. Artificial acting could create this response.

Macaulay objected ferociously to Lamb's argument: 'The morality of the *Country Wife* and the *Old Bachelor* is the morality, not, as Mr Charles Lamb maintains, of an unreal world, but of a world which is a great deal too real. It is the morality, not of a chaotic people, but of low townrakes, and of those ladies whom the newspapers call "dashing Cyprians".'⁴ Lamb knew perfectly well that Restoration society included characters as immoral as those in the plays of Wycherley and Congreve. In the essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare' he wrote that 'doubtless without some vicious alloy, the impure ears of that age /Dryden's/ would never have sate out to

hear so much innocence of love as is contained in the sweet courtship of Ferdinand and Miranda' (I, 109). Houghton quoted Lamb's comment on Burnet's *History of His Own Time* as a work 'Full of scandal, which all true history is. No palliatives, but all the stark wickedness, that actually gives the *momentum* to national actors' (*Letters*, I, 176-7). Houghton argued that Lamb knew that this applied to social as well as political life, and that he 'did not need Macaulay to tell him that Wycherley and Congreve wrote from observation (p.63). Lamb knew that Congreve did not write in a vacuum, but he did not suppose that he simply recorded the vices of his age. Lamb understood as clearly as did Macaulay that vice existed in all periods, but he distinguished between art and history. He argued that the morality of artificial comedy became unreal when its appropriate artistic presentation (which was artificial acting) made it seem so.

Important critical objections to Lamb's essay have stressed that he divorced artificial comedy from what E E Stoll writing in his *Shakespeare Studies* called its 'necessary ultimate relation to morality and life' (New York, 1927, p. 46). Lamb suggested that artificial comedy created its own autonomous world and he arrived at this defence partly in reaction against the excesses of contemporary moral judgement of these plays. Contemporary audiences applied to the characters of artificial comedy the rigorous moral standards of their real lives. Lamb proposed that if artificial acting techniques maintained the 'fictitious half-believed personages of the stage' and kept the audience's emotions distant, then the audience were not required to condemn the morality of the plays; whereas, if the plays were represented realistically, moral judgements could interfere. The argument derived from practical experience of the theatre. When Palmer acted Joseph Surface he conveyed 'the downright *acted* villany of the part, so different from the pleasure of conscious actual wickedness, - the hypocritical assumption of hypocrisy', and consequently 'he divided the palm with me with his better brother' (II, 144). But the contemporary actor 'would instinctively avoid every turn which might tend to unrealise, and so to make the character fascinating. He must take his cue from his spectators, who would expect a bad man and a good man...rigidly opposed to each other' (II, 145). Lamb did not produce good criticism on Restoration comedy, but he did develop a sound analysis of audience reaction in the theatre and of the different effects which dissimilar acting techniques created on him.

NOTES

- 1 W E Houghton, Jr, 'Lamb's Criticism of Restoration Comedy', *ELH*, 10 (1943), 61-72 (p. 68). Houghton also commented on the relationship between 'Stage Illusion' and theories of acting but he denied that the latter essay exercised a 'bearing on his /Lamb's/ theory of artificial comedy, since it concerns only the technique of acting' (p. 72). Quotations from Lamb are from the editions of E V Lucas: *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 7 vols (London, 1903-5), and *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to which are added those of his sister Mary*, 3 vols (London, 1935), abbreviated *Letters*. References follow quotations in the text.
- 2 See S Barnet, 'Charles Lamb's Contribution to the Theory of Dramatic Illusion', *PMLA*, 69 (1954), 1150-9.

- 3 'Charles Lamb on the New Comedy, "Debtor and Creditor"', in Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt's "Examiner" Examined* (London, 1928), p. 249.
- 4 T. B. Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, 2 vols, Everyman's Library (London, 1967), II, 411-52 (p. 418).

NEW LAMB TEXTS FROM *THE ALBION?* II. SHORT PIECES - THE CHINESE PRIME MINISTER

Winifred F Courtney

Daniel Lovell,* from whom Fenwick had bought *The Albion*, was incorrigibly outspoken and endured a dreadful life - later as editor of *The Statesman*. In and out of prison for sedition and libel, his sentences and fines became ever more drastic until in 1818, a ruined man, he died - outside of prison walls, but only barely. Fenwick and Lamb may have escaped similar proceedings by a hair. A series of *Albion* attacks on Ex-Minister Pitt (as well as the verse on Mackintosh) ran very close to the wind. These were signed by "R."

Attack, however, was buried in *The Albion* among columns of war news and rumor, with datelines from everywhere. Britain and France were even then negotiating in talks which were to result in the short-lived Peace of Amiens within the year, but war went on on all fronts, from India to the West Indies. The doings of Nelson, Lord Elgin, the First Consul of France (Bonaparte), Toussaint Louverture, and Alexander I (liberal new Czar of all the Russias) enlivened *The Albion's* pages. The French journals, excerpted or summarized, provided interesting communiqués in which the *British* became "the enemy," against whom in their island an expedition was contemplated. Likewise from Paris came news of ribbons on bonnets and bodices, the latest fashionable color schemes.

At home the ever-mounting National Debt, the wheat shortage caused by blockade as a reason for land enclosure, Ireland (The Act of Union had just been passed), Catholic Emancipation (*The Albion* was for it), non-residence of the clergy (the Church was in a parlous state) were among the Parliamentary issues stressed. Scandalous court cases were lent dignity by the comments of the brilliant advocate Thomas Erskine, and Lord Kenyon as King's Bench judge. One of the most shocking concerned the diabolical abortion pills sold by a Mr. White of St. Paul's Churchyard to an adulterous Quaker, Mr. F*y. A black man was seen to turn white; lightning caused freak fatalities. There were experiments with steam engines, and factory accidents to children; the gentle rambles of the (half-mad) King and his family at Weymouth were reported in loyal detail. There was something for everybody in *The Albion*, and a good deal of ground covered in ten days. In its pages Lamb's acquaintances Randal Norris and Joseph Jekyll play fleeting minor roles - and Isaac Corry, his friend Southey's employer.

Lamb read it all and commented upon much in his "paragraphs" - some amusing, some weak - which limitations of space will compel me to curtail in favor of his more substantial pieces, though I shall mention all those I believe to be his. If the case has been proved for his authorship of those scattered with italics, it remains to look for other confirming indications. I shall, on consideration, treat the first five *Albions* of the Bath run in the present article, where I shall also include the seven related pieces signed "R.," though they occur in seven issues. (The last five "Bath" *Albions* contain generally longer pieces - and fewer "paragraphs" - identifiable as Lamb's. These will be the subject of a future, final article.) In order to quote as much "Lamb" text

*I am grateful to Professor Marrs for pointing out to me that the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* under this name can hardly fail to be the former *Albion* proprietor named by Lamb in "Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago."

as possible, only major editorial identifications will be given.* I take each *Albion*, then, in chronological order:

Monday, June 29, 1801 (No. 565): A series of House of Commons Resolutions proposed by "the Minister" (Henry Addington, as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer) occupies three columns of page 1 and runs into page 2, entitled "National Finance." George Tierney, the Whig budget expert, opposed these resolutions; he and a "Mr. Morgan" were also busy exposing past Tory fiscal misdeeds, to be the subject of the series of *Albion* articles by "R." The first "R." piece appears at the top of page 3. I have given these a "B" rating throughout, for probable Lamb authorship, chiefly because they lack scattered italics and because the final three are much taken up with statistics. I question, too, whether *Lamb* would have had the time or inclination to locate and study the relevant information from the mass of Parliamentary material which Fenwick appears to have been following closely. My best guess is that Fenwick probably supplied the report concerned and that Lamb did the writing: he had, after all, been a government accounting clerk for nine years now and knew a good deal about accounts - more than he liked to admit as a literary man. I think he chose a more direct style than the "Burton" manner we have seen (possibly at his editor's insistence) to make the "R." series compact - and also, perhaps, to suggest that more writers were involved in *The Albion* than was actually the case. Here, then, is the first:

THE BLESSINGS OF *Mr. PITT's ADMINISTRATION.*

The blessings of the heaven-born Minister begin now to be duly felt and appreciated. - Messrs. Morgan, Tierney, and Addington, are daily laying open the frauds of the grand impostor. To the comparative view of the public finances, just published by the former of these gentlemen, we are indebted for the best and clearest developement of the state of our finances, and the progressive accumulation of our debt during the Administration of the heaven-born, the dexterity of whose tricks with the Consolidated Fund would not disgrace the oldest practitioner at ring-dropping in Smithfield. But this fact ought to be printed in large letters, and placed over every fire place in the united kingdom [*sic*] - *Mr. Pitt began his solid system of finance when the debt amounted to two hundred and thirty-two millions - he closed it with leaving us under the pressure of a debt of five hundred and fifty eight [*sic*] millions.* R.

The imagery - "heaven-born Minister" and "grand impostor" (for Pitt), and "the oldest practitioner at ring-dropping in Smithfield" - are imaginative touches suggesting Lamb and generally lacking elsewhere. The gusto of Lamb in attack we have already seen in the Mackintosh epigram, and we will see it, much later, in his devastating verses on the "Prince of Whales" for Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*.

Just below this, also on page 3, is an unsigned piece, with scattered italics, touching on "Doctor Priestly" - Lamb's usual spelling of Joseph Priestley, the Dissenting "Jacobin" clergyman, theologian, and chemist, who had emigrated

* It may be worth a note here as to why I have not included William Godwin among the possible writers for *The Albion*. Godwin had long ago given up doing any but "serious" writing, with only an occasional exception; his health had compelled him to cut even the hours given to that task. And he meticulously recorded his daily stint in an extant (unpublished) diary which covers this period. Nowhere does he record writing for *The Albion*, and it seems a safe assumption that he did not do so.

to America (after persecution) in 1792 and whom, as Lamb wrote Coleridge in 1797, he had once sinned "in almost adoring" (Marrs I, 88). It also concerns "Peter Porcupine," the irascible William Cobbett (of *Rural Rides*), who had returned from radical America a staunch attacker of Jacobins and was later an English Radical: it was his nature to oppose.

EMIGRATION TO AMERICA.

We have already noticed the cruel and illiberal treatment which Doctor Priestly has received from the Editor of the *Porcupine*. Nothing but a press of more important matter has prevented us from noticing the remaining articles of that curious paper of "emigration," contained in the *Porcupine*, 30th May: all the topics of which are taken from the private calamities, and domestic sufferings, real or imaginary, *relevant* or *irrelevant*, no matter, of English emigrants. One of these articles we can no longer be silent upon; we will give it in the vulgar, unmanly, *unsexual* language of the writer. It speaks of Mr. Redhead, sone of the late bridge-master of the city of London. "*Whom he married, I know not; but this I know, that no girl worth having was married in Philadelphia, during my residence there, without my knowing of the wedding.*" From this we may reasonably gather, that Mr. *Porcupine* kept a register office, and was a sort of matrimonial *Pimp*, in Philadelphia; or, at least, that he *re-emigrated* to England, and set up his office in the congenial air of Southampton-street, in the warm neighbourhoods of *Drury Lane* and *Covent Garden*, because there was *no girl worth having* to be had in Philadelphia. Let him chuse, which *horn* of the *dilemma* he will accept.

The article is trite enough, but I think Lamb's. Note the "warm neighbourhoods" Lamb later chose to live in.

Immediately below occur a group of "paragraphs." The first concerns an M.P. who had crossed from Whig to Tory benches:

The accession of Mr. Nicholls must needs be a vast strength to Ministers. Their mighty *puddle* of corrupt influence, no doubt, is deeply sensible of a *drop* more, or a *drop* less.

The second is that on Mackintosh quoted in my previous article. The third 'deals with the present fashion for ladies to "shew *every thing*, and conceal *nothing*," quoting Tacitus; the fourth with a gay English group in a boat picked up by a French privateer and taken to Boulogne: "This is now the only certain mode of obtaining a *passport* to France!" The fifth comments on a trial for poaching, the sixth on the "Lady Babs and Bettys" in the Irish Pension List. (If I do not indicate otherwise, I identify all quoted material as Lamb's. The reader may wish to refer to the "probability" ratings given on pages 5 and 6 of the January *CLB*.)

Tuesday, June 30, 1801 (No. 566). In this issue, only "What Is Jacobinism?," previously presented, appears to be Lamb's. The court case involving the Quaker Fry, a subject of future "paragraphs," occurs on page 4.

An interesting advertisement on page 1 is that of the Fleet Street shoemaker Thomas Hardy. Hardy, organizer of a working-class movement for Parliamentary Reform, had been accused of treason on the flimsy grounds of 1794, together with John Horne Tooke (of whom more hereafter), Thomas Holcroft the actor-dramatist, John Thelwall (later Lamb's friends), and eight others. Threatened with hanging, they were narrowly acquitted through the superb public reasoning

of Erskine and William Godwin combined, a crucial victory for English liberties. The taint of "acquitted felon" clung, but *The Albion* was not a paper to shrink from such association.

Wednesday, July 1, 1801 (No. 567). Another article by "R." appears on page 2:

GLORIOUS WORDS.

At the mention of certain words, in the Catholick Church, the hearers cross themselves; in the Protestant churches, they nod their heads, or curtsy; the good people, in a village, cross straws before a witch, or nail a horse shoe on the door. We may laugh at the superstition, and derive instruction from the practice. Thus, when the grand impostor in the House, or his dupes out of the House, were declaiming most wildly on the trade of all the world, the balance of trade, the peace of Europe, the peace of the civilized world, the peace of all the world, the cause of religion and social order, the indelibility of the clergy, the Consolidated Fund, the preservation of our most glorious Constitution, the horrors of Jacobinism, the empire of the seas, the prosperity of the empire, the grand secret of resisting all their nonsense, was by opposing words to words; and, at the end of a sentence of two pages, let the hearer or reader repeat internally one of these words - fudge, humbug - and he is immediately restored to the use of his senses. The experiment may be tried with great success, by reading any of Mr. Pitt's printed speeches, with pen in hand, and writing in certain places one of these words in the margin. - *Ex parte credi.* R.

Note the antique spelling of "Catholic," the lively introduction, and the Latin tag; recall Lamb's preoccupation with witches. The mounting climax and sudden descent to ridicule make the satirical point in masterly fashion. At the bottom of this column occur three paragraphs of which the first and second, sparing of italics, deal with a technical blunder on the part of government and the admirable model of Protestant Emancipation to be observed in Catholic Bavaria. These may well be Lamb's; the third, another much italicized comment on the Whig-turned-Tory Mr. Nicholls, I judge to be his. Yet a fourth on this page, commenting on Portugal, lacks italics, and is harder to claim.

On page 3, these paragraphs together:

Mr. Windham, in his unsuccessful reply to some pointed observations of Mr. Tierney, respecting that Gentleman's inconsistency, he having been member of a former Cabinet, which agreed to give up the whole of our colonial conquests to France, except the Cape and Trincomale, rather unhappily stated, that his *individual sincerity* was *nothing* to the *purpose*, but the sincerity of the *majority* of the Government *was*, and could be supported. This is a new and dangerous *position*, which will require a larger portion of school divinity, and scholastic metaphysics, than have fallen to the portion even of Mr. Windham himself, to explicate and defend, viz. that where a *majority* of members, *told by the head*, are sincere, *their* sincerity covers and atones for the *individual* insincerity of any one of their company. This is borrowed from the scholastic doctrine of *merits*; and this is borrowing with a *vengeance*. We sincerely advise this Gentleman to put his *Aquinas*, and his ponderous *Bellarmino*, upon the shelf, and substitute the *Whole Duty of Man*, or some plain book of portable morality, where he may learn, that *individual sincerity* is something to the *purpose*.

The new Chancellor of the Exchequer has *solid* talents, which would have recommended him to a Premiership under the celebrated Queen of the Dunciad.

Mr. Addington's *insensibility*, and Mr. Pitt's *acrimony*, in debate, furnish forth the old Christmas dish, brawn with mustard.

The splendid political sophisms of Mr. Burke are daily served up, disguised by ill-cookery, in the Ministerial Journals. These men, when they get a good thing into their hands, give it a *twist* by their aukward (*sic*) handling; like the *crooked man*, of whom a facetious Greek Professor relates this comical story, that he swallowed a *tenpenny nail*, and voided it out a cork-screw!

Note the reference to the scholastics - familiar to Lamb by then as we learn from his letters, as was Alexander Pope. We know Lamb liked culinary images - "brawn with mustard." He had recently been more than once in company (with Godwin and at Rickman's) that included the brilliant Cambridge Regius Professor of Greek, Richard Porson, known for his wit and consumption of alcohol, usually combined. In the next column occur the following, also together:

Since the clergy have been deemed ineligible to sit in Parliament, as *actual* representatives of shires and boroughs, we recommend it to them to adopt *titular seats*. We know many of that order, "neither hot nor cold," who might start as excellent candidates for the *rotten borough* of Laodicea.

A persecuting Bishop has just published a *long-promised* translation of *Hosea*, with Notes, and a Commentary. We suppose it is adapted to *modern events*. Probably the uncertainty of the *pending negotiations* may have been one reason for the delay of the translation and *Commentary*. As Shakespear says, "this prophecy shall Merlin make, for I live before his time."

The late Poet Burns wittily compared *Printers' devils*, those humble, but indispensable ministers to literature, to the *hoofs* of the *horse*, that kicked out the *waters* of *Hippocrene*.

It was not unwittily remarked of a man, who is living with a woman, that lately was in keeping with another person, that he loved his mistress for the same reason that epicures love their venison - for having been *kept*.

The wretched and illiberal *nationalities*, which the Ministerial Journals indulge in, against the French, as if, because we are at war with France, we must not allow a Frenchman to be a *man*, sadly bring to our mind some beautiful lines of Andrew Marvell, in a far different strain of nobleness and candor (*sic*). They occur in a poem, written to discountenance the bitter animosities which subsisted in his time between the north and south inhabitants of this island.

The world in all does but *two nations* bear,
The *bad*, the *good*, and these *mix'd every where*; -
Under the *poles* place either of these *two*,
The *bad* will *basely*, *good* will *bravely* do.

The Ministerial Journals are full of praises of Mr. Addington, because he is insensible to the feathered shafts of wit, and the poisoned arrow of disgrace.

The first refers to the Parliamentary debate as to whether the caustic philologist Horne Tooke, who had been elected as a Whig in the rotten borough of Old Sarum, might continue to hold his seat, since in youth he had become an "indelible" clergyman at his father's behest. Addington himself had introduced the

successful bill denying this privilege to the clergy, and Tooke was allowed to serve out one term only. Lamb had by now met Tooke, as we learn from Godwin's diary,* and will write a tribute to him in a later *Albion*.

The second refers to such Bishops as the one attacked by Sydney Smith, who subjected new clergy under his jurisdiction to eighty-seven questions on belief and was otherwise autocratic: Lamb had many good reasons to reject the Established Church of his day. "Pending negotiations" refer to the peace talks. Note "Shakespear," Burns, and Marvell, three of Lamb's favorite poets, as well as the epicure and his venison, in succeeding italicized paragraphs. (He scrupled not to add italics within quotations for his own purposes.) The final paragraph, though it lacks italics, from its placement and phraseology I think is also his.

There is yet another paragraph on this page (*sans italics*), a news note so deft and graceful as compared with most such items that I cannot resist quoting it as very possibly Lamb's, though it lacks confirming clues:

The Court of Common Pleas, Westminster, was thrown into much confusion yesterday, during the thunder-storm; the wind drove the rain with such violence against the sky-light, that it broke the glass; and a torrent of rain descending on the wigs and cravats of the Counsel, they instantly forsook their seats in terror and dismay. In vain did Lord Alvanley endeavour to rally the flying barristers; all was confusion, till the waters subsided, and the heavens became clear; learning then resumed its seat, and law proceeded without doubts of a ducking.

If this is his, so perhaps are the two "straight" paragraphs above it, the first telling, poker-faced, of Mr. Pitt's sale of his house at Holwood, the second reporting the imminent erection at Brighton of a statue of the Prince of Wales. (Mark well the former.)

On page 4 there is a report from China:

We some months since mentioned the arrest, &c. of the Chinese Prime Minister Ho-xeno. - The following are the heads of the principal charges, preferred and published by order of the Emperor: -

"That being in the late Emperor's life-time summoned to his country seat at Yuen-Ming-Yuen, he had entered the left door of the hall on horseback, behaving like a man who did not acknowledge the authority of his Sovereign; that he had divulged the secrets of the empire; that he had retained in his hands, or destroyed some important letters, respecting military operations in the Northern districts; that he had concealed some of the decrees of the deceased Emperor, and fabricated others in their stead; that he had encouraged vagabonds and robbers; that he had caused himself to be carried out, and brought into the Imperial Palace through the door Xin-U: that he had not reported the inability of some of the Mandarins to perform their functions; that he had in his palace many apartments built of the wood Nam Mu, a material sacred to the Royal habitation; that he had imitated the Emperor's country house in the style of his apartments, gardens, &c.; that he had in his possession 200 strings of pearls, a number far exceeding that possessed by his Royal Master; and among other jewels, a ball of coral, of

*I am indebted to Lord Abinger for allowing me to consult the microfilm of the diary in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library.

wonderful magnitude and incalculable value."

The gold and silver already discovered and confiscated belonging to Ho-xeno, amounts to about 1,000,000 l.

On first reading, I took this to be gospel - to what exotic news *The Albion* had access! It was only when "R." revealed on Saturday, July 4, that Ho-xeno was known to the Chinese as "Hoax-enow" that I realized I had been taken - and became wholly convinced that Lamb was "R." as well as author of the above. Consider the fact that Lamb's friend Thomas Manning was now bending every effort to get to China, already a sort of never-never land to Lamb (see his letters to Manning on the subject - and see "Roast Pig," long after) - the place where anything might happen and probably did, a land as mysterious in his day as in much of ours. Consider the un-Chinese nature of the names of the "door Xin-U" and the "wood Nam Mu." Consider how good Lamb was at imitation and how prone to hoaxing: he had already written hoaxing letters to Manning and J.M. Gutch. Our rascal author is playing one more of his little games and will shortly carry it further. Since "some months since" Lamb was not even writing for *The Albion*, I suspect the existence of an earlier report on Ho-xeno is likewise fictitious: the reader will simply suppose that he missed it. Would Fenwick or any other normal journalist have perpetrated so elaborate a deception?

I have observed, in studying the "Lamb" items in *The Albion*, that his mind tends to run on the same track for a while - several punning items come together, or quotations from English poets, or Latin poets. After plumbing the China hoax I began very much to doubt the following, which appears on the same page:

On Monday night, two women were found in the Gardens of the British Museum, in attempting to take away several rare and valuable plants which had been placed there by Sir Joseph Banks. They had climbed over a wall adjoining the fields, and were dressed in a very mean attire; but it is supposed that this was but a disguise, as the choice of the plants seemed to indicate a knowledge of *Botany*. The gardener detected them in the act, and after giving them a little chastisement, suffered them to escape. Such offenders would probably have thought it no punishment to be sent to *Botany Bay*.

Surely this "paragraph" is Lamb's, and is it not made up of whole cloth to enable him to make a pun with the theme of transportation for felony to Botany Bay? How many women would dress up to steal a rare plant? How many gardeners, catching them (of a summer's night!) would let them go? Sir Joseph Banks lends the necessary convincing note: President of the Royal Society, he had collected exotic plants with Captain Cook and would shortly assist Manning to get to the Far East. But my faith in the daily press has been sadly shaken; I do not believe the Botany story.

Thursday, July 2, 1801 (No. 568). Thursday's contribution by the toiling clerk-journalist appears to have been entirely "paragraphs." The first of a group on page 2 has a serious purpose; those succeeding dwell on Cobbett's iniquities, and those of Mr. White, who sold abortion pills:

The daily prints, in the service of Ministry, are very fond of insisting upon the unshaken temper, and unmoveable spleen, of the *golden image* which the *King* hath set up. The quality of being *unmoved* is a virtue more proper to stocks, and stones, and lumpish things, than to *man*, in whom impatience, and a seasonable warmth of temper, are often most graceful and becoming: what *Milton* would call "an unsinning predominance of anger, and a sanctified bitterness against the enemies of truth."

It seems by Peter Porcupine's account, that the English Clergy are sadly *reviled* and *slandered* in the pulpits of Methodists and Dissenters. Do Clergymen never retort?

To that vile *persecuting spirit*, which is so disgustfully prominent in the pages of Peter Porcupine, we have seldom seen a *parallel*, except in some *visitation sermons*, and the Bishop of R----'s *pastoral charges*.

Peter Porcupine *whiningly* complains, that the Bishops, who are the natural *guardians* of the Clergy, do not protect their charge. From what we have ever observed, most of these *Reverend Gentlemen* are quite old enough to *take care of themselves*.

Religio, among the Romans, meant neither more nor less than superstition. The English word *religion*, with Mr. W---e, retains that meaning still.

The following punning group, together elsewhere on page 2, I also give in full:

An article is rather oddly expressed in one of the morning prints. "The *Diet* of the Empire is employed in *secretly digesting* a plan of *charging* the German *Constitution*, so as to give it a more *solid* and lasting *form*." This is *Anthropomorphism* (*sic*) with a witness!

The depriving the Pope of his *temporal* dignities, if it is to take place, will form a curious coincidence in point of time with the declaration of the ineligibility of the Clergy to *temporal* seats in England.

If there is any foundation in the fact, which was asserted in a late trial, that Mr. W---e, in St. Paul's Church-yard, does actually sell certain *diabolical* medicines, we sincerely hope the law will give him a *pill*, to render any such nefarious practices *abortive* in future.

Mr. Chaptal takes the Port Folio of Talleyrand Perigord in his absence. A correspondent humourously translates his name into English *Mr. Tall-chap*.

Much has been said, *pro* and *con*, respecting the expediency of admitting the clergy to a seat in the House of COMMONS. It must be a very UNCOMMON kind of House, into which some of these gentlemen cannot *creep*. (Except for the first C, the two capitalized words occur in *The Albion* as *small* capitals. - WFC.)

Yet another group appears on page 3, of which I skip the first and second, concerning a garrulous lawyer and the lovely roses of Lyndhurst, the latter quoting Virgil — both also, I think, Lamb's — in favor of the following:

One of the Irish Members of the House of Commons always speaks of appointing a Committee by *ballad*, and one of the Scotch Members wishes it to be chosen by *ballet*. If their advice was taken we should have rare *singing* and *capering* in St. Stephen's chapel, and the Opera-house would be deserted.

A Ministerial paper of yesterday informs us that at a dinner at Lord Hobart's when Mr. Addington was present, one of the company gave the health of the latter in these words: — "To the *most honest* Statesman in the United Kingdom;" and this toast was drank (*sic*) with *acclamation*. — Mr. A. may complain of his opponents; but "one flatterer's worse than all."

Origin of the name of Vansittart: — Dean Swift being at a dinner party where there was a Gentleman with a very *sour* countenance, the Dean said to him, in

his punning way, "Sir, I believe you fancy a tart." The name was immediately fastened on the Gentleman, and has been continued to his descendants, who have also preserved the *characteristic features* by which it was acquired.

Nicholas Vansittart, Tory M.P., was later, as Baron Bexley, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Friday's issue (No. 569) is missing from the Bath run.

Saturday, July 4, 1801 (No. 570). On page 1 (not, I think, by Lamb) a long letter on "State Prisoners" addressed to the "Friends of Liberty, Justice, and Humanity" pleads in half a column of tiny print for funds to relieve the families of those unjustly imprisoned under "the renewed suspension of the Habeas Corpus." Contributions will be received by Hardy the shoemaker and other men of commerce, as well as the Cambridge bookseller Benjamin Flower (publisher of the Southey-Coleridge play *Robespierre*, who had himself spent time in jail) and "The Office of the Albion, Fleet-street."

On page 2, among pedestrian notes on the whereabouts of the famous, occurs the following, which may or may not be Lamb's but concerns the two men he was later to describe (in the "Sonnet to Matthew Wood, Esq.") as "drunken PITT, and that pickpocket peer":

Mr. Pitt goes to Scotland with Mr. Dundas, to view the ruins of Roslin Castle, and, it may be, to catch poetic inspiration on the banks of the Esk.

Henry Dundas, later Lord Melville, a power in Scotland, would have been known to Lamb as President of the Board of Control of the East India Company from 1784 to April, 1801. As First Lord of the Admiralty (1804-5) he was said to be corrupt but acquitted of formal charges.

On the same page appears the next "R." piece, where the purpose of the Ho-xeno communiqué becomes clear. It is another attack on Pitt,* who had sold his Holwood house and rejected certain offers to relieve his vast personal indebtedness.

HO-XENO AND THE GRAND IMPOSTOR.

Whatever parade the infidels may make of the virtues and science of the Chinese, it is evident that they are mere children in politics. Ho-xeno, or, as the Chinese call him, Hoax-enow, if he had condescended to take a lesson or two from our Embassy, would have learned that it is much better to creep up the back stairs, than to enter the left door of the Imperial hall on horse-back; to make a present of a hundred string (*sic*) of pearls to the reigning Queen, than to keep two hundred in his own possession; to wear the appearance of poverty, than to imitate the grandeur of his royal master; in short,

*Lamb's anonymity in attack was a necessary thing, since from early youth onward he was dependent on the government for his and Mary's income. A paper like *The Albion*, as later the *Examiner* and *Champion*, allowed him to express his very strong political feelings. That these feelings were his own is indicated in a letter to Coleridge of July, 1796, when Lamb writes in regard to one of Coleridge's (abortive) prospects, on the Whig *Morning Chronicle*: "Why, surely the joint editorship of the Chron: must be a very comfortable & secure living.... But...can you write with sufficient moderation, as tis call'd, when one suppresses the one half of what one feels, or could say, on a subject, to chime in the better with popular lukewarmness?" (Marrs I, 40)

whilst he was in office, he should have made it a point never to pay his tradesmen's bills, he should have affected to despise economy, and, when he retired with his snug thousands and tens of thousands, he should have thrown himself into a mean house, dismissed his servants, put down his equipages, and sold his country houses. The envy of the courtier might thus have been weakened, and the pity of the populace excited. After a proper interval, he might have re-produced his jewels and his ball of coral: he might have laughed at the credulity of the sovereign and the people. Instead of articles of high treason, he would have been indulged with a Bill of Indemnity, and he might have walked about the streets with all the confidence of the grand impostor. R.

Further down on page 2 appears the following, on Parliamentary Reform:

P-----Y REFORM. - The *use*, and the ancient *honour*, of P-----ts, their very colour and complexion, have undergone so pernicious a change, from the blind habit of Members following, like tame sheep with bells, withersoever (*sic*) the Minister of the day, the great bell-weather (*sic*), leads, that good men may reasonably be filled with apprehensions, whether *any* Reform would avail to restore them to their original application: "for a man cannot refine a *scorpion* into a *fish*, although he go about to *draw* it, and *rinse* it, with never so much *cleanly cookery*." - MILTON. (Capitals and small capitals for title and "Milton.")

A group of "paragraphs" on page 3 have considerable topical interest. (Why was Lamb so haunted by Mr. White's pills and the "infant dying as soon as born"? Perhaps in part from the concern expressed much later in the poem of that title?)

The carriage in which Lord Nelson left Yarmouth was driven, it is said, by post boys in sailors (*sic*) habits, and the landlord of the inn accompanied them, in a similar dress, to the end of the first stage. The *hero* of Aboukir and Copenhagen needed not this display and *masquerade*, more proper to the *gaudy* and *parading* Neapolitan, than to the modest character of a British Admiral.

A *common sailor* is disgraced, when his honourable dress is assumed, in *masquerade*, by *coward ostlers*, and *sharking* landlords at inns.

As the *dashing* Mrs. H----s, a few mornings since, in masculine garb, was driving the *delicate* Lord P----m, a dispute occurred at the turnpike gate, where the collector, from his ignorance of fashionable attire, made a *mistake* in the *sex*, and very liberally bestowed his professional abuse upon the *Lady*, instead of the Gentleman, addressed - "*Madam*, d--me!"

It is not a new compliment paid by Mr. Erskine to a Noble Lord, of whom he says - that if there were neither hares nor partridges in the world, he would be the best tempered man breathing. The Poet offered a similar panegyric to a lady distinguished by a very singular fancy.

Felix si numquam armenta fuissent. (Happy that they were never cattle.)

Mr. W---e, of St. Paul's Church-yard memory, *reads*, with Martinus Scriblerus, in Virgil, "*Infantum renovare dolorem*", instead of "*infandum*."

All the poisons of "drug-damned Italy" have never come up in *diabolical* wickedness to the medicines, which appear to have been applied in a late case of a *purty-born* and *soon dying* infant.

Yet another group on this page has Lamb's critique of the Poet Laureate embedded in it. Bayes, a character in George Villiers' play *The Rehearsal*, is mentioned in both the "Old Benchers" and the "Newspapers" essays of Elia.

One of the Ministerial Papers has published a studied *sepulchral* panegyric on the *political demise* of Mr. Chancellor Pitt. As Bayes in the *Rehearsal* says, "Are you quite sure he is dead tho'?"

MR. PYE'S ALFRED. (Capitals and small capitals). - In the new Epic Poem of England's Arch Poet, a Druid is made to utter a *prophesy* (as usual) which contains, according to an *intelligent* critic in the *True Briton*, an *admirable* panegyric upon our blessed Constitution. It begins with *nonsense*: -

SPECIMEN. (small capitals)
Beyond the proudest *gem* of fame, that *springs*,
Rear'd by the muse!

We have indeed heard, that the man who is in possession of the true poetical faculty, is richer than if he owned all the *mines* of Golconda; and we had some difficulty in believing it: But how *diamonds* can be *reared*, and watered and made to *spring*, we wish Mr. Pye to inform us: and if he cannot, to ask his friend the *stone-fancier* in Fleet-street.

Mr. Pye's "springing gems" and "cultivated diamonds" are more intolerable nonsense than his arm "omnipotent to spare."

Where is "the question of *Catholic Emancipation*" gone? we ask. Advices from Lethe say, that she is come there, to *drink the waters* with her elder sister, "the question of *Negro Emancipation*."

Catholic Emancipation was the subject of a long article quoted from an Irish pamphlet on pages 1 and 2 of this *Albion*. Lamb's sympathy for that cause will be observed in his extended obituary of Lord Petre, whose death is reported briefly today on page 2. (The note above is the only comment on the slave trade I have come across in the Bath *Albion* run.)

We have now arrived at the end of what I can identify as Lamb's probable portion of the first five *Albion* issues held at Bath. To wind up our study of Lamb as "R.," or part of him - whose articles, alas, become progressively duller as they grow more statistical - I shall quote in full only the first two of the three remaining "R." pieces. The next, lacking a signature but joined to the series by title, I shall excerpt. These, of course, are of later date than the *Albions* we have seen, and all four bear the heading "*CONSOLIDATED FUND*," which I shall not give again. From the last article, signed by R., three-quarters of which is a long quotation from Morgan's report, I give only the final sentence. Here, then, are the next two items:

Among the glorious words used by the grand impostor, the Consolidated Fund may vie with the peace of the civilized (*sic*) world, the tranquillity of Europe, the cause of religion and social order, in magnificence of expression and speciousness. - It produced on the financial feelings of the hearers the same effects as the other words on their moral feelings. All were equally unintelligible: all were intended to convey something mysterious, all to cover something erroneous. In finance, errors are easily detected; but few people being conversant with the details of business, they are more easily concealed, by adding, subtracting, changing terms, borrowing, lending, &c. Thus the Consolidated Fund could easily be made use of in a budget, from

year to year, and many persons not understanding the term, took for granted that it was impossible to make it answerable for a sum which would never be forthcoming.

"In the year 1786, the funds," according to Mr. Morgan, "which had formerly been divided into four classes of the aggregate, the South Sea, the General, and the Sinking Funds, were consolidated into one fund, and the taxes of which they consisted, being arranged under the different heads of customs, excise, stamps, and incidents, were charged with the payment of the interest of the public debts, and of the million appropriated to the redemption of the principal, together with the payment of the civil list, the pensions of annuity allowed to sundry persons, and other articles of less importance." The surplus of this fund, when there was a surplus, was enumerated among the permanent resources of the country. R. (*Albion* of July 6, 1801, p. 3)

Imposture frequently ends in imposing on the impostor himself. It is said, that Mahomet was a dupe at last to his own pigeon, and really believed himself to have been inspired. The vision of Archbishop Secker is known to a sufficient number of persons acquainted with his life; and Methodism can produce instances in abundance of preachers, who see sights and dream dreams and experience experiences (*sic*), which no one pays any regard to but the preacher and his disciples. In the same manner, the permanent resources of the country, out of the produce of the Consolidated Fund, became a standing theme of exultation. What might, and probably would have been true, if the cause of religion and social order had not been the windmill, on which our political Quixotte (*sic*) took it into his head to break a spear, was deemed to be true in a total change of circumstances.

Thus, "in estimating the ways and means for the public services, the Chancellor of the Exchequer took the surplus of the Consolidated Fund for

The year 1795 at	--	£2,895,000
1796	--	3,500,000
1797	--	2,000,000

Making in the whole	--	£8,395,000
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The House of Commons reports give a different statement, namely

		Surplus.
The year 1795	--	£1,691,158
1796-	--	231,223
1797	--	857,101

Total of Surplus	--	£2,779,482"
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This sum is made out by quarters, and the quarters for which there was a deficiency are omitted for the present. But this account might have checked the arrogance of the impostor. R. (*Albion*, July 7, 1801, p. 2)

The next article (July 8, p. 2) is the one not signed. Was it purely Fenwick's, or was "R." inadvertently omitted? It continues in the statistical vein and has little fire, but how does one make merry with such material? It begins,

Every person is liable to mistakes in figures. The Ex-Minister calculated

the surplus of the Consolidated Fund for the three years, 1795, 1796, 1797, at 8,395,000 l. From the reports of the House of Commons, it appears to have amounted to 2,779,482 l. This is so far below the financier's estimate, that it is ridiculous if there were not a hundred instances of the same kind to praise him for his skill in finance, an art of which he is totally ignorant....

The author proceeds to prove, with quotations from Morgan, that (his last sentence),

The real surplus is reduced to 1,801,462 l. a very different sum from the 8,395,000 l. the estimate of the Ex-Minister.

The grand impostor appears nowhere in this one: perhaps it is not Lamb's at all.

The final, sober article by "R." (of July 9, 1801, p. 2) reduces the actual surplus to £1,536,093, or a deficit Pitt is alleged to have concealed of nearly seven million pounds - the conclusion from Morgan's report, copiously excerpted. (Total annual government expenditure, according to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1808, was under twenty million.) The final sentence, following immediately upon Morgan, comments on the latter's prediction of future fiscal crisis. "To what schemes," says R., "the grand impostor will at that time have recourse, the father of lies only can foresee." That sentence, at least, sounds like vintage Lamb, and on this note, with gayer times ahead, let us leave the accounting clerk to Pitt's wicked deceptions. A service has been performed and "R.'s" exposé is now concluded.

Note: All quotations have been proofread by the present author.

(To be continued)

FROM A SCOTTISH ELIAN'S NOTEBOOK

Charles Lamb should have met Robert Burns for he loved the Bard's poems; and Elia's prejudice anent us Norlanders might have melted away for ever as the jug that cheers passed to and fro in the blue tobacco reek of, maybe, Tam o' Shanter's Inn...

I am 80. In 1936 - one year after the Society was born - I bought the Everyman edition of the *Essays* in a bookshop newly opened by a young enthusiast with high hopes; alas, demolished within a few months...shop empty...bookman gone.

Overnight I was transformed into an Elian; but it was not until 1963 that I became a Member of the Society, although as far back as 1935 I had observed in the sorely lamented *John o' London's Weekly* an advertisement regarding the proposed formation of such a Group.

I now had some difficulty in locating the whereabouts of the Society and was finally indebted to F R Banks, the compiler of the *Penguin Guide to London*, for it, the address in his Guide, 37 Tavistock Square, having been superseded.

Almost immediately after contact I received from the Founder of the Society, the late Ernest Crowsley, such a warm welcome that I at once knew that here was the haven for me...and I have now a grand collection of letters, not only from him, but from our former Editor, H G Smith, also now gone, and Miss Florence Reeves to prove it.

I was then able to purchase two batches of old Bulletins - wonderful, instructive reading - from Mr Crowsley, which he generously followed up with a packet of old Bulletin Supplements and a good portrait of Lamb's father. Shortly after, another lot of past Bulletins from Miss Reeves arrived on the mat and I am proud to have received from the author, H G Smith, his pamphlet "Charles Lamb and his Bible". Emulating Lamb, the flyleaf has the phrase "My WORKS are in the pages of the Charles Lamb Society Bulletin". How very apt.

Some little time ago, browsing in a second-hand bookshop, I unearthed a real treasure - a beautifully bound volume of *Rosamond Gray* published by R Brimley Johnson at 8 York Buildings, London, with a fine frontispiece of Hazlitt's portrait of Lamb as a Venetian Senator. The paper approximates to parchment, the quality printing is a delight to the eye and the boards are of purple cloth with title and author in dull gold, as is the publisher's colophon. Unfortunately there is no publication date, but the evident love that went to its making places it well back in years. A few days later I picked up an 1888 copy of Ainger...surely my lucky week.

Living as I do so far North I have never had the privilege of meeting other members of our Society on their home ground; but Miss Reeves sent me a good photograph taken at an Annual Birthday Celebration where she annotated the names of the more prominent Elians depicted therein, which made for me a more personal link. Later she gave me a coloured snapshot of Button Snap; followed by two views of the grave at Edmonton.

Miss Reeves has also done me the honour of performing two of my songs at various Meetings while Miss Benning played my "Colebrook Minuet" which I specially composed for the Society in some return for all these kindnesses received.

Indeed I have experienced such an almost unbelievable warmth from my "Distant Correspondents" that the most appropriate phrase I can conjure up must be "Perfect Sympathies".

Alexander Mackenzie Davidson

BOOK REVIEWS

Edwin W Marrs, Jr. (ed): *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb, Vol. II, 1801-1809* Cornell University Press £17.50

Professor Marrs' second volume, up to and including Letter 231, corresponds to Lucas's Letter 101 in Volume I to Letter 215 in Volume II; and interestingly enough in view of the series of articles now appearing in the Bulletin, the sixth letter in the volume is the one which announced that "the poor Albion died last Saturday of the world's neglect: & with it the fountain of my puns is choked up for ever." (Professor Marrs gives us a long and interesting note on Fenwick, its proprietor.)

At this time the Lambs had just moved to 16 Mitre Court Buildings, Inner Temple, and continued there until after the end of this volume. Lamb directed Godwin to "the *old* number 16" and Professor Marrs surmises that there was a new set of apartments on which the Mitre Court Buildings numbering had been repeated. This could have been serious, as Lamb notes in his letter of "autumn 1805" to Manning:

You direct yours to me in Mitre Court: my true address is Mitre Court

Buildings. By the pleasantries of Fortune, who likes a joke or a double entendre as well as the best of us her children, there happens to be another Mr Lamb (that there should be two!!) in Mitre Court, His duns and *girls* frequently stumble up to me, and I am obliged to *satisfy* both in the best way I am able.

It was here that the famous Wednesday evenings originated, although the first evidence of them is in the letter of 10 December 1808 from Mary to Sarah Hazlitt:

You cannot think how very much we miss you and H. of a Wednesday evening - all the glory of the night, I may say, is at an end. Phillips makes his jokes and there is no one to applaud him. Rickman argues & there is no one to oppose him.

Lamb was just 26 when this volume opens and 34 at the close, and the letters of this period show an energy and a gaiety which were quite decidedly those of a young man. At the same time the list of his correspondents demonstrates beyond much doubt that he was not an intellectual lightweight: Manning, Rickman, Godwin, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Hazlitt, among others. There are also some special, affecting touches which reveal the real man existing under the surface image. Writing to Coleridge after he and Mary had returned to London in 1802 after a visit to Keswick, he says:

Particularly tell me about little *Pi-Pos* /Derwent Coleridge/ the only child (but one) I ever had an inclination to steal from its parents. That one was a Beggar's brat, that I might have had cheap. I hope his little rash is gone.

But don't be jealous. I have a very affectionate memory of you all, besides *Pi-Pos*: but *Pi-Pos* I especially love.

One feels quite keenly what a pity it was that Lamb didn't buy the Beggar's brat and give it the happiness of which he would have been capable. Again, in the letter of 14 June 1805, when Mary had been taken off to the asylum once more, he wrote to Dorothy Wordsworth:

Meantime she is dead to me, - and I miss a /prop/. All my strength is gone, and I am like a /fool bereft/ of her co-operation. I dare not think, lest I/should think/wrong; so used am I to look up to her/in the least/ & the biggest perplexity. To say *all that* /I know of her/ would be more than I think any body could/believe or even under/stand...She is older, & wiser, & better than me, and all my wretched imperfections I cover to myself by resolutely thinking on her goodness. She would share life & death, heaven & hell with me. She lives but for me. And I know that I have been wasting & teasing her life for five years past incessantly with my cursed drinking & ways of going on.

This second volume of the series of five or six displays the same editorial felicities as the first: the notes are apt and full, and the text often notably better than Lucas's. As usual, however, one has one or two small cavils. For example, the first letter to John Rickman is that of 16 September 1801 (No.111, which is in Vol.II), but there is no note attached to it to tell the reader who Rickman was or why he was addressed at Dublin Castle. All is made clear when we remember that Lamb told Manning on 3 November 1800 of his introduction to Rickman by George Dyer; looking at that letter, which is in Vol.I, we find a very full and useful note, but a cross-reference would have helped. I was intrigued by Professor Marrs' suggestion that a description of "a fine family" in his letter of 18

November 1801 to Robert Lloyd "Earth cannot show a more lovely & venerable sight", *might* have been seen by Wordsworth before he wrote "Earth has not anything to show more fair" in the Sonnet Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802. And I was sadly disappointed by a note against the letter to George Dyer of 5 July 1808: "Ms unavailable, but purchased by Maggs Bros. Ltd from Sotheby's on April 29, 1969". No doubt Maggs bought this letter for a client, but who is this philistine who would refuse permission for the letter to be consulted in relation to the definitive edition of Lamb's letters? After all, it had been published before.

Let us give a warm welcome to Volume II, while hoping that Volume III will not be far behind; we have reason to hope that it may be available in 1977. And of course our congratulations to Professor Marrs on maintaining standards of scholarship and, dare I say it, entertainment, at the high level he has set himself. We are indeed fortunate in our Vice-Presidents.

BS

George L Barnett: Charles Lamb (Twayne's English Author Series) *Boston: G K Hall & Co.* \$7.95 (UK distributor: Geo. Prior)

We offer an unfeigned welcome to this book, by another of our Vice-Presidents, Professor George Barnett, who has done us the great honour of dedicating it to "The Charles Lamb Society".

Although it is one of a series of introductory volumes to the life and work of celebrated authors, Professor Barnett seizes the opportunity to put the record straight in a number of particulars. His brief account of Lamb's life at the East India House is a case in point: he gives particulars of salary through Lamb's career, of duties and holiday entitlements; and he makes the point that the *regularity* of the work was a steadying influence which encouraged rather than inhibited literary activity.

Professor Barnett writes judiciously, quite this side of idolatry. He sees Lamb's literary life as a journey in search of the proper form for his talent, a journey which culminated in the Elia essays:

He was often disappointed; even when he gave up poetry, he did so typically - as he did smoking - many times.

He takes us through Lamb's attempt to make a success as a dramatic writer, as a journalist, as a critic. He writes, always interestingly and often most acutely, about Lamb's literary pilgrimage and of the problems he met on the way. For example:

Lamb understood the technical requirements of the drama but he was unable to permit characters to express themselves and come to life. The style... is all that remains.

The sustained effort required for novels, plays and epic poems - so often beyond the grasp of many Romantic writers - was not needed for composing letters.

Professor Barnett writes most interestingly in Chapter 3 about Lamb as a letter writer, and in Chapter 4 on the Elia Essays:

Lamb's life had produced in him the feelings of an ordinary man toward people, places and his world at large. His misfortunes had given him, perhaps, a greater tolerance for weakness, a sympathetic understanding of human nature, and a profundity of wisdom. His literary pursuits were, as we have observed, the hobby of an amateur; he was not a professional

writer like Hazlitt or De Quincey. Above all, he was genuine, and his essays render life truthfully. He was ever true to himself in speaking his mind. He constantly characterised...what he would have us take for shortcomings but which, properly evaluated, must be recognised as eminent qualifications for creating the personal essay.

Altogether Professor Barnett's book puts us very much in his debt. It is an ideal introduction to Lamb's life and work for the student and the general reader - no one could have done it better - and at the same time it has much to give even to those of us who feel that we already know a little of the subject. At \$7.50 (the UK price is not available at the time of going to print, but will probably be about £5) the book is not unreasonably priced for these days, and it is one which should be in the possession of all Elians.

BS

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