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HAWTHORNE'S DEBT TO CHARLES LAMB

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Three contemporary admirers of Nathaniel Hawthorne significantly linked his name with Charles Lamb's. The first to make the association was the American reviewer of *Twice Told Tales*:

In many respects MR HAWTHORNE reminds us of Lamb. 'Elia' might have written, for example, the 'Rill from the Town Pump,' in which that peerless essayist's graphic limning and felicitous meditations are alike embodied; and there are other portions of the volumes which are imbued with that combined simplicity, naturalness, and grace, which are scarcely less the characteristics of LAMB than of HAWTHORNE.<sup>1</sup>

The second person to associate the two authors was B W Procter ("Barry Cornwall") in a letter to Hawthorne, November 6, 1851:

Your last two books have become very popular here. For my own part, I have read them with great pleasure; and you will not be displeased, I think, when I tell you that whilst I was reading your last book ("The House of the Seven Gables"), the turn of thought or phrase often brought my old friend Charles Lamb to my recollection.<sup>2</sup>

The third person to make the association was Miss De Quincey in a letter to a friend, early in 1853:

There is no prose writer of the present day in whom I have half the interest that I have in him /Hawthorne/. His style is in my mind so beautifully refined, and there is such exquisite pathos and quaint humor...He reminds me in many things of Charles Lamb.<sup>3</sup>

The literary relationship noted by these contemporary readers has gone wholly unregarded by students of Hawthorne hunting his sources. This is not surprising; for, though Hawthorne's general literary indebtedness to Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Scott, and the Gothic romances is well established, he is not easy to track. When he borrows from another writer, he is never slavish nor mechanical, but creative. As Poe has well observed, Hawthorne has a commendable originality "springing from ever-active vigor of fancy...giving its own hue, its own character to everything it touches."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, and not unmindful of the difficulties offered by Hawthorne's highly individualized style, I should like to present in this paper evidence to show that Lamb did in fact (as

<sup>1</sup>*The Knickerbocker, or New York Monthly Magazine*, XIX (March 1842), 282.

<sup>2</sup>Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: a Biography* (Boston, 1885), I, 441.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 4.

<sup>4</sup>*The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. E C Stedman and G E Woodberry (New York, 1914), VII, 24.

his contemporaries surmised) provide Hawthorne in several of his compositions with hints of setting and characterization, rhetorical devices, turns of thought or phrase, and touches of fancy.<sup>5</sup>

Lamb and Hawthorne shared a temperamental affinity for reverie - a wondrous state of mind where shadows of the imagination seem to transform reality. Two passages from their writings will serve to illustrate this temperamental kinship. In "Mackery End," when telling of revisiting a place from which he had been ten years absent, Lamb contemplates the usurpation of the imagination over reality:

The sight of the old farm-house, though every trace of it was effaced from my recollection, affected me with a pleasure which I had not experienced for many a year. For though I had forgotten it, we had never forgotten being there together, and we had been talking about Mackery End all our lives, till memory on my part became mocked with a phantom of itself, and I thought I knew the aspect of a place, which, when present, O how unlike it was to that, which I had conjured up so many times instead of it!<sup>6</sup>

In *Mosses from an Old Manse* Hawthorne, observing a mirrored reflection of the actual, questions whether the impalpable is not the truer picture:

A more lovely stream than this...has never flowed on earth...It comes flowing softly through the midmost privacy and deepest heart of a wood which whispers it to be quiet...The river sleeps along its course and dreams of the sky and of the clustering foliage, amid which fall showers of broken sunlight, imparting specks of vivid cheerfulness, in contrast with the quiet depth of the prevailing tint. Of all this scene, the slumbering river has a dream picture in its bosom. Which, after all, was the most real - the picture, or the original? - the objects palpable to our grosser senses, or their apotheosis in the stream beneath?<sup>7</sup>

Both Lamb and Hawthorne in these two passages contemplate how reality may be overspread with phantoms of the imagination until recreation seems more real than reality itself. Hawthorne was constitutionally attracted to such contemplations of "unreality" and Lamb, though less so, on occasion, not less movingly so. Among Lamb's writings in this mode, and of all his essays the most poignant, is "Dream Children: A Reverie." For this essay Hawthorne seems to have had an especial admiration. He drew upon it for parts of two of his own sketches for mood, for technical devices, and for language.

<sup>5</sup>On two widely separated occasions (in 1833 and in 1848) Hawthorne borrowed books by and about Lamb from the Salem Athenaeum. The two volume American edition (Philadelphia, 1828) of *Essays of Elia* is recorded as loaned to Hawthorne on August 26, 1833. *Literary Sketches and Letters: being the final Memorials of Charles Lamb, Never before Published*, by Thomas Noon Talfourd (New York, 1848) is recorded as loaned on October 10, 1848. (See Marion L Kesselring, *Hawthorne's Reading: 1828-1850*, New York: 1949, pp.35, 54.) When Hawthorne was editor of *The American Magazine*, he reprinted a poem by Lamb ("The Sabbath Bells") in that journal (May, 1836). And he briefly mentions Lamb in his sketch, "A Virtuoso's Collection" (1841). Thus the record shows that Hawthorne's interest in Lamb began early in his career and did not abate.

<sup>6</sup>*Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E V Lucas (London, 1903), II, 77. All quotations from Lamb are from this five volume edition, hereafter identified as L. Wherever italics are used they are mine.

As Lamb in the character of Elia escapes sad reality through blended reminiscence and reverie in the imagined world of his dream children, John and Alice, so Hawthorne in "Little Annie's Ramble" presents an elderly gentleman who finds release from life's harsh struggle through an imaginative self-identification with the reveries of his child companion, Little Annie - "longing after the mystery of the great world - which many children feel, and which I felt in my childhood,...I delight to let my mind go hand in hand with the mind of a sinless child." (H, I, 143-4) In the ramble of the narrator and Little Annie together there is a progression of situations introduced and advanced in much the same way as the narration is advanced in Lamb's "Dream Children." Lamb marks his progression by asides beginning with "here" ("Here little Alice spread her hands,"..."Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous," and so on) and continues with sentences beginning with "then" ("Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was"). This pattern of parallel language and construction is followed throughout the essay. Hawthorne introduces a succession of paragraphs and incidents with "here" ("Here are hacks with coaches,"..."Here is a shop to which the recollections of my boyhood,...give a peculiar magic,"..."Here are pleasures, as some people would say of a more exalted kind," and so on) sometimes followed with a "now" ("Now her eyes brighten with pleasure") or a "then" ("Then the mighty treasures of sugar plums"). Certain close verbal parallels, moreover, are to be found in both essays, as in the following passages:

Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer - *here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement.*

"Dream Children"

A street musician...pours forth his strains...and *little Annie's ...feet begin to move in unison with the lively tune*, as if she were loath that music should be wasted without a dance.

"Little Annie's Ramble"

or again, in these passages:

Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when they were children...John smiles, as much as to say, *"that would be foolish indeed."*

"Dream Children"

What would little Annie think if, in the book...she should find her sweet little self,...there to remain till she became a woman grown, with children of her own to read about their mother's childhood! *That would be very queer.*

"Little Annie's Ramble"

In both essays the return to reality is a reluctant one for each narrator, tinged with the nostalgic yearning for something forever lost. In this instance, Lamb's heart burden is the more grievous one. (He is sorrowing for the death of a brother, his childhood companion.) Hawthorne's character

<sup>7</sup>"Mosses from an Old Manse," *The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. by G P Lathrop (Boston, 1884), III, 32. All quotations from Hawthorne are from this twenty-four volume edition hereafter identified as H. Wherever italics are used they are mine.

might be anyone carrying the weight of remembrance and lost youth. Yet the conclusion of Hawthorne's essay corresponds closely to the mood of Lamb's "Dream Children." Here are Hawthorne's closing sentences:

When our infancy is almost forgotten, and our boyhood long departed, though it seems but as yesterday; when life settled darkly down upon us, and we doubt whether to call ourselves young any more, then it is good to steal away from the society of bearded men, and even of gentler woman, and spend an hour or two with children. After drinking from those fountains of still fresh existence, we shall return into the crowd, as I do now, to struggle onward and do our part in life. (H, I, 152)

Hawthorne's "The Village Uncle: An Imaginary Retrospect" also reveals affinities to Lamb's "Dream Children; A Reverie." Each of these essays is a reverie, a fusion of fact and fancy, a dream of happiness that at the close is dispelled forever. The setting of each is the fireside at bedtime with children gathered around to hear stories of their elders. Lamb's children are visionary, but the children of Hawthorne's Village Uncle approach this state through his imaginative description of them:

Come, my children, draw your chairs around me, all of you. There is a dimness in your figures! You sit quivering indistinctly with the motion of the blaze, which eddies about you like a flood, so that you all have the look of visions, or people that dwell only in the firelight, and will vanish from existence as completely as your shadows when the flame shall sink among the embers.

"The Village Uncle" (H, II, 349)

And when the Village Uncle nears the end of his reverie, with melancholy premonitions of his own death, the children fade from his sight and he awakens to loneliness; just so Elia had watched his dream children disappear from view and out of the blank vacancy he had been recalled to his own heartache and isolation. Here are the closing lines from each essay:

While I stood gazing *both the children gradually grew fainter to my view...* awaking, I found myself seated in my bachelor armchair where I had fallen asleep.

"Dream Children"

*My children...your figures grow indistinct, fading into pictures on the air, and now to familiar outlines,...I lift my eyes...and perceive myself alone.*

"The Village Uncle"

"Old China," one of Lamb's best and best-loved essays, Hawthorne seems to have found serviceable for a brief passage in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Lamb writes: "I have no repugnance...to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured *grotesques*, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, *in that world before perspective - a china tea-cup.*" (L, II, 248) He continues his essay, as every reader of Lamb will recall, with a delineation of scenes on his and Bridget's china tea-set; "a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady;" "the same lady, or another stepping into a fairy boat;" farther on, "horses, trees, pagodas," and "a cow and rabbit couchant" - all "seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay." The details of Lamb's exquisite description, which occupies several short paragraphs, Hawthorne precisely and beautifully summarizes in parts of two sentences in *The House of the Seven Gables*: "Hepzibah brought

out...a china tea-set painted over with *grotesque* figures of man, bird, and beast, in as *grotesque* a landscape. These pictured people were odd humorists, in a world of their own, - a world of vivid brilliancy, so far as color went, and still unfaded." (H, V, 99)

In "The Custom House: Introductory to *The Scarlet Letter*," called by Henry James one of its author's most perfect compositions, Hawthorne reveals a close reading and skilful use of Lamb's "The South Sea House" in its entirety.

Both Lamb and Hawthorne, it will be recalled, were employed by their respective "houses" and both wrote about their experiences in retrospect though with very different feelings. Lamb recalls his days at the South Sea House with an amused whimsicality after the absence of twenty years; Hawthorne, on the other hand, when he sat down to write "The Custom House" was still rankling over his recent dismissal from the surveyorship. Hawthorne had been appointed Surveyor of the Port, or Collector of the Customs, in March 1846 and held the post for three years. At that period the port of Salem was in a declining state and for days together it sometimes happened that there was nothing to do. Hawthorne found time heavy on his hands, and in the long intervals between the infrequent interruptions of business occupied his thoughts with droll observations of the effete old men (the most incompetent of whom it had been his onerous duty to discharge) who largely made up the company of his associates. At the close of his term, though he had nursed hopes for reappointment, Hawthorne was ejected from office by means of a petition of Salem men who charged him falsely with political partisanship. Hawthorne was stunned by this foul blow, but got his revenge on his native town by making merciless fun of the old men, his former associates. Salemites, especially those employed in the Custom House, were enraged by Hawthorne's malign lampoon, particularly his unaccountable assault on the venerable inspector (a Mr Lee) who was dragged in abusively. Hawthorne says that the main purpose of the Custom House sketch is to offer proofs of the authenticity of the story of the *Scarlet Letter*; also, he feared that the somberness of that story might weary a reader unless balanced by material of a brighter sort. Artistically Hawthorne's stated objectives are supportable, but it is clear enough that his unstated purpose was to give vent to a deep-lying antipathy towards certain characters of the Custom House and to offer repayment for the underhanded persecution of the Salem Whigs. However, Hawthorne was amused as well as enraged by the moss-grown loafers of the old house. He took delight in Old General Miller, collector of the port, and in Burchmore, whose expert attention to business gave him "a new idea of talent." Like Lamb, Hawthorne was proud of his ability to mix easily with men far removed from a literary atmosphere. The rancorous vein of the Custom House sketch has affinities with Swift; but the fanciful and the humorous holds allegiance to Charles Lamb.

"The South Sea House" stands first in the volume of Lamb's *Essays of Elia*. Thus when Hawthorne was shaping up his memories preparatory to writing down an experience similar to Lamb's he is likely to have remembered that essay. Indeed, in as much as Hawthorne was, at the time, under pressure from his publisher to get on with the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, he may very well have actually hunted up a copy of *Elia* and re-read "The South Sea House" for whatever help it could give. The close identity of some portions of the two essays suggests such a possibility.

"The South Sea House" includes, in order, the location and appearance of the house of trade; an account of its "once busy interests" now defunct;

reminders of the antiquity which hangs like a pall upon the place; its clerks, with individual characterizations of the cashier, the cashier's deputy, the accountant, and other lesser figures; and finally a farewell. Because of Hawthorne's larger purpose and greater length ("The Custom House" is about five times the length of "The South Sea House") his essay contains material which has no counterpart in Lamb's. Thus Hawthorne comments upon his ancestry, his family's (and his own) ties with Salem, his appointment to the post of revenue officer and his performance of his duties, his ruminations on the intrusion of practical affairs upon the pursuit of literature, his discovery of the manuscript and the scarlet letter, and his release from the surveyorship. Yet within the larger framework of "The Custom House" are woven the materials of "The South Sea House" and in pretty much the same order.

We may first observe similarities in the orientation of the reader to the faded grandeur and diminished activities of the two houses (both houses, incidentally, in their heyday were engaged in lucrative trade with the Far East):

Reader,...didst thou never observe a *melancholy-looking*, handsome, *brick and stone edifice* to the left - where Threadneedle Street abuts upon Bishopsgate? I daresay thou hast often admired its magnificent portals ever gaping wide, and disclosing to view a grave court, with cloisters and *pillars*, with *few or no* traces of goers-in or comers-out...

This was once a house of trade, - a center of busy interests. The throng of merchants was here - the quick pulse of gain - and here some forms of business are still kept up, though the soul be long since fled. Here are still to be seen stately *porticos*; imposing staircases...

Such is the South Sea House. At least, such it was forty years ago, when I knew it, - a magnificent relic!

"The South Sea House" (L, II, 1)

In my native town of Salem, at the end of what, half a century ago, in the days of old King Derby, was a bustling wharf, - but which is now burdened with decayed wooden warehouses, and exhibits *few or no* symptoms of commercial life; except, perhaps, a bark or brig, half-way down its *melancholy* length...At the head, I say, of this dilapidated wharf...stands a spacious *edifice of brick*...Its front is ornamented with a *portico* of half a dozen wooden *pillars*, supporting a balcony, beneath which a flight of wide granite steps descends towards the street.

The pavement round about...the Custom House of the port has grass enough growing in its chinks to show that it has not, of late days, been worn by any multitudinous resort to business.

"The Custom House" (H, IX, 19-20)

The substance, the tone, and a number of words (*melancholy*, *brick*, *edifice*, *pillars*, *porticos*, *few or none*) are alike in these sections.

Next come the clerks of each house:

/The clerks/ were mostly bachelors...Generally (for they had not much to do)...old-fashioned...Humourists, for they were of all descriptions, ...*for the most part* placed in this house in ripe or middle age...They formed a sort of Noah's ark...A *lay monastery*...Yet *pleasant* fellows,

full of *chat*.

"The South Sea House" (L, II,3)

They were ancient sea-captains, *for the most part*, who, after being tost on every sea...had finally drifted into this quiet nook.../They went/ lazily about what they termed duty,.../a/ *venerable brotherhood*. It was *pleasant*, in the summer forenoons,...it was *pleasant* to hear them *chatting* in the back entry.

"The Custom House" (H, IX, 28-31)

In these passages there are identities in the terms in which our authors describe their characters and again, as in their introductory paragraphs, similarities in language.

When Hawthorne launched into the first of the character sketches (that of "a certain inspector" who, it is clear, he held in deep repugnance), it would seem that he needed little help from Lamb, or any other author, to fill out the details. It is perhaps the more significant, therefore, that the traits of character which Hawthorne emphasizes in the old inspector (his feebleness of intellect and his gourmandism) are to be found in the cashiers described first in order by Lamb in "The South Sea House":

/Thomas Tame's/ *intellect* was of the *shallowest* order. It did not reach to a saw or a proverb. His mind was in its original state of white paper. A sucking babe might have posed him.

"The South Sea House" (L, II, 4)

/The old inspector had a/ moderate proportion of *intellect*...being in barely enough measure to keep the old gentleman from walking on all-fours. He possessed no power of thought, no depth of feeling, no troublesome sensibilities...He was, in truth,...*shallow*.

"The Custom House" (H, IX, 33-4)

/Evans'/ *tristful* visage clearing up a little over his roast neck of veal...till evening brought on the hour of tea...Then was his forte, his glorified hour! How he would chirp and expand over a muffin!

"The South Sea House" (L, II, 3)

It always pleased and satisfied me to hear him expatiate on fish, poultry, and butcher's meat...and smack his lips over dinners.

"The Custom House" (H, IX,35)

Hawthorne's sympathetic characterization of Capt. Burchmore, accountant for the Custom House, bears close points of resemblance to Lamb's drawing of John Tipp, accountant of the South Sea House.

/To/ the then accountant, John Tipp,...the whole duty of man consisted in writing off dividend warrants...He was indeed equal to the wielding of any of the most intricate accounts of the most flourishing company ...His pen was no less erring than his heart. He made the best executor in the world; he was plagued with incessant executorships accordingly ...Neither was it recorded of him that for lucre, or for intimidation, he ever forsook friend or principle.

"The South Sea House" (L, II, 5)

/Captain Burchmore's/ gifts were emphatically those of a man of business; prompt, acute, clear-minded...The Custom House...was his proper field of activity; and the many intricacies of business,...

presented themselves before him with the regularity of a perfectly comprehended system...The merchants valued him not less than we...His integrity was perfect...A stain on his conscience...would trouble such a man very much in the same way.../as/ an error in the balance of an account.

"The Custom House" (H, IX, 41-2)

Each of our accountants shares alike a talent for figures, each is devoted to his duty, each has projected an order and formality into his conduct of business, each draws the admiration of his associates, and each has a moral integrity that is as scrupulous as the books each keeps.

When Hawthorne reached the point in his sketch where he tells of his idle wanderings one rainy day in the airy second story of the Custom House and the discovery of the manuscript, it would seem that he found some help from Lamb in setting the atmosphere of a place that was very like the great deserted rooms of the South Sea House thick-laden with dust and haunted by the shades of dead accountants. (cf. L, II, 2 and H, IX, 46-8)

Hawthorne closes his sketch with the same emphasis upon the unreality of his former life that Lamb employs in his closing paragraphs:

But it is time to close with this solemn mockery...peradventure the very names which I have summoned up before thee are fantastical - insubstantial...Their importance is from the past.

"The South Sea House"

The life of the Custom House lies like a dream behind me...All those venerable personages...are but the shadows to my view; white headed and wrinkled images, which my fancy used to sport with, and has now flung aside forever.

"The Custom House"

Finally, it may be noted that Hawthorne duplicates the language of one of Lamb's last sentences when he rounds out his portrait of the old inspector:

*But it is time to close...this solemn mockery*

"The South Sea House"

*But it is time to quit this sketch.*

"The Custom House"

"The Custom House" is by the nature of the piece constructed largely from direct observation with, as Hawthorne says, "an imaginative touch here and there"; the staple of its style is reposeful in the Augustan manner. Yet important points of arrangement and of detail in setting and in characterization are given strong support from Lamb's "The South Sea House"; the turn of phrase, the touch of whimsy and of fantasy of Lamb are there, too.

Of Lamb's essays, "Dream Children" and "The South Sea House" appear to have been the most richly suggestive to Hawthorne for his own sketches. Hawthorne found especially attractive Lamb's delight in reverie, his nostalgic love of the past, and his sympathetic insight into human character. Technically Lamb offered Hawthorne certain rhetorical figures, an enrichment of vocabulary, and a mellow informality of style. Direct observation was, without a doubt, the foundation of Hawthorne's art, but books in abundance and the play of a vigorous imagination were required in the construction of a finished house of art. To the books already known to



have contributed substantially to the building of this house we may now confidently add Charles Lamb's universally admired *Essays of Elia*.

## JOHN CLARE AND HIS DOCTORS

Anne Tibble

Clare had no sort of luck over timing for the 'natural' country poetry he wanted to write. The fashion for 'nature' poetry was passing when his first book was published in 1820. Luck or chance gave him birth among the agricultural poor just at the time his native county was being enclosed, making his life and circumstances much more rigorous than they might have been. But he encountered some good fortune with his doctors. Two of the five or more who attended him during his seventy-four years of life made significant contributions to nineteenth century medicine. One of the others revealed in his books some of the doctoring ideas of his day. Another was a broad-minded and benevolent adviser.

This last, Dr George Darling, whom Clare's publisher John Taylor of London introduced to so many literary men, was Keat's doctor. He prescribed for and advised Clare between 1824 and 1837, probably free of charge. He contributed to Clare's upkeep at Dr Matthew Allen's private mental home at High Beech. Allen kept Clare four years. And Allen was far before his time in humane, friendly treatment of patients. Dr Fenwick Skrimshire of Peterborough tended Clare at home for many years, and in 1841 he certified him insane in a document the terms of which are now notorious. Dr Thomas Prichard, superintendent of St Andrew's Asylum, Northampton, from its opening in 1838, cared for Clare from 1841 until he founded his own institution in 1845. Prichard intimidated Clare - and other patients - by the magnetism of his personality.

In hospitals for the insane, doctors in Clare's day still countenanced methods of 'exorcizing devils' such as purging, whipping, ligations, the rotatory chair to produce nausea, leaving the patient naked on straw, in chains, or leg-locked. One patient of Old Bethlem was leg-locked for eight years. The witches' brew called Venice Treacle was still in use. Few could visit places of restraint in some of which, it has been alleged, patients were allowed to eat their own excrement. Lunatics were sometimes made spectacles for laughter and derision.

Treatment of the mad George the Third alerted public opinion. London's Bedlam, where the worst abominations were said to have taken place, and the York Lunatic Asylum, came under reform. In 1815 a Lunacy Commission was set up, with powers to inspect. From 1819 to 1824 young Dr Matthew Allen helped with rehabilitation at York.

Lecturing on the up-and-coming craze for phrenology at Kirkaldy, Allen came across the schoolmaster there - one Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle denounced phrenology as rubbish. Allen, whose ideas on treatment of the insane already ran in the direction of what we now call occupational therapy, offered Carlyle £80 to coach one of his patients in mathematics. This subject had been the youthful Carlyle's delight at his early home at Ecclefechan. Gladly Allen consented to a further demand from Carlyle for £150. Carlyle came to see his student, found, in his own words, a 'dotard' a 'semi-vegetable', and declined the post. It must have been about this time that John Clare, at Helpstone, set about teaching 'Eliza Holmes the common rules of Arithmetic at the restless request of her parents', without payment of any kind.

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In 1825 Matthew Allen founded his own hospital at High Beech in Essex. The three separate houses at High Beech were within walking distance of Epping Forest. Fair Mead, the home of the Allens, was made a place of promotion to family life for patients' good behaviour in the other two houses; Leopard's Hill Lodge for male patients, and Springfield for women. We know that Clare called High Beech 'Allen's Hell'; and much may have taken place there of which Allen was either unaware, or to which he deliberately shut his eyes.

Allen's two publications, *Cases of Insanity*, 1831, and *Essay on the Classification of the Insane*, 1837, outline his ideas on the care of the mentally sick - 'this neglected department of medicine'. Acts of Parliament, Allen stated in the latter, can never make places of restraint 'what they ought to be':

The present constitution of society is not in a healthy state. It is not bound together by that order and sympathy which should exist, but on the contrary, discord and disservice prevail to an extent which seems to threaten its decomposition and destruction.

One part of the mind Allen contended, anticipating Freud and Adler, as well as one part of society, was 'at war' with another:

It is in this way that we often find minds that have much that is amiable about them, are soonest overthrown.

Allen's prescription for treatment was eminently wholesome. He believed in as much freedom as possible. 'Not more than three percent' of patients 'need restraint'. He allowed Clare freedom to wander within 'the Forest's airy bounds'. He encouraged him to continue writing as well as to work in the fields. In a public effort to obtain money for Clare to be at home again, he held out strong hopes for complete recovery.

It was in 1837 that John Taylor had persuaded Allen to receive Clare. By July 1841 Clare had grown tired of 'those jailors called keepers'. He walked out - and home to Northborough in Northamptonshire. His account of that walk, written the day after his arrival home, is one of literature's most moving passages.

Fenwick Skrimshire of Peterborough attended Clare after High Beech as he had attended him intermittently since Clare's youth. Clare described him as 'that odd man...who collects the eggs of English birds'. From Skrimshire, a general practitioner, we learn a great deal of the state of country doctoring of the day. He was the author of four books: *A Series of Popular Clinical Essays*, 1805; *Essays toward the Study of Natural History*, 1812; and, when his interests took a sociological turn, *An Essay on the Consumption of Malt* 'from the point of view of the pastor, the publican, and the agricultural labourer.' In 1838 Skrimshire published *The Village Pastor's Surgical and Medical Guide*, 'in letters from an old Physician to a young clergyman, his son, on his entering upon the duties of a parish priest.'

Skrimshire admitted in his preface to the last that he had 'long doubted' whether 'medical works, written for unprofessional readers, were not calculated to do as much mischief as good': for 'every practitioner'

must well remember the time when old nurses were the authority that regulated the treatment, not only of trivial ailments, but of almost all the serious disorders of infancy and childhood. Most mothers surrendered their judgment in these matters to the old nurse of the family, and every village had an old crone for its oracle in all matters of surgery and medicine. The farrago of absurdities, which was

thus generally practised, is now utterly discarded by all but the grossly ignorant; and to what, let me ask, is this improvement to be ascribed, but to a more free and candid intercourse between intelligent practitioners and their patients, and to the general perusal of popular treatises on medical subjects?

Confident that the public were, by 1838, 'accustomed to 'professional works written by surgeons and physicians of eminence' Fenwick Skrimshire proceeded to outline his joy 'at the vast improvement in the condition of our own established church' in the past half century. He was sure that 'merit is now the passport to the highest dignities'; he looked forward to the time when every village in England would have a highly educated pastor to watch over 'the eternal interests of its inhabitants'. Outlining aims for his curate son, who had not lacked 'parental guidance' or education, he warned him to keep on good terms with the medical man of the district, who might live miles away from the village. He bade him beware of the 'uneducated pretending quack' - of which there were evidently still many. A young pastor should be 'graced with that philanthropy and Christian charity, which is ever ready to relieve distress, and which cheerfully submits to personal inconvenience for the good of others. The pastor was warned how, in spite of 'intelligent practitioners'

The patient, or his officious friend, will often, before you arrive, have stuffed into the wound dry rags, or rags soaked in vinegar, perhaps a piece of tobacco, or a piece of felt from his hat, or some other substance...with a view not only of staunching the bleeding, but of producing what is vulgarly called a good rot, which means a copious discharge of matter...

The young pastor was to remove all foreign matter, and 'bring the divided surfaces into apposition', securing them by strips of adhesive plaster: 'sutures', stitches by needle and thread, were to be left to the surgeon. Washing was to be avoided as much as possible; so were spirits, salt water, vinegar, or any

of the nostrums of quacks or Lady Bountifuls, with which you will be assailed, as specifics for making the wounds heal quickly...salves, cerates, or anything else, interposed between cut surfaces, interfere with nature...

He was to be very firm if he found the bedroom of the sufferer 'crowded with neighbours and acquaintances':

More than half of them have been brought there by no better motive than curiosity, or that love for sights of horror and distress, so particularly prevalent among the uneducated, which so generally brings a crowd to the scene of any serious or dreadful accident, and as commonly fills the chamber of the dying in the lower classes of society ...

The pastor was to 'make a show of declining to assist the sufferer till the room is cleared'.

Skrimshire proceeded to the treatment of coughs, colds, chronic eruptions, and a variety of other ailments which the poor are disposed generally to 'mismanage' themselves. For suspended animation from drowning, his young pastor was to wrap the person in a blanket; then

Obtain the smallest pair of bellows at hand, use them once to blow out any dirt or dust that may be in them, wrap some soft rag round the

nozzle, and apply it to one of the nostrils, whilst an assistant closes the other nostril and mouth with his hand. Having used the bellows two or three times, and watched for the expansion of the chest, if it is perceived to heave or appears distended, then gently press upon the ribs and the pit of the stomach to expel the air, the assistant at the same time allowing the nostril and mouth to be open. Repeat the use of the bellows with the nostril and mouth closed, and the same pressure with the nostril and mouth open, alternately for many times, so as to imitate as nearly as you can the natural breathing; and persist in it for two or three hours, even if no signs of returning life are apparent; but should the action of the heart or the pulse at the wrist be felt, should a sigh be heard, or a twittering of any muscles of the face be perceived, continue the artificial breathing, desisting occasionally for a few seconds to watch for the repetition of these signs of returning animation...A feather dipped in vinegar may be introduced into the nostrils to excite sneezing...

If the cause of suspended animation was not known, the young pastor was at once to suspect intoxication.

For most poisons vomits were advocated, the stomach pump was to be resorted to, and up to twenty 'indispensable' leeches applied to the stomach if the patient were in pain. For infantile convulsions the warm bath, then a 'purgative glyster', then calomel and rhubarb. But 'should the child be of a fat and gross habit', 'general bleeding is desirable.' For hysterics, in young or old, the application of fetid odours to the nostrils - and - of course, leeching, strong purgatives, oil of turpentine, calomel and jalap.

Over epileptic attacks, the doctor confessed: 'our confidence in medicine is not great.' For confirmed cases he could only suggest a daily souse of the head in cold water and attention to an adage that surely smacks of the despised, occasionally wise, old nurse: keeping the head cool and the feet warm.

In the early nineteenth century over-eating, over-drinking, opium-taking were all under attack. Clare had been subject to 'epileptiform' attacks since the day when, as a boy he had seen a loader fall from a hay-wagon and break his neck. These swoonings were liable to recur when he wrote, as he sometimes did, for days on end without much food or enough sleep. When, in 1830, he rose in the Peterborough theatre to denounce in good set terms the actor playing Shylock he was in great mental and physical distress. Darling's consoling words that he had not harmed his children and was not ill through any direct fault of his own were too distant in London to be of much help. It was Skrimshire who 'bled blistered & cupped' him and prescribed a 'seaton in my neck'. A seaton was a much-used remedy of the time: a thread or piece of tape drawn through a fold of skin to maintain an opening for discharges: for a 'good rot' - in the words of Skrimshire's despised lower classes of society.

When, late in 1841, Skrimshire was asked to certify Clare for admission as a pauper into St Andrew's Asylum at Northampton, he did not suggest as contributory factors in mental breakdown, hard mental work, disappointed hopes, emotional exhaustion, possibly inadequate food all his life. In answer to the query as to cause he declared on no evidence whatsoever that it was 'hereditary'. Madness had made itself manifest, he wrote, 'after years addicted to poetical prosings.' Yet he was not a hard man, and at least twice in tending Clare, had reduced or waived his fee.

The first superintendent of St Andrew's was Dr Thomas Prichard, tall, handsome, young, athletic. The Prichards were a family from Pwllheli, owning considerable land in North Wales. Two of Dr Thomas's brothers were doctors. Other members of the family were surgeons. Without fuss, Thomas Prichard was one of the first to do away with physical restraint for the mentally sick; and this when the subject was being hotly debated. He did not scruple to use mesmerism in controlling his patients.

Clare was allowed to walk the mile or so from St Andrew's into Northampton town. Such freedom, Prichard maintained relieved the terrible monotony of confinement. The Northampton journalist G J De Wilde has a story of Clare's steady refusal to join any more 'escape' plans. After those eighty miles out of Essex, having eaten grass by the wayside to keep going and having reached home but 'found no Mary' - when two crestfallen fugitives were brought back to St Andrew's, Clare said: 'I told you how it would be, you fools.' When after Prichard's departure somebody made Clare tipsy with drink and he was confined to the Asylum grounds, the effect on his poetry was profound.

Just as Matthew Allen was beneficial for Clare, so was Thomas Prichard though in a different way. Prichard allowed him to be classed among the 'gentlemen' patients. He and W F Knight, the Steward, encouraged Clare to write, helped him reconcile himself to his fate, providing environment and stimulus under which many of Clare's later poems of vision were written. His conflict whilst under the moral and religious Allen had resulted in those revealingly imperfect long poems "A New Canto of Don Juan" and "New Cantos of Child /sic/ Harold - Byronic, both of them, in little but name. The conflict resolved itself in some aspects and, cathartic perhaps, by the very writing of the two poems left Clare freer. He could return to archetypal ideas which had haunted him from boyhood; of a universal mother, earth-maiden, muse, Guardian spirit.

T S Eliot has said that poets are in some sense mirrors of our past. The ideal of love which occupied Provençal Troubadours of the Age of Chivalry, which came again to trouble the Romantic era and which today is out of fashion, is also the concern of some of Clare's best later poems. Just as clearly as the ideal precedes, it passes beyond marriage. It is concerned with the difference between that spontaneous rapture and sacrificial gentleness contained in maternal love and in the uprising and sustaining of deep humanness; with the conflict between this strand in human make-up and the strands of violence and aggression; with the displacement of love by a kind of mechanical dullness, self-deception, negation. Clare, stressing essential 'innocence' in a freeing from intellectual dogma and from civilization's cruelly conceptual artifice, became under Dr Thomas Prichard, a particularly lucent mirror of our past, as well as of our present.

#### FAR 'FROM THE CHEERFUL HAUNTS OF STREETS': LAMB'S ENFIELD

D O Pam

The charm of this little town (when Lamb came here it was scarcely more than a village) must have delighted the weary office worker and his sister taking a brief respite at Mrs Leishman's boarding house in Gentlemen's Row, indeed, they grew to like the place so much that on retirement they decided to make their home in Enfield. Then, as now, the centre of this little township was the market square shown in the print. In the background to the left stands the Kings Head conveniently placed as an alternative to the church. St Andrews makes a handsome backcloth to a pastoral scene with its clock looking

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down over the market square as it still does. The Enfield clocks then paid no great regard to accuracy, which suited the essayist in his retirement whose time was at his own disposal. 'On that account' he wrote 'I have a good word for the Enfield clocks too. Their hands generally point without any servile reference to this sun of our world in his sub-empyrean position. They strike too just as it happens according to their own sweet wills - one - two - three, anything they like, and thus to me, a more fortunate Whittington, they pleasantly announce that time, as far as I am concerned, is no more'.

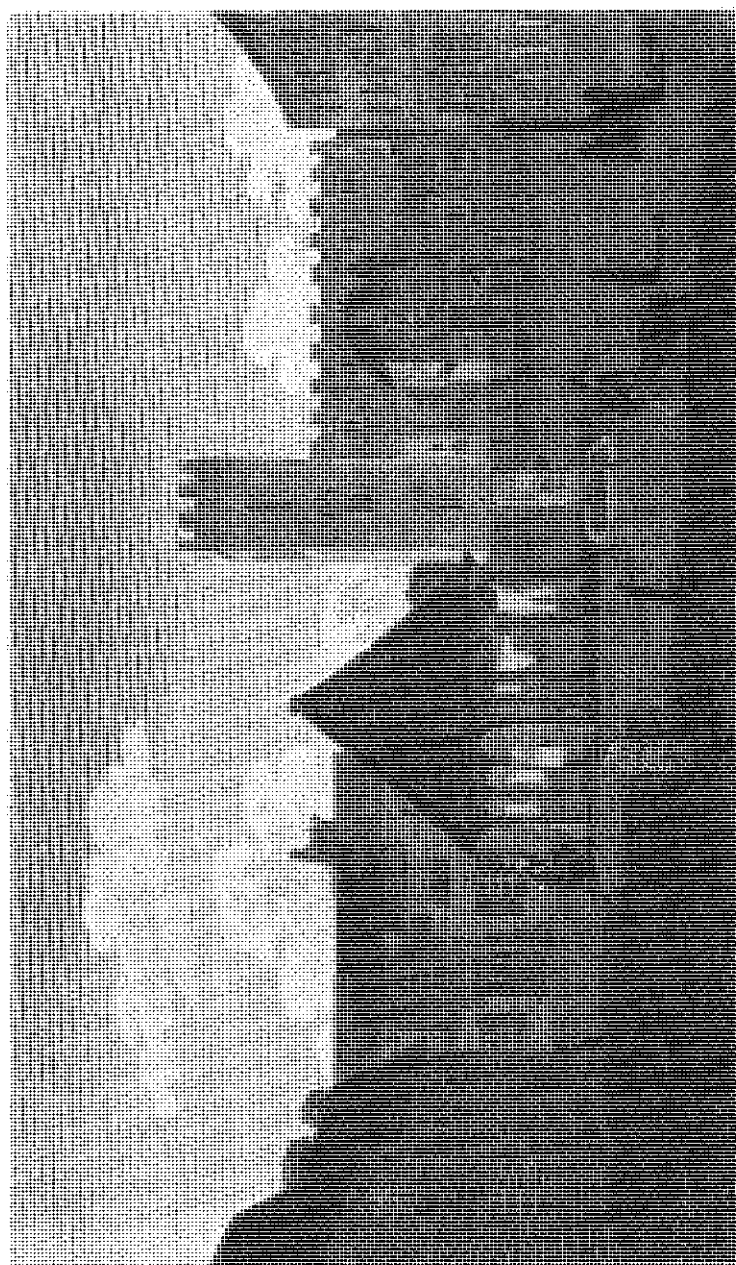
In the foreground stands a milestone announcing solemnly that it is nine miles from his beloved London and so contradicting its brother milestone, which stood almost opposite and which announced, with equal gravity, that the same distance measured ten miles. On the right of the square was the Greyhound Inn, 'kept by a comfortable old man and his daughter called Powell' wrote Mary Cowden Clarke. The Cowden Clarkes stayed there on their honeymoon and Charles Lamb, dwelling only a few hundred yards away in Chase Side, knew nothing of their presence. 'Benedicks are close', he chided them later, 'but how I so totally missed you at that time, going for my morning cup of ale duly, is a mystery'.

The year 1823 saw many changes still bewailed by the local historians of the parish, but to Lamb the process appeared otherwise. 'You'd like to see the improvements on the Chase' he wrote 'the new cross in the market place'. This is the gothic monstrosity shown in the second illustration, though it looks well enough now as a garden ornament. It replaced the old market house in the first print which had stood there since the reign of Charles I. At the same time they also 'improved' the church, destroying the porch with its muniment room above and sun dial and the low south aisle which had been built in the fifteenth century, all so that a gallery might be installed on this side of the church. To complete the work the whole of the exterior of the fabric was rendered over in cement, causing Charles Lamb, who had meantime become disillusioned with the little town, bitterly to complain that it was a 'new plastered flat church'.

Lamb's disillusion hardened into dislike. Life in Enfield had become tedious to him. 'The week days would be intolerable but for the superior invention which they show here in making Sundays worse. Clowns stand about in what was the market place and spit minute-ly to relieve ennui. Clowns to whom Enfield trades-people are gentle people. Inland clowns, clods, and things below cows. They assemble to infect the air with dullness from Waltham marshes. They clear off o' the Monday mornings like other fogs.'

But the cloud of despondency which hung over him at Enfield did not disperse and he was driven to make the last move of the many which had measured out his life, only a few miles away to the cottage in Church Street, Edmonton where he spent the last eighteen months of his life.





## BOOK REVIEWS

John Cornwell: Coleridge; Poet and Revolutionary, 1772-1804 *Alan Lane, 1973*

Why is it so difficult to produce a satisfactory biography of Coleridge? Few men have lived lives that were ostensibly more open to the public view, or have spoken more freely and trustingly about what they thought and felt, contradictory though some of the thoughts and feelings have been at different places or different times. Coleridge's life was not lacking in incident; and of course it is rich in opinion, theory and observation. Perhaps it is in the difficulty of bringing these two elements together that the difficulty resides- in arranging a marriage, as it were, between the Letters and the Notebooks.

That there is no satisfactory biography I take as axiomatic. The bare bones of the affair were exposed by James Dykes Campbell in his admirable and unpretentious *STC, A Narrative of the Events of His Life*, which is precisely what it says it is. However, we know much more now than he could have done, so that even if Ernest Hartley Coleridge had completed and published the biography on which he was said to have been working when all his papers were 'lost' it would by now have been superseded, good though it may well have been. Most writers have concentrated on the romantic early phase which is superficially much easier to deal with than the middle and later years, and which has been well covered, notably by Lawrence Hanson and also in Malcolm Elwin's *The First Romantics* which at least takes some healthy swipes at Wordsworth and more particularly at Southey. Even so, we probably learn more about Coleridge's situation in the anxious years after early manhood in William Heath's *Wordsworth and Coleridge: A Study of their Literary Relations in 1801-1802*, which is concerned with the inner rather than the outer life of the two poets and which reveals a whole range of new perspectives.

There have, of course, been a number of attempts at a full biography. Sir Edmund Chambers, who did nothing to conceal his indifference to the chore handed to him by the Clarendon Press, succeeded in perpetuating a stereotype of the good-man-gone-wrong which schoolteachers everywhere adopt with alacrity (it is no credit to the Clarendon Press that after 35 years this worthless book should still be in print). Maurice Carpenter in *The Indifferent Horseman* produced an indifferent book; and W J Bate a useful one in a series, however, which was designed to provide an outline rather than the finished product.

And now we have Mr Cornwell, plunging in where angels - if there be any such - fear to tread. In a longish book (430 pages) he has again attempted only the earlier years, to the departure to Malta in 1804, but he has made the attempt to synthesise theory with practice- what Coleridge felt and thought with what he did. The trouble is that in the latter he has followed a well-beaten track, erecting no new signposts on the way (he even quotes from the egregious Cottle to raise an easy laugh or an equally easy sneer); and in philosophical terms he does not succeed very well in explaining what he thinks he means. Judged by the highest standards, therefore, this is not a satisfactory book. That is not to say that, of its sort, it is a bad book. Taken with a pinch of salt by a common reader not already well-acquainted with Coleridge it will fill in the picture without doing too much harm; it would certainly be more likely than the Chambers to lead him to wish to know more. But what common reader, or indeed public library, will be prepared to pay £5 to attain such a limited objective? Altogether this is not a book to be recommended.

Well, if that is the case what do we want? I should say that we need an examination, in much greater detail than has been attempted before in a biographical context of Coleridge's *nature* and particular gifts; of his motivations, even in his earlier years between leaving Christ's Hospital and settling in Keswick (where his difficulties really seem to have become unmanageable); of his relations with Wordsworth both during the happier early years and subsequently up to the break which occurred in 1810 (or did it in fact begin much earlier?); and most of all of the years in the wilderness between leaving the Lake District for good and arriving at his final haven at Highgate in 1815 (and what sort of haven was that: did it do him good or prevent him from arriving at the full expression of his immense gifts? The question needs to be asked). We need to have followed up the signposts erected in the Heath book already referred to, and in Donald Sultana's *STC in Malta and Italy*. We want a blow-by-blow account of all the documented events of Coleridge's life, and not just a simplistic summary; and we want Norman Fruman's bill of indictment met head-on and admitted or discharged. Of course the documentation by now is immense, even if each part of it throws up new problems to be solved: in fact the first task would be to identify the problems. I must not say that all that is lacking is someone of sufficient imagination, sympathy and sheer intellectual stature to accomplish the task, since I hear that a gentleman of Oxbridge has been nominated and of course we must wait and see what he can do. The task is a great one and it must be accomplished. In the present instance it is no discredit to Mr Cornwell that he has not accomplished it. In that league he is out of his class.

Basil Savage

#### THE WORDSWORTH CIRCLE

We are gratified to note that our contemporary, published quarterly at Temple University, Philadelphia, contains in its current number 'Charles Lamb and the Elizabethan Dramatists: a Reassessment' by James Shokoff, which is the winning essay in the Charles Lamb essay competition to which we referred in the Bulletin for April 1972.

The tone and spirit of Professor Shokoff's contribution can perhaps best be conveyed by the following quotation

The aim of the present essay is to set Lamb's achievement in proper perspective by showing that Lamb was uniquely important, for both his scholarship and his criticism, in the revival of interest in the old dramatists, and certainly more important than is currently allowed. The bases for this assertion will be four demonstrations: that the Elizabethan revival before Lamb slighted the minor dramatists; that Lamb's *Specimens* was different and more likely to be effective than any other book in the antiquarian movement; that Lamb as scholar-editor was directly responsible for recovering several virtually lost works; and that Lamb's work was a major impetus for and influence upon important studies of the Elizabethan drama after 1808...

It may be conceded that he succeeds in his aim. The Wordsworth Circle is obtainable from The Editor, TWC, Department of English, Temple University, PA 19122 price \$3.00 per annum: subscriptions from the sterling area at £1.25 are received by Basil Savage.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

Robert Southey: *A Tour in Scotland in 1819* (Mercat Press)  
 John E Jordan (ed.): *De Quincey as a Critic* (RKP)  
 Peter F Morgan (ed.): *The Letters of Thomas Hood* (Oliver & Boyd)

## NEW MEMBERS

Dr M E Priestley, English Department, Elon College, N.Carolina 27244, U.S.A.  
 Miss Leslie J Friedman, 4010 Manzana, Palo Alto, CA.94306, U.S.A.  
 Aberdeen University Library, Periodicals Department, King's College,  
 Aberdeen AB9 2UB  
 Mrs E H Lilley, 12 Hunter Court, Hunter House Road, Sheffield S11 8TY  
 Mr A C King, 35 Amwell Street, London E C 1  
 Mr G A Taylor, Mayaro, Rookery Way, Haywards Heath, Sussex RH16 4RE

## EVENTS FOR 1973-74

October 6 The Annual Crowsley Memorial Lecture - Dr Hugh Sykes Davies,  
 Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge  
 November 3 Music of the Early 19th Century - Lawrence Watts, ARCM, FTCL  
 (Tenor at St Paul's Cathedral)  
 December 1 Art in Elian Times - P J Garrard, RBA, NEAC  
 January 5 Regency and Early Georgian Architecture - E E Brown, FRIBA,  
 HSIA  
 February 9 THE CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON - Guest Speaker, John Wain,  
 Professor of Poetry at Oxford  
 March 2 Women Fair but Frail - Finbar Macdonnel  
 April 6 The Annual General Meeting

Except for the Birthday Luncheon, which will take place at Simpsons-in-the-Strand, all meetings will be at The Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, London W C 1 and will start at 2.45 pm.

