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SATIRE AND HUMOR IN LAMB'S VERSE

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As Ben Johnson used the word, humor was really satire, characterization of persons ridiculously grotesque from the predominance of a particular trait. Later usage of the term humor implies a counterbalance of satiric ridicule with sympathy.

Lamb's essays are humor in this sense, usually sympathetic but often with considerable satiric bite. So is a good deal of his verse. Some of his verse has considerable intrinsic merit as satiric humor. It also casts an interesting sidelight on his prose.

The best-known of his humorous poems is no doubt his "Farewell to Tobacco," in which Lamb amusingly parodies the convention of the poet's complaint of and farewell to his cruel mistress. There are others as good in their way. Three are translations, with the humor heightened, from the Latin of Vincent Bourne, the Westminster master of Cowper. "A Pindaric Ode to the Tread Mill" ludicrously parodies high-flown pindaric literary tributes in order to celebrate the creeping commonplaceness of manner in which Defoe unspectacularly converts certain spectacularly vicious characters to moral rectitude. "Epicidium" is a mock satiric lyric lament, in the manner of Prior's "Down Hall," for the loss of early acquaintances. More characteristic perhaps, and certainly more in the self-depreciatory vein of the "Farewell to Tobacco," are "Free Thoughts on Several Eminent Composers," in which the poet gently rejects the great composers he is not musical enough to appreciate, and "Brevis Esse Laboro," in which he recounts how two stout attendants dipped him - because of his stammer - two extra times in a cold sea, whither he had been sent - for one dip only - on doctor's orders. Such mildness toward others and such willingness to turn the jest upon himself have made Lamb a favorite of all those who cannot take their satire undiluted.

Yet even in his humor Lamb is a satirist, whose strictures on what is wrong with the world are but imperfectly concealed by his warm sympathy, broad tolerance, and defensive self-depreciation. Often he deals with only surface evils, as in "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People," or - cutting a little more deeply - in "Grace before Meat," but he can also tread painfully close to the brink of social cruelty, as in "Poor Relations," and his criticism is not the less effective when it gives a Kafka-like impression of the riotously macabre, as in "On the Inconveniences Resulting from Being Hanged." Lamb had the courage to look into the abyss of human weakness, as in "Confessions of a Drunkard". While this essay is not to be taken as literally a personal confession, and Lamb resented such an interpretation, he was tempted to sufficient over-indulgence to realize the danger; and the theme of addiction to a vice is no more than an extension of that treated more lightly in the "Farewell to Tobacco". Not infrequently he treats with traditional subjects of satire, as in "Imperfect Sympathies" his incapacity to like Soctchmen, Jews, and Quakers, or his preference for

the mild rather than the severe pedagogue in "The Old and the New Schoolmaster".

No wonder a man of such tastes should occasionally write genuine satire. Nearly all of this is political, inspired by two major assaults by his friend Leigh Hunt - as editor of *The Examiner* - upon that most worthless of the Hanoverians, first as Prince Regent during one of those mysterious illnesses of his father, George III, and then as the succeeding monarch, George IV.

In 1812 George, then Prince Regent, abandoned his long-suffering Whig friends and his long-professed Whig principles and turned Tory from expediency. In 1820 as George IV he vindictively sued his estranged consort Caroline for divorce in order to keep her from sharing his coronation. These were the two chief occasions on which Lamb was moved to write satire.

Lamb was never really politically minded and - in so far as he was - (his disapproval kept politics from being often discussed in the Lambs' well-known evenings at home) his essays show abundant evidence of that dislike of change and that nostalgic longing for the past which are common to satirists of a conservative bent. Nevertheless, Lamb's satirical writings make it clear that he kept some of his early Jacobin opinions as he did some of his early Jacobin friends. Lamb wrote in his "Preface" to *The Last Essays of Elia* that "He never greatly cared for the society of what are called good people."

As early as 1801 he composed a rather severe epigram on the "black" apostate from radicalism "Judas" Mackintosh. In 1802 he wrote another on the feeble Addington, unexpectedly called to head a Tory ministry

I put my night-cap on my head,
And went, as usual, to my bed;
And, most surprising to relate,
I woke - a Minister of State!

Tory supporters George Canning and John Hookham Frere are hit at the same time. No doubt Lamb looked upon them with distaste as apostate Whigs; but he had personal reason for disliking them for the verse satires earlier written upon him, as well as such friends of his as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lloyd, in the highly successful *Anti-Jacobin*, to which they had been major contributors.

At the height of Hunt's campaign against the Prince Regent, he published three minor masterpieces in close conjunction. These were Thomas Moore's stinging "Parody of a Celebrated Letter," ridiculing the Prince's attempt to justify his change of friends and principles; Hunt's own scornful article on "The Prince upon St Patrick's Day," assailing George's abandoning of the Irish; and Lamb's delectable "Triumph of the Whale," much the mildest of the three.

The basic comparison upon which this poem is constructed allows Lamb great sport with the fatness of the Regent and his immense capacity for food and drink. The various Monsters of the Deep who swim in procession with their gluttonous and amorous monarch are delightfully specified, including "Mermaids, with their tails and singing/His delighted fancy stinging"; and the Tory "Ink-fish" which hide him from too close observation. The instability of the princely purpose is amusingly figured in the old legend of mariners - here no doubt the disappointed Whigs - anchoring by mistake on a whale's back. Lamb concludes this amusing little squib by classifying

the "Regent of the Sea" according to his proper species:

By his bulk, and by his size,
By his oily qualities,
This (or else my eyesight fails),
This should be the *Prince of Whales*.

And indeed, after the Regent failed them, his former friends would have been glad to see him reduced again to Prince of Wales.

The joke is all the better if Lamb in this skit has turned back upon the supporters of the Tory government Gillray's well-known attack upon the radicals, in which he caricatures the Duke of Bedford as Leviathan, accompanied by a weird procession of humanized beasts. Probably Canning's participating in *The Anti-Jacobin* is one reason for Lamb's consistent hostility to him, as in "The Unbeloved". Among the beasts in the cartoon are Toad and Frog, apparently engaged in singing (as Lloyd and Lambe and Co.) that hymn to atheist member of the French Directory, Lepaux, which had been ridiculed in *The Anti-Jacobin*. According to Southey, Godwin sought to suppress Lamb's disputatiousness on their first meeting by asking whether he was Toad or Frog. This may be Lamb's exquisite revenge.

This verse satire cannot have pleased the Regent much better than the prose article for which he had Hunt prosecuted. No wonder Lamb seems to have felt some responsibility for Hunt's punishment, visiting him often in prison and helping him to carry on the journalistic work with which Hunt continued to support himself.

Not until 1819 did Lamb open fire again, and again the stimulant was an attack of Hunt upon George - now the most unpopular monarch of the Hanoverian dynasty - engaged in suing his Queen for divorce. Lamb, in contrast to Hunt, focuses first on Gifford, the chief Tory "Ink fish", who had published a savage article on Lamb in *The Quarterly Review*. "St Crispin to Mr Gifford" is a sonnet satire in which the patron saint of cobblers expresses punning regret that Gifford left his former "lowly labours" as a cobbler for "learned toils," cobbling together his critiques "cross the grain" and making "a stretching-leather" of his brain.

Having paid his respects to Gifford, Lamb returns to his royal victim in "The Godlike" in which George is compared with a mild humor in sharp contrast to the acerbity of Hunt, Moore, and Byron on this occasion, to Jove, Bacchus, Phoebus, Mercury, and Vulcan ("for domestic strife"), and then with unexpected savagery, to Minerva, because he had issued from the lunatic brain of George III. This comparison seems surprisingly severe from one addressed by Coleridge in "This Lime-tree Bower My Prison", but to Lamb's considerable indignation, as "gentle-hearted Charles" (he suggested "drunken dog" as less insulting).

"The Three Graves" mischievously exploits the title of one of the early radical satires of Coleridge, which that poet was now willing to forget, to condemn the spy system supposedly being used by the government to provoke radicals into rebellion so that they could then be executed. The "Sonnet to Matthew Wood, Esq.", the London alderman in whose home Queen Caroline found refuge upon returning from abroad, is an assault on Canning as the son of an actress, a "shallow Eton wit," and previously the companion in those "sottish orgies" in which "drunken PITT" and "pick-pocket Peer" Lord Treasurer Dundas hatched their "mad counsels" against revolutionary France. George IV is repeatedly ridiculed: "On a Projected Journey," urging his

leaving for Hanover; "Song for the Coronation," against the exclusion of George's Queen from the coronation (in a parody of a Scotch song); and - some years later - "Suggested by the Sight of Waltham Cross", comparing George's mistreatment of his Queen with the marital devotion which caused Edward I to raise the Elinor crosses in memory of his. It is notable that Lamb is much less severe upon the prince than other satirists of the time. The marital troubles of George are treated as merely absurd. Lamb's severity is reserved for Gifford and Canning, both of whom had previously attacked him.

Aside from these few political epigrams and squibs, Lamb wrote little verse satire, and that little is of historical rather than of intrinsic literary importance. One of his non-political epigrams is on the Jewish proprietor of a nostrum called the Balm of Gilead: "On a Late Empiric of 'Balmy' Memory". Another - "On the Arrival in England of Lord Byron's Remains", which were preserved in alcohol - reveals his customary hostility to that poet, who "Went out a pickle and came back the same", though he did believe Southey's arrogant *Vision of Judgment* more worthy of punishment than Byron's parody of it. Another ridicules the four hundred blockheads who read *The Literary Gazette*, and still another punningly complains that "on the Fast-Day" people "of all ranks are loose."

None of these is more than light occasional verse. Such satiric inclination as he possessed tended to soften, rather in the manner of Hunt, in his later years. Thus he mitigates the irony of his "Letter to Elia to Robert Southey," in which Lamb comes valiantly to the defense of what he referred to in the "Preface" to *The Last Essays of Elia* as his "ragged regiment" of friends, especially Hunt and Hazlitt, then at the nadir of their popularity. Even Robinson, who detested Hunt and Hazlitt for their politics, admired Lamb for coming to their defense. He attributes any propensity he may have to deal lightly with religious matters to the example Southey has set in making a jest "not of what you thought to be religion, but...what some pious, but perhaps mistaken folks, think to be so." Leigh Hunt, "in his more genial moods," has "often reminded" him of Southey. But the irony is so mixed with affection and respect that Southey could not be offended by it, and the end of the letter Lamb turns into an appeal to Southey to use his influence in the Church to remove the fees for showing the monuments in Westminster Abbey!

Lamb's verse satire was largely a response to his friendship for Hunt. Surprisingly, some of it is more severe than anything in his essays, but the essays themselves have more and deeper satire than is commonly recognized. The best of the verse satire - such as the "Farewell to Tobacco" and "The Triumph of the Whale" - has the sportive good-humor of the essays without the sad recognition of the deficiencies of mankind and the inadequacies of life which is half hidden under the playful puns and lambent wit of his prose. Perhaps better than any other English author except Byron he illustrates Santayana's belief, expressed in his *Persons and Places*, that there is a natural connection between playful wit and a sense of the terrible realities of human life:

Between the laughing and the weeping philosopher there is no opposition: *the same facts* that make one laugh make one weep. No whole-hearted man, no sane art, can be limited to either mood.

Mary Lamb was no doubt thinking of her brother Charles as well as of the actresses being discussed when, in speaking of an actress, she referred to

that depression of spirits in an artistic temperament which is likely to take refuge "in a half-playful, half-bitter irony of speech."

Thus, Lamb could conceal his concern for the assassination of Perceval, the Prime Minister, under comic love for the worthless Regent in whose service Perceval died. When told that in sea warfare life was so cheap that a man who had lost all four limbs had been chucked unceremoniously through a porthole, Lamb stuttered: "Shame, d----d shame. He m-m-might have l-lived to be an a-a-ornament to Society." Such a response sharpens our sense of horror of either alternative - life or death - to the poor sailor. Lamb once said that "there are deeper sufferings in the mind of man than in any imagined hell."

He had himself suffered from a brief period of insanity and had to live constantly in apprehension of the recurring insane periods of his sister Mary and with the terrible memory of her murder of their mother during her first mental affliction. This gives to his satiric humor at its best a depth lacking in Leigh Hunt's and rather resembling Cowper's, but it is never at its best in his verse.

Occasionally the kind of melancholy wisdom which often underlies his prose humor does appear in his verse, but, when it does, the wit and laughter are likely to evaporate. Thus, when he turns from the ungrateful labor of making verses for the albums popular with ladies in his time to writing some "In My Own Album", the wit is there but is subdued to the melancholy. The white sheet of his soul (obviously suggested by Locke's blank sheet of the infant mind) has had "strange defeatures" written on it by thought and care, "sad dates" stamped upon it by time's "heaviest hand," while error betrays "his path by crooked lines" and "fruitless, late remorse doth trace" her "irrecoverable race":

My scalded eyes no longer brook
Upon this ink-blurr'd thing to look -
Go, shut the leaves, and clasp the book.

The ingenuity of the comparison cannot lighten Lamb's sorrowful sense of life's deficiencies, all the more impressive in coming from one of Johnson-like virtue, one of whom Wordsworth wrote after his death: "Oh, he was good, if e'er a good Man lived!"

EDWARD VERRALL LUCAS

Claude A Prance

On E V Lucas as a man I cannot comment because we never met, but as a writer he seems to have been an old friend for almost as long as I can remember. We have so many interests in common: old Brighton, Sussex, London, cricket, Charles Lamb and England, to say nothing of painters and picture galleries.

After a day of difficulty and stress, or even after reading a book which requires more than usual concentration, it is a relief and a relaxation to turn to one of Lucas's many volumes of delightful essays which require no particular effort to enjoy their full flavour, or even to divert the mind with one of his stories - they are not quite novels - some he called entertainments.

It was with great pride that Lucas recorded in his autobiography his feelings on reading in a letter from Lord Grey of Fallodon to his brother-in-law that he liked *Listeners' Lure* so much he had resolved to buy and read all that

E V Lucas had ever written or would write in the future. No small undertaking, for Lucas was responsible for considerably more than 100 books. Essays, stories, travel books, art criticism, biographies, anthologies: Lucas distinguished himself in all these, as well as being a first class editor. He was, too, a writer of verse and of children's stories.

His earliest efforts, like those of many authors, took the form of verse. *Sparks from a Flint* appeared in 1890, to be followed two years later by *Songs of the Bat*, which the author published himself at the price of one penny: as he says, after spending too much time at Lord's. The best of the cricket verse was included in 1898 in *Willow and Leather*, sub-titled "A Book of Praise", and issued in Arrowsmith's Bristol Library series at one shilling. The book contained both verse and prose, including a shortened version of Lucas's essay on Hambledon from Ranjitsinhji's *Jubilee Book of Cricket*, and even today the tiny volume has much attraction for ardent cricketers. An earlier cricket book in the same series was E B V Christian's *At the Sign of the Wicket*, delightfully sub-titled "Essays on the Glorious Game".

Although Lucas's interests were so wide spread, he could never keep cricket out of his pages and it frequently crops up in his many volumes of essays, his stories and anthologies. In 1907 he edited *The Hambledon Men* which reprinted John Nyren's *The Young Cricketer's Tutor* and *The Cricketers of My Time*, with much other material of great interest, including John Mitford's review of Nyren's book, and prose and verse by James Pycroft, old Clarke, Andrew Lang and Alfred Cochrane: a most fascinating volume to a lover of cricket and the past. Nyren was a friend of the Novellos and of Charles Cowden Clarke, who helped him with his book, and it is highly probable that Lamb may have met him at some of the Novellos' parties.

In 1950, twelve years after Lucas's death, Rupert Hart-Davis collected and published the best of his writings on cricket, taking as his title *Cricket all his Life*, a quotation from an eighteenth century letter about Turner of East Hoathly, who wished that he could play cricket "all his life". Lucas quoted from this old Sussex letter in at least three of his books.

His interest in cricket, if not his performance, was the cause of his inclusion in J M Barrie's famous team, the Allahakbarries, which translated means "God help us" (originally the Allahakbars). Conan Doyle was the outstanding cricketer in this team, but few of the other authors were so distinguished. Barrie's humorous description of his friends is not flattering: "E V Lucas had (unfortunately) a style" - another "threw in unerringly but in the wrong direction". However, not many cricket teams can have had greater enjoyment from their efforts than Barrie's collection of rabbits.

Mr Hart-Davis says Lucas's colleagues would have been astonished to find him in his office on Test Match days, but although cricket was one of his greatest interests he thought and wrote of many other things; and quite early in his career he was persuaded to write a book on *Bernard Barton and his Friends*. This appeared in 1893 and was congenial to Lucas, since he also came of Quaker stock, and he was able to bring in to his volume Charles Lamb about whom he was to write so much. There was, too, the additional interest that Bernard Barton's daughter, to whom Lucas talked in the last years of her life, was also Mrs Edward Fitzgerald.

The book on the old Quaker banker's clerk led to another of Elian association, *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds*. Again Quaker interest was

evident, for the Lloyds of Birmingham were Quakers as well as bankers, and from here Lucas was led on to his later work on the Lambs which produced his great seven volume edition of their works and the three volume edition of their letters. Methuen commissioned the new edition of the former in 1900 and it was issued between 1903 and 1905, the two volume *Life* following in September 1905. This edition, with the letters published in 1935, comprises Lucas's most outstanding scholarly work, and although inaccuracies in the text of the letters have been found by others, not always Lucas's fault for he could not see the originals of all the letters quoted, the lovers of Lamb - and they used to be numerous - will always want to possess these fascinating books. Lucas was remarkably successful with the *Life*, allowing Lamb's own words to tell much of the story. The first volume contained what is really one of his best essays, the chapter on Lamb's friend, George Dyer, the eccentric author "with a head uniformly wrong, and a heart uniformly right". In Lucas's many volumes of essays Charles Lamb frequently appears, in short passages and even in whole essays, which form some of the most attractive of his writings. In 1914 he produced an anthology entitled *The Best of Lamb*, a *Charles Lamb Day Book* in 1925, and when the Lamb centenary occurred in 1934, sixteen of Lucas's Elia essays were collected in a fascinating book *At the Shrine of Saint Charles*.

In 1907 Lucas edited a selection of the letters of William Cowper, a favourite poet of Elia who, copying Coleridge, wrote of his "divine chit-chat". This was for the attractive World's Classics Series, and for the edition of Jane Austen's *Emma*, issued in the same series in the following year, he wrote an introduction.

E V Lucas was one of the most successful of anthologists. *The Open Road*, a collection of prose and verse about the English countryside, sub-titled "A Little Book for Wayfarers", was the earliest and is still the most popular. It first appeared in 1899 and I have an india-paper edition issued in 1948 described as the forty-fifth edition, probably there have been more since then. In 1905 came *The Friendly Town: A Little Book for the Urbane*, an anthology of prose and verse about London. Three years later he produced *Her Infinite Variety: A Feminine Portrait Gallery*, and the following year *Good Company: A Rally of Men*, no doubt as a companion to the earlier volume. In 1927 he published *The Joy of Life* containing lyrics mainly from living poets. All these anthologies are full of most attractive material, produced in pocket editions which are a joy to handle. There were, however, two other volumes, *The Gentlest Art* (1907) and *The Second Post* (1910), later issued in one volume, which contained some of the most enchanting work of English letter writers - and how good they are is evident from these volumes.

Lucas had a light touch as a writer of stories. There is little plot in them, and they are much akin to his essays. Something of their character is indicated by their sub-titles: An Easy Going Chronicle, An Entertainment, A Conversation Piece, An Oblique Narrative, while some are in the form of letters. One of the earliest, *Over Bemertons* (1908), is sheer delight. Joseph Bemerton, the secondhand bookseller, appears in at least one other of Lucas's books and is an attractive figure, but his shop is even more so, and it was a deciding factor in making up Kent Falconer's mind to rent the rooms over it - as he says "Besides, think of the name - Bemerton - with the suggestion of holy Mr Herbert in it." Perhaps *Listener's Lure* takes second place, although the books with the attractive Jenny Candover in them make very pleasant reading. In one story, *Mr Ingleside*, Lucas quotes from the incomparable Mrs Ros, whose novels fulfil all expectations. He was so enthusiastic about her work that he founded an Amanda Ros club in London.

Lucas also wrote much about travel and art, the two subjects often appearing in the same volume, as in his "Wanderer" series. Akin to these is his *Highways and Byways in Sussex*, undoubtedly one of the best volumes in this excellent series. This book must have been congenial to him to write, for he loved Sussex greatly and, of course, cricket could not be kept out of the volume. He also makes reference to Charles Lamb.

Painters and their work interest him much and he wrote a companion to the galleries of Europe, volumes on John Constable and Vermeer of Delft, a series of "Little Books on Great Masters", and *The British School*, described as "an anecdotal guide to the British Painters and Paintings in the National Gallery". He was also the author of an elaborate life of E A Abbey. In his travel books and essays there is considerable information on painters and on the picture galleries of London and continental cities. His volume of essays, *French Leaves* (1931) while containing much about France besides its painters, was illustrated mainly from pictures by artists of the Brabazon school.

In spite of the many other fields covered by Lucas's questing mind, it is probable that today he is still best known as an essayist. At the time he wrote it was customary to issue such works in pocket editions - so much more attractive than the paper backs or even the larger cloth bound volumes of a later period - and perhaps this may have contributed a little to their popularity. It is well to be first drawn to a book by its outside. Judging by the frequency with which his volumes appear in the secondhand bookshops they must have been popular indeed and sales large. They were certainly often reprinted.

Most of Lucas's essays were printed first in periodicals, prominent among which were *Punch*, of which he was assistant editor, and *The Sunday Times*; but it is difficult to name some among so many, which included the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Globe*, *The Academy* (he was a member of the staff), *The Times*, *Spectator*, *Westminster Gazette*, in fact he contributed to nearly all the important periodicals of his day. Let me add that he had edited University College magazine, *The Privateer*, and also wrote for *The Boy's Own Paper*.

Among Lucas's other gifts was an extraordinary facility in choosing titles as is shown by his volumes of essays. He had, too, a great fondness for sub-titles and few of his books lack these descriptive appendages.

One of the best of his books of essays was *One Day and Another* published in 1909. It contained essays on William Allen Richardson (who gave his name to a rose), the Reverend Cornelius Whur, author of the poem "The Female Friend", The Lord of Life, one of Lucas's many pleasing essays on dogs, and two particularly attractive essays: Winter Solace, a meditation in a cricket library, and A Rhapsodist at Lord's, who turns out to be Francis Thompson. In one essay in this book, On Reading Aloud, Lucas refers to that wonderful volume of short stories, Richard Garnett's *The Twilight of the Gods*. He wrote an article on this book in *The Academy* under the title of "Forgotten Books", which he claimed persuaded John Lane to publish the enlarged edition of 1903. This contained twelve additional tales from Dr Garnett's scholarly but gently satirical pen, one of which was the superb "Alexander the Ratcatcher" from *The Yellow Book*.

An earlier volume of Lucas's essays was *Fireside and Sunshine* (1906) which reprinted a number of pieces from *Domesticities* (1900), including the attractive essay of The Poetry of Catalogues, and some new pieces, foremost

among which was Cricket and the Backward Look. This was followed by *Character and Comedy* (1907) with good essays, including one on Oliver Edwards, Dr Johnson's friend, who had tried to be a philosopher but could not keep cheerfulness from breaking in.

In 1911 came *Old Lamps for New* with a long essay on Vermeer, more about William Allen Richardson and the amusing piece, *The Embarrassed Eliminators*, in which a group of Elians find difficulty in deciding on their favourite Lamb essay. *Loiterer's Harvest* followed in 1913, and then during the war years several volumes which, while containing a few good essays, lack some of the interest of earlier books: perhaps because those essays often deal with the war and, being topical at the time, have since lost part of their attraction. *The Phantom Journal* (1919) improved on the war time books and during the next few years there were some excellent volumes, *Giving and Receiving* (1922), *Events and Embroideries* (1926), *A Fronded Isle* (1927) and particularly *Traveller's Luck* in 1930. The following year *Visibility Good* was published containing many interesting essays, as, too, did *Lemon Verbena* (1932). An outstanding volume appeared in 1933 in *Saunterer's Rewards*. This contained essays on The Culpepers, B R Haydon's picture of Curtius, Charles Lamb and the Measles, Whistler's lawsuit with Ruskin and on My Favourite Painter, who was Corot.

The same year Lucas published *English Leaves* containing essays in praise of England. This I find one of the three most attractive volumes of his essays ever published, the other two being the anthology on Charles Lamb and that on cricket. In this volume he writes on Canterbury, Winchester, Greenwich, Salisbury Cathedral, Bath, cricket, England in 1810-11, old English landmarks and on Gertrude Jekyll. This is a book to read and re-read and, in at least one house, to take its place in the bookcase reserved for favourite volumes, which already contains *Over Bemertons*, *The Open Road* and several other Lucas volumes. Here they have for companions Jane Austen, Dorothy Osborne, Thomas Love Peacock, Gilbert White and, of course, Charles Lamb.

Pleasure Trove (1935) had good essays and the subjects include Dickens in Kent and English landscape. In 1938 *Adventures and Misgivings* appeared, Lucas's last volume of essays, and perhaps appropriately named for he died in June that year: in fact because of illness he asked Clifford Bax to supply the cross headings for the book. It showed no falling off in quality from earlier volumes and he had essays on Next Spring (bulb catalogues), Weddings (Suckling's ballad), the D N B and on gardens. This same year he had written *A Hundred Years of Trent Bridge* which was published privately.

It was Lucas's practice to print an essay in more than one volume, for example when a book went out of print, he sometimes selected from it what he considered the best essays and reprinted them with new material under a different title. Thus the purchaser often found he had already read part of his new book, but the additional material usually compensated for this and the old was always worth re-reading.

When Lucas died in 1938 he left rather more than £24,000, part of which went as legacies to the Royal Literary Fund and to the Authors' Pensions Fund. During his lifetime he had paid for the upkeep of Charles Lamb's grave at Edmonton and in his Will he left a fund for the continued maintenance after his death. Thus he expressed his gratitude for the many happy hours his writings on Elia had given him.

Although, perhaps not a book collector on a large scale or even in the strict sense, for he makes his hero in *Over Bemertons* dismember Dr Giles's

A Chinese Biographical Dictionary, "a fat volume in a yellow paper cover", into four pamphlets by cutting it, so that it could be used as a handy bedside book. However, Lucas was certainly a lover of books and had frequently recorded his pleasure in browsing over London bookstalls and in bookshops, "those little terrestrial heavens", and in acquiring curious and out-of-the-way volumes. His library was sold at Sothebys after his death, but realised only £130 for fifty-two lots comprising hundreds of books. About 200 volumes of his essays and anthologies fetched £11 and more than 600 miscellaneous books, mostly modern, brought £26- while 45 books relating to Charles Lamb went for £3.12s., two of these are said to have belonged to Elia himself!

During his life of seventy years Lucas's work has frequently been described as urbane. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines this word as "courteous, suave or refined in manner" and Lucas's writing were all these. It seems he favoured the word himself for one volume of essays was titled *Urbanities*, while it also occurs in the sub-title of one of his anthologies. It has been remarked that nearly all his essays are in praise of something in life which had given him happiness: thus it can be said that they were mostly written with enthusiasm, which he frequently passes on to his readers.

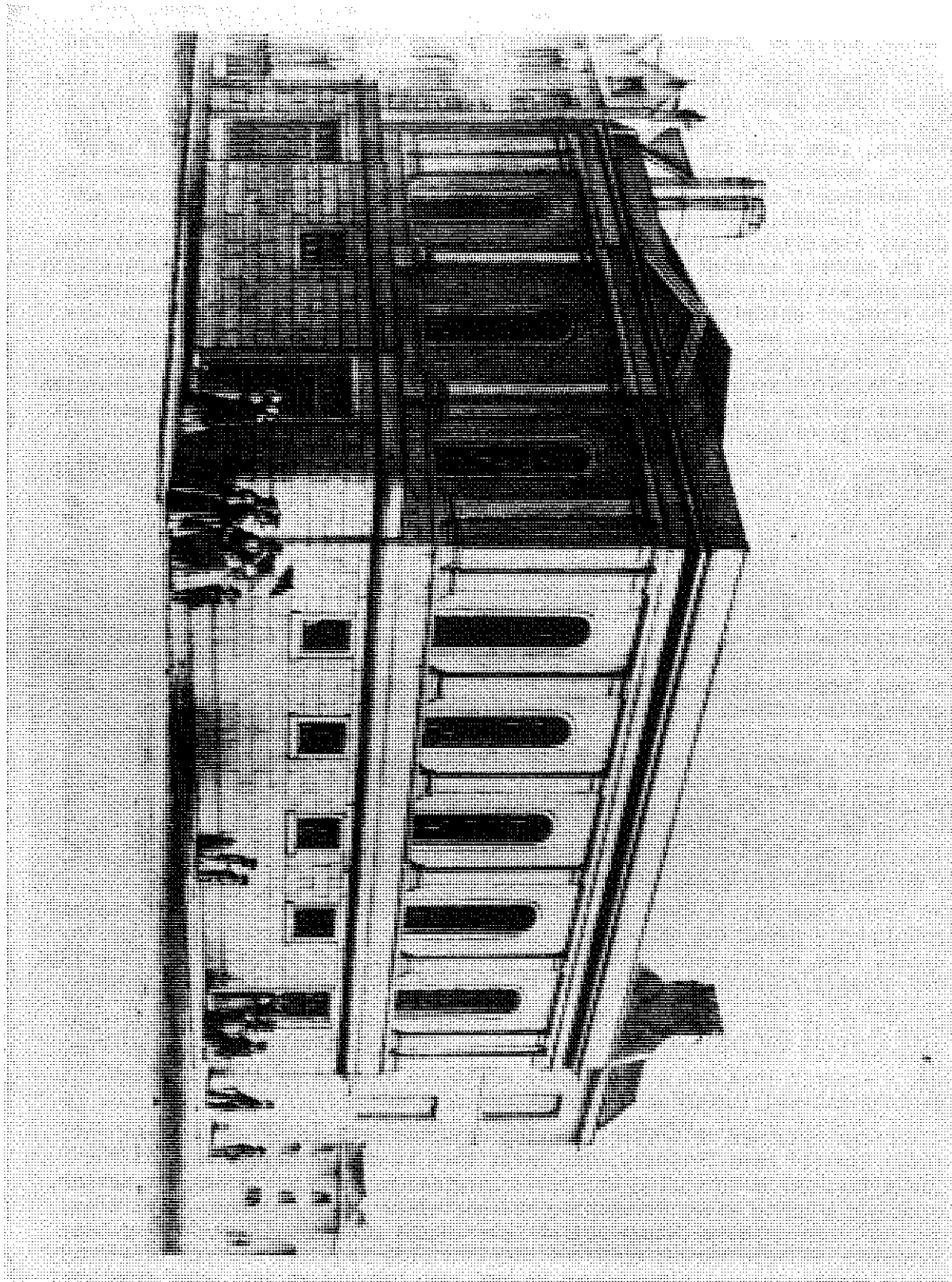
Lucas had a keen sense of humour and an amused eye for the eccentricities of character in those around him and in the literature of his own time and of the past. This sense of fun added greatly to the charm and readability of his work. George Sampson once described him as "the future exponent of sane and humorous quietism in life" and the same writer summed up his books in that "they have one essential quality of entertainments: they entertain."

His essays and stories have given pleasure to many thousands of readers, and he is unlikely to be forgotten among cricket enthusiasts, but his memory will perhaps be best preserved as the editor of the standard edition of the works of Charles and Mary Lamb and of their letters. No one before him had devoted so much attention to Elia and Lucas's researches were detailed and resulted in the finding of much new material, while his notes are a joy to read in themselves and add enormously to one's pleasure and appreciation when reading Elia. With the *Works* and *Letters* must, of course, go the *Life*, surely one of the most thorough and detailed of biographies issued this century. It was criticized at the time of its appearance as too heavy in treatment for Lamb "the frolic and the gentle", and in more recent years Mr John Gross has described it as "Lucas's overgrown biography". Nevertheless when Herbert Paul made the earlier criticism in an able and amusing review which showed clearly his affection for Elia, he admitted that another *Life* of Lamb after this there could hardly be", and he goes on to say that Lucas's "devotion to Lamb and suppression of himself, make this book really delightful." Lovers of Elia who find almost every detail of Lamb's life of interest - and most of us do - must always be enormously in E V Lucas's debt.

COLERIDGE'S FIRST CHAPEL

Berta Lawrence

Trim Street Chapel, the meeting house of Unitarians in Bath, has stood locked and disused for a year or two now, its religious life having lasted about 175 years; it was opened for worship in 1795, only a few weeks before 23-year-old Coleridge came over from Bristol to conduct the service one



Sunday early in the New Year 1796.

Trim Street itself had been built as recently as 1710, the very first street to be constructed outside the ancient city walls. This was brought about by the influence of a wealthy clothier named George Tryme. Pillared, porticoed houses, some with shell-hoods, handsome, dignified and possessed of sober charm, rose along both sides. Number 1, a beautiful house that became the establishment of an engraver and lithographer, was demolished in spite of outcry in 1969. Number 5, where General Wolfe lived until he went on his Quebec expedition, still remains on the east side of pretty old Trim Bridge - the correct name of which is St John's Arch - that united Trim Street with two other streets on different levels. The eighteenth-century cobblestones in front of Wolfe's house, familiar to Coleridge and the Unitarian congregation, remain undisturbed after a fierce battle with spoilers who would have preferred concrete slabs. But the graceful unified character of Trim Street has now been utterly destroyed by the demolition of the Georgian houses west of Trim Bridge and their replacement by a faceless office-block called Trimbridge House.

However, on the opposite side the Chapel still stands, an imposing building with lofty arched windows designed by John Palmer - the architect of Lansdowne Crescent and St James's Square - but considerably altered in the 1850's. It is up for sale and its future looks uncertain. Some months ago a project was formed for turning it into an Arts Centre, then a Trim Street firm of wine merchants proposed making it an assembly hall with a bar and cloakrooms, using its basement for storage. Lately, planning permission was granted for turning it into either "a coffee-house" or "a place of public assembly". The carrying-through of any of these proposals is bound to entail almost complete alteration of the interior with its gallery containing the organ, its box-pews the doors of which were slammed by those members of Coleridge's congregation who departed early in disapproval of his sermon, its vestry where Coleridge peremptorily refused the surprised Mr Jardine's repeated offer of a minister's black gown to cover his blue coat and white waistcoat. We know that he had driven from Bristol in a chaise provided by Cottle who, with another friend, accompanied him, so that it is possible that his uncombed and tumbling black hair also evoked criticism as it did when he lectured in Bristol.

We learn from Cottle that the political views expressed in his lectures had precluded a preaching debut in Bristol, that he had expected Coleridge to attack some of the prevalent social evils in his Bath sermon, that Coleridge had greatly disappointed him, and Mr Jardine too, by delivering a tedious re-hash of a lecture on the Corn Laws in place of a sermon (though he did have a text) and, having volunteered to take the second service also, had disappointed them further by a very boring lecture on the Hair Powder Tax, the discourse that not surprisingly scattered several of the seventeen persons who had turned up on the second occasion.

Coleridge returned to Bristol feeling dejected because Mr Jardine had not shown himself more friendly. One feels that it should have been possible for a friendship to spring up. David Jardine was only six years his senior, each had a young wife; Mr Jardine had an infant son - Coleridge's Hartley was not then born; although not of Coleridge's mental calibre Jardine was talented; he held strong opinions and like Coleridge had annoyed his family by rejecting the religious views he had been brought up in; later that year Coleridge planned an attempt at farming*; Jardine lived outside Bath at the

* "Pray, what does your lordship know about farming?" Charles Lamb

hamlet called Pickwick where he cultivated some land. But, unlike Coleridge at that time, Mr Jardine had just passed through several years of stress, anxiety and harassment which possibly contributed to his sudden death while walking in his fields fifteen months later, after preaching at Trim Street and administering the Sacrament the previous Sunday.

The records and correspondence of Trim Street Chapel are now in the Archives at the Guildhall, Bath. A reading of these, particularly the letters with their beautiful 18th-century paper and scarcely faded handwriting (generally of careful penmanship, although Mr Jardine's is often hurried and agitated) conveys the fact that Mr Jardine and his congregation had for several years been divided by dissension, and that the new Meeting House of which he was so proud and which he was so eager to open, had stood unused after completion for such a long time that, only a few months before Coleridge's visit, Mr Jardine had been informed that it must be sold for what it would fetch and the subscribers' money returned. Building it had proved much more costly than the Congregation had anticipated amounting, with the purchase of the ground, to a total of £2350 whereas only £978 had been raised. A circular letter dated 20 March 1795 informs "Ladies and Gentlemen who subscribed a new Chapel for the Unitarian Society in this city" that there is a deficit of £1371.19s. and that as the four "contractors", or chief subscribers, "are not agreed to sustain so large a share of expence in addition, and a part of Subscriptions being required to be returned, which leads to return of the *whole*, we, the Trustees, are sorry to find Sale of the Chapel the only probable issue."

The problem had been brought to a head by one of the most distinguished trustees, Mr, later Sir, Benjamin Hobhouse who demanded immediate return of his large subscription, angrily writing "By keeping the Chapel shut there was a design to get as much as possible towards the deficiency of an imprudent engagement."

In October 1795 David Jardine wrote an anguished letter from Pickwick, telling how greatly he had longed for his Congregation to have a better place of worship, but that "for causes unknown, zeal has evaporated." He knew that Trim Street Chapel would never be used for the purpose it was designed for, - "no small degree of mortification to me." He said that he had missed the chance of a much better post; he tendered his resignation to take effect on Lady Day 1796.

As late as December 1795, notices went round to members of the Congregation. "Sir, as it is finally decided that the Chapel in Trim Street will not be appropriated to the purpose for which it was erected, your attendance is earnestly requested at the Chapel in Frog Lane on Sunday next after morning service to consider what measure it may be convenient for the Society to adopt."

By some means difficulties were surmounted as Trim Street Chapel opened for worship shortly before Coleridge's visit, and the Rev. David Jardine had withdrawn his resignation.

The old Chapel stood in Frog Lane, now elegantly styled New Bond Street where shops built in Jane Austen's time are threatened with demolition. During the last three years of his ministry there Mr Jardine had been the centre of acrimonious discussion on another subject - letters to his trustees show that he ardently desired to introduce a Liturgy into the services of their new Trim Street Chapel. Many of his Congregation members supported him, but nearly all his influential trustees opposed him strongly,

especially Henry Howse, a very generous benefactor, who wrote to Mr Jardine that his Dissenter forefathers would have been deeply shocked at seeing a minister take out a book to *read* his prayers! The members proposed to hold divided services at Trim Street; so, rather than split his flock Mr Jardine gave way on liturgy, with great disappointment. His letters to his Trustees show how passionately he had desired a change in the Service. Cottle testifies that those two Sunday services were tedious and dull, - prayers and hymns, as well as Coleridge's discourse.

Mr Jardine had been ordained at the old Frog Lane Meeting House. Coleridge's great friend, Dr Estlin, the Bristol minister, conducted the service, which he later published in its entirety. After David Jardine's untimely death Dr Estlin published his sermons.

Like the records of the Bridgwater and Taunton meeting houses, the Trim Street documents make no mention at all of Coleridge's contact with the Chapel. Neither does Jerome Murch, writing their history in 1835. Not one of these three chapels bears a plaque informing people that S T Coleridge preached within its walls, although in Bridgwater the recently-formed Civic Society has suggested to the local authority that one should be provided.

BOOK REVIEWS

Alethea Hayter: *A VOYAGE IN VAIN: COLERIDGE'S JOURNEY TO MALTA IN 1804* (London: Faber, 1973 pp. 188 £2.95)

This is a pleasant book, but not much to the point. Miss Hayter has researched into naval archives and makes many interesting, if not very relevant, points about the situation of Nelson's fleet in the period before Trafalgar. Nothing new emerges about Coleridge himself, however. For the general reader only superficially acquainted with the facts and problems of Coleridge's life this is an enjoyable read; but there is nothing for the even slightly better informed. The diffuseness of the writing is a little irritating. What is one to make, for example of an entry which reads "On the Saturday morning, when Coleridge was supine in his bunk, sick and sorry for himself in the *Speedwell's* evil-smelling cabin, William and Dorothy Wordsworth set out for a two-day walk across the Westmorland hills... It had been a busy April for the Wordsworth family..." and then goes on for two full pages about how Tom Hutchinson had had a "bad go" of rheumatism, and how Dorothy and Sara Hutchinson walked into Penrith to buy household equipment, and what Dorothy wrote to Lady Beaumont? Indeed Lady Beaumont pops up at all sorts of places in this book like a tutelary genius, poor silly, good-hearted dear that she was. And above all, what is an Elian to think of an author who gratuitously brings in the following passage about Mary Lamb: "To me she is a figure of absolute horror, and I would not have had the courage to stay alone in a room with her for a moment. This *wise loving reasonable* woman /my italics/ seized a knife and killed her own mother". Perhaps there is more than a little of Lady Beaumont in Miss Hayter.

BS

Edward Sackville West: *A FLAME IN SUNLIGHT: THE LIFE AND WORK OF THOMAS DE QUINCEY* (London: The Bodley Head, 1974 pp. xviii + 362 £4.00)

This is a reprint of a book first published in 1936 and for long unavailable. It has been edited by Professor John E Jordan, who has added a preface and

notes and has extended the bibliography. Mr Sackville West's book is well worth republishing. Inevitably the discovery of new material has left it behind somewhat, but as Professor Jordan says: "This was a life that could be 'written truthfully' only by someone of great sensitivity, sympathy and imagination. These qualities Sackville West possessed." While therefore one might go elsewhere in quest of specific facts, the book does give one the true feel of an extraordinary life which was lived far more in the imagination than in any diurnal sequence of events. Perhaps I can be forgiven for reproducing an extract:

But if De Quincey cannot be neatly situated among his contemporaries, some effort must be made to compare the quality of his writing with that of Lamb and Hazlitt, whose work most nearly resembles his in form and aim. Take, for example, the first paragraphs of Lamb's essay on *Imperfect Sympathies*. These might conceivably have been written by Hazlitt, but never by De Quincey. The reasons for this judgment resume the differences between the writers involved: (1) the sentences are all comparatively short; they are flung at the reader in a series of brisk gestures ("Here! catch!"), while De Quincey's enormous sentences weave themselves round the mind of the reader until they seem to assume its very shape; (2) Lamb's punctuation is much simpler than De Quincey's, being practically confined to commas, dashes and full-stops; the colons and semi-colons which play so prominent a part in De Quincey's elaborately symphonic style rarely appear in Lamb - though more often in Hazlitt; (3) the chattiness, which is so original and important a feature in all three writers, is in each case of a different kind. Here we touch what is presumably the root of the problem. Lamb talks to a tableful of people who have just dined well; Hazlitt - in a graver voice, less consistently jocular and with overtones of bitterness, exasperation and ecstatic hatred - to a man who has dined alone, frugally, and has drawn up his arm-chair to the winter fire. But De Quincey's is the voice that whispers to us in the strictness of privacy, as it were our own mind talking to itself, in moments of joy and sorrow and lassitude, at the crises of wonder and in the last depths of terror and remorse - pausing on the staircase of memory to catch some queer reflection of light which lingers in a dark corner, or ascending to the attics of childhood, to tap the springs of secret wisdom which murmur there in the dusty sunbeams, telling of Death and Summer, of things near and far, of old and new beliefs, of the strange humours of man and the grace and fidelity of women, the desperate beauty of irrecoverable moments, and the tortuous ways of Truth.

That is very just.

BS

Shire Publications Ltd have sent us two more of their interesting paperback series to which we referred in the April Bulletin: *English Literary Associations* by Sidney Blackmore, and *Discovering The Quantocks* by Berta Lawrence. They are equally interesting and informative with the Hertfordshire volume, and at 30p and 35p respectively (good photographs and all) very good value for money. Of course one has minor points - Mr Blackmore might care to note that Wordsworth didn't sit down immediately at Bristol after his Wye Valley "ramble" and write Tintern Abbey; it was not written until some years after - but this is a publishing project warmly to be recommended. Copies can be had from Shire Publications Ltd, Cromwell House,

Church Street, Princes Risborough, Aylesbury, Bucks HP17 9AJ.

BOOKS FROM SOUTHEY'S LIBRARY

By courtesy of Mr John Saumarez Smith of G Heywood Hill Ltd, the Mayfair booksellers, I have been able to examine three works from the library of the former Poet Laureate. As was the case in all well-regulated households, the Southneys kept a rag bag into which were put old dresses, curtains and suchlike which were of a material which might come in handy for making cut-down garments, patchwork quilts and other articles.

Southey had an original use for these pieces of material: he bound his books in them. Not leather-bound volumes, of course, but those which arrived in "publisher's boards" - publishers did not start issuing their books in cloth bindings until the 1820s, and the typical book as it came from the printer ready for rebinding in a style suitable for a gentleman's library was cased in grey boards with a rough cloth spine. Southey's bindings were in full petticoat with paper labels on which the title was written in ink in an elegant hand.

The three works under notice are

Grahame's Poems, containing The Sabbath, Sabbath Walk, Rural Calendar, &c in two volumes London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807. Vol. I is inscribed "Robert Southey from the Author". The books are bound in silk with an autumn leaf motif in gold, green and blue.

Selected Scottish Ballads in two volumes London: J Nichols, 1783. Southey's bookplate, designed and engraved by Thomas Bewick, is on the verso of the half-title in Vol. I. It shows a round tower overgrown with trees, with a helm and shield and the motto "In Labore Quies(?)". The volumes are bound in a glazed linen with a floral pattern in red, green, blue, gold and mauve.

The Queen's Wake, a Legendary Poem by James Hogg (the Ettrick Shepherd). This is the second edition published in 1813 in Edinburgh, and in London by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown. It is inscribed "To Robert Southey Esq. As a small testimony of the highest esteem from his friend The Author". It is bound in (?) muslin with a purple-brown motif of stylised leaves and branches.

It would be interesting to speculate whether Southey did the binding himself or called upon the services of his women-folk (Lamb accused Wordsworth of having "de-oculated" two of *his* women-folk by obliging them to copy his poems). Some support for the theory of vicarious work can be found in the fact that the labels for *Selected Scottish Ballads* are written in a less mature hand.

Alas, the books had already been sold, but in any event they would have been out of the reach of this collector.

BS

NOTES

Writing about Mrs Courtney's article on The Lambs in the April Bulletin, Mr Prance tells us that he possesses a volume entitled *Annals of The Lambs, London and New York*. It gives a good deal of information about the Society, its members and activities. It describes its foundation in London in 1869: the twelve original members included "Charles Matthews", perhaps Charles J

Matthews, and "S B Bancroft" (Sir Squire Bancroft). The New York Society was founded in 1874, as Mrs Courtney says. Mr Prance says that the most curious thing about his volume is that there is no mention in it of Charles Lamb. Could it be, he asks, that the New York Society adopted him in later years?

It should be noted that the second illustration to Berta Lawrence's "Southey and Somerset" in the July Bulletin is of Corston Manor Farm: the caption was inadvertently omitted by the printer.

An interesting note on "The Lucas Edition of Lamb's Letters: Corrections and Notes" appears in the May 1974 number of Notes and Queries. It is by Professor Duane Schneider, a member of the CLS, and points out inaccuracies in Lucas's transcriptions of letters now in the British Museum and the Bodleian.

Southey's bicentenary - he was born on 12 August 1774 - has not quite passed without notice. As well as Berta Lawrence's article and the lecture to be given by Mr John Field on 7 December, there is an exhibition of manuscripts at Dove Cottage Museum, and Keswick has had some local celebrations, including a reading from Southey's works at Crosthwaite Church, where he was buried, on the bicentenary date. This recital, which included the memorable story of the three bears and the wicked old woman, was repeated at the 1974 Wordsworth/Coleridge Summer Conference, which was attended by a number of members of the Society including one of our Vice Presidents, Professor Earl Leslie Griggs. The Conference is to be enlarged for 1975 so that Charles Lamb may be duly honoured in his bicentenary year.

The annual prospectus of the Mary Ward Centre is now to hand. It includes a notice of the Society and its activities, and gives us occasion to express once again our appreciation of the hospitality and helpfulness experienced by those of us who are able to attend the Society's winter lectures, given there on Saturday afternoons.

NEW MEMBERS

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