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'Let us stimulate the Elian Spirit of friendliness and humour.'

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EDITORIAL

Bill Ruddick

The present *Charles Lamb Bulletin* is unusual in that it contains only one full-length article, that on *The Excursion* by Gordon Thomas. This is the second of three which were selected from a very strong lecture programme at the Wordsworth Winter School at Grasmere last April: Mary Wedd's lecture will be published in the forthcoming January *Bulletin.*

Gordon Thomas's and Mary Wedd's lectures could scarcely have been prepared under more different circumstances. As his text explains, Gordon's was planned in Jerusalem, during the Gulf War, with Scud missiles roaring overhead. Mary's was thought out in Sevenoaks, with nothing more disturbing over the rooftops than an occasional passenger jet. Yet everyone who heard the two lectures (which were given successively) marvelled at the extent to which they linked together through their themes and content. A remarkable instance of 'Perfect Sympathies'!

This October *Bulletin* concludes Volume X of the New Series. I decided that this was the right moment to bring together a number of short items of merit which have been

accumulating on my desk, and which might otherwise have been some time in reaching publication. Any literary journal can only be as good as the contributions which are received by its editor. As one who is constitutionally averse to arm twisting and the hectoring tone of voice, I take this opportunity of saying a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has devoted so much time, care and trouble to making sure that the last eight *Charles Lamb Bulletins* have maintained so high a standard.

The January 1993 *Bulletin* may well be characterised by a celebratory air. It will mark the twentieth anniversary of the institution of the New Series by Basil Savage, and hopefully Basil will be giving us some insights into how he did it.

'THOSE REVOLUTIONS OF DISTURBANCES': THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF *THE EXCURSION*

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'Those Revolutions of Disturbances': The Four Horsemen of *The Excursion*

I propose a reading of *The Excursion* which recognizes it as a work 'long, difficult, winding, and often returning upon itself', to use Wordsworth's own words, in his *Reply to 'Mathetes'* (*Prose* 2: 23), rather than a series of unwelcome and unconvincing and unprovoked mental and spiritual verbal bludgeonings of the hapless Solitary by the more 'correctly' enlightened Wanderer, Pastor, and Narrator. This approach, in fact, is what we generally expect of Wordsworth as well as his greatest contemporaries, at least when we let go of the prejudices of our *own* notions of social philosophy. J Douglas Kneale is right when he says, 'Romantic poetry contains its own allegory of reading. It consists in the recurrent meetings of the poet with his own image, like the Magus Zoroaster in [Shelley's] *Prometheus Unbound*' (360). Let me repeat that: Romantic poetry is best understood as a series of recurrent meetings of the poet with his own image. Nothing that Wordsworth wrote, not even *The Prelude*, so richly and constantly illustrates this point as *The Excursion* - a work of winding and returning upon itself, of recurrent self-confrontations, dramatically posed for us in those complex confrontations among all the characters.

Surely this constant theme of image-confrontation underlies one of the most striking scenes in *The Excursion*, indeed, in all of Wordsworth, that of the two rams in Book 9; two rams that are really only one but which maintain a separateness and almost defiant unawareness of each other and echoing in all these ways the human beings who behold them:

> Antipodes unconscious of each other,
> Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,
> Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight! (9.449-51)

When we read *The Excursion* in this sense, what do we find? Unities, beauties, combinations, assurances - all about to *fade* at every moment - 'whose peace', as the Pastor's wife observes, is 'The sufferance only of a breath of air' (9.472-73). As the narrator, the Wanderer, the Solitary, the Pastor, and other incidental characters walk and talk across the pages of *The Excursion*, what is there that causes not only the Pastor's wife but everyone else to speak and act with a nervous anxiety which colours the whole dramatic

situation of the poem? What makes everyone so tentative in this poem, and every hope so temporary?

I think I had not so clearly sensed, until I read *The Excursion* again last year, how uncomforting a poem it is – except in the sense that every expression of truth, of confronting things as they really are, has comfort in it, the comfort that comes in the reminder that the empires of deception are not so triumphant as they would sometimes almost convince us they are. The occasion of my renewed interest, and vastly enlarged appreciation, of the poem was the first six months of 1991 that my family and I spent in Jerusalem, where, scarcely had we settled in than we found ourselves somehow – though living in a noncombatant nation – in the midst of the Persian Gulf War, with Scud missiles flying overhead, often several times a night, and warning sirens wailing, and rushings-off to the bomb shelter. It was, in fact, in the bomb shelter that I first began to re-read *The Excursion*. And no doubt it was that setting which led me to perceive that the rhythms of the poem barely conceal the fact that always in the background thunder the hoofbeats of Wordsworth's version of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. And not very far in the background, either, in *The Excursion*, though I don't think I had ever quite fully sensed them until that reading last winter in Jerusalem, with the Scud missiles flying overhead, the Patriot anti-missile missiles rising up to meet them (and sometimes doubling the havoc below as the debris fell from the explosive collision), and scenes of terrorism and sometimes even harsher counter-terrorism unfolding literally before our eyes in the hapless Palestinian village across the way.

Much of the tension and power of the poem results from the ironic calm and false quiescence of the ongoing conversations and meanderings among the hills while these scourges wage war on all humanity just barely over the horizon, and sometimes not even that far distant. This constant and inescapable juxtaposition of peacefulness and upheaval explains the tautness and power of the poem and gives every word and image its meaning. As the characters of *The Excursion* ramble among the hills and vales in and around Grasmere and the Langdales, the poet almost grotesquely dogs their footsteps with the utterly different sounds echoing from the only slightly distant Horsemen of those combined scourges of War, Poverty, Exploitation, and Ignorance.

Well, it was an age of war, perhaps the most terrible warfare that Europe and other parts of the world had, up till then, seen in recorded history. Wordsworth considered, in a passage he finally excluded from the published poem, depicting the general ravages of war –

> a City to the flames
> Of war delivered, . . .
> Or . . . a field of battle. (MS. see PW 5: 183)

And in the published version of *The Excursion* he left in a general glimpse of

> Earth's melancholy vision through the space
> Of all her climes – these wretched, these depraved,
> To virtue lost, insensible of peace,
> From the delights of charity cut off,
> To pity dead, the oppressor and the opprest;
> Tyrants who utter the destroying word,
> And slaves who will consent to be destroyed. (5.936-42)

But I think he was wise not to go on much in this vein. *The Excursion* is not *War and Peace* – thank goodness! And anyway, Wordsworth's gift is in the specific delineation, not the grand generalisation. Thus, the fortuitous inclusion of the story of Margaret and her Ruined Cottage brought right into the first book of *The Excursion*, right where it casts its spell over the course of the whole poem. Much has been written about how the poet spoiled and degraded *The Ruined Cottage* by incorporating it into the ramblings and discourses of the Wanderer and his friends. I'd like to stake a claim here for an opposing view, namely how the inclusion of the Ruined Cottage materials in *The Excursion* vitalizes and energizes the longer work.

The treatment is typically Wordsworthian. Margaret and her hapless husband Robert, mere peasants, mere social debris, are cast in epic proportions. For a long time they 'filled with plenty, and possessed in peace, / This lonely Cottage' (1.567–68). They are, in fact, celestial dwellers, and when they lose their home, like many another nameless peasant of the social debris of war, the poet equates them verbally with the angels fallen from heaven. Milton had called these, in *Paradise Lost*, the 'many, whom thir place knows here no more' (7.144), and Wordsworth echoes by describing how not only Margaret and her family but 'of the poor did many cease to be, / And their place knew them not' (1.544–45). No war is described, though one is always going on, and no battlefield gore. Just waste, despair, social debris, and pain that knows no earthly cure. The Wanderer, even as he tells the tale, insists that all is not lost, but he knows it is:

> I exhorted her to place her trust
> In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.
> I took my staff, and, when I kissed her babe,
> The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then
> With the best hope and comfort I could give:
> She thanked me for my wish; – but for my hope
> It seemed she did not thank me. (1.807–13)

After such a moment, his later urgings to enlightenment and consolation ring ironically hollow. When some critics claim that they in their wisdom perceive this hollowness, and that Wordsworth missed it, I can only wonder at their arrogance.

> And here my Friend, –
> In sickness she remained; and here she died;
> Last human tenant of these ruined walls! (1.913–15)

– the lines haunt the rest of *The Excursion*. There is no escaping them. In a poem of epic scale whose composition spans nearly the whole Napoleonic period, how could it be otherwise?

The second of the Apocalyptic horsemen, Poverty, is nearly inseparable from the first. If truly we must always have the poor with us, Wordsworth knew that a generation of war and terror immensely exacerbated the problem. Margaret and her family are victims of both War and Poverty; eventually they simply wither away from sickness and starvation, a horrible picture.

After exploring the remains of the ruined cottage, which as the poet admits had its true setting in Somerset, the narrator and the Pedlar wander, as Wordsworth told Miss Fenwick, 'as by the waving of a magic wand' (PW 5: 404), into 'the circular recess in which lies Blea-Tarn' (404), and also very like Grasmere itself, where they encounter both the Solitary and a rural funeral procession, 'a mute procession on the houseless road' (2.563). They will

soon learn from the Solitary about the man who has become the corpse of the funeral. Surely in this isolated spot the grimmest of social ills cannot intrude. But yes. The corpse is another of the almost numberless victims of that day of grinding, remorseless poverty, in a nation described ironically by Blake in one of his *Songs of Experience* as not a 'rich and fruitful land' but 'a land of poverty' where

> their sun does never shine,
> And their fields are bleak and bare,
> And their ways are filled with thorns -
> It is eternal winter there.
> For where'er the sun does shine,
> And where'er the rain does fall,
> Babe can never hunger there,
> Nor poverty the mind appal. ('Holy Thursday' 2, 8, 9–16)

Wordsworth's depiction of this mind-appalling poverty is typically less dramatic than Blake's, and much more devastating by its reality and humanity. He lets the Solitary dismiss the common notion that poverty is exclusively an urban problem:

> Dissevered from mankind,
> As to your eyes and thoughts we must have seemed
> When ye looked down upon us from the crag,
> Islanders mid a stormy mountain sea,
> We are not so; – perpetually we touch
> Upon the vulgar ordinances of the world. (2.732–37)

In 1798 in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus identified these 'vulgar ordinances of the world' as 'unwholesome occupations, severe labour and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kind, the whole train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, plagues and famine' (cited in Gaull 118). Though Wordsworth and Malthus did not share the same view on how to cope with such evils and where they would lead, that difference of opinion surely did not mean that the poet did not see the same grim symptoms of social distress. And what we learn in *The Excursion* of the life and death of the wretched man whose funeral procession the travellers come upon is wrenching in its details, made all the more so by Wordsworth's lightly ironic tone of understatement. This was a man who 'lived dependent for his bread / Upon the laws of public charity' (2.739–40) – that is, he barely survived by the degrading *un*charity of the Poor Laws, furnished by a landlady who made a business of such 'public charity' – 'tempted by such slender gains / As might from that occasion be distilled' (741–42) – and charitably furnished him with 'the portion . . . of coarse but wholesome fare / Which appetite required' and a place to live, 'a blind dull nook, / . . . the *kennel* of his rest' (745–47). Not content with the public funds which 'this homeless Pensioner' brought her in income, this landlady, whom the poet referred to in his Fenwick note as a 'woman I knew well, . . . and she was exactly such a person as I describe' (George 405), made the wretched seventy-year-old pauper 'her vassal of all labour'; he

> tilled
> Her garden, from the pasture fetched her kine;
> And, one among the orderly array
> Of hay-makers, beneath the burning sun
> Maintained his place; or heedfully pursued
> His course, on errands bound, to other vales, . . .
> So moved he like a shadow that performed
> Substantial service. (2.764.73).

In one of those drenching, almost unending torrential rainstorms that seem to me unique to the English Lakes, and perhaps especially to the Langdale area, this woman sends her 'Pensioner' out to gather peat for the fire, much to the pitying indignation of the Solitary when he finds out what she has done:

> my ancient Friend –
> Who at her bidding early and alone,
> Had clomb aloft to delve the moorland turf
> For winter fuel – to his noontide meal
> Returned not, and now, haply, on the heights
> Lay at the mercy of this raging storm.
> 'Inhuman!' – said I, 'was an old Man's life
> Not worth the trouble of a thought?' (2.785–92)

Aside from this one outburst of accusation, both the poet and the Solitary tell this grim story in a tone of almost frolicsome light irony, though the Solitary admits, 'I treat the matter lightly, but, alas! / It is most serious' (2.780–81). But the contrast between this dreary and commonplace human tale of waste and indifference and the spectacle of Nature, suggesting the noble nature and destiny of the thrown-away pauper himself, is most striking. Both, to use the Solitary's words, are unimaginable sights, one as glorious as earth can afford or eternity can promise, the other dreary and pointless and full of a sense of waste and hopelessness. First, the heavenly vision, afforded the Solitary as he returns from his mountain-rescue mission, having found the old pauper 'buried among tufts' of heather (2.818), still alive, at least still breathing. In his profound joy at this apparently happy outcome to the frightening adventure, the Solitary turns back toward home, to be rewarded by one of the most rapturous outpourings in all Wordsworth, a veritable Lakeland Xanadu:

> when a step,
> A single step, that freed me from the skirts
> Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
> Glory beyond all glory ever seen
> By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!
> The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
> Was of a mighty city . . . .
> Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
> Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
> Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
> Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
> Molten together, and composing thus,
> Each lost in each, that marvellous array
> Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
> Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
> In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped . . . .
> That which I *saw* was the revealed abode
> Of Spirits in beatitude: my heart
> Swelled in my breast, – 'I have been dead,' I cried,
> 'And now I live!' (2.829–76)

But this lengthy and glorious beatific vision of eternity, of man's hope and destiny and promise, recounted so spectacularly and so powerfully, is juxtaposed at once with a drearily stifling, almost numbing admission that for this one old pauper, as for so many others, hope can only be elsewhere, for hope there is none on earth, nor feeling, nor life. When he is brought back out of the storm, that same storm whose mingled clouds and clearing

have provided the Solitary with his ecstatic outpouring, the old pauper seems alive enough, at which even his stingy landlady is happy, though for selfish reasons; but even such happiness as that, poor as it is, is doomed. And now the Solitary drops the ecstasy and becomes merely, grimly stark as he tells the end of the tale:

> But, though he seemed at first to have received
> No harm, and uncomplainingly as before
> Went through his usual tasks, a silent change
> Soon showed itself: he lingered three short weeks;
> And from the cottage hath been borne to-day. (2.891-95)

'Uncomplaining' as always, the old pauper, a relic of misplaced official 'charity', personification of the widespread social debris of poverty, goes through the 'silent change' of death, to be carried away and forgotten. Wordsworth's clarity of vision is here, as usual, unrelenting.

Always in tandem, keeping perfect step with the horsemen of War and Poverty, is the third of Wordsworth's apocalyptic figures, the new spectre of the Industrial Age, the exploitation of labour. As the "hostess" of the aged pauper turns him into a 'vassal of labour' in his defenseless poverty, so a whole nation of the poor have been turned into vassals of the factories. Observes the Pedlar,

> I have lived to mark
> A new and unforeseen creation rise
> From out the labours of a peaceful Land
> Wielding her potent enginery to frame
> And to produce, with appetite as keen
> As that of war, which rests not night or day,
> Industrious to destroy! (8.87-95)

The dramatic structure of *The Excursion* permits the poet to include all the common arguments in defence of the Industrial Revolution: man's conquest of nature, 'the barren wilderness erased, / Or disappearing,' with 'spacious tracts, / O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires / Hangs permanent' (8.129-30, 124-26); England the centre and controller of world trade:

> - Hence is the wide sea peopled, - hence the shores
> Of Britain are resorted to by ships
> Freighted from every climate of the world
> With the world's choicest produce. (8.133-36)

Above all, wealth, which brings national pride and military power, which brings, so runs the argument, freedom:

> a dread arm of floating power, a voice
> Of thunder daunting those who would approach
> With hostile purposes the blessèd Isle,
> Truth's consecrated residence, the seat
> Impregnable of Liberty and Peace. (8.143-47)

But these are hollow rationalisations, as the Wanderer quickly admits. It is, after all, the same poet who had earlier denounced a world too much with us, a world in which, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. So the Wanderer now explores in detail the savage

materialism of the Industrial Age, more devastating, says he, and more lasting and universal in its effects, than the Norman Conquest, a devastation which forces nature, especially *human* nature, to rebel:

> I grieve, when on the darker side
> Of this great change I look; and there behold
> Such outrage done to nature as compels
> The indignant power to justify herself;
> Yea, to avenge her violated rights,
> For England's bane. (8.151-56)

The summoning bell of the factory unites people of all ages and conditions in one great forced worship at the shrine of Mammon, day and night, endlessly, the new religion of a godless age, replacing, says the Wanderer, in a passage of particular bitterness, the discarded Christian practices of a devout people 'of old' in which

> Our ancestors, within the still domain
> Of vast cathedral or conventual church,
> Their vigils kept; where tapers day and night
> On the dim altar burned continually,
> In token that the House was evermore
> Watching to God. (8.185-91)

Those times are gone, and so apparently is that God. Man has lost his own soul at the same time that man's scientific pursuits have 'almost a soul / Imparted – to brute matter' (203-04). And Industrial Man has invented a new god, and new worship, centred in the all-devouring factory:

> Men, maidens, youths,
> Mother and little children, boys and girls,
> Enter, and each the wonted task resumes
> Within this temple, where is offered up
> To Gain, the master idol of the realm,
> Perpetual sacrifice. (8.180-85)

We proud inhabitants of the closing years of the twentieth century sometimes congratulate ourselves on our superior awareness, on such things as our discovery of the hazards of industrial pollution. But Wordsworth was here long before us, with his telling and memorable image of "that brook converting as it runs / Into an instrument of deadly bane" (257-58). Or the totalitarian tendency of accumulated industrial power and wealth – but here too Wordsworth precedes our discoveries:

> Economists will tell you that the State
> Thrives by the forfeiture – unfeeling thought,
> And false as monstrous! Can the mother thrive
> By the destruction of her innocent sons? (8.283-86)

Wordsworth knew, and tried to warn us, of the mind-numbing, soul-destroying effects of economic vassalage which we are only now beginning to recognise on our own. There was nothing comforting for the England of the new Industrial Age of the early nineteenth century in Wordsworth's view of what had been gained and lost, got and spent, and we find still no comfort today, but maybe, not quite too late, some powerful guidance and incentive:

Oh, banish far such wisdom as condemns
A native Briton to those inward chains,
Fixed in his soul, so early and so deep:
Without his own consent, or knowledge, fixed!
He is a slave to whom release comes not,
And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,
Is still a prisoner . . .
[His] liberty of mind
Is gone for ever; and this organic frame,
So joyful in its motions, is become
Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead. (8.297-324)

The boy who spends his days and nights a vassal of the textile mill has neither time nor opportunity to learn either from nature or from a more formal school. His exploited toil supports and enriches society, and society offers him in return not even his basic human birthright - knowledge.

His country's name,
Her equal rights [the irony is heavy], her churches and her schools -
What have they done for him? And, let me ask,
For tens of thousands uninformed as he?
In brief, what liberty of *mind* is here? (8.429-33)

And so, right in stride with War, Poverty, Exploitation, comes Wordsworth's fourth horseman of the Apocalypse, for him the grimmest spectre of them all: Ignorance. The Solitary speaks indignantly of the depressing thrall of ignorance and illiteracy on both the child labourer of the factories and the rustic farm child who fares no better, and is given no greater social significance, than a piece of livestock - even a piece of furniture:

His legs appear,
Fellows to those that lustily upheld
The wooden stools for everlasting use,
Whereon our fathers sate. And mark his brow!
Under whose shaggy canopy are set
Two eyes - not dim, but of a healthy stare -
Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange -
Proclaiming boldly that they never drew
A look or motion of intelligence (8.404-12)

from schoolroom or book. There is a dehumanizing of one denied by social indifference the light of learning, of basic education, and even the power of beneficent Nature cannot overcome such darkness:

What penetrating power of sun or breeze,
Shall e'er dissolve the crust wherein his soul
Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheathed in ice? (8.417-19)

For once, the Wanderer does not try to talk the Solitary out of his negative thoughts. Illiteracy and ignorance are too sombre and too pervasive to be dismissed by any magic wand of optimism. Indeed, the Wanderer clearly perceives the connections among war, grinding poverty, industrial exploitation, and mental darkness, and he thanks the Solitary for his reminder of 'a keen regret,/A wide compassion which with you I share' (9.154-55).

The child of the factory and the child of the fields are both victims of social abuse and vassalage:

> A Little-one, subjected to the arts
> Of modern ingenuity, and made
> The senseless member of a vast machine,
> Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel (157-60)

and

> The rustic Boy, who walks the fields, untaught;
> The slave of ignorance, and oft of want,
> And miserable hunger. (162-64)

These sober discussions are interrupted by the arrival of a 'radiant Girl' (8.493), the Pastor's daughter, and her brother and his friend, a 'blest . . . pair / Of blooming Boys' (9.256-57). The girl seems to spend her days in splendid radiance and a few dainty household chores, and the poet makes an ironic distinction between her and the two boys, whose blest lot it is to be

> A few short hours of each returning day
> The thriving prisoners of their village-school:
> And thence let loose, to seek their pleasant homes
> Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy;
> To breathe and to be happy, run and shout . . .,
> bringing each in turn
> The tribute of enjoyment, knowledge, health,
> Beauty, or strength! (9.259-70)

These boys, perhaps, would have been the pupils of such famous early innovators in education as Joseph Lancaster, or Andrew Bell, with whom the Wordsworths had some relationships (even after Bell hired away their sons' schoolmaster and left William, Mary, and Dorothy to teach the children themselves - Gaull 61). In a time when, as the Wanderer says, most children were 'A savage horde among the civilised, / A servile band among the lordly free' (9.309-10), schemes for improved and more widely available education were numerous, in England and elsewhere. Today in all modern nations we view with growing concern the inadequacy of our schools, and rightly so. We should not forget, in the process of our concern, what a remarkable thing it is to *have* schools. The vast school systems, costly, inefficient, often defective, of modern nations are developments of little more than the past century. It was in 1870 that Parliament passed the National Education Acts for Britain, finally bringing to an end a long national debate over how, why, and whether to involve the state in the education of children. Adam Smith a century before had urged a state system of education in *The Wealth of Nations* as a means to curtail superstition. Thomas Paine in *The Rights of Man* urged national schooling as a basic right and means to social equality. William Godwin believed that schooling must be the basis for national virtue and freedom but that it must not be under government control. Thomas Malthus believed that a government had the duty to educate its citizens and free them from dependence on religion and public charity.

Among these other early advocates of national education was Wordsworth. In a thoughtful letter of 1808 to Francis Wrangham he reveals long-standing contemplation on the matter, awareness of both the need and the difficulty. He writes:

> I deem any plan of national education in a country like ours most difficult to apply to practice. In Switzerland, or Sweden, or Norway, or France, or Spain, or anywhere but Great Britain it would be comparatively easy. Heaven and Hell are scarcely more different from each other than Sheffield and Manchester, etc. differ from the plains and Vallies of Surrey, Essex, Cumberland, or Westmorland. We have mighty Cities and Towns of all sizes, with Villages and Cottages scattered everywhere. We are Mariners, Miners, Manufacturers in tens of thousands: Traders, Husbandmen, everything. What form would suit all these; but which, if happily fitted for one, would not perhaps be an absolute nuisance in another? (MY 1: 250).

Such questions still perplex us, and Wordsworth is right too - prophetic, I might say - in his distrust of government control. His indictment in 1808 only gains in power by our experiences of the past two centuries, and perhaps especially of the past two decades, at least in my country, and maybe yours. He writes:

> What can you expect of national education conducted by a Government which for twenty years resisted the abolition of the Slave Trade; and annually debauches the morals of the people by every possible device? holding out the temptation with one hand, and scourging with the other. The distilleries and Lotteries are standing records that the Government cares nothing for the morals of the People, and that all they want is their money. (MY 1: 251)

But despite his awareness of such pitfalls, Wordsworth also knew that ignorance is the greatest obstacle of all, in the words of *The Excursion*, 'that ignorance . . . which breeds . . . / Dark discontent, or loud commotion' (9.346-48), that ignorance which is the enemy to peace, economic justice, and freedom, that fourth apocalyptic horseman, foundation of the other three: War, Poverty, and Exploitation. And so the Wanderer, 'revolving in his soul / Some weighty matter . . . with fervent voice / And an impassioned majesty,' exclaims:

> O for the coming of that glorious time
> When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
> And best protection, this imperial Realm,
> While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
> An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
> Them who are born to serve her and obey;
> Binding herself by statute to secure
> For all the children [I take 'all the children' to include
> even the radiant girls of the land] whom her soil maintains
> The rudiments of letters, and inform
> The mind with moral and religious truth,
> Both understood and practised, - so that none,
> However destitute, be left to droop. (9.293-304)

If today we are beginning to be more concerned with the failures of state-supported education than with its successes, we must not be so foolish as to overlook this remarkable and forceful vision, and we must recognize that here Wordsworth's voice is the voice of the greatest of all the man-made attempts at Revolution, a voice, as he himself writes, of 'prayer / That from the humblest floor ascends to heaven' (9.325-26).

This effectual prayer, connecting humblest floor to highest heaven, points up the insistent *individuality* of Wordsworth's treatments of 'those revolutions of disturbances' which 'still roll' forever about 'the heart of man', which is 'the centre of this world' (4.324–27) in *The Excursion*. It is not the ravages of War that he presents in the poem but the ravaging of Margaret and her family and the ruination of their cottage. It is not the depradations of poverty he depicts but the aged old pauper, worn out and thrown away by an uncaring society and a stingy landlady. It is not a call for the general liberation from the factory of children and a provision for state-funded education which we remember but the blooming boys, the Pastor's son and his friend, and their chance for schooling.

This deeply individualised prayer is, in fact, the human basis of the pious Christian appeal with which *The Excursion* concludes and which so many modern readers and, especially, critics find to be such an anti-climax, such a collapse into orthodoxy, such a failure of nerve in Wordsworth. But here again I beg to differ. The religion for which the poet finally calls is not the orthodoxy of his own day nor of ours. It is not the unholy combination of politics and power and wealth and unrighteous dominion and conquest which for far too much of the history of Christianity has constituted what we complacently call 'the Church' and which Wordsworth dismisses as 'this dire perverseness' (9.660). It is not the institutionalised cult of the Four Horsemen of War, Poverty, Exploitation, and Ignorance. It is, if I may so express it, the individualistic Religion of genuine revolution, a revolution of individual responsibility and determination, and of a society woven of such individuals. It is the ultimate triumph of "those revolutions of disturbances" through which *The Excursion* has wound its way in glimpses, the triumph of God-given, God-sustained human diligence and human character to produce what the poet insistently calls 'holy freedom' (9.656) and 'a peaceable dominion, wide as earth' (665), 'That paradise, the lost abode of man, / . . . raised again . . . , here restored' (717–19).

A lecture given at the Wordsworth Winter School, Grasmere, on April 30, 1992

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'MRS ROBINSON TO THE POET COLERIDGE': AN APPENDIX

Martin J Levy

When we published Martin J Levy's article *Coleridge, Mary Robinson and Kubla Khan* in *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* for January 1992 (pages 156–67), difficulties of access in the British Library made it impossible for Martin Levy to supply a text of Mary Robinson's very remarkable poem 'Mrs Robinson to the Poet Coleridge' drawn directly from the first edition of the *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Written by herself.* With some posthumous Pieces, edited by her daughter Maria Elizabeth Robinson in 1801.

Martin Levy has now been able to collate the poem with the original *Memoir*, and the authentic text here follows.

Appendix

Mrs Robinson to the Poet Coleridge

RAPT in the visionary theme!
　　SPIRIT DIVINE! with thee I'll wander!
Where the blue, wavy, lucid stream,
　　'Mid forest glooms shall slow meander!
With THEE I'll trace the circling bounds
　　Of thy NEW PARADISE, extended;
And listen to the varying sounds
　　Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

Now by the source, which lab'ring heaves
　　The mystic fountain, bubbling, panting,
While gossamer its net-work weaves,
　　Adown the blue lawn, slanting!
I'll mark thy "sunny dome," and view
Thy "caves of ice," thy fields of dew!
Thy ever-blooming mead, whose flow'r
Waves to the cold breath of the moon-light hour!
Or when the day-star, peering bright
On the grey wing of parting night;
While more than vegetating pow'r,
Throbs, grateful to the burning hour,
As Summer's whisper'd sighs unfold
Her million-million buds of gold!
Then will I climb the breezy bounds
　　Of thy NEW PARADISE, extended,
And listen to the distant sounds
　　Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!
　　SPIRIT DIVINE! with THEE I'll trace,
　　Imagination's boundless space!
With thee, beneath thy "sunny dome,"
　　I'll listen to the minstrel's lay,

Hymning the gradual close of day,
In "caves of ice" enchanted roam,
Where on the glitt'ring entrance plays
The moon's-beam with its silv'ry rays;
Or, when the glassy stream,
That through the deep dell flows,
Flashes the noon's hot beam,
The noon's hot beam, that midway shows
Thy flaming temple, studd'd o'er
With all PERUVIA'S lust'rous store!
There will I trace the circling bounds
Of thy NEW PARADISE, extended,
And listen to the awful sounds,
Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

And now I'll pause to catch the moan
Of distant breezes, cavern-pent;
Now, ere the twilight tints are flown,
Purpling the landscape far and wide,
On the dark promontory's side
I'll gather wild-flow'rs, dew besprent,
And weave a crown for THEE,
GENIUS OF HEAV'N-TAUGHT POESY!
While op'ning to my wond'ring eyes,
Thou bidst a new creation rise,
I'll raptur'd trace the circling bounds
Of thy RICH PARADISE, EXTENDED,
And listen to the varying sounds
Of winds, and foamy torrents blended.

And now, with lofty tones inviting,
Thy NYMPH, her dulcimer swift-smiting,
Shall wake me in extatic measures,
Far, far remov'd from mortal pleasures!
In cadence rich, in cadence strong,
Proving the wond'rous witcheries of song!
I hear her voice! thy "sunny dome,"
Thy "caves of ice," aloud repeat,
Vibrations, madd'ning sweet!
Calling the visionary wand'rer home.
She sings of THEE, O! favour'd child
Of minstrelsy, SUBLIMELY WILD!
Of thee, whose soul can feel the tone
Which gives to airy dreams a MAGIC ALL THY OWN!

LOST ANECDOTES OF LAMB

Duncan Wu

St Catherine's College, Oxford

The literary remains of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bt. (1792–1872), now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, include a group of loose papers which T.D. Rogers describes as 'Notes on, and descriptions and lists of .... collections of manuscripts, arranged alphabetically by owner'.[1] Among these papers is a inventory of the manuscripts of Basil Montagu[2] (24 April 1770 – 27 November 1851), the friend of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb and Hazlitt; Elians will recall that Montagu is mentioned (as *M.*) in 'Oxford in the Vacation'.[3] The inventory is not in the hand of Sir Thomas Phillipps nor in those of his circle (the lists in this folder are in various hands). Besides the date at its head, '1856', which indicates when it was drawn up, little more can be ascertained. The hand is fairly neat, suggesting that it may have been drawn up by one of Montagu's executors or solicitors, but it may equally well be the draft for a sale-list. It consists of a single sheet of paper folded in the middle, bearing the watermark 'CANSELL / 1839'.

Its interest for Elians rests in the inclusion, among Montagu's numerous manuscript notes and studies of Bacon,[4] of the following two items:

> Anecdotes of Hazlitt, C Lambe[5] and Others
> Volume of Unpublished Anecdotes of Coleridge, Lambe, Sheridan &c

Montagu no doubt knew some interesting anecdotes of Lamb, for they were neighbours in London from 1801, when Montagu married his second wife, Laura.[6] It is not clear when they first met, but they may have been acquainted from the mid-1790's onwards, when Montagu was resident in London, and a member of the Godwin circle (some of whose members Lamb knew).[7] The most detailed account of their friendship is given by M C Crum, *The Life of Basil Montagu* (B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1950), pp. 164–8.

The whereabouts of Montagu's two manuscript 'Anecdotes' are unknown. In 1858 Charles Knight observed that Montagu 'is stated to have left about 100 volumes of manuscripts, a Memoir of himself and his contemporaries, and a Diary',[8] but he did not disclose his source for this information. These manuscripts were pronounced lost by 'Cyril' as early as 1905[9] and, shortly after, William Douglas wrote that 'About forty years ago his common-place books – a number of quarto volumes – were in the possession of the Birkbeck Literary Institution, to which they had been presented' by Montagu's widow.[10] If Douglas was correct, the date of this gift must have been c.1865; it did not, presumably, include the manuscripts mentioned by Knight. The commonplace books have since disappeared, as R G Williams, the Librarian of Birkbeck College, tells me: 'There is no trace of these or any other manuscripts in the nineteenth century printed catalogues of our Library, which was in any case completely destroyed by enemy action in 1941. Certainly the manuscripts, if they had survived, are not here now.'

My attempts to locate these manuscripts have so far proved fruitless, but there is reason to think they will turn up at some future time. Since they were probably not among the commonplace books bequeathed to the Birkbeck Literary Institute, they may have been sold at some point during the nineteenth century, and may well have survived.

NOTES

1. T.D. Rogers, *Catalogue of the topographical collections and of the correspondence and papers of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart. (1792–1872) given to the Bodleian Library, Oxford* (2 vols., typescript catalogue retained at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, 1982), i 190.
2. MS. Phillipps-Robinson b.211, fol.178.
3. Charles Lamb, *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford, 1987), p.12.
4. Montagu's edition of *The Works of Francis Bacon* was published in 16 volumes by William Pickering, London, 1825–34.
5. For an interesting note on this spelling of Lamb's name, see *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. Edwin W Marrs, Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, 1975–8), hereafter Marrs, i 220n6.
6. The Montagu family, Lamb told Coleridge on 8 September 1802, are 'near neighbours to us' (Marrs ii 66).
7. On 9 June 1796, Lamb described John Stoddart as 'a cold hearted well bred conceited disciple of Godwin' (Marrs i 22).
8. *Cyclopædia of Biography* (6 vols., London, 1858), iv 303.
9. 'Basil Montagu's MSS', *Notes and Queries* 10th Series, 4 (1905), p.109.
10. 'Basil Montagu's MSS', *Notes and Queries* 10th Series, 4 (1905), p.156.

ENFIELD AND EDMONTON ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Nicholas Roe

University of St Andrews

Two issues only of *The Enfield Illustrated Magazine* were published in 1898. Nevertheless, the magazine is an intriguing (and amusing) document of London's suburban culture at the end of the nineteenth century. It also presents two items with an Elian association which may be of interest to CLB readers.

'Reminiscences of Enfield' by one S J Smith appeared in the magazine's first issue (June 1898, pp 29–31). The essay describes the various unhappy changes in the village after the arrival of the railway in 1849. Keats's school (which was converted into Enfield station) and the Lambs' cottage are mentioned in passing only, but Smith does offer this recollection of a view from Bush Hill that Charles and Mary Lamb would surely have recognised:

> On the top of [Bush Hill], with the turnpike at its foot, long ago removed, Enfield spread out before you over a wide, richly cultivated and variously wooded expanse, prominent objects in which were the cedar at the Palace School, the tower of the Parish Church, and many large houses nestling in the midst of rich and variegated foliage...

Lamb had very mixed feelings about living in Enfield. On the other hand this recollection of the landscape in the mid-nineteenth century agrees with descriptions of Enfield by Keats's school friend Charles Cowden Clarke, and indeed by Keats himself. I suspect S J Smith may have been one of the last to recall Enfield as Lamb and Keats had formerly known it.

The second issue of the magazine (July 1898 p.64) contains an 'Occasional Note' of more direct interest to Elians:

> Some time since attention was drawn by Mr Charles Herbert (in *Middlesex and Hampshire Notes and Queries*) to the neglected condition of Charles Lamb's grave at Edmonton. We are glad to learn that, the matter having attracted the notice of Christ's Hospital Club, one of the members has undertaken, at his own expense, to put in order the untidy mound that marked the resting-place of "Elia". A neat iron railing now surrounds it, and the lettering on the tomb-stone has been carefully picked out. It is understood that the club will in future be responsible for the care of this grave.

The sprawl of London has long-since disfigured many of the places Lamb and Keats had known. Yet this small footnote about Lamb's grave expresses values that remain essential to the objects of the Charles Lamb Society - one hundred years after the fitful publication of the 'Enfield Illustrated Magazine'.

AN ELIAN GATHERING

D.E.Wickham

At frequent intervals throughout the year, David Wickham supplies us with several sheets of what he modestly calls 'fillers' to make sure that no blank spaces are left at the end of each *Bulletin*. The fate of these erudite and frequently witty pieces can be hard: what sees print and what fails to do so is entirely dependent on the size of the half, third or quarter pages left towards the conclusion of the typist's labours.

When, on a previous occasion, I suggested bringing together a number of David's pieces to take the place of an article, he opposed the idea, saying that fillers were what his offerings were, and fillers they should remain. But I have such a strong substantial clutch of pieces to hand at the moment, that I dare to disobey, and 'An Elian Gathering' now follows. (Editor)

'MY DEAREST SELINA' - A LETTER FROM MISS BENJEY

[Chairman's Disclaimer: *N.B.* This is intended as entertainment or a bit of fun. It does *not* involve a newly-discovered letter from the Elian circle.]

Our old friend Florence Reeves recently gave me a couple of little Pitman books entitled *A Commentary and Questionnaire*, one on *Lamb's Letters* by D F Dale, 1927, the other on the *Essays* by F. W. Robinson, 1934. They seem to be aimed at exceptionally learned fourteen-year-olds who would recognise allusions to Bacon and Swift and be able to comment on the accuracy of Lamb's implied theory of Shakespeare's use of end-stopping in blank verse. I am not making this up, though one question approaches self-parody: 'Do you endorse, in all respects, George Dyer's history of the Pastoral?'

The *Essays* questions range between the detail of 'Who was the *inspired charity-boy*, and what was Lamb's connection with him? ' and 'Describe *either* Samuel Salt *or* Joseph Paice' to the sweep of 'Make a list of passages containing phrases which seem to you particularly appropriate' and 'Ascertain the proportion of Anglo-Saxon to words of foreign origin in any two paragraphs from different essays. If the proportions in the two paragraphs differ

markedly, can you account for the difference?' Where shall we start with that last one in a modern class? 'Please, Miss, what does "as-certain" mean?' perhaps.

The *Letters* questions made me work hard at discovering 'For what reason did Lamb really desire Cottle's photograph?' [sic] and exactly what was meant by Lamb's 'interview with the rattlesnake'. Finally, this fascinating booklet offered a piece of homework which I could not refuse: it introduced, or, better, re-introduced me to Miss Benjay [sic] and enjoined me to 'Write a letter purporting to come from "Miss Benjay" to a friend of hers, describing the impression made by Charles and Mary Lamb upon her the day they came to tea'. The equivalent Lamb letter is Lucas No.65, i.e. Marrs No.66, and it really should be read beforehand. The first shock is the early date of the meeting, April 1800, so this is not a middle-aged blue-stocking dealing with a slight elderly man in black and his aged sister but a very young woman meeting the 'Venetian Senator' and his sister of thirty-six. The references in Marrs and in Claude Prance's *Companion* also show that the lady was by no means the fool that Charles Lamb seems to imply. I wonder if she frightened him? Here goes.

East Street, London, 14 April 1800

My dearest Selina,

At last I have met my literary lion! A few days ago my dear friend Sarah Wesley finally gave me an introduction to Miss Mary Lamb and I visited her in the lodging she shares with her brother in Chapel Street, Pentonville. It seemed at one point during my visit that Miss Lamb was pricing the lace at my neck and the silk in my gown, the pale blue silk which you like to much and were once kind enough to say comes out so fresh every time I wear it. In many other ways, however, Miss Lamb is not of this world though I flatter myself that she liked me. I believe that we were just about to exchange vows of eternal friendship when who should come in but her brother, Mr Charles Lamb!

My dear friend, he was a trifly shabbily dressed but is notably good-looking, with fine eyes and a most engaging stutter. He is, I suspect, two or three years older than us, while his sister is perhaps ten or twelve years older still. They clearly dote upon each other and I feel that he has some great sorrow in his life. He is an accountant in the East India House. Unfortunately Miss Lamb sadly mumbled the introduction, so that I do not think he clearly knew who I was.

I longed for some literary conversation but he has already published several poems and tales, so I did not dare to mention my poor *Female Geniad*. Assuming him to be tired and hungry after his day's work, I made my excuses and left, though not before insisting that he and Miss Lamb come to drink tea with me next evening.

They were kind enough to accept my invitation and you may imagine the flutter with which I heard them climbing the stairs to my little apartment. I had provided tea and coffee and some macaroons. Miss Wesley had warned me that Mr Lamb is extremely fond of macaroons and made some near-indelicacy about the way to a man's heart. They sat down. Dreadful silence! At last I blurted out my disagreement with Mr Isaac D'Israeli's supposition that the differences of human intellect are the mere effect of organization. I begged to know Mr Lamb's opinion. He answered with a pun which I did not catch but which did not sound relevant, though Miss Lamb laughed indulgently. In an attempt to lighten the atmosphere I essayed a *bon mot*. To my horror, Mr Lamb explained that neither he nor Miss

Lamb understand French. I turned the conversation into a more general discussion of modern languages, then into a particular *causerie* about German. Surely everyone these days speaks German? Mr Lamb sat mute.

Almost in despair, I turned to poetry. Mr Lamb must say something now. After an embarrassed silence I attempted to provoke him by asserting that no good poetry had appeared since the days of Dr Johnson. Mr Lamb said a few halting words. Perhaps I stated my case with too much certainty but I was over-eager rather than intentionally emphatic.

We passed from Dr Johnson to Miss More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* but Mr Lamb had not read it. I tried to interest him *ab initio* in my friend Dr Gregory's criticism of Miss More's use of metaphor and praised Miss More's vindication of herself but Mr Lamb would not be drawn.

I asked Mr Lamb's opinion of Dr Gregory's paradoxical theory that Pope was not a poet. He seemed to lack the interest to reply, even when I quoted Miss Seward's stimulating and contrary opinion.

My dear friend Miss Lamb, who had been dozing for some minutes, suddenly awoke. Understanding that she and her brother are interested in the theatre, I tried to bring her into the conversation by mentioning that I had been studying three dramatised translations of Kotzebue's wonderful work on Pizarro and suggested that she might like to take two of them home with her to compare. I thought it would afford her some pleasure but she and Mr Lamb refused, really quite sharply.

It was now nine o'clock. Wine and macaroons were served again, with notable success, and we parted. I confess to you, my dearest Selina, that I was a little disappointed in this less than satisfactory evening but Mr Lamb and Miss Lamb must have enjoyed themselves for they have kindly promised to come again next week and meet Jane and Anna Maria Porter. Jane and Anna Maria particularly wish to meet Mr Lamb and Miss Lamb because they are friends of Mr Coleridge, of whom Jane and Anna Maria have heard so much.

Your affectionate friend to serve you,
[Signed] Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger

WHAT WAS CHARLES LAMB'S STATUS AT WORK?

Our member Mr Frank Ledwith has raised a very interesting point. He and I had been corresponding about the 'true works', the few surviving books of East India Company accounts which were once thought all to have been destroyed.

'The few sidelong references by CL to his work at East India House do make me curious', wrote Mr Ledwith. 'I suspect he was a senior executive with a degree of authority - but what? Of course, he was not a "gentleman", so he would be classed as a "writer" (like Clive) or a "clerk". The books might well show what he was and did, and thus show him more three-dimensionally.'

I feel that this places CL too high. I have seen a printed East India House Directory of 1808 but surely too expensive at £125 for the single entry of interest, which records 'C. Lamb' in the middle of a group of other names in the Accounts Department, well

down the second column of all the staff. His brother John always seems to have been in a much more senior South Sea Company position and CL spoke of working with others in a compound, which he defined as a collection of simples. He never (?) mentions promotion, his increases in salary apparently being due to reorganization and the passage of the years. I think, therefore, that he may have been, at best, like one of those officer-material other ranks in war-time who always refuse to be promoted beyond sergeant (which is questionable anyway – can you see him ordering people about?) – or very much a man who kept his head down and had another life outside the office – or what we would now call a senior clerk or section head, on the grounds that his face probably never really fitted when seen from above.

This seems to be borne out by the few details in William Foster's *The East India House*, 1924, and its quotation from Thomas De Quincey's *London Reminiscences*, but has anyone picked up any more definite ideas which could be sent to the Hon. Editor for circulation in the *Bulletin*?

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Bernard Quaritch the great London book-dealers were kind enough to let me have a copy of their catalogue 1132, issued in 1991.

Item 57 is Charles Lamb's letter of 29 November 1833 to Edward Moxon, from which Talfourd omitted a number of lines and Lucas inevitably followed him. $7,500, say £4,200.

Item 58 is an early proof in two volumes of George Wither's *Works*, Bristol, 1820, interleaved and heavily and rudely annotated by Charles Lamb, John Matthew Gutch and Dr John Nott, for an edition to be published 1839–47. Gutch was at Christ's Hospital with Charles Lamb and became a lifelong friend. Charles Lamb has signed the first leaf of proof and inscribed each volume fully to his friend and colleague at the East India House, James [Brook] Pullham. Inserted into the book are a finished copy of the original copperplate engraving of Brook Pullham's full-length representation of Charles Lamb (which is on the inside of the Society's new glossy leaflet), a proof of it, and *the original drawing*. The volume also contains a fine letter by A. C. Swinburne referring to his ownership of these two volumes. $30,000, say £16,800.

Any change could be expended on Item 134, a document on vellum signed by 'Tho. Wiat', i.e. Sir Thomas Wyatt. Only seven letters in autograph but Quaritch described it as the earliest known signature of the great Tudor poet, who is probably the earliest 'major' English poet an example of whose undisputed autograph survives, apparently the only specimen of the autograph in private hands, and so perhaps offering the only opportunity which will arise to acquire the signature. $35,000, say £19,600.

HENRY MEYER'S PORTRAIT OF CHARLES LAMB

This is the portrait of Charles Lamb of which a photograph is displayed at meetings of the Charles Lamb Society, the one showing him seated and middle-aged.

Although my attempt to arrange a visit to inspect it and other India Office relics seems to have fallen through, Mr J. P. Losty, the Curator of Prints and Drawings in the Oriental and India Office Collections at The British Library has supplied the following details.

After the demise of the India Office, the portrait was sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. After a brief deposit with the above Collections at 197 Blackfriars

Road, London S.E.1., it was sent to a restorer for cleaning and relining. It was then to be returned to Blackfriars Road before meeting its destiny ... Since it is, writes Mr Losty, the only major portrait of an important literary figure possessed by the British Library, it is destined to hang in a public area of the new British Library building in St Pancras from 1993/4.

REGINALD HINE AND PARSON WOODFORDE

Ill-informed readers begin here. Reginald L. Hine, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S. (1883-1949), was a Hertfordshire solicitor, antiquary, author, and member of the Charles Lamb Society. He is perhaps best known locally for his books on *The History of Hitchin*, 2 vols., 1927 and 1929, and *Hitchin Worthies*, 1932; most widely known for *Confessions of an Un-common Attorney*, 1945, and *Relics of an Un-common Attorney*, 1951; and celebrated among Elians for *Charles Lamb and his Hertfordshire*, 1949. [By the way, I have not found a really good inscribed copy of this last one and am open to offers!]

Well-informed readers begin here. Some of us know about the late 18th century Parson James Woodforde of Somerset, Oxford, and Weston Longville in Norfolk, and will even be members of the highly (personally) recommended Parson Woodforde Society (Membership Secretary: Mrs P Stanley, 76 Spencer Street, Norwich, Norfolk). Parson Woodforde's Diary covers the period 1758-1802 and five volumes of extracts were published in a not entirely ideal form between 1924 and 1931. The PWS Honorary Editor has published several volumes of the complete text for that Society in recent years. Parson Woodforde is invariably maligned because he usually listed the food served to his guests and the ignorant always assume that one ate everything at that date rather than just what could be reached from one's place at table.

The most recent PWS Quarterly Journal, Vol. XXV, No. 3, Summer 1992, includes a brief article entitled *The Man Who Missed Out On Parson Woodforde* and quotes an extract from Hine's *Confessions of an Un-Common Attorney*, which I have traced to pages 192-3 in my (really good) inscribed copy but must confess to not having noticed before. Hine was a martyr to neurasthenia, depression or nervous breakdown, which ultimately caused him to commit suicide, and so he consulted various doctors. These included Dr Woodforde of Ashwell, who said that what Hine needed was a literary or historical work which would occupy and fascinate his mind for five years or so. He offered him his ancestor's diary to edit. Hine refused, on the grounds that he would prefer to write a history of Hitchin, but was rueful later when John Beresford, who succeeded him in his own house, the Jacobean Ashwell End, made a name for himself by undertaking the editing of extracts. Hine admits that 'For a picture of village and church life in the Georgian era one could hardly ask for anything more authentic, satisfying, and racy.'

The PWS editor wonders whether the Hine account can be accepted at face value: he wrote of the diary as a 'pile of eighteenth century manuscript' whereas it is in fact a collection of 72 (formerly 73) notebooks, and it is thought that the enthusiasm for publication came from Beresford, while the doctor thought the diary was too much a private record to attract a wide audience. On the other hand, I would allow for looseness of description and the passage of time and not regard either detail as making the Hine anecdote impossible.

IT'S THAT QUOTE AGAIN!

Wendy Cope the poet (sic, not poetess) was the subject of a *Times* article last March. After growing up in 'middle-class Bexleyheath' (among today's Elians, perhaps only the Wickham family can truly appreciate the full emotional effrontery of that description), she

became a primary school music teacher in the Old Kent Road. This was doubtless working-class but was not so described. Learning that she had no television, a helpful eight-year-old pupil suggested that, if she had a job, she might save up and buy one.

Her first book of poems was reprinted, her condition for resigning from the school. But how far should she go? 'A wise friend told her: never write poems for money. Do other things for money, and write the poems you want.'

Do you suppose that the wise friend was quoting the sense of Charles Lamb's remark to Bernard Barton in similar circumstances? – 'Keep to your Bank, and the Bank will keep you', which was printed by special request on the Society's new glossy leaflet.

If the source turned out to more direct, I think we might adapt Wendy Cope's poem about A. E. Housman for whom 'she has a thing':

> I spoke the other afternoon with Elia,
> Who told me I should keep my job – a bore!
> My only fear at this advice he gave me
> Was – he's been dead since 1834.

THE LAMBS' GRAVE AT EDMONTON

I recently visited Edmonton and was shocked at the state of the grave of Charles and Mary Lamb, particularly the graffiti colour-washed across the back of the stone. The former All Saints churchyard is now a public open space in the care of Enfield Borough Council. After a long period of being ignored by post and passed from hand to hand by telephone I realised that nothing would be done unless the Charles Lamb Society did it.

There seemed to be no trace of the old funds which were supposed to exist for maintaining the grave. It could well be that inflation has exhausted them anyway, but the Society's Council agreed that we would not apportion blame, simply obtain a quotation for the necessary work.

J. Bysouth of Tottenham was the firm of stonemasons recommended to us. They quoted for six items and we accepted the first four: removal of graffiti, removal of lichen and treatment with inhibitor, removal of weeds and similar treatment, and repointing all open joints. The cost was £186 plus VAT, i.e. £218.55, and the work was completed by the end of May 1992. I hope that members will always make a point of visiting the grave and reporting on its state if they are ever anywhere near Edmonton.

This put right the main things which had shocked me. The Society's Council therefore decided that, despite correspondence with Christ's Hospital and the possibility of a donation from them and an appeal among both their old pupils and our members, we should not proceed with Bysouth's other suggestions, at least in the foreseeable future. These were re-setting the plinth, which has suffered from movement, for £597, and the subsequent repairing of the plinth where ironwork has been removed, for £235. Both figures would be subject to VAT.

[I was pleased to learn that Donald W. Insall and Associates, who have conserved Kelmscott Manor, the House of Lords ceiling, and Clothworkers' Hall, and are currently working on both the Mansion House and the College of Arms in London, have appointed J. Bysouth of Tottenham as the sub-contractor for providing the geometrically-complicated entrance staircase at the latter building.]

SOURCE! - A Plea from the Chairman

I really do need to know this source and will be grateful if someone can identify it. It does not seem to be in the first few pages of any obvious biography of the Lambs and may be lost in the unindexed wastes of Talfourd or Barry Cornwall. On the other hand it may be too shame-makingly easy when we find out.

It is the anecdote where some young woman has alluded to rank in her family and Charles Lamb is reported as saying something like "La! Miss's cousin is a lord. Our grandfather was a cobbler".

Please can anyone tell me the source?

'TWAS EVER THUS

This would be a strange Society if we were not always seeking new members, younger members, and new younger members to help ease the burden of running the Society. The membership of any Society is invariably growing older.

I have just been reading Robert Roberts' book *The Classic Slum*, reprinted as a Penguin in 1990. The author was born in 1905 in a slum in Salford, the whole town described as the 'classic slum' by Frederick Engels in 1844.

Roberts goes into great detail about burial clubs, how they were conducted without policies and entirely on trust under the overall control of a committee of five trustees chosen by ballot and almost invariably elected year after year. In its latter days the particular burial club of which he writes got into trouble and had to be amalgamated with a larger organisation. An investigator seeking out trustees found two of the five 'senile to the point of indifference to any commercial affair' and the other three elders 'illiterate'. The society's assets stood then, in the 1930's, at more than £165,000.

None of this applies at present to the Charles Lamb Society and is totally irrelevant except as an awful warning.

BOOK REVIEWS

Claire Clairmont and the Shelleys 1798-1879
Robert Gittings & Jo Manton (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992) xi + 281 pp. £20.00.

The years of Claire Clairmont's birth and death were marked by two significant works of literature. In 1798 Godwin published his *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and in 1879 Ibsen produced *A Doll's House*. The social critique behind both memoirs and drama illuminates Claire Clairmont's existence. Radical ideas and sexual emancipation directed Claire's early life, but the nineteenth-century resistance to such ideals enforced over half a century of concealment of that history from the society in which she earned her living. The challenging task of this biography, as its full title

implies, is to balance an account of Claire's involvement with the Shelleys and the long years subsequently spent alone in pursuit of independence.

The first third of the book (1798-1822) was written by Robert Gittings, who sadly died before its publication. He related Claire's childhood and adolescence in the Godwin household; the 'ten minute' affair with Byron that, in Claire's words, 'discomposed the rest of my life'; her brief happy spell of motherhood before the loss of Allegra and the little girl's sudden death in 1822. In the same year, Shelley's drowning left Claire as much of a widow as Mary Shelley and Jane Williams.

Perhaps because Claire is jostled by the 'godlike' figures of Shelley and Byron, this is the most awkwardly-compressed part of her story. It is difficult to see events through the Clairmont/Shelley journals without adopting their heightened modes of perception. Claire joined Mary and Shelley on their 1814 journey through France, and for 'the three young people' we are told, 'thus full of the exhilaration of a new-found freedom . . . time was meaningless (they had no watch)'. A little later, however, we learn that Shelley in fact had to sell his watch and chain to raise money. Unintentionally, perhaps, this collision of romantic ideals and material necessity suggests a pattern for Claire's existence; an existence which, Gittings stresses, was dominated by the presence of Shelley.

The migratory pattern of Claire's life seems to have been set in motion by Shelley's and Mary's need of a translator. 'Wanting to be like the others', we are informed, 'she began to keep a journal.' Her first attempt at fiction, *The Ideot*, was written because Shelley and Mary were also thus occupied. Following the way that Mrs Clairmont had introduced herself to 'the immortal Godwin', Claire accosted Byron, determined (in Gittings' opinion) to set up a 'poetic partnership' like Mary's with Shelley. As the relationship with Byron is documented mainly by his callous asides the biography does not reveal that Claire's name for her daughter, Alba, derived from her calling Byron Albe. Claire's refusal of Peacock's offer of marriage in 1817 is attributed to her absorption in motherhood rather than to an enduring wish to settle with Byron. Alba, christened Allegra at Byron's insistence, was surrendered to Byron via Shelley's negotiations. Gittings convincingly establishes the way that this separation destabilized the twenty-year old mother for the rest of her life. Claire formed tenacious attachments to children in her extended family and at the age of seventy-two tried to adopt the illegitimate daughter of her niece.

The possibility that Claire bore Shelley's 'Neapolitan charge' in 1818 is dismissed although we are made aware of an ambivalent relationship between Shelley and Claire (and consequently between Mary and Claire). Musical skill, glad animal spirits and demanding playfulness alternately inspired and crossed the poet. Gittings' enduring image of Claire's vital volatility is as the 'fiery comet' from *Epipsychidion*.

At the dissolution of the Italian household, Jo Manton takes up the history of this fiery personality as the biography finds a compelling new direction in the varied survival struggles of the Lerici widows. None of them married but it is the 'clamorous' and 'thoughtless' Claire of Part One who appears the boldest adherent to radical principles. She was, Manton asserts, 'a true Romantic' who 'never became in belief or behaviour a Victorian'.

This biography is not a 'clamorous' feminist critique. Manton states bleakly:

the French Revolution had torn society apart to claim the rights of man, yet even at the guillotine women appeared either as victims or knitters. Their embittered, still unfinished, revolution lay in the future. For all she knew, Claire stood alone.

Claire Clairmont never knew her natural father, changed her name from Jane to Claire and wanted her history to be known. Her ambition to embark on 'some independent mode of life' had been approved by Shelley in' 1821. In 1822 Claire rejected Trelawney's unreliable offers of union ('I wish you to marry that you may rest at anchor in a safe harbour') and began a career of training other people's children.

Manton's exposure of the governess-trade is effective because it is implicit; Claire was often too tired or too busy to reply to letters or keep a journal. However, Manton draws together scattered evidence of extensive travels and reconstructs a remarkable narrative of anxiety, exploration and finally, independence. Claire's travel writing is commended to the reader in extracts of sharp social observation. Details of life in Moscow, St Petersburgh, Dresden and Tuscany are interwoven with the worries of supporting her mother and family, the need to hide her early links with radical authors, and her longing for news of Mary's plodding son Percy whom Claire idealistically believed to be another Shelley. In the final break with Mary, Claire is depicted as the aggressive victim of the Shelley Family's revision of its reputation.

Manton shows how over many years the Lerici widows loyally afforded each other financial help and confidence. Before the Married Women's Property Act Claire helped Jane's daughter by banking money that would otherwise have disappeared in the Hunt family debt.

Mysteries about Claire remain; a secret life in Paris in the 1840's and (like Byron?) her turning towards the Roman Catholic church. A strength of this book is that it does not load these spaces with speculation. Claire guarded her memories of the gods on earth. This biography demonstrates how experience added a codicil to the Romantic ideals of liberty: 'I want to earn money since it is the only key of freedom.'

Jane Stabler
University of St Andrews

Tom Mayberry. COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH IN THE WEST COUNTRY. Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Glos. and Wolfeboro Falls, NH, USA 1992 pp. x : 182. £14.99

This delightful book traces Coleridge's course in the West Country from Ottery St Mary, via Bath, Bristol and Clevedon to Nether Stowey; and Wordsworth's from Bristol and Racedown to Alfoxden. The relationship between place and poetry gives its magic to the account and now famous journeys, such as that on which 'The Ancient Mariner' was conceived or the Wordsworth's visit to the Wye Valley in July 1798 are included. The cover photograph is of small beech-trees in winter above Alfoxden, where they are blown sideways by just such a 'stormy winter gale', which 'cuts like a scythe', as afflicted Wordsworth's 'Thorn'. The last return visits, by Coleridge, with his family, in 1807 and by Wordsworth in 1841 are interestingly recorded to complete the tale.

The obvious comparison to make is with Berta Lawrence's *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset*, published in 1970, to which Tom Mayberry pays tribute in his Preface, but the functions of the two books are different. Mayberry takes a much wider canvas, which

necessitates a less detailed account of the Nether Stowey and Alfoxden area. He gives us an admirably succinct and unassuming narrative of the main outline of events relating to the West Country in the two poets' lives, with enough biographical information outside it to put it in perspective. Perhaps one does miss the feeling of a living, breathing, rural community of varied individuals that one gets from Berta Lawrence. Readers of the *Bulletin* may feel that some of her cameos of local characters would have fleshed out and brought to life the picture of the neighbourhood into which Coleridge erupted for a period and the Wordsworths entered for that wonderful year. However, that would not have left space for the reference to other localities which are also interesting in themselves and are maybe less studied elsewhere.

The maps and gazetteer are very useful and Dorothy Wordsworth's Alfoxden Journal is given as an appendix with notes. Tom Mayberry, as Principal Archivist at Somerset Record Office and a lifelong West Country resident himself, is admirably fitted for the task he undertakes here. The illustrations are really excellent, some showing relevant buildings that no longer exist, enabling us to form a picture of the difference between what Wordsworth and Coleridge saw and what we see. Alternatively, there are scenes where neither the loss of old landmarks nor the addition of sometimes unwelcome modern 'improvements' get in the way of our experiencing very much what the poets felt, for example in Holford Combe or in the Great Track on the Quantock Hills. This book would be an ideal companion on a walking holiday in that area in the footsteps of the poets.

Mary Wedd

Thomas Hood. SELECTED POEMS. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Joy Flint. Fyfield Books. Carcanet Press, Manchester, 1992. pp.134. £6.95.

Leigh Hunt. SELECTED WRITINGS. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by David Jesson Dibley. Fyfield Books. Carcanet Press, Manchester, 1990. pp.197. £5.95.

Reading J. Meade Falkner's *Moonfleet* recently, I was struck by the fact that there were more chapter epigraphs from Hood than from any other author except Shakespeare, an indication of his continuing popularity fifty-three years after his death in 1845. Who reads him now, I wonder? Joy Flint's selection should remind - or inform - present-day readers how various were his poetical voices. 'The Song of the Shirt' is here, and 'The Bridge of Sighs' ('One more unfortunate, / Weary of breath . . .'), and 'I remember, I remember', and 'Faithless Sally Brown' with its puns ('They went and told the sexton, and / The sexton toll'd the bell'), and 'Eugene Aram's Dream' and 'The Last Man', both in the mould of 'The Ancient Mariner' but stamped as Hood's in every link, specially the latter, which I am inclined to think his best poem; the more 'literary', 'romantic' poems are here too, Keatsian cheek by Miltonic jowl ('Where are the songs of Summer? - With the sun, / Oping the dusky eyelids of the south . . . '); here is a substantial extract from 'Lycus, the Centaur', an heroic failure, probably inspired by the Glaucus and Scilla episode in *Endymion*, but turning on an incident so grotesque that it was a daring poetical act to treat it seriously (Lycus' lover, a water-nymph, obtains from Circe a spell, intending to make him immortal; instead she has been given one that will transform him into a horse; appalled by its effects, she breaks off half-way . . .); here, again, the grotesque this time serving a satirical end, is an extract from the long tale of Miss Kilmansegg and her precious leg (a leg of gold to replace a leg crushed in a riding accident); here are humorous odes and addresses to great people - to Mrs Fry the prison reformer, to Mr Graham the balloonist, to Joe Grimaldi the clown on his retirement:

And hast thou really wash'd at last
  From each white cheek the red half moon?
And all thy public Clownship cast,
  To play the private Pantaloon?
All youth - all ages - yet to be,
Shall have a heavy miss of thee!

This particular Ode, the editor tells us, was Lamb's favourite: 'I liked Grimaldi best: it is true painting of abstract clownery, and that precious concrete of a Clown', he wrote to Coleridge, and he must have relished the allusions in this stanza to the Seven Ages and to Falstaff's Shrewsbury epitaph (which turns up again in the next stanza as 'we can / Much "better spare a better man"'). The editor tells us, too, that portraits of Lamb and Grimaldi hung together on Hood's study wall.

Who now reads Hunt, for that matter? Hood's senior by fourteen years, he outlived him by another fourteen. Nathaniel Hawthorne visited him in his seventieth year, in his 'plain and shabby little house' at Hammersmith, where his study displayed 'an awful lack of upholstery' - a sad situation, as Hawthorne reflected, for one who was 'born with such a faculty for enjoying all beautiful things'. That faculty appears in Hunt's essays, critical and descriptive, as well as in his poetry. David Jesson Dibley, formerly Head of English at Christ's Hospital School, has included a substantial trio of extracts from 'The Story of Rimini', Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca re-told, with abundant detail, in couplets that derive from Chaucer's and Dryden's without being like either, and a representative selection of Hunt's other poetry, not omitting 'Abou Ben Adhem' or 'Jenny kiss'd me' (which is about Jane Welsh Carlyle); but he has taken note of Hunt's own rueful remark, 'Hard is it for one who has grown up in the hope of being a poet, to confess that the best things he has done have been written in prose', and has given most of his space to Hunt's essays about himself and his contemporaries. There is a good piece, from *Table Talk* (1851), about Lamb, who, for all his sweetness of temper, would sometimes 'throw out a startling and morbid subject for reflection', 'as if he would cram into one moment the spleen of years', and whose essays ('among the daintiest productions of English *wit-melancholy*') are none the worse for their 'sprinkle of old language': 'Shakespeare himself might have read them, and Hamlet have quoted them.'

Both selections have informative and appreciative introductions, and explanatory notes which, though those to Hunt in particular might well be more numerous, are helpful as far as they go; in any case, one would not want editorial bread to outweigh authorial sack. The volumes are well printed, and though there are some obvious mistakes (two half-lines, if not more, have gone from 'The Story of Rimini' on page 33, and as Hunt has rephrased the passage completely in my 1847 edition I cannot put it right) it is good to have these two authors in readable form again.

T W Craik
University of Durham

SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

SOCIETY LEAFLET AND PROGRAMME

All members should have received copies of the very handsome new Charles Lamb Society leaflet, bearing the 'Venetian Senator' portrait and examples of Lamb's handwriting on the front, along with their July *Bulletin*. Spare copies of the leaflet are available from the

Editor on request. Among points to note in the interesting and varied new lecture programme is the date of Saturday 3rd April 1993. On this day the Society's new archive, at Putney United Reformed Church, Upper Putney Road, Putney SW15 will be on show, and there will be a buffet lunch. Further details in the January 1993 *Bulletin* will serve as a reminder. The Birthday Luncheon, on Saturday 30th January, will once again offer members and friends a chance to enjoy the very handsome premises of the Royal College of General Practitioners at 14 Prince's Gate, Kensington, SW7. It is easy to imagine the erstwhile splendours of American Ambassadorial functions, or even the days when the walls were hung with the riches of Pierpont Morgan's great art collection, amid such surroundings.

Returning to less exalted matters, the spelling 'Colleridge' in relation to the lecture of Saturday 6th March is a mishap, not a new interpretation of the biographical evidence!

NEWS FROM WINIFRED COURTNEY

A very welcome letter to the editor from Winifred Courtney brought news of her Golden Wedding celebrations last Summer, together with a cake-cutting photograph of Denis and herself which shows them both in understandably high spirits and the very best of health. The other reason for Winifred's letter was to alert me to the imminent arrival of xeroxes of two articles on 'Charles Lamb [as Poet]' and 'Charles Lamb [as Prose Writer]', published in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol.93 (*British Romantic Poets, 1789-1832:* First Series) and the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol.107, (*British Romantic Prose Writers,* 1789-1832: First Series), both volumes edited by John R Greenfield, Detroit, Gale Research, 1990 and 1991 respectively, and published by Bruccoli Clark Layman. Readers in the States may be able to find the volumes without too much difficulty; others with access to research libraries may also be rewarded for a degree of ingenuity and patience by finding two excellent articles with very good bibliographies and outstandingly good illustrations, not only of people and places, but also of Lamb's own manuscripts, very clearly copied; these are much less often reproduced in books and journals.

'POOR RELATIONS': WHY LESS OF A BORE?

David Todd, 71 Holman Street, Shrewsbury, MA 01575, USA wonders why when Charles Lamb reprinted the essay 'Poor Relations' in *The Last Essays of Elia*, 1833, he omitted the phrase 'the bore *par excellence*' at the end of the first paragraph which had appeared when the essay was first published in the *London Magazine* in May, 1823. He asks whether Lamb ever indicated his reasons for the excision, and I cannot find any help in Lucas's notes.

Looking at the passage again, I do wonder whether Lamb felt that the rather modish French phrase spoiled the more antiquated, sometimes quasi-Biblical flavour of what went immediately before. But does anyone know the real answer?

WORDSWORTH SUMMER CONFERENCE, 1992

The Wordsworth Summer Conference this year came in for some rather mixed weather, but fortunately the rain tended to descend at night time, or in those hours devoted to lectures and conference papers, and the Editor, who tried to do his duty by track and fell, was only soaked to the skin once. A braver party who emulated Charles and Mary Lamb's achievement in climbing Skiddaw were in some danger of being blown off, but they managed the ascent and returned to Grasmere with spirits duly elevated.

There is now a very sizeable Elian presence at the Wordsworth Summer Conference (appropriately, of course) and among numerous other delights was that of greeting several 'old familiar faces', some unseen for a good deal more than a single twelvemonth. Michael Newton, whose presence the Society had sponsored, was able to make useful contacts with other young scholars in the Romantic area, and his own conference paper, on 'Wordsworth and the Feral Child' was warmly received.

The Conference ended with an event which the Lambs would have enjoyed with unchecked delight: a 'Reader's Theatre' performance of Monk Lewis's *The Castle Spectre*. Quite what was its moment of highest drama it would be difficult to say. Duncan Wu's direction ensured that sensation followed sensation with dizzy rapidity; sliding panels were mimed, the moon rose and fell in obedience to the Editor's thrilling tones, Nicola Trott somehow compelled the most spectacular suspension of disbelief since the 1790s while turning a full set of Gore-Tex into a suit of armour, and a rapturous audience forgot their bewilderment with the plot to cheer us to the echo.

Amid the terminal mayhem, a still point of purest magic: Pamela Woof as the actual spectre, ethereal in white and silver, radiating forgiveness and reconciliation on all around her, like the spirit of Giselle (Act II) herself. Truly it was an evening of rich experiences.

WORDSWORTH WINTER SCHOOL AND SUMMER CONFERENCE, 1993

The dates for the next Wordsworth Winter School are from 7-12 February 1993 and its theme is 'Wordsworth and the Sonnet'. The Summer Conference dates are from 31 July to 14 August 1993. Information concerning either (or both) may be obtained from Sylvia Wordsworth, The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria, LA22 9SH, UK.

A WILLIAM GODWIN NUMBER OF THE *CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN*

Since 1993 sees the bicentenary of *Political Justice*, and since Michael Newton and others have indicated an interest in writing on Godwinian matters, it seems a good idea to announce at this stage that I hope to be able to publish a Godwin-related number of the *Bulletin* at some point in the year. Charles Lamb was not directly involved with Godwin's affairs at the time when *Political Justice* first appeared, but the Godwin-Lamb relationship became a close and important one in stimulating Charles and Mary Lamb to publication only a few years later. In view of this, and in view of the material I have so far been offered, I think it seems reasonable to project an issue of the *Bulletin* devoted to Lamb-Godwin themes generally. Offers of further articles would be most welcome, particularly if they touch upon some aspects of the joint friendship and its literary consequences.

Madeline Huxstep is also hoping to include some Godwin or Godwin-related lectures in the 1993-94 programme, so I think we can honestly claim to be trying to do our bit!

Bill Ruddick

SOME NOTES FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

Enclosed with this *Bulletin* (for UK members) is a booking form for the Luncheon on 30th January 1993 - the nearest we could get to Charles Lamb's real birthday on 10th February *and* enjoy the elegant surroundings of the Royal College of General Practitioners, which the Editor rightly enthuses about above, while avoiding a clash with the Wordsworth Winter

School. We are delighted that Professor Jonathan Bate will be our Guest of Honour on the present occasion.

HENRY MEYER

John Hunter is engaged on some family historical research. One of his ancestors was Henry Meyer, painter of the well-known Lamb portrait which shows a background of East India House. Mr Hunter asks us for information, and if possible for copies of the Lamb portrait, and of 'The Young Chatechist' with Lamb verses attached. We have already pointed Mr Hunter in the direction of Prance, Christ's Hospital and the Guildhall Library – also Lucas; and now there is D E Wickham's short account of the portrait in the current *Bulletin* to be added to the list. But if any member can offer further information about Henry Meyer himself, do please write to Mr Hunter directly. His address is Beacon House, 7 Dock Street, London E1.

We have asked Mr Hunter to furnish us with an account of his researches for a future *Bulletin*.

...OF WORMS AND GRAVES AND EPITAPHS

A visit to Lamb sites in July included a look at Mary Field's grave in Widford Churchyard. Although it is quite tidy, the Society may wish to spend a little money on cleaning the headstone and re-cutting the lettering. The grave of Charles and Mary Lamb at Edmonton Churchyard looked well cared for after some refurbishment earlier this year.

An ivy cutting from Mary Field's grave is now flourishing in Bielefeld, Germany, cared for by our member, Martina Ewald, whose account of our tour follows these notes.

Madeline Huxstep

AN ELIAN EXCURSION

Martina Ewald

When Madeline Huxstep asked me to write something about our Elian trip into Hertfordshire for the *Bulletin*, it first gave me quite a shock. How could I ever write something which really would be printed? And (what frightened me even more) how could I write an article in English? But after having got settled again in my familiar surroundings, I finally thought 'Why not write something about a day I will never forget?' And so here is my summary of my day with Charles Lamb. I hope you won't mind if my English is sometimes rough or wrong.

My husband and I were picked up in the morning by Madeline Huxstep and Charles Branchini. The first place we were going to see was Widford. It was at the Bell Inn that Madeline parked her car, and guess what was the first thing we saw? A goat! A goat, not a lamb! Later we found out that this goat belonged to the publican of The Bell, a man who seemed very much interested in keeping up the memory of Charles Lamb. Over one of the tables there hung a copy of Hazlitt's painting. When my husband and I were introduced as the German guests of the Charles Lamb Society, the publican drew nearer and told us the story of this painting. The moment someone tries to take it away from its accustomed place, something horrible happens! That this is not just a threatening story for children he proved by telling us that any time it was taken down for even a single moment by the former innkeepers, they had cut their hands on the frame. Or else, without any evident reason, the crockery would start breaking! This seemed to remind the landlord of another story. Sometimes there was a strong smell of tobacco in The Bell, even though nobody in his family smoked. We did know that Lamb loved tobacco, didn't we? I will not go into

further details, though I did enjoy myself with the Lamb ghost stories. If you want to hear more about them, spend an evening at The Bell. Be sure I envy you, since I cannot be there!

As the Bell did not serve any food on Mondays, we had to find a different place where we could have lunch. It was ever so nice to have lunch in a pub. Madeline recommended 'Ploughman's' to us, and that was a good choice. Thus fortified, we made our way to Widford Church where Mary Field is buried. The graveyard was a romantic sight. Mary Field's grave itself was covered with ivy, and I took some cuttings home. I really do hope it will grow, for it will be a memory of the Lamb family, as well as of Madeline Huxstep and Charles Branchini, who brought Lamb back to life for me.

Our next destination was Enfield, where Charles and Mary lived in several houses. After managing the one-way maze at Enfield, we had a look at one of these houses, then made our way on to Edmonton.

And there we went to see the Lambs' grave. Honestly, I would never have thought that one day I would see it in reality. I had seen the gravestone in so many pictures, but the experience of standing there was overwhelming. It felt a little as if Charles Lamb had died only recently, and for a moment I had the feeling of having lost a good friend.

Luckily, however, Madeline had two other houses left for us to see. The first was, of course, Walden Cottage in Edmonton. I must agree with David Wickham, who said in his article 'Islington-Iana', in the April number of the *Bulletin*, that the house is 'astonishingly easy to miss'. This small house was Lamb's last home, and in my imagination I had always seen it as a cottage, small but rather away from other houses, instead of hidden between them. But maybe this thought resulted from some verbal associations in my mind between Walden Cottage and Thoreau's Walden Pond!

The last part of our journey brought us back to London - i.e. to Islington. I can understand that Islington is now a fashionable place to live. Personally, I would not mind living there either! (Maybe in Elia Street? Wouldn't that be lovely?!) We spent some minutes by the Regent's Canal before we finally went to Colebrook Cottage. There it was, I was told, that the incident well-known from 'Amicus Redivivus' took place. But unfortunately the New River flows underground nowadays. Yet I will always remember Duncan Terrace as the place where Charles Lamb had a good laugh about poor George Dyer! And that is why I must say I liked the choice of going to see Colebrook Cottage as the last of the Lambs' places that day: not Widford, where of course he spent a lot of his time, starting with his visits to his grandmother when he was a small boy; not Enfield, where he moved because of Mary's illness, and where he was never as happy as he had been in London; and of course not Edmonton. That would have been a rather sad end to a lovely day for me. No it was right to end up at Islington, a place where he laughed. So my final memory of my Elian day was that of a laughing Charles Lamb.

PUBLICITY

D E Wickham

Members will be aware that the Council has invested a fair amount of money in a new glossy leaflet. After careful thought we send it out to likely groups and individuals. We are also providing study bursaries, making donations to suitable bodies, and printing booklets on subjects of Elian interest. This is all by way of publicising the Society and finding new members.

The Manx Tourist Board had the same idea, according to the *Daily Telegraph* of 3rd July 1992. 'Great Escapes' was a £200,000 promotion designed to sell the delights of the Isle of Man to tourists and was launched last April with a mail shot to 125,000 people thought to be likely candidates for a holiday. There were 8,284 replies. Eleven resulted in bookings, each for an average of three days.

Tourism officials were reported as trying to look on the bright side. "It's early days yet", said their chief executive.

WILL HONEYCOMB — D E Wickham

I write, for the record, as one who partly joined the Charles Lamb Society because of delight in a wonderful piece of prose - which turned out to have been written by Thackeray!

It has taken me a long time to trace a lost Elian reference to 'Will Honeycomb' and that is because it was written by William Hazlitt. Doubtless all the Hazlittians knew that but I did not and so could not ask them.

Chapter 20 of Lucas' *Life of Charles Lamb* must have been my source: 'William Ayrton, the musical critic [Did he sing his reviews?] . . . whom Hazlitt calls, in one of his essays, "the Will Honeycomb of our set" . . .'

Further, I had assumed a kind of Tony Lumpkin figure. In fact Will Honeycomb comes from *The Spectator* (1711-1713) and was a fine gentleman, the great authority on the fashions of the day.

TIM WILSON'S PRESENTATION GOBLET

In the *Bulletin* for April this year we gave an account of the presentation which marked the Society's appreciation of Tim Wilson's years as Chairman. It was then said that a more detailed account of the goblet, specially crafted by Annabel Rathbone, along with a photograph, would be published in the *Bulletin* for July.

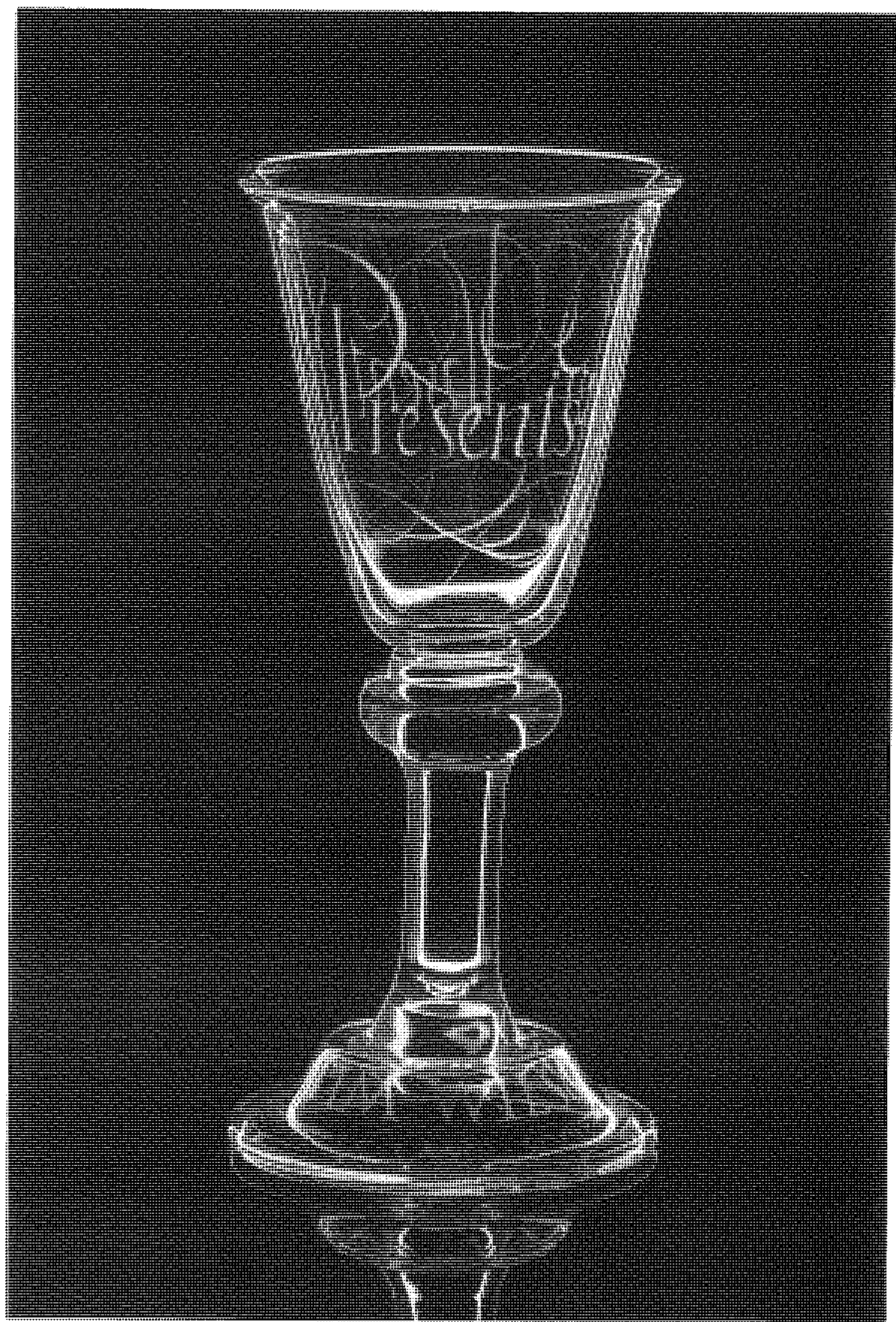
Unexpected pressure on space made this impossible, but the promised information and photograph can be included now.

. . . .

Annabel Rathbone specialises in diamond-point line engraving on glass. This is a traditional technique, using a hand-held diamond tool. Unlike drill engraving, which may merely mark the surface of the glass, or carve onto it as deeply as desired, the diamond line must cut decisively into the surface. A fine lead glass will allow a smooth line to be engraved; a hard soda glass will produce a splintery, shallow line.

This method of engraving leads naturally to linear designs, and it is the firm, engraved line that forms the basis of Annabel Rathbone's work. She is one of the very few people now engraving who use this technique.

Annabel Rathbone was born in London in 1935, went to Chelsea School of Art and the Royal College of Art, and now lives and works in Richmond, Surrey. She is an Associate Fellow of the Guild of Glass Engravers.



THE MYSTERY OF ANOTHER LIBRARY

D E Wickham

The fate of Charles Lamb's ragged regiment of a library is well known. Various depredations by friends seeking souvenirs after his death and eventual inheritance by Edward Moxon who, having sold sixty volumes to America and allowed a few items to escape then or before, destroyed the rest.

The following remarks are taken from *News and Comment* in *The Book Collector* for Spring 1985, page 90. Given the above details, who is X?

'No less surprising is the fact that nine-tenths of the books sold at auction after X's death have disappeared or lost their provenance (which amounts to the same thing). The sale contained some 3000 volumes in 663 lots. It was a working library, and the 'woeful condition' (to quote a contemporary note on one surviving catalogue) apparently discouraged collectors. While X's friends bought the odd memento, the bulk of the library seems, unbelievably, to have been consigned to oblivion.'

An earlier sentence provides too helpful a clue: 'Only 13 of the books are marked for quoting in the *Dictionary*: "when the range of works quoted . . . is considered, it is surprising how few marked books appear to have survived".'

X is, of course, Dr Johnson.

THE BAD LECTURER ?

D E Wickham

'For my part I am very sorry for him. It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self - never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dimsighted . . . Doubtless some ancient Greek has observed that behind the big mask and the speaking-trumpet, there must always be our poor little eyes peeping as usual and our timourous lips more or less under anxious control.'

George Eliot: *Middlemarch*, ch. 29.

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