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JOHN AND SARAH STODDART: FRIENDS OF THE LAMBS

The eleventh annual Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture, given to the Society by Dr Robert Woof on 1st October 1983

We look forward in 1984 to marking the 150th year since the death of both Lamb and Coleridge. Thus with celebratory care I take a sentence from one of the earliest of Lamb's surviving letters to his myriad-minded friend. On 8 June 1796 Lamb writes to Coleridge:

Allen I am sorry to say is a *confirmed* atheist. Stodart or Stothard a coldhearted well bred conceited disciple of Godwin does him *no good*. His wife has several daughters (one of em as old as himself) surely there is something *unnatural* in such a marriage.

You will have no difficulty in realising that the Robert Allen here mentioned is Coleridge's oldest friend from Christ's Hospital and that it is he who is remembered so charmingly by Lamb in his 1823 essay: 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago'. Lamb has been discussing the wit of Coleridge and of Charles Valentine Le Grice; and then he turns to praise Allen:

Nor shalt thou, their compeer, be quickly forgotten, Allen, with the cordial smile, and still more cordial laugh, with which thou wert wont to make the old Cloisters shake, in thy cognition of some poignant jest of theirs; or the anticipation of some more material, and, peradventure, practical one, of thine own. Extinct are those smiles, with that beautiful countenance with which (for thou wert the *Nireus formosus* of the school) in the days of thy maturer waggery, thou didst disarm the wrath of infuriated town-damsel, who, incensed by provoking pinch, turning tigress-like round, suddenly converted by thy angel-look, exchanged the half-formed terrible "*bl-----*", for a gentler greeting - "*bless thy handsome face!*"

Coleridge's great love of Allen is partly explained in his letter of 5 February 1793 to Mrs Evans when he contrasts his own,

hypochondriac gloomy spirit *amid blessings* [which] too frequently warbles out the hoarse gruntings of discontent

with:

my dear friend, Allen, [who] has a resource against most misfortunes in the natural gaiety of his temper.

Allen was the son of a clergyman from Kent; but, like so many young men of the revolutionary time, he suffered from pangs of conscience when faced with the possibility that he might have to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles. It is perhaps this problem of Allen's that makes Coleridge, on 13 July 1794, write to Robert Southey, who had just been introduced to Coleridge by Allen in the previous month:

For God's sake, Southey! enter not into the church. Concerning Allen I

say little - but I feel anguish at times.

Allen seems to have been one of those who took part in the discussions with Coleridge and Southey about pantisocracy, that ideal community to be set up on the banks of the Susquehanna River in the USA. Coleridge reprimands Southey for some aggressive comments on Robert Allen, by noting:

My dear Allen! - wherein has he offended? He did never promise to form one of our Party - but of all this when we meet

But however much Coleridge and Lamb might have worried over Allen's atheism, Coleridge's chief sense of Allen was not governed by theological concerns: for in 1796, Allen had surprised his friends by marrying a widow; she was the daughter of Dr Foster of Oxford, with three children, but was soon to die of consumption. Coleridge wrote to John Coulson on 8 December 1796, in a way that describes and pleasantly contradicts the picture by Lamb of "Bobbee" Allen:

Poor Allen! My heart bleeds over his distresses. The money, which I remitted him, demanded his esteem, not gratitude. I write '*esteem*' - for in this rascally world, a man deserves *esteem* merely for being *honest*: and indeed it was only *honesty* in me. For I received from him more than I have been able to return when I was in the army. He was perpetually sending me from Oxford money, & Tea, & Sugar, & a variety of other things, & twice came down, and wept over 'the thought-be-wilder'd Man' with tears of brotherly affection. - When I forget to love him, the best & kindest thing that God's mercy can do for my soul, will be to forget *me*.

Allen was to go to Portugal as an Army surgeon in 1797 and Coleridge loses touch with him, though possibly meeting him five years later during the summer of 1802 when Stoddart and Allen were coming through Keswick on their way from Scotland. Lamb commented 11 October 1802:

I have just heard from Stoddart. Allen & he intend taking Keswick on their way home. Allen wished particularly to have it a secret that he is in Scotland, & wrote to me accordingly very urgently. As luck was, I had told not above 3 or 4: but Mary had told Mrs Green of Christ's Hospital!

If Coleridge and Allen met then, it was the last time they met. Coleridge's note book entry from Malta in 1805 reads:

John Tobin dead - and just after the Success of his Play! - and Robert Allen dead suddenly!

O when we are young we lament for Death only by sympathy or with the *general* (feeling with which we grieve for) Misfortunes (in general;) but there comes a time, (and this year is the time it has come to me) when we lament for Death, as *Death*, when it is felt for itself, & as itself, aloof from all its consequences / - Then comes the grave-stone into the Heart -/ with all its mournful names - then the Bell-man's or Clerk's Verses subjoined & the Bills of Mortality are no longer common-place.

How rare and pleasant were Allen's qualities is borne out by a letter of that year, 1802, when Mary Lamb writes to a certain Sarah Stoddart, the sister of John, Robert Allen's atheistical friend. Mary writes on 21 July 1802:

We have heard nothing of Allen; I long very much to see him; I have the recollection of much kindness shown to us by Allen, and kindness unacknowledged, and seemingly forgotten; for soon after Allen had been uncommonly attentive and good to us, when we were in distress from severe illness, he married, and so it happened I do not know why, we never saw him afterwards.

Robert Allen's kindness perhaps belonged to that period of catatonic withdrawal which Lamb suffered in 1795-6, a time when Lamb felt that Allen gave him attention but only as a duty. Lamb complained to Coleridge:

Thank you for your frequent letters, you are the only correspondent & I might add the only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere & have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, & reserved of manners, no-one seeks or cares for my society & I am left alone. Allen calls very occasionally as tho' it were a duty rather, & seldom stays ten minutes.

But inward-looking and reserved as Lamb was, Allen, handsome Bob Allen, was having his own difficulties. Perhaps it was Allen's neglectful manner that made Lamb give this sharp portrait of Allen:

Allen sometimes laughs at Superstition & Religion & the like. A living fell vacant lately in *the gift of the Hospital*. White informed him that he stood a fair chance for it. He scrupled, & scrupled about it, - & at last (to use his own words) "tamper'd" with *Godwin* to know whether the thing was *honest* or *not*.

Godwin said nay to it, & Allen rejected the living! Could *the blindest Poor Papish* have bowed more *servilely* to his *Priest* or *Casuist*?

Lamb, of course, had no time for *Godwin* at this period - he was to meet him in 1800 and only after that to become a friend. What Lamb does not seem to recognise is the agony that religion caused Robert Allen. This is clear from an unpublished letter from Allen to Robert Southey which has recently come to light:

Dear Southey,

Your last friendly letter demanded an earlier acknowledgement - it endear'd you to me more than ever - that you, who are so rigid a regulator of your own actions, should treat with indulgence, nay I may say with tenderness the weakness of others, shows you in the most amiable light. After the receipt of yours, I promised myself tranquillity for a time - when, alas! I receiv'd a letter from Mr Waldo (the person who has hitherto *patronis'd* me - detested word! thro life) accusing me, of being acquainted with Republicans and Infidels, and assuring me if I did not immediately withdraw myself from all connections with them & give a good account of my own private principles, he would have nothing more to do with me. You cannot tell what I suffer'd in consequences of this letter. Principle & feeling began their conflict afresh, and my heart was rent twain. I had no alternative left but to avow my real sentiments, or equivocate - to give up a friend, whose good opinions my mother regards as the criterion of merit and looks up to as the pledge of my future prosperity in life, or to keep him at the expense of ingenuousness & honesty. I adopted the latter, and I blush with shame, tho' not with contrition. I find myself degraded in my own eyes, and how can I expect to stand more highly in yours? You alone Southey, of all mankind, have been made acquainted with all the previous operations of my mind, all the struggle between principle & feeling, that has ended

thus disgracefully to myself, but happily I hope to my mother. If my mother shall be made happy by it, my end will be obtain'd - but of this I have considerable fears. So little vers'd am I in the school of hypocrisy, that I fear I shall betray myself thro' the mask I have assum'd - and so lose the wages of my transgression. Southey, if you could see thoroughly into my heart you would excuse me - I act with no view to self-aggrandisement - I want nothing for myself but bread to eat and water to drink - the only thing I aim at is to make my hitherto distress'd mother comfortable for the short remainder of her days, and to assist my brother in settling in life, neither of which ends I can accomplish without temporizing. Oh that I had firmness of mind sufficient to join you! But I can not get above family affections - how then am I to act? To avow my real sentiments, and to join your party, are synonymous in their effects - neither therefore will suit my purpose. It would seem then that I am reduc'd by necessity to turn hypocrite and trick out my countenance in the features of deceit. Wretched condition! After having suffer'd what I have done at Lincoln these last two summers in the cause of truth, to turn apostate at last & forfeit all claim to sincerity - fool that I was, why did I not temporize at first! I should have been adept by this time. Write, if you can still think me worthy of your regard - Bid Coleridge write - I understand he is with you - God love you both, and prosper your undertakings - yours

R Allen
27 February

(Address: Robert Southey / no 8 Westgate Buildings Bath. Stamped:Oxford)

Whatever happened to Allen in 1795, it was to prefigure John Stoddart's experience in 1796; for, cold-hearted disciple of Godwin as Stoddart was, he was, like Allen, to be sorely tested and tried for his theological doubts. Let us turn to Stoddart and his family, especially his sister, that enigmatic figure who was to marry William Hazlitt and to whom some of Mary Lamb's best letters are written.

John Stoddart was born in Salisbury on 6 February 1773. His sister Sarah was a little younger; she was later to be the first wife of William Hazlitt. John and Sarah were the children of John Stoddart, a naval lieutenant, and Sarah, his wife. They were not rich; money and rank in society were their quiet obsessions. If Lamb calls John Stoddart "well bred", he is perhaps noting a kind of formality that Stoddart undoubtedly had. There was nothing vicious in John's behaviour - in many ways he was the model son; he relates in 1838 when writing to Baron Field, that "As I neither drank nor smoked, our time, (at my rooms at least) was chiefly passed in reading or discussing passages of our favourite authors, or compositions of our own. Mary Lamb was always of the party, and joined in the criticisms, in her mild, unpretending way. She, too, occasionally wrote short copies of verses, which Charles had great pleasure in repeating." This friendliness was to develop after 1800. It is in 1802 when *John Woodvil* was given to Stoddart by Lamb.

The republican puritanism of John (evident from his short hair and refusal to use hair powder) was, in time, to turn to a forbidding stiffness. W. Carew Hazlitt, the son of Stoddart's nephew, and grandson of Hazlitt, instanced the difference between the Stoddart brother and the sister in their later years. By then Sarah Stoddart, had become Mrs Hazlitt:

A lady whom I formerly met recollected very well the first visit Mrs Hazlitt paid to her family at Bayswater. It was a very wet day, and she

had been to a *walking match*. She was dressed in a white muslin gown, a black velvet spencer, and a leghorn hat with a white feather. Her clothes were perfectly saturated, and a complete change of things was necessary, before she could sit down. The stiff, ceremonious ways of Sir John Stoddart and his family did not please her at all. When one of her nephews (Sir John's sons) was praised in her hearing as an example of good breeding and politeness, she laughed, and exclaimed, 'Oh, do you like such manners? John seems to me like an old-fashioned dancing-master.'

Perhaps the origins of this difference between brother and sister can be traced in an unpublished correspondence which covers the period of 1790 to 1803 in which we find a series of letters written to Sarah Stoddart by her father, the naval lieutenant, by Sarah, her mother, and by John, her brother. The papers exist amongst those of the Pinney family and they are clearly there because of John Stoddart's friendship with John Frederick Pinney, one of the young men who arranged for Wordsworth to go to the Pinney House at Racedown with Dorothy in 1795. The papers were obviously left with Pinney when Sarah and her brother went to Malta in 1803, the year before Coleridge was to travel there, and they were not recovered when Stoddart returned to England in 1807. In those letters, Sarah all too frequently is a target for everyone else's advice. It is certainly the considered view of her relatives that, as a young lady lacking a fortune, she was in need of a husband and, preferably, a wealthy one.

What is clear about all the Stoddarts is that they lived in a world that they wished to escape from. They didn't like their poverty. And what was worse for John's father was that he did not like his work in the Navy at all. He felt ill done to, and perhaps the warmest side of his relation with his son John was based on his fond hope that John, with his connections (which his talents had given him), would be able to improve their financial situation. The father's origins appear to be in Northumberland. John in 1794 visited some of his University friends in the North but also conscientiously accepted his father's request that he look for the family's ancestors. In Morpeth he could find only watchmakers with the name; in Alnwick he was encouraged by meeting a servant of the late vicar, a Mr William Stoddart; finally, at Eggingham he was more encouraged to believe that the family was descended from the vicar of that place, one Charles Stoddart. The father's main posting seems to have been at Poole Harbour on the south coast. He writes to his daughter on 22 February 1795 (the daughter is in one of two places - at home in Salisbury or in Poole, Dorset with some friends called the Parsons):

Having so suddenly, & unexpectedly ordered the Impress service at this port, I neither then, or since had a convenient opportunity of writing to you.

Almost two months later, on 12 April 1795, he writes again on the day before he had been "On Duty at Blandford to regulate some Men; to be raised there for the navy." It looks as if he is having to press men into war service. It is clear that he has little money. He had suggested to his wife that she should borrow money from one Garlick; when she tried to do this, she was refused. Mrs Stoddart's husband does not come across as heroic, for his response to this refusal is complacent:

I was in hope that he would have treated her better, but it was ever the way he treated me.

The lieutenant's hope was that his lot might be better for, on 27 June 1795, he reports that John had a letter from Shute Barrington, the Bishop of Durham and former Bishop of Salisbury, written to Lord Spencer. Lieutenant Stoddart's hope of getting into some promotion depended upon his appearance at the Admiralty, and it seems that the maliciousness of his superior, Captain Langhorn, prevented this. Lieutenant Stoddart's job was not entirely on shore, for on 12 July he has clearly been cruising in a tender for a whole week waiting for some ships expected from Newfoundland. The unfortunate Lieutenant reports the results of Bishop Barrington's efforts.

In Lord Spencer's answer to the Bishop, 'though he does not leave much room for hope I may obtain Promotion yet expresses, that he thinks I have some claim to Reward from Government, for my past Service; from whence your good brother infers something lucrative, at least, may be obtained.

The Lieutenant is overwhelmed with John's goodness to him and, as he points out fulsomely to Sarah herself,

The goodness, & Nobleness of his Mind does not stop here, at my Interest only neither at his own; you have a most incomparable Brother, my dear Sarah, & it is *your* Interest ultimately that he is pursuing with such Avidity that he is willing to promote that, even at the expense of his own: he is therefore invaluable to you, & you cannot Love & Esteem him too much.

But whatever similar plaudits brother John might receive from his father, the marriage market is the concern of Sarah's parents. When, on 14 October 1795, Lieutenant Stoddart returned home from Poole to Salisbury, he there discovered some of the details of a Mr Reed's courtship of his daughter Sarah: this, Mr Cooper, a Salisbury friend, seemed to favour. Even so, Sarah is also receiving the attentions of a Mr Warren. Her father congratulates Sarah on her discretion in handling this complicated situation, though he thinks it prudent to warn her -

... be careful my Dear Daughter, not to give encouragement to *any* Address: but refer it for the approbation to your friends.

In his worries about money he is horrified to learn that Sarah has spoken of expecting £800 on her marriage and more thereafter. This, he explains, is not possible. In a rather comical way, Sarah receives a letter from her brother John when it is clear that he has failed to negotiate a marriage with one of the suitors, Mr Warren. It appears that Sarah has been indignant, but John, who is a Godwinian, and therefore committed to reason rather than passion, sends her a letter which might well justify Lamb's description of Stoddart as "coldhearted". But "coldhearted" would be too violent, for the interesting thing about the letter is that a young man in 1795 of republican sympathies tries to pursue reason as a mode of conduct. The young philosopher is preaching rationality to his more passionate sister. John writes from Eton School where he is acting as a private tutor. Sarah, at this stage is about 20 years old.

My dear Sister

Eaton Octr 25th 1795

I did indeed desire that you should be made acquainted with the [outcome] of my conferences with Mr. Warren, both because I thought it best for the satisfaction & quiet of your own mind not to hear anything farther of his pretensions as a Lover since [it] may come to nothing -

& also because I thought you might probably misconceive some part of the Transaction - this you seem in fact to have done - for I see no reason for accusing Mr. Warren of so much deceit & meanness as you think him guilty of - he was perhaps at first rather more eager for the match, than a little consideration inclined him to be - but I do not think that at any time he wished to deceive you as to fortune, or to pretend to more disinterested motives than he really felt - he always acted under the dominion of Prudence, & I think from the first you might have seen that he was not so blindly partial to you as to sacrifice the Peace of his Family to such a Union - I own his whole conduct was not that of a Man of great refinement in Sensibility, but on the other hand, ask yourself whether your own feelings were not very similar? /2/ It appear'd that you met together on nearly the same grounds. Two young people liking each other's Person & disposition sufficiently to form an union, if that union should be justified by other circumstances of a favourable nature - indeed if there was any appearance of mercenary conduct it was rather on your side, as you seem'd at the same time to hold out encouragement to two different men - both of whom you could not of course prefer from disinterested motives - I say not this to find Fault with your conduct which upon the whole was perhaps justified by circumstances, but merely to show you with how little you entertain so strong a displeasure for what you seem to think an affront.

John's cold analysis, which has a semblance of rationality, must have not seem'd pleasant to his sister. He lectures her for her spirited anger:

I am sorry therefore that you should recur to what you call *Spirit* as a resource on this occasion - it is a bad principle - Everyone should weigh their duties & interests in impartial scales, and decide calmly according to their preponderances.

If Sarah got advice from her brother, she also got more practical advice from her mother. For instance, when Sarah was staying with the Rev. Mr Parson at Pulham near Sherbourne, Dorset, her mother sent her a draft letter which she might copy out and send to Mr Reed, a suitor who was older than herself. Mr Reed was a propertied gentleman who was much favoured by a Salisbury friend Mr Cooper. The letter is coy, outrageous with calculation and certainly has nothing to do with Sarah's own actual feelings. The orthography is very much Mrs Stoddart's. It is dated 20th September 1794.

Dear Sir -

I flatter myself you will not think me too presuming in addressing a few lines to express my happiness on hearing from my dear mother that you are so much recov'd of an indisposition, which gave me very sincere concern. I Joyfully congratulate you as well as the numerous Sharers of your bounty - and liberality - so kindly extended around you, the prayers and blessings of the poor are allways attendant on you, as well as those of your particular favourites and friends; among which it is with much pleasure I have long found my self much in this distinction - and drink your health and talk of you often, with my most dear and kind friends Mr & Mrs Parsons who lament they could not see you at Pulham as we hoped; I wish I could see you could once get together, because you are so good and so much alike in Benevolence and disposition, that I am sure you would love each other as well as I love you all. I must acknowledge myself obliged to you for many kind and very agreeable

attentions paid me by a much respected friend: in Short: (But keep this a secret) I long to make you a bit of a confidant: I know your love and delicasy for our sex so well that I should not think it a breach of prudence to trust you with my thoughts - I think it long till we can Chat together as usual - We spent a week at Weymouth very agreeable indeed - As I have not inform'd my dr Parents of writing to you because I have but rec'd the tidings of your recovery - I desire if you please to tell them I have wrote to congratulate you. Give my love and duty to them; my dr Mother lamented she was so long without seeing you - but I was glad My dr Father was so attentive and that you allways sent compts to my Mother by him. I assure you they have ben very anxious, as well as myself and so we ought for we have no other, so sincear a friend in Salisbury as you are: however we have been very luckey in a few Stirling Frinds, of the first and best Characters in the world - who has the will and power to promote our interest on many occasions - now don't say my little Sally has tired me with her long letter, for I assure you I take much pleasure in writing to you and telling you how sensible I am of the good will you bear me. My dear Mr & Mrs Parsons send their best respects and invitations as soon as you can embrace them - as for me it is needless to say how much I am (my Valued friend)

Your Respectfull and affectionate
Humble Servant
S: Stoddart

A week later, 26 September 1794, her father writes to tell her of a long conversation with Mr Reed at Weymouth:

I took every opportunity to bring forward a conversation to speak in praise of your Amiable disposition, & good qualities fitted to make a man happy, who was fond of a Domestic, life; which, I urge, few Ladies of the present times were calculated for: at another time, when talking of his Age, I observed to him, that from the care which had been taken of his Health, he was now full as young in Constitution, as many who by fast living, were more than a dozen years younger in age.

But by the end of the year this romance had come to nothing. Her mother comforts her:

I am glad my dear Girl is quit easy on a certain account - which had it taken place - I really believe would have rendered her very unhappy - There was but one temptation and that my love is beneath your Notice - as without any disagreeable encumbrance yr dear father will provide you with a gentile Independence - especially as Stod is so well off think of the Horror of being tied to a splenetic old man, buried alive in the Prime of your life and without a possibility of redress. Doubtful, Suspicious, & never to be convinced of yr Affections Horrid!

A letter early in January 1795 dismisses Mr Reed even further:

As to Clod - he is fit only to cultivate his dirty Acres - the mind of one very dear to me is above his comprehension - and I hope to see it one day in more accomplished hands it may possibly be in yr dr Brother's power to bring you forward to all our credit & comfort

Having been through such courtships as this, based on prudence and money, it is perhaps not surprising that Sarah a year later should have branched out on her own and written to one of John's student friends John Barwis of Queen's College, whose home was at Devizes, Wiltshire. He begins his reply

by noting that he "had the audacity to write you an answer for aught I know by the *prudish* part of mankind might be accounted a higher crime and misdemeanour against the sovereign authority of etiquette". Barwis goes into a highly verbose discussion about the disadvantage "from not being permitted to correspond with each other in a friendly manner; not without an attachment is publically declared and approved; or a near degree of relationship subsist between them"; he claims he is a man of reason and declares "hostility to so ridiculous an opinion". Barwis writes a kind of journal letter which, he says, is really in response to hers:

You have told me of your adventure since you left Salisbury. And in return you shall hear some of mine.

One of our losses is that Sarah's letters seem largely to have disappeared, so it is of some interest to know how well she wrote and what kind of letter she wrote. What is evident is that Barwis found her lively, and writes several letters of an intelligent but not intellectual kind. But she pleasurably welcomed the more playful witty letters of her new friend; she was all too used to learned letters, for it was John who, in his earliest letters, while at Oxford and immediately after, showed off to Sarah in his accomplishments in conchology, poetry, antiquities, French.

John also had an opportunity to be clever on the public stage while at Oxford. To his parents' pleasure Stoddart was involved with a Society named "Society for Scientific and Literary Disquisition" - later it took the name "The Lunaticks", a term which, of course, was also applied to the celebrated Scientific Society which had such members as Priestley and Watt. This undergraduate society was of less august nature, but imitation was clearly in mind. Thomas Frognall Dibdin (*Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, p.94 ff) wrote:

It comprehended a debate and an essay, to be prepared by each member in succession, studiously avoiding, in both, all topics of religious and political controversy.

It had originally been hoped to make the Society a public one, but the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Willis (Vice-Chancellor 1792-1796), surprised the founders by interdicting "your meeting in the manner proposed". Dibdin declared that Cyril Johnson, Dean of Christchurch, was "somewhat prone to consider innovation and revolution as synonymous", and he had been behind the Vice-Chancellor's intervention. Dibdin explains that the fears on the part of the College authorities were on account of the recent publication of Godwin's *Political Justice*. This at least establishes that the date of the Society's founding was 1793 (15 February). From Stoddart's correspondence it looks as if he has withdrawn from the Society by the end of November 1793, when his only connection is reduced to that of "extra-member". Though Stoddart was an effective speaker, for Dibdin reports:

Taking the art of speaking and the composition of an essay, together, I think Mr. (now Sir John) Stoddart of Christchurch beat us all. He was always upon his legs, a fearless opponent; and in the use of a pen, the most unpremeditatedly successful.

Despite the prohibition of political discussions, one suspects that Godwin's book was making its impact. Dibdin declares:

Nor can it be denied that, in common with many other inquiring spirits, some of the members of our proposed club were a little imbued with the principles of Mr. Godwin's book.

It is this Literary Society and its being founded amid secular and political controversy which gives us a context for the most dramatic event in Stoddart's life, an event which parallels the distresses and drama suffered by Robert Allen. All the reports of John until early 1796 in the letters of his parents are full of approbation and glowing pride. There is no letter that gives a dénouement of the quarrel with the Bishop. The clearest statement of what happened comes in a scurrilous fashion in a satirical account of Dr Slop, *alias* Stoddart himself, the satire published in 1821 by William Hone. By that time, Stoddart had become famous as, first, the irritable editor of *The Times*, and thereafter the founding editor of *The New Times*. Stoddart was an outrageous supporter of the Government of Lord Liverpool, and certainly was not a favourite in radical circles. But in 1796, it was not so much Stoddart's politics that got him into difficulty with his patron the Bishop; as for Allen, it was the questions of religious truth which were the sticking-point. Nevertheless, Godwinian political ideas were affecting Stoddart, and these were to emerge in letters (and quarrelsome letters they are) from John to his sister. His separation from the Bishop meant that he no longer had an income; and no longer was his father willing to correspond with him. Stoddart had to leave Eton and live in London. He had to train to become a lawyer, to earn his living: he moved in with Basil Montagu. Indeed, it was at this time that he witnessed documents which were signed by Wordsworth and Montagu in 1796.

What Hone says is that Stoddart did not keep the patronage of the Bishop of Durham because he refused to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles. Hone puts it cheekily, "he became interested in Mary Wollstonecraft and then in Godwin".

Stoddart practised the doctrine of *all things in common*, and prevailed on a young man who had imbibed some of his notions, to aid him in providing its advantages. In an attic chamber in a temple, they formed a *community of goods* - lived on short commons, and waited on each other.

The friend involved here must have been Basil Montagu. Stoddart writes on 15 June 1796 from his new premises at Lincoln's Inn. He begins his letter:

Your letter, my dear Sister, gave me much pleasure by the proof of kindness and Friendship which is exhibited, though in regard to the sentiments relative to my late & present situation it by no means meets my own opinions - the kindness of the Bishop to myself in particular, & still more his general liberality of his principles endear him much to me; but I think it is the mark of the *weakest* mind to place one's whole independence on the opinions of others, however distinguished by rank or abilities -

Stoddart is, of course, no longer writing to his parents himself; he is writing through Sarah to them. Stoddart asks Sarah to do her best to remove the remaining anxieties that the parents might have held. In a postscript to the letter, Stoddart adds:

P.S. It will perhaps give you an additional pleasure to hear that I am with my Friend Basil Montagu one of the best of human Beings, whose house is my house, & whose assistance is always at my service.

When he writes on 29 June, he replies to a problem that Sarah has raised:

You think my Independence must be affected by being with my Friend Montagu, and indeed it is too general an error even among very good persons that they never confer favours without expecting a return - This

is by no means the case with Mr Montagu, and if I had not been convinced that his offers were those of pure disinterested friendship I should never have accepted them - whether it will ever be in my power to make him any return I know never enter'd his Mind, but you are wrong in supposing it impossible as I have already had an opportunity of recommending him a Law Pupil by whom he will gain one hundred guineas - But these things are such as Men acting upon true principles of Benevolence will do, without any view to the mercantile consideration of *sending off* one good turn against another, which is the pretty miserable morality of the world in general - You are equally wrong (tho' the wish was certainly a friendly one) in wishing to see me in the *first class* of my future Profession

He then turns energetically to deal with his parents and their misguided ambitions for him.

But if you or my Parents have set your minds on seeing me in a Judge's Wig, I tell you beforehand you will certainly be disappointed - I mean to live as an honest Man and I hope in some degree as a wise one, which I believe may be done in the profession of the Law if a Man acts with great caution & moderation, but not if he gets into the bustle & chicanery of extensive practice - to prove to you that Money is not my only object, I was yesterday offer'd a strong recommendation (& which would probably have succeeded) to a place of three hundred £ a year, but which from the nature of it, I at once rejected.

John is having to defend himself against Sarah's attack on behalf of the family:

The remaining topic of your letter, relating to myself is "the Expectations which you have cherished with regard to the Bishop". But as I have discuss'd the subject before, I shall only add that I feel a satisfaction in my own mind on being freed from that dependence, and that I think it both foolish and unjust to rely upon another Person's Patronage rather than on one's own Exertions - What relates to the health of yourself & my dear Mother I am truly sorry to hear, but hope a short time will recover you both.

There is no sweetness at the end of John's letter;

I know nothing either of Mr. Feltham or his sister, nor have I time to enquire for them - Indeed this long letter is stolen from literary business of some importance

There is after this no letter for three months between Sarah and her brother; on October 8th 1796 he writes:

My dearest Sister - I delay not a moment to answer your letter - I have been in expectation of one day after day from you or my dear mother & your silence was much more mysterious than mine could possible be... Why have I so long neglected you?

The answer was that he had been trying, without success, to get his version of Schiller's *Fiesco* performed and had been trying to see the manager of the theatre. He had been so busy that he had not travelled with Montagu to the Lake District, nor with Wyatt (son of the architect whom Barrington had permitted to "improve" Salisbury Cathedral) into Wiltshire.

What one notices in Stoddart's letters is that he does not mention his father in any affectionate or specific terms. It is clear that Sarah has been

telling him about their mother's ill health, and to this John replies:

For my own part Living as I shall probably for some time at a distance from my parents I shall not be able to show them those attentions which I could wish, but I shall not cease to think of them with the sincerest affection - Above all things caution my dear Mother to give no ear to those petty calumnies which you say are circulated concerning me - they are infinitely beneath her notice & it would give me pain to suppose her affected by them - if there is anything which I cannot bear with patience, it is that the malice & folly of such insignificant beings as the retailers of Scandal should be able to hurt a sensible Breast - I beg, if I should come down, as I intend to do in two or three weeks, that these idle stories may not be a subject of conversation - They must be ever disagreeable, I should be sorry that they should break in upon the harmony & happiness which I promise myself -

What John is also able to clarify is that Allen had got his appointment, presumably as a medical officer in Portugal; and that Montagu was thinking of sharing his chambers with "an eminent counselor". A letter of early 1797 (17 January is the date of the stamp) indicates that John did not go home over the Christmas vacation:

I am sorry to observe in my dear Sister's letter more of Anger than of reason - when opportunity seemed to present itself for my paying a visit to my Parents, I joyfully embraced it, because I thought such a visit would be a subject of mutual pleasure - But I thought at the same time that both my Parents & myself looked on it as a matter not of Necessity but of Convenience, & that we of course would make it give way to anything more immediately urgent - convinced as my dear Mother must be of my affection for her, it would be absurd to make this visit a criterion of it.

It seems that John's Godwinian philosophy had been sorely tried by Sarah's letter to him:

There is one thing in your letter which I own from its absurdity & from the frequent repetition of so frivolous an argument almost makes me lose what small share of philosophy I possess - I mean your recurrence to the conversation & sentiments of the People of Salisbury - what are their opinions to me - or what are they to my mother? Does she not know that the same people who are so impertinently officious in offering advice & insinuating censure have no real friendship or benevolence in their hearts ... I believe there does not exist a person more patient than myself in hearing, not more ready in attending to that advice which appears to me to be dictated by *Reason* & Benevolence but I can only treat with the highest contempt that petty scandal which it seems the curse of country towns to deal in -

John's final defence involves his wish that he need not pay back at once £20 that is owing to his mother:

Such a demand on her part would I own seem to me more like the conduct of a *Creditor*, than of a *Friend* or a *Parent*.

Stoddart should be given credit for the incredible industry whereby he aimed to make a living as an author. Thus, after the translation of *Fiesco* in 1796, he translates a French text of Depaze - *The Five Men*; he then undertakes two volumes called: *The Secret History of the French Revolution*; and he also writes a novel called *The Orphan, A Romance*. From a letter in

1796 (3 April) to Barwis, we learn that novels were not a form of literature that Sarah at that stage approved of:

I highly approve of your opinion concerning the *general* character of Novels - they are commonly made up of a heap of fictitious absurdities, which awaken attention without affording instruction, and call forth our sensibilities and passions without reason or satisfaction...[Barwis defends the *Eloise* of Rousseau, the *Télémaque* of Fenelon, and the novels of Smollett, Fielding and Richardson.]

One suspects that Sarah would not praise John's fiction. It is not really until the end of 1797 that John and Sarah are on even footing again in their correspondence; and never again is the earlier enthusiastic, innocent admiration for each other present in the writing. Indeed, on 24 November, Stoddart makes an interesting criticism of Sarah which gives us some indication of the kind of person that Hazlitt was to marry. He says he wants her to be esteemed: "esteem'd & admired in every way".

You will easily understand that I allude to those minutiae of taste & conduct; which constitute elegance of manner & mental refinement. I know that you devote a portion to reading, & cultivate faculties perhaps more valuable than those generally attended to by your Women; but whilst I would have you pursue these studies still farther, I would not wish you to neglect whatever is truly agreeable in the manners & appearance of the most fashionable Women. If on the one hand Extravagance Dissipation & Taudriness are to be avoided, on the other hand we should equally abstain from coarseness, Rusticity & vulgarity. And so with respect to knowledge. If an affection of Learning & Sentimental Refinement are ridiculous, a total want of Cultivation is no less disagreeable.

When later in the letter he says "One would wish to see minds of the most real worth distinguished by the most captivating exterior", he speaks generally, but his finger seems to be pointing at her.

In dress for instance, everyone is pleas'd to see a simplicity & neatness, but there is a way of putting on the simplest garment which will make it sit with ease & give a graceful appearance to the whole frame: on the other hand the material of the dress may be plain & neat enough, & yet ill form or manner of adjustment may make the wearer look like a Dowdy. These slight hints I merely throw out for your imagination to work upon...

In 1798, when the figures of the Romantic period, Wordsworth and Coleridge were writing *Lyrical Ballads*, Stoddart really has not emerged into the front rank.

I may & perhaps shall by its means [that is, the law's means] support a certain degree of respectability in society, but what I want in particular I must endeavour to make up in other modes of knowledge. It is not in my nature to be wholly inattentive to any kind of information which falls in my way; hence my literary & scientific acquisitions such as they are.

He mentions that he has good communications to make to Wedgwood - this is undoubtedly Tom Wedgwood, who was to be the patron of both Coleridge and Godwin. He mentions the connections "I have form'd with foreign literati" and this obviously relates to his translations. Something of his radical touch is present in his writing here -

It must not be forgotten that the present Times are peculiarly adverse to any enterprise concerned with War or politics. The aspect of affairs is terrible to those engaged in the established System, a System which the more I contemplate its destructive tendencies the more I am pleased to be out of its vortex.

I have tried to establish that John Stoddart was, in some ways, a talented young man, struggling to free himself from his parental origins and trying to make his way in a more adventurous world than that in which he had been brought up. But we should perhaps move forward and watch John and his sister take a more public stage. There are two scenes to which I particularly want to draw your attention. The first shows how John Stoddart came into a close intimacy with both Wordsworth and Coleridge. There was, of course, in 1798, a tendency to withdraw from politics by many young men who had at first caught the revolutionary fever; Stoddart, like Godwin, was opposed to violent revolution; but there is clear evidence that he did hear Mackintosh's lectures in 1799, when he routed those who had an optimistic belief in progress. Hazlitt records the scene at Lincoln's Inn Hall:

He [Mackintosh] grew wanton with success. Dazzling others by the brilliancy of his acquirements, dazzled himself by the admiration they excited, he lost fear as well as prudence; dared everything, carried everything before him. The modern philosophy, counterscarp, halfworks, citadel, and all, fell without a blow, by "the whiff and winds of his fell doctrine" as if it had been a pack of cards. The volcano of the French Revolution was seen expiring in its own flames, like a bonfire made of straw: the principles of reform were scattered in all directions, like chaff before the keen northern blasts. He laid about him like one inspired; nothing could withstand his envenomed tooth.
(P P Howe, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, Vol.11, 98.)

It was to counteract such a mood of cynicism and despondency among these former radicals that made Coleridge in October 1799 urge Wordsworth to write a great philosophical poem.

Stoddart moved more confidently into literary circles, both in England and Scotland. His touring of the length of Britain brought him into the Lakes and to the fireside of both Wordsworth and Coleridge. His first visit was in April 1800, when Coleridge had just arrived, to see, as Lamb put it, his god Wordsworth. There, Stoddart, a fellow translator of Schiller, found Coleridge at work on his version of *Wallenstein*. It was not until October that he was able to make a visit of some length. He was then welcomed at Grasmere and at Keswick as an established friend. He reached Grasmere on 22nd October, the next day went off with Coleridge to Keswick, and for a week we see that Coleridge's notebook is an absolute blank. Despite the fact that the poets are trying to finish the *Lyrical Ballads*, it appears that Stoddart stopped their work completely. Dorothy records, 30 October:

Wm. talked all day, and almost all night, with Stoddart. Mrs. and Miss Lloyd called in the morning. I walked with them to Tail End... W. and S. in the house all day.

Well, such excesses had consequences, for the next day's entry reads:

W. and S. did not rise till one o'clock. W. very sick and very ill.

Dorothy notes on 1 November: "Talk in the evening"; and on 3 November: "Wm. and Stoddart still talking".

Stoddart had a reputation as a talker, as T F Dibdin said of the Lunatick Society at Oxford:

Taking the art of speaking and the composition of an essay, together, I think Mr. (now Sir John) Stoddart of Christchurch beat us all.

And Wordsworth was no slouch in talking: John Stuart Mill told John Sterling he was "the best talker I ever heard (and I have heard several first-rate ones)". This visit to the pastoral world profoundly affected Stoddart and there is no doubt that Stoddart and Wordsworth and Coleridge had been talking about the kind of principles that affected their writing of poetry in the *Lyrical Ballads*. In a letter to Sarah, dated 14 November 1800, from Lincoln's Inn Stoddart writes:

But I assure I could with pleasure retire to a cottage among the sublime scenes which I have lately visited, & passed my time with a domestic partner as happily & perhaps as usefully as I possibly can in my station however exalted.

It is clear from Wordsworth's letters that Stoddart was not a naturally enthusiastic admirer of his poetry. Some of the more ludicrous responses to his poems are attributed to Stoddart; even so, it is Wordsworth who enlists the support of Stoddart to write what is in fact the only review of the magnificent second volume of *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 (published January 1801). Stoddart writes to Coleridge, 1 January 1801:

I find here a letter from Wordsworth recommending me to enlist in the Monthly Fencibles but little know I of their soft phrase.

It seems clear that Wordsworth and Coleridge engendered the review from Stoddart, and in some ways the review is one of those statements which is partly ghosted by the authors of the poems themselves. None of Stoddart's own opinions, which are recorded by Wordsworth, are present in the review: for instance, on 'The Idiot Boy' Stoddart was "thrown into a *fit* almost with disgust, cannot *possibly* read it".

Though Stoddart is to write warmly about *Lyrical Ballads* in the *British Critic* for February 1801, it seems that his particular wish was to benefit from the conversation of his new friends; in this, he resembles Southey, who pursued Coleridge for the intellectual advantages his society would give him. Stoddart is engaged in writing an essay on taste which he is going to insert in his *Remarks...on Scotland*, 2 Vols. 1801. Stoddart, even in his general commentary on Scotland, puffs up his prose with thinned versions of Wordsworth's ideas:

Poetry is not an art, to whose highest cultivation cities are generally favourable. Society, and the faces of men supply it, indeed, with the richest materials of imagination and feeling; but solitude, silence, and self-feeding meditation, are requisite to perfect its energies.

Coleridge did find Stoddart agreeable. In 1801, 8 July, he wrote to Godwin:

And now for "my late acquisition of *friends*" - Aye - *friends!* - Stoddart indeed if he were nearer to us and more among us, I should really number among such - he is a man of uncorrupted integrity & of a very, very kind heart - his talents are respectable - and his information such, that while he was with me I derived much instruction from his conversation.

But two years later, perhaps Stoddart has not grown in the Lake poets' affections. Southey then records that Coleridge had told him that Stoddart

was perhaps the cause of the attacks that were made upon the Lake Poets by the Edinburgh Reviewers:

Coleridge thinks that the reason why those Scotchmen hate him as they evidently do, is because Stoddart once went to Edinburgh and fell in company with these men and his praise - God knows would be motive enough to make honest men *a priori* dislike the object. Exempli gratia if you and I had never seen or known Lamb or Coleridge and heard this unhappy Spider-brained metaphysician speak of them as the greatest men in the world and his most particular friends - should we not be apt to think that Birds of a feather flock together, and put down his friends for a couple of Jack Daws?

(Southey to Rickman, *New Letters of Robert Southey*, 1965, I, 316)

When Coleridge went to Malta his arrival was marked by contrasting behaviour between Sarah and John Stoddart. When the 'Speedwell' dropped anchor off Valetta, Malta, at 4 o'clock, Coleridge went on shore. He recorded in his note book:

It was, however, six o'clock before I came to Stoddart's - neither he nor Mrs S. at home / the sister was, but not knowing it to be me, did not come down / - In above an hour she came down / O ipsissima! - would not let the Servant after two hours & a half go to the next street to inform St. of my arrival /. *No! there was no occasion!!*

Sarah writes to the Lambs, describing the arrival of Coleridge for which Mary thanks her. That Coleridge actually found her welcome was quite cold and that Sarah was an uneasy kind of person is not known to Mary. Still, Mary does detect that John Stoddart in writing to Charles and herself does not mention Coleridge at all; she rightly suspects that there is a quarrel between them. In his note book Coleridge says that Stoddart is one of those insects of criticism who crawls over a page taking one letter at a time but cannot take in the whole work. When he returned from Malta, Coleridge found that Stoddart had got all his papers and would not let him have them until he paid certain expenses owing to him.

It is through the letters of the Lambs we return to Sarah herself and her quest for love. Remember how charmingly Mary Lamb talks of Sarah's handling of her suitors.

I feel that I have too lightly passed over the interesting account you sent me of your late disappointment. It was not because I did not feel & comple[te]ly enter into the affair with you. You surprize & please me with the frank & generous way in which you deal with your Lovers, taking refusal from their cold prudential, hearts with a better grace, & more good humour than other women accept a suitor's service. - Continue this open artless conduct & I trust you will at last find some man who has sense enough to know you are well worth risking a probable life of poverty for.

It is from Mary in November 1807 that we hear of one who has sufficient poverty to be a suitable candidate for Sarah's hand:

And pray, by all means, preserve the said letter, that I may one day have the pleasure of seeing how Mr Hazlitt treats of love.

Amongst William Hazlitt's letters there is preserved that one amazing letter to Sarah Stoddart,

Above a week has passed and I have received no letter - not one of those letters "in which I live, or have no life at all." What is become of you? Are you married, hearing that I was dead (for so it has been reported) or are you gone into a nunnery? Or are you fallen in love with some of the amorous heroes in Boccaccio? Which of them is it? Is it with Chynon who was transformed from a clown into a lover, and learned to spell, by the force of beauty?

Sarah had Mary as a confidential correspondent; she also wanted her as a bridesmaid. Mary writes wonderfully about this:

I shall have no present to give you on your marriage, nor do I expect I shall be rich enough to give anything to baby at the first christening but at the second, or third child's I hope to have a coral or so to spare out of my own earnings. Do not ask me to be Godmother for I have an objection to that - but there is I believe no serious duties attached to a bride's maid, therefore I come with a willing mind, bringing nothing with me but many wishes, and not a few hopes, an[d] a very little of fears - of happy years to come.

The irony of Mary's wish was that the Hazlitts' marriage was marred by many miscarriages; two children died and only one, William, survived. There is, in the British Museum, a pathetic paper on which Sarah has recorded all these sad losses. The Lambs did finally go to Salisbury where the Hazlitts were living and finally they brought those two worlds together.

On 7 November 1809 Mary writes memorably about Winterslow, a house which Sarah had inherited from her father and where for a moment real happiness was shared by herself and Charles and by William and Sarah Hazlitt.

My dear Sarah

The dear quiet lazy delicious month we spent with you is remembered by me with such regret that I feel quite discontented & Winterslow-sick. I assure you I never passed such a pleasant time in the country in my life, both in the house & out of it - the card playing quarrels, and a few gaspings for breath, after your swift footsteps up the high hills excepted, and those drawbacks are not unpleasant in the recollection. - We have got some salt butter, to make our toast seem like yours, and we have tried to eat meat suppers, but that would not do for we left our appetites behind us, and the dry loaf, which offended you, now comes in at night unaccompanied, but sorry am I to add, it is soon followed by the pipe and the gin bottle. - We smoked the very first night of our arrival.

NOTE: I wish to thank Mrs Hestor Marsden-Smedley for permission to quote from the Pinney Papers now at Bristol University; and to thank the Trustees of Dove Cottage for permission to quote the letter of Allen to Southey.

Coleridge's letters are from the edition edited by E L Griggs, Charles and Mary Lamb's from that edited by E W Marris Jr, and Hazlitt's from H W Sikes, W H Bonner, and G Lahey.

BOOK REVIEW

David Cecil: *A Portrait of Charles Lamb*. Constable 1983. pp.192. Illustrated £9.95

Lord David Cecil's name has been known to the British reading public for many years as the author of studies of Cowper, Jane Austen, Lord Melbourne and other eighteenth and early nineteenth-century figures. Of late years he has also been a familiar performer on television. But more relevant to our purpose now is the fact that for eleven years, from 1944 to 1955, he was President of the Charles Lamb Society. The present work, therefore, may be seen as the fruit of a long concern with Lamb's life and work and will be warmly welcomed by members.

Lord David Cecil's method is still that of his earlier biographies: he constructs a narrative free from footnotes and page references; assimilating material and reaching conclusions in his own mind without feeling that he need provide chapter and verse for what he is doing. He has always written easily, and such passages as his appreciation of Lamb's essay-writing style (pp. 7-8) are precise, light and elegant. But along with the lightness of touch, unfortunately, there still goes an equally characteristic tendency to slip into errors of fact and dating. At a first reading one is almost too charmed to take notice, but at a second reading they begin to stand forth. So far I have noticed the misspelling of Mathew Feilde's name (p.28) and that of Joseph Paice (p.32), the wrong dating of Samuel Salt's and grandmother Mary Field's deaths (p.34), the wrong naming of James White as Thomas White (pp.46 and 109), the wrong dating of the first number of the *London Magazine*, which began in January 1820, not December (p.148), the wrong assertion that the Garrick Plays were pieces performed in by David Garrick, instead of texts collected by him (p.160) and the recurrent spelling (and indexing) of *John Woodvil* as *John Woodville*. Among the illustrations Pickersgill's portrait of Wordsworth (p.183) is described as showing him at fifty two, whereas plain arithmetic tells us that he must have been ten years older than that in 1832, when it was painted.

The worst of finding smallish errors like these is that one inevitably begins to suspect that further readings would reveal more: after all, they all involve easily-checked matters (more easy to check than ever now that Claude A Prance's *Companion to Charles Lamb* is available). But I forbear to chase after further mistakes, since an indication of their nature through a few examples will probably serve to alert members of the Lamb Society to treat the text with care and to give a word of warning to friends who buy the book, or to whom they are thinking of giving it.

For the book would, in spite of shortcomings, make a delightful introduction for people who know little of Lamb but seem likely to be sympathetic. It is charmingly written, well produced, reasonably priced and very handsomely illustrated. The choice of contemporary drawings and prints (often in excellent colour) by John Hadfield is, indeed, exceptionally good. Nor is Lord David Cecil's interpretation of Lamb's personality without interest.

It is, no doubt, an old-fashioned reading, and one that shows little obvious awareness of recent biographical or scholarly writing. It is in the Lucas vein: softening Lamb's character, emphasising its feminine aspects and ignoring his interest in political concerns and his passion for truth, and fairness almost totally. But it does make something positive of Lamb's relationship with Mary - indeed Lord David Cecil has clearly been struck by the fact that after Lamb's death Mary managed not too badly, despite the effects of age and mental instability. 'Perhaps' he concludes,

'though neither had been aware of it, he had, in fact, always needed her more than she needed him.' An unexpected final sentence, but one worth considering.

Much is missing in Lord David Cecil's study, much softened and smoothed to achieve the readability and pleasantness of the text. But there is, none the less, much to provoke thought and much to give pleasure. And the illustrations really are outstandingly good. An obvious Christmas present for members of the Society to give their less knowledgeable friends, then: but with just a word of warning about slips of fact and dating.

Bill Ruddick

ELIAN NOTES AND QUERIES

Many thanks to kind members who provided the answers to most of our queries, particularly to Dr Chrystal Tilney, Miss Isabel Westcott, Mrs Ledwith and our Hon. Secretary for question 2, Mr Bill Ruddick for question 3 and Mr David Wickham's further researches for question 4. The answers are as follows:

- 2 Judges XI, 29-40, the story of Jephthah's daughter.
- 3 Macaulay's review of *The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanburgh and Farquhar* by Leigh Hunt in the *Edinburgh* for Jan. 1841. Reprinted as 'Leigh Hunt' in *Critical and Historical Essays*, Vol.2 (page 416 of the Everyman Edition).
- 4 John Keats gives the answer in his 1971 biography *You Might as Well Live - the Life and Times of Dorothy Parker*, in Penguin. Dorothy Parker wrote a play, which even she afterwards found rather silly and lacking in plot, about the life of Charles and Mary Lamb. In 1949 it opened in Dallas, Texas, as *The Coast of Illyria* in London as *Strange Calamity*, and in Edinburgh as *At Last*, and closed rapidly in all three. (What a disappointment! Ed.)

NOTES

WORDSWORTH CONFERENCES AT DOVE COTTAGE

Members may be interested in the Winter Conference at Grasmere between 19th and 24th February 1984. Accommodation is at the Prince of Wales Hotel, inclusive price for this four day (five night) course is £110, which covers expeditions as well as board and lectures. This course is not designed for the specialist, but for general readers and lovers of the Lakes. One of the days this year will be devoted to "Charles Lamb and Thomas de Quincey - Friends and Critics".

The Summer Conference will be held as usual during the first fortnight in August, from July 28 to August 11, with an additional three-day "Colloquium" on *The Prelude* for those who wish to stay on for it to August 14. Some lectures and papers on Lamb and Coleridge at the Summer Conference are expected, to mark the 150th anniversary.

All particulars of both Conferences can be obtained by addressing to the Winter or Summer Wordsworth Conference, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria LA22 9SG.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

SATURDAY 11th February 1984 - 12.30 for 1.15 pm

1984 is the 150th Anniversary of Charles Lamb's death, and so our Birthday Celebration Luncheon will have an especial significance. We look forward to enjoying the company of fellow-Elia's and the excellent cuisine at FREDERICK'S, Camden Passage, N1. Camden Passage is two minutes' walk from Angel (Northern Line) Station, and many omnibus routes; parking (meters up to 1.30 pm) in the Duncan Terrace area.

RICHARD WORDSWORTH, who delighted many audiences with his evocation of Charles Lamb in his one-man show *The Frolic and the Gentle* will be our Guest of Honour.

Tickets from Madeline Huxstep, 1a Royston Road, Richmond, TW10 6LT (01-940 3837) at £12 each. This includes three-course meal, coffee, and wine or soft drinks. (Pre-prandial drinks and port/liqueurs are *not* included.) Please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your application and, as most seating will be at tables for 8/10, indicate your preferred table companions.

(Those applying for Luncheon tickets may include their Annual Subscriptions and Donations on the same cheque. Cheques for subscriptions *only* should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer.)

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		(double)	£9.00
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Cheques should be made payable to the Charles Lamb Society and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, R Houston Wallace, Flat 3, 47 Sussex Square, Brighton, Sussex BN2 1GE unless they are included when paying for Luncheon tickets.

DONATIONS

Can you add to your subscription by making a donation to

- 1 the repair of books in the CLS Library, housed in the Guildhall Library. As an example, among books recently repaired: *Essays of Elia*, Second series, 1835. Rebacked, lettered and finished with gold bands. Old sides cleaned and corners repaired. Bookplate preserved. £9.50. So, £9 or £10 donation from YOU can help us to ensure the continued life and usefulness of the CLS Library.
- 2 the upkeep of Buttonsnap - Charles Lamb's only freehold property. Although the Trustees have now secured from the Rent Officer a "fair rent" of £520 pa, the thatch is giving cause for concern which, despite the benefit of grants/loans, will still involve considerable expenditure.

When writing out your cheque for your subscription, please add to it as much as you can afford as a donation towards *either* or *both* of these continuing commitments.