

DISSERTATION

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A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
TO
CHARLES LAMB.

TOGETHER WITH A SPECIAL STUDY OF HIS
RELATION

TO

ROBERT BURTON,

THE AUTHOR OF THE "ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY".

INAUGURAL-DISSERTATION

ZUR

ERLANGUNG DER PHILOSOPHISCHEN DOKTORWÜRDE

AN DER

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG.

VORGELEGT VON

BERNARD LAKE,

LECTOR PUBLICUS DER ENGLISCHEN SPRACHE UND ASSISTENT AM
ENGLISCHEN SEMINAR AN DER UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG.



1903.

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To my Mother.

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Preface.

The first two main divisions of this little work are mainly of service in clearing the ground for the last, which is an attempt at estimating the influence Burton had on Lamb. This will perhaps explain the disparity between the various parts.

I should like in this place most gratefully to acknowledge the services which have been rendered me by Professor Wülker of Leipzig and by Professor Herford late of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and the kindness which was shown by many of the professorial staff at Leipzig to their foreign Colleague during his stay amongst them.

Lastly no student of Lamb can forbear to recall with gratitude the name of Canon Ainger, who has done so much for the author he knows so well.

Paris, October 1903.

B. L.



Lamb. — General Introduction.

§ 1. Life.

Charles Lamb was born at Crown Office Row in the Temple, London, on the 10th February 1775. His father John Lamb came from Lincolnshire and performed the duties of "clerk, good servant, dresser, friend, "flapper", guide, stop-watch, auditor and treasurer" — as Lamb expressed it — to Samuel Salt, one of the Benchers of the Inner Temple. John was a genial cheerful man, possessing a "fine turn for humorous poetry" and doubtless from him Lamb inherited the gift of writing humorous verse. His mother, Elizabeth Field, was the daughter of the housekeeper of Blakesware (the Blakesmoor in Hertfordshire of the essays), the county residence of the family Plumer. Charles Lamb was in the habit of spending his holidays there with his grandmother, and the old rambling mansion, with its "Marble Hall" and the "Twelve Caesars", its pictures, tapestries and winding ways made an impression on his mind, which never faded in after life. Lamb's family was poor and they generally appear to have been in money difficulties, despite the kindness of Samuel Salt, who left them a legacy of £ 500 at his death. John Lamb had several children, but only three, John, Mary and Charles, survived their infancy. Charles was a nervous, imaginative child — he says in his essay on "Witches and other Night Fears". "I was dreadfully alive to nervous terrors. The nighttime, solitude and the dark were my hell. The sufferings I endured in this Nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow. I suppose, from the fourth to the seventh or eighth of my life — so far as memory serves in things

so long ago — without an assurance, which realized its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre." This excitability came from the father's side, as there had been insanity in his family, and we shall see what terrible consequences were the result of it later on. The essay "The old Benchers of the Inner Temple" supply us with an account of his child life amidst the "reverend walls" of that famous old building. These ancient surroundings had much to do with the moulding of Lamb's taste for things medioeval. "I was born and passed the first seven years of my life, in the Temple. Its church, its hall, its gardens, its fountain, its river, I had almost said — for in those young years, what was this king of rivers to me but a stream that watered our pleasant places? — these are of my oldest recollections." And he goes on to describe his childish pastimes there, and his recollections of the Benchers, who daily marched with awe inspiring tread up and down the ancient terrace. At the age of seven he was sent by a certain Timothy Yeates to Christ's Hospital, where he remained till 1789. We have three main sources for our knowledge of his life there and of the state of this old established school at that time. One account was written by Lamb, another by Leigh Hunt in his "Autobiography" and a third by Coleridge in his "Biographia Litteraria". Lamb's contributions were "Recollections of Christ's Hospital", published in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1813, and his essay "Christ's Hospital, Five and Thirty years ago", published under the nom de plume of Elia in the "London Magazine" 1820. The first is a pleasant picture of the life of the school, the second presents its reverse side and is supposed to be written by Lamb's old school friend Coleridge. An old schoolfellow, C. V. Le Price, wrote the following letter to Talfourd, the first editor of Lamb's Works, in which he gives the following description of Charles. "I never heard his name mentioned without the addition of Charles, although there was no other boy of the name of Lamb, the addition was unnecessary; but there was an implied kindness in it, and it was a proof that his gentle

manners excited that kindness. His delicate frame and his difficulty of utterance, which was increased by agitation, unfitted him for joining in any boisterous sport. The description which he gives in his "Recollections of Christ's Hospital", of the habits and feelings of the schoolboy, is a true one in general, but is more particularly a delineation of himself — the feelings were all in his own heart — the portrait was his own. 'While others were all fire and play, he stole along with the self-concentration of a young monk.' The school at that time was divided into two sections, the upper and lower, and these were under the control of two masters, the Rev James Boyer and the Rev Matthew Field. The first was a type of the severe classical master, who had an exaggerated idea of the importance of the rod. The second was an idle society gentleman, who left the boys to their own devices. Coleridge in the "Litt. Biog." has pronounced an enthusiastic eulogy on the merits of Boyer, and Canon Ainger rightly says "though Coleridge may have *read into* Boyer's teaching something that belonged rather to the learner than the teacher, we need not doubt how great were the young student's obligations to his master." Lamb, though never attaining to the rank of a "Grecian", or prefect, became a so called deputy Grecian, i. e. a member of the class directly below that of the Grecians, and thus had the benefit of Boyer's teaching. He had read, says Talfourd "Virgil, Sallust, Terence, selections from Lucian's Dialogues and Xenophon; and had evinced considerable skill in the niceties of Latin Composition both in prose and verse." In after life he wrote Latin letters to Coleridge, made epigrams for schoolboys, extracts from Milton's Latin works and translated Vincent Bourne's sonnets into English verse, which show him whave been no mean scholar in the language. Lamb would have liked to have gone to the University, and it was evident that he had ample talents for a literary career, but he had an impediment in his speech, which prevented him from holding any Christ's exhibition to the University, as such were only granted on the condition that the holder entered the Church. Further at this time the Lamb family were

desperately in need of money, and it became necessary for its youngest member to contribute something to the family fund. He gave up all thoughts of a University career in that spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion, which characterised his whole life.

The actual education that Charles received at Christ's Hospital set him in the way of writing a good style, and the atmosphere of the place was in accordance with his tastes and feelings. Christ's was an ancient and venerable foundation, which owed its initial existence to that "godly and royal child, King Edward the Sixth, the flower of the Tudor name — the young flower that was untimely cropped as it began to fill the land with its early odours — the boy-patron of boys", and though it was a charity school the boys were inspired by feelings of awe for its lengthy past. Lamb felt this in particular, and thus we see that from his first to his fourteenth year, he was continually in an atmosphere of medioevalism. He went from the School to the Temple and from the Temple to the School; on the one hand he was surrounded by relics of the ancient Templars, on the other he was in daily contact with sights and customs that had been retained in the school ever since the time of its founder. These haunts of ancient culture fostered his taste for all that was antique, and hence when he devoted himself to a study of the authors of the Elizabethan period, and the one following it, he felt that the air they had breathed, he had breathed, and that their ancient memorials were to him as household gods.

Another great factor in Lamb's life was his friendship with Coleridge. They were fellow-scholars, and even in their early days Coleridge "the inspired charity boy", as Lamb called him, had acquired a reputation for brilliancy of scholarship. Lamb was in all probability not very intimately acquainted with him at school, but the intercourse which began there ripened into a most remarkable literary friendship. Their relations at first were that of master to disciple — Lamb could not compare with his friend in point of learning or



in insight into metaphysics — but Coleridge soon discovered that his friend possessed critical faculties of a very high order. This resulted in Coleridge and his friend Southey sending their poems to Lamb for criticism and emendation. A large part of the early Lamb-Coleridge and Lamb-Southey correspondence deals with the minutiae of criticism. Lamb's own poems were included by Coleridge in his 1796 volume — but the severe mutual criticism in which both indulged caused an estrangement of a year, during Coleridge's visit to Germany; at his return the breach was healed, and their intimacy during a long series of years was never again broken.

On leaving Christ's Hospital Lamb went to the South Sea House and worked as a clerk under his brother John for three years, until by the aid of Samuel Salt he obtained a place in the offices of the East India Company, where he remained for the next 33 years at a salary, which rose from £ 70 to £ 700. We have little information concerning himself or his family during the next three years. No letters dating from this time are extant. The only important events of his office life routine were the visits of Coleridge to London during the Cambridge vacations. Their general rendez-vous was a public house in Southwark — the Salutation and the Cat — and Lamb in his dedication of his verse to Coleridge in 1818 says "Some of the sonnets . . . may happily awaken in you remembrances, which I should be very sorry should be ever totally extinct — the memory "of summer days and of delightful years" — even so far back as to those old suppers at our old ***¹⁾ Inn — when life was fresh and topics exhaustless, — and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty and kindness." There they talked for hours on poetry, philosophy and religion, but their natures were widely different. Coleridge looked forward with radiant vision to the future, to the Ideal, Lamb remained more closely bound to the real, he was not "rapt above the sky", yet he had a deeply religious nature,

¹⁾ Salutation and Cat.

which rarely came to the surface, more rarely indeed with the progress of the years. Again, Coleridge was entering upon a literary career with brilliant prospects before him, Lamb chained to the "desk's dull wood" used literature in part as a means of relief from the continuous contemplation of accounts and petty details.

Lamb's first letter to Coleridge dates from the year 1796, and relates that he had been confined in a madhouse at Hoxton for six weeks during the Christmas season of 1795. "My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that began this year and finished the last, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and dont bite any one. But mad I was! And many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume, if all was told. Coleridge! It may convince you of my regards for you, when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy." This more immediate cause was a young girl, whom Lamb addresses in his sonnets as "Anna" and the "fair hair'd maid", and in the essays as Alice or Alice W—n (Winterton) — her true name, as Canon Ainger has shown, was Ann Simmons. She lived in Hertfordshire at the village of Widsford, and Lamb refers to her in connection with this place in his essay "On Blakermoor in H—shire", and in a sonnet mentions the "green winding walks" where he roamed with his Anna. The circumstances of the affair are very obscure. Lamb probably met her, when paying visits whis grandmother Field; want of money and his tendency to insanity may have been the more remote causes of the parting, but the immediate cause was the family tragedy of 1796, for on September 26th his sister Mary, worn out by her struggles to earn money and by her constant attention to her bedridden mother, suddenly lost her reason, stabbed her mother to the heart and wounded her father in the head. She was removed to a madhouse and on Lamb devolved the care of his doting father and

aged Aunt. His brother John had never contributed much to the support of the family, being more engaged in "keeping the elder brother up in state" and in satisfying his artistic tastes than in looking after his parents. Thus the whole burden fell on Lamb's shoulders, and as his letters to Coleridge show, he was often sick at heart and almost ready to give up poetry altogether. In a sonnet to his sister, Charles says:

‘Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection; and would oft times lend
An ear to the desponding love sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee my sister and my friend.’

This ‘debt of love’ Lamb paid in full, for from henceforth he took sole charge of his sister, giving a guarantee to the authorities that she should remain under his care for the rest of her life. Mary Lamb was often subject to similar attacks, but luckily she could always recognize the premonitory symptoms, and could take the necessary measures. In his “miniature romance” *Rosamund*, Lamb has given us an idealised sketch of his Sister and of Anna, he has weaved such a romance around these two, as could only have come from a heart inspired by real affection. But he has not spared himself, for the hero of the tale suffers from the same fantastic morbidness as the author. After the shock of the catastrophe, the consciousness of the responsibility now resting upon him helped to keep his head and his nerves steady. But alas! this inherent disease found an outlet in his weakness for liquor. Only by the aid of stimulants could he relieve his solitude when Mary was gone. Indulgence in wine caused a temporary suspension of his nervousness in society, it unlocked his tongue and enabled him to give expression to those gems of criticism which otherwise would have been lost to his friends and to the world. He struggled all his life, though in vain, to free himself from the habit, but those who know his inner history

will hesitate before giving a harsh judgement on this failing in his character.

Lamb never married, but he fell in love with a young Quakeress in Pentonville, whose virtues he has celebrated in his poem "Hester Savory" 1803. She had married another and died six months after the wedding; Lamb in enclosing these memorial verses to his friend Manning says "I send you some verses I have made on the death of a young Quaker you have heard me speak of as being in love with for some years . . . *though I had never spoken to her in my life*".

Lamb's Biography, after this time, has little that is worthy of note in point of external detail. We learn of changes of residence at various periods. (Metre Court Buildings, Temple, 1800. — Temple No. 4, 1809. — Russell St. Covent Garden, 1817. — Colebrook Row, Islington, 1823. — Enfield, 1827. — Edmonton, 1833). These changes were rendered necessary on account of Mary Lamb's frequent illnesses, which had made them marked people; how great a grief this was to him may be judged from the following extract "My heart is quite sunk and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful; nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner marked." As the years went on her illnesses became more and more frequent, and the intervals of sanity were spent in looking forward to the next attack. In 1823 they tried housekeeping at Islington, instead of living in lodgings, but this proved too much for Mary's nerves, and finally they went to Edmonton, where she could be always under the care of people, experienced in such diseases. But there was another reason, and one almost as important, which made them in a manner birds of passage. Charles suffered from the inroads made on his time and money by visitors. We find this to be a constant complaint in his letters. To those who knew him well, he was a most attractive companion, but he had not the strength of will to deny friends his hospitality, when they came at unseasonable hours. He says he dreaded

their approach, but still more their departure. To Manning he writes "my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me." Late nights followed by heavy mornings is often the burden of his tale. "I am never C. L. but always C. L. & Co." They tried the plan of renting a room from 5—8 every evening, where he might read and think alone, but the absence of his sister and the enforced loneliness made him more miserable than the overabundance of company, so the idea was given up. His favourite "Popular Fallacy" was "that home is home, though it be never so homely", and he says "There is another home which we are constrained to deny to be one. It has a larder, which the home of the poor man wants; its fireside conveniences, of which the poor dream not. But with all this it is no home. It is — the house of a man that is infested with many visitors. May we be branded for the veriest churl, if we deny our heart to the many noble hearted friends that at times exchange their dwelling for our poor roof. It is not of guests that we complain, but of endless purposeless visitants; droppers-in as they are called".

Lamb had an especial fondness for men who had some twist in their character — and he gives, in his Preface to the Last Essays of Elia, expression to this thought. "He chose his companions for some individuality of character which they manifested. Hence not many men of science, and few professed literati were of his councils. They were for the most part persons of uncertain fortune. His intimados were, to confess a truth, a ragged regiment." Lamb however had many friends of standing and of genius, whose kindly sympathy was a key to the treasures of his mind. We have only to go through the list of his correspondents to find such names as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Haglitt, Southey, Manning — the Chinese traveller — Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, Henry Crabb Robinson, and Talfourd — men who represented some of the best thought of the day. The peculiarity about Lamb's correspondence — which is delightful to read for its quaintness and humour — is that he always found some particular

friend who, at certain periods, of his life was able to draw from him a series of brilliant letters. In his early years Coleridge inspires him most, and to him Lamb communicates all his sorrows and despair at the time of the tragedy at home. Then follows a healthy literary correspondence with the practical Southey, and after him comes Manning, Mathematical Tutor at Cambridge, and Chinese explorer. With Wordsworth Lamb maintained an affectionate though somewhat desultory correspondence for many years. In the early twenties, the Quaker poet, Bernard Barton was in close touch with him, and towards the end of his life he found a new friend in the person of Cary, the translator of Dante.

Talfourd in his Biography says that the happiest time of his life was his residence in the Temple from 1809—1817. His salary had risen so much as to put him out of the reach of poverty — the publication of the "Specimens" brought him into contact with a larger literary circle, and his house became a well known resort for men of talent. He held a kind of literary evening every Wednesday, his "ministers' reception" as he called it. Here he was at his best — his wit never so brilliant, his spirits never so exuberant, his nervousness never less apparent. The talk was general save when some great man came, such as Coleridge or Wordsworth, and then these held the circle charmed. Formality there was none — beef and beer were placed on the sideboards, cards on the table. How different was his conduct in surroundings that were strange or uncongenial to him. His nervousness and the impediment in his speech made themselves doubly felt — people thought, and perhaps not without reason, that he was a fool or a mad man. Carlyle and Moore were unlucky enough to meet him on such occasions and hence the severity of their judgements. In the Preface quoted above there is a remarkable self-analysis — one which has been substantiated by all his best friends in articles published after his death. — "Those who did not like him hated him; and some, who once liked him, afterwards became his bitterest haters. The truth is, he gave

himself too little concern what he uttered, and in whose presence. He observed neither time nor place, and would e'en out with what came uppermost. With the severe religionist he would pass for a free thinker; while the other faction set him down a bigot, or persuaded themselves that he belied their sentiments. Few understood him; and I am not quite certain that at all times he understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure irony. He sowed doubtful speeches, and reaped plain unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. . . . I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent and be suspected for an old fellow; till some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless, perhaps, if rightly taken), which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies. His conceptions rose kindlier than his utterance, and his happiest impromptus had the appearance of effort. He has been accused of trying to be witty, when in truth he was but struggling to give his poor thoughts articulation."

His life was diversified by excursions made during his annual holiday. He visited Coleridge and Wordsworth at the Lakes in 1802. — he went occasionally to Wiltshire and Hertfordshire, Margate and Brighton, and in 1812 even to Paris, but in general his sister's health would not allow of long journeys. Attacks of insanity were often brought on by the excitement of travel, and so they came to the conclusion that it was better to give them up altogether. Further, Lamb was a great lover of London — he was never very happy when away from it — he lived all his life in the metropolis and its suburbs, and even in the latter he feels he is too far away from the centre of life — in changing houses at Enfield in 1833 he makes the characteristic remark "forty two inches nearer London". He says in a letter to Manning

which reminds us in a way of Dicken's Sketches "Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens . . . noise of coaches, drowsy cry of watchmen at night . . . cries of 'Fire' and 'Stop Thief', old book stalls "Jeremy Taylors", Burtons on Melancholy "and Religio Medicis on every stall . . . for these may Keswick and her giant brood go hang". But again he writes, "Such an impression I have never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I ever can again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw etc I shall never forget ye, how ye lay about that night like an intrenchment . . . Oh! its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about." But with all this enthusiasm he remains a Londoner at heart, he often reminds Wordsworth that he is one of these dwellers in the city, of whom the Lake poet had no great opinion. In this same letter he goes on to say "Besides, Fleet St and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than amidst Skiddaw . . . After all. I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year, two or three years among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet St at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know." He could see nothing in the "Heavens themselves" like Wordsworth, but when, for example, we turn to his essay on "Blakesmoor in H—shire", where he had received so many delightful impressions as a child, we find passages such as the following, "Mine too — whose else? — thy costly fruit garden, with its sun baked southern wall; the ample pleasure garden, rising backward from the house in triple terraces, with flower pots, now of palest lead . . . the verdant quarters backward still; and stretching still beyond, in old formality, thy firry wilderness, the haunt of the squirrel and the day-long murmuring wood-pigeon, with that antique image in the centre, god or goddess, I wist not; but a child of Athens or old Rome paid never a sincerer worship to Pan or to Sylvanus in their native groves, than I to that fragmental mystery."

1) cf. also letter to Reflector "The Londoner".

Gardens and public places, haunts where Isaak Walton was wont to moralize, were more to Lamb than the

“visible scene

With all its solemn imagery, its rocks

Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received

Into the bosom of the steady lake.”

Lamb retired from the India House in 1825. He had served the Philistines, as he called them, for more than thirty years, and his health was breaking down under the strain. Complaints of this are frequently found in the letters from 1822—25. “I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don’t know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, day after day, all the golden hours of the day between ten and four, without ease or interposition—*taedet me harum quotidianarum formarum . . .* Oh for a few years between the grave and the desk.” In 1825 he obtained the necessary doctor’s certificate, and applied for his discharge; with the result that in March “I came home for ever” as he expressed it in his essay on the Superannuated Man. The Directors of the Company behaved most liberally, and granted him two-thirds of his salary, with a reversion after his death to his sister. Lamb often regretted that his office work kept him from his beloved literature, but there can be no doubt that for his unsteady temperament, this regular restraint was the best thing possible. It acted as a sedative to his nervous system — he valued these literary pleasures, stolen from his sleeping hours, in proportion to the efforts he had to make to procure them. He seems himself to recognize this, for he writes to Barton, who wished to give up his position as a bank-clerk and take to literature as a profession “Throw yourself, my dear Sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes” and again “I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it good

to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall.”¹⁾ His literary activity was far greater than it probably would have been if his life had fallen in more pleasant places, and Coleridge’s life might well have been a warning to him. However he rejoiced greatly in his freedom — “It was like passing out of Time into Eternity. From a man, poor in time, I was suddenly lifted up into a great revenue; I could see no end of my possessions.” Even from this passage one can see that the new life had its drawbacks. He had now too much Time on his hands. He missed his regular occupation and he says to Barton in 1829 “I pity you for over-work; but I assure you no work is worse. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit. With few years to come the days are wearisome . . . I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inch-meal just now. But the snake is vital.” He busied himself with his studies of old plays. He attended the British Museum every day from ten to four, reading through Garrick’s collection of plays. He wrote more essays, poems and Popular Fallacies, but his life does not seem to have been any happier.

As has been already hinted at, the Lambs during the last ten years of Charles’ life were unable to remain long in one place. Mary’s illnesses were more frequent and more severe and her brother’s restlessness increased with the progress of the years. In 1833 he writes to Wordsworth “Mary is ill again. Her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months followed by two of depression most dreadful. I look back to her earlier attacks with longing . . . in short half her life she is dead to me, and the other half is made anxious with fears and looking forward to the next shock.” One gleam of comfort in their old age came from the presence of Emma Isola, an Anglo-Italian, whom the Lambs had adopted and who married Moxon the publisher. But Lamb’s old friends were dying and he felt desolate and forlorn. His

¹⁾ East India Co.

brother John, though never much of a companion, had died in 1822. Lamb's new friend Cary could not entirely compensate for the loss of the old ones, and the death of Coleridge in 1834 was, as Canon Ainger says, Charles Lamb's death blow. The two friends had not seen much of each other during these latter years. Coleridge was living with the Gilmans at Highgate, and Lamb visited him there occasionally. But presence or absence had nothing to do with the deep feelings of friendship which had bound them together for so many years. Lamb writes after his death "When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me he had long been on the confines of the next world. I grieved then that I could not grieve; but since I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men and books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my capitations." In the December of the same year Lamb had an accident, erysipelas set in and on the 27th of December he died. His sister survived him ten years.

§ 2. Poems & Poetic Criticism.

Lamb issued various collections of poetry. The first appeared in conjunction with Coleridge and Lloyd, entitled "Poems by S. T. Coleridge, to which are added poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd, Cottle Bristol 1797", which was followed in 1798 by "Blank verse by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb". In 1818 Ollier published his "Works" in prose and verse, and Moxon in 1830 "Album verses with a few others".

His early poems have an autobiographical interest, and give us some idea of the inner working of his mind at the time of the tragedy in his family. Thus there are sonnets to "Anna" and Mary — these two seemingly dividing his affections between them. The sonnet on "Innocence" is especially interesting as the ideas contained in it are repeated in his essay "New Year's Eve", written many years afterwards,

wherein he reflects how different a man he was from the sprightly young 'Elia' of his childhood. This poem shows us how early Lamb had to take up the battle of life, and to assume a man's responsibilities. The Blank Verse is almost entirely connected directly or indirectly with the family tragedy, but both sonnets and blank verse, culminate in intensity of feeling and pathos in the "old familiar Faces".

Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
I had a mother, but she died and left me,
Died prematurely in a day of horrors —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late with my bosom cronies —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women.
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, kinder friend has no man,
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
Earth seemed a desert, I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than brother!
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So we might talk of the old familiar faces.

For some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me: all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

The religious poems are written in blank verse after the manner of Cowper. The poems "On the day of my Aunt's funeral", "a year after the events", "living without God in the world" are poems of this class. Despite the despair visible in some of them, some gleams of hope for the future shine through the darkness, for he is

"Contented as I may, to bear me on
To the not unpeaceful evening of a day
Made black by morning storms."

Thus closes his short, and with one exception — the "familiar faces" — unimpressive poetic period, as distinguished from prose and the drama. Yet he wrote much desultory poetry, which may be dealt with in this place. Lamb in his Introduction to the "Works" speaks of "dwindling from poetry into prose and criticism." Of course in poetic power he could not compare with his friend Coleridge, to whom the Dedication was addressed. Lamb's verse can never be compared with his prose, though perhaps he regretted it. "I flatter myself I am a dab at prose" he says somewhere in his letters. During these years up to 1818 his prose style was gradually forming and verse recedes more and more into the background. The poems of this period have generally been included in letters to friends, such as Manning and Wordsworth, or else issued in his "Poetry for Children" — a book that followed his *Tales from Shakespeare*. They are mostly connected with personal subjects or with those of his friends. He writes a sonnet on his own name, or one on a certain actress who has pleased him, or one on his brother John, or one on a picture of Leonardo da Vinci. His poetry was quaint and superficial and shows a delicate sense for rhythm and sound.

His "Hester Savory" and "Lucy Barton" may illustrate this. I quote some verses from each. To Hester:

. . . My sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore
Shall we not meet as hertofore

Some summer morning,
When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet forewarning?

And to Lucy in her Album.

Little book, surnamed of white
Clean as yet and fair to sight
Keep thy attribution right.

Never disproportion 'd scrawl
Ugly blot, that's worse than all
On thy maiden clearness fall.

Whitest thoughts, in whitest dress
Candid meanings, best express
Mind of quiet Quakeress.

An interval of twenty four years separated these two poems, both of which are addressed to Quakeresses. Lamb had an especial fondness for the members of this sect. He wrote an essay on a "Quaker's Meeting", he was a great friend of a Quaker poet, he was a lover of the folios of George Fox. "Get the writings of John Wolman by heart" he says "and love the early Quakers." The Quakers have an atmosphere of quaint seriousness about them, which appealed to Lamb in particular, and hence these poems are particularly delicate both in thought and expression. We can compare with them a passage from the "Quaker's Meeting" as the exact prose counterpart of what has been said in verse.

"The very garments of a Quaker seem incapable of receiving a soil; and cleanliness in them to be something more than the absence of the contrary. Every Quakeress is a lily; and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the Shining Ones."

There are two other poems which deserve special mention here, So "T. H. L., a child" and on "an infant dying as soon as born." The first was addressed to Thornton Hunt, son of Leigh Hunt, who at that time, 1813, was in prison on account of a libel on the Prince Regent. The second refers to the still-born child of Thomas Hood, the poet. I quote parts of it, as descriptive of Lamb's delicate fancy:

"I saw where in the shroud did lurk
A curious frame of Nature's work.
A floweret crushed in the bud,
A nameless piece of babyhood
Was in a cradle coffin lying.
. . . She did but ope an eye, and put
A clear beam forth; then straight up shut
For the long dark
Could she (Nature) flag, or could she tire,
Or lacked she the Promethean fire
(with her nine moons' long workings sicken'd)
That should thy little limbs have quicken'd?
Limbs so firm, they seem'd to assure
Life of health and days mature.
Woman's self in miniature!
Limbs so fair, they might supply
(Themselves but cold imagery)
The sculptor to make beauty by.

Lamb lived in an important era of our literary history. He witnessed at the beginning of his career the revival of romance, nay further, he was intimately acquainted with two of its prime leaders, Wordsworth and Coleridge. But he was very far from joining in the movement, though he admired much of its poetry. He had no definite theories about Poetry like his friend Wordsworth, though his critical faculty was far greater. Neither can it be said that his own Poetry made any impression on the thought of his age. The examples that have been given above sufficiently show the genre of the vast majority of them. His poetry is most

interesting as the expression of a tender and fantastic genius and as throwing side lights on his prose, inasmuch as it gives proof of the manifold influences which his predecessors had on his style.

In the early nineties both he and Coleridge were enthusiastic admirers of the sonnets of the Rev William Lisle Bowles, published in 1789.¹⁾ Hence Lamb's early sonnets are based on Bowles's model. Great was the fascination which this poet exercised on Lamb, and still more on Coleridge. But after the events of 1796 Bowles was no longer congenial to him, and he turns naturally to Cowper. The gloom of some of Cowper's verse just suited the poet at this dark hour of his life — and so Cowper's blank verse becomes the model of Lamb's. He had a great admiration for Cowper's genius, as appears from a sonnet, in which he speaks of him as the man "destined" and

Born to reanimate the lyre, whose chords
 Have slumbered, and have idle lain so long!
 . . . Then then, take up the mighty epic strain,
 Cowper, of England's Bards the wisest and the best.

It is only fair to add that this fulsome praise is qualified by the accompanying letter to Coleridge "the poor gentleman has just recovered from his lunacies and that begets pity". It is easy to understand how great a sympathy Lamb would have for a man who suffered from the same mental disease as had wrought such havoc in his own family life. But with the reawakening of interest in things temporal, the influence of Cowper disappears, for Lamb's extensive reading was bringing him into contact with older, and for him, more important writers. With the exception of his poem to Hester, and a few translations from the German, taken from Coleridge's prose versions, Lamb wrote no poetry till the year 1805. In the interval he had written his play *John Woodvil*, and had drunk deeply of the Elizabethan poets. It is not sur-

¹⁾ See examples quoted in the "Cowper Anthology."

prising to find that a Jacobian, George Wither, one of the numerous "Arkadians" of that age, and author of 'Philarete' and 'Shepherd's Hunting' should have become his most cherished model. Wither's metre, the seven syllabled trochaic became Lamb's favourite, and a very large proportion of his verse is written in it. One has only to mention his "Farewell to Tobacco" — some of his "Poetry for Children", to "T. L. H. a child", "the young Catechist", "Angel Help", "On an infant dying as soon as born", "The Christening" to see how strong a hold on him this metre had. Lamb wrote a critique on Wither's¹⁾ works, and after giving by far the two best extracts from the Philarete, he thus criticizes the metre "To the measure in which these lines are written, the wits of Queen Anne's days contemptuously gave the name of Namby Pamby, in ridicule of Ambrose Phillips, who has used it in some instances, as in the lines on Cozzoni, to my feeling at least very deliciously; but Wither, whose darling measure it seems to have been, may shew, that skilful hands it is capable of expressing the subtlest movements of passion. So true it is, which Drayton seems to have felt, that *it is the poet who modifies the metre, not the metre the poet.*"

To no poet may this last sentence be more justly applied than to the writer of it. He took his models from older poets, but he infused into them something that was especially his own. Lamb's thoughts seem to flow easier in this "darling" metre of Wither than in any other. Take for example a passage from Philarete and compare it with a verse of the 'Farewell to Tobacco'.

Wither. "Though sometimes my song I raise
To unused heights of praise,
(And brake forth as I shall please
Into strange hyperboles).
'Tis to shew conceit has found
Worth beyond expression's bound?"²⁾

1) On the poetical Works of George Wither.

2) Wither "Philarete" English Garner.

Lamb. "For I hate, yet love thee, so
That which ever thing I show,
The plain truth will seem to be
A constrained hyperbole,
And the passion to proceed
More from a mistress than a weed."

To find examples of the "subtle movement" that Lamb speaks of we have only to turn to his poem on the still-born infant to find a conceit worthy of the Elizabethans.

Limbs so fair, they might supply
(Themselves but cold imagery)
The sculptor to make beauty by.

Lines like these show that Lamb was essentially a writer in miniature. Single lives or short poems suit him best, just as his criticism is in general a criticism of details rather than of general ideas.

The poems of his later years were published under the title of Album verses. Lamb had retired from business and was good-natured enough to write in the numerous albums which were sent him. We have an amusing letter from him on this subject. "We are in the last ages of the world, when St. Paul prophesied that women should be "headstrong, lovers of their own wills, having albums". I fled hither to escape the albumean persecution, and had not been in my new house twenty four hours, when the daughter of the next house came in with a friend's album to beg a contribution, and on the following day intimated that she had one of her own. Two more have sprung up since. 'If I take the wings of the morning' and fly into the uttermost parts of the earth, there will albums be. New Holland has albums. But the age is to be complied with." Another link, which connects him with the Elizabethans, was as Canon Ainger points out, his fondness for the acrostic. Many of these album verses are written in this kind.

Closely connected with Lamb's poetry is his criticism and appreciation of the poetry of others and Mr. Swin-

burne¹⁾ in an essay on Charles Lamb and George Wither has given us examples of the manner in which Lamb studied literature, of the numerous side-notes and parallel quotations with which he was accustomed to fill up the margins of his books. Lamb could read hundreds of lines, and yet not overlook one which perhaps helped to redeem the whole from intolerable dullness. It was no wonder that Coleridge and Southey sent their poems to him for criticism. In point of detail he was, as a critic, unrivalled. And his criticism becomes more valuable because he was a poet, and judged from the poet's standard. Lamb's work to day stands out far more distinctly than the work of many of the great reviewers of his day, and it is in part due to this reason, though of course the essays of Elia are the main props of his fame. Not only could Lamb appreciate the poetry of others, but he possessed that *illuminating* faculty, which forces a passage on our notice and then stamps it on our memory for ever. Take two examples from Wither, which are added in a note to the essay on that poet.

“Along line is a line we are long repeating. In the Shepherd's Hunting take the following

If thy verse doth bravely tower
As she makes wing she gets power; etc.

What longer measure can go beyond the majesty of this! What Alexandrine is half so long in pronouncing, or expresses *labour slowly but strongly surmounting difficulty* with the life with which it is done in the second of these lines? or what metre can go beyond this from Philarete.

Thoughts too deep to be express'd
And too strong to be suppress'd.”

There is life in such criticism as this. It fixes the attention of the reader on the salient point, and becomes almost as valuable as the quotation itself.

Further we must say of Lamb as a poet that he possessed

¹⁾ Swinburne. Miscellanies.

the power of *assimilation*, which, though never destroying what was original in himself, made him the master of so many styles, which he, in a manner, pressed into his service according to his mood or the nature of the subject. For example compare Flecknoe's lines

"Offspring of a heavenly kind
Frost of the mouth and thaw of the mind."

with these from the Farewell to Tobacco,

"Stinking'st of the stinking kind
Filth of the mouth or fog of the mind."

which almost reminds one of Jonson's parody of Withers "Shall I wasting in despair?"

Wither. Should my foolish heart be pined
'Cause I see a woman kind?
Or a well disposèd nature
Joinèd with a comely feature?

Jonson. Shall my foolish heart be burst
'Cause I see a woman's curst?
Or a thwarting hoggish nature
Joinèd in as bad a feature?

As a further example of this assimilation take Lamb's parody of Milton's description of the limbo of vanity in the III Book of Paradise Lost.

Milton. Up hither like aërial vapours flew
Of all things transitory and vain, when sin
With vanity had filled the works of men:
Both all things vain and all who in vain things
Built their fond hopes of glory and of lasting fame,
Or happiness in this or the other life;
All th' unaccomplish'd works of nature's hand,
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixed
 . . . fleet hither and in vain.

Lamb conceives, in his essay on the "Shade of Elliston" the actor, a limbo for players in the following lines.

Up hither like aerial vapours fly
Both all Stage things and all that in Stage things
Built their fond hopes of glory or of lasting fame.
All th' unaccomplish'd works of authors' hands
Abortive, monstrous or unkindly mixed,
Damn'd upon earth, fleet hither —
Play Opera, Farce, with all their trumpery.

As a Critic of *Modern Poetry* Lamb has his limitations. It was necessary for him to feel first the *Man* behind the poem. The personality of the poet influenced the judgement of the critic. Byron Lamb could not endure. In a letter to Cottle he says "I have a thorough aversion to his character, and a very moderate admiration of his genius: he is great in so little a way. To be a Poet is to be the Man, not a petty portion of occasional low passion worked up in a permanent form of humanity. Shakespeare has thrust such rubbishy feelings into a corner — the dark dusky heart of Don John in *Much Ado about Nothing*." Or again to Barton "Why! a line of Wordsworth is a lever to lift the immortal spirit. Byron can only move the spleen." The truth is, Wordsworth the Man attracted him just as much as Wordsworth the Poet, hence there were no reasons for the restraint of his enthusiasm over the *Excursion*. "It is the noblest conversational poem I ever read — a day in Heaven' and he wrote a critique of it in the *Quarterly*, which Gifford the editor cruelly mangled, so much so that Lamb in an apology to Wordsworth says "they had left only the bleeding sockets". Lamb's interest lay chiefly in the Past — he was jealous of the reputation of his darlings; and to take an example, he called "*Goethe's Faust*" a disagreeable canting tale of seduction, which has nothing to do with the spirit of *Faustus-Curiosity*. Was the dark secret to be explored to end in the seducing of a weak girl, which might have been accomplished by earthly agency', and then the reason for his scorn appears "When Marlowe gives his *Faustus* a mistress, he flies him at Helen, the flower of Greece, to be sure, and not at Miss Betsy or Miss Sally Thoughtless." We must

remember that at this time — 1829 — the second part of Faust had not appeared, and there was some justification for his remarks about Helena. But Lamb will suffer nothing that is derogatory to the memory of his favourite Marlowe — hence his ire against the author who has dared to choose a similar theme.

§ 3. Drama and Dramatic Criticism.

Lamb says of his sister Mary "She was tumbled early by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage." This description applied as much, if not more, to the writer himself, and one of the first fruits of this browsing was his play *John Woodvil*, written in 1799, rejected by Kemble for the theatre, and published in 1801 in duodecimo, with an appendix containing imitations of Burton. The language of this play is exquisitely beautiful, whilst the plot, as Southey put it is "exquisitely silly."

Lamb was never in his life capable of constructing a plot, and it is amusing to find him writing letters to Godwin, and offering sketches of a new play. In *Woodvil* we are hurried to Sherwood, and back to Devon to hear a dozen lines of soliloquy, and then again to Sherwood in time to see the arrest and death of the hero's father. There is little attempt at continuous development of character — we get exquisite snatches, stray phrases, but nothing more. Fine passages are spoilt by their proximity to the ridiculous. Here for instance is a soliloquy on friendship:

"Fast cement of fast friends, band of society,
Old natural go-between in the world's business,
Where civil life and order, wanting this cement,
Would presently rush back
Into the pristine slate of singularity
And each man stand alone."

Suddenly a servant enters, bawling out the grotesque announcement "gentlemen, the fireworks are ready."

The true worth of the play lies in the numerous isolated passages of *great beauty*, which are scattered here and there. In these passages, which often have a remote connection with the play, he gives full vent to his fancy — the cadence is Elizabethan, we are in a world with which the critics of Lamb's day were entirely unacquainted, hence it is not surprising that they took the plot and not the style as a butt for their scorn. To take a passage as illustration — Lamb inserts the following description of forest sports:

To see the sun to bed, and to arise
Like some hot amorist with glowing eyes,
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him,
With all his fires and travelling glories round him.
Sometimes the moon on soft night clouds to rest.
Like beauty nestling in a young man's breast,
And all the winking stars, her handmaids, keep
Admiring silence, while these lovers sleep.
Sometimes outstretch'd, in very idleness,
Nought doing, saying little, thinking less,
To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
Go eddying round, and small birds, how they fare,
When mother Autumn fills their beaks with corn,
Filch'd from the careless Amalthea's horn;
And how the woods berries and worms provide
Without their pains, when earth has nought beside
So answer their small wants.
To view the graceful deer come tripping by,
Then stop, and gaze, then turn, they know not why,
Like bashful youngers in society."

This passage seems to be a mixture of two styles, the realism of Wordsworth and the delicate fancy of the Jacobean such as Marvell or Walton.

In his Dedication to the 'Works', Lamb addressing Coleridge, says "I have ventured to publish it (Woodvil) in its original form though I have heard you complain of a certain over imitation of the antique in the style . . . I had

been newly imitated in the writings of our elder dramatists: Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger were then a *first love*; and from what I was so freshly conversant in, what wonder if my language imperceptibly took a tinge." The curious point about this play is that while the language and the humour is Elizabethan, Lamb chose to set it amidst Restoration surroundings — Lamb contending paradoxically, as is his habit, that this was his reason for giving the language an 'older cast.' The 'imperceptible tinge' prepares us for the publication of "Specimens of Dramatic Writers Contemporary with Shakespeare", issued in 1808. The publication of these Specimens opened a world hitherto unexplored by the readers of the early part of the 19th century. Lamb was a pioneer in this field. The 'gentle hearted Charles' entered into the storm and conflict, witnessed in the drama of this age. We are in the midst of tragic scenes, "horror is heaped on horror's head", Tamberlaine is not content unless the captured kings drag his chariot twenty miles a day, everything is on the grand scale, dark secrets of passion are being explored, just as are unknown quarters of the globe. Violent passions are placed in conflict with each other, and exposed in all their nakedness. Scenes of lust, robbery murder and torture, such as the striking of the half hours as the clock approaches midnight and Faustus has to die, or the procession with the coffin and the executioners that passes before the heroic Duchess of Malfi — these are the lions of tragedy with which the gentle Lamb had to contend. The gratitude of future ages to Lamb can never be fully expressed. Doubtless the time of discovery was drawing nigh but it was he who gave the key-note to the criticism of future editors.

Lamb's purpose in issuing these Specimens is explained in an Introduction to the Specimens, when extracts from them were issued in his "Works." "My leading design was to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors. To shew in what manner they felt, when they placed themselves by the power of imagination in trying circumstances, in the conflict of duty and passion, or the strife of contending

duties, what sort of loves and enmities theirs were, . . . how much of Shakespeare shines in the great men his contemporaries, and how far in his divine mind and manners he surpassed them and all mankind.”

Hence he left out all masques and Arcadian pastorals, as being too remotely connected with human life. The Specimens cover a wide field; they include Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Middleton, Decker, Ford, Chapman and many others. His plan was to give extracts from the principal scenes, adding notes on any particular points of character or of language — for he was no philologist — at the end. Some of the criticism is extraordinarily luminous, as for example the well known comparison of the Witches in Macbeth, Middleton’s Witch, and the Witch of Edmonton. “His (Shakespeare’s) witches are distinguished from the witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief, might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth’s, he is spellbound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These witches can hurt the body, those have power over the soul. Hecate in Middleton has a son a low buffoon: the hags of Shakespeare have neither child of their own nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung or whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them. Except Hecate they have no *names*; which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties, which the *other author* has given to his hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presenee cannot co-exist with mirth. But in a lesser degree, the witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power, too, is in some measure over the mind. They raise jars, jealousies, strife

“like a thick scurf” over life. Mother Sawyer differs from the hag both of Middleton and Shakespeare. She is the plain traditional old woman witch of our ancestors; poor deformed, and ignorant; the terror of villages, herself amenable to justice. That should be a hardy sheriff with the power of the county at his heels, that would lay hands on the Weird Sisters. They are of another jurisdiction. But upon the common and received opinion, the author (or authors) have engrafted strong fancy. There is something frightfully earnest in her invocations to the familiar.”

This is one of the happiest instances of Lamb’s comparative criticism though sometimes he carried this principle too far. He set up Shakespeare as a standard, and chose scenes from his contemporaries which almost approached his in grandeur. For example on Marlowe’s Edward II. he says “In a very different style from the mighty Tamburlaine is the tragedy of Edward II. The reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty in Edward furnished hints which Shakespeare scarcely improved in his Richard II.” These dramatists must, however, be compared as a whole, — a true estimate can never be made by comparing scene by scene — here again we see how Lamb was more interested in particular beauties —, he is on far safer ground when he distinguishes between the manner of Shakespeare and Fletcher. “Another striking difference between Shakespeare and Fletcher is the fondness of the latter for unnatural and violent situations. He seems to have thought nothing great could be produced in an ordinary way . . . Shakespeare had nothing of this contortion in his mind, none of that craving after violent situations, and flights of strained and improbable virtue, which I think always betrays an imperfect moral sensibility.” If one man is to be made the centre around which the others turn, then the whole body of their accomplished work, their development of character, the nature of their subjects, their language, and the action and reaction of character and motive, must be taken into consideration in such a comparative estimate. Lamb was so engrossed in the portrayal of a certain character under

certain conditions, that his criticism at times becomes too confined, and he is apt to seek only for situations which correspond to the one he is interested in.

We possess a very instructive essay on the Master himself, which appeared in the 'Reflector' of 1811. "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation." Lamb argues that the very greatness of these plays unfits them for performance on the stage. Hamlet's speeches, for example, represent the inner workings of his mind, which the author is compelled to express in words. He contends that in acting we have only to do with externals, that there are certain stage tricks, which are employed to represent fear, anger and the other emotions, but that these can give no insight into the depth of emotion and of thought that lies beneath. He cannot endure Othello on the stage. The love of Othello for Desdemona appears to him to be ideal when read — but to see a black man wooing a tender girl gives him an inward shudder. His fancy is crushed and materialized by scenic effects, as in the case of Lear and Richard. The argument likewise holds good with the supernatural in Shakespeare. The witches of Macbeth appear to him to be ridiculous old women. The horror they inspire is gone. He would deal with the comedies in the same way, and so the logical conclusion of this essay would be the total abolition of "the stage and all stage things." Lamb, in fact, often used paradox in order to throw light on especial traits of character. The essay is, in fact, famous on account of his splendid criticism of Shakespeare's tragic characters. "The Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear: they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton on the stage or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension but in intellectual: the explosions of his passion are as terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and

disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read we see not Lear, we are Lear — we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his season, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodized from the ordinary purposes of life, but executing its powers, as the mind bloweth where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks or tones, to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of the *heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds them that ‘they themselves are old.’ What gesture shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or eye to do with such things?” Yet it must not be thought that Lamb was insensible to the charms of the stage. His great ambition was to get accepted a play of his own, — John Woodvil, Mr. H. a farce, or else the Wife’s Trial. Further he has written an essay on his “First Play” and another on “Some of the old actors” which show that he had the keenest relish for good acting. As he says in his essay ‘Old China’, one of his greatest pleasures was to go with his sister to Covent Garden Theatre. He loved his house too, because it was in the neighbourhood of this same theatre. Take the description of Mrs. Jordan’s Viola to show his keen perception of the details of the art.¹⁾ “There is no giving an account how she delivered the disguised story of her love for Orsino. It was no set speech, that she had foreseen, so as to weave it into an harmonious period, line necessarily following line, to make up the music — yet I have heard it so spoken or rather *read*, not without its grace and beauty — but when she had declared her sister’s history to be a “blank” and that she

¹⁾ On the old actors.

“had never told her love”, there was a pause as if she had ended — and then the image of the “worm in the bud” came up as a new suggestion — and the heightened image of “Patience” still followed after that, as by some growing (and not mechanical) process, thought springing up after thought, I would almost say, as they were watered by her tears.”

It is interesting to compare Lamb’s criticism of the Elizabethans with that of the Restorationists. This latter we find under the title “Artificial Comedy”. The atmosphere of these two periods was widely different; England had plunged into wild gaiety, and as a result of the severity of the Puritan regime the drama became as licentious as the age. The breezy, heroic atmosphere of Shakespeare has been changed for the heated air of corrupt society. Vice is exposed in her fairest forms, Virtue in her most repulsive. Yet Lamb — with another paradox — tries to set up the theory that these plays must not be judged by the ordinary standards of morality — in fact that they belong neither to the sphere of morality or immorality, but occupy some neutral ground. He complains that the public of his time is ever demanding a standard of dramatic morality — “We have been spoiled with — not sentimental comedy — but a tyrant far more pernicious to our pleasures, which has succeeded to it, the exclusive and all devouring drama of common life, where the moral point is every thing; — our interest in what is going on is so hearty and substantial that we cannot afford our moral judgement . . . to compromise for a moment.” He condemns these characters from a moral point of view as “vain and worthless”. Yet is it a ‘privation of moral light’ rather than ‘palpable darkness’. ‘When we are among them we are among a chaotic people. We are not to judge them by our usages. No reverend institution are insulted by their proceedings — for they have none among them. No peace of families is violated — for no family ties exist among them.’ Macaulay in his essay on Hunt’s Collection of Restoration Plays took up Lamb’s argument “If what Mr. Charles Lamb says were correct, the inference would be that these dramatists did not in the least understand the very

first principles of their craft. Pure landscape into which no light and shade enters, pure portrait painting into which no expression enters, are phrases less at variance with sound criticism than pure comedy into which no moral enters."

The truth is that Lamb, as Canon Ainger points out, loved to find some "soul of goodness in things evil", both in plays and in men. Doubtless these plays had no bad effect on him. "I am glad to take an airing beyond the diocese of strict conscience . . . I come back to my cage and my restraint, the fresher and the more healthy for it."

§ 4. Prose.

Lamb's first prose work is his 'miniature romance' — Rosamund Gray — published in 1798. It has no compeer in the history of English literature — it stands in a niche to itself. Regular plot it has none — character sketches — quotations from Lamb's favourite authors — extracts from letters — the personal feelings of the writer woven in with much that is myth — improbable events — such are its main characteristics. Canon Ainger in a note to the tale lays stress on the fact that it is a mixture of the sentimental romance with a vein of something truly artistic and poetic. But for us here it is most interesting on account of the insight which it gives us into the nature of Lamb's reading and the formation of his taste. The author says of Rosamund "I know not whether the peculiar tincture of her mind might not be traced, in part, to a tincture she had received in early life from Walton and Wither, from John Bunyan and her Bible." The library of the old grandmother consists of the Bible, Wither's Emblems, the Pilgrim's Progress and the Complete Angler — all worthies dear to Lamb. We see further that the influence of the early dramatists has begun, for the name Matravis, the villain, we cannot doubt was taken from the murderer of Edward II in Marlowe's play, Matrevis. But we pass on to Lamb's proper work in prose. We jump to the year 1812 — the year in which he published essays in Leigh Hunt's Reflector. Lamb here in part breaks away from the

old paths of the drama and criticism. These essays give play for the first time to Lamb's fantastic humour, if we except the humorous servant dialogues in Woodvil and the Burton extracts. The Spectator and the Tatler are the models in form which he followed. They begin "Dear Mr. Reflector", and end with a pseudonym corresponding to the nature of the subject, such as 'Pensilis' in the essay 'On the inconveniences of being hanged', Burton junior 'On the Melancholy of Tailors', Edax on Appetite and so forth. I lay stress on the words 'model in form' for both in style and contents they are sometimes widely different. Whilst using the Spectator model he sometimes brings two styles, very opposite in character, into close proximity to each other. Thus in the Essay on "Burial Societies", the matter is an imitation of Sir Thomas Browne, the author of the Religio Medici and "Urn Burial".¹⁾ Browne's object in this latter book was to give an account of some ancient urns found in Norfolk but he soon leaves that part of his subject and digresses into the grave subject of the beliefs of the ancients concerning a future life, as evinced from the various rites they used at burials. 'Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave' he says. This sentence Lamb has quoted almost at the beginning of his essay, and it is not improbable that it gave rise to the whole subject. His essay contains the fantastic proposal of establishing a burial society for such people as cannot afford a respectable interment, but who have too much pride to be taken to their last resting place in pauper fashion. Thus is man desirous of being 'pompous in the grave'. At the end of the essay he adds 'the character of an Undertaker', written, he says, at the beginning of the 18th century and resembling the character of Sable in Steele's comedy of the 'Funeral'. And so in this essay we find traces of three different styles, all acting on Lamb's prose, yet not obscuring its originality.

But all his romances, essays, plays, poetry and criticisms

¹⁾ or Hydrotaphia 1658.

are concentrated in the essays of Elia, which began to appear in 1820. The essays that we have mentioned above were but experiments. They make up his emancipation period, when his style was forming in that particular section of literature in which he is famous. All his previous work may be regarded as necessary for the purification of his style and the cultivation of the power of expression. When he began these essays it was seen that his style was ripe, that it was flavoured with the best that could be found in English classic authors. It was no momentary growth, it had taken years of labour, and only through strenuous effort was it perfected at the last, for though the essays seem to us to flow as easily and readily from his pen, as if they had been the work of a moment, it is known that he took great pains to make them as perfect as possible. We are continually reminded, either by the use of a word, or the turn of a phrase, of some author, ancient or modern, but the resemblance lasts but for a moment and we are carried on into fresh pastures, without a pause.

To understand the form which these essays took it is necessary to have some idea of the magazine, which published them. The 'London Magazine' was founded in 1820, under the editorship of John Scott. It appealed both to the literary and commercial community, as it contained articles and information suitable for both sections. Those who had formerly, like Coleridge, sent their contributions to the Times or Morning Post now sent them to the 'London'. It was called 'Cockney' by its Edinburgh rivals, though it never took up the hostile attitude adopted by the Quarterly. The career of the 'London' was brief but brilliant. Lamb and de Quincey found in it the medium which best suited their own especial styles. It may almost be said that without the 'London' Lamb would never have taken his place in English literature as an essayist of the first rank, but only as a critic of the older plays. The editors of the 'London' gave him full opportunity to write how and what he liked. There was no danger of the beauties of his essays being cut out to suit the taste of some

fastidious editor. He had not to fear the fate of his unfortunate article on Wordsworth in the Quarterly. Hence all subjects become obedient to his mastery, and one can only admire the creativeness of his fancy, and the charm of his style, though the elaboration of design, so characteristic of Macaulay, is wanting. Lamb himself has given the best description of his essays in his "Preface to the Last Essays" by a "friend of the late Elia". "I am now at liberty to confess that much, which I have heard objected to my late friend's writings was well founded. Crude they are — I grant you — a sort of unlicked, incondite things — villainously pranked in an affected array of antique modes and phrases. They had not been *his*, if they had been other than such; and better it is that a writer should be natural in a self-pleasing quaintness, than to affect a naturalness (so called) that should be strange to him. Egotistical they have been pronounced by some who did not know, that what he tells us, as of himself, was often true only (historically) of another; as in a former essay (to save many instances) — where under the the *first person* (his favourite figure) he shadows forth the forlorn state of a country boy placed at a London School, far from his friends and connections — indirect opposition to his own early history.¹⁾ If it be egotism to imply and twine with his own identity the griefs and affections of another — making himself many, or reducing many to himself — then is the skilful novelist, who all along brings in his hero or heroine, speaking of themselves, the greatest egoist of all; who yet has never, therefore, been accused of that narrowness. And how shall the intenser dramatist escape being faulty, who, doubtless under cover of passion uttered by another, oftentimes gives blameless vent to his most inward feelings, and expresses his own story modestly?"

There are many points of general interest in the essays, such as their autobiographical value, Lamb's rank as an essayist and humourist, which will not be dealt with here. The

¹⁾ Coleridge was in reality the "country boy."

point of view, with which we shall be exclusively concerned is the influence of Lamb's reading on the style and matter of the essays.

The first most noteworthy feature is the *wealth and felicity of quotation*. We are indebted to Canon Ainger for the references to the originals of the quotations, which are to be found in his notes at the end of his splendid edition of the *Essays*. Much has been said in general about the influences of Lamb's reading on his style, here we can descend to particulars, and show how the thoughts of others have been woven into the text. We have seen that Lamb had difficulty in comprehending the *whole* of anything, whilst particular phrases, and scenes remained in his memory. This, though a drawback to his criticism, is one of the glories of the essays. There is many a reminiscence in Lamb which ought never to be found out — many a "sweet assurance", as Lamb might call it, dead as soon as born, many a cadence reminding one of Browne, Burton or Walton — which it would be a desecration to discover; with such we are not concerned. Only those quotations will be referred to, which have been treated by Lamb himself as such. A long list of authors might be given, from whom he took quotations. Shakespeare, as we should expect from the author of the "Tales" stands first and then follow Spenser, Sidney, Beaumont, Fletcher, Pope, Congreve, Marvel, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Cowley and many others; but he is most brilliant and most happy when he quotes Milton.

The quotations may be divided into two classes.

I. Those longer quotations which either suggest the essay itself, or which form an integral part of the argument.

The most brilliant example of this is to be found in the essay "Grace before meat". The Epicurean, he argues, need ask for no blessing on his food. A grace is more fitting, where bread is scarce, and in such a case it is not the signal for the beginning of an orgy. He takes as an example the

1) Ainger, Ed.: Letters No. 186.

description of Satan's temptation of Christ in Milton's *Paradise Regained*. 'The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan in the *'Paradise Regained'* provides for a temptation in the wilderness.

A table richly spread in regal mode
With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort
And savour; beasts or fowl of game,
In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,
Gris-amber steamed; all fish from sea and shore
Freshlet or purling brook, for which was drained
Pontus, and Lucrine Bay, and Afric coast.

The Tempter, I warrant you, thought these eates would go down without the recommendatory preface of a benediction. There are likely to be short graces where the devil plays the host. I am afraid the poet wants his usual decorum in this place. Was he thinking of the old Roman luxury or a gaudy day at Cambridge? . . . To the temperate fantasies of the famished Son of God, what sort of feasts presented themselves?

He dreamed indeed

— As appetite is wont to dream
Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.

But what meats?

Him thought he by the brook of Cherith stood,
And saw the ravens with their horny beaks,
Food to Elijah bringing even and morn:

Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought.

He saw the prophet also how he fled
Into the desert, and how there he slept
Under a juniper; then how awaked
He found his supper on the coals prepared
And by the angel was bid rise and eat,
And ate the second time after repose,
The strength where of sufficed him forty days:
Sometime that with Elijah he partook,
Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.

Nothing in Milton is finer fancied than these temperate dreams of the Divine Hungerer. To which of these too visionary banquets, think you, would the introduction of what is called the grace have been most fitting or pertinent?"

It would not be surprising to find that this essay derived its origin from Lamb's wish to make this splendid passage from Milton more widely known.

Or take an example from 'New Year's Eve'.

Thoughts of the Old New Year have made him sorrowful — he was thinking of the changes time has wrought in the character of the youthful Elia. He hates the thought of death, of leaving his friends and his darlings — 'my midnight folios'. Then his mood changes. 'In the meantime I am alive. I move about. . . . Another cup of wine — and while that turn coat bell, that just now mournfully chanted the obsequies of 1820 departed, with changed notes lustily rings in a successor, let us attune to its peal the song made on a like occasion by hearty, cheerful, Mr. Cotton. (Then follow a long poem on the New Year, which ends as follows.)

Then let us welcome the New Guest
With lusty brimmers of the best:
Mirth always should good Fortune meet,
And renders e'en Disaster sweet,
And though the Princess turn her back,
Let us but line ourselves with sack,
We better shall by far hold out,
Till the next year she face about.

How say you Reader — do not these verses smack of the rough magnanimity of the old English vein. Do not they fortify like a cordial; enlarging the heart, . . . where be those puling fears of death, just now expressed or affected? Passed like a cloud — absorbed in the purging sunlight of clear poetry — clean washed away by a wave of genuine Helicon, your only spa for such hypochondries". In this case the whole of the Essay is changed as soon as we come within view, so to speak, of hearty Mr. Cotton, and the poet rises airily in the scale of optimism.

These two passages illustrate Lamb's habit of bringing in quotations which add a genuine beauty to the text, and which indeed in the case of the Milton seem to play almost a secondary part. A similar instance is to be found in the "Old Benchers", where he quotes from his favourite Marvell on gardening, to illustrate his remarks on the gradual disappearance of sun dials — "the primitive horologe of the first world."

II. The quotation of such lines which, as gems in a foil, illumine some particular point, phrase or comparison, that he wishes to emphasize — "bijou" quotations they might be called.

The Essay on "Chimney Sweepers" is especially rich in such illustration. To illustrate the distinction of colour in the skin of the sweep and the colour of their teeth he makes a delightful reference to a line from *Comus*.

"A Sable cloud
Turns forth her silver lining on the night."

Or again the following quaint conceit "A bad sweep was once left in a stack with a brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. It was an awful spectacle certainly, not much unlike that old stage direction in *Macbeth*, where the "apparition of a child crowned, with a tree in his hand, rises." Or in referring to the mortality of sweeps he quotes from *Cymbeline*.

Golden lads and lasses must
As chimney sweepers come to dust.

On New Year's Eve, the year appears to him to take a *personal colour*, which he illustrates by a quotation from his friend Coleridge "I saw the *skirts* of the departing year" which is supported by one from Pope, concerning the Old and New Year, for he (Lamb) says he is not one "who welcomes the coming, speeds the parting *guest*." In Valentine's Day he salutes old Bishop Valentine with the words "Thou comest attended by thousands and thousands of little loves, and the air is

“Brush’d with the hiss of rustling wings” as at the assembly of the fiends in Pandaemonium in the first book of the *Paradise Lost*. Or when he talks of pictures and their fate and how, the first delight of proprietorship having worn off, they begin the retrograde movement of disfavour, he quotes the similar fate of the Queen in *Richard II*.

— “Set forth in pomp;
She came adornèd hither like sweet May
Sent back like Hallowmass or shortest day.”

Such examples show Lamb’s talent for illuminating his text with innumerable references to the literature of all periods. He was often very inaccurate, as he quotes nearly always from memory. He has a curious habit of compressing the original into small space giving, as it were, only the kernel. In his *Quaker’s Meeting* he quotes Congreve to illustrate the solemn silence of one of their gatherings.

“How reverend is the view of their hushed heads,
Looking tranquillity”,

which in its full form was as follows.

“How reverend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads
To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof
By its own weight, made steadfast and immoveable,
Looking tranquillity.”¹⁾

Or in the *Christ’s Hospital*, speaking of a boy who concealed his food for a special purpose, and thus aroused the suspicions of his comrades, he says

‘twas said
He ate strange flesh’,

which is an abridged quotation from *Antony and Cleopatra*

It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh
Which some did die to look upon.²⁾

¹⁾ *Morning Bride* Act II. Sc. 1.

²⁾ Act I. Sc. 4.

Further he did not hesitate either to parody a verse, or to set it amidst grotesque surroundings. We saw how he imitated Milton's description of the limbo of vanity, and in the Dissertation on Roast Pig, he does not hesitate to quote two lines from Coleridge's Epitaph on an Infant — which he had so often laughed at — in the following connection.

“If the young pig had reached maturity ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate disagreeable animal — wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation — from these sins he is happily snatched away —

“Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade,
Death came with timely care.”

Nor does he omit to quote from his friend Wordsworth, as in connection with his visit to Mackery End, which he had not seen for so many years —

But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation.

But perhaps the most curious point in these quotations is his fondness for quoting — from himself. In the “Old and New Schoolmaster” he quotes the following line of his own.

“A child's a plaything for an hour”, taken from his Poetry for Children.

“A child's a plaything for an hour;
Its pretty tricks we try
For that or for a longer space
Then tire or lay it by.
. . . Thou straggler into loving arms,
Young climber up of knees,
When I forget thy thousand ways,
Then life and all shall cease”.

Or in the “Old Benchers” in speaking of his father under the name of Lovel “he was a *remnant*, most forlorn of

what he was", taken from "lines written on the day of my Aunt's funeral".

One parent yet is left . . .
A palsy stricken, childish, old, old man
A *semblance* most forlorn of what he was,
A merry cheerful man,

Lamb's proverbial inaccuracy holds good even when he is quoting from himself, as the words underlined show. These illustrations, and there are many more, will suffice to show what importance quotations assume in a consideration of Lamb's Essays. They show in what an atmosphere he lived — there is nothing forced about their introduction — no "bleeding sockets" are left to bewail their loss. Their very cadence corresponds to the surroundings in which they have been newly placed. Lamb possessed the secret of transplanting these delicate flowers of poetry, and of setting them amidst such surroundings, and in such a soil, as would best set off their own beauty, and adorn their new abode.

We come now the more *general influences*, acting on the Essays. We saw in his emancipation period, or perhaps we might call it "formative", that he adopted his style to the nature of his subject, that when he spoke of the town, or events of the town, he assumed the style of the Spectator, that when he spoke of funerals he turned to Sir Thomas Browne, or makes extracts from the "Worthies" of Fuller, the Church Historian. This feature is further developed and applied with more finesse in the Elia Essays. The resemblances are not so distinct as in the essays to the Reflector. His style has still further matured, and he uses his materials with far greater ease. Here is the opening passage from his essay the "Weddings" — it has been quoted by Canon Ainger but will bear repetition.

"I do not know when I have been better pleased than at being invited last week to be present at the wedding of a friend's daughter. I like to make one at these ceremonies, which to us old people give back our youth in a manner,

and restore our gayest season, in the remembrance of our own success, or the regrets, scarcely less tender, of our own youthful disappointments, in this point of a settlement. On these occasions I am sure to be in a good humour for a week or two after, and enjoy a reflected honeymoon." In such a sweet and graceful manner does the essay writer amble along, in no wise disturbing us with his egotism, that we are once more sent back again to Addison's day and generation. "Captain Jackson" and "Barbara S. —" are other examples of the Spectator style.

Or again look at his description of a "Poor Relation" and there is one of Fuller's Worthies to the very life.

"A Poor Relation — is the most irrelevant thing in nature — a piece of impertinent correspondency — an odious approximation — a haunting conscience — a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noon-tide of your prosperity . . . a lion in your path — a frog in your chamber — a fly in your ointment — a mote in your eye" and so on. This disjointed fashion of analysis is most characteristic of Fuller. Take another passage in imitation of the same author. The "Worthy" is this time the physician Monoculus, who in the essay "Amicus Redivivus" restores again, to life and to his friends the amiable but short sighted George Dyer, who has fallen into a stream whilst visiting the Essayist. "He passeth by the name of Doctor, is remarkable for wanting his left eye. His remedy — after a sufficient application of warm blankets, friction etc is a simple tumbler or more of the purest cognac, with water, made as hot as the convalescent can bear it. When he findeth, as in the case of my friend, a squeamish subject, he condescendeth to be the taster, and showeth by his own example the innocuous nature of the prescription." Fuller, a Divine, who died in 1661 wrote the "The Worthies of England" published posthumously. Fuller was a great wit, and his quaint description of various personalities have been extracted by Lamb, with whom he was a great favourite. His gravity of style mingled with

the strangest conceits, is very happily imitated by Lamb in the above passage. Here is a passage from Fuller.

“I saw a servant maid at the command of her mistress make, kindle and blow a fire. Which done, she was posted away about other business, whilst her mistress enjoyed the benefit of the fire. Yet I observed that this servant, whilst industriously employed in the kindling thereof, got a more general, kindly and continuing heat than her mistress herself. Her heat was only by her, and not in her, staying with her no longer than she stayed by the chimney; whilst the warmth of the maid was inlaid, and equally diffused through the whole body.”

When Lamb is not dealing with characters, and using Fuller's witty method of description, he often imitates the gravely humorous manner of his contemporary Sir Thomas Browne. There is an air of resignation about Browne, which was in accordance with Lamb's feeling on religious subjects. Hence when his Essays concern the grave facts of life and the probabilities of the hereafter his style has something of the seriousness of the ‘Urn Burial.’ We see here the advance Lamb has made since the days of “Burial Societies.” He treats that subject much as Sir Thomas does the subject of Urns before going on to graver matters. These graver matters are found in the Essays, and especially in the New Year's Eve. Lamb had an instinctive fear of death “Out upon thee, thou foul ugly phantom” he cries. Life and present reality appealed to him more than future ideals. “I have heard some speak of an indifference to life. Such have the end of their existence as a port of refuge; and speak of the grave some soft arms, in which they slumber as on a pillow, some have wooed death.” Hear Sir Thomas on the same subject in the Urn Burial. He is speaking of Epicurus “whom men make honest without an Elysium, who contemned life without the encouragement of immortality, and making nothing after death, yet made nothing of the king of terrors. Were the happiness of the next world as closely apprehended as the felicity of this, it were martyrdom to live; and with such as consider

none hereafter it must be more than death to die, which makes us amazed at those audacities that durst be nothing and return into chaos again." These are metaphors which do not solace Lamb. "I am not content to pass away like a weaver's shuttle." Lamb boasts that he was the first of the moderns to discover the "Urn Burial" — certain it is that there are more references to Browne in the essays than to any other man. The humorous manner of Browne is well illustrated in the essay on "Imperfect sympathies", where Lamb confesses that he cannot sympathize with Scotchmen, Jews or Quakers — unlike Sir Thomas who confesses "he has no antipathy . . . nor does he behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard or Dutch".¹⁾ This essay is famous for its masterly analysis of the Character of a Scotchman, whose "taste never fluctuates, whose morality never abates", who has no idea of the borderland between the affirmative and negative. Before examining in detail Lamb's relation to Burton, it will be as well to give some short account of that famous personage and his book.

Burton.

Robert Burton was born at Lindley in Leicestershire on Feb 8th 1576—7, as appears from his monument in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. His father Ralph Burton was a man of good family and possessed of property, for we find Burton saying. "I was born of worshipful parents myself, in an ancient family, but I am a younger brother." His father was the owner of an estate at Lindley, which is described by Burton as the "possession and dwelling place of Ralph Burton Esy, my late deceased father" — and again "the pleasant village of Falde (in Staffordshire), an ancient patrimony in our family, is now in the possession of mine elder brother, William Burton Esq." From these facts we can judge of the status and good name the family must have enjoyed. His mother, Mistress Dorothey Burton (died 1629) was famous

¹⁾ Religio Medici.

throughout the country round for her skill in medicine, for she "had done many famous and good cures upon divers poor folks." ¹⁾ We learn from Burton's will that he was a Grammar Scholar at Nuneaton, and further from the "Anatomy" that he was also at Sutton Coldfield in Warwickshire. In his remarks on education he raises a protest against the severity of the discipline of the schools of his day. "Nemio severitate deficiunt et desperant" he says "children are made to think no slavery in the world (as once I did myself) like to that of a Grammar Scholar." It is possible that Burton may have received an exceptionally severe training, but it is just probable that his attitude of mind on the question may have received a bias from the nature of the subject he was treating at that particular moment, namely the influence of education as a cause of melancholy. In 1593 he entered Brasenose College Oxford as a Commoner, under the tutorship of Dr. John Bancroft, afterwards Bishop of Oxford. In 1599 he obtained a studentship — equivalent to our modern fellowship — at Christ Church and here he remained for the remaining forty one years of his life. "I have lived" he says in the Anatomy "a silent, solitary, private life, mihi et musis in the University as long almost as Xenocrates at Athens, ad senectam fere, to learn wisdom as he did, penned up most part in my study. For I have been brought up a student in the most flourishing colledge of Enrope, angustissimo collegio . . . for 30 years I have continued a scholar." But his energies were not confined to mere scholarship. In 1606 he wrote a Latin Comedy "Philosophaster" (acted at Christ Church 10th Feb 1617--8), and in 1616, after having received the degree of B. D. 1614, he was presented to the Vicarage of St. Thomas, Oxford by the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church. His preferment did not end here, for in 1630 George, Lord Berkeley, to whom the Anatomy is dedicated, gave him the living of Segrave in Leicestershire which he "kept with much ado to his dying day." Burton was not an enthu-

¹⁾ Anatomy of Melancholy.

siastic parson, he remained in his parishes the requisite number of days and for the remainder of the year left them in charge of some curate; he himself preferred the calm of his own study at Christ Church. "I have a competency (*Laus Deo*) from my noble and magnificent Patrons though I still live a collegiate student, and lead a monastique life." He does not seem to be quite contented with the rewards he received — he inveighs against the "gripping patrons" who are the fountain of injuries done to the church. On the other hand he acknowledges that the lack of further promotion was "due to his own infelicity, than to their (the patrons) naughtiness." He compares himself to Alexander, the tutor of Crassus, who asked nothing from his master and therefore received nothing — 'Had I put myself forward . . . I might have been as great as many of my equals.' The course of his life does not seem to have left him altogether unsatisfied; he was once mad to bustle about and seek preferment, but that is past, perchance he has received more than he deserved. "*Inveni portum; spes et fortuna valet.*" He died in 1640.

The 'Anatomic of Melancholy', Burton's great work, was first published in 1621. The first edition contained an apologetical Appendix signed Robert Burton and dated 'From my study in Christ Church December 5, 1620.' The reception of the book was highly favourable, as may be seen from the number of editions published during the next fifty years. We find editions in folio dating from the years 1624, 1628, 1632, 1638 (the last during his lifetime), 1651—2, 1660 (which I myself have used), 1676. Burton himself in the Introduction to the Anatomy says 'The first, second and third editions are suddenly gone, eagerly read.' Fuller in his *Worthies* states that scarce any book of philology in our land hath in so short a time passed so many editions.' It was Burton's custom at the issue of each new edition, to revise and make additions to the preceding one. The Book must have become very dear to his heart, for though in the third edition he says 'I am now resolved never to put this treatise out again, ne quid nimis, I will not hereafter add, alter, or retract, I have done',

we find alterations in the fourth edition. He quotes the story of Panerates in Lucian, who being in want of a servant, took a door post and made it stand up like a man and perform all the services he required. He, the Author, has no such skill to create assistants for this work; he had to do his business himself, and "therefore was enforced, as a Bear doth whelps, to bring forth this confused lump". The third edition contained the famous frontispiece by C. Le Bland, which was descriptive of the various kinds of melancholy with their several cures. Burton died in 1640 but he left further materials for a new edition, which were handed to his publisher — Henry Crippes living at 'Popes-head Allee'. The demand appears to have fallen off after the year 1676 and no further editions were published for some considerable time. The book was a great favourite of Dr. Johnson's, who used to say that it was the only book which could make him rise two hours earlier. Ferrier in his 'Characteristics of Sterne' has pointed out the great indebtedness of Tristram Shandy to the Anatomy. At the end of the 18th century general interest was again aroused in the book. Editions were published in 1800 and 1806, and several abridgements have been made during the present century. The latest is that of Shilleto and Bullen, in three volumes, London 1893.

Of the title of this book Burton says 'It is a kind of policy in these days to prefix a phantastical title to a book, which is to be sold. For as Larks come down to a day net, many vain readers will tarry and stand gazing like silly passengers, at an antick picture in a painter's shop, that will not look at a judicious peece. For my part I have honorable presidents for this which I have done. I will cite once for all Anthony Zara, Pap. episc his Anatomie of wit in four sections, members, subsections &c to be read in our libraries.'¹⁾ Such titles had become very common since the publication of Lyly's 'Anatomie of wit', and Burton could very well have cited him as *the* "honorable president".

¹⁾ Also the margin Anatomie of Popery, Anatomie of Immortality.

It will be convenient here to give some account of the general plan and contents of this remarkable book. In point of scheme it is not so important as in matter of style and contents. The book opens, as has been said with a frontispiece on the right hand side, containing pictures, illustrating the various kinds and degrees of melancholy, such as jealousy, solitude, insanity and so on, which are explained by a poem of ten verses on the left hand side. In the centre of the frontispiece is the title, which is as follows; “The Anatomie of Melancholy. What it is, with all the kinds, causes, symptomes, prognosticks and several cures of it. In three Partitions, with their severall Sections, members or subsections, Philosophically, Medicinally, Historically, opened and cut up by Democritus Junior. With a Satyricall Preface, conducing to the following Discourse. The seventh edition, corrected and amended by the Author. Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.”

Above the inscription stands a portrait of old Democritus of Abdera, sitting under a tree, and cutting up various animals in order to find the seat of melancholy. Below the inscription is a portrait of Democritus Junior, of which the Author says ‘as thou likest it, so it likes thee’. Underneath in the two corners are shown pictures of the two plants, most frequently recommended for the cure of Melancholy — Borago and Helleborus.

Then follows the Dedication to George, Lord Berkeley, ‘honoratissimo domino’, then a Latin letter, Democritus Junior ad Librum suum. Finally before entering upon his lengthy Introduction Burton has summarised in verse the joys and sorrows, the ‘pleasing thoughts’ and ‘thousand miseries’ which result from the state of melancholy — pleasure and pain alternate in these verses, each of which ends with a couplet expressive of contempt or admiration of Melancholy.

The Introduction is concerned with the lengthy address of ‘Democritus Junior to the Reader’, which occupies 78 pages of folio. It contains Burton’s defence for his use of the nom de plume, Democritus Junior, his reasons for writing such a

book, with remarks concerning the generality of the disease of Melancholy, the present state of England, and proposals for a new Utopia of his own. The personality of Democritus seems to have appealed to Burton in an especial manner — not only does he imitate Democritus' habit of scoffing at frail humanity, but even went as far as to have acted the Democritus Junior in his private life at Oxford. In describing the Life of Democritus, Burton quotes Hippocrates to the effect that "he would walk down to the haven and laugh heartily at such variety of ridiculous objects, which there he saw." Bishop Bennet, in his Register and Chronicle p. 320, says of Burton, that he would be extremely cheerful and would then fall into such a state of despondency that he used to go to the bridge and hear the bargemen swear, 'at which he would set his hands to his sides and laugh most profusely'.

Burton further tells us that he resembled Democritus in that he was shut up in his study at Oxford, and could from that place of refuge "daily hear both private news"; now and then he walked abroad, and like Democritus "could not choose but make some little observation". But the real reason of his writing the book was that "he writ of melancholie by being busy to avoid melancholic". He confesses "I had gravidum cor, foetum caput, a kind of impostume in my head" and that he wished to make "an antidote out of the prime cause of the disease". He could have written upon other subjects but "was fatally driven upon this rock of melancholy and carried away by this by-stream".

Against various imaginary criticisms, such as "that he being a Divine has written of Physik", he contends that many physicians have taken orders in the church, and that an absolute cure in this disease is only made possible by the mutual cooperation of Doctor and Divine.

He then turns to the proof of the generality of the disease, in Kingdoms, Provinces, and Families, in Church, in Politics, in Law and in war — wherein such streams of blood flow as are able to turn mills. Such absurdities and manifest wrongs existed that if Democritus could but come and see

them "he would break the rim of his belly with laughing" "When all are mad, who can discern madmen? I refer to you, though you be likewise fools and madmen, and I as mad to ask the question." Having treated of the state of kingdoms in general, he descends to the state of England in particular, complains of the idleness of the people, the want of cities and of the means of conduct and navigable rivers (wherein he shows himself as a practical philosopher), and as some consolation for the desolation he sees around him, he constructs an Utopia of his own, which is modelled on that of Sir Thomas More. Then he briefly "runs over some few sorts and conditions of men. The most secure, happy, jovial merry in the world's esteem are Princes and great men, free from melancholy, but for their cares, miseries, suspicions, jealousies, I refer you to Zenophon's Tyramus." And with such antitheses does he go through the whole list. Great men, philosophers, lovers, all have need of Hellebor as a means of releasing themselves from sorrow.

Finally he makes personal explanations for what he has said; in case he has been too satirical or comical for a Divine, he will hide under the name Democritus; in case he has spoken "foolishly, rashly, unadvisedly, absurdly", he will acknowledge he has anatomised his own humour. He requests every private man to pardon him, if "hereafter in anatomising this surly humour, my hand slip, as an unskilful prentise I lance too deep and cut through skin and all at unawares."

The "Anatomy" proper is divided into three Partitions, the Cause of Melancholy, the Cure of Melancholy, and Love Melancholy. At the beginning of each partition is a synopsis of the contents, in satirical imitation of those in the theological works of the time. The Partitions are divided into sections, members, and subsections; the main argument of the sections is to show the Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks or immediately preceding signs, and lastly the cure of the disease. A closer examination of these points is to be found in the several members and subsections corresponding to the above named sections. Thus, to take an example, the main lines

of thought contained in the members of the 'Cause' section may be set down as follows:

Natural and supernatural Causes.

Necessary Causes, such as Bad Diet, Ayr &c.

(these being handled in the subsections).

Passions or Perturbations of the Mind.

Non-necessary Causes, such as terrors and affrights, education.

Causes resulting from the influence of the body on the mind
(from which arise Head Melancholy, Hypochondriacal
Melancholy, and Melancholy "all over the body").

These divisions are more or less closely followed in the "symptomes" section, and in the 'partition' devoted to the Cure of Melancholy. The 'cure' partition is enlarged by a section on physik, and a long digression on "Remedies against Discontents", corresponding to the "heap of other accidents, the death of friends &c." in the first or Cause section. The partition on Love Melancholy is equivalent to the first and second partitions rolled into one; it contains a general introduction, a discourse on Heroical Love (before marriage!), on Jealousy (after marriage!) and on Religious Melancholy, all of which are split up into the same divisions of Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks and Cures.

The subsections are devoted to the examination of particular points, and it is in these that Burton assumes the greatest license. Some of the members contain as many as fifteen sections and it is evident that these must overlap each other and cause an enormous amount of repetition. Occasionally a subsection rises in length to the dignity of a 'section', and especially when the author seizes the opportunity of making a digression such as on "the Nature of Devils and Spirits" "On the Force of Imagination" "On Ayr" "Remedies for present Discontents"; at the end of such a digression he returns to his anatomising with some such reflection as the following "But hoo! I am now quite gone out of sight, I am almost giddy with roving about: I could have ranged farther yet."

When we turn to the Contents of the Anatomy, we find

Burton in his Introduction speaking of this "confused lump", which he had erought forth without having had time "to lick into shape." This is a very fair description of the anatomy; for despite the fact that the Author began by laying down certain rules and divisions, which were to be landmarks to him on his way, all his endeavours to keep with in these prescribed boundaries were fruitless. The nature of his subject naturally lent itself to boundless digression, and hence it is impossible to give a clear account of the contents; for such a work a second Burton would be required, gifted with a mind that was a storehouse of antiquarian lore, and possessing all his keenness of faculty for quotation and illustration. To quote his own words on a similar subject "He is a good Huntsman that can catch some, not all." It must be remembered that the age of Burton was a great reading age; masses of scholastic and ancient literature had to be read by every student; but as a whole the scholarship was pedantic. Study wanted more life and less pedantry, and this Burton, by means of his fund of dry humour, knew how to supply, though in some respects he was as great a pedant as any of them. No scholar of his day had such a vast store of knowledge at his disposal as Burton. He had a splendid library of his own and the continual use of the Bodleian, so that he had ample resources at hand for the completion of his task. But all this knowledge would have been worse than useless, if he had not possessed in a high degree the gift of sifting it out in an interesting manner, of illustrating his arguments with felicitous quotations and comparisons. This "anatomising and cutting up" of melancholy became in reality an elaborate treatise on Man. As he says in his Introduction "My subject is of Man, and human kind, thou thyself, Reader, art the subject of my discourse." He goes over the whole range of experience from the cradle to the grave. Education, profession, politics, religion, philosophy, history are his subjects, and are handled with reference to this particular disease of melancholy. He shows a profound knowledge of physik, or rather of books written by great physicians, as well as of the mind and of cures

for mental diseases. His entire knowledge was derived from books — he was no traveller or courtier, he confesses he has never been outside England, and yet so keen has been his insight, so lively his imagination that he talks of men and manners in the style of *Tartarin de Tarascon*. He has at his command a vast store of adventure and anecdote with which he can enliven his discourse on this dismal subject.

A pronounced strain of melancholy runs through the whole book. The writer had searched through many of the literary treasures of the world, he had spent his life ‘mewed up in cloisters’, and had found the result to be *vanitas vanitatum*, yet it has been remarked that Burton’s melancholy had nothing of *Byron* or *Werther* in it. He did not suffer from any weakness of mind, though his body may not have been entirely free from ailments — he was in fact a *hypocondriac* by profession as well as by nature.

He is “the fantastic great old man” as *Lamb* called him — humorous, satirical, merry, sad, in successive moments like the melancholy men he speaks of “Though they laugh many times, and seem to be extraordinary merry (as they will by fits) yet extream lumpish again in an instant, dull and heavy, *semel et simul*, merry and sad but most part sad” so we may say of him; the traces of this inconstancy of disposition are evident as we read his book. He is extravagantly merry, he “fools his readers to the top of his bent” he plays with them, calls them fool dizzards, asses, apologizes for these rash statements, yet resolves to abide by them, they are mad, so perchance is he — then suddenly “the scene changes”, and he becomes dull, sottish, boorish, and suffers from the same pains of melancholy as he is describing. Fear and sorrow are his companions, black humours run to his brain, he becomes satirical, he lashes out at friends and enemies, his prose becomes as heavy as his head, his quotations more ponderous, his translations more lifeless.

The *Anatomy* is a huge collection of extracts taken from authors of all times and connected by a running commentary. Burton possessed a splendid memory and made a vast number

of notes. He says the Anatomy was "in extemporaneous style . . . out of a confused company of notes and writ with as small deliberation as I do ordinarily speak." That is the secret of Burton's work, it is conversational, and that it corresponds to his character we learn from Anthony Wood's Athenae "I have heard some of the ancients of Christ Church say that his (Burton's) company was very merry faceté, and juvenile, and no man of his time did surpass him for his reading and dexterous interlarding his common discourse among them with verses from the poet or sentences from classical authors." His habit is to take a classic phrase as a peg on which to hang his argument, which he supports with a dozen quotations from various authors; he supplements this with a dozen refutations, making his own commentary all the time, and finally humorously "leaves them to settle it among themselves". Or again, he will pile up long stories of witch craft, and of the power and influence of the devil on man, which at the end he characterises as absurd and untenable, yet adding that in his opinion "these things are brought upon us for our offences"!

Despite the profusion of quotation it is false to imagine that the Anatomy is merely a collection of the good sayings of the past. Burton shows at times that he has considerable power of language, as may be seen from the following extract, wherein he treats of the nature of his book. "So that as a River runs sometimes precipitate and swift, then dull and slow; now direct, then per ambages; now deep, then shallow; now muddy, then clear; now broad, the narrow; doth my stile flow; now serious, then light; now comical, then satyirical; now more elaborate, then remisse, as the present subject required, *or as at that time I was affected*. And if thou vouchsafe to read this treatise, it shall seem no otherwise to thee, than the way to an ordinary traveller, sometimes fair sometimes foul; here champion, there inclosed; barren in one place, better soil in another; by woods, groves, hills, dales plains, I shall lead thee per ardua montium et lubrica vallium, et roseida cespitum et

glebosa camporum, through variety of objects, that which thou shalt like and surely dislike.”

Such a vast collection of knowledge deserves a better name than Fuller gave it “a book of philology” — it is rather, a storehouse of knowledge, and in Burton’s day was regarded as a book from which gentlemen of poor education could gain the necessary modicum of classical lore and quotation, and in our day doubtless it has been used by many a needy literary hack. Burton’s style is characteristic of his times. The Enphuistic use of antithesis is strongly marked, as the above extract will serve to illustrate; his sentences are often composed of long strings of adjectives or nouns, depending on a single verb, and leaving the Reader at the end in a somewhat breathless condition. There are many subordinate sentences, dependent on one of these nouns, which break up the main sentence, and take the Reader, in an entirely different direction, from which he is as suddenly restored — thus his construction of sentences is loose following the fashion of his time. Here is a passage which relates what he sees from his window in Christ-Church “I hear new news every day, and those ordinary rumours of wars, plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors, comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions, of towns taken, of cities besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, daily musters and preparations, and such like, which these tempestrious times afford, battles fought, so many men slain, monomachies, shipwracks, piracies and sea fights, peace, leagues, stratagems and fresh alarums.”

Burton’s fondness for quotation has been mentioned, but something more must be added to this. In most instances a Latin quotation is followed by a translation in English, either in prose or verse, according to the nature of the subject, and, vice versa, English sentences are often followed by their equivalents in Latin. His translations are very free — he can turn with equal facility from one language to another, and can catch the true spirit of both without any effort. He himself says “My translations are sometimes rather paraphrases

than interpretations, now *ad verbum*, but as an author, I use more liberty and that's only taken which was to my purpose." This, we shall see, is an important point in connection with Lamb.

The influence of the Anatomy on Lamb.

We saw that personality played a great part in Lamb's likes and dislikes and so Burton became one of his favourites, for he loved the eccentric student, sitting alone in his study at Christ Church, anatomising and cutting up Melancholy. He could picture to himself the man, who had unlimited time and resources at his disposal, with the Bodleian close at hand, in which to gather material for his Anatomy. Burton was no man of the world — his knowledge of men and things was derived from books, but his genius enabled him to perceive the spirit that lay behind their dusty covers. As far as outward life was concerned he was a Professor Dry-as-dust, but on the pages of his book are depicted in a fantastic manner the thoughts and passions of mankind. Such a character would appeal to a man like Lamb. He would feel the contrast between his life and Burton's. For with him the greater part of the day was not his own, his living depended on his daily exertions, and yet by the irony of fate he had the same taste for reading and study without the full means of gratifying them. With the great political and social events of the day, he had nothing to do. "I will write for Antiquity" he said, if the public did not like his works. Yet, though like Burton he was in disposition a retiring student, he had a keen faculty of observation, and a ready pen to transfer his thoughts to paper. His modesty kept him in the background, yet the common every day facts of life find in him a worthy admirer and exponent. Lamb loved a character, which had a twist in it, and hence Burton took firm hold on his fancy. He treated him as a friend; for the man Burton appears most distinctly in his work. An extraordinary personality lay hidden beneath its pages. It is almost unnecessary

to describe him save in Lamb's own words "the fantastic great old man." No lapse of time could destroy the kinship Lamb felt for him, for Lamb, too, was an oddity and had a strange vein of fantasy in his nature. Burton had strongly marked traits of melancholy and boisterous humour. Lamb possessed a morbid and excitable constitution, tinged with inherited though subdued insanity. To strangers both were reserved — both required congenial company to unlock their tongues and to reveal the treasures which nervousness concealed. Both were subject to strange changes of temperament, sad at one moment, boisterous the next. Now they long for solitude, and now they complain of desolation.

Burton's range of experience was remarkably small as far as outward events were concerned. He was no Weltmann, save by theory. Incessant devotion to books made him sarcastic and bitter, and so his method is satirical. Laughter and scorn in his opinion were the true cures of human folly. He brings together a vast profusion of opinions, and has so little respect for them that he leaves them to fight it out amongst themselves. He is a kind of Solomon, everything is vanitas. As snobbery became a mania with Thackeray, so did Melancholy with Burton. All men are dizzards and ninies. His nature was fantastic and pessimistic and it flourished in the hothouse of Melancholy. He was often voluntarily melancholy. It was his habit to assume the manner of Democritus until it became a part of himself. Even when he is most absurdly fantastic, *atra cura* sits close behind him. The Anatomist never forgets the seriousness of his task. Lamb, on the other hand, had much more experience than Burton, he lived a busy life in the greatest town in the world. He had undergone much in his life that, with many men, would have made him bitter. He was often in the depths of despair, but at times he could forget himself and become fantastically merry. Burton always writes according to his mood, some of Lamb's gayest work was written under the saddest circumstances, so much so that we should never imagine that his gaiety was forced. He is always the humourist, who

laughs at men's follies, pardons their foibles, and remembers there is good in everything. At times when he writes of friends, Dyer for example, he is most fantastic when he is most affectionate. This is the cause of the sacredness of the relation between Lamb and his readers. He laughs, but he laughs *with* us, whilst Burton laughs *at* us. Burton sits in the chair of Irony, and contemplates the crowd below. Burton would call a man a fool, a dizzard, Lamb "an ark-angel, a little damaged." Burton produces the uncomfortable feeling that perhaps after all hellebore is the only effective remedy. Lamb has sympathy for the "dim specks — poor blots — innocent blacknesses of the human race."

When we turn to the Anatomy itself, and Lamb's relation to it, we find that it is one of his prime favourites. "I can read anything which I call a book" he says, and the Anatomy is certainly one of them. In 'Mackery End' he speaks of the different tastes of his sister and himself "We are both great readers in different directions. While I am hanging over (for the 1000th time) some passage in old Burton or one of his strange contemporaries, she is abstracted in some modern tale, or adventure." "Out-of-the-way humours and opinions — heads with some diverting twist in them — the oddities of authorship please me best", and such he found in the Anatomy. He loved the old book in its ancient dress and its quaint frontispiece, and he could not bear to think of its being modernised, or issued between modern bindings. In his essay on Books and Reading, he says "I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the Anatomy of Melancholy. What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic great old man, to expose them in a winding sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure. What hapless stationer could ever think of Burton ever becoming popular." Shakespeare and Milton he preferred in modern editions because everybody read them, and Fielding in a circulating library edition, because the condition of the book showed the pleasure that had been derived from it by thousands of poor readers. Such books have become a part of the national heart. But

old Burton — he was too precious save to the eyes of the initiated. Lamb was as jealous over books of this sort, as one of Burton's lovers over his mistress. Lamb may be said to have revived the interest in the Anatomy and in the Urn Burial. And the interest arose from the fact that he made it a part of himself and his life. Lovers of Lamb must become lovers of Burton. Burton gains almost unconsciously a share of the affection we bestow on Lamb. The book became to him a friend, it almost reaches the dignity of a physician. He write to Coleridge "Read Albertus Magnus de Chartis Amissis five times over after phlebotomising — 'tis Burton's recipe" — or again to his friend Dibdin, he warns him against the Anatomy in his present delicate health. "Mary bids me warn you not to read the Anatomy of Melancholy in your present low way. You'll fancy yourself a pipkin or a headless bear as Burton speaks of. You'll be lost in a maze of remedies for a labyrinth of diseases — a plethora of cures. Read Fletcher . . . Fletcher is as light as sodawater, Browne and Burton are too strong portions for an invalid."

Whenever we get a picture of his library the Anatomy is never absent, save when it has been stolen away by one of those unholy borrowers. In the "Two races of men" we hear of those who borrow and those who lend, — Coleridge being an especial offender in this kind. "The slight vacuum on the left hand case — two shelves from the ceiling — scarcely distinguishable but by the quick eye of a loser — was whilom the commodious resting place of Browne on Urn Burial. C¹) will hardly allege that he knows more about this treatise than I do, who introduced it to him, and was indeed the first (of the moderns) to discover its beauties — but so have I known a foolish lover to praise his mistress in the presence of a rival more qualified to carry her off than himself. Just below Dodsley's dramas want their fourth volume, where Vittoria Corombona is, the remainder nine are as

1) Coleridge.

distasteful as Priam's refuse sons, when the Fates borrowed Hector — Here stood the Anatomy of Melancholy in sober state — There loitered the Complete Angler; quiet in life, by some stream side." In the same essay he advises his friends never to shut their libraries to S. T. C. He will restore the books with usury, tripling their value. "Many are these precious M. S. S. of his — (in matter oftentimes and almost in quantity not unfrequently vying with the originals) in no very clerklly hand — legible in my Daniel; in old Burton; in Sir Thomas Browne."

We first hear of the Anatomy in a letter to Coleridge, which in substance is repeated to Manning March 17th 1800. Coleridge, he says, has been staying with him for three weeks, and "has lugged me to the brink of engaging to a newspaper, and has suggested to me, for a first plan, the forgery of a supposed manuscript of Burton, the anatomist of Melancholy. I have even written the introductory letter.* This refers to the "Curious Fragments, extracted from a common place book, which belonged to Robert Burton, the famous author of the Anatomy of Melancholy." In a further letter to Manning of Oct. 5th 1800, he says that all his splendid prospects of engagements had been blown into thin air. "I had struck off two imitations of Burton, quite abstracted from any modern allusions, which it is my intention to bring in from time to time, to make 'em popular! Stuart¹⁾ has got these with an introductory letter; but, not hearing from him, I have ceased from my labours, but I write to him to-day to get a final answer. I am afraid they won't do for a paper. Burton is a scarce gentleman, not much known, else I had done 'em pretty well." The newspaper plan, as far as Burton was concerned, came to nothing, and so these two extracts, with the addition of a third, were published in duodecimo in 1801 with 'John Woodvil'.

The three fragments consist of supposed entries in Burton's diaries. The first is dated on the day when Burton actually

¹⁾ Editor of Morning Post.

finished the Anatomy, December 5th 1620, so he leads off with some account of Burton's hopes and fears in sending his book forth into the world. He distinguishes between two classes of readers, just like Democritus Junior in the Introduction. "Some, I suppose, will applaud, commend, cry him up (these are my friends), hee is a flos rarus, forsooth, a none-such, a Phoenix . . . Others again will blame, hiss, reprehende many things, cry down altogether, my collections, for crude, inept, putrid, post coenam scripta, erudite, and not sufficiently abounding in authorities, dogmata, sentences, of learned writers, which have been before me, when as that first named sort clean otherwise judge of my labours to be nothing but a messe of opinions, a vortex attracting indiscriminately gold, pearls hay, straw, wood, excrement, an exchange, tavern, marte for foreigners to congregate, Danes Swedes, Hollanders, Lombards . . ." With this highly fantastic passage we can compare one from the Anatomy on the same subject.

"Yea but you will infer that this is actum agere, an unnecessary work, the same again and again, in other words. To what purpose? Nothing is omitted that may be well said, so thought Lucian on the like theme. If the severe doom of Synesis be true 'It is a greater offence to steal dead men's labours than their clothes', what shall become of most writers? I hold up my hand at the bar amongst others and am guilty of felony in this kind . . . Oppose what thou wilt — and for those other faults of barbarism, Dorick Dialect, extemporanean style, tautalogies, apish imitation, a rapsodie of frogs gathered together from several dunghills, excrements of authors, toys and fopperies confusedly tumbled out, with out art, invention, judgement . . ., I confess all ('tis partly affected) thou canst not think worse of me than I do of myself . . . Yet this is some comfort, ut palata, sic judicia, our censures are as various as our palates. That which is most pleasing to me, most harsh to another . . . As the barking of a dog, I securely contemn those malicious and scurrile obloquies" sc.

But this is not the only aim of the extracts, bare imitation was not sufficient for Lamb. He wished to show the old Master in three of his different moods — his fantastic treatment of a case of love melancholy, his bitter invective against all the pseudo-philosophers of the world and vain seekers after Truth, his scorn for the present state of society and for the regard paid to rank, and wealth, as opposed to real worth, though the latter may be, perchance, clad in rags.

In the first extract he proceeds to give an account of a 'case', such as is to be found in the third partition of the Anatomy, on Heroical or Love Melancholy. A man comes to the Anatomist, and declares that the author has prescribed no remedy for his own particular case. He is a lover and dotes upon a certain Glyceria, who scorns him, and marries another. He goes away, and travels for seven years to try and cure himself. Fugit hora, he longs for home, determines to return and see his friends once more. They are astonished at the difference in him. He is changed, quantum mutatus, his love is cured, he desires to be a bachelor. She, on the contrary has lost her husband, is amantissima, ready to jump into his mouth, but her he scorns and rejects. Another seven years pass when suddenly redit Amor, his old complaint returns. Once more he goes about anhelus, muttering to himself, yet it is not the present Glyceria that he loves. It is the old notional idea that has taken possession of him. For this he desires a cure. The pseudo Anatomist recommends a hasty marriage, and a diet of herbs and milk, according to Hippocrates his method. At this the man raves, calls him a fool, a candidate for Bedlam, will listen to no reason, and has to be abandoned in despair. Thus, approximately, does Lamb work out his case. He follows Burton in giving the causes, symptoms, and cures. He imitates his habit of leaving the question unsolved. Likewise he omits any certain cure. He recommends remedies from Utopia, Fairy Land, Islands in the Moon, and with that the extract suddenly closes.

The second extract is a satire against the pseudo-philo-

sophers who seek after Divine Truth. There is much disputation and many contentions among men, but the result of it all is that it makes men dizzards and ninnies. Philosophy runs mad, huge books are written and who is the wiser? Many a Doctor seated in his chair is a homo parvulissimus, who seeks only to blind the eyes of his fellows to his ignorance. Men seek to catch retiring Truth, and in doing so they lose their wits. Queen Opinion leads them by the nose, for Truth Absolute dwells not upon earth. And supposing Very Truth were present among us, she abides not in Universities and learned Courts; she comes not to the great clerks, but to the simple man, sitting in quiet groves, amidst the pleasant scenes of nature — to him she appears, “with such a shyning lyghte and a sparklyng countenance”, such as he cannot resist. Here again Lamb has caught the Anatomist in two different moods. In one Knowledge appears to him to be worthless, and his reading and search after Truth to be futile, and one of the great causes of the melancholy of the soul. Hear him on the subject of pseudo sophisters. “These acute and subtil sophisters, so much honoured, have as much need of Hellebor as others, you shall find that of Aristotle true, nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura demenciae, they have a worm as well as others; you shall find a phantasticall brain, a fustian, a bombast, a vain glorious humour . . . run parallel throughout their works . . .; they that laugh and contemn others, condemn the world of folly, deserve to be mocked, are as giddy headed and lye as open as any other.” “It is a labyrinth of intricable questions, unprofitable contentions, incredibilem delirationem, one calls it.” In his digression on Study he says “How many pox scholars have lost their wits or become dizards, neglecting all worldly affairs and their own health . . . for which after all their pains in the world’s esteem they are accounted ridiculous and silly Fools, Idiots, asses, and rejected, contemned, derided, doting and mad.”

But there is a second mood, which must not be forgotten, when he says that Truth appears to the lover of nature, to

him who “refreshes his mynde continually with Natura, her pleasant scenes, woods, waterfalls, or Art her statelier gardens, parks, terraces, Belvideres.” Burton was essentially a lover of nature in her quiet moods by the brook-side. In his introductory poem he writes.

When to myself I act and smile
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,
By a brook side or wood so green,
Unheard, unsought for or unseen,
A thousand pleasures doe me bless
And crown my soul with happiness.

In this he ressembles his contemporary Walton, for whom Lamb had such special regard. The solitude of Nature and the thoughts that come to the melancholy man in her presence, are frequently expressed in the Anatomy and it is characteristic of Lamb, and a proof of his sympathy with the insatiable student, that after the learned search for Truth, he makes Her appear in “the wood so green”.

Extract III is an imitation of Burton in his sarcastic mood, inveighing against the present state of things; he chooses as an example the worship of wealth and the contempt of poverty. The Anatomist is taking his morning walk, when he meets the funeral of a poor man, who has been deserted by all his quondam cronies and relatives. All the friends who surrounded him in the time of his wealth and health have gone; they think it a bore “to have to follow his body to the grave”. All ceremony, funeral trappings and outward signs of woe are wanting — the coffin is composed of bare boards, the man is a pauper and has a pauper’s burial. How different if he had been a Crassus or a Croesus, what funeral odes and orations would have been heard, what groans and beatings of the breast, what a crowd of clients seeking favour from the next heir, who very likely spurns and despises them — ‘Hæc sunt majora gravitate Heracliti. These follies are enough to give crying Heraclitus a fit of the spleen.’ We can compare this with Burton in

his section on poverty and want 'For look into the world, and you shall see men most part esteemed according to their means, and happy as they are rich. If he be likely to thrive and in the way of preferment, who but he.' In the vulgar opinion, if a man be wealthy, no matter how he gets it, of what parentage, how qualified, how vertuously endowed, or villainously inclined, let him be a bawd, a gripe, an usurer a villain, a Pagan, a Barbarian, a wretch; so that he be rich (and liberal withall) he shall be honoured, admired, adored, revered and highly magnified. He shall be accounted a gracious Lord, a Macoenas, a wise, discreet, a proper, a valiant, a fortunate man . . . All men's eyes are on him, god bless his good worship, his honour, every man speaks well of him". And then on the contrary "if we are poor we are metamorphosed in an instant, base slaves, villains, and vile drudges; for to be poor is to be a knave, a fool, a wretch, a wicked, an odious fellow, a common eye-sore." Lamb was particularly fond of such subjects as burials and hanging — and is therefore characteristic that he chooses this form to illustrate what Burton has spoken of in general.

No suggestion has been here made, implying that the paragraphs quoted from the *Anatomy* were those from which Lamb took his specimens. They have been given only as types of Burton's remarks on similar subjects, to show how well Lamb has caught the spirit of the *Anatomy* in general. These three extracts are the three main types which are to be found in that book. That Lamb wished to make them as lifelike as possible seems to be implied in the fact that he definitely states they contain no modern allusions, but may apply with equal justice to almost any period.

There are several points of interest connected with these extracts which will not only show us how faithful an imitator Lamb was, but also throw additional light on the *Anatomy* itself. The first is the question of diet, which plays such an important, if humorous, rôle in the *Anatomy*. Burton wishes to cure the body as well as the mind, and he has therefore devoted several sections to the question of the quality and

quantity of foods. What flesh, fowl and herbs are to be eaten and what not. He draws up an enormous number of regulations and supports them with different authorities, who, it must be added, are generally in the habit of giving contrary opinions. According to Burton's laws there is nothing fit to eat upon the earth, but he saves himself by retreating behind the shield of custom. This subject had a certain attraction for Lamb, as we shall see later on in his Essays. Hence he cannot refrain from paroding this humorous feature in the Anatomy. There are two parodies of this phase — one in the opening lines of the third extract, and the other at the end of the first. The modern Anatomist recommends the lovesick man the following cure. "I counsel marriage with his mistresse, according to Hippocrates his method, together with milk diet, herbs, aloes, and wild parsley, good in such cases, though Avicenna preferreth some sort of wild fowl, teals, widgeons, becca ficos, which men in Sussex eat." And the second concerns the breakfast of the philosopher. "This morning, May 2, 1602, having first broken my fast upon Eggs and Cooling salads, mallows, water cresses, those herbes, according to Villanovus his prescription, who disallows the use of meat as gross, fat, hebetant, feral, altogether fitter for wild beasts than for men, e contra commendeth this herb-diete for gentle, humane, active, conducing in contemplation in most men, I betook myselfe to the nearest fields." Compare these with the following, from Burton taken at random out of a list of similar prescriptions. "Crato, consil 21 lib 1 utterly forbids all manner of fruits, as Pears, Apples, Plums, Cherries etc Sanguinem inficiunt, saith Villanovus, They infect the blood and putrifie, Magninus holds. Cardan makes that a cause of their continual sicknesse at Fessa in Africk, because they live so much on fruits, eating thrice a day — Laurentius approves of many fruits, which others disallow."

Another feature is the manner in which Lamb chooses his Authorities in the Extracts. We have seen that Burton brings forward long lists of authorities pro and con, Lamb here makes use of such names as Melanchthon, Villanovus,

Galen, Wolfius, Sannazar, Polydore, which frequently occur in Burton. There is a certain fitness in the manner in which he introduces them, not ostentatiously, yet lending a certain picturesque colour to the text.

Certain features of style must also be added.

Burton, it has been pointed out, had so many ideas in his head, that he failed utterly to keep his arguments and examples within proper bounds. There is no Ariadne thread running through his work, but all manner of digressions, and digressions within digressions. In the first extract there is a good example of this. He is wondering what will be the opinions of his friends concerning his book, some will think it is a “*flos-rarus*, a none-such, a Phoenix.” Phoenix! at the mention of this word, he rushes off to give an account of this bird, and the various authorities for its existence “Concerning whom (the phoenix) see Plinius and Mandeville, though Fienus de monstris doubteth at large of such a bird, whom Montaltus confuting argueth to have been a man malae scrupulositatis, of a weak and cowardly faith; Christopherus a Vega is with him in this.” Thus is not only the question of the phoenix discussed, but also the untrustworthiness of the authorities. And then he calmly returns to his original as if nothing had happened in the mean time! In his essay “Margate Hoy” Lamb makes the adventurer declare that contrary to the vulgar belief of there being only one phoenix in existence, they are not uncommon in some parts of upper Egypt!

Again, we have seen how Burton joins long lists of words and phrases together, just as Clarendon in his History of the Rebellion does sentences. This feature Lamb has faithfully followed in the extracts. We should note the use of the words *adde* and *also*, where, so to speak, he takes breath before entering on another period. In the III extract the philosopher describes London as follows “Being in London I commonly dwell in the suburbes, as airiest, quietest, loei musis propriores, free from the noises of caroches, waggons, mechanick and base workes, workshoppes, *also* sights, pageants, speetaeles of outlandish birds, fishes, crocodiles, Indians, mermaids, *adde*

quarrels, fightings, fists, proper to this island, at which the stiletto'd and secrete Italian langhs."

Lastly he makes use of Latin quotations intermingled with the English text, and followed by free English translations, "Sumpsit non surripuit" as Burton would say. "That's only taken which is to my purpose." These are woven into the text in the most natural manner, as indeed we should expect from Lamb, judging from the examples given in the Essays. In no case do they interrupt the flow of language, in fact they add an additional flavour. I set down some examples here from both authors.

Compotores — those jokers, his friends that were wont to tipple with him at ale-houses.

assesores opum — those cronies of his that stuck by him so long as he had a penny.

amantissima — ready to jump into his mouth:

We notice the expanded form in the English translation which is a special habit of Burton's as the following shows *necessitas cogit ad turpia* — poverty alone makes men thieves, murderers, traitors, assassins.

hinc illae lachrymae — that's the primary cause.

omnem hilaritatem in perpetuum amisi — mine heart's broken, I shall never look up or be merry again.

After speaking of the extracts in his letter to Manning, Lamb goes on "I have also hit off a few lines in the name of Burton, being a 'Conceit of Diabolic Possession.' Burton was a man often assailed by the deepest melancholy, and at other times much given to laughing and jesting, as is the way with melancholy men. I will send them to you, they were almost extempore, and no great things, but you will indulge them." This 'conceit' was published with the extracts by Lamb under the title 'Hypochondriacus.'

By myself walking,
To myself talking,
When as I ruminatē
On my ontoward fate,

Scarcely seem I
Alone sufficiently,
Black thoughts continually
Crowding my privacy;
They come unbidden
Like foes at a wedding,
Thrusting their faces
In better guests' places,
Peevish and malcontent,
Clownish, impertinent,
Dashing the merriment;
So in like fashions
Dim cogitations
Follow and haunt me,
Striving to daunt me,
In my heart festering,
In my ears whispering,
"Thy friends are treacherous
Thy foes are dangerous
Thy dreams ominous."

Fierce Anthropophagi,
Spectra, Diaboli,
What scared St. Anthony,
Hobgoblins, Lemures,
Dreams of Antipodes,
Night-riding Incubi
Troubling the fantasy,
All dire allusions
Causing confusions;
Figments heretical
Scruples fantastical,
Doubts diabolical;
Abaddon vexeth me,
Mahon perplexeth me,
Lucifer teareth me —¹⁾

¹⁾ Compare this with the extract from Burton in Lamb's essay on 'Ears' — quoted later on.

Jesu! Maria! liberate nos ab his diris tentationibus
Inimici.

Burton distinguishes three classes of Melancholy — Head Melancholy — *Hypochondriacal* or wind Melancholy — and Melancholy “all over the body”! There is a picture of Hypochondriacus in the Frontispiece to the Anatomy, with an explanatory verse on the opposite page, but it is not to this that this poem refers, but rather to the “Author’s Abstract of Melancholy” to which reference has been made. The main substance of this poem is taken from the following verse in Burton.

Methinks I hear, methinks I see
Ghosts, goblins, fiends; my phantasie
Presents a thousand ugly shapes
Headless bears, black men, and apes,
Doleful outeries and fearful sights,
My sad and dismal soul affrights.
All my griefs to this are folly,
None so damned as Melancholy.

The first poem which Lamb wrote for several years after this was his ‘Farewell to Tobacco’ and this likewise has much in it that is due to Burton. Burton in his ‘Abstract’ wrote alternate verses in praise or blame of melancholy — which form Milton borrowed in his *L’allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Thus with the verse quoted above we may compare the following.

Methinks I hear, methinks I see,
Sweet music, wondrous melodie,
Towns places and cities fine.
Here now, then there; the world is mine,
Rare beauties, gallant ladies shine
Whate’er is lovely or divine.
All other joys to this are folly,
None so sweet as Melancholy.

Lamb adopts this same method in his poem on Tobacco — he blesses it and curses it in alternate verses. Tobacco can

hide him from his worst foes, but it so changes his features that his best friends do not recognize him. Tobacco is a gross usurper of the rites of Bacchus, yet it aids the God's victories all the more.

Scent to match thy sweet perfume
Chemic art did ne'er presume.
Through her quaint alembic strain,
None so sovereign to the brain.
Nature, that did in thee excel
Framed again no second smell.
Roses, violets, but toys
For the smaller sort of boys,
Or for greener damsels meant;
Thou art the only manly scent.

Then follows the reverse side of the picture

Stinking'st of the stinking kind,
Filth of the mouth and fog of the mind,
Africa that brags her foyson,
Breeds no such prodigious poison,
Henbane, nightshade, both together,
Hemlock, aconite —

at which point he breaks off again into hyperboles of praise. A little further on in the same poem, we find that same piling up of words, which in some measure bring back the "headless bears" verse given above.

He borrows love's language and instead of calling it

Dearest Miss,
Jewel, Honey, Sweetheart, Bliss,
And these forms of old admiring,
Call her cockatrice and Siren,
Basilisk and all that's evil,
Witch, Hyena, Mermaid, Devil,
Ethiop, Wench and Blackamoor,
Monkey, Ape, and twenty more.

In 1814 Lamb published in the "Champion" an essay on the "Anatomy of Tailors", bearing the motto

sedet, alternamque sedebit
Infelix Theseus. Virgil.

and signed Burton Junior.

We find a letter of Lamb's to Wordsworth on the subject. Wordsworth had evidently read Lamb's article and had written to him about it, for the latter replies "your experience about tailors seems to be in point blank opposition to Burton, as much as the author of *The Excursion* differs, *toto caelo*, in his notion of a country life from the picture which W. H. (Hazlitt) has exhibited of the same. But with a little explanation you and B may be reconciled. It is evident he confined his observations to the genuine London Tailor. What freaks tailor-nature may take in the country is not for him to give an account . . . Burton never affirmed that the art of sewing disqualified the practiser of it from being a fit organ for supernatural revelation. He never enters such subjects."

Nine years had passed since Lamb wrote the 'Farewell', and thirteen since he had published the extracts. The difference in Lamb's style is great, though he keeps still to the old form of anatomising. This article on Tailors is written in modern English, in bare outline it resembles the essay. It comes in his emancipation period, when the influence of other authors was combined with the Burton. Thus we have an extract from Sir Thomas Browne, and a sentence somewhat resembling Sir Thomas about the calm bravery of tailors when facing death in battle. But the essay bears in its essential features the stamp of the old Anatomist. We have only to listen to such sentences as "For pride is near of kin to melancholy, — a hurtful obstruction from the ordinary outlets of vanity being shut; it is this stoppage which engenders proud humours" or "Shall we wonder to find the brain affected and in a manner overclouded, from that indissolable sympathy between the noble and ignoble parts of the body" — to be

reminded of Burton with his “humorous, and black spirits rushing from the heart into the brain.”

Lamb begins by anatomising the general characteristics of tailors. He mentions their professional melancholy, and the suspicious gravity of their gait. They avoid all public assemblies and jovial gatherings. They, like Sir Thomas Browne, have been born under a “leaden planet”. Their pride is inward not outward — for the beauty or plainness of their wares neither elevates nor depresses them. Yet they are brave, but it is a bravery which comes from contemplation — for they are no newsmongers. Then Lamb proceeds, like Burton, to search for authorities. But he does not turn to the Scholiasts, Schoolmen, and old Philosophers and Physicians as his predecessor did — but to his favourite authors.

“Burton, whose book is an excellent abstract of all the authors in that kind who have preceeded him, and who treats of every species of this malady, from the hypochondriacal or windy to the heroical or love melancholy has strangely omitted it. Shakespeare himself has overlooked it. “I have neither the scholar’s melancholy, saith Jacques, which is emulation; nor the courtier’s which is proud; nor the soldier’s, which is politic; nor the lover’s which is all these”, — and then, when you might expect him to have brought in “nor the tailor’s, which is so and so” — he comes to an end of his enumeration, and falls to a defining of his own melancholy. Milton has likewise omitted it, where he had a fair opportunity of bringing it in, in his *Penseroso*.” As in these Lamb finds no solution, he is compelled to search himself for the causes. Burton gives the ‘causes’, ‘symptoms’ and ‘causes of these symptoms’ — which does not err in the direction of clearness — Lamb is content with symptoms and causes. Firstly, he speaks of the ‘Final’ causes of this melancholy, which is probably due to the fact that clothes were the first outward sign of the fall of the human race, and that it was therefore only fitting for that section of mankind, which is concerned in the making of apparel, to preserve a marked

degree of seriousness in their demeanour — an idea which is not inferior to Burton in the absurdity of the invention. But in the Anatomist's airy manner he waives all further reference to final causes, — he will discover the 'Efficient' causes — an imitation of Burton's anatomy of the soul, into "apprehensive" and "moving", of which latter Reason is the "Efficient Cause", as he calls it. And first it is due to his sedentary habits, which he supports by an extract from a certain Dr. Norris. The body and the brain being indissolubly connected, the humours of the body must affect the brain — hence melancholy. The Turks, for example, who sit cross legged are noted for this complaint. Secondly it comes from his Diet. And here Lamb brings in an old joke against tailors, who were reported to be excessively fond of Cabbage — the word used in the double sense of stealing and the vegetable — (Tailors being supposed to retain the unused cloth for themselves). He turns with glee to his old friend Burton to furnish him with a proof of his theory. "Amongst herbs to be eaten (he says) I find gourds, cucumbers, melons disallowed; but especially CABBAGE. It causeth troublesome dreams, and sends up vapours into the brain. Galen loc. affect. lib 3. cap 6 of all herbs condemns cabbage. And Isaak lib 2. cap. 1. animae gravitatem facit, it brings heaviness to the soul." This extract is taken from Burton in the Chapter entitled "Bad diet a cause of melancholy." We see again how fond Lamb is of referring to the question of food as in Burton. The whole essay is, indeed, fantastic in the highest degree. It is an Anatomy in Miniature.

Two essays of this period, which have already been referred to by name, are concerned with this question of food. The 'indulgence of the palate' and 'Edax on Appetite.' Here again the resemblance to Burton is not so clear, save when there is some direct reference to food. The letter on the 'indulgence of the palate' is supposed to be written by a wife, who is troubled by the ravages made on her viands by a frequent visitor. The family themselves are vegetarians. "We have a theory, that animal food is not wholesome or natural to

man." "Our children are perfect little Pythagoreans." Like Burton they eat dried fruits, figs, raisins and milk. "A beef steak is an absurdity to them; a mutton-chop, a solecism in terms; a cutlet, a word absolutely without any meaning; a butcher is nonsense, except so far as it is taken for a man who delights in blood, or a hero." As Burton says, the world has become used to these things by custom, and so the housewife tries to train her children gradually to become accustomed to the sight of cooked meat. He asks what was the cause of this immoderate appetite. "His father and mother, by all accounts, were very moderate eaters; only I have heard that the latter swallowed her victuals very fast, and the former had a tedious custom of sitting at his meals." — A reason which is a burlesque on Burton's "Parents a Cause of Melancholy by Propagation."

The second essay 'Edax on Appetite' is a humorous account of a man who, from his birth, has been afflicted with an enormous appetite — "an appetite which grows by what it feeds on." He gives a description of the mockery he is subject to, of the struggles he has made to conquer it. He takes a fantastic illustration, out of Pliny, of an animal called the Annihilator, which causes everything it bites to crumble to dust in a few seconds. Finally he will leave his body to the anatomists and physicians, that it may be cut up to determine where lay the original sin.

The essays of Elia are the crown of Lamb's work; **they contain the essence of the influences which** had been at work on his style during the previous twenty five years. Hence the task of estimating the extent of Burton's influence becomes more difficult. In an essay on the "Old and new Schoolmaster" Lamb said "you may derive thoughts from others; your way of thinking, the mould in which your thoughts are cast must be your own." No man could write clearer, purer or better English than Charles Lamb, and yet his style is, as Canon Ainger expresses it, Protean — we can never definitely fix it. For he suits his style to the subject that he writes on, and we

no sooner imagine that are have a definite idea of it, than he flits off into some new form.

We can here sum up the influence which up to the year 1820 Burton had on Lamb. He began with direct imitation both in prose and verse — he not only tries to catch some of the spirit, which is in the Anatomy, but he concerns himself with all the details and tricks of expression which Burton is in the habit of using. He also shows that he has a clear idea of the groundwork of the Anatomy. Then he passes on to the 'Farewell to Tobacco', in which he is indebted to Burton for the form, whilst the metre is taken from a poetical contemporary of the Anatomist. Here again, as in the Hypochondriacus the language is entirely modern, but highly fantastic. In the Anatomy of Tailors we find the last direct imitation of both form and spirit, though the language is in the style of the Spectator. In the other two essays of this period, Burton's influence is still fainter, as it is wrapped up and woven in with other styles. He no longer makes direct reference to Burton. The Anatomy has become an unconscious factor in his style, which will make itself felt, whenever the grotesqueness of the subject gives it an opening in which the 'Fantastic' may play a part. We may divide the idea of the Fantastic into three main parts that of the gravely humorous, of the purely witty, and of the pedantic. When Lamb imitates Burton he is generally pedantic. Browne and Fuller are the representatives of the other two classes, and their mannerisms are quite distinct from Burton's. But the pedantic does not play so great a part in the essays as that of the gravely humorous.

There are only two essays in which direct reference is made to Burton which in any way concern direct imitation, though there are many references to the man and his book, which are merely passing. These essays are "the Chapter on Ears" and "Witches and Other Night Fears." In the 'Ears' essay he begins with the somewhat startling announcement 'I have no ear', but he immediately dispels any anxiety the reader may have on the subject by stating that he is not

bereft of those “indispensable side — intelligencers” — but that he means he has no ear for music. Such a fantastic-pedantic opening prepares the way for Burton. Lamb was no musician, he tells us he had practised ‘God save the king’ all his life, and had never arrived within several quavers of the original tune, though he adds, no one hath ever doubted Elia’s loyalty. Music in every form, save that of street noises, causes him pain, opera and oratorio remind him of the Theatre in Hades, where only the forms and none of the enjoyment are kept up. Then he goes on to describe the effect of instrumental music — “Words are something; but to be exposed to an endless battery of mere sounds; to be long a dying; to be stretched up on a rack of roses; to keep up languor by unintermitted effort, to pile honey upon sugar, and sugar upon honey, to an interminable tedious sweetness; to fill up sound with feeling, and strain ideas to keep grace with it; to gaze on empty frames and be forced to make the pictures for yourselves; to read a book, all stops, and be obliged to supply the verbal matter; to invent extempore tragedies to answer to the vague gestures of an inexplicable rambling mime —” these are some of the pleasures of instrumental music and then he goes on, “I deny not that in the opening of a concert, I have experienced something vastly lulling and agreeable: — afterwards followeth the languor and oppression . . . like the comings on of melancholy, described by Burton, doth music make her first insinuating approaches: — ¹⁾ “Most pleasant it is to such as are melancholy given, to walk alone in some solitary grove, betwixt wood and water, by some brook side, and to meditate upon some delightful and pleasant subject, which shall affect him most, *amabilis insania*, and *mentis gratissimus error*. A most incomparable delight to build castles in the air, to go smiling to themselves acting an infinite variety of parts, which they suppose, and strongly imagine, they act — or that they see

¹⁾ Anat. of Mel. On Solitariness p. 88, also cf. Lamb’s poem *Hypochondriacus*.

done. So delightful these toys at first, they could spend whole days and nights without sleep, even whole years in such contemplations, and fantastical meditations, which are like so many dreams, and will hardly be drawn from them — winding and unwinding themselves like so many clocks, and still pleasing their humours, until at the last *The Scene turns upon a sudden*, and they being now habitated to such meditations and solitary places, can endure no company, can think of nothing but harsh and distasteful subjects. Fear, sorrow, suspicion, subrusticus pudor, discontent, cares and weariness of life, surprise them on a sudden, and they can think of nothing else: continually suspecting, no sooner are their eyes open, but this infernal plague of melancholy seizeth on them, and terrifies their souls, representing some dismal object to their minds; which now, by no means, no labour, no persuasions, they can avoid, they cannot be rid of, they cannot resist.” This “scene turning” Lamb has experienced at musical parties, where “I stagger under the weight of harmony, reeling to and fro at my wits’ end; — clouds, as of frankincense, oppress me — priests, altars, censers, dazzle before me — the genius of his religion hath me in her toils — a shadowy triple tiara invests the brow of my friend, late so naked, so ingenuous, he is Pope, — and by him sits, like as in the anomaly of dreams, a she — Pope too — tri-crowned like himself! — I am converted and yet a Protestant; — at once malleus hereticorum, and myself grand heresiarch: or three heresies centre in my person: — I am Marcion, Ebion, and Cerinthus — Gog and Magog — what not?” In the passages both before and after the extract from the Anatomy we find the true fantastic spirit of Burton. But this which has just been quoted, is the most characteristic. He has, like the Anatomist, been flying off into midair — “But hoo! I am quite gone out of sight” — he piles up sentence after sentence, comparison after comparison, his language is disjointed and fantastic, he struggles in the embraces of the Goddess Music and cannot free himself, until finally the supper tray enters, reconciling him to the

rationalities of a purer faith, and showing him the genuine unterrifying aspect "of my pleasant countenanced host and hostess". "After the storm comes the calm", and like Burton, who again, after these aerial flights, resumes his anatomising, he comes down to earth and "things earthy".

The second essay is that on "Witches and other *Night Fears*". Burton lived at a period, when the belief in witchcraft had reached its height. Even Shakespeare did not hesitate to make use of the popular belief in their power, though we have no hint of his own opinions on the subject. We have seen from Lamb's criticism on the *Specimens* how popular the subject was among his contemporaries. Burton in his *Anatomy* could not forego the opportunity of jeering at men for their extravagant news on this subject. He made it one of the leading causes of melancholy. In the first Partition there is a long digression on the "Nature of Spirits, bad Angels and Devils and how they cause melancholy" and "Of Witches and Magicians, how they cause melancholy" and it seems possible that the title of Lamb's essay derives its origin from Burton. Burton here strings together the ideas of various philosophers, physicians and representatives of various religious bodies — Christian, Platonic, Atheistic, Sadducean are mixed together in vast confusion. Even Burton himself dwells tentatively on the subject. He was not carried away by such beliefs, as that would not befit the Anatomist, but he has a sort of suspicion that there may be something in it and he cannot entirely free himself from the tendency of his age. He says they are "illusions and cozenings", "they cannot take gold out of Crassus' chest" — with which we can compare Lamb's "Amidst the universal belief that these witches were in league with the author of all evil, no simple justice of the peace seems to have scrupled issuing a warrant for them." On the other hand, Burton says they are messengers of God, sent to plague men for their sins. But we can never be quite sure of the Anatomist. It may be all mockery, for finally he gives priests and pagans permission "to settle it among themselves". He tries to explain these

fears by attributing the power of witchcraft to a 'diseased phantasy' and a 'strong conceit'. "The forcible imagination of the one party moves and alters the spirit of the other. They (witches) can cause and cure not only diseases, maladies and several infirmities by these means but move bodies from their places, cause thunder, lightning, tempests. So that I may certainly conclude that strong conceit or imagination is *astrum hominis* and the rudder of the ship." "'Tis strange what women and children will conceive unto themselves, if they go over a churchyard in the night, lye or be close in a dark room, how they sweat and tremble on a sudden."

Lamb in his essay sets up a theory concerning witchcraft. He contends that our ancestors were not such fools as we suppose in this matter, for we find them possessing critical faculties concerning practical views of life equal to ours. But when once the invisible world was supposed to be open and the lawless agency of bad spirits assumed, what measures of probability, of decency, of fitness or proportion — of that which distinguishes the likely from the palpable absurd — could they have had to guide them in the rejection or admission of any particular testimony." Everything was probable, where no "law of agency" was understood. "There is no canon by which a dream may be criticised." He quotes himself and little Thornton Hunt, as examples of the fears which children suffer from. Little Hunt in his dreams "will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell — damned murderer are tranquillity." He quotes Burton's line "Headless bears, black men or apes" as instances of the forms, which these dreams take. He contends that the fear is spiritual or as Burton would say, it is due to a "strong conceit", and that the idea of an unembodied spirit following one, as in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, is worse than any number of devils. The fact of the dreams being at their worst in the period of "sinless infancy" seems to imply some anterior connection with own "ante-mundane" condition.

Lamb doubtless was well acquainted with beliefs about witchcraft from his extensive reading of authors in the 16th and 17th century, but it is not too much to conclude from the general tenor of his remarks that Burton in particular has had some influence, perhaps in directing his attention to the subject in the form of an article, somewhat corresponding to his (Burton's) Digression. The title and the quotation of Burton seem to imply that he had had Burton in his mind, when considering the subject.

There are a further two essays which have to do with the subject "Anatomy" — one more especially of the body and one of the mind. The first is the essay on the "Convalescent." Lamb had been ill, and as is his custom, proceeds to describe his feelings in his next essay to the London Magazine, and in such a subject the Anatomy naturally plays some part. He proceeds to analyze himself "And truly the whole state of sickness is such: for what else is it but a magnificent dream for a man to lie a-bed, and draw day-light curtains about him; and shutting out the sun, to induce a total oblivion of all the works going on under it." With which compare that phrase of Burton's "most pleasant it is for such as are melancholy given to lie in bed whole days, and keep their chambers." Lamb illustrates the regal nature of the sick bed, the monarchical prerogatives enjoyed by the occupant thereof, — illusions which are dissipated at the return of convalescence. The Doctor no longer appears as the mediating party between Nature and himself nor is he any longer the "Manus Dei", as Burton calls him. The "hypochondriacal flatus", is now subsiding — the acres over which he has ruled in imagination are dwindling to a span — only the thin and meagre figure of the essayist remains. And here again, as in the essay on Ears does Lamb come down from the heights of imagination to the realities of existence, as does his old friend the Anatomist.

The second essay connected with this subject is the "Popular Fallacy" — "that a sulky temper is a misfortune." This is an analysis of temperament and a description of the

growth of jealousies and distrust — which subject Burton has likewise treated in the *Anatomy*. Lamb contends that to the sulky man himself a sulky temper is no misfortune, but a blessing. It enables him to rear up a huge edifice by the aid of his imagination, and increases his idea of his own self-importance. He imagines that someone has passed him in the street without recognising him. This is the first straw, but he proceeds to count up various other imaginary neglects he has suffered from at the hands of his friend. This leads him to the faithlessness of friends in general, and from this point that he is the only faithful friend in the world, and lastly to the crowning conceit, that justice and truth dwell in his own bosom alone. These thoughts are hurriedly cut short by the entrance of his friend with a beaming countenance; and the dream is dispelled. He makes the same quotation as Burton does on the subject of the delusiveness of melancholy —

Pol, me occidistis, amici,
Non servastis, ait; cui sic extorta voluptas,
Et demptus per vim mentis gratissimus error.

Lamb, we notice, always follows Burton in suddenly cutting short these freaks of fantasy and hurriedly bringing his readers back again to firm ground.

We are not accustomed to find Lamb assuming the rôle of the satirist. Humour is the weapon he uses. It is not his habit to cut up and anatomise humanity after the fashion of Burton. But there is one essay, in which he is more vigorous than in any other, namely in "Modern Gallantry", where he protests against the idea that we are more chivalrous to women than our forefathers. And he draws up a number of tests which, until they be fulfilled, he contends, are emphatic proofs of his statement. He sets out these tests in paragraph form, somewhat as follows.

-I shall believe that this principle actuates our conduct, when I can forget that, in the nineteenth century of the era from which we date our civility, we are but just be-

ginning to leave off the very frequent practice of whipping females in public, in common with the coarsest male offenders. I shall believe it to be influential when I can shut my eyes to the fact that in England women are occasionally — hanged.

I shall believe in it, when actresses are no longer subject to be hissed off the stage by gentlemen.

I shall believe it, when Dorimant hands a fish wife across the kennel; or assists the apple woman to pick up her wandering fruit, which some unlucky dray has just dissipated . . .

Finally I shall begin to believe that some such principle is influencing our conduct, when more than one half of the drudgery and coarse servitude of the world, shall cease to be performed by women.”

With such vigorous strokes does Lamb defend the fair sex — contriving to make use of some fretty sarcasm at his fellow man’s expense. In this he follows the example of Democritus junior in the Anatomy of Melancholy. Lamb’s thoughts on this subject are of course quite his own, as is likewise his humorous way of expressing himself, but there is in Burton a passage, which in form, very nearly corresponds to this.

Burton supposes that if Democritus were capable of coming and seeing the anomalies of the present world, he would split his belly with laughing.

“To see so much difference between words and deeds, men like stage players act a variety of parts, give good precepts to others, soar aloft, whilst they themselves grovel on the ground.”

“To see a man profess friendship, kisse his hand, smile with intent to do mischief or cozen him whom he salutes.

“To see a servant able to buy out his master . . .

“To see men buy smoke for wares, castles built with fools’ heads, men like apes follow the fashions.”

Both writers make no attempt to prove that the former world is any “better than it should be” They merely contend

that the world has exaggerated ideas of improvement in manners, and in character. Lamb uses Burton's method of "making an Utopia of his own", whilst Burton contents himself with a drastic account of things as they are, and of the impression they might have made on Democritus.

There is a very pleasant essay which shows the effect of *outward associations* on Lamb's style. It is the essay "Oxford in the vacation". Lamb had never been a university student and so he visits these "academic bowers" in his holidays, and imagines that he is some student, or Gentleman Commoner, strutting about in cap and gown. And it is in Oxford that the spirit of Burton comes over him, and finds expression in his style, though there is no direct reference to him in the essay. He says how odd he is of Christ Church and its precincts, and we can easily imagine the cause. He revels in the Bodleian, and perhaps he is back again in thought to the Anatomist, as he turns over these bulky tomes, for his language becomes quaint and fanciful, and the words of Burton come back to his mind "I no sooner come into the library but I bolt the door, to me excluding lust ambition, avarice, and all such vices, whose nurse is idleness, whose mother is ignorance and Melancholy herself; *and in the very lap of eternity, amongst so many divine souls I take my seat* and with so lofty a spirit and a sweet content, that I pity all our great ones, and rich men that know not this happiness." Amidst such surroundings it is natural that his style should be unconsciously coloured; natural too that he should take up the Anatomist's habit of discussing the reason of his pseudonym. He is "a votary of the desk — a notched and cropt scrivener — one that sucks his sustenance, as sick people are said to do, through a quill." "I am Elia — no Selden, or Archbishop Usher, — though present, in the thick of their books, here in the heart of learning, under the shadow of the mighty Bodley."

Finally we find in the essays numerous hints of the Anatomy — for no other name can they receive. They give us the "sweet assurance" — to use a quotation of Lamb's — that

they are descended from the race of Burton, but where they go or whence they come, we do not know. This is perhaps a more delightful feature in Lamb than the references which can be actually verified. As I have already said, they give a certain indefinable aroma to the text. In all questions concerning food as in "Grace before Meat", a "Dissertation on Roast Pig" there is always a more or less hidden reference to Burton — either in the manner in which he piles up all manner of birds &c that are pleasing to his palate, or in the directions he gives to this cook for the preparation of the young suckling.

Or again in speaking of things concerning the heart, he cannot forbear using Burton's method of enquiry and analysis. He asks what the is authority for making the *heart* the seat of the affections. Why not the liver or the midriff? "But custom has settled these things, and awarded the seat of sentiment to the aforesaid triangle, while its less fortunate neighbours wait at an animal and anatomical distance" — a sentence which reminds us of Burton's "analysis of the Body."

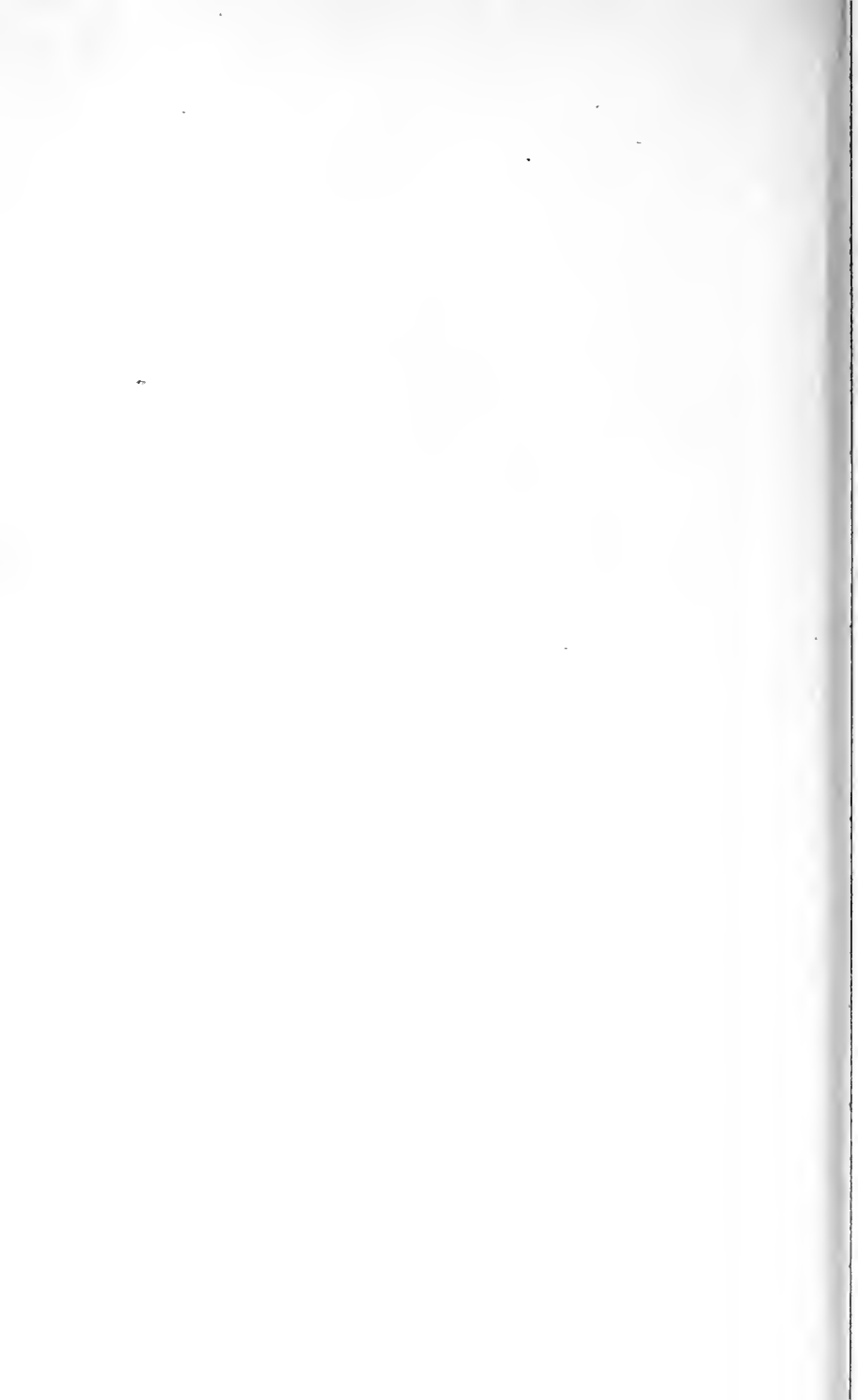
Or again in describing a melancholy character, as that of Evans in the "South Sea House", we see before us one of those who, to quote Burton, "fear they are suspected of a robbery without a cause "for Lamb says he is" Melancholy as a gib-cat over his counter all the forenoon, I think I see him making up his cash. (as they call it) with tremulous fingers, as if he feared every one about him was a defaulter', *"in his hypochondry ready to imagine himself one."*

Or we see Lamb in a boisterous Burton mood at the end of New Year's Eve, after the reaction has set in, caused by that draught of Helicon from hearty cheerful Mr Cotton — the only spa for these hypochondries." Or again in the Margate Hoy, when he describes the fantastic experiences of the traveller whom he meets on board ship, we seem to hear again the solitary student recounting in his study the most extraordinary adventures in all parts of the world with

a solemn countenance, which heightens the belief in the truth of the story.

Thus are have followed the re-birth of the Anatomy in the works of his faithful servitor Lamb. The process has been good for both of them. It has helped to make the modern essayist more antique and picturesque, and has brushed off some of the dust, that lay on the shelves of the old Anatomist.





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