

## **The Friendship between Lamb and Coleridge**

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I am afraid I have for you no new and exciting discovery. Perhaps I may excuse myself by saying that the search for novelty in criticism recently has tended to distance us so so much from the real creators, the prose writers and poets, that their voices altogether cease to be heard. So I shall tell only a simple and familiar story, of which perhaps it is good sometimes to remind ourselves.

Once upon a time there were two little boys called Sam and Charley and each had a fairy godmother. No, this is not really a fairytale and the elderly gentlemen who sponsored Coleridge and Lamb for Christ's Hospital would have been very much surprised to find themselves cast in such a role. Yet they gave the boys not one but two inestimable gifts, of an admirable education and a lifelong friendship. Not that they entirely appreciated their good fortune at the time. As you know, the physical conditions at the school were Spartan and the terrifying figure of the master Boyer strides through his pupils' memories like an ogre. Leigh Hunt, Lamb and Coleridge have all given evidence of his cruelties. Children develop their own superstitions - Coleridge tells, for example, of a Christ's Hospital charm for cramp (*Table Talk* June 10 1832) - or strategies for reading the signs of good or bad fortune. It was firmly believed by members of my house at school that if we had the pudding called spotted dick for lunch before a match our house would certainly win. Perhaps there was more reason in Lamb's account of Boyer's wigs.

He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of different omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discoloured, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution. Woe to the school, when he made his morning appearance in his passy, or passionate wig. No comet expounded surer. - J.B. had a heavy hand.

*(Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago)*

Coleridge told how he was flogged for claiming to be an infidel, “-wisely, as I think,- soundly as I know.” (*Table Talk* May 27,1830)

[21]

Yet, under Boyer, says Lamb, “were many good and sound scholars bred” and the details of Coleridge’s account of the master’s salutary warning against literary affectation in *Biographia* do ring true.

“Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your nurse’s daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh, aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!”

Lamb reports that Coleridge, on hearing of Boyer’s death, provided this epitaph:

Poor J.B.!- may all his faults be forgiven and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities.

His pupils felt gratitude mixed with their nightmares of him. Edmund Blunden, writing of Leigh Hunt, says :” the school gave him an accurate, extensive and lasting control of Latin and Greek, which continued to supply dignity of image and graciousness of allusion to his style through his over-busy literary career. It is not common among journalists to have Appollonius Rhodius or Strabo at their elbow as he had.” (*Leigh Hunt—A Biography*-1930: Archon reprint 1970 p.14)

Coleridge praises Boyer for making “us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons; and they. were the lessons, too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to escape his censure”. Yet a heavy price was paid. Though Lamb’s home was nearby and he never lost contact with it, he feels himself most sensitively into the suffering of his exiled friend.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged years!

It would be hard to find a better description of homesickness than that in *Frost at Midnight*. At the age of eight, in a class-room at the front of my own boarding school, on Sunday mornings, I would sit learning my Collect for the day and staring out at the drive, almost believing that by willing I could make my parents appear walking up it. A few years later, still at the same school, though I was enchanted by *The Ancient Mariner*, it was these lines that really made me Coleridge's slave:

But O! how oft,  
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,  
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,

[22]

To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft  
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt  
Of my sweet birth-place....  
And so I brooded all the following morn,  
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye  
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:  
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched  
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,  
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,

Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,

My play-mate when we both were clothed alike.

The superstition about the film of soot was, alas! less efficacious than the divination by wig.

I do not want to indulge in facile psychologizing but the pain of having been abandoned by a parent as apparently unwanted - for so it seems to the child, though the parent's intention may have been entirely laudable - and into a repressive and loveless regime too, can have a traumatic effect that is lifelong, as "of a little Child" that "now moans low in utter grief and fear-/And now screams loud, and hopes to make its Mother hear!" In Coleridge's case, it may well have set the pattern of his later life: the need to compensate for a sense of worthlessness by showing off in his learned monologues and the longing for an ideal love, combined with the inability to achieve it in the real world.

I was particularly impressed by a notebook passage quoted by Graham Davidson in his book (*Coleridge's Career*. Macmillan 1990.p.154):

O God... preserve me from the deadly Hensbane of self-contempt - the worst and most concentrated form of selfishness. For it is a sinking down into the mere Self, and abstraction from the redeeming God.

Unfortunately the sense of being unloved and unlovable often leads, in a vicious chain, to behaviour liable to alienate affection even further and so to lead to self-disgust. No wonder Coleridge found it hard to understand how Wordsworth could say he felt no need of a Redeemer.

Nevertheless Coleridge's wrestling with the idea of love, temporal and spiritual, proved a fruitful exercise. Kathleen Coburn says,

It is, I believe, an overlooked nobility in Coleridge - his frailties are more obvious - that he was able so often to turn his personal loneliness to creative use. The poems, the literary criticism, the philosophy, all were wrenched out of a complex total experience.

(Experience into Thought. Toronto 1979)

Despite its harsh and painful concomitants, without the education they received at Christ's Hospital neither Coleridge nor Lamb could have contemplated the achievements of their later life: There is some evidence that Coleridge, as he reached the top of the school, developed a relationship of trust with Boyer. John Beer quoted the testimony of Coleridge's fag, Leapidge Smith, in which he remembers Coleridge sending him to the Headmaster's house to present him with a lighted candle "particularly informing the doctor that Coleridge had lighted it". Whereupon Boyer "laughed heartily and replied, 'Tell Colly' (he always called him so when pleased) 'that he is a good fellow'." John Beer goes on to elucidate but the point for us is that this was an in-joke shared between master and pupil. (*Coleridge's Variety* . ed. J. Beer. Macmillan 1974. p.62)

After Coleridge's Army escapade, Boyer helped him get back to Cambridge. (*Letters*, ed. Griggs I. pp.64-5)

The second great gift the school gave to Coleridge and Lamb was that their shared childhood experience laid the foundation for the lifelong friendship which was to mean so much to both of them. Lamb, the younger boy, never became a Grecian because of his stammer. After Coleridge's death Lamb wrote, "He was a Grecian (or in the first form) at Christ's Hospital, where I was a deputy Grecian; and the same subordination and deference to him I have preserved through a life-long acquaintance". At first there was a strong element of hero-worship in Lamb's feelings for Coleridge and he never ceased to revere his genius but by the time he wrote his famous reminiscence of "the inspired charity boy" who expounded lamblichus or Plotinus or quoted "Homer in his Greek, or Pindar" in the cloisters of Christ's Hospital, Lamb had got the measure of his friend. Richard Holmes shrewdly finds that "the Neoplatonic mystics and gnostics have the air of being plucked out of a conjuror's hat," and detects "a certain undercurrent of

affectionate mockery". (*Coleridge: Early Visions*. Hodder & Stoughton.1989. p.33)

[24]

Nevertheless, John Beer points out that "in the time of Coleridge's schooldays, these philosophers had an unusually topical interest, since Thomas Taylor had just begun his enthusiastic series of translations from the Neo-Platonist philosophers", so Lamb may not have been so arbitrary in his choice after all. (*Coleridge's Variety*. p.59)

The prognosis for Lamb's *unqualified* idolization of his friend is, though he does not at first recognize it, bad from the beginning. In his first extant letter of May 27, 1796, Lamb begins with the reassurance that he has paid the bill and redeemed the belongings that were being held in lieu at the Salutation and Cat, where Coleridge had been skulking eighteen months before in an attempt to evade his obligation to Sara Fricker. Not that Lamb grudged the payment: "give yourself no further concern about it. The money would be superfluous to me, if I had it." (*Letters*, ed. Marrs. I. p.3)

No doubt he felt that Sara's loss had been his gain, as he revelled in his friend's evening company, "drinking egg-hot and smoking Oronooko" (Marrs 1.32) and talking - or, in Lamb's case I suspect, listening. In 1818, looking back at this time, Lamb told Coleridge that it was then that "you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindliness". (Lucas, *Life*. 1.p.97. Quoting L.'s dedication to C in *Works*. 1818)

The gifts were reciprocal. If Boyer really had, as Coleridge asserted, instilled into him the maxim that "Whatever is translatable in other and simpler words, without loss of sense or dignity, is bad", [\[1\]](#) he had managed to forget it. Dykes Campbell says," the development of Lamb's critical taste was years in advance of Coleridge's - as may be seen by his letters to his friend in 1796, when Lamb was twenty-one and Coleridge twenty-four" (Lucas, *Life*. 1.p.67)

George Whalley's seminal article, *Coleridge's Debt to Lamb*, [\[2\]](#) drew attention to the importance of Lamb's critical influence at this time, which a detailed study of the letters bears out. "Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge, or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness". This was the message that helped to develop the two branches of Coleridge's verse that Lamb and everyone after him, most admired, the Conversation Poems and the Supernatural.

[25]

Some of our present-day critical theorists could perhaps benefit from Lamb's advice - or maybe they need the stronger medicine of Boyer. "This" says Coleridge "is worthy of ranking as a maxim (regula maxima) of criticism. Whatever is translatable in other and simpler words, without loss of sense or dignity, is bad."

Meantime, in a throw-away passage well into that first letter Lamb confides," Coleridge, I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol - my life has been somewhat diversified of late. The 6 weeks that finished last year and began this your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad house at Hoxton - I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one." How can one fail to admire such a reaction to the experience most feared by mankind, what Lamb calls "the sorest malady of all" and which of us would not have put it first in the letter? "But mad I was," he goes on without any euphemism, "and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume if all told". Later on he says "Coleridge it may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness".

Charles did not have any recurrence - but there was worse to come. On September 27, 1796, he writes to his "dearest friend" to tell him of what he later called "the day of horrors". "My poor dear dearest sister in a fit of insanity has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp." Lamb dealt with the situation calmly and efficiently: "thank God I am very calm and composed and able to do the best that remains to do". But his life had been shattered. For the moment he abandoned the idea of writing poetry. "With me' the former things are passed away', and I have something more to do than to feel". He was only grateful that his own sanity had survived. "God has preserved to me my senses,- I eat and drink and sleep, and have my judgment I believe very sound." He asks Coleridge to "Write, - as religious a letter as possible -" and it is a

consolation, in contemplating Coleridge's generally irresponsible life, that when his friend appealed to him in this terrible trouble he did not let him down. He wrote immediately by return of post and no one could possibly fault him for right feeling and genuine deep care for his friend.

Your letter... struck me with a mighty horror. It rushed upon me and stupified my feelings. You bid me write you a religious letter. I am not a man who would attempt to insult the greatness of your anguish by any

[26]

other consolation. Heaven knows that in the easiest fortunes there is much dissatisfaction and weariness of spirit; much that calls for the exercise of patience and resignation; but in storms like these, that shake the dwelling and make the heart tremble, there is no middle way between despair and the yielding up of the whole spirit to the guidance of faith...

...I look upon you as a man called by sorrow and anguish and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God...

...I wish above measure to have you a little while here; no visitants shall blow upon the nakedness of your feelings; you shall be quiet and your spirit shall be healed...

"I charge you, my dearest friend, not to dare to encourage gloom and despair. You are a temporary sharer in human miseries that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine nature. I charge you, if by any means it be possible, come to me....

The visit was not immediately feasible but the correspondence continued, Lamb confiding without reserve in the friend, whose letter, he said, "was an inestimable treasure to me", and, in his turn, commiserating with Coleridge's own ill-health and insecurity. "Tell me, dearest of my friends, is your mind at peace, or has anything yet unknown to me, happened to give you fresh disquiet, and steal from you all the pleasant dreams of future rest?" (Marrs I. p.59) Very soon poetry becomes again the subject of their letters: "it may divert us both from unpleasanter feelings", says Lamb. It is during the period 1796-1797 that Lamb's critical advice was so useful to Coleridge. Though he did not always immediately act on Lamb's comments, he did respect his opinion. Concerning *Joan of Arc* Coleridge spoke of "Lamb, whose taste and judgment I see reason to think more correct and

philosophical than my own, which yet I place pretty high". A month later, he reports, "The lines which I added to my lines in the *Joan of Arc* have been so little approved by Charles Lamb, to whom I sent them that although I differ from him in opinion, I have not heart to finish the poem". (Griggs I, pp. 297 & 309) If somewhat unwillingly, Coleridge did come to realize that much of his early poetry was over-elaborate. "Charles, I think you never heard me preach?" - "I never heard you d-do anything else." (Lucas, *Life* II.822) But, though Coleridge delightedly reported that Lamb translated "Sermoni propria" as "properer for a sermon", (*Table Talk* July 25, 1832) he particularly praised the poem to which it was attached, *Reflections on Leaving a place of Retirement*. "Write thus, and you have most generally

[27]

written thus, and I shall never quarrel with you about simplicity". He also encouraged his friend to more ambitious ventures, such as "the Origin of Evil as a most prolific subject for a long poem", which eventually emerged as *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, of which, despite minor reservations, Lamb was an enthusiastic partisan. (Marrs I. p.97)

For his part, Coleridge was to write in 1800, "My poor Lamb! - how cruelly afflictions crowd upon him! I am glad that you think of him as I think - he has an affectionate heart, a mind sui generis, his taste acts so as to appear like the unmechanic simplicity of an Instinct - in brief, he is worth an hundred men of *mere* Talents. Conversation with the latter tribe is like the use of leaden bells - one warms by *exercise* - Lamb every now and then *eradiates*, & the beam, tho' single & fine as a hair, yet is rich with colours, & I both see & feel it." (Griggs I. p.588)

After the move to Nether Stowey Lamb asks, "Do, in your next letter, & that right soon, give me some satisfaction respecting your present situation at Stowey. Is it a farm you have got? & what does your worship know about farming?" (Marrs I. p.87) Despite a gap in Coleridge's letter-writing of several months much deplored by Lamb - "Col, you may hurt me and vex me by your silence, but you cannot estrange my heart from you all" - in June, "I stared with wild wonderment to see thy well-known hand again... You press me, very kindly do you press me, to come to Stowey". At last, in July, the long awaited visit took place. (Marrs I

.pp.110 & 113) There Lamb met not only Sara and “the minute philosopher” (Marrs I. p.105), as he called Hartley, but also Poole and William and Dorothy Wordsworth. It is interesting that Wordsworth, to whom Lamb also became a most useful critic, might protest at first but nearly always acted on his suggestions.

I had long felt great sympathy for Mrs. Coleridge, many years before I read Molly Lefebure’s admirable book, ever since, in fact, I first saw the Lime Street cottage and understood what it was like in Coleridge’s day. The first home of my married life was very similar, but I did at least have an oil-stove in the kitchen, on which an oven could sit. How on earth did the three small bedrooms contain the family and three guests? Did Lamb and Wordsworth, who had never before met, have to share a bed? The mind boggles.

Worse than that, though, was Sara’s task in making meals for them all, cooking on an open fire. No wonder “dear Sara” spilt a skillet of milk on her husband’s foot, no doubt stretched out in the most inconvenient and

[28]

warmest place, as she tried to thread the obstacle-race to reach heated food or drying washing. He would not have had a diaper pinned to his knee, on a famous occasion, would he if he had not been hogging the best of the fire? (Griggs I. p.308) I am not surprised that the strain of that summer brought on a miscarriage. (Griggs I .p.339) Oh yes, there’s no doubt where my sympathies lie.

However, for Lamb it was a rare experience. On his return to London he wrote, “I am scarcely yet so reconciled to the loss of you, or so subsided into my wonted uniformity of feeling, as to sit calmly down to think of you and write to you... The names of Tom Poole, of Wordsworth and his good sister, with thine and Sara’s, are become ‘familiar in my mouth as household words’.” (Marrs I. p.117) He asks for a copy of Wordsworth’s poem *Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew Tree*, which warns against a self-indulgent wallowing in disappointment and despair, such as they were helping Lamb to avoid. “It will recall to me the tones of all your voices.”

“You will oblige me too by sending me my great-coat, which I have left behind in the oblivious state the mind is thrown into at parting - is it not ridiculous that I sometimes envy that great-coat lingering so cunningly behind?” That was written in July. Towards the end of September Lamb begs, “I wish you would send my great-coat. The snow and the rain season is at hand, and I have but a wretched old coat, once my father’s, to keep ‘em off, and that is transitory... Meet emblem wilt thou be, old Winter, of a friend’s neglect - cold, cold, cold!” Unfortunately Charles Lloyd was already making mischief, which was to lead, in 1798, to the only breach between Lamb and Coleridge in their whole lives. In publishing in November 1797 the Nehemiah Higginbottom sonnets, including one entitled *To Simplicity*, Coleridge was not being tactful, to say the least!

However let us take Lamb’s visit to Stowey as a milestone and consider what by this time the two friends had achieved with each other’s help. Before Lamb could continue writing and eventually find his appropriate form with the familiar essay, he had to learn to live with the terrible family disaster and its consequences, the limitation of his expectations, his responsibility for Mary, and her recurring illness. This never became easy and his loneliness and grief when she was away touch one deeply in reading the letters.

Nevertheless, with Coleridge’s support at the crucial time, he learnt to deal with them. His reaction to his own brief madness was characteristic.

[29]

There was no evasion of reality, no self-deception or covering up. Lamb looked the worst unflinchingly in the face. Those who still cling to a picture of a sentimental ninny who escaped into whimsy could not be more wrong. Yes, when he wrote, “I am got somewhat rational now and don’t bite anyone”, he was using humour as a defensive weapon, and this continued to be one of his strategies, but only a fool fails to see through the comic surface to the abyss beneath. Even if we did not have the letters or know about Lamb’s life, sensitive and careful readers of the essays would be able to penetrate to the essential toughness underlying his nostalgia and informing his irony. The religious consolation, too, which at his request Coleridge had proffered him, did its part in setting Lamb on the path to a way of life whereby he could fulfil his obligations and also write. In his poem to Lamb before the

catastrophe, Coleridge had promised, “Thou thy best friend shall cherish many a year”.

As to Coleridge, the literary influence of Bowles’ sonnets and “the divine chit-chat of Cowper” (Griggs I. p.279) were utilised and transcended by Lamb’s critical discussion in his letters. Holmes points out (p.115) that “Lamb’s natural taste and perception was to be crucial in the maturing of Coleridge’s verse... well before he came under the personal influence of Wordsworth”. One must be careful not to oversimplify. There was not a sudden and continuous change from complete turgidity to complete simplicity. The two modes co-existed in time, sometimes in the same poem. Though most of us might be hard put to it to detect them, the seeds of Coleridge’s mature poems must be there in *Religious Musings*, just as he was able to diagnose from Wordsworth’s *Descriptive Sketches* “the emergence of an original poetic genius”. Nevertheless, these highly derivative poems are the springboard for growth into new and revolutionary forms. Legouis demonstrated in detail Wordsworth’s imitations and borrowings, particularly from eighteenth century poets, in *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, “so numerous”, he says,” that a special edition would be required to exhaust the list”.

Similarly *Religious Musings* bristles with personifications and resounds with poetic diction but, in particular, reads like a poor pastiche of Milton. Grevel Lindop entertainingly demonstrates “the rhetorical cunning with which Lamb manages his criticism of Coleridge’s poems, covering each dispraise of a part with lavish eulogy of the whole...” (*The Coleridge Connection* ed. Gravit & Lefebure. Macmillan 1990. p.114) He detects a mischievous irony in some of the praise with which Lamb tempers his adverse comments. Here is Lamb

[30]

retracting a previous severity on lines from *Religious Musings*, yet managing to make his point all the same.

“If there be anything in it approaching to tumidity (which I meant not to infer in elaborate - I meant simply laboured) it is the Gigantic hyperbole by which you describe the Evils of existing Society. Snakes Lions hyenas and behemoths is carrying your resentment beyond bounds.” (Marrs I. p.10) He goes on to list the “variety of uniform excellence” of other expressions of- to me - equal monstrosity, his admiration for which I simply do not believe: summed up as “the Simoon”, “frenzy and ruin”, “the Whore of Babylon”, the “cry of the foul spirits disinherited of Earth” and so on. Then he says, ““That is a capital line in your 6th No, “(of *The*

*Watchman*)”“ this dark freeze coated, hoarse, teeth chattering Month”, worthy he says of Burns whom he, but not Coleridge at that time, preferred to Bowles. The contrast between the elaborate bombast of the passage from *Religious Musings* and the down-to-earth unaffectedness of that “capital line” epitomizes the way Lamb’s criticism was leading Coleridge.

One could argue, perhaps, that the process approached its consummation in the poem Coleridge addressed to Lamb during his stay at Stowey in 1797, *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*. Here are some of the lines Lamb refers to in *Religious Musings* about the whore of Babylon:

O return!

Pure Faith! meek Piety! the abhorred Form

Whose scarlet robe was stiff with earthly pomp,

Who drank iniquity in cups of gold,

Whose names were many and all blasphemous,

Hath met the horrible judgment! Whence that cry?

The mighty army of foul Spirits shrieked

Disinherited of earth! For she hath fallen

On whose black front was written Mystery;

She that reeled heavily, whose wine was blood;

She that worked whoredom with the Daemon Power,

And from the dark embrace all evil things

Brought forth and nurtured: mitred Atheism!

And patient Folly who on bended knee

Gives back the steel that stabbed him; and pale Fear

Haunted by ghastlier shapings than surround

Moon-blasted Madness when he yells at midnight!

Return pure Faith! return meek Piety!”

[31]

Then turn to the opening of *This Lime-tree Bower*.

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain

This lime-tree bower my prison!

How well the contrast illustrates what George Whalley describes as Lamb’s task of “poet-making”, “refining Coleridge’s taste, forcing him to renounce rhetoric and the easy effect in favour of a hard clean line with energy self-contained”. Instead of the bombast we have speech rhythms and vocabulary, simple in themselves yet used in sophisticated versification and containing sequences of thought and association which create a unified structure and a new poetic form. Whalley ends his article thus: “one thing is sure: that Coleridge was launched forth upon his marvellous year with vision clarified and energies redirected by his fruitful nine-months’ correspondence with Charles Lamb.”

At first Lamb’s pleasure in the manner of *This Lime-tree Bower* - acknowledged later- was eclipsed by his dismay at part of its matter. We are used to being highly entertained by his well-known comment.” For God’s sake (I never was more serious), don’t make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses.” (Marrs I. pp.217-18)

He protests that “ the meaning of gentle is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited...” But in view of the subsequent history of Lamb criticism he did have a point. Certainly his humane virtues do, in Wordsworthian phrase “shine aloft-like stars” but he was very far from being “poor-spirited” and there are times when his irony can be compared to Swift’s.

Even before the “day of horrors” Lamb administers to Coleridge what Whalley calls “bracing if bitter tonics” (p.75). Afterwards, Whalley says, “ a subtle but

profound maturity had come to Lamb; a new sternness enters his voice". It could be argued that Coleridge's support in Lamb's crisis had helped him to develop his already superior judgment into a new authoritativeness which Whalley believes marks "a very important turning-point in their relations". (p.77)

It remains to relate the end of the story, not, I am afraid, exactly with "they lived happily ever after", but certainly with their regard for one another unabated. Like a weather-house couple, one might go in as the other came out but they were permanently attached. On his death-bed Coleridge wrote in pencil in a copy of his Poetical Works against *This*

[32]

*Lime-Tree Bower my Prison* the words, "Charles and Mary Lamb -dear to my heart, yea, as it were my heart. S.T.C. Aet.63,1834. 1797-1834 - 37 years!" In his will he asked for a mourning ring containing his hair to be given "To my close friend and ever-beloved schoolfellow, Charles Lamb - and in the deep and almost life-long affection of which this is the slender record, his equally-beloved sister, Mary Lamb, will know herself to be included".

Lamb wrote, "When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he had long been on the confines of the next world, - that he had a hunger for eternity. 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 cogitations". Lamb only survived his friend by five months. Wordsworth wrote that Lamb's death "was doubtless hastened by his sorrow for that of Coleridge". (Lucas *Life* II. p.834)

I should like to end with the Latin quotation invented by Coleridge and provided with an equally spurious ascription for the title-page of *Poems by S.T.Coleridge, Second Edition, To which are added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd*. "Duplex nobis vinculum, et amicitiae et similium junctarumque Camoenarum; quod utinam neque mors solvat neque temporis longuinq̃uitas!" Which can be freely translated," Double is the bond between us, both of friendship and of a like

attitude to poetry, so that I wish that neither death nor the passage of time had power to dissolve it”.

The fact that we are still talking of it suggests that in relation to Lamb Coleridge had his wish.

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[1] A note put into Sara Coleridge’s 1847 edition of *Biographia Literaria* which, it is to be assumed, she took from an annotation by Coleridge in the copy she was working from - now presumably lost. The note was printed at the foot of the page describing Boyer’s comments which I quoted earlier and was in the old Everyman edition which I had at school.

[2] ‘Coleridge’s Debt to Charles Lamb’ by George Whalley published in *Essays and Studies* by members of the English Association, 1958.