

Charles Lamb, the Friend

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(Coleridge Bulletin, New Series 15, Spring 2000, pp.16-26)

If ever a man understood the importance and the quality of friendship it was Charles Lamb. He was nurtured in it at Christ's Hospital, which seems to have inadvertently included it in the curriculum, sometimes even by example, as in the case of the two masters, Trollope and Stevens.

Oh, it is pleasant, as it is rare, to find the same arm linked in yours at forty, which at thirteen helped it to turn over the Cicero De Amicitia or some tale of Antique Friendship, which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate! (Bate p.24)

Lamb gives affectionate portraits of a number of his school-friends, often catching their distinctive characters in a few words, as in the wit-combats between Coleridge and LeGrice,

'which two I behold like a Spanish great gallion, and an English man of war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C.V.L., with the English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.' (Bate p. 25)

In Lamb's letter to Coleridge reporting the 'day of horrors' on which his sister Mary in a fit of insanity killed their mother, he writes 'Mr. Norris of the Bluecoat School has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend...' (Marrs I 44; 27 Sept.1796) This Mr. Norris seems to have been a surveyor for the school, whose fraternal net spread wide. In the next letter, the afflicted family no longer feels so isolated. 'Our friends have been very good.' In particular, he speaks of the brother of that Charles Valentine LeGrice 'the English man of war'. Lamb says,

Sam LeGrice who was then in town was with me the 3 or 4 first days, & was as a brother to me, gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance & humoring my poor father. Talk'd with him, played at cribbage with Him (for so *short* is the old man's recollection, that he was playing at cards, as tho' nothing had happened, while the Coroner's Inquest was sitting over the way!) Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his Mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, & he was forced to go. (Marrs I.48-9; 3 Oct 1796)

Lamb also received invaluable moral support from Coleridge, to whom

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these letters were written and who was, of course, as Lamb here addressed him, 'My dearest friend', and who, in his turn, told the painter C.R.Leslie that 'Lamb's character is a sacred one with me'. (Lucas *Life* II.123; Fitzgerald 138) After Coleridge's death, Lamb wrote, 'I cannot make a criticism on men and books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to

him'. Yet, in what George Whalley called Lamb's task of 'poet-making', his letters of 1796-7 had been instrumental in the development of Coleridge's greatest poetry. Perhaps to no-one else at this time, before his intimacy with Wordsworth, would Coleridge have been as willing to defer as to 'Lamb, whose taste and judgment I see reason to think more correct and philosophical than my own...' (Griggs I. 172) But they were not unaware of each other's failings, as evidenced by the circumstances of their one estrangement. Coleridge published the Higginbottom Sonnets, which though not, I think, intended primarily as satire on Lamb's poems, nevertheless were intended to include him among 'our young Bards' whom Coleridge hoped would be improved by his skit. The sonnet 'To Simplicity', which Southey thought was aimed at him, might well have hurt Lamb, who the year before had been advising Coleridge, very wisely, to 'Cultivate simplicity'. If Coleridge had an inkling that verse was not Lamb's most successful medium, he was quite right. Likewise, Lamb's answer, the 'Theses Quaedam Theologicae', drove right home, particularly perhaps in the question 'Whether pure intelligences can love?' (May/June 1798) Charles Lloyd had certainly played a part in bringing about this rift between the two friends but, after the two year gap in their association, they saw each other plainly, warts and all, but were still friends. Perhaps Coleridge had been right to think that Lamb and Lloyd had 'clothed my image with a suit of notions and feelings which could belong to nothing human'. If so, Lamb had learned his lesson. (Griggs I 405)

A couple of months later, in a letter to Charles Lloyd's younger brother Robert, Lamb gives his opinions on friendship. (Marrs I. 134-5. August 1798) Poor Robert was in rebellion against his Quaker home and family and Lamb gently attempts in another letter to persuade him that to be asked to sit in silence at a Quaker Meeting was no very severe hardship Robert, feeling isolated and in need of a friend, was inclined to regard Lamb with hero-worship, which he, needless to say, forcibly repudiated, pointing out his own unworthiness. All the same, 'I do not wish to deter you from making a friend, a true friend, and such a friendship, where the parties are not blind to each other's faults, is very useful and valuable'. (Marrs I 135)

At the beginning of the letter Lamb roundly asserts that 'The having a friend is not indispensably necessary to virtue or happiness...' but I think he himself would have been lost without one. As Mary Lamb said when Crabb Robinson cut Hazlitt, with whom it was almost impossible not to quarrel, 'You are rich in friends. We cannot afford to cast off our friends because they are not all we wish.' (HCR I 287) Lamb urges Robert to be both realistic and disinterested.

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...we are commanded to love our enemies, to do good to those that hate us; how much more is it our duty then to cultivate a forbearance and complacence towards those who only differ from us in dispositions and ways of thinking—there is always, without very unusual care there must always be, something of *self* in friendship...

Lamb says we imagine our friend is just like us and we love him 'because he is *ours*'. Such identification is an illusion and such possessiveness detrimental to any relationship.

Our duties are to do good expecting nothing again, to bear with contrary dispositions, to be candid and forgiving, not to crave and long after a communication of sentiment and feeling, but rather to avoid dwelling upon those feelings, however good, because they are our own—a man may be intemperate & selfish, who indulges in *good feelings*, for the mere pleasure they give him.

Lamb was not quite twenty-four when he wrote this letter but he seems already to have known what it takes many of us a lifetime to learn. It is useless to expect the reactions of others to be what ours would be in the same situation, to hope to receive back the equivalent of what we give -or indeed anything—or to be sure that our own motives are as pure as we think them. Lamb sees the danger of our entering a friendship to serve our own needs without attempting to put ourselves in the place of our partner and wondering how best to allow for his. One cannot *grab* fellowship. Lamb ends his letter thus:

humble yourself before God, cast out the selfish principle, wait in patience, do good in every way you can to all sorts of people, never be easy to neglect a duty tho' a small one, praise God for all, & see his hand in all things, & he will in time raise you up *many friends*—or be himself in stead an unchanging friend—God bless you. C.
Lamb

Though the letter was written particularly 'to speak to Robert's condition', in Quaker phrase, it speaks to us all. Lamb did his best to follow his own precepts and, though there were people he could not bring himself to like—the second Mrs. Godwin, Shelley, Canning, the Prince of Wales, to name but a few—he was blessed with '*many friends*'. He did good 'to all sorts of people' and did not 'neglect a duty'. In addition to taking on the care and support of his sister and thereby sacrificing marriage and a family, he contributed sums from his modest salary to help needy friends.^[1] For his old schoolmistress, Mrs. Reynolds, Lamb and Randall Norris were able to obtain from the Temple Society a pension of £10 a year. Lucas wryly comments that Lamb himself

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gave her an allowance 'with a liberality exceeding that of the Law'. (*Life* 1.47) This was £32 a year from her retirement till her death only two years before Lamb's own. When in 1819 John Morgan, an ex-Christ's Hospital pupil, who with his wife and sister-in-law had looked after Coleridge in his own home for long periods, lost his fortune and then suffered a stroke, Southey and Lamb set about raising funds for him and themselves each contributed an annuity of £10. Lamb's letters show him repeatedly getting up subscriptions for friends in distress—for example, Godwin, Hone, Coleridge—and heading the list with his own donation. He worked hard to get a pension for Mrs. Randall Norris from the Middle Temple Benchers (Lucas *Letters* II. 769) and for Coleridge from the Chancellor when the death of George IV brought the allowance from him to an end. (*Ibid.* 934-5) When Leigh Hunt was in prison the Lambs visited him in all weathers. (*Life.* 402)

Lamb followed his own advice, too, in having a clear-eyed understanding not only of his own failings but of those of his friends. He saw them exactly for what they were but was able 'to cultivate a forbearance and complacence towards those who only differ from us in dispositions and ways of thinking'. Indeed, he almost delighted in them the more because of their failings and peculiarities.

His *intimados*, to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He found them floating on the surface of society; and the colour, or something else, in the weed pleased him. The burrs stuck to him—but they were good and loving burrs for all that. (Bate. 173)

There is, after all, no harm in enjoying the humorous idiosyncrasies of one's friends, so long as this is combined with genuine affection; of Coleridge, for instance, whose mock-death is reported in a letter to Manning in 1815.

Poor Col., but two days before he died he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the 'Wanderings of Cain', in twenty-four books. It is said he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism and metaphysics, but few of them in a state of completion. (Marrs III 205; Dec 25, 1815)

The Magnum Opus, perhaps? Not far out. Or

He is at present under the medical care of a Mr. Gilman (Killman?) a Highgate Apothecary, where he plays at leaving off Laudanum.—I think his essentials not touched, he is very bad, but then he wonderfully picks up another day, and his face when he repeats his verses hath its ancient glory, an Arch angel a little damaged...(Marrs III 215; April 26, 1816)

Lamb's own addiction is not neglected, though for a while he did become 'aquavorous'.

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Must I then leave you, Gin, Rum, Brandy, Aqua Vitae—pleasant jolly fellows—. Damn Temperance & them that first invented it, some Ante Noahite. Coleridge has powdered his head, and looks like Bacchus, Bacchus ever sleek and young. He is going to turn sober, but his Clock has not struck yet, meantime he pours down goblet after goblet, the 2d to see where the 1st is gone, the 3rd to see no harm happens to the second, a fourth to say there's another coming, and a 5th to say he's not sure he's the last. (Marrs III 62; Nov 13, 1810)

One could go on, but so much for Coleridge. What about Wordsworth?

He says he does not see much difficulty in writing like Shakespeare, if he had a mind to try it. It is clear, then, nothing is wanting but the mind. (Marrs II 274; 26 Feb, 1808)

Did you ever hear a better put-down? Lamb's first criticisms of the second Volume of *Lyrical Ballads* were hardly well received. 'All the North of England are in a turmoil Cumberland and Westmorland have already declared a state of war-' Though 'an almost insurmountable aversion from Letter writing' had hindered Wordsworth's acknowledgement of Lamb's play, after his stating that 'no single piece' in the second volume 'had moved me so forcibly as the Ancient Marinere, the Mad Mother, or the Lines at Tintern Abbey' in the first, 'The Post did not sleep a moment. I received almost instantaneously a long letter of four sweating pages from my *reluctant Letterwriter*, the purport of which was that he was sorry his 2d vol. had not given me more pleasure,' and so on. (Marrs I. 272; Feb 15, 1801)

The vanity of authors is born of deep self-doubt but it is invariable. Even Lamb longed for praise of his play. But the interesting sequel to this is that, though Wordsworth may have fulminated at first when he received Lamb's detailed suggestions about alterations to his poems, he nearly always implemented them. His respect for Lamb's judgement was as great as Coleridge's and they all were examples of such 'true friends' as Lamb recommended to Robert Lloyd, 'where the parties are not blind to each other's faults'.

In one case Lamb was able to use the vanity of authors in an entirely therapeutic way. On August 26th, 1800, Lamb reported to Coleridge that he had ‘just received from Cottle a magnificent copy of his *Guinea Alfred*’. This was Joseph Cottle’s Epic in twenty-four books. Lamb goes on, ‘I got as far as the Mad Monk the first day & fainted.’ (Marrs 1.236) He finds Cottle derivative and has no trouble in tracking down his sources but ‘when he *is* original it is in a most original way indeed—His terrific scenes are indefatigable. Serpents, asps, spiders, ghosts, dead bodies, stair cases *made of no thing* with Adder’s tongues for banisters—. My God! what a brain *he* must have—he puts as many plums in his pudding as my Grandmother used to do

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& then his emerging from Hell’s horrors into *Light*, and treading on pure flats of this earth for 23 books together—!’

However, on Sept, 28th Amos Cottle died and Lamb tells in a letter to Coleridge of October 9th how he and George Dyer ‘paid a solemn visit of condolence’ to Joseph. Conversation was decidedly sticky until

George modestly put in a question, whether *Alfred* was likely to sell. This was Lethe to Cottle, and his poor face, wet with tears, and his kind Eye brightend up in a moment. Now I felt it was my cue to speak... At that moment it came strongly into my mind that I had got *Uncle Toby* before me he looked so kind and so *good*. I could not say an unkind thing of *Alfred*. So I set my memory to work to recollect what was the name of Alfred’s Queen, and with some adroitness recalled the well known sound to Cottle’s ears of *Alswitha*.—At that moment I could perceive that Cottle had forgot his brother was so lately become a blessed spirit... I felt my cue, and strong pity working at the root, I went to work, and beslabbered *Alfred* with most unqualified praise... Was I a Candied Greyhound *now* for all this?. Or did I do right? I believe I did... Poor Cottle, I must leave him, after his short dream, to muse again upon his poor brother, for whom I am sure in secret he will yet shed many a tear. (Marrs 1 239-40)

Surely this is the way to see a friend, without illusions but with no less love. I have had to select but do read this letter in full, with its very real appreciation of Cottle’s virtues while not being blind to his failings, including, Lamb surmises ‘that the Brothers were poetical rivals’.

Similarly, in the case of George Dyer, whose spiritual home is in a library, so that ‘With long poring, he is grown almost into a book. He stood as passive as one by the side of the old shelves. I longed to new-coat him in Russia and assign him his place.’ (Bate. p. 11 *Oxford in the Vacation*.) Yet as far as the *contents* of the volumes were concerned, ‘To G.D. a poem is a poem. His own as good as any bodie’s, and god bless him, any bodie’s as good as his own, for I do not think he has the most distant guess of the possibility of one poem being better than another. The Gods by denying him the very faculty itself of discrimination have effectually cut off every seed of envy in his bosom.’ (To W.W. Lucas I 547; April 26, 1819) Not for him, then, on the face of it, is that weakness of authors which I said was invariable. Surely he must be the exception. But not so.

In November 1801, Dyer inadvertently starved himself and arrived at the Lambs’ convinced that he was dying. They took him in and looked after him. ‘by the aid of meat and drink put into him’, says Lamb, ‘(for I all along suspected a vacuum) he was enabled to sit up in the evening’, but he still stayed with the Lambs and he still thought he was dying. In these circumstances ‘Since he has been so close to me I have perceived the workings of his

inordinate vanity...his solicitude that the public may not lose any tittle of his poems by his death, and all the while his utter ignorance that the world

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don't care a pin about his odes and his criticisms, a fact that everybody knows but himself—*he is a rum genius.*' (Marrs II. 31-2 To Rickman; Oct/Nov 1801) Lamb got enormous entertainment from George Dyer's idiosyncracies, most notably perhaps in 'Amicus Redivivus'.

I do not know when I have experienced a stranger sensation than on seeing my old friend G.D., who had been paying me a morning visit a few Sundays back, at my cottage at Islington, upon taking leave, instead of turning down the right hand path by which he had entered -with staff in hand, and at noon day, deliberately march right forwards into the midst of the stream that runs by us, and totally disappear. (Bate.237-8; Lucas, *Letters* II 673)

This was another occasion when the rescued Dyer occupied Lamb's bed for a while. After the starvation episode Lamb made sure it could not recur. 'I have proposed for him to dine with me (and he has nearly come into it) whenever he does not go out; and pay me.' This both made sure that the money did not get filched by relations and 'satellites', and that George's pride was not offended. It worked a treat, as Lamb reported later. 'Dyer regularly dines with me when he does not go avisting, and brings his shilling. He has picked up amazingly. I never saw him happier.' (Marrs II 37-8; Nov 24, 1801) Lamb saw clearly Dyer's odd character and knew what *not* to expect from him but also saw the sterling qualities he had—and loved him for both. 'O George, George, with a head uniformly wrong and a heart uniformly right...' (Marrs I 226) Yet 'The oftener I see him, the more deeply I admire him. He is goodness itself'. (Marrs I. 235)

Percy Fitzgerald gives a list of Lamb's friends at the India House and quotes Lamb. 'There was more wit, more discourse, more shrewdness, and even talent, among these clerks (he would say) than in twice the number of authors by profession that I have conversed with'. (Fitzgerald p.107) But what we all remember is the account from Hazlitt, who would not entirely agree with this. 'The conversation of authors is not so good as might be imagined: but, such as it is (and with rare exceptions) it is better than any other¹. (*The Plain Speaker* p. 22) In describing Lamb's 'Thursday evening parties' (earlier, Wednesdays) Hazlitt somewhat modifies his view.

When a stranger came in, it was not asked, 'Has he written anything?'—we were above that pedantry; but we waited to see what he could do. If he could take a hand at piquet, he was welcome to sit down. If a person liked anything, if he took snuff heartily, it was sufficient. He would understand by analogy, the pungency of other things, besides Irish blackguard, or Scotch rappee. A character was good anywhere, in a room or on paper. But we abhorred insipidity, affectation and fine gentlemen. (p. 30)

Talfourd gives a wonderful *tableau vivant* of Lamb's friends in characteristic

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poses, at one of these evenings, though, as Lucas points out, dates would have prevented his exact scene in real life, like that of the romantic novelist who fills the landscape with wild flowers which could never really have been all out at the same time. (Lucas, *Life* 458 ff.) Nevertheless, it does illustrate the variety of humankind happily fraternizing under Lamb's auspices. (Talfourd 151 ff.)

'There Coleridge sometimes, though rarely, took his seat; and then the genial hubbub of voices was still; critics, philosophers, and poets, were contented to listen; and toil-worn lawyers, clerks from the India House, and members of the Stock Exchange, grew romantic while he spoke.' (78-9) That they did not understand him seems not to have mattered either to them or to him. As Hazlitt says, 'Coleridge is the only person who can talk to all sorts of people, on all sorts of subjects, without caring a farthing for their understanding one word he says' (28) and Talfourd admits that 'His hearers were unable to grasp his theories...but they perceived noble images, generous suggestions, affecting pictures of virtue which enriched their minds and nurtured their best affections'. (79) After all, who needs to understand theories anyway? Nevertheless, Lamb must sometimes have had to summon all that 'forbearance' that he recommended to Robert Lloyd, when inundated by Coleridge's talking, which made Mary Lamb ill. That Charles met it with his usual amused tolerance is evidenced by his apocryphal story of the button. I am sure you all know it, but I can't resist repeating it.^[2] Lamb is reputed to have told how, on his way to work, he met Coleridge 'brimful of some new idea,

and in spite of my assuring him that time was precious, he drew me within the door of an unoccupied garden by the road-side, and there, sheltered from observation by a hedge of evergreens, he took me by the button of my coat, and closing his eyes commenced an eloquent discourse, waving his right hand gently, as the musical words flowed in an unbroken stream from his lips. I listened entranced; but the striking of a church-clock recalled me to a sense of duty. I saw it was of no use to attempt to break away, so taking advantage of his absorption in his subject, I, with my penknife, quietly severed the button from my coat, and decamped. Five hours afterwards, in passing the same garden, on my way home, I heard Coleridge's voice, and on looking in, there he was, with closed eyes,—the button in his fingers—and his right hand gracefully waving, just as when I left him. He had never missed me! (Lucas *Life* II 823)

It was not surprising that, with friends so many and various, Lamb sometimes felt himself to be 'a little over-companied'. (Lucas *Letters* I. 540) 'He who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself.' (p. 539)

Yet, in a letter to Wordsworth of 20th March 1822, five months after

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John Lamb's death, Charles has no sooner said that he has buried himself at Dalston, 'where I yet see more faces than I could wish', than he begins to lament the loss of friends. He finds that when they die he cannot spare them.

Every departure destroys a class of sympathies. There's Capt. Burney gone!—what fun has whist now? What matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you? One never hears any thing, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone almost you would care to share the intelligence. Thus one

distributes oneself about—and now for so many parts of me I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points and I want so many answering needles. The going away of friends does not make the remainder more precious. It takes so much from them as there was a common link. (Lucas *Letters* II 608)

To the end of his life Lamb was still following his advice to Robert Lloyd to 'do good in every way you can'. On 22nd February 1834 Lamb wrote to Wordsworth:

I write from a house of mourning. The oldest and best friends I have left, are in trouble. A branch of them (and they of the best stock of God's creatures I believe) is establishing a school at Carlisle. Her name is Louisa Martin, her address 75 Castle Street, Carlisle; her qualities (and her motives for this exertion) are the most amiable, most upright. For thirty years she has been tried by me, and on her behaviour I would stake my soul. O if you can recommend her, how would I love you -if I could love you better. Pray, pray, recommend her... (Lucas *Letters* II. 992)

He ends, 'Good you are to me. Yours with fervor of friendship; for ever.' On the wrapper Wordsworth wrote, 'Lamb's last letter'.

I think that Charles Lamb knew about friendship, both in theory and in practice, and that we can all learn from him. *He* had learnt in a hard school. As he wrote, 'God bless us all, and shield us from insanity, which is "the sorest malady of all" '. (Marrs I. 109) Yes, indeed. But the experience of September 1796, when he was only twenty-one, had taught him, in contrast to his elder brother, the necessity of responsibility and self-reliance. I think it is fair to say that, though one can excuse him on medical grounds, Coleridge never learnt these things, essential for making the right decisions in one's treatment of others. Charles had been able to do the best for Mary, in a sense his oldest friend, and, naturally sensitive to the signs of mental unbalance in Charles Lloyd, was concerned at Coleridge's treatment of him. 'You use Lloyd very ill—never writing to him. I tell you again that his is not a mind with which you should play tricks. He deserves more tenderness from you—' (Marrs I. 123) This letter was written in September 1797. Coleridge published the

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Higginbottom Sonnets in the Monthly Magazine in November. *Edmund Oliver*, with which Coleridge had good reason to feel offended, was published in April 1798, so he had not that extenuation for ridiculing poems he had previously approved and published with his own. In that same letter, written a few days before the anniversary of his mother's death, Lamb pleads with Coleridge to send him his great-coat, which he had left behind at Stowey. At the time, in the glow of his recent visit to Somerset, Lamb's letter is full of gratitude for his hosts' kindness when he was still almost in a state of shock. 'Is it not ridiculous that I sometimes envy that great-coat lingering so cunningly behind?—at present I have none—so send it to me by the Stowey waggon, if there be such a thing...' He never doubted that the coat would be sent to him at once. But now, two months later, as the weather deteriorated and he had only an old coat of his father's, it becomes a symbol of Coleridge's failure as a friend. 'Never be easy to neglect a duty, though a small one', he was to write to Robert. In the meantime, 'I shall remember where I left my coat—meek Emblem wilt thou be, Old Winter, of a friend's neglect -Cold, cold, cold, -' If Lamb had thought he could rely on Coleridge, he now knew otherwise. The last straw was the insulting remark reported to him, 'Poor Lamb, if he wants any knowledge, he may apply to me'. (Lucas *Life*, p.160)

Essential elements, then, of true friendship, which Lamb suggested in 1798 to Robert Lloyd, had been painfully understood and acquired over the previous two years, an intensive training I think we may say. First, he learnt that, in time of catastrophe, though friends may rally round, as they did for him, a man is essentially alone and must face facts and make responsible decisions in his own strength. Not all of us are capable of this, as I well know. It is easier, like John Lamb, to evade the challenge and run away, but Charles met the test. Next, he recognized that he must have a fellow-feeling, entering into the experience and needs of his friends, without expecting any reciprocal understanding or tolerance. He must guard against emotional dependence and accept apparent rejection with a shrug. Like the rest of us, Lamb could not do this immediately but, as we have seen, retaliated when he felt Coleridge had betrayed him. It took two years for him to be able to come to terms with it, but he did learn ‘to bear with contrary dispositions, to be candid and forgiving’. He was aware that ‘there is always, without very unusual care there must always be, something of self in friendship’. Lamb sacrificed much of his own self-interest in his relationships but felt justified in compensating for this by his enjoyment of his friends’ characteristic oddities as well as of their virtues. The therapeutic uses of humour were something he knew well.

Above all, perhaps, Lamb learned to ‘wait in patience’, to endure, and to make the most of simple pleasures.

Sun and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fire-side conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—do

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these things go out with life?

And you, my midnight darlings, my Folios! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces? Must knowledge come to me, if it come at all, by some awkward experiment of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading?

Internet take note. Lamb foresaw you and rejected you out of hand.

Shall I enjoy friendships there, wanting the smiling indications which point me to them here,—the recognizable face—the “sweet assurance of a look”—? (Bate. 34)

Lamb had no use for a heaven that does not include these things. If, as some believe, we create our own heaven or hell, our own destination, it is easy to visualize Lamb in his. I think it would certainly include something like those Thursday evenings, at which he and Mary were surrounded by their friends.^[3]

[1] To give an idea of the value of money then, Lamb’s income in 1796 was £170-80 a year (Life I 119). Before retirement in 1825 – after 33 years of employment - £730, and upon retirement £450 (Life II 666).

[2] Told by John Dix in *Lions Living and Dead* 1852

[3] Texts referred to:

Charles Lamb *Elia & the Last Essays of Elia* Ed Jonathan Bate World's Classics 1987

Charles and Mary Lamb *Letters* Ed. Edwin W. Marris Jnr. Cornell 1975-8 up to 1817; after that *Letters* Ed. E.V. Lucas 1912. Methuen London

Life of Charles Lamb E.V. Lucas 1912. Methuen London

Charles Lamb and the Lloyds E.V Lucas Smith Elder London 1898

Charles Lamb, His Friends, His Haunts and His Books London 1898. Percy Fitzgerald, Richard Bentley London 1866

Coleridge's Letters Ed. E.L. Griggs, Oxford 1966 - 71

Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary Selected and Edited by Thomas Sadler, Macmillan 1872

Memoirs of Charles Lamb by Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, D.C.L. Ed. Fitzgerald, Gibbings & Co., London 1894.

The Plain Speaker William Hazlitt Ed. Duncan Wu, Blackwell, Oxford 1998.

Coleridge's Debt to Charles Lamb by George Whalley in *Essays and Studies* 1958.