

THE LETTERS OF
CHARLES LAMB



VOLUME ONE

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

47 This book is copyright. It may not be reproduced whole or in part by any method without written permission. Application should be made to the publishers:

J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
Aldine House · Bedford St. · London

Made in Great Britain
Printed by
Billing & Sons Ltd. · Guildford · Surrey
Set and bound at The Temple Press, Letchworth
First published in 'Everyman's Library,' 1909
Last reprinted 1950

928.2.77
L 218 - 1
v. 1

945 | (13)
STATE CENTRAL LIBRARY
WEST BENGAL
CALCUTTA
5. 8. 59.

Vide
3rd page of
this epistle.

no { With better hopes, I trust, from Avon's vales
This other 'minstrel' cometh. Youth endear'd,
God & good Angels guide thee on thy road,
And gentler fortunes wait the friends I love.

[Lamb has crossed through the above lines.]

Let us prose.

What can I do till you send word what priced and placed house you should like? Islington (possibly) you would not like, to me 'tis classical ground. Knightsbridge is a desirable situation for the air of the parks. St. George's Fields is convenient for its contiguity to the Bench. Chuse! But are you really coming to town? The hope of it has entirely disarmed my petty disappointment of its nettles. Yet I rejoice so much on my own account, that I fear I do not feel enough pure satisfaction on yours. Why, surely, the joint editorship of the Chron: must be a very comfortable & secure living for a man. But should not you read French, or do you? & can you write with sufficient moderation, as 'tis call'd, when one suppresses the one half of what one feels, or could say, on a subject, to chime in the better with popular lukewarmness?—White's 'Letters' are near publication. Could you review 'em, or get 'em reviewed? Are you not connected with the Crit: Rev:? His frontispiece is a good conceit: Sir John learning to dance, to please Madame Page, in dress of doublet, etc., from [for] the upper half; & modern pantaloons, with shoes, etc., of the 18th century, from [for] the lower half—& the whole work is full of goodly quips & rare fancies, 'all defily masqued like hoar antiquity'—much superior to Dr. Kenrick's Falstaff's Wedding, which you may have seen. Allen sometimes laughs at Superstition, & Religion, & the like. A living fell vacant lately in the gift of the Hospital. White informed him that he stood a fair chance for it. He scrupled & scrupled about it, and at last (to use his own words) 'tampered' with Godwin to know whether the thing was honest or not. Godwin said nay to it, & Allen rejected the living! Could the blindest Poor Papish have bowed more servilely to his Priest or Casuist? Why sleep the Watchman's answers to that Godwin? I beg you will not delay to alter, if you mean to keep, those last lines I sent you. Do that, & read these for your pains:—

TO THE POET COWPER

Cowper, I thank my God that thou art heal'd!
Thine was the sorest malady of all;
And I am sad to think that it should light
Upon thy worthy head! But thou art heal'd,

7. TO S. T. COLERIDGE

the 6th July [P.M. 7th July, 1796].

Substitute in room of that last confused & incorrect Paragraph, following the words 'disastrous course,' these lines

1—* B 34²

And thou art yet, we trust, the destin'd man,
Born to reanimate the Lyre, whose chords
Have slumber'd, and have idle lain so long,
To the immortal sounding of whose strings
Did Milton frame the stately-paced verse;
Among whose wires with lighter finger playing,
Our elder bard, Spenser, a gentle name,
The Lady Muses' dearest darling child,
Elicited the dearest tunes yet heard
In Hall or Bower, taking the delicate Ear
Of Sydney, & his peerless Maiden Queen.

Thou, then, take up the mighty Epic strain,
Cowper, of England's Bards, the wisest & the best.

1796

I have read your climax of praises in those 3 reviews. These mighty spouters-out of panegyric waters have, 2 of 'em, scattered their spray even upon me! & the waters are cooling & refreshing. Prosaically, the Monthly Reviewers have made indeed a large article of it, & done you justice. The Critical have, in their wisdom, selected not the very best specimens, & notice not, except as one name on the muster-roll, the 'Religious Musings.' I suspect Master Dyer to have been the writer of that article, as the substance of it was the very remarks & the very language he used to me one day. I fear you will not accord entirely with my sentiments of Cowper, as *express* above, (perhaps scarcely just), but the poor Gentleman has just recovered from his Lunacy, & that begets pity, & pity love, and love admiration, & then it goes hand with People but they lie! Have you read the Ballad called 'Leonora,' in the second Number of the 'Monthly Magazine'? If you have!!!!!!!!!!!!!! There is another fine song, from the same author (Berger), in the 3d No., of scarce inferior merit; & (vastly below these) there are some happy specimens of English hexameters, in an imitation of Ossian, in the 5th No. For your Dactyls I am sorry you are so sore about 'em—a very Sir Fretful! In good troth, the Dactyls are good Dactyls, but their measure is naught. Be not yourself 'half anger, half agony' if I pronounce your darling lines not to be the best you ever wrote—you have written much.

For the alterations in those lines, let 'em run thus:

I may not come a pilgrim, to the Banks
of Avon, lucid stream, to taste the wave (inspiring wave) was too
which Shakspeare drank, our British Helicon; common place.
or with mine eye, &c., &c.
To muse, in tears, on that mysterious Youth, &c. (better than 'drop a tear')

Then the last paragraph alter thus

Complaint begone, begone unkind reproof,
Take up, my song, take up a merrier strain,
For yet again, & lo! from Avon's vales,
Another minstrel cometh! youth *endeared*,
God & good angels &c., as before.

better refer to my own
'complaint' solely than half
to that and half to Chatterton
as in your copy, which
creates a confusion—'ominous
fears' &c.

Have a care, good Master poet, of the Statute de Contumelia. What do you mean by calling Madame Mara harlot & naughty things? The goodness of the verse would not save you in a court of Justice. But are you really coming to town?

Coleridge, a gentleman called in London lately from Bristol, & inquired whether there were any of the family of a Mr. Chambers living—this Mr. Chambers he said had been the making of a friend's fortune who wished to make some return for it. He went away without seeing her. Now, a Mrs. Reynolds, a very intimate friend of ours, whom you have seen at our house, is the only daughter, & all that survives, of Mr. Chambers—& a very little supply would be of service to her, for she married very unfortunately, & has parted with her husband. Pray find out this Mr. Pember (for that was the gentleman's friend's name), he is an attorney, & lives at Bristol. Find him out, & acquaint him with the circumstances of the case, & offer to be the medium of supply to Mrs. Reynolds, if he chuses to make her a present. She is in very distress circumstances. Mr. Pember, attorney, Bristol—Mr. Chambers lived in the Temple. Mrs. Reynolds, his daughter, was my school-mistress, & is in the room at this present writing. This last circumstance induced me to write so soon again—I have not further to add—Our loves to Sara.

Thursday.

C. LAMB.

[The passage at the beginning, before 'Let us prose,' together with the later passages in the same manner, refers to the poem in the preceding letter which in slightly different form is printed in editions of Lamb as *Lines to Sara and her Samuel*. To complete the sense of the letter one should compare the text of the poem in Lamb's *Works*.

Coleridge had just received a suggestion, through Dr. Beddoes of Bristol, that he should replace Grey, the late co-editor (with James Perry), of the *Morning Chronicle*. It came to nothing; but Coleridge had told Lamb and had asked him to look out a house in town for him.

'All deftly masqued.' From Coleridge's *Monody on the Death of Chatterton*. Dr. Kenrick's *Falstaff's Wedding*, 1760, was a continuation of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

The lines to Cowper were printed in the *Monthly Magazine* for December 1796.

Coleridge's *Poems* were reviewed in the *Monthly Review*, June 1796, with a reference to Lamb as 'a friend,' and calling his contribution 'of no inferior