



The world that knows him as the "gentle Elia" does Lamb an injustice. Gentle he always was with Mary and in most of his writings. It was, however, his strength which enabled him to be gentle and not any softness which forced him into being so. He hated the phrase "gentle-hearted" when applied to him as much as Sir James Barrie abhorred the word "whimsical." "For God's sake (I never was more serious)," wrote Charles to Coleridge, "don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. . . . The meaning of gentle is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited."

Certainly Lamb was anything but poor-spirited. He had a resilience unknown to noisier men and a toughness unsuspected by those who have read him sparingly, and then only in his fanciful or sentimental moods. Did he look like a clerk? He did not act like one. He was no timid soul. He was

fiercely independent. His father may have been a servant, but in a snobbish age Lamb was subservient to no one. He was at all times ready to stammer out his opinions without fear. Everyone who described him noted the sadness of his brown eyes, the thoughtfulness of his expansive brow, the sweetness of his expression, and the smallness of his body. Lamb knew that physically he was "less than the least of the Apostles." A friend thought he looked so fragile that "a breath would overthrow him." But there was iron in his "immaterial legs." His slight body contradicted the largeness of his spirit.

Although Charles knew great sorrow, he was not discontented. If he could refer to Mary and himself, playfully though correctly, as "shorn Lambs," his belief in the tempering wind was nonetheless strong. Living with sorrow was as much a habit with him as climbing up on his high stool each morning to work as a clerk at the East India House. The prospect of any change so staggered him that he convinced himself he would no more reverse the untoward accidents and events of his life than he would alter the incidents of some well-contrived novel. Such was his love of life that he even loved his own. He meant what he said when he confessed, "I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets." JOHN MASON BROWN.

This is the first of a series of articles on Charles Lamb. In expanded form these will serve as the introduction to "The Viking Portable Library Charles Lamb."

The Criminal Record			
The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction			
Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE DOVE Wilson Tucker (Rinehart: \$2.)	Private detective Horne, helping silent-movie actress find modest treasure hoard, encounters murder, blackmail, and much excitement.	Quest of gold-bearing cigar-box on Hollywood Western set packs plenty of action, rowdy fun, and complicated plotting, creditably set down.	Passable
THE CHOCOLATE COBWEB Charlotte Armstrong (Coward-McCann: \$2.50)	Six-year-old poisoning of Calif. painter's wife and pending demise of his son clarified by devoted girl and policeman El Kelly.	"How-dun-it" rather than "whodunit." Identity of slayer never in doubt. High suspense, much emotion, satisfactory if breathless writing, and clinch ending.	Good entertainment
DEVIOUS DESIGN D. B. Olsen (Crime Club: \$2.)	Murders old and new in Pacific Northwest town engage attention of visiting Prof. A. Pennyfeather.	Considerable action, plenty of "atmosphere," some faithful portraits of rather unappealing people, and roundabout but effective detecting.	Fair

- No Whodunits—
- No Cowboys and Indians—
- No Boy Meets Girl Stuff—

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FARMER TAKES A NEWSPAPER

(Continued from page 7)

He is all right, but is still lit up quite good, and his family uses him to read by in the evenings, and is saving the monthly electric light bill. The doctor says he should glow at about 200 watts right up into July, and then will gradually taper off and they can use him for a bug light in the bathroom until about Labor Day.

In the spring, John devotes an editorial to his printer Jess's window box, which is a free enterprise and is Jess's own business, whether it grows popcorn or sunflowers:

For some reasons we don't understand, the whole world sat back in awe and thought it was remarkable to have a sunflower in a window box. Possibly it is, and perhaps a lot more people would have been interested if they could have seen it. But the cucumbers and scarlet runner beans made such a jungle, people couldn't see the sunflowers too well.

This year Jess thinks he'll try some okra. We don't know what okra is up here, but we get it in canned soups, and we've always wondered does it grow up in the air and have pods, or does it stick down in the ground and grow shoots. Jess aims to find out, and we aim to let him.

Under a heading, "Says She's Never Broken One of 432 Jugs," which concerns Clara Coombs's collection of cream pitchers, we find comforting word for those who hate dish-washing:

Clara reckons on washing and rearranging her collection twice a year. She can't rightly say how long it takes her because she likes to polish them till they shine, feel the delicate bone china and remember the people who gave them to her or the trips she made acquiring them from antique shops.

Each year a prize is given to the first green pea grown in the section. "All we need is just one, fully developed. We hear some folks planted peas last fall in anticipation of the contest and have a head start." One year the prize was fifty nickels, in case somebody had to go to Lewiston and needed nickels for the parking meters. "For our part, we will point out that our parking space is all free and above board, it being a simple country whim of us unenlightened townsmen that public property belongs to the public."

Weddings and funerals and school and church meetings are covered with sober Maine honesty, and state and national affairs may be handled with no more chattiness than *The New York Times*. But it's the "nor'ester" touch that the "foreign" subscribers like best. When the Maine "nibble-witted legislators were hitting on all sixteen cylinders" trying to decide

whether or not they ought to take the word "Vacationland" off the license plates, John's editorial said:

We feel it is a crying shame for anybody in Maine to get so all-fired commercialized he couldn't think of anything better to call a good old state than Vacationland. Maine might be vacationland to a good many tired city people who had weeks and enough money to buy gasoline, souvenirs, and a shore dinner, but we find it enjoyable to live in these parts the year 'round, and Maine appeals to us mostly when it isn't Vacationland to very many at once.

John likes to write satire, probably has one of the keenest satiric minds since Jonathan Swift. But in more ways than one he had to be careful. Some people you can kid a little; most people you can't kid at all. In print, that is, in the home-town paper. So for the most part John sticks to friendly interpretation of life in the village. But sometimes he just can't restrain himself:

We are glad Mr. Truman vetoed the tax-cut bill. We should weep to think Congress had deliberately been hard on the building administrators, lime investigators, putty-knife inspectors, and all the other ten or fifteen million leeches and parasites we have been supporting. We don't think of a single thing more important to national and world security right now than to keep our great system intact, and perpetuate the bureaus and administrators.

Now and then even the business ads in the *Enterprise* turn up with the Gould touch. After George LaChance was defeated for a town office, for instance, this ad appeared:

Thank you all. I am still having three meals a day even if I didn't get elected. Thank you all for supporting me Monday, with a special thanks to my neighbors. Thanks too to those who meant to vote for me but found the polls had closed earlier than usual. I am still in the linoleum business and have expert floor layers and will give everybody the best of breaks.

After the *Enterprise* had been rolling along for a few months, John and Jess found they'd have to have some help. Jess had his hands full with the printing, and with babying along the old press, though once a year or so he found time to bring forth a lallapalousa of an editorial. Miss Selma Ey, the typesetter, had been there right along. Miss Ey is a tiny lady who smells of knitting and an old-fashioned garden, even though she is generally to be found black to the elbows with printer's ink.

They asked Betty Sugg, a neighbor, if she'd come in and take care of some of the subscriptions. The list was up 2,000; bundles had to be made up to go all over the country. Betty had a busy family life at home, but she managed to help out. And at last John got Marjorie Beech from England to take over correspondence and numberless things around the office.

After the 2,000th subscription no more could be entered. That was all Jess could print on the old press. They had trouble finding a new one, and they had more trouble getting it hauled. When Leon Bard finally got it on his truck, all four tires went flat, and Leon got out and looked and said, "Who ever heard of such a thing?"

But with the help of Biff Morgan's manure loader, they ran the new press into the building, and now the partners don't have to worry until subscriptions hit 10,000.

Last fall, John used up one of his two remaining evenings a week and wrote a book about his grandfather's old place, "The House That Jacob Built." That left one evening to spare, which was where the radio program came in. WLAM seemed to feel there was quite a wholesale interest in the kind of items the *Enterprise* printed. So John goes up to Lewiston on Thursday nights and broadcasts about the kind of time the folks have had that week in Lisbon. Like the fellow said to John: "Your items are so local, they're universal."

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 263

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 263 will be found in the next issue.

FGP AGNBP KPTHFP NR

BCRP CK FN OP

CXFPHPKFPZ CX NXP FG CXW

DHNRNMXZBQ SXZ CX S

FGNMKSXZ FG CXWK APBB.

GMWG ASBDNBP

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 262

Bad weather always looks much worse through a window.

J. KIERAN.