

# 2

## ESSAYS OF CHARLES LAMB

### STRUCTURE

- Learning Objectives
- Introduction
- Oxford in the Vacation
- All Fools Day
- Imperfect Sympathesies
- Valentines Day
- The Praise of Chimney Sweepers
- A Bachelor Complaint on the Behaviour of the Married People
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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand

1. The essays of Charles Lamb, such as:
  - Oxford in the vacation
  - All fools day
  - Imperfect sympathesies
  - Valentines day
  - The praise of chimney sweepers
  - A bachelor complaint on the behaviour of the married people

### INTRODUCTION

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) was an English essayist, best known for his *Essays of Elia* and for the children's book *Tales from Shakespeare*, which he produced with his sister, Mary Lamb (1764-1847). Lamb has been referred to by E.V. Lucas, his principal biographer, as the most

lovable figure in English literature and his influence on the English essay form surely cannot be overestimated.

Lamb was honored by The Latymer School, a grammar school in Edmonton, a suburb of London where he lived for a time; it has six houses, one of which, "Lamb", is named after Charles.

## Work

Lamb's first publication was the inclusion of four sonnets in the Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects* published in 1796 by Joseph Cottle. The sonnets were significantly influenced by the -poems of Burns and the sonnets of William Bowles, a largely forgotten poet of the late 18th century. His poems garnered little attention and are seldom read today. Lamb's contributions to the second edition of the *Poems* showed significant growth as a poet. These poems included *The Tomb of Douglas* and *A Vision of Repentance*. Because of a temporary fall-out with Coleridge, Lamb's poems were to be excluded in the third edition of the *Poems*. As it turned out, a third edition never emerged and instead Coleridge's next publication was the monumentally influential *Lyrical Ballads* co-published with Wordsworth. Lamb, on the other hand, published a book entitled *Blank Verse* with Charles Lloyd, the mentally unstable son of the founder of Lloyd's Bank. Lamb's most famous poem was written at this time entitled *The Old Familiar Faces*. Like most of Lamb's poems it is particularly sentimental but it is still remembered and widely read, often included in *Poetic Collections*. Of particular interest to Lambarians is the opening verse of the original version of *The Old Familiar Faces* which is concerned with Lamb's mother. It was a verse that Lamb chose to remove from the edition of his *Collected Work* published in 1818.

In the first years of the 19th century Lamb began his fruitful literary cooperation with his sister Mary. Together they wrote at least three books for William Godwin's *Juvenile Library*. The most successful of these was of course *Tales From Shakespeare* which ran through two editions for Godwin and has now been published dozens of times in countless editions, many of them illustrated. Lamb also contributed a footnote to Shakespearean studies at this time with his essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," in which he argues that Shakespeare should be read rather than performed in order to gain the proper effect of his dramatic genius. Besides contributing to Shakespeare studies with his book *Tales From Shakespeare*, Lamb also contributed to the popularization of Shakespeare's contemporaries with

his book *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*.

*Essays of Charles Lamb*

Although he did not write his first Elia essay until 1820, Lamb's gradual perfection of the essay form for which he eventually became famous began as early 1802 in a series of open letters to Leigh Hunt's *Reflector*. The most famous of these is called "The Londoner" in which Lamb famously derides the contemporary fascination with nature and the countryside.

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## OXFORD IN THE VACATION

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### Essay

Casting a preparatory glance at the bottom of this article as the very connoisseur in prints, with cursory eye (which, while it reads, seems as though it read not), never fails to consult the quis sculpsit in the corner, before he pronounces some rare piece to be a Vivares, or a Woollet \ methinks I hear you exclaim, Reader, Who is Elia?

Because in my last I tried to divert thee with some half-forgotten humours of some old clerks defunct, in an old house of business, long since gone to decay, doubtless you have already set me down in your mind as one of the self-same college1- a votary of the desk - a notched and cropt scrivener - one that sucks his sustenance, as certain sick people are said to do, through a quill.

Well, I do agnise something of the sort. I confess that it is my humour, my fancy - in the fore-part of the day, when the mind of your man of letters requires some relaxation (and none better than such as at first sight seems most abhorrent from his beloved studies) - to while away some good hours of my time in the contemplation of indigos, cottons, raw silks, piece-goods, flowered or otherwise. In the first place and then it sends you home with such increased appetite to your books not to say, that your outside sheets, and waste wrappers of foolscap, do receive into them, most kindly and naturally, the impression of sonnets, epigrams, essays - so that the very parings of a counting-house are, in some sort, the settings up of an author. The enfranchised quill, that has plodded all the morning among the, cart-rucks of figures and ciphers, frisks and curvets so at its ease over the flowery carpet-ground of a midnight dissertation. It feels its promotion. So that you see, upon the whole, the literary dignity of Elia is very little, if at all compromised in the condescension.

Not that, in my anxious detail of the many commodities incidental to the life of a public office, I would be thought blind to certain flaws,

which a cunning carper might be able to pick in this Joseph's vest. And here I must have leave, in the fulness of my soul, to regret the abolition, and doing-away-with altogether, of those consolatory interstices, and sprinklings of freedom, through the four seasons, - the red-letter days, now become, to all intents and purposes, dead-letter days. There was Paul, and Stephen, and Barnabas - Andrew and John, men famous in old times - we were used to keep all their days holy, as long back as when I was at school at Christ's. I remember their effigies, by the same token, in the old Baskett Prayer Book. There hung Peter in his uneasy posture-holy Bartlemy in the troublesome act of flaying, after the famous Marsyas by Spagnoletti. - I honoured them all, and could almost have wept the defalcation of Iscariot - so much did we love to keep holy memories sacred: - only methought I a little grudged of the coalition of the better Jude with Simon - clubbing (as it were) their sanctities together, to make up one poor gaudy-day between them - as an economy unworthy of the dispensation.

These were bright visitations in a scholar's and a clerk's life - 'far off their coming shone.' - I was as good as an almanac in those days. I could have told you such a saint's day falls out next week, or the week after. Peradventure the Epiphany, by some periodical infelicity, would, once in six years, merge in a Sabbath. Now am I little better than one of the profane. Let me not be thought to arraign the wisdom of my civil superiors, who have judged the further observation of these holy tides to be papistical, superstitious,. Only in a custom of such long standing, methinks, if their Holinesses -the Bishops had, in decency, been first sounded - but I am wading out of my depths. I am not the man to decide the limits of civil and ecclesiastical authority - I am plain Elia - no Selden, nor Archbishop Usher - though at present in the thick of their books, here in the heart of learning, under the shadow of the mighty Bodley.

I can here play the gentleman, enact the student. To such a one as myself, who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution, nowhere is so pleasant, to while away a few idle weeks at, as one or other of the Universities. Their vacation, too, at this time of the year, falls in so pat with ours. Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted ad eundem. I fetch up past opportunities. I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for me. In moods of humihty I can be a Sizar, or a Servitor. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner. In graver moments, I proceed Master of Arts. Indeed I do not think I am much unlike that respectable character. I have seen your dim-eyed vergers, and bed-makers in spectacles, drop a

bow or a curtsy, as I pass, wisely mistaking me for something of the sort. I go about in black, which favours the notion. Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor.

The walks at these times are so much one's own, - the tall trees of Christ's, the groves of Magdalen! The halls deserted, and with open doors, inviting one to slip in unperceived, and pay a *devoir* to some Founder, or noble or royal Benefactress (that should have been ours) whose portrait seems to smile upon their over-looked beadsman, and to adopt me for their own. Then, to take a peep in by the way at the butteries, and sculleries, redolent of antique hospitality; the immense caves of kitchens, kitchen fireplaces, cordial recesses; ovens whose first pies were baked four centuries ago; and spits which have cooked for Chaucer! Not the meanest minister among the dishes but is hallwed to me through his imagination, and the Cook goes forth a Manciple.

Antiquity! thou wondrous charm, what art thou? that, being nothing, art everything! When, thou wert, thou wert. not antiquity - then thou wert nothing, but hadst a remoter antiquity, as thou calledst it, to look back to with blind veneration; thou thyself being to thyself flat, jejune, modern! What mystery lurks in this retroversion? or what half Januses are we, that cannot look forward with the same idolatry with which we for ever revert! The mighty fbture is as nothing, being everything! the past is everything, being nothing!

What were thy dark ages? Surely the sun rose as brightly then as now, and man got him to his work in the morning? Why is it we can never hear mention of them without an accompanying feeling, as though a palpable obscure had dimmed the face of things, and that our ancestors wandered to and fro groping!

Above all thy rarities, old Oxenford, what do most arride and solace me, are thy repositories of mouldering learning, thy shelves What a place to be in is an old library! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labours to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding-sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those sciential apples which grew amid the happy orchard.

Still less have I curiosity to disturb the elder repose of MSS. Those *variae lectiones*, so tempting to the more erudite palates, do but disturb

and unsettle my faith. I am no Herculanean raker. The credit of the three witnesses might have slept unimpeached for me. I leave these curiosities to Porsori, and to G.D. - whom, by the way, I found busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press, in a nook at Oriel. 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. He might have mustered for a tall Scapula.

D. is assiduous in his visits to these seats of learning. No inconsiderable portion of his moderate fortune, I apprehend, is consumed in journeys between them and Clifford's Inn - where, like a dove on the asp's nest, he has long taken up his unconscious abode, amid an incongruous assembly of attorneys, attorneys' clerks, apparitors, promoters, vermin of the law, among whom he sits, 'in calm and sinless peace.' The fangs of the law pierce him not - the winds of litigation blow over his humble chambers - the hard sheriff's officer moves his hat as he passes - legal nor illegal discourtesy touches him - none thinks of offering violence or injustice to him - you would as soon 'strike an abstract idea.'

D. has been engaged, he tells me, through a course of laborious years, in an investigation into all curious matter connected with the two Universities; and has lately lit upon a MS. collection of charters, relative to C----, by which he hopes to settle some disputed points - particularly that long controversy between them as to priority of foundation. The ardour with which he engages in these liberal pursuits, I am afraid, has not met with all the encouragement it deserved, either here or at C----. Your caputs, and heads of colleges, care less than anybody else about these questions. - Contented to suck the milky fountains of their Alma Maters, without inquiring into the venerable gentlewoman's years, they rather hold such curiosities to be impertinent - unreverend. They have their good glebe lands in manu, and care not much to rake into the title-deeds. I gather at least so much from other sources, for D. is not a man to complain.

D. started like an unbroken heifer, when I interrupted him. A priori it was not very probable that we should have met in Oriel. But D. would have done the same, had I accosted him on the sudden in his own walks in Clifford's Inn, or in the Temple. In addition to a provoking short-sightedness (the effect of late studies and watchings at the midnight oil) D. is the most absent of men. He made a call the other morning at our friend M.'s in Bedford Square; and, finding nobody at home, was ushered into the hall, where, asking for pen and ink, with

great exactitude of purpose he enters me his name in the book - which ordinarily lies about in such places, to record the failures of the untimely or unfortunate visitor - and takes his leave with many ceremonies, and professions of regret. Some two or three hours after, his walking destinies returned him into the same neighbourhood again, and again the quiet image of the fireside circle at M.'s - Mrs. M. presiding at it like a Queen Lar, with pretty A.S. at her side - striking irresistably on his fancy, he makes another call (forgetting that they were 'certainly not to return from the country before that day week'), and disappointed a second time, inquires for pen and paper as before: again the book is brought, and in the line just above that in which he is about to print his second name (his re-script) - his first name (scarce dry) looks out upon him like another Sosia, or as if a man should suddenly encounter his own duplicate! - The effect may be conceived. D. made many a good resolution against any such lapses in future. I hope he will not keep them too rigorously.

For with G.D. - to be absent from the body, is something (not to speak it profanely) to be present with the Lord. At the very time when, personally encountering thee, he passes on with no recognition - or, being stopped, starts like a thing surprised - at that moment, Reader, he is on Mount Tabor - or Parnassus - or co-sphered with Plato - or, with Harrington, framing 'immortal commonwealths' - devising some plan of amelioration to the country, or thy species - peradventure meditating some individual kindness or courtesy, to be done to thee thyself, the returning consciousness of which made him to start so guiltily at thy obtruded personal presence.

D. commenced life, after a course of hard study in the house of 'pure Emmanuel,' as usher to a knavish fanatic schoolmaster at, at a salary of eight pounds per annum, with board and lodging. Of this poor stipend, he never received above half in all the laborious years he served this man. He tells a pleasant anecdote, that when poverty, staring out at his ragged knees, has sometimes compelled him, against the modesty of his nature, to hint at arrears, Dr. would take no immediate notice, but after supper, when the school was called together to evensong, he would never fail to introduce some instructive homily against riches, and the corruption of the heart occasioned through the desire of them - ending with 'Lord, keep Thy servants, above all things, from the heinous sin of avarice. Having food and raiment, let us therewithal be content. Give me Agur's wish' - and the like - which, to the little auditory, sounded like a doctrine full of Christian prudence

and simplicity, but to poor D. was a receipt in full for that quarter's demand at least.

And D. has been underworking for himself ever since; - drudging at low rates for unappreciating booksellers, - wasting his fine erudition in silent corrections of the classics, and in those unostentatious but solid services to learning which commonly fall to the lot of laborious scholars, who have not the heart to sell themselves to the best advantage. He has published poems, which do not sell, because their character is unobtrusive, like his own, and because he has been too much absorbed in ancient literature to know what the popular mark in poetry is, even if he could have hit it. And, therefore, his verses are properly, what he terms them, crochets; voluntaries; odes to liberty and spring; effusions; little tributes and offerings, left behind him upon tables and window-seats at parting from friends' houses, and from all the inns of hospitality, where he has been courteously (or but tolerably) received in his pilgrimage. If his muse of kindness halt a little behind the strong lines in fashion in this *excitement-loving age*, *his prose is the best of the sort in the world, and exhibits a faithful transcript of his own healthy, natural mind, and cheerful, innocent tone of conversation.*

D. is delightful anywhere, but he is at the best in such places as these. He cares not much for Bath. He is out of his element at Buxton, at Scarborough, or Harrowgate. The Cam and the Isis are to him 'better than all the waters of Damascus.' On the Muses' hill he is happy, and good, as one of the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains; and when he goes about with you to show you the halls and colleges, you think you have with you the Interpreter at the House Beautiful.

## Summary

Lamb explains that the pseudonym "Elia" refers to himself. He informs the reader that at one time he was a clerk at the South-Sea House, a description of which, with brief sketches of some of his colleagues of those days, he has given in an earlier essay (The South-Sea House). He used to treat his working hours in the office as a sort of relaxation preparatory to his literary labours which he used to commence after going home from the office. In changing over from his clerical work in the office to his literary work in the evenings, he used to have the feeling that he had been promoted to a higher position.

Lamb deplores the abolition of certain holidays which were formerly on certain days connected with the memories of saints. There was a time when certain days were observed as holidays in commemoration of saints like Paul, Stephen, Barnabas, Andrew, John and Simon. But those



holidays have now been dispensed with. Those "red-letter days" have a list of festivals and holidays on the tips of his fingers. It is a pity that the civil authorities have abolished most of the holidays connected with religious and spiritual matters.

Lamb then describes a visit to the University of Oxford during the vacation. He never actually had a University education. But a visit to the University of Oxford during the vacation makes him imagine what he might have been, had he actually been admitted to the University as a student. He imagines himself as a Sizar or a Servitor or a Gentleman Commoner. He even imagines himself as a Master of Arts. In the cathedral of Christ Church, Lamb imagines himself as a Doctor of Divinity. He sees the tall trees of Christ Church and the groves of Magdalen College. He passes through the deserted halls and takes a peep into the butteries, sculleries and kitchens. The meanest cook of the University rises in his imagination to the dignity of the Manciple whom Chaucer describes in the Prologue to his *Canterbury Tales*.

Lamb's mind next travels back to the days of antiquity. The times, which are referred to as antiquity, had their own, a more remote, antiquity. There was a time when antiquity itself was not antiquity but the "present". It is a tendency of people to go back in retrospect to bygone times, and not to project themselves into the future. Even to bygone undark ages", the sun used to shine as brightly as it does now.

To stand in the Bodley of the University of Oxford in a most satisfying and pleasing experience for Lamb. It seems as though all the souls of all the past writers are testing on the shelves of the library. Lamb would not like to disturb those souls by handling the various volumes. He feels as if he is inhaling learning. The odour of the moth-eaten volumes is as fragrant to him as was that of the apple tree in the Garden of Eden to Adam. Nor would he like to disturb the repose of the different manuscripts that lie in the Bodley library. He is not one of those research workers who try to explore the past. He is no Herculean explorer.

The labour of exploring manuscripts should be left to a man like George Dyer, says Lamb. George Dyer pores over books so diligently that he himself has grown almost into a book. George Dyer is assiduous in his visits to the seats of learning like the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Much of his fortune has been spent in his journeys from his dwelling to these two universities and back. Dyer has been investigating into the dispute as to which of the two universities was founded first. The enthusiasm with which he has been pursuing this investigation has not been shared by heads of colleges and other

administrators at the two universities. George Dyer is a very absent-minded man. He looks startled even when accosted by a person of long acquaintance. He is so absent-minded, that one day he made a second call at a house where he had already called and been told that the occupants of the house were away to the country and were not expected for a week at least. Most of the time, George Dyer is pre-occupied with his meditations and with his imaginative flights.

After a course of hard study at Cambridge, Dyer worked as an usher to a knavish fanatic schoolmaster at a meager salary. Subsequently he became an author but without much commercial success. His poems do not sell because he is too absorbed in ancient literature to understand the demands of modern taste. He is a writer of excellent prose.

Lamb concludes the essay by observing that Dyer is delightful anywhere but that he is at his best at such places as the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The rivers of Oxford and Cambridge Universities are more to him than all the waters of Damascus. He feels most at home at these seats of learning.

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## ALL FOOLS DAY

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### Essay

The compliments of the season to my worthy masters, and a merry first of April to us all! Many happy returns of this day to you — and you — and you, Sir — nay, never frown, man, nor put a long face upon the matter. Do not we know one another? What need of ceremony among friends? We have all a touch of that same — you understand me — a speck of the motley. Beshrew the man who on such a day as this, the general festival, should affect to stand aloof. I am none of those sneakers. I am free of the corporation, and care not who knows it. He that meets me in the forest to-day, shall meet with no wise-acre, I can tell him. *Stultus sum*. Translate me that, and take the meaning of it to yourself for your pains. What, man, we have four quarters of the globe on our side, at the least computation.

Fill us a cup of that sparkling gooseberry — we will drink no wise, melancholy, politic port on this day — and let us troll the catch of *Amiens* — *due ad me* — *due ad me* — how goes it?

Here shall he see Gross fools as he.

Now would I give a trifle to know historically and authentically, who was the greatest fool that ever lived. I would certainly give him in

a bumper. Marry, of the present breed, I think I could without much difficulty name you the party.

Remove your cap a little further, if you please; it hides my bauble. And now each man bestride his hobby, and dust away his bells to what tune he pleases. I will give you, for my part,

The crazy old church clock, And the bewildered chimes.

Good master Empedocles, you are welcome. It is long since you went a salamander gathering down Aetna. Worse than samphire-picking by some odds. 'Tis a mercy your worship did not singe your rnustachios.

Ha! Cleombrotus! and what salads in faith did you light upon at the bottom of the Mediterranean? You were founder, I take it, of the disinterested sect of the Calenturists.

Gebir, my old free-mason, and prince of plasterers at Babel, bring in your trowel, most Ancient Grand! You have claim to a seat at my right hand, as patron of the stammerers. You left your work, if I remember Herodotus correctly, at eight hundred million toises, or thereabout, above the level of the sea. Bless us, what a long bell you must have pulled, to call your top workmen to their nuncheon on the low grounds of Sennaar. Or did you send up your garlick and onions by a rocket? I am a rogue if I am not ashamed to show you our Monument on Fish-street Hill, after your altitudes. Yet we think it somewhat.

What, the magnanimous Alexander in tears ? — cry, baby, put its finger in its eye, it shall have another globe, round as an orange, pretty moppet!

Mister Adams — 'odso, I honour your coat — pray do us the favour to J read to us that sermon, which you lent to Mistress Slipslop — the twenty I and second in your portmanteau there — on Female Incontinence — the same — it will come in most irrelevantly and impertinently seasonable to the time of the day.

Go Master Raymund Lully, you look wise. Pray correct that error.

Duns, spare your definitions. I must fine you a bumper, or a paradox. We will have nothing said or done syllogistically this day. Remove those logical forms, waiter, that no gentleman break the tender shins of his apprehension stumbling across them.

Master Stephen, you are late. — Ha! Cokes, is it you ? — Ague-cheek, my dear knight, let me pay my devoir to you. — Master Shallow, your worship's poor servant to command. — Master Silence, I will use few words with you. — Slender,

it shall go hard if I edge not you in somewhere. — You six will engross all the poor wit of the company to-day. — I know it, I know it.

Ha! honest R—, my fine old Librarian of Ludgate, time out of mind, art thou here again? Bless thy doublet, it is not over-new, threadbare as thy stories — what dost thou flitting about the world at this rate ? — Thy customers are extinct, defunct, bed-rid, have ceased to read long ago. — Thou goest still among them, seeing if, peradventure, thou canst hawk a volume or two. — Good Granville S—, thy last patron, is flown.

King Pandion, he is dead,

All thy friends are lapt in lead.

Nevertheless, noble R —, come in, and take your seat here, between Armado and Quisada: for in true courtesy, in gravity, in fantastic smiling to thyself, in courteous smiling upon others, in the goodly ornature of well-apparelled speech, and the commendation of wise sentences, thou art nothing inferior to those accomplished Dons of Spain. The spirit of chivalry forsake me for ever, when I forget thy singing the song of Macheath, which declares that he might be happy with either, situated between those two ancient spinsters — when I forget the inimitable formal love which thou didst make, turning now to the one, and now to the other, with that Malvolian smile — as if Cervantes, not Gay, had written it for his hero; and as if thousands of periods must revolve, before the minor of courtesy could have given his invidious preference between a pair of so goodly-proprietyed and meritorious-equal damsels. . . . To descend from these altitudes, and not to protract our Fools' Banquet beyond its appropriate day, - - for I fear the second of April is not many hours distant - - in sober verity I will confess a Truth to thee, reader. I love a Fool — as naturally, as if I were of kith and kin to him.

When a child, with child-like apprehensions, that dived not below the surface of the matter, I read those Parables — not guessing at their involved wisdom — I had more yearnings towards that simple architect, that built his house upon the sand, than I entertained for his more cautious neighbour; I grudged at the hard censure pronounced upon the quiet soul that kept his talent; and — prizing their simplicity beyond the more provident, and, to my apprehension, somewhat unfeminine wariness of their competitors — I felt a kindliness, that almost amounted to a tendre, for those five thoughtless virgins, — I have never made an acquaintance since, that lasted; or a friendship, that answered; with any that had not some tincture of the absurd in their characters. I venerate an honest obliquity of understanding. The more laughable blunders a man shall commit in your company, the more tests he giveth you, that he will not betray or overreach you. I love the safety, which a palpable hallucination warrants; the security, which a word out of season ratifies. And take my word for this, reader, and say a fool told it you, if you please, that he who hath not a dram of folly in his mixture, hath pounds of much

worse matter in his composition. It is observed, that "the foolisher the fowl or fish, — woodcocks, — dotterels, —cod's-heads, &c. the finer the flesh thereof," and what are commonly the world's received fools, but such whereof the world is not worthy? and what have been some of the kindest patterns of our species, but so many darlings of absurdity, minions of the goddess, and her white boys? — Reader, if you wrest my words beyond their fair construction, it is you, and not I, that are the April Fool.

## Summary

This essay celebrates April 1, which is regarded as all fools day on which all kinds of practical jokes are fools day and wishes many happy returns of the day to everybody. Nobody, he says, should keep away from the celebration of this festival. Everybody, according to Lamb, has a touch of the fool in him, "a speck of motley". He himself, says Lamb, belongs to the category of fools and would like his readers to regard themselves as having a touch of the fool in their composition. The majority of the people in this world have something of the fool in ^ their make-up. Lamb invites everybody to share the Gooseberry wine with him and to sing the song of folly that Amiens sings in Shakespeare's play. He would like to know, who was the greatest fool that would like to drink a toast to that man.

Lamb then invites to the company of fools some of the characters who have actually lived and whom he regards as fools. He welcomes Empedocles, the philosopher, who jumped into the crater of Mt. Etna in order to know what was at the bottom of it. Then he welcomes Cleombrotus who jumped into the ocean in order to lead a better life after death. He invites Gebir who had a hand in the building of the Tower of Babel. He invites Alexander the great who, after having conquered the world, wept because there was no other world for him to conquer. He invites Raymund Lully, the chemist and philosopher of the thirteen century, to join the company of fools. Another philosopher who is invited to this company is Duns Scotus, also of the thirteenth century.

Next, Lamb invites some of the fools and simpletons from fiction to join the feast. Parson Adams, Master Stephen, Cokes, Aquecheek, Master Shallow, Master Silence, Slender, all these are asked to join the feast of fools.

Another character to be invited is Ramsay who used to keep the "London Library" in Ludgate Street. Ramsay is given a seat between the two Spanish Dons, Armado and Quisada (Don Quixote), because he is in no way inferior to these two Dons in respect of Chivalry, gravity, courteous smiling upon others, bombastic speech; and the uttering of wise maxims. Lamb compliments Ramsay on his having acted the part of Macheath who had to face the embarrassment of making love two sweethearts at once, one on each side of him.

In conclusion, Lamb says that he loves a Fool and that he loves a Fool as naturally as if he were related to him by ties of the blood. He recalls that when he used to read the parables in the Bible, he used to feel more attracted towards the fool who built his house upon the sand then towards the wise man who built his house on a rock. His sympathy went to the foolish servant buried his money in the ground rather than to the wise servants who multiplied their money by investment. Similarly, he experienced a feeling of tenderness for five foolish virgins who were deprived of the bridegroom and not for the five shrewd virgins who were united with the bridegrooms. Then Lamb tells us that only those of his friendships have proved firm and lasting which were made with persons who had a touch of absurdity in their characters. He feels a respect for honest, stupidity, eccentricity. The more the blunders a man commits, the greater the certainty that he will not betray a friend. Folly and absurdity are a sure guarantee of loyalty and honesty. If a man does not have any touch of folly in his composition, it means that there is a lot of knavery in him. The finest flesh for eating is that which is obtained from those birds or fish, which are the most foolish. The most kind-hearted human beings are those who have an element of folly, stupidity, or absurdity in their character.

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## IMPERFECT SYMPATHESIES

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### Essay

I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things, I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy in any thing. Those national repugnancies do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch — Religio Medici.

That the author of the Religio Medici, mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction, conversant about notional and conjectural essences; in whose categories of Being the possible took the upper hand of the actual; should have overlooked the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind, is not much to be admired. It is rather to be wondered at, that in the genus of animals he should have condescended to distinguish that species at all. For myself-earth. hound and fettered to the scene of my activities,

Standing on earth, not rapt above the sky, I confess that I do feel the differences of mankind, national or individual, to an unhealthy excess. I can look with no indifferent eye upon things or persons. Whatever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent, it begins to be disrelishing. I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices — made up of likings and dislikings — veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies. In a certain sense, I hope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel for all indifferently, but I cannot feel towards all equally. The more purely-English wont that expresses

sympathy will better explain my\_-meaning. I can be a friend to a worthy man, who upon another account cannot be my mate or fellow. I cannot like all people alike.

I would be understood as confining myself to the subject of imperfect sympathies. To nations or classes of men there can be no direct antipathy. There may be individuals born and constellated so opposite to another individual nature, that the same sphere cannot hold them. I have met with my moral antipodes, and can believe the story of two persons meeting (who never saw one another before in their lives) and instantly fighting,

"We by proof find there should be twixt man and man such an antipathy, That though he can show no just reason why For any former wrong or injury, Can neither find a blemish in his fame, Nor aught in face or feature justly blame, Can challenge or accuse him of no evil, Yet notwithstanding hates him as a devil".

The lines are from old Heywood's "Hierarchic of Angels," and he subjoins a curious story in confirmation, of a Spaniard who attempted to assassinate a King Ferdinand of Spain, and being put to the rack could give no other reason for the deed but an inveterate antipathy which he had taken to the first sight of the King.

The cause which to that act compelled him Was, he ne'er loved him since he first beheld him. I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me - - and in truth, I never knew one of that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight. There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. She presents no full front to them — a feature or side-face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game peradventure — and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitutions, to run it down. The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in or out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath — but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but even bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematizers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely. The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth — if, indeed, they do grow,

and are not rather put together upon principles of clock-work. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests any thing, but unloads his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him. He never stoops to catch a glittering something in your presence, to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You cannot cry halves to any thing that he finds. He does not find, but bring.

You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian - you never see the first dawn, the early streaks. - He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Is he orthodox — he has no doubts. Is he an infidel — he has none either. Between the affirmative and the negative there is no border-land with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him — for he sets you right. His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong. His conversation is as a book. His affirmations have the sanctity of an oath. You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country. "A healthy book" — said one of his countrymen to me, who had ventured to give that appellation to John Bunce, — "did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I do not see how that epithet can be properly applied to a book." Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he liked MY BEAUTY (a foolish name it goes by among my friends) — when he very gravely assured me, that "he had considerable respect for my character and talents" (so he was pleased to say), "but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions." The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him. — Persons of this nation are particularly bound of affirming a truth — which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm, as annunciate it. They do indeed appear to have such a love of truth (as if, like virtue, it were valuable for itself) that all truth becomes equally valuable, whether the proposition that contains it be new or old, disputed, or such as is impossible to become



a subject of disputation. I was present not long since at a party of North Britons, where a son of Burns was expected; and happened to drop a silly expression (in my South British way), that I wished it were the father instead of the son — when four of them started up at once to inform me, that "that was impossible, because he was dead." An impracticable wish, it seems, was more than they could conceive. Swift has hit off this part of their character, namely their love of truth, in his biting way, but with an illiberality that necessarily confines the passage to the margin. The tediousness of these people is certainly provoking. I wonder if they ever tire one another! — In my early life I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of Burns. I have sometimes foolishly hoped to ingratiate myself with his countrymen by expressing it. But I have always found that a true Scot resents your admiration of his compatriot, even more than he would your contempt of him. The latter he imputes to your "imperfect acquaintance with many of the words which he uses;" and the same objection makes it a presumption in you to suppose that you can admire him. — Thomson they seem to have forgotten. Smollett they have neither forgotten nor forgiven for his delineation of Rory and his companion, upon their first introduction to our metropolis. — Speak of Smollett as a great genius, and they will retort upon you Hume's History compared with his Continuation of it. What if the historian had continued Humphrey Clinker?

There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves, and entertain their company, with relating facts of no consequence, not at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable.

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids. But I should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side, — of cloaked revenge, dissimulation, and hate, on the other, between our and their fathers, must, and ought, to affect the blood of the children. I cannot believe it can run clear and kindly yet; or that a few fine words, such as candour, liberality, the light of a nineteenth century, can close up the breaches of so deadly a disunion. A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. He is least

distasteful on 'Change — for the mercantile spirit levels all distinctions, as all are beauties in the dark. I boldly confess that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become so fashionable. The reciprocal endearments have, to me, something hypocritical and unnatural in them. I do not like to see the Church and Synagogue kissing and congeeing in awkward postures of an affected civility. If they are converted, why do they not come over to us altogether? Why keep up a form of separation, when the life of it is fled? If they can sit with us at table, why do they keck at our cookery? I do not understand these half convertites. Jews christianizing — Christians judaizing - - puzzle me. I like fish or flesh. A moderate Jew is a more confounding piece of anomaly than a wet Quaker. The spirit of the synagogue is essentially separative. There would have been more in keeping if he had abided by the faith of his forefathers. There is a fine scorn in his face, which nature meant to be of Christians. The Hebrew spirit is strong in him, in spite of his proselytism. He cannot conquer the Shibboleth. How it breaks out, when he sings, "The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!" The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph. There is no mistaking him. — has a strong expression of sense in his countenance, and it is confirmed by his singing. The foundation of his vocal excellence is use. He sings with understanding, as Kemble delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments, and give an appropriate character to each prohibition. His nation, in general, have not ever-sensible countenances. How should they? • - but you seldom see a silly expression among them. Gain, and the pursuit of gain, sharpen a man's visage. I never heard of an idiot being horn among them. — Some admire the Jewish female-physiognomy. I admire it — but with trembling. Jael had those full dark inscrutable eyes.

In the Negro countenance you will often meet with strong traits of benignity. I have felt yearnings of tenderness towards some of these faces --or rather masks — that have looked out kindly upon one in casual encounters in the streets and highways. I love what Fuller beautifully calls - - these "images of God cut in ebony." But I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good-nights with them — because they are black.

I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the sight, or quiet voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the bosom. But I cannot like the Quakers (as Desdemona would say) "to live with

them." I am all over sophisticated — with humours, fancies, craving hourly sympathy. I must have books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whim-whams, which their simpler taste can do without. I should starve at their primitive banquet. My appetites are too high for the salads which (according to Evelyn) Eve dressed for the angel, my gusto too excited

To sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse: The indirect answers which Quakers are often found to return to a question put to them may be explained, I think, without the vulgar assumption, that they are more given to evasion and equivocating than other people. They naturally look to their words more carefully, and are more cautious of committing themselves. They have a peculiar character to keep up on this head. They stand in a manner upon their veracity. A Quaker is by law exempted from taking an oath. The custom of resorting to an oath in extreme cases, sanctified as it is by all religious antiquity, is apt (it must be confessed) to introduce into the laxer sort of minds the notion of two kinds of truth — the one applicable to the solemn affairs of justice, and the other to the common proceedings of daily intercourse. As truth bound upon the conscience by an oath can be but truth, so in the common affirmations of the shop and the market-place a latitude is expected, and conceded upon questions wanting this solemn covenant. Something less than truth satisfies. It is common to hear a person say, "You do not expect me to speak as if I were upon my oath." Hence a great deal of incorrectness and inadvertency, short of falsehood, creeps into ordinary conversation; and a kind of secondary or laic-truth is tolerated, where clergy-truth — oath-truth, by the nature of the circumstances, is not required. A Quaker knows none of this distinction. His simple affirmation being received, upon the most sacred occasions, without any further test, stamps a value upon the words which he is to use upon the most indifferent topics of life. He looks to them, naturally, with more severity. You can have of him no more than his word. He knows, if he is caught tripping in a casual expression, he forfeits, for himself, at least, his claim to the invidious exemption. He knows that his syllables are weighed — and how far a consciousness of this particular watchfulness, exerted against a person, has a tendency to produce indirect answers, and a diverting of the question by honest means, might be illustrated, and the practice justified, by a more sacred example than is proper to be adduced upon this occasion. The admirable presence of mind, which is notorious in Quakers upon all contingencies, might be traced to this imposed self-watchfulness — if it did not seem rather an humble and secular scion of that old stock of religious constancy, which never bent or faltered, in

the Primitive Friends, or gave way to the winds of persecution, to the violence of judge or accuser, under trials and racking examinations, "You will never be the wiser, if I sit here answering your questions till midnight," said one of those upright Justicers to Penn, who had been putting law-cases with a puzzling subtlety. "Thereafter as the answers may be," retorted the Quaker. The astonishing composure of this people is sometimes ludicrously displayed in lighter instances. — I was travelling in a stagecoach with three male Quakers, buttoned up in the straitest non-conformity of their sect. We stopped to bait at Andover, where a meal, partly tea apparatus, partly supper; was sat before us. My friends confined themselves to the tea-table. I in my way took supper. When the landlady brought in the bill, the eldest of my companions discovered that she had charged for both meals. This was resisted. Mine hostess was very clamorous and positive. Some mild arguments were used on the part of the Quakers, for which the heated mind of the good lady seemed by no means a fit recipient. The guard came in with his usual peremptory notice. The Quakers pulled out their money, and formally tendered it — so much for tea — I, in humble imitation, tendering mine -- for the supper which I had taken. She would not relax in her demand. So they all three quietly put up their silver as did myself, and marched out of the room, the eldest and gravest going first, with myself closing up the rear, who thought I could not do better than follow the example of such grave and warrantable personages. We got in. The steps went up. The coach drove off. The murmurs of mine hostess, not very indistinctly or ambiguously pronounced, became after a time inaudible — and now my conscience, which the whimsical scene had for a while suspended, beginning to give some twitches, I waited, in the hope that some justification would be offered by these serious persons for the seeming injustice of their conduct. To my great surprise, not a syllable was dropped on the subject. They sate as mute as at a meeting. At length the eldest of them broke silence, by inquiring of his next neighbour, "Hast thee heard how indigos go at the India House?" and the question operated as a soporific on my moral feeling as far as Exeter.

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## SUMMARY

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Lamb's disapproves of the attitude of indiscriminate sympathy, which Sir Thomas Browne professed to have towards all things and all nationalities. Sir Thomas Browne lived among abstract ideas; but Lamb is earth-bound and fettered to the scene of his activities. Lamb has an acute perception of the differences between things as also between persons. Everything for Lamb is a matter of taste or distaste. He is non-committal towards nothing. His attitude towards things and persons is either one of approval or disapproval. He calls himself a bundle of prejudices; he is made up of liking and disliking. He is the salve of sympathies, apathies and antipathies.

Lamb has an aversion for Scotchman. The mind of an anti-Caledonian is suggestive rather than comprehensive. An anti-Caledonian does not insist upon the whole truth. He is satisfied with fragments and scattered pieces of truth. He is not a systematizer. He does not wait for a proposition to mature in his mind before speaking about it. But the mind of a Caledonian or a Scotchman is just the opposite. A Scotchman does not believe in surmises, guesses, half-truths, partial truths, or dim instincts. His mind is made up about things. He believes either in the affirmative or in the negative without borderland between the two. His taste never fluctuates. His morality is fixed. He knows no compromise between right and wrong. Scotchmen, says Lamb, are tedious and tiresome. A true Scot cannot even tolerate your admiration of any Scottish writer because he believes that only Scotchmen can truly understand Scottish authors.

Nor does Lamb feel attracted towards Jews whom he calls "a piece of stubborn antiquity". The differences between Jews and Christians are so long-standing and so hardened that there can be no understanding between them. Lamb can tolerate a Jew only on the Stock Exchange. He thinks that all the fraternizing between Jews and Christians is hypocritical and unnatural. Either the Jews should be converted to Christianity or they should keep away from Christians. He cannot understand "Jews Christianizing" or "Christians Judaizing". Jews are no doubt an intelligent race but their intelligence is devoted exclusively to moneymaking. Jewish women are certainly pretty but they can be dangerous.

Lamb feels quite sympathetic towards the Negroes. The Negro countenance is indicative of a generous nature. Negroes have rightly been called "images of God cut in ebony". But the black complexion of Negroes prevents Lamb from mixing with them or eating at the same table with them. Thus, their black complexion is one of his aversions.

Lamb loves Quaker ways, Quaker principles, and Quaker worship. When he is agitated, the sight or voice of a Quaker acts as a tranquillizer upon him. But he does not like Quakers to the extent of being able to live with them. He is fond of books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandals, jokes etc., while Quakers disapprove of all these things. Besides, Quakers are in habit of either giving ambiguous answers to questions that are put to them or evading those questions. A Quaker cannot commit himself, because he is supposed always to tell the truth. A Quaker is by law exempted from taking an oath. In the daily intercourse of our lives, we have sometimes to be satisfied with partially correct statements and sometimes even with false statements. We cannot always speak as if we were upon an oath. How much truth we speak or hear often depends upon the circumstances of a case. But a

Quaker is too rigid and does not understand the need of this flexibility. He, therefore, attaches too much importance to every word that he speaks so that he may not stray from the truth. A Quaker has an admirable presence of mind, which is no doubt to be attributed to this self-watchfulness on his part. To illustrate the astonishing composure of Quakers, Lamb narrates an incident of how three Quakers with whom he had been travelling struck to their own position in paying the bill at a wayside inn and remained utterly unperturbed by the protestations of the landlady.

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## VALENTINES DAY

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Hail to thy returning festival, old Bishop Valentine! Great is thy name in the rubric, thou venerable Arch-flamen of Hymen! Immortal Go-between! who and what manner of person art thou? Art thou but a name, typifying the restless principle which impels poor humans to seek perfection in union? or wert thou indeed a mortal prelate. With thy tippet and thy rochet, thy apron on, and decent lawn sleeves? Mysterious personage! like unto thee, assuredly, there is no other mitred father in the calendar; not Jerome, nor Ambrose, nor Cyril; nor the consigner of undipt infants to eternal torments, Austin, whom all mothers hate; nor who hated all mothers, Origen; nor Bishop Bull, nor Archbishop Parker, nor Whitgift. Thou comest attended with thousands and ten thousands of little Loves, and the air is Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. Singing Cupids are thy choristers and thy precentors; and instead of the crosier, the mystical arrow is borne before thee.

In other words, this is the day on which those charming little missives, ycleped Valentines, cross and intercross each other at every street and turning. The weary and all for-spent twopenny postman sinks beneath a load of delicate embarrassments, not his pwn. It is scarcely credible to what an extent this ephemeral courtship is carried on in this loving town, to the great enrichment of porters, and detriment of knockers and bell-wires. In these little visual interpretations, no emblem is so common as the heart, — that little three-cornered exponent of all our hopes and fears, — the bestuck and bleeding heart; it is twisted and tortured into more allegories and affectations than an opera hat. What authority we have in history or mythology for placing the headquarters and metropolis of God Cupid in this anatomical seat rather than in any other, is not very clear; but we have got it, and it will serve as well as any other. Else we might easily imagine, upon some other system which might have prevailed for any thing which our pathology knows to the contrary, a lover addressing his mistress, in perfect simplicity of feeling, "Madam, my liver and fortune are entirely

at your disposal;" or putting a delicate question, "Amanda, have you a midriff to bestow?" But custom has settled these things, and awarded the seat of sentiment to the aforesaid triangle, while its less fortunate neighbours- wait at animal and anatomical distance.

Not many sounds in life, and I include all urban and all rural sounds, exceed in interest a knock at the door. It "gives a very echo to the throne where' Hope is seated," But its issues seldom, answer to this oracle within. It is so seldom that just the person we want to see comes. But of all the clamorous visitations the welcomest in expectation is the sound that ushers in, or seems to usher in, a Valentine. As the raven himself was hoarse that announced the fatal entrance of Duncan, so the knock of the postman on this day is light, airy, confident,-and befitting one that bringeth good tidings. It is less mechanical than on other days; you will say, "That is not the post, I am sure." Visions of Love, of Cupids, of Hymens — delightful eternal common-places, which "having been will always be" which no school-boy nor schoolman can write away; having your irreversible throne in the fancy and affections - what are your transports, when the happy maiden, opening with careful finger, careful not to break the emblematic seal, bursts upon the sight of some well-designed allegory, some type, some youthful fancy, not without verses—

Lovers all, A madrigal, or some such device, not over abundant in sense – young over disclaims it, — and not quite silly — something between wind and water, a chorus where the sheep might almost join the Shepherd, as they did, or as I apprehend they did, in Arcadia. All Valentines are not foolish; and I shall not easily forget thine, my kind friend (if I may have leave to call you so) E. B. — E. B. lived opposite a young maiden, whom he had often seen, unseen, from his parlour window in C—e-street. She was all joyousness and innocence, and just of an age to enjoy receiving a Valentine, and just of a temper to bear the disappointment of missing one with good humour. E. B. is an artist of no common powers; in the fancy parts of designing, perhaps inferior to none; his name is known at the bottom of many a well executed vignette in the way of his profession, but no further; for E. B. is modest, and the world meets nobody half-way. E. B. meditated how he could repay this young maiden for many a favour which she had done him unknown; for when a kindly face greets us, though but passing by, and never knows us again, nor we it, we should feel it as an obligation; and E. B. did. This good artist set himself at work to please the damsel. It was just before Valentine's day three years since. He wrought, unseen and unsuspected, a wondrous work. We need not say it was on the finest gilt paper with borders — full, not of common hearts and

heartless allegory, but all the prettiest stories of love from Ovid, and older poets than Ovid (for E. B. is a scholar.) There was Pyramus and Thisbe, and be sure Dido was not forgot, nor Hero and Leander, and swans more than sang in Cayster, with mottos and fanciful devices, such as besemed, — a work in short of magic. Iris dipt the woof. This on Valentine's eve he commended to the all-swallowing indiscriminate orifice—(O ignoble trust!) — of the common post; but the humble medium did its duty, and from his watchful stand, the — next morning, he saw the cheerful messenger knock, and by the precious charge delivered. He saw, unseen, the happy girl unfold the Valentine, dance about, clap her hands, as one after one the pretty emblems unfolded themselves. She danced about, not with light love, or foolish expectations, for she had no lover; or, if she had, none she knew that could have created those bright images, which delighted her. It was more like some fairy present; a God-send, as our familiarly pious ancestors termed a benefit received, where the benefactor was unknown. It would do her no harm. It would do her good for ever after. It is good to love the unknown. I only give this as a specimen of E. B. and his modest way of doing a concealed kindness.

Good-morrow to my Valentine, sings poor Ophelia; and no better wish, but with better auspices, we wish to all faithful lovers, who are not too wise to despise old legends, but are content to rank, themselves humble diocesans of old Bishop Valentine, and his true church.

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### **THE PRAISE OF CHIMNEY SWEEPERS** Essay

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I like to meet a sweep — understand me — not a grown sweeper — old chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive — but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first negritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek — such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the peep peep of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise?

I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks - - poor blots - innocent blacknesses -

I reverence these young Africans of our own growth — these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind.



When a child, what a mysterious pleasure it was to witness their operation! to see a chit no bigger than one's-self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the fauces Avernian — to pursue him in imagination, as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns,—horrid shades --to shudder with the idea that "now, surely, he must be lost for ever!" —: to revive at hearing his feeble shout of discovered day-light.-- and then (O fulness of delight) running out of doors, to come just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety, the brandished weapon of his art victorious like some flag waved over a conquered citadel! I seem to remember having been told, that a bad sweep was once left in a stack with his brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. It was an awful spectacle certainly; not much unlike the old stage direction in *Macbeth*, where the "Apparition of a child crowned with a tree in his hand rises."

Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him two-pence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed heels (no unusual accompaniment) be superadded, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to a tester.

There is a composition, the ground-work of which I have understood to be the sweet wood 'yclept sassafras'. This wood boiled down to a kind of tea, and tempered with an infusion of milk and sugar, hath to some tastes a delicacy beyond the China luxury. I know not how thy palate may relish it; for myself, with every deference to the judicious Mr. Read, who hath time out of mind kept open a shop (the only one he avers in London) for the vending of this "wholesome and pleasant beverage, on the south side of Fleet-street, as thou approachest Bridge-street — the only Salopian house. — I have never yet adventured to dip my own particular lip in a basin of his commended ingredient — a cautious premonition to the olfactories constantly whispering to me, that my stomach must infallibly, with all due courtesy, decline it. Yet I have seen palates, otherwise not uninstructed in dietetical elegances, sup it up with avidity.

I know not by what particular conformation of the organ it happens, but I have always found that this composition is surprisingly gratifying to the palate of a young chimney-sweeper — whether the oily particles (sassafras is slightly oleaginous) do attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions, which are sometimes found (in dissections) to adhere to the roof of the mouth in these unfledged practitioners or whether Nature, sensible that she had mingled too much of bitter wood in the lot of these raw victims, caused to grow out of the earth her sassafras for a

sweet lenitive but so it is, that no possible taste or odour to the senses of a young chimney-sweeper can convey a delicate excitement comparable to this mixture. Being penniless, they will yet hang their black heads over the ascending steam, to gratify one sense if possible, seemingly no less pleased than those domestic animals — cats — when they purr over a new-found sprig of valerian. There is something more in these sympathies than philosophy can inculcate.

Now albeit Mr. Read boasteth, not without reason, that his is the only Salopian house; yet he it known to thee, reader — if thou art one who keepest what are called good hours, thou art haply ignorant of the fact - he hath a race of industrious imitators, who from stalls, and under open sky, dispense the same savoury mess to humbler customers, at that dead time of the dawn, when (as extremes meet) the rake, reeling home from his midnight cups, and the hard-handed artisan leaving his bed to resume the premature labours of the day, jostle, not unfrequently to the manifest disconcerting of the former, for the honours of the pavement. It is the time when, in summer, between the expired and the not yet relumined kitchen-fires, the kennels of our fair metropolis give forth their least satisfactory odours. The rake, who wisheth to dissipate his o'ernight vapours in more grateful coffee, curses the ungenial fume, as he passeth; but the artisan stops to taste, and blesses the fragrant breakfast.

This is Saloop - - the precocious herb-woman's darling — the delight of the early gardener, who transports his smoking cabbages by break of day from Hammersmith to Covent-garden's famed piazzas — the delight, and, oh I fear, too often the envy, of the unpennied sweep. Him shouldest thou haply encounter, with his dim visage pendent over the grateful steam, regale him with a sumptuous basin (it will cost thee but three halfpennies) and a slice of delicate bread and butter (an added halfpenny) --so may thy culinary fires, eased of the o'er-charged secretions from thy worse-placed hospitalities, curl up a lighter volume to the welkin — so may the descending soot never taint thy costly well-ingredienced soups — nor the odious cry, quick-reaching from street to street, of the fired chimney, invite the rattling engines from ten adjacent parishes, to disturb for a casual scintillation thy peace and pocket!

I am by nature extremely susceptible of street affronts; the jeers and taunts of the populace; the low-bred triumph they display over the casual trip, or splashed stocking, of a gentleman. Yet can I endure the jocularly of a young sweep with something more than forgiveness. In the last winter but one, pacing along Cheap-side with my accustomed precipitation when I walk westward, a treacherous slide brought me

upon my back in an instant. I scrambled up with pain and shame enough — yet outwardly trying to face it down, as if nothing had happened — when the roguish grin of one of these young wits encountered me. There he stood, pointing me out with his dusky finger to the mob, and to a poor woman (I suppose his mother) in particular, till the tears for the exquisiteness of the fun (so he thought it) worked themselves out at the corners of his poor red eyes, red from many a previous weeping, and soot- inflamed, yet twinkling through all with such a joy, snatched out of desolation, that Hogarth — but Hogarth has got him already (how could he miss him?) in the *March to Finchley*, grinning at the pye-man — there he stood, as he stands in the picture, irremovable, as if the jest was to last for ever — with such a maximum of glee, and minimum of mischief, in his mirth -- for the grin of a genuine sweep hath absolutely no malice in it — that I could have been content, if the honour of a gentleman might endure it, to have remained his butt and his mockery till midnight.

I am by theory obdurate to the seductiveness of what are called a fine set of teeth. Every pair of rosy lips (the ladies must pardon me) is a casket, presumably holding such jewels; but, methinks, they should take leave to "air " them as frugally as possible. The fine lady, or fine gentleman, who show me their teeth, show me bones. Yet must I confess, that from the mouth of a true sweep a display (even to ostentation) of those white and shining ossifications, strikes me as an agreeable anomaly in manners, and an allowable piece of foppery. It is, as when

A sable cloud

Turns forth her silver lining on the night.

It is like some remnant of gentry not quite extinct; a badge of better days; a hint of nobility — and, doubtless, under the obscuring darkness and double night of their forlorn disguisement, oftentimes lurketh good blood, and gentle conditions, derived from lost ancestry, and a lapsed pedigree. The premature apprenticeships of these tender victims give but too much encouragement, I fear, to clandestine, and almost infantile abductions: the seeds of civility and true courtesy, so often discernible in these young grafts (not otherwise to be accounted for) plainly hint at some forced adoptions; many noble Rachels mourning for their children, even in our days, countenance the fact; the tales of fairy-spiriting may shadow a lamentable verity, and the recovery of the young Montague be but a solitary instance of good fortune, out of many 'irreparable and hopeless defiliations.

In one of the state-beds at Arundel castle, a few years since under a ducal canopy — (that seat of the Howards is an object of curiosity to j visitors, chiefly for its beds, in which the late duke was especially a connoisseur) encircled with curtains of delicatest crimson, with starry coronets inwoven — folded between a pair of sheets whiter and softer than the lap where Venus lulled Ascanius was discovered by chance, after all methods of search had failed, at noon-day, fast asleep, a lost chimney-sweeper. The little creature, having somehow confounded his passage among the intricacies of those lordly chimneys, by some unknown; aperture had alighted upon this magnificent chamber; and, tired with his tedious explorations, was unable to resist the delicious invitement to repose, which he there saw exhibited; so, creeping between the sheets very quietly, laid his black head upon the pillow, and slept, like a young Howard

Such is the account given to the visitors at the Castle. — But I cannot help seeming to perceive a confirmation of what I have just hinted at in this story. A high instinct was at work in the case, or I am mistaken. Is it probable that a poor child of that description, with whatever weariness he might be visited, would have ventured; under such a penalty, as he would be taught to expect, to uncover the sheets of a Duke's bed, and deliberately to lay himself down between them, when the rug, or the carpet, presented an obvious couch, still far above his pretension — is this probable, I would ask, if the great power of nature, which I contend for, had not been manifested within him, prompting to the adventure? Doubtless this young nobleman (for such my mind misgives me that he must be) was allured by some memory, not amounting to full consciousness, of his condition in infancy, when he was used to be lapt by his mother, or his nurse, in just such sheets as he there found, into which he was now but creeping back as into his proper incunabula, and resting-place. — By no other theory, than by this sentiment of a pre-existent state (as I may call it), can I explain a deed so venturous, and, indeed, any other system, so indecorous, in this tender, but unseasonable sleeper.

My pleasant friend Jem White was so impressed with a belief of metamorphoses like this frequently taking place, that in some sort to reverse the wrongs of fortune in these poor phangelings, he instituted an annual feast of chimney-sweepers, at which it was his pleasure to officiate as host and waiter. It was a solemn supper held in Sniithfield, upon the yearly return of the fair of St. Bartholomew. Cards were issued a week before to the master-sweeps in and about the metropolis, confining the invitation to their younger fry. Now and then an elderly stripling would get in among us, and be good-naturedly winked at; but

our main body were infantry. One unfortunate wight, indeed, who, relying upon his dusky suit, had intruded himself into our party, but by tokens was providentially discovered in time to be no chimney-sweeper (all is not soot which looks so), was quoited out of the presence with universal indignation, as not having on the wedding garment; but in general the greatest harmony prevailed. The place chosen was a convenient spot among the pens, at the north side of the fair, not so far distant as to be impervious to the agreeable hub-hub of that vanity; but remote enough not to be obvious to the interruption of every gaping spectator in it. The guests assembled about seven. In those little temporary parlours three tables were spread with napery, not so fine as substantial, and at every board a comely hostess presided with her pan of hissing sausages. The nostrils of the young rogues dilated at the savour. James White, as head waiter, had charge of the first table; and myself, with our trusty companion Bigod, ordinarily ministered to the other two. There was clambering and jostling, you may be sure, who should get at the first table — for Rochester in his maddest days could not have done the humours of the scene with more spirit than my friend. After some general expression of thanks for the honour the company had done him, his inaugural ceremony was to clasp the greasy waist of old dame Ursula (the fattest of the three), that stood frying and fretting, half-blessing, half-cursing "the gentleman," and imprint upon her chaste lips a tender salute, whereat the universal host would set up a shout that tore the concave, while hundreds of grinning teeth startled the night with their brightness. O it was a pleasure to see the sable youngers lick in the unctuous meat, with his more unctuous sayings — how he would fit the tit bits to the puny mouths, reserving the lengthier links for the seniors — how he would intercept a morsel even in the jaws of some young desperado, declaring it "must to the pan again to be browned, for it was not fit for a gentleman's eating" — how he would recommend this slice of white bread, or that piece of kissing-crust, to a tender juvenile, advising them all to have a care of cracking their teeth, which were their best patrimony, how genteelly he would deal about the small ale, as if it were wine, naming the brewer, and protesting, if it were not good, he should lose their custom; with a special recommendation to wipe the lip before drinking. Then we had our toasts — "The King," — the "Cloth," — which, whether they understood or not, was equally diverting and flattering; — and for a crowning sentiment, which never failed, "May the Brush supersede the Laurel!" All these, and fifty other fancies, which were rather felt than comprehended by his guests, would he utter, standing upon tables, and prefacing every sentiment with a "Gentlemen, give me leave to propose so and so," which was a prodigious comfort to those young orphans;

every now and then stuffing into his mouth (for it did not do to be squeamish on these occasions) indiscriminate pieces of those reeking sausages, which pleased them mightily, and was the savouriest part, you may believe, of the entertainment.

Golden lads and lasses must,

As chimney-sweepers, come to dust -

James White is extinct, and with him these suppers have long ceased. He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died — of my world at least. His old clients look for him among the pens; and, missing him, reproach the altered feast of St. Bartholomew, and the glory of Smithfield departed for ever.

## Summary

Lamb tells us that he feels attracted towards young chimneysweepers-whose cry of "sweep, sweep" at dawn reminds him of the chirping off sparrows. He describes chimneysweepers as "dim specks", "poor blots", "innocent blacknesses", etc. The work of chimneysweepers, says Lamb, demands a lot of patience. As a child, Lamb used greatly to marvel at the manner in which a young chimneysweeper would enter the chimney from below and climb higher and higher, brushing its walls, till he emerged at the top.

Lamb urges his readers to give a penny or two pence to a young chimneysweeper if they happen to meet one, because a boy of this category surely deserves of that much charity.

Lamb then goes on to describe a concoction, which is prepared from a kind of sweet wood called "sassafras". This sassafras tea, or "salop" as it is called, is a favourite beverage with chimneysweepers. Lamb himself has never tasted it because of its unsavoury smell, but there is some quality of this concoction that makes it very palatable to young chimneysweepers. They find it as gratifying to their senses of smell and taste as a spring of valerian is to cats. A man called Mr. Read keeps a shop on the south side of Fleet Street where he sells this "wholesome and pleasant beverage". But Mr. Read has his imitators who sell the same concoction from their stalls in the early hours of the morning to artisans setting forth to commence the labours of the day. Let the reader, says Lamb, offer a basin of this drink to a chimneysweeper. The chimneysweeper will work the better for this hospitality and will clean his benefactor's chimney so well that it will never catch fire from a casual spark. The reader's hospitality, says Lamb, will thus be well rewarded and may save him the expense of

having to call fire engine in the event of the accumulated thick soot inside his chimney catching fire.

*Essays of Charles Lamb*

Lamb says that, although he cannot tolerate the jeers and ridicule of a street crowd, he does not mind a young chimneysweeper jeering and laughing at him. Once, in the course of a walk, Lamb slipped and fell on his back in a street. A roguish young chimneysweeper, seeing him in that condition, laughed and laughed till the tears flowed from his eyes. But Lamb did not feel offended in the least. Indeed, he felt happy that he had provided so much fun to a young chimneysweeper. After all, there is not the least malice in a young chimneysweeper's laughter.

Lamb does not like young women to make a display of their beautiful white teeth. But the sight of a young chimneysweeper displaying his white and shining teeth is welcome to him. A black and sooty figure showing a set of white teeth looks an attractive sight.

Lamb then goes on to say that, not all the chimneysweepers are lowborn. Some of them were born in high, aristocratic families and were kidnapped from their palatial homes in their infancy. Lamb tells the story of how once a young chimneysweeper was found fast asleep in a luxurious bed in an aristocratic mansion. Obviously, this boy, feeling exhausted after his sweeping of that mansion, had crept into this bed and fallen asleep. But, says Lamb, no lowborn chimneysweeper could have ever dared to lie down on a lordly bed. The only possible explanation of that conduct of this young boy was that, having aristocratic blood in his veins, he was promoted by some natural instinct to get into that aristocratic bed. This boy must have been the son of an aristocratic family and in his early childhood, have been kidnapped from his home.

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## **A BACHELOR COMPLAINT ON THE BEHAV-IOUR OF THE MARRIED PEOPLE**

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### **Essay**

As a single man, I have spent a good deal of my time in noting down the infirmities of Married People, to console myself for those superior pleasures, which they tell me I have lost by remaining as I am.

I cannot say that the quarrels of men and their wives ever made any great impression upon me, or had much tendency to strengthen me in those anti-social resolutions, which I took up long ago upon more substantial considerations. What oftenest offends me at the houses of

married persons where I visit, is an error of quite a different description; — it is that they are too loving.

Not too loving neither: that does not explain my meaning. Besides, why should that offend me? The very act of separating themselves from the rest of the world, to have the ruller enjoyment of each other's society, implies that they prefer one another to all the world.

But what I complain of is, that they carry this preference so undisguisedly, they perk it up in the faces of us single people so shamelessly, you cannot be in their company a moment without being made to feel, by some indirect hint or open avowal, that you are not the object of this preference. Now there are some things which give no offence, while implied or taken for granted merely; but expressed, there is much offence in them. If a man were to accost the first homely-featured or plain-dressed young woman of his acquaintance, and tell her bluntly, that she was not handsome or rich enough for him, and he could not marry her, he would deserve to be kicked for his ill manners; yet no less is implied in the fact, that having access and opportunity of putting the question to her, he has never yet thought fit to do it. The young woman understands this as clearly as if it were put into words; but no reasonable young woman would think of making this the ground of a quarrel. Just as little right have a married couple to tell me by speeches, and looks that are scarce less plain than speeches, that I am not the happy man, the lady's choice. It is enough that I know I am not: I do not want this perpetual reminding.

The display of superior knowledge or riches may be made sufficiently mortifying; but these admit of a palliative. The knowledge which is brought out to insult me, may accidentally improve me; and in the rich man's houses and pictures, — his parks and gardens, I have a temporary usufruct at least. But the display of married happiness has none of these palliatives: it is throughout pure, unrecompensed, unqualified insult.

Marriage by its best title is a monopoly, and not of the least invidious sort. It is the cunning of most possessors of any exclusive privilege to keep their advantage as much out of sight as possible, that their less favoured neighbours, seeing little of the benefit, may the less be disposed to question the right. But these married monopolists thrust the most obnoxious part of their patent into our faces.

Nothing is to me more distasteful than that entire complacency and satisfaction which beam in the countenances of a new-married couple, - in that of the lady particularly: it tells you, that her lot is disposed of in



this world: that you can have no hopes of her. It is true, I have none; nor wishes either, perhaps: but this is one of those truths which ought, as I said before, to be taken for granted, not expressed.

The excessive airs which those people give themselves, founded on the ignorance of us unmarried people, would be more offensive if they were less irrational. We will allow them to understand the mysteries belonging to their own craft better than we who have not had the happiness to be made free of the company: but their arrogance is not content within these limits. If a single person presume to offer his opinion in their presence, though upon the most indifferent subject, he is immediately silenced as an incompetent person. Nay, a young married lady of my acquaintance, who, the best of the Je'st was, had not changed her condition above a fortnight before, in a question on which I had the misfortune to differ from her, respecting the properest mode of breeding oysters for the London market, had the assurance to ask with a sneer, how such an old Bachelor as I could pretend to know any thing about such matters.

But what I have spoken of hitherto is nothing to the airs which these creatures give themselves when they come, as they generally do, to have children. When I consider how little of a rarity children are, — that every street and blind alley swarms with them, — that the poorest people commonly have them in most abundance, — that there are few marriages that are not blest with at least one of these bargains, — how often they turn out ill, and defeat the fond hopes of their parents, taking to vicious courses, which end in poverty, disgrace, the gallows, and c. — I cannot for my life tell what cause for pride there can possibly be in having them. If they were young phoenixes, indeed, that were born but one in a year, there might be a pretext. But when they are so common -

I do not advert to the insolent merit which they assume with their husbands on these occasions. Let them look to that. But why we, who are not their natural-born subjects, should be expected to bring our spices, myrrh, and incense, — our tribute and homage of admiration, — I do not see.

"Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even so are the young children:" so says the excellent office in our Prayer-book appointed for the churching of women. "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:" So say I; but then don't let him discharge his quiver upon us that are weaponless;—let them be arrows, but not to gall and stick us. I have generally observed that these arrows are double-headed: they have two forks, to be sure to hit with one or the other. As for instance, when you come into a house which is full of children, if you happen to take

no notice of them (you are thinking of something else, perhaps, and turn a deaf ear to their innocent caresses), you are set down as untractable, morose, a hater of children. On the other hand, if you find them more than usually engaging, if you are taken with their pretty manners, and set about in earnest to romp and play with them, some pretext or other is sure to be found for sending them out of the room: they are too noisy or boisterous, or Mr. — does not like children. With one or other of these forks the arrow is sure to hit you.

I could forgive their jealousy, and dispense with toying with their brats, if it gives them any pain; but I think it unreasonable to be called upon to love them, where I see no occasion, — to love a whole family, perhaps, eight, nine, or ten, indiscriminately, to love all the pretty dears, because children are so engaging.

I know there is a proverb, "Love me, love my dog:" that is not always so very practicable, particularly if the dog be set upon you to tease you or snap at you in sport. But a dog or a lesser thing — any inanimate substance, as a keep-sake, a watch or a ring, a tree, or the place where we last parted when my friend went away upon a long absence, I can make shift to love, because I love him, and any thing that reminds me of him; provided it be in its nature indifferent, and apt to receive whatever hue fancy can give it. But children have a real character and an essential being of themselves: they are amiable or unamiable per se; I must love or hate them as I see cause for either in their qualities. A child's nature is too serious a thing to admit of its being regarded as a mere appendage to another being, and to be loved or hated accordingly: they stand will me upon their own stock, as much as men and women do. O! but you will say, sure it is, an attractive age, there is something in the tender yeon of infancy that 'of itself charms Us. That is the very reason why I am more nice about them. I know that a sweet child is the sweetest thing in nature, not even excepting the delicate creatures which bear them; but the prettier the kind of a thing is, the more desirable it is that it should be pretty of its kind. One daisy differs not much from another in glory; but a violet should look and smell the daintiest. — I was always rather squeamish in my women and children.

But this is not the worst: one must be admitted into their familiarity at least, before they can complain of inattention. It implies visits, and some kind of intercourse. But if the husband be a man with whom you have lived on a friendly footing before marriage, if you did not come in on the wife's side, - - if you did not sneak into the house in her train, but were an old friend in fast habits of intimacy before their courtship

was-so much as thought on, — look about you — your tenure is precarious — before a twelve-month shall roll over your head, you shall find your old friend gradually grow cool and altered towards you, and at last seek opportunities of breaking with you. I have scarce a married friend of my acquaintance, upon whose firm faith I can rely, whose friendship did not commence after the period of his marriage. With some limitations they can endure that: but that the good man should have dared to enter into a solemn league of friendship in which they were not consulted, though it happened before they knew him, — before they that are now are man and wife ever met, — this is intolerable to them. Every long friendship, every old authentic intimacy, must be brought into their office to be new stamped with their currency, as a sovereign Prince calls in the good old money that was coined in some reign before he was born or thought of, to be new marked and minted with the stamp of his authority, before he will let it pass current in the world. You may guess what luck generally befalls such a rusty piece of metal as I am in these new mintings.

Innumerable are the ways which they take to insult and worm you out of their husband's confidence. Laughing at all you say with a kind of wonder, as if you were a queer kind of fellow that said good things, but an oddity, is one of the ways — they have a particular kind of stare for the purpose — till at last the husband, who used to defer to your judgment, and would pass over some excrescences of understanding and manner for the sake of a general vein of observation (not quite vulgar) which he perceived in you, begins to suspect whether you are not altogether a humorist, — a fellow well enough to have consorted with in his bachelor days, but not quite so proper to be introduced to ladies. This may be called the staring way; and is that which has oftenest been put in practice against me.

Then there is the exaggerating way, or the way of irony: that is, where they find you an object of especial regard with their husband, who is not so easily to be shaken from the lasting attachment founded on esteem which he has conceived towards you; by never-qualified exaggerations to cry up all that you say or do, till the good man, who understands well enough that it is all done in compliment to him, grows weary of the debt of gratitude which is due to so much candor, and by relaxing a little on his part, and taking down a peg or two in his enthusiasm, sinks at length to that kindly level of moderate esteem, — that "decent affection and complacent kindness" towards you, where she herself can join in sympathy with him without much stretch and violence to her sincerity.

Another way (for the ways they have to accomplish so desirable a purpose are infinite) is, with a kind of innocent simplicity, continually to mistake what it was which first made their husband fond of you. If an esteem for something excellent in your moral character was that which riveted the chain which she is to break, upon any imaginary discovery of a want of poignancy in your conversation, she will cry, "I thought, my dear, you described your friend, Mr. — as a great wit." If, on the other hand, it was for some supposed charm in your conversation that he first grew to like you, and was content for this to overlook some trifling irregularities in your moral deportment, upon the first notice of any of these she as readily exclaims, "This, my dear, is your good Mr. ———." One good lady whom I took the liberty of expostulating with for not showing me quite so much respect as I thought due to her husband's old friend, had the candour to confess to me that she had often heard Mr. — speak of me before marriage, and that she had conceived a great desire to be acquainted with me, but that the sight of me had very much disappointed her expectations; for from her husband's representations of me, she had formed a notion that she was to see a fine, tall, officer-like looking man (I use her very words); the very reverse of which proved to be the truth. This was candid; and I had the civility not to ask her in return, how she came to pitch upon a standard of personal accomplishments for her husband's friends which differed so much from his own; for my friend's dimensions as near as possible approximate to mine; he standing five feet five in his shoes, in which I have the advantage of him by about half an inch; and he no more than myself exhibiting any indications of a martial character in his air or countenance.

These are some of the mortifications which I have encountered in the absurd attempt to visit at their houses. To enumerate them all would be a vain endeavour: I shall therefore just glance at the very common impropriety of which married ladies are guilty, of treating us as if we were their husbands, and vice versa — I mean, when they use us with familiarity, and their husbands with ceremony. Testacea, for instance, kept me the other night two or three hours beyond my usual time of supping, while she was fretting because Mr. — did not come home, till the oysters were all spoiled, rather than she would be guilty of the impoliteness of touching one in his absence. This was reversing the point of good manners: for ceremony is an invention to take off the uneasy feeling which we derive from knowing ourselves to be less the object of love and esteem with a fellow-creature than some other person is. It endeavors to make up by superior attentions in little points, for that invidious preference which it is forced to deny in the greater. Had Testacea kept the oysters back for me, and withstood her husband's importunities to go to supper, she would have acted according to the

strict rules of propriety. I know no ceremony that ladies are bound to observe to their husbands, beyond the point of a modest behaviour and decorum: therefore I must protest against the vicarious gluttony of Cerasia, who at her own table sent away a dish of Morellas, which I was applying to with great good will, to her husband at the other end of the table, and recommended a plate of less extraordinary goose-berries to my unwedded palate in their stead. Neither can I excuse the wanton affront of :

But I am weary of stringing up all my married acquaintance by Roman denominations. Let them amend and change their manners, or I promise to record the full-length English of their names, to the terror of all such desperate offenders in future.

## Summary

As a confirmed bachelor, Lamb has discovered a number of weaknesses in married people and has therefore found much consolation in his state of bachelorhood. It is not the quarrels of husbands and wives that console him for having remained unmarried. What offends him at the houses of married persons is that they are too living. He has found that a husband and a wife constantly try to produce the impression that they are very fond of each other. This display of married happiness is an insult to a bachelor. If a man enjoys some monopoly, he should keep it as much out of sight as possible so that others may not question his right to the monopoly. But married people go out of their way to make bachelors conscious of the monopoly of marriage which they enjoy. They air of complete satisfaction which a newly married couple wear on their faces is especially offensive to Lamb.

Married people often put on an expression of exaggerated self-importance. They regard bachelors as ignorant and incompetent persons. A young married lady once mocked at Lamb because he happened to offer an opinion about the most appropriate method of breeding oysters for the London market. She seemed to think that a bachelor could not be expected to have any knowledge of such matters.

Lamb does not understand why married people should be excessively proud of their children. After all, children are not a rarity. In fact, the poorest people have the large number of children. Besides, children often go wrong and prove to be a cause of much disappointment to their parents. Married people's are still less justified in expecting a bachelor to show a fond attention to their children. Why should a bachelor shower his affection on children? Yet, in this matter, there is a contradiction in the behaviour of married people. If a bachelor shows too much interest in children, their parents quickly, send them out of the room. A bachelor, therefore, finds himself on the horns of dilemma in dealing with children. Should

he, or should he not, adopt a loving attitude towards children? If he should, what is to be the degree of affection with which he ought to treat them? In any case, it is unfair on the part of the married couple to expect a bachelor to show affection to all their eight, nine, or ten children. There is certainly a proverb: "Love me, love my dog". But while it is possible to love a friend's dog or any other article that reminds a man of his friend, it may not be possible always to love a friend's children because children have a separate existence of their individual natures and temperaments. Lamb says that it has never been possible for him to feel affection for women and children indiscriminately.

Very soon after getting married, a man tends to become indifferent to a bachelor friend no matter how long was the duration of friendship before the marriage. No wife can tolerate her husband's bachelor friend if the friendship dates back to her pre-marriage days. No matter how long a man had been friendly with her husband before her marriage, she will so manage that her husband will become cool long before and distant towards him.

Women adopt different ways to bring to an end the friendship between their husbands and the bachelors with whom they may have had intimate relations before marriage. A wife may laugh with a kind of wonder at everything that her husband's bachelor friend may say. By her laughter, she may produce the impression that her husband's friend is an oddity or a humorist, not fit to be introduced to women. On the other hand, a wife may keep exaggerating the particular qualities of her husband's friend in such way that the husband's enthusiasm on the part of a wife. Another technique employed by a wife is to ask with a kind of innocent towards him and became the basis of the friendship. By this method, a wife tries to make her husband feel that he was mistaken in his assessment of his friend's qualities.

Bachelors invariably receive degrading treatment from married women. There was the case of a wife who kept Lamb, an invited guest, waiting for several hours for dinner because her husband had been detained somewhere. This lady should have been considerate enough to serve dinner to Lamb if the husband had been detained for two or three hours beyond the usual hour of dinner. Then there was the case of a lady who passed on an excellent dish of Morella's to her husband and recommended a less savoury dish of gooseberries to Lamb who was guest at the house. Lamb protests against such discourteous treatment from wives and threatens to disclose their names if they do not amend and improve their manners in future. A wife ought to be informal with her husband, but she ought to show a formal politeness to her husband's friends.

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## SUMMARY

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In the first years of the 19th century Lamb began his fruitful literary cooperation with his sister Mary. Together they wrote at least three books for William Godwin's Juvenile Library. The most successful of these was of course

Tales from Shakespeare which ran through two editions for Godwin and has now been published dozens of time in countless editions, many of them illustrated. Lamb also contributed a footnote to Shakespearean studies at this time with his essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," in which he argues that Shakespeare should be read rather than performed in order gain the proper effect of his dramatic genius. Beside contributing to Shakespeare studies with his book Tales From Shakespeare, Lamb also contributed to the popularization of Shakespeare's contemporaries with his book Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare.

Although he did not write his first Elia essay until 1820, Lamb's gradual perfection of the essay form for which he eventually became famous began as early 1802 in a series of open letters to Leigh Hunt's Reflector. The most famous of these is called "The Londoner" in which Lamb famously derides the contemporary fascination with nature and the countryside.

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### KEY WORDS

1. **The Latymer School :** The Latymer School, a grammar school in Edmonton, a suburb of London.
2. **The Londoner :** One of the most famous series of open letters to Leigh Hunt's Reflector by Charles Lamb.
3. **Sassafras :** The concoction, which is prepared from a kind of sweet wood called "sassafras".
4. **Empedocles :** Empedocles, the philosopher, who jumped into the crater of Mt. Etna in order to know what was at the bottom of it.
5. **Images of God cut in ebony:** Negroes have rightly been called "images of God cut in ebony".

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### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the Charles Lamb's essay, "Oxford in the Vacation".
2. Write down the summary of the essay, "Valentines Day".
3. Describe the themes explained by Lamb in his essay, "Imperfect Synthesis".
4. Explain the motive and ideas of a bachelor in Lamb's, "A Bachelor complaint on the behaviour of married people".
5. Discuss the setting employed by Lamb in his essay, "All fools day".
6. To whom does the pseudonym 'Elia' refer to?
7. Write about the red-letter days of Lamb.
8. Write about Lamb's, "All fools Day".

9. How does Lamb describe the Chimney Sweepers?
10. Why did the young chimneysweeper laugh at Lamb?

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### **FURTHER READINGS**

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1. Life of Charles Lamb — E.V. Lucas
2. Essays of Elia — Charles Lamb
3. Charles Lamb and the Lloyds — E.V. Lucas Smith
4. Charles Lamb; A Memoir — Barry Cornwall aka Bryan Procter
5. Charles Lamb — George Barnett

