

SOME LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB TO JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

THE letters which follow, hitherto unpublished, were written by Charles Lamb to John Howard Payne within the years 1822 and 1823, as nearly as can be conjectured, for it will be observed some of them bear no dates, while others are not completely dated. Such inadvertence on the part of Lamb was not uncommon. Of the letter he wrote to Gilman, after the funeral of Coleridge, Talfourd says: "Like most of Lamb's letters it is undated." Talfourd also says, in his preface to the "Final Memoirs," that "there is, indeed, scarcely a note (a notelet he used to call his very little letters) Lamb ever wrote which has not some tinge of that quiet sweetness—some hint of that peculiar union of kindness and whim—which distinguish him from all other poets and humorists." This statement is confirmed by the brief correspondence with Payne.

A few words here concerning John Howard Payne will, it is thought, not be out of place. He was born in the city of New York (or on Long Island), in June, 1792, and before he went to Europe, in 1813, he seems to have been "everything by turns and nothing long"—actor (he was styled the "Young American Roscius"), clerk, writer for the newspapers, etc. While abroad, and after quitting the stage, he became a playwright,—successful at times, but often suffering great hardship. The writer of this has seen and read letters written by Payne while he was in Paris, engaged in the adaptation of French pieces to the English stage, to Mrs. Glover, the actress,—with whom he seems to have been on terms of great intimacy,—which disclose a condition of impecuniosity almost incredible—sponging on his acquaintances for money to pay the postage on his letters to Mrs. Glover, denied by his landlady access to his scanty wardrobe, occasionally foraging in restaurants for a daily meal (often nothing but bread and cheese), or some other similar shift. It has been said that the poor-devil author in Irving's "Bracebridge Hall" had his original in Payne, who was well acquainted with Irving, as he was with most of the literary men of his day during his sojourn in England. He returned to his own country in 1834, and, among other literary ventures, endeavored to establish in New York a magazine with the fanciful Persian title Jam-Jeham-Nima (cup of the universe), but the attempt was a failure. Dur-

ing the administration of President Tyler he was appointed consul to Tunis, where he served several years. He was reappointed to the same position when Fillmore was President, and died at Tunis, while United States consul, in the year 1852. His most successful plays were "Brutus; or, the Fall of Tarquin," and "Clari; or, the Maid of Milan." The former was written, or constructed, for the elder Kean, and still keeps possession of the stage. In the latter occurs the popular song of "Home, Sweet Home," the words of which have probably been the means of preserving his name from oblivion. In constructing the tragedy of "Brutus," Payne laid many authors of plays based on the same theme under contribution, and it is believed wrote very little of the text himself. This, no doubt, might be truthfully said of nearly every play bearing his name.

To return to Lamb. The accomplished Mrs. Mary Cowden Clarke, *née* Victoria Novello, in an article published in the "National Magazine," entitled "Recollections of the Lambs, by One who Knew Them," speaks of Payne in the subjoined paragraph:

"Mary Lamb, ever thoughtful to procure a pleasure for young people, finding that one of her and her brother's acquaintances—Howard Payne—was going to France, requested him, on his way to Paris, to call at Boulogne and see Victoria Novello, who had been placed by her parents in a family there for a time, to learn the language. Knowing how welcome a visit from any one who had lately seen her friends in England would be to the young girl, Miss Lamb urged Howard Payne not to omit this; her brother Charles seconding her by adding, in his usual sportive style, 'Do; you needn't be afraid of Miss Novello; she speaks only a little coast French.'"

The temptation, in introducing the letters and notes which follow, to enlarge upon what other lovers of Lamb have written touching his genius, his charitable heart, and that "long life of silent heroism," is very great, but must be resisted. The letters are given exactly as they were written, and this surely is what would be desired by all who are thoroughly in sympathy with Elia. In one of the letters (that dated "1822—Thursday") it will be observed that Lamb himself confirms the statement made by some of his biographers, and stoutly denied by others, that he sometimes drank to excess. W. Carew Hazlitt, in his volume entitled "Mary and Charles Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains," writes:

"In 'A Character of the late Elia,' 1823, one of the most admirable, perhaps, of his essays, Lamb himself has touched upon this point. His words are these: 'He [Elia] was temperate in his meals and diversions, but always kept a little on this side of abstemiousness.' * * * My father recollects the proprietor of the neighboring tavern sending in his account for porter—an invoice of portentous amount, as regarded the pots of porter charged, but ingeniously compressed into one line, which Lamb called 'truly H-Homeric!'"

The Shakspeare picture, mentioned in the same letter of 1822, was, no doubt, an attempted deception of W. H. Ireland, who, toward the close of the eighteenth century, startled Shakspeare scholars by the announcement of the discovery of certain Shakspeare autographs, letters, confession of faith, *et cetera*, of great literary value; finally an alleged drama by Shakspeare—"Vortigern"—was brought forth and was put upon the stage by Kemble. The pretended discoverer's father, Samuel Ireland, was himself deceived, it is said, and many people had faith for a while in the discoveries—just as many had believed in those of poor Chatterton; but Malone attacked the imposture, and soon after Ireland himself made and published his "Confessions."

R. S. Chilton.

THE LETTERS.

1822—Thursday.

Ali Pacha will do. I sent my sister the first night, not having been able to go myself, and her report of its effect was most favorable. I saw it last night—the third night—and it was most satisfactorily received. I have been sadly disappointed in Talfourd, who does the critiques in the "Times," and who promised his strenuous services, but by some damn'd arrangement, he was sent to the wrong house, and a most iniquitous account of Ali substituted for his, which I am sure would have been a kind one. The "Morning Herald" did it ample justice, without appearing to puff it. It is an abominable misrepresentation of the "Times," that Faren played Ali like Lord Ogilby. He acted infirmity of body, but not of voice or purpose. His manner was even grand. A grand old gentleman. His falling to the earth when his son's death was announced, was fine as anything I ever saw. It was as if he had been blasted. Miss Foote looked helpless and beautiful, and greatly helped the piece. It is going on steadily, I am sure, for *many nights*. Marry, I was a little disappointed with Hassan, who tells us he subsists by cracking court jests before Hali, but he made none. In all the rest, scenery and machinery,

it was faultless. I hope it will bring you here. I should be most glad of that. I have a room for you, and you shall order your own dinner three days in the week. I must retain my own authority for the rest. As far as magazines go, I can answer for Talfourd in the "New Monthly." He cannot be put out there. But it is established as a favorite, and can do without these expletives. I long to talk over with you the Shakspeare Picture. My doubts of its being a forgery mainly rest upon the goodness of the picture. The bellows might be trumped up, but where did the painter spring from? Is Ireland a consummate artist—or any of Ireland's accomplices?—but we shall confer upon it, I hope. The "New Times," I understand, was favorable to Ali, but I have not seen it. I am sensible of the want of method in this letter, but I have been deprived of the connecting organ, by a practice I have fallen into since I left Paris, of taking too much strong spirits of a night. I must return to the Hotel del Europe, and Macon.

How is Kenny? Have you seen my friend White? What is Poole about, &c.? Do not write, but come and answer me.

The weather is charming, and there is a mermaid to be seen in London. You may not have the opportunity of inspecting such a *Poisarde* once again in ten centuries.

My sister joins me in the hope of seeing you.

Yours truly,

C. LAMB.

Wednsd., 13 Nov., '22.

DEAR P.—Owing to the inconvenience of having two lodgings, I did not get your letter quite so soon as I should. The India House is my proper address, where I am sure for the fore part of every day. The instant I got it, I addressed a letter, for Kemble to see to my friend Henry Robertson, the Treasurer of Covent Garden Theater. He had a conference with Kemble, and the result is, that Robertson, in the name of the management, recognized to me the full ratifying of your bargain: £250 for Ali, the Slaves, and another piece which they had not received. He assures me the whole will be paid you, or the proportion for the two former, as soon as ever the Treasury will permit it. He offered to write the same to you, if I pleased. He thinks in a month or so they will be able to liquidate it. He is positive no trick could be meant you, as Mr. Planche's alterations, which were trifling, were not at all considered as affecting your bargain. With respect to the copy-right of Ali, he was of opinion no money would be given for it, as Ali is quite laid aside. This explanation being

given, you would not think of printing the two copies together by way of recrimination. He told me the secret of the two Galley Slaves at Drury Lane. Elliston, if he is informed right, engaged Poole to translate it, but before Poole's translation arrived, finding it coming out at Cov. Gar., he procured copies of two several translations of it in London. So you see here are four translations, reckoning yours. I fear no copy-right would be got for it, for anybody may print it and anybody has. Your's has run seven nights, and R. is of opinion it will not exceed in number of nights the nights of Ali,—about thirteen. But your full right to your bargain with the management is in the fullest manner recognized by him officially. He gave me every hope the money will be spared as soon as they can spare it. He said *a month or two*, but seemed to me to mean about *a month*. A new lady is coming out in Juliet, to whom they look very confidently for replenishing their treasury. Robertson is a very good fellow and I can rely upon his statement. Should you have any more pieces, and want to get a copy-right for them, I am the worst person to negotiate with any bookseller, having been cheated by all I have had to do with (except Taylor and Hessey,—but they do not publish theatrical pieces), and I know not how to go about it or who to apply to. But if you had no better negotiator, I should know the minimum you expect, for I should not like to make a bargain out of my own head, being (after the Duke of Wellington) the worst of all negotiators. I find from Robertson you have written to Bishop on the subject. Have you named anything of the copy-right of the Slaves? R. thinks no publisher would pay for it, and you would not risque it on your own account. This is a mere business letter, so I will just send my love to my little wife at Versailles, to her dear mother, etc.

Believe me, yours truly, C. L.

23 Jan., '23.

DEAR PAYNE: I have no mornings (my day begins at 5 P. M.) to transact business in, or talents for it, so I employ Mary, who has seen Robertson, who says that the Piece which is to be Operafied was sent to you six weeks since by a Mr. Hunter, whose journey has been delayed, but he supposes you have it by this time. On receiving it back properly done, the rest of your dues will be forthcoming. You have received £30 from Harwood, I hope? Bishop was at the theater when Mary called, and he has put your other piece into C. Kemble's hands (the piece you talk of offering Elliston) and C. K. sent

down word that he had not yet had time to read it. So stand your affairs at present. Glossop has got the Murderer. Will you address him on the subject, or shall I—that is, Mary? She says you must write more *show-able* letters about these matters, for, with all our trouble of crossing out this word, and giving a cleaner turn to th' other, and folding down at this part, and squeezing an obnoxious epithet into a corner, she can hardly communicate their contents without offence. What, man, put less gall in your ink, or write me a biting tragedy! C. LAMB.

MY DEAR MISS LAMB: I have enclosed for you Mr. Payne's piece called Grandpapa, which I regret to say is not thought to be of the nature that will suit this theater; but as there appears to be much merit in it, Mr. Kemble strongly recommends that you should send it to the English Opera House, for which it seems to be excellently adapted. As you have already been kind enough to be our medium of communication with Mr. Payne, I have imposed this trouble upon you; but if you do not like to act for Mr. Payne in the business, and have no means of disposing of the piece, I will forward it to Paris or elsewhere as you think he may prefer.

Very truly yours,

HENRY ROBERTSON.

T. R. C. G., 8 Feb., 1823.

DR. P—: We have just received the above, and want your instructions. It strikes me as a very merry little piece, that should be played by *very young actors*. It strikes me that Miss Clara Fisher would play the *boy* exactly. She is just such a forward chit. No young *man* would do it without its appearing absurd, but in a girl's hands it would have just all the reality that a short dream of an act requires. Then for the sister, if Miss Stevenson that was, were Miss Stevenson and younger, they two would carry it off. I do not know who they have got in that young line, besides Miss C. F., at Drury, nor how you would like Elliston to have it—has he not had it? I am thick with Arnold, but I have always heard that the very slender profits of the English Opera House do not admit of his giving above a trifle, or next to none, for a piece of this kind. Write me what I should do, what you would ask, &c. The music (printed) is returned with the piece, and the French original. Tell Mr. Grattan I thank him for his book, which as far as I have read it is a very *companionable one*. I have but just received it. It came the same hour with your packet from Cov. Gar., *i. e.*, yester-night, late, to my summer residence, where, tell

Kenny, the cow is quiet. Love to all at Versailles. Write quickly.

C. L.

I have no acquaintance with Kemble at all, having only met him once or twice, but any information, &c., I can get from R., who is a good fellow, you may command. I am sorry the rogues are so dillitory, but I distinctly believe they mean to fulfill their engagement. I am sorry you are not here to see to these things. I am a poor man of business, but command me to the short extent of my tether. My sister's kind remembrance ever.

C. L.

1823.

DEAR PAYNE: Your little books are most acceptable. 'Tis a delicate edition. They are gone to the binder's. When they come home I shall have two—the "Camp" and "Patrick's Day"—to read for the first time. I may say three, for I never read the "School for Scandal." "*Seen* it I have, and in its happier days." With the books Harwood left a truncheon, or mathematical instrument, of which we have not yet ascertained the use. It is like a telescope, but unglazed. Or a ruler, but not smooth enough. It opens, like a fan, and discovers a frame such as they weave lace upon at Lyons, and Chamberry. Possibly it is from those parts. I do not value the present the less, for not being quite able to detect its purport. When I can find any one coming your way I have a volume for you, my Elias collected. Tell Poole, his Cockney in the Lon. Mag. tickled me exceedingly. Harwood is to be with us this evening with Fanny, who comes to introduce a literary lady, who wants to see me,—and whose portentous name is *Pura*, in English "many things." Now of all God's creatures, I detest letters-affecting, authors-hunting ladies. But Fanny "will have it so." So Miss Many Things and I are to have a conference, of which you shall have the result. I dare say she does not play at whist. Treasurer Robertson, whose coffers are absolutely swelling with pantomimic receipts, called on me yesterday to say, he is going to write to you, but if I were also, I might as well say that your last bill is at the Banker's, and will be honored on the instant receipt of the third Piece, which you have stipulated for. If you have any such in readiness, strike while the iron is hot, before the Clown cools. Tell Mrs. Kenney, that the Miss F. H. (or H. F.) Kelley, who has begun so splendidly in Juliet, is the identical little Fanny Kelly, who used to play on their green before their great Lying-Inn Lodgings at Bayswater. Her career has stopt short by the injudicious bring-

ing her out in a vile new Tragedy, and for a third character in a stupid old one,—the Earl of Essex. This is Macready's doing, who taught her. Her recitation, &c., (*not her voice or person*) is masculine. It is so clever, it seemed a male *Debut*. But cleverness is the bane of Female Tragedy especially. Passions uttered logically, &c. It is bad enough in men-actors. Could you do nothing for little Clara Fisher? Are there no French Pieces with a Child in them? By Pieces I mean here dramas, to prevent male-constructions. Did not the Blue Girl remind you of some of Congreve's women? Angelica or Millamant? To me she was a vision of Genteel Comedy realized. Those kind of people never come to see one. *N'importe*—hav'nt I Miss Many Things coming? Will you ask Horace Smith to—[The remainder of this letter has been lost].

DEAR PAYNE: A friend and fellow-clerk of mine, Mr. White (a good fellow) coming to your parts, I would fain have accompanied him, but am forced instead to send a part of me, verse and prose, most of it from 20 to 30 years old, such as I then was, and I am not much altered.

Paris, which I hardly knew whether I liked when I was in it, is an object of no small magnitude with me now. I want to be going, to the Jardin des Plantes (is that right, Louisa?) with you—to Pere de la Chaise, La Morgue, and all the sentimentalities. How is Talma, and his (my) dear Shakspeare?

N. B.—My friend White knows Paris thoroughly, and does not want a guide. We did, and had one. We both join in thanks. Do you remember a Blue-Silk Girl (English) at the Luxembourg, that did not much seem to attend to the Pictures, who fell in love with you, and whom I fell in love with—an inquisitive, prying, curious Beauty—where is she?

Votre Tres Humble Serviteur,

CHARLOES AGNEAU,
alias C. LAMB.

Guichy is well, and much as usual. He seems blind to all the distinctions of life, except to those of sex. Remembrance to Kenny, and Poole.

(No Date.)

DEAR J. H. P.: Thank you. I shall certainly attend your farce if in town; but as 'tis possible I shall ruralize this week, I will have no orders of you till next week. All Sundays I am ready to ambulate with you, but will make no engagement for this week,—to leave the poor residue of my holidays unembarrassed.

Yours truly,

C. L.