

reverent devotion, contains in a most marvellous sense the marks of one of the highest forms of self-sacrifice. Some weakness of human nature seems absolutely necessary to balance the beauty of his thoroughly unselfish life. It has been charmingly remarked by the same excellent critic to whom I referred at the beginning that "In early life Coleridge planned a Pantisocracy where all the virtues were to thrive. Lamb did something far more difficult; he played cribbage every night with his imbecile father, whose constant stream of querulous talk and fault-finding might well have goaded a far stronger man in practising and justifying neglect." It is, then, in these simple acts, if one may so name them, that the supreme nobility of Lamb's life is everywhere obvious and distinct. His failing was therefore a virtue; it saved him from becoming quite a saint. It is impossible to read those charming letters of his without feeling very insignificant ourselves—without, in fact, becoming very humble. Surely the spirit of cheerfulness, of good humour, and of love saturates them throughout. If we turn to one of Lamb's contemporaries—Wordsworth—it must be admitted that his life is, on the whole, very disappointing, although it is hard to agree with those who have considered the epithet "conceited" an appropriate one for Wordsworth. Because Wordsworth effected a revolution in English poetry he will always be gratefully remembered—his work cannot die; but it is with the life of the poet with which we are at present dealing, the everyday existence, and that, unfortunately, does not attract. But there is an interest attached to the life of Wordsworth, as in that of every man of letters, and in his case it attaches itself to his friends and relatives more than to the poet in person. Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy are so

closely joined in our thoughts with men who interest us in their common life far more than the poet does, that in their congregated interest they stand unique. Southey, Coleridge, Hazlitt and Lamb, and to them may be added the name of Joseph Cottle, the Bristol bookseller—certainly no mean figure when his connection with the "*Lyrical Ballads*" is remembered—all these bring their sparks of bright and cheerful criticism and throw a certain brilliancy upon the person of Wordsworth which he alone does not possess. Lacking vigour, the greyiness of his later solitary life produced a most disappointing effect upon the genial and clear spirit of Emerson, the spirit of a man who sought for loveliness in all he met, who expected sweetness and light, and found it not in Wordsworth's outward form.

For lives of vigour and spirit we must go to Carlyle and Macaulay; here is force, and here is brilliance—a brilliance not of the limelight, but of the glorious sun. To many, "the philosopher of Chelsea" is more vigorous in his utterances than he is in his life; "a sour and dyspeptic old man"! such is Carlyle in the estimation of a goodly company. Here, again, such a dictum is apparently the result of a hasty judgment, and insufficient acquaintance. A careful study of the numerous and ever-increasing reminiscences of Carlyle's sayings and doings will soften the portrait which our fancy has painted for us. We must not expect to find in a prophet, or a seer, the characteristics of a Charles Lamb; we find instead the sledge-hammer force of a Cromwell, and in Carlyle's case also we must take him "with the scars and wrinkles." But Carlyle is not present in our thoughts as a solitary seer; it is the pungency of his life that provokes interest; we are attracted to him by the unique position which he held among the men and