

And this "inspired charity boy" communicated some virtue of his inspiration to the younger lad who was his faithful shadow during their seven years together at Christ's. When, at the age of fifteen, Lamb was taken from school and began his forty years of slavery to "the drudgery of the desk's dead wood" the friendship of the poetic soul, now growing in knowledge at the university, helped him to keep countenance despite disappointment and despondency. Coleridge, Mary, and his books of older days were fast taking their place, in the inner sanctum of his affections, which they were to hold throughout his life.

"I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late with my bosom cronies."

May appropriately refer to more than one occasion in Lamb's life and to more than one crony—not to speak it profanely. We know that there were numerous seasons of "sitting late" when Coleridge and Lamb met by appointment at "The Salutation and Cat." On one such occasion a bee crept up the leg of the table where the friends sat sipping and chatting, and stung the oblivious Coleridge on the thumb. "A stinging commentary," said Lamb, with one of his swift flashes, "on the passage 'By the prickings of my thumbs, something evil this way comes.'" More enjoyable commentaries there doubtless were during these meetings, on literature and other interesting topics. As iron sharpeneth iron, so these hours together made the mutual affections and ambitions of the young men stronger and stronger. Both were cherishing authorship, and about this time both had contributions printed in the *Morning Chronicle*.

Except for occasional breaks of this kind, the monotony of Lamb's life was unbroken until he had reached his majority. Then the bolt fell that swept away his parents and, in a sense, blasted his whole life. Then it was that he cheerfully made the great sacrifice that sweetened and glorified his whole life.

His sweeping self-denial involved the giving up of one idol of which we know little more than that he had worshiped it and now turned from it to the care of his sister.

"I loved a love once, fairest among women;
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her."

This face, the face of a "golden-haired maiden," made familiar, nay, burned into his heart by the impassioned gaze and constant dream of the lover, he put away, and it, too, was gone.