

Just before *The Old Familiar Faces* was written, Coleridge has issued a small volume of poems in which were included poems by Charles Lamb and by Charles Lloyd. To the latter, as well as to Southey, Wordsworth and other young men of a literary turn, Coleridge had introduced Charles. All these constantly submitted their productions to the India House book-keeper, for his critical judgment was exquisite and his letters and conversation very suggestive. Coleridge, however, played the patron a little too swellingly, until finally he hurt—not the self-esteem, but the self-respect of his friend.

“Like an ingrate I left my friend abruptly,”

Says the gentle fellow, remorsefully. Coleridge was in Germany being transformed from a poet into a philosopher. As far as he was concerned there were to be no more Lyrical Ballads. In his absence Lamb turned lovingly to Charles Lloyd:

“Friend of my bosom; thou more than a brother.”

But Lloyd and Lamb were too much alike in disposition to brace each other. Southey it was, with his cheerful industry and solid sense, that proved invaluable in the absence of Coleridge. The latter came home after some months and the old friendship was renewed. Lamb could not cherish resentment; and Coleridge, poor fellow, could not afford to shake off the one friend who, despite endless scheming, without one finished result, despite broken promises, neglected opportunities, and maunderings in opium dreams, refused to desert him.

There is not space here to relate the incidents of Lamb's further career—the rise to fame through his dramatic criticism and his quaint, witty, delightful essays; his great number of friends, with not a single enemy to off-set them; the many occasions, when he begged for Coleridge and others favors which he would never have asked for himself; the intermittent periods of anguish (which grew longer and more frequent as life advanced) when Mary was under restraint. His life was one of sorrow for himself, and yet the cause of mirth, sunshine and joy to others. Through it all he might well say:

“Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood;  
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,  
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.”

The city—especially the Temple and the streets which he had haunted with his boy friends and with Mary—was his special