

THIS IS

## LAMB AND MANNING

Sir,

In the admirable article, "The Letters of Charles Lamb" (June 15), your review refers to Thomas Manning as one of those friends of Elia "whose distinction.....is not much more than that Lamb wrote to them....When greater men are forgotten, this friend will perhaps be remembered as partner with Lamb in the essay on Roast Pig."

May I suggest that this rather summary judgment fails to give due credit to one whose influence on Lamb was of prime significance, and whose achievement in his own right gives him a place in English history? In 1801, two years after meeting Manning in Cambridge, Lamb described him, in a letter to Robert Lloyd, as "a man of great power, an enchanter almost; far beyond Coleridge or any man in power of impressing." Under Manning's eccentric ways and punning wit Lamb recognized an inner poise that strengthened his own spirit. "I will nurse the remembrance of your steadiness and quiet, which used to infuse something of itself into our nervous minds....Mary called you our ventilator," he wrote (May 10, 1806), after his friend's departure for China.

There was intellectual stimulus as well, as Barry Cornwell noted in his "Charles Lamb: A Memoir":—"Manning's solid, scientific mind had, without doubt, the effect of arousing the sleeping vigour of Lamb's intellect." This intellectual release found expression in some of Lamb's finest wit and humour, not only in the Roast Pig essay, but in letters to Manning which are among the best he wrote.

In his own right Manning has his niche in history as the first Englishman to penetrate the holy city of Lhasa in Tibet (1811) and to interview its sacred ruler, the Dalai Lama. His Journal of this hazardous expedition was unknown to the world until 1875 when it was published by Sir Clements R. Markham, Secretary to the Royal Geographic Society. It went into a second edition in 1879. In his Biographical Introduction Sir Clements says: "what he actually did was sufficient to place him in the first rank of English travellers."

As a member of Lord Amherst's special Embassy to China in 1817, Manning interviewed Napoleon at St. Helena, where they stopped on their homeward journey. Records of the visit state that Manning reminded Napoleon of the signing of his passport, and answered the former Emperor's questions about China.

The collection of Manning's "Lassa papers" (sic), which he refers to in a letter to Lamb, in 1823, as "long lock't up in lots of lumber," seems never to have been thoroughly investigated by scholars. Their collector is worthy of a full-length biography; but, as far as I know, my chapter on him in "Lamb Always Elia" (London, 1935) is the only critical estimate of Thomas Manning. His letters to Charles Lamb, edited by Mrs. G. A. Anderson, were published in New York in 1926. As late as 1824 Lamb wrote, to



Mrs. Thomas Allsop, "Manning is with us...." The correspondence between these friends continued to the last year of Lamb's life---1834. Manning died six years later.

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