

BIOGRAPHIES THROUGH THE
EYES OF CONTEMPORARIES

CHARLES LAMB

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
NATURE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE Vol. I.
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CHARLES LAMB

His Life Recorded by his
Contemporaries

Compiled by
EDMUND BLUNDEN



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is the first volume in a new series of biographies which proceeds on a system different from the usual. The life of each biographer will be presented entirely through the eyes of his contemporaries, from contemporary descriptions by those who knew or saw him, and from contemporary documents.

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PREFACE

THE subject of the present volume was induced to write his own Autobiography, which has been frequently reprinted and is the best preliminary to the accounts now collected :

[*In William Upcott's Collection.*]

CHARLES LAMB born in the Inner Temple 10th Feb. 1775 educated in Christ's Hospital afterwards a clerk in the Accountants Office East India House pensioned off from that service 1825 after thirty-three years' service, is now a Gentleman at large, can remember few specialities in his life worth noting except that he once caught a swallow flying (*teste sua manu*); below the middle stature, cast of face slightly Jewish, with no Judaic tinge in his complexional religion; stammers abominably and is therefore more apt to discharge his occasional conversation in a quaint aphorism or a poor quibble than in set and edifying speeches; has consequently been libelled as a person always aiming at wit, which, as he told a dull fellow that charged him with it, is at least as good as aiming at dulness; a small eater but not drinker; confesses a partiality for the production of the juniper-berry, was a fierce smoker of Tobacco, but may be resembled to a volcano burnt out, emitting only now and then a casual puff. Has been guilty of obtruding upon the Public a Tale in Prose, called *Rosamund Gray*, a Dramatic Sketch named *John Woodvil*, a Farewell Ode to Tobacco, with sundry other Poems and light prose matter, collected in Two slight crown Octavos and pompously christened his Works, tho' in fact they were his Recreations and his true works may be found on the shelves of Leadenhall Street, filling some hundred Folios. He is also the true Elia whose Essays are extant in a little volume published a year or two since; and rather better known from that name without a