

The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

NO. 10, SUMMER, 1978

THE EDITOR

The Charles Williams Society started with the good fortune to have a professional editor, Xenia Howard-Johnston, now Xenia Dennen. Like other young gifted people, she found herself with too much to do, and getting married of course made just one thing more. So we are not too much surprised that she has regretfully resigned the job. We are immensely grateful to her for her readiness to give spare time to the work, for her enthusiasm for Charles Williams studies, her many ideas and suggestions, and her experience in editorial work. We look forward to seeing her and her husband at meetings.

Pending the appointment of a new editor by the Council, the Newsletter will be produced as best we can. Letters and contributions should be sent to the Secretary, Dr. Brian Horne, King's College Hostel, Vincent Square, London, S.W.1.

FAITH AND FICTION - RELIGION AND THE ART OF THE STORY TELLER

A Report on the First Conference of the Charles Williams Society held at the Grail Conference Centre, Pinner, on 23-25th June, 1978

After supper on Friday, 23rd June, the Chairman opened the conference in the Library with a general welcome to all members and visitors and particularly to Colonel Clarke and Mrs. Bushell from the Dorothy L. Sayers Society and Dr. and Mrs. Huttar from U.S.A. He then asked Dr. Brian Horne to introduce Dr. Ulrich Simon, who gave the first lecture of the conference under the title of "Heroes and the Heroic". Brian Horne had said that this was a subject much in Dr. Simon's mind at present and Dr. Simon described the figure and attributes of the Hero in classical mythology, and the changes that had taken place in the approach to the heroic, even to the conception of the anti-hero. He went on to enlarge these themes through the figure of Samson in Old Testament History and as seen by Milton in Samson Agonistes.

Next morning at 10 a.m., reinforced by a number of day visitors we listened to Martin Moynihan's Notes towards The Figure of Arthur. He spoke of the interest of writers in Arthur from the Celtic legend of the victor of Mons Badonicus through Malory to the Idylls of the King. He referred to Dr. Simon's lecture of the previous evening, seeing Arthur as the returning hero, the beloved sovereign having his place among the nine worthies.

His lecture produced lively questioning of the lecturer and plenty of discussion from the members.

During Saturday afternoon an impromptu reading of Charles Williams' play "Cranmer" was arranged by Thelma Shuttleworth, assisted by Elisabeth Bell. Ten people took part and there was some lively reading by our American visitors.

The evening lecture at 8 p.m. was given by Dr. Barbara Reynolds under the title of Faith and Fiction in the Art of Dorothy L. Sayers. Colonel Clarke, Chairman of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society introduced Dr. Reynolds as a distinguished Italian scholar, a friend of Dorothy L. Sayers, who after Dorothy's death in 1957 completed her translation of the Paradiso of Dante's Divine Comedy and wrote all the notes and had only recently returned from organizing a Dorothy L. Sayers celebration at Wheaton College, Illinois.

Dr. Reynolds first gave us some details of Dorothy L. Sayers' early life and studies at Somerville College, Oxford, where she had studied Medieval French, her early poems and how she came to create the Lord Peter Wimsey stories in the years 1923 to 1940 and how that long development in detective fiction came to an end, to be followed by The Zeal of Thy House, the first of her plays embodying Christian Theology. Dr. Reynolds also read a long letter written by Dorothy L. Sayers to John Wren Lewis in the nature of a personal testament remarkable for both its content and style. Dr. Reynolds then turned to Dorothy L. Sayers as an interpreter of Dante and of the powerful impression that Dante the writer made on the writer Dorothy L. Sayers and the sense of exhilaration which she obtained from Dante's narration and mentioned that Charles Williams's insight into Dante was to become increasingly important to Dorothy L. Sayers as she progressed with her great task as translator and interpreter of Dante.

On Sunday morning Holy Eucharist was celebrated in the Chapel of the Grail by Revd. Dr. Brian Horne and at 10 a.m. for just over an hour an anthology of readings chosen by members from the works of Charles Williams and Dorothy L. Sayers was arranged by Anne Scott. The first part was devoted to extracts from prose works and the second part to poetry. Dr. Barbara Reynolds read some early poems of Dorothy L. Sayers, which she possesses. "Mount Badon" and "Taliessin on the Death of Virgil" were read from Charles Williams.

The final lecture of the conference was given by Humphrey Carpenter, the biographer of J.R.R. Tolkien, under the title of "The Inklings", the group that used to meet in C.S. Lewis's rooms at Magdalen during the War to talk and to read to each other and discuss what each had written.

He briefly described their personalities and the setting at Magdalen and vastly entertained us with his reconstruction of a Thursday evening of "The Inklings" in C.S. Lewis's rooms. After

the discussion that followed the Conference was formally brought to an end.

A feature of the Conference was a well-stocked bookstall run by Nigel Sustins of the Church House Bookshop, London, S.W.1, where many copies of the works by and on Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers, J.R.R. Tolkien and others were on sale.

It remains to say that the excellent facilities, extensive grounds and quiet atmosphere of the Grail conference centre were greatly appreciated by all.

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY, 1978-79.

- 23rd September, 1978: Alice Mary and Charles Hadfield will talk on the background to the two printed Masques, and organise a reading by members.
- 25th November, 1978: Margaret Sinclair. Subject: The making of The House of the Octopus.
- 10th February, 1979: Canon Donald Nicholson. Subject: "Charles Williams and the Art of Historical Biography".
- 21st April, 1979: Dr. Brian Horne. Subject: Charles Williams and Gerard Manley Hopkins's Theology and Poetry."

The Institute of Christian Studies being no longer available, future Society meetings will be held at Liddon House, 24, South Audley Street, London, W.1. (North Audley Street is the second turning to the right, south, off Oxford Street, going from Marble Arch towards Oxford Circus. After Grosvenor Square it becomes South Audley Street.)

Each meeting is followed by discussion and tea. Please bring copies of any books which might be referred to at a meeting. There is no fee for members, but 50p must be paid for a guest (each member may bring one guest) and this should be handed to the person in charge of the meeting.

The Society Lending Librarian brings a selection of library books which may be borrowed by members.

MEETING OF THE S.W. LONDON GROUP (C.W. SOCIETY)

19th October, 1978, at 5, The Green, Wimbledon, S.W.19, at 8.p.m.

LONDON READING GROUP

7th October, 1978, Saturday, at 7.30 p.m. at David and Dulcie Caro's house, 50, Drayton Gardens, London, S.W.10 (nearest station, Gloucester Road).

5th November, 1978, Sunday, at 1 p.m. at Richard and Joan Wallis's flat, 6, Matlock Court, Kensington Park Road, London, W.11 (nearest station, Notting Hill Gate). Please bring sandwiches.

13th January, 1979, Saturday, at 7.30 at David and Dulcie Caro's house (see above).

4th February, 1979, Sunday, at 1 p.m. at Charles and Alice Mary Hadfield's house, The White Cottage, 21, Randolph Road, London, W.9 (nearest station, Warwick Avenue). Please bring sandwiches.

At Saturday meetings we read The Figure of Beatrice with Dante's Purgatorio and Paradiso; at Sunday meetings War in Heaven.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Chairman: Richard Wallis, 6 Matlock Court, Kensington Park Road, London, W.11 3BS. (221 0057)

Secretary: Dr. Brian Horne, King's College Hostel, Vincent Square, London, S.W.1. (834 4740)

Treasurer: Philip Bovey, 32 Maple Street, London, W.1. (637 0449)

Membership Secretaries: Jenet and Philip Bovey, 32 Maple Street, London, W.1. (637 0449)

Lending Library: Mrs Anne Scott, 25 Corfton Road, London, W5 2HP (997 2667)

Editor: Vacant.

MAY, 1945

Pain riots, panics, in Byzantium,
screams through the highways of London-in-Logres:
arterials blocked, gates barred, containers breached,
no help from Gaul; lights out in Lateran;
the citadel itself in jeopardy.

Follows -

the proffered kingdom, snatched;
power cut, a Gordian strike, ends menacing;
glory, a candle-flame in a naughty world.
No more but so?

Rest of our bones, and soul's delivery?
Enough.

This also is, neither is this: Amen.

Thelma Shuttleworth.

CHARLES WILLIAMS BOOKS IN PRINT IN THE U.S.A. - 8th JULY, 1978.

Eerdmans:

Greater Trumps \$2.95
War in Heaven \$3.95
Many Dimensions \$3.95
Place of the Lion \$2.95
Shadows of Ecstasy \$2.95
Descent into Hell \$2.95
Descent of the Dove \$3.95
Taliessin through Logres, The Region of the
Summer Stars and Arthurian Torso \$5.95
Essays Presented to Charles Williams \$2.95

Meridian Books:

Witchcraft, New American Library F400 \$3.95

Noonday (Ferrar, Straus):

All Hallows' Eve N247 \$3.95

OUP:

Image of the City \$11.50

Octagon:

Figure of Beatrice \$10.50

Arno:

James I \$11.50
Poetry at Present \$13.00

Folcroft:

Bacon \$20.00
Reason and Beauty \$15.00
Religion and Love in Dante \$6.50
Rochester \$20.00

This list has kindly been supplied by our member, Dr. Stephen Matthews, of New York City. The books can be ordered from any English bookseller accustomed to handling American business. For those who find difficulty, however, we hope to give in our next issue the name and address of an American bookseller willing to supply them, with particulars of methods of payment.

WHEATON COLLEGE, AND NEW YORK

by Alice Mary Hadfield

Charles and I had the great pleasure of a visit to the United States this April - July. Our first objective was Wheaton College, to see the collection of Charles Williams material being made there by Professor Clyde Kilby. We were strangers to the United States, to Chicago, and to Wheaton, and to the transport. We found no difficulties, and every assistance. We went out to Wheaton every day and did a lot of work in a week.

Wheaton is a small country place some 30 miles from Chicago. A good commuter train (double-decker, for those interested) from Madison Avenue station at about 9 a.m. took us to College Avenue station and we walked up the village street to the college campus. Handsome brick buildings stand well sited in a hilly setting and by asking students we quickly found the Library building, with its separate department for Special Collections, which includes the Marion E. Wade collection. Two charming young women made us welcome, Mrs. Marjorie Mead, the Assistant to the Curator, and Mrs. Barbara Hendershott, her assistant. The curator, Professor Kilby, has his office in the department, but is often away.

There is a well-lighted, quiet, spacious room to work in and adjoining it are the shelves and filing cabinets of the several collections: Williams, Lewis, Tolkien, Sayers, some Chesterton and Macdonald, and maybe others. Almost all the editions of all C.W.'s books are there, and pamphlets; in the filing cabinets are quantities of typescripts, copies of mss notes or letters, articles, theses and reviews by him and on him, a few photographs and ephemera. I needed to check a word in a xerox copy of a letter, and Marjorie Mead brought me the original. A great deal of the files material is fully classified, but more remains to be worked on. There are no fees. Seekers are made welcome, helped but not disturbed.

Marjorie and Barbara surrounded me with books at the big table and Charles perched on a stool and went through the filing cabinets. We worked all the morning, had a snack in the college cafeteria (this was an experience, such comfort!) and a stroll in the campus and back to work till about 4. I could leave my material on the table. We walked down to the station, and the train took us back to Chicago.

On one evening Professor and Mrs. Kilby took us, Marjorie and Barbara and their husbands, out to dinner at a special well-known country restaurant. We thank Professor Kilby, Marjorie and Barbara for the opportunity to work, the freedom of their shelves and their hospitality.

In New York we met Mrs. Dorothy Fitzgerald and Dr. Stephen Matthews. Dorothy is a senior member of professional-literary-academic circles, lecturer and writer, adult and scholarly on Charles Williams, experienced in society and magazine organisation. Stephen (burly, ginger-haired) is a bibliographical consultant to

our Society, completing a huge bibliography of C.W., and is very well up in publishers and booksellers. Dorothy entertained us three to a very good lunch and then we had two hours' solid talk on the C.W. Society, possibilities and studies.

We also went to see Joyce Hines, a member-friend. She was present at the original St. Katharine's weekend which persuaded us to take steps to launch the Society. Now she keeps stock of the re-printed original end papers of Taliessin Through Logres. We had a happy time talking in her flat, looking at her many books, English and French, and eating her good lunch.

Meetings such as these make good links.

SESTINA: INKLINGS OF IMMORTALITY

What theme that touches not an allegory?
Or else a myth? so wondered youthful Lewis;
What tale ne turns at last eucatastrophic,
Except dramatic tragedy? -- thus Tolkien;
What images which do not glow with precision,
If only as its mirrors? mused young Williams.

Sat down to write a letter then did Williams
About a book on love, on allegory;
Before he finished, praise with phrased precision
On his romance of archetypes from Lewis;
Meanwhile, already Lewis's friend was Tolkien,
Writing his history eucatastrophic.

The war came -- war which proved eucatastrophic,
Which brought to Oxford, out of London, Williams,
So there he taught of Milton, met with Tolkien:
The Inklings hinted, like an allegory,
To show true philia; in rooms of Lewis,
With laughter, ale, creation faced precision.

For Heavenly Glory glows with great precision
In geometric patterns; eucatastrophic-
'S the Gospel: the Great Dance described by Lewis,
The City, spread in time, in love, by Williams,
Were symbols of their friendship -- an allegory
Shown in the questing Company of Tolkien.

Or else, the archetypal group of Tolkien
Was incarnated with a real precision
In Oxford, the truth of philia's allegory,
To tell its tales, like Dante's, eucatastrophic,
There stimulated by the wit of Williams,
Sustained, retained, by friendship's gift in Lewis.

The Glory streamed: to Barfield, sibling Lewis,
Dantean Hardy, Coghill, younger Tolkien,
Mathew, others, despite the death of Williams;
The Glory streamed in geometre precision:
Community was found eucatastrophic:
Thus Faith and Joy danced their allegory.

Remaining: Lewis's forms of myth's precision,
Et Tolkien's history eucatastrophic,
Et Williams' images: Love's allegory.

Joe R. Christopher,
Tarleton State University, U.S.A.

Ed. note: A sestina is a poem of six-line stanzas (with an
envoy) in which the line-endings of the first stanza are
repeated, but in different order, in the other five.

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

CHARLES WILLIAMS' LECTURES ON MILTON'S "MASQUE"
(Oxford University, 1940)

"Chastity's more than lust's negation: free
It is to act, to grow, from stage to stage;
Guardian of fruitfulness, nor soiled by age;
With marriage, no inconsistency!"
More Williams lectured, in his Cockney key,
Pacing, with gestures -- an angelic mage,
Teaching to all the incredulous young the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity.

Cried Dyson, hearing of Williams' new repute:
"The man's become a common chastitute!"
The Inklings laughed, nor purged thus glory's glows;
Cried Lewis: "The truth's regained that time had hid --
Our time, when Comus waved his wand of id --
And still the wonder lingers: Sabrina rose."

Joe R. Christopher,
Tarleton State University, U.S.A.