

# The Feeling of Charles Lamb Before and After His Retirement

Lamb in "The Superannuated Man" has given an account of his feeling before and after his retirement. Lamb served as a clerk for long thirty-six years and then retired. Lamb's life as a clerk was tedious and boring. He, however, had a respite from work on a Sunday every week.

The drudgery of the office was soul killing and it told on his health. In the latter part of his professional life constant anxiety and painful nights troubled him greatly. He was oppressed with a fear that his mental powers were declining and he was afraid that he made some serious mistakes in handling the figures in the account books kept by him. His perpetual worries would be read by everyday on his countenance and indeed his health was fast breaking down. When lying on bed at night he was mentally working out the very figures dealt with by him during the day. He was always apprehensive of some incorrect entry in the accounts. Thus he was depressed by the lifeless work at the clerk's desk.

Then Lamb retired from service. The sudden change from slavery to complete freedom threw his mind completely out of balance. He felt very uneasy. He did not know how to adjust himself to this new situation. He compares his condition to that of a prisoner of Bastille, who has suddenly obtained his freedom after forty years of prison life. He felt that he had suddenly passed from kingdom of time to the Kingdom of Eternity. The fact that all time was left to him and he could enjoy it at his own sweet will produce the impression that he was dwelling in the world of Eternity. He had so much time at his disposal now that he did not understand what to do with it. But when the first shock of bewilderment subsided, he took a sober view of his new blessings and advantage. He regulated his life, so as to make a rational use of his time. He set apart specific portions of his time for specific enjoyment.

He could work aimlessly at his sweet will. He could go to a church; he could visit a sick friend. He had, as though, infinite time at his disposal. He led the life of a Retired Leisure.

## **The Circumstance in which Lamb got His Release from His Office**

Lamb's life as a clerk was tedious and boring. In the latter part of his professional life constant anxiety and painful nights troubled him greatly. He was oppressed with a fear that his mental powers were declining and he was afraid that he had made some serious mistakes in handling the figures in the account books kept by him. His perpetual worries would be read by everybody on his countenance and indeed his health was fast breaking down. When lying on bed at night he was mentally working out the very figures dealt with by him during the day. He was always apprehensive of some incorrect entries in the accounts. Thus he was depressed by the lifeless work at the clerk's desk. One day L, the junior partner, put him to questions regarding his health. Lamb confessed that his power of work was deteriorating. After this

confession he was constantly suspecting that the authorities would soon terminate his service on grounds of ill-health. A week later when he was leaving office after finishing his works he received a call from the authorities. His nervousness can be imagined. He feared that he would be dismissed from service. When he meets the whole committee of managers, the eldest partner delivered a brief lecture appreciating the life-long devoted service of Lamb. The speaker concluded his speech with a proposal that Lamb should retire with a pension amounting to two – thirds of his salary. Lamb's gratitude knew no bounds.

### **Lamb's Feelings During the Fortnight Following His Retirement**

The sudden **change from slavery to complete freedom** threw his mind completely out of balance. He felt very uneasy. He did not know how to adjust himself to this new situation. He compares his condition to that of a prisoner of Bastille, who has suddenly passed from the kingdom of Time to the Kingdom of Eternity. The fact that all time was left to him and he could enjoy it at his own sweet will, produced the impression that he was dwelling in the world of Eternity. He had so much time at his disposal now that he did not understand what to do with it. But when the first shock of bewilderment subsided, he took a sober view of his blessings and advantages. He regulated his life, so as to make a rational use of his time. He set apart specific portions of his time for specific enjoyment.

### **Sundays are 'the very worst adopted' for Holidays**

*"It is true I had my Sundays to myself; but Sundays, admirable as the institution of them is for purposes of worship, are for that very reason the very worst adapted for days of unbending and recreation."*

Despite of tedious and boring job of accounting, Lamb, however, had a respite from work on a Sunday every week. But according to him Sundays were quite unsuitable for true relaxation and enjoyment. Sundays being the days of worship and religious meditation, offered little scope for enjoyment. The atmosphere was shrouded in gloom and somberness hence it was not congenial to proper recreation. Besides, Sunday being a day of complete abstention from all works there was no noise and bustle in any street. There was no hawker crying out the nature of his goods, there was no sound of music or folk entertainment. The sounds and stirrings to Lamb were the real charm of London streets. But these were brought to a stand – still by the paralyzing touch of religious contemplation on Sundays. Moreover, the shops were closed and the attractive articles of sale were missing. The book shops which particularly had a special attraction for a book lover like Lamb remained totally closed. Thus the varied means of enjoyment which London had to offer were non-existing. The streets looked deserted and forlorn. Now and then one could find on the streets only apprentices or maid servants who due to over work throughout the six working days of the week had little energy left in them to enjoy a holiday. So Sundays were to Lamb practically useless as holidays.