

Charles Empson

by

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Summary

Charles Empson was the uncle of John Snow. Little has been known of his life, which turns out, in his early years, to have been an adventurous one. This paper gives an account of him, set in the history of his times, and of his relationship to John Snow.

Charles Empson is of interest to several groups of people; to those concerned with the history and exploration of South America; or with its pre-Columbian artefacts; or with the history of Bath; or to anaesthetists, because he was the uncle of John Snow. But Charles Empson has remained a shadowy figure in the life of his nephew, although their relationship was very close, and Snow is described as having been devotedly attached to him. ¹ However, recent research into Snow's family and background has revealed also something about Empson, who is now seen to be an interesting person in his own right, and who perhaps had more of an influence on Snow than has previously been perceived.

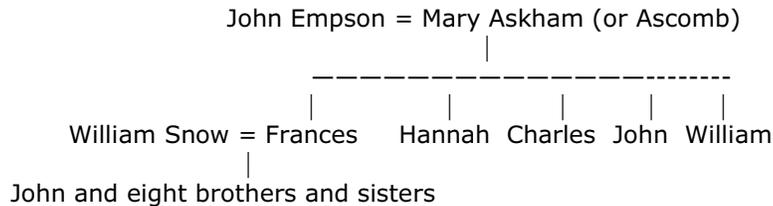


Fig 1. The Empson and Snow Families

The family lived in Yorkshire. As regards their kinship, (Fig 1) it is known that John Snow's mother, Frances, or Fanny, was the base born or illegitimate daughter of Mary Askham. Her baptism, on 15th February 1789, is recorded in the Ledsham parish register. There were Askhams in Ledsham from at least the 1660s, spelled variously as Askham, Askam, and Ascomb, and both Francesca and Francis were family names. In the Acomb parish register it is recorded that Mary Ascomb/Askham, both names are entered, married John Empson, a weaver, on 2nd January 1792. Again, there were many Empsons in Acomb, going back to the 1500s. Four children have been traced from this marriage: Hannah, baptised 30th January 1793; Charles, 1st February 1795; John, 3rd June 1799; and William, 6th December 1801; and in his will, John acknowledged Frances as his natural daughter. According to Mr. George Sims, the family lived in Stockton Lane, York.

The Huntington parish register records the marriage of Frances Askham to William Snow on 24th May 1812. They were the parents of John Snow. Presumably, because the law did not allow for her to become legitimate, Frances did not change her surname to Empson after her mother's marriage; however Charles Empson was still her full brother. Leaman mistakenly states that Mary married Charles, rather than that she was his mother, and speculated that Charles may have contributed towards the children's education. ² According to Mr. Anthony Snow, there is a family tradition to that effect (personal communication). However the recent discovery of John Empson's will reveals that he may have been a man of moderate means, and that he was very attached to his eldest daughter and her family.

We know nothing of Charles Empson's early years, except that at some time as a boy, perhaps during his teens, he had an engagement in the neighbourhood of Stockton. This induced him to visit many places in the district distinguished for picturesque scenery. One day, before sunrise, he ascended the isolated conical eminence of the highest hill in all Yorkshire, Roseberry Topping. He waited until 'the glorious sun, rising in sublime grandeur, melted down, and dispersed the dense and fleecy clouds that rolled beneath me ... and thought ... what ecstasy should I not feel ... if I could tread the lofty steps of the Andean range, and ascend the yet untrodden summits of the Cordilleras!' No sooner was he free to choose his own course in life than he set about accomplishing this wish.

This last enigmatic sentence is paraphrased from the preface to the book in which he described some of his experiences in South America, as indeed was the whole paragraph.³ Until very recently this book was the only source of information about Empson's stay on that continent, and it posed a number of questions. He tells us that he spent four years, probably during the early 1820s, in what is now Colombia. But he supplies no dates, nor does he say how he was able to finance his voyage and his stay, how he got there and under whose auspices, who his companions were, and what was the real purpose of his visit. These remained complete mysteries. For the book itself is essentially a companion to a series of twelve coloured drawings elaborated from sketches from Colombian life, and published as a separate volume.⁴ Each of the twelve chapters first describes, then illustrates by means of one or more stories, legends, or character sketches, the subject of one of the illustrations. These include a South American cottage, the kitchen, a waterfall, a bridge, lagoons, and several geographical locations, such as the cities of Honda and Pamplona; and an appendix in Spanish, provided by a notary, describes 48 specimens of fruit grown at El Salto, with additional remarks in English. Empson's account is impressionistic, made up of patches of colourful local description, from which one has to try to make out a whole picture. Fortunately it is now possible to fill in some of the spaces that Empson left empty.

South America during the early 1820s was just emerging from the throes of its revolt against the rule of Spain, during which it received much British support.⁵ A British Legion some 8000 strong, mainly veterans from the Napoleonic Wars, enlisted in London, but Empson was not of their number.⁶ In this he was fortunate, since one observer estimated that of these 8000 only 300 survived, two thirds having succumbed to drink, and the remainder to tropical fevers.⁷

The policy of Canning, the Foreign Secretary, was directed by two main considerations.⁸ Under the Congress System the victorious European allies had agreed to intervene in the internal affairs of any country in which revolution threatened. As a result, French troops had occupied Spain in 1823 to put down a revolt against the reactionary regime of Ferdinand VIII.⁹ This brought with it the threat of an attempt by a Spain under French hegemony to

re-subjugate its former colonies, and, stimulated by Canning, resulted in the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine, on 2nd December 1823. But while seeking American support, Britain felt also the need to get a diplomatic and commercial foothold in Latin America to counteract the growing influence of the United States. Since Canning's policy of moving towards recognition of the independence of the South American countries would have signified approval of the overthrow of established authority by revolution, it aroused continental disquiet, and suspicion about its real purposes, and it met opposition at home also. Earl Grey complained that Britain was showing that only its trading interests counted. 'In short the whole policy of our Ministers is that of stock jobbers and commercial speculators.'¹⁰

In October 1824 Canning sent out commissioners to the Latin American countries, with instructions to report on the stability and security of the new states, with a view to deciding on recognition. Colonel John Potter Hamilton was appointed to Colombia, and while he later wrote a most interesting and entertaining account of his travels in that country,¹¹ his diplomatic function did not at first come up to expectations, perhaps because he had been giving priority to his own interests; he secured the exclusive rights to navigation of the Orinoco with steam vessels.¹² On 8th November 1824 Canning wrote to him complaining about the total absence of any information about the internal state of Colombia, its resources, and the views and policies of the Colombian Government.¹³ 'If you will compare your report with your Instructions, you cannot but perceive how far short you have fallen from that which was expected of you.' This reproof had its effect, and after receiving a satisfactory report from Hamilton, and failing to secure from France an assurance of the withdrawal of its troops from Spain, Britain recognised Colombian independence in 1825; and in his famous speech of 12th December 1826 Canning explained that he had resolved that if France was to have Spain, it should be Spain without her South American colonies. 'I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the old.'

The new South American republics started life with a great burden of debt, mainly to England, and Bolívar was forced to finance the war of independence by selling off much of the natural, and especially mineral, resources.¹⁴ Other interesting accounts of Colombia were published by Commander Charles Stuart Cochrane RN, and Colonel F. Hall.¹⁵ Cochrane was on two years leave of absence from the Navy, and was seeking the pearl fishery concession from the Colombian government. He had ideas for increasing productivity and safeguarding the divers against attacks by sharks and mantas. In his book he includes a long account of the war of independence, and mentions enterprising capitalists of Great Britain who contracted to supply warlike equipment and stores. He invested in an attempt to mine gold, and was involved in other enterprises. He secured the concession on an emerald mine, but turned down a copper one as too expensive at \$10 000;¹⁶ but he did not survive long to enjoy the fruits of his enterprise, because Hamilton describes him as the 'late'. Hall was a hydrographer in the service of the Colombian government, and a friend of Jeremy Bentham, to whom his book is dedicated. Hall sought to encourage

emigration to Colombia, which he recognised as potentially a very rich country; and Bentham had been concerning himself for some years with the constitutional position of the new states.¹⁷ Several diplomats and army officers from the United States also wrote accounts of their travels,¹⁸ and one, Richard Clough Anderson, remarked upon the power and ubiquity of the British in Colombia, and complained that the country was filled with agents of English speculating companies.¹⁹ Among the enterprises that hoped to exploit the natural wealth of the country was the Colombia Mining Association, a London based company with ambitions to re open certain previously productive gold and silver mines now derelict in the aftermath of earthquakes and war. It was thought that with modern machinery and steam power they should become even more profitable than in the past. To this end, in the early part of 1824, the Company's agents engaged George Stephenson as its advisor, and his son Robert, not yet aged 21, as its mining engineer. Robert was appointed to lead an expedition to Colombia, and Charles Empson, who appears to have been a very close friend, accompanied him, and was his constant companion throughout the next three years.²⁰

The party, which included a small advance guard of miners, reached Liverpool on June 8th 1824, and four days later George Stephenson arrived to see them off. On June 12th he wrote to his business partner, 'I found Mr. Sanders, Robert and Charles waiting for me at the coach office. Magnificent fellows,'²¹ he called them; and on June 18th Robert entered in his log of the voyage, 'Set sail from Liverpool in the Sir William Congreve at three o'clock in the afternoon: wind from the south east, sea smooth, day beautiful.'²² Mr. Sanders was a Liverpool merchant, and one of the prime movers in the idea of the Liverpool to Manchester railway, with which George was engaged. This paper appears to be the first to identify 'Charles' as Empson.

On July 23rd Robert recorded, 'Early in the morning saw the Colombian coast, and at two o'clock cast anchor opposite La Guayra; observed with silence the miserable appearance of the town. The hills behind the town rise to a height that gives a degree of sublimity to the scenery in the eyes of a stranger.'²³ He was required to report on the feasibility of constructing a breakwater or a pier at La Guayra, and on the possibility of linking the town with Caracas, the capital of the district, about 12 miles inland, by a railway. It is possible that he disembarked with only an interpreter, while the main party, including Empson, sailed on with their equipment to the main port, Cartagena. At any event he remained at La Guayra for two months, possibly unable to proceed into the interior because of the wretched state of the roads, but during this time he made his survey and prepared his report.²⁴ About the beginning of October he set out for Santa Fé de Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, a distance of some 1200 miles. He travelled on mule back, accompanied only by his interpreter and a guide, who turned out to be a villanous rogue. The journey was one of fatigue and peril, through very difficult terrain. Cut throats and ruffians abounded, but the party was well armed. En route Stephenson visited many districts said to be rich in minerals, and he spent several days reaching a spot where his guide assured him there was a rich vein of quicksilver, only to discover later that it had been left there by a bullock cart that had overturned and deposited its load, part of a cargo from Cadiz, onto the rocks, some years earlier.²⁵

He reached Bogotá on January 19th 1825, and met Mr. Illingworth, the manager of the mining company. From there he went to Honda, some twelve miles away, the furthest navigable point on the River Magdalena, then proceeded to Mariquita, the headquarters of the mining district, which he found in a desolate and ruined state. Of its population of 20,000, only 450 remained. Empson and the main party, meanwhile, landed at Cartagena, then the main port, at the mouth of the River Magdalena, on the Atlantic coast of Colombia. Empson describes the nearby lagoons, and the river, and travelled up it to Honda, about 600 miles inland on the left bank. ²⁶ Travel was by oar-propelled boats of various sizes, and the journey took him five months; but several of the writers, Cochrane, Hamilton, and others, mention the forthcoming introduction of a steamboat service, the concession for which had just been granted to a German entrepreneur, J B Elbers.

Honda served as the port for the capital, Bogotá. It had been destroyed in the severe earthquake of 1812, and was only partly rebuilt. Empson describes it as shut in by the mountains on all sides, and the heat stifling, like an oven. There he may have met Stephenson, and continued the journey overland. Empson describes the mode of travel. The standard beast of burden was the mule, and a good mule, very sagacious and loyal, was twenty times as valuable as a horse. ²⁷ According to Bache a pack mule cost \$50, a mule for riding, between \$150 and \$300. ²⁸ Indian guides were licenced by the Government to convey passengers across the Cordilleras. After reaching the highest point accessible to mules, one either walked, or was carried on a light cane chair suspended from a man's shoulders, a *sillero*. The frontispiece to Cochrane's second volume depicts a hair-raisingly precipitous descent of a Cordillera with the passenger seated in a chair facing outwards on the back of a *sillero*; and there is the tale of a brutal Spanish officer who persisted in using his spurs to urge on his *sillero*, until the desperate native pitched his tormentor down the thousands of feet into the abyss and took to his heels, never to be seen again. ²⁹ That this story had a factual basis is confirmed by Hamilton, who condemns the use of spurs on *silleros* as debasing. ³⁰ Both Empson and Stephenson dilate on the beauty of the scenery. At Bogotá one saw the great River Magdalena traversing the plain and precipitating itself into the *salto* (waterfall) of Tequandamo. On the left were the Vale of Villeta, the volcano of Tolyma, and the promontories called, for obvious reasons, Tetas. On the right was the plain, with the summit of the giant Andes behind, and in the sky above, the stars that make up the constellation, the Cross of the South. Later, Stephenson used to speak in especially glowing terms about the journey from Honda to Mariquita. At first the road was precipitous for a short distance, after which it rose gently for two miles to an extensive table land, beautifully covered with delicate grasses, and studded with groups of trees, some of which were in blossom at all seasons of the year. The scenery became increasingly lovely, the route passing through groves of palm, coco, orange, cinnamon, and almond trees, pines and mangos, while ahead rose the majestic Cordilleras. The party stayed for a while in Mariquita, while Stephenson prospected in all directions. He visited long abandoned mines, and settled on those of Santa Ana as being most suitable for rehabilitation. At Santa Ana he had a cottage built, with two rooms, the outer and inner walls of flattened bamboo, the ceiling of smooth reeds, and the roof of palm leaves. Empson devotes a chapter to it, and Smiles also illustrates it. All the

woodwork had to be tarred to protect it from ants, and Empson gives a detailed account of a lost battle to protect a beautiful magnolia tree from a vast army of millions of these insects.³¹ When an earthquake shook the district, for earthquakes were frequent, the inhabitants of the cottage merely felt as if shaken in a basket, without sustaining any harm.³² It overlooked a deep ravine that extended almost to the base of the Andes, and the hillsides were rich with magnolias, acacias, groves of bamboo, and tranquil pools where pelicans watched for their prey, while overhead in the branches, parrots, mocking birds, monkeys, macaws, and clouds of butterflies, gave colour and animation to the scene. The mountain rivers had worn deep basins in the rocks, and Stephenson selected one of these, with precipitous granite walls, as a swimming bath. When one of the party got into difficulties, Stephenson managed to rescue him.³³

The cook at this establishment, Senora Manuela, was a considerable character. She was a freed slave, who had obtained her liberty by working as a nurse in the hospital during the siege of Cartagena. In her hair she habitually wore a silver comb, or on festive days one of gold, but no shoes. She could provide a dinner of three complete courses for two hundred guests, and often prepared a meal for parties of up to fifty. Empson mentions as among her repertoire some 'pythonesque' dishes, roast parrot, roast armadillo, tortoise hash, and smoked boars tongue, with the more mundane pineapple fritters or coconut custard to follow. Rice was a staple cereal. Manuela had also a reputation as a healer. She treated scorpion stings by cupping with a funnel shaped calabash, and snake bite by excision with a knife, which she wielded with surgical precision. She took a great professional interest in the set of cupping glasses which were part of Empson's luggage.³⁴

There were two rainy seasons each year, from mid March to mid-May and mid-October to mid-December; otherwise the weather was dry and hot, with a mid-day temperature of about 84°F. Once when it fell to 73°F Stephenson found it uncomfortably chilly, and reflected how extraordinary it was that the body soon became enured to high temperatures. His own health was not uniformly good; he was subject to attacks of fever.

At Santa Ana Stephenson spent two years coping with difficulties and vexations. The local authorities were by no means helpful, and had to be regaled by various means, which included a ball at Mariquita, which the governor of Honda, accompanied by a host of friends, honoured with his presence. Stephenson later wrote that the corruption of the Colombian Government was excessive. From high to low, the bribe and the dagger were regarded as necessary to political existence. His many problems, with transport, unsuitable machinery, and the drunkenness and insubordination of the Cornish miners recruited and sent out by the Association, are fully described by his biographers.

Empson gives an account of a number of explorations, but whether he travelled alone or with Stephenson is not clear; he occasionally mentions companions. The whole of his wanderings seem to have been restricted to an area that extended from the coast to beyond Bogotá, and perhaps some hundred miles each side of the River Magdalena, and followed what had, from

the various other accounts, already become a recognised tourist route. To reach the Andes the plain of Feladeros had to be crossed, and the Rivers Morillo and Morales, originating from the foot of Paramo. All the river beds were rich with gold, which was mined in the range of mountains rising from the savannah called El Ruis.³⁵ He describes the dangerous crossing of a ravine by a primitive cane suspension bridge constructed by the natives in a single day.³⁶

Both Empson and Stephenson were fascinated by the appearance, manners, and dress of the people. The natives mainly wore the *pancho*, an oblong piece of cloth with a slit in the centre for the head. They celebrated Empson's arrival at one place by a fiesta that lasted three days, with dancing to drums, tambourines, and a clumsy sort of dulcimer. Sausages, dried salt beef, and squares of chocolate, were the main provisions, and *aguadiente*, a crude spirit distilled from sugar cane, so, as he says, the departure was often delayed for a day or so, and the journey always commenced in a spirit of joyful hilarity.³⁷

Although the other writers only mention it in passing, Empson devotes several pages to an account of the goitre that was endemic in a large area of the country, and he and Hall are the only ones who connect it with cretinism.³⁸ 'The disease which produces that deformity, called on the continent of Europe the Goitre, a mild variety of which is occasionally seen in England, bearing the gentler designation of a Derbyshire neck, is called in South America El Goto, and prevails to a most appalling extent. In some areas many hundreds of miles across, it is a matter of surprise to find a single person without this deformity. Custom reconciles one to everything. When the inhabitants of Berania saw for the first time a party of Englishmen, their surprise broke out in the exclamation, *Mira que hombres fein [sic] sin gotos*, literally, Look at these ugly men; they have no *gotos*. So far from making any attempt to conceal these disgusting deformities, they take a pride in displaying them, and embellish them with chains of gold, coral, amber, and jet.

Unhappily this disease has concomitants of the most serious character; imbecility and idiocy result from it in such an alarming ratio, that government [sic] have decreed a very handsome reward for the discovery of a cure. The natives have certain antidotes; burnt sponge, for example, which, acting on the glandular system, reduces the frightful development of the thyroid gland, and when the *goto* becomes so large (*grand* as the natives say,) that its weight becomes oppressive, and they are afraid to sleep in any but one position, lest they should die of suffocation, the remedy is applied, and the protuberance is reduced within the line of beauty. The condition was especially prevalent on the planes of Guayaquil. But enough of this: the remembrance brings back that uncomfortable feeling which, when the *goto* was a novelty, induced us to feel often at our own necks, to hold the looking glass before them, and to fancy that we saw a positive symptom of the malady.'

Having provided this factual account, he concludes the chapter, in the usual pattern, with the touching story of the beautiful Doña Paulina, who, while her husband, the general, was away fighting for his country's freedom, developed a goitre. Her unfeeling female friends rejoiced, and laid plans to

ensnare the handsome, wealthy, popular general for themselves. Deeply disturbed, the lady travelled to a distant province to seek the advice of a famous physician. She travelled with a kitchen, a bedroom, and a train of twenty mules for her domestics; the luxury of a hotel was unknown in those parts. The physician, a close friend of the general's, was concerned to preserve the lady's health rather than risk dubious remedies to abolish the goitre, and tried to divert her mind from her misfortune; but she, in her purse, kept a friend 'more faithful than any of you.' This was a length of ribbon, with which every week she measured the circumference of her neck, and marked its increase. Unexpectedly, the general returned, and clasped to his bosom his dear Paulina: his sudden appearance rendered this meeting a public one, and those whom delicacy would have forbidden to witness the first transports of a devoted husband were obliged to remain spectators. The goitre was gently alluded to. 'Do you really feel indifferent about this calamity,' said the half incredulous Paulina. 'Certainly,' said the general, 'It is a reason why I should love you more than ever. I set so great a value on every lock of your hair, on every particle of you, so the more there is of you, the more there is for me to venerate.' The grateful Paulina was happy; her health and spirits were restored, and soon her graceful ivory like throat was restored to its exquisite proportions; the *goto* had vanished.

In a recently published collection of early watercolours of the region,³⁹ Empson was somewhat unfairly described as a poetic and slightly mad botanist and collector, and, with more justification, as someone from whose writings it is not easy to extract any useful information. Certainly he had a great interest in both plant and animal life, and describes many different species, embellishing his descriptions with appropriate tales. In the lagoons which lay along the course of the Magdalena he saw water lilies, rose coloured pelicans, and silvery feathered cranes. The River Claro, a beautiful tributary of the Magdalena, swarmed with alligators.⁴⁰ On the plains there were cocoa and coffee plantations, and the natives everywhere grew plantains, the ubiquitous substitute for bread. Chocolate was another product, but only palatable if prepared with cinnamon. The common chocolate is vile stuff. Parrots were plentiful, and easy to domesticate, but soon learned those very objectionable terms with which the Spanish language abounds.⁴¹

Of special interest to anaesthetists is the following: 'The Indians of the desert possess a poison called curare, so potent, that the quantity which can be concealed beneath the thumb nail will cause certain death. In the use of this composition they show surprising skill.'⁴² He describes also the use of the blowpipe, the natives 'Sometimes killing, sometimes only stunning his game by blowing pellets of clay, or seeds of the Indian shot or *Laña Indica*, through a tube of cane.'⁴³ But whether crude curare was among the many botanical specimens that Empson embarked with on his return to England we shall never know.

In Bogota Empson became acquainted with the Montealegre family, from whom he acquired a number of pre-Colombian gold artefacts.⁴⁴ The acquaintance blossomed into friendship, and when the party returned to England they were accompanied by the two Montealegre sons, one of whom

was eventually employed in the Robert Stephenson Company's engineering works.

During his last twelve months in Colombia, according to Empson, whether from miscarriage of the mail or neglect, Stephenson received no letters from home. But his father had written to him from Liverpool on 23rd February 1827, and this is one of the very few letters in his own handwriting that survives. George wrote that he now had a very comfortable home, with a room set aside for Robert and Charles, for when they should arrive home. He mentioned that he had been asked to survey a line from Darlington to York, which would suit Mr. Charles, and expressed the hope that Charles would bring plenty of seeds from American plants for the garden. ⁴⁵

Robert's health was not of the best, and he became anxious to return to England. Before he left he was laid low with another violent attack of agueish fever which left him completely wearied and worn down. He wrote his last letter from South America on July 16th, 1827. He intended to leave Santa Ana on the 24th or 25th, and get the boat from Honda to Cartagena on 30th. This time, travel would be different. In a letter dated 15th December 1825 he said that there was already a steam boat on the Magdalena, but drawing too much water. The engines were from the United States, and he wished to see their steam machinery, which had an excellent reputation, on his way home. Since there was now frequent communication between Cartagena and New York, and a regular packet from New York to Liverpool, that was the best way home. ⁴⁶

After being entertained at a public farewell dinner they left Santa Ana, and embarking from Honda at the end of July, Stephenson met his replacement down river at Mompax. The next day they passed a steamship ascending the Magdalena, with Bolívar the Liberator on board en route to Bogotá, and were disappointed that they only had this passing sight of such a distinguished person. ⁴⁷ Later it was to be suggested, though not apparently by Empson himself, that he had met and become a close associate of Bolívar.

Even their return to Cartagena was not uneventful. Travelling in the rainy season, with storms, thunder and lightning, and the river in torrents, their boat became swept into the shallows and stuck. They managed to attract the attention of the twice weekly mail boat, and were eventually rescued by canoe. ⁴⁸ Arriving at Cartagena they found yellow fever raging, and no suitable vessel about to leave for a British port. Here they were joined by Mr. Gerard, an employee of the Association, who was bound for Scotland, with the two Montealegre boys. It was here also that Stephenson had his celebrated meeting with the elderly Trevithick, and the party took passage on the brig Bunker Hill, bound for New York, on 23rd August. ⁴⁹ Again it was an eventful voyage; they picked up the survivors of two wrecks, whom hunger had, in the second instance, reduced to cannibalism. Their journey was almost at an end when, at 3 am, Tuesday 18th September, their ship ran aground on a lee shore, at Sandy Hook, at the southern side of the mouth of the Hudson on the approach to New York, owing, Empson said, to the captain having a greater interest in chess than navigation. But this may be unfair, since Richard Bache vividly described the difficulty of leaving New York harbour through the

narrows and avoiding grounding at the approach to Sandy Hook,⁵⁰ and Stephenson in his account attributed no blame to anyone. The ship immediately began to fill and break up, and high seas prevented the boats being launched, but fortunately there was no loss of life, and they were landed, safe and sound, by 8 am. 'After seventeen hours of intense anxiety, a sloop came to our relief, and landed us on Staten Island.' But Empson's large collection of specimens of the animal, mineral, and vegetable kingdoms, the fruit of four years of toil, were lost, and of his possessions he managed to save only some precious objects of pre-Columbian art.

Stephenson, having observed the priority being given to other passengers, discovered that they were Freemasons, as was the mate, and he was so impressed by this that he forthwith resolved to become a Mason. He had saved his collection of mineral specimens, but had lost a complete cabinet of entomological curiosities of Colombia, and the box containing all his money, on which the party was dependent. In a letter to Illingworth he wrote, 'I saved my minerals, but Empson lost part of his botanical collection.'⁵¹ There is also an account of the wreck in the newspaper *Marine Journal*.⁵²

'Brig. Bunker Hill, Woolsey (Captain), 27 days from Cartagena, Passengers R. Stephenson, C. Empson, J. Levy, J. Gerard, J. Montealque (sic), M. Mariano, and servants. Took on 2 seamen and a passenger from schooner Eliza of N.Y. had been on wreck 7 days ditto John S. Spence, capsized; 3 had died and survivors had subsisted off the bodies of the supercargo, steward, and passenger. The Bunker Hill went ashore at 3 am. yesterday on the ROMER. All the passengers and part of the cargo has come up in lighters, part of the cargo was thrown overboard, the vessel bilged and it is supposed she will be lost.' (The Eliza had been lost in a frightful hurricane. The crew had caught a large shark on the third day, and subsisted partly off that.) *Marine Journal*, Wed. 19th Sept. p. 2.

Fortunately Stephenson had no difficulty in obtaining money in New York; nor in joining the Free Masons. He was inducted into the St. Andrew's Lodge No. 7 on 21st September. Then he, Empson, and three other companions, Gerard and the Montealegre boys, set out on a walking tour of New York State. While they had not been favourably impressed with the manners and customs of the inhabitants of New York City, they received great help and hospitality throughout the State, which they found well populated and a wonderful example of human industry. They visited Niagara Falls and crossed into Canada, Stephenson wearing his poncho until they reached Montreal, where he changed into the ordinary costume of an English gentleman. There they went into the best society of the city, and were regaled with a succession of balls and routs.⁵³

The United States was a source of great interest to the English, and several books were published by curious visitors during the late 1820s and early 1830s. The best known is Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. London: Bentley, 1832, reprinted in 1984 by Century Publishing, London. Mrs. Trollope had little good to say about their manners. She found the remorseless spitting of the Americans deeply repugnant, 'from the contamination of which it was absolutely impossible to protect our dresses.'

Also the frightful manner of feeding with their knives, till the whole blade seemed to enter into the mouth. 'In America, that polish which removes the coarser and rougher parts of our nature, is unknown and undreamed of' The most notorious account was Captain Basil Hall's *Travels in North America*, 'which aroused great passion from one corner of the Union to the other,' but Mrs. Trollope found not one exaggerated statement throughout the work. Captain Hall had thought the greatest difference between England and America to be the want of loyalty. She thought it the want of refinement.

Returning to New York, they took passage to Liverpool at a cost of thirty guineas, sailing on the first class New York built packet, the Pacific, master Captain R.R. Crocker, on Monday, 15th October 1827, and arriving at Liverpool on 16th November.⁵⁴ Passengers in the ship Pacific which sailed for Liverpool on 16th, included Robert Stephenson, 2 boys, and a servant, of Central America. The *New York American* regularly carried advertisements for the Old Line of Liverpool Packets, among which was the Pacific, described as 'N.Y. built, coppered and copper fastened, with uncommonly extensive and commodious accommodation for passengers, fast sailor, 30 gns cabin, bedding, wines, and stores of the best quality, commanded by men of great experience.' From the shipping reports its average time of crossing was 30 days.

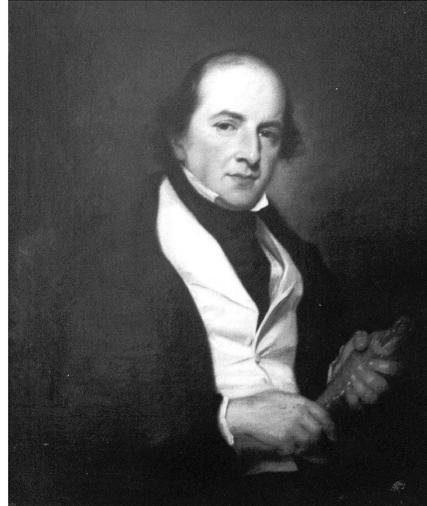
Arriving in Liverpool 16th November,⁵⁵ they found George Stephenson settled in a comfortable house, superintending the construction of the Liverpool to Manchester Railway; and 'The friend who had shared the perils and trials of Robert's American life became a guest in George Stephenson's house in Liverpool. When the young men awoke on the morning after their arrival they found on their dressing tables two handsome watches, which had been placed there while they were asleep. In this manner George Stephenson made good part of the losses they had sustained through the shipwreck.'⁵⁶

They soon returned to Newcastle, and on 6th February 1828 Empson exhibited a number of gold artefacts at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. John Snow was at that time with Mr. Hardcastle, a surgeon in that city, having, according to Richardson been articled at the age of 14, which would have been in 1827. It may be of some significance that Hardcastle was the Stephenson's family doctor.⁵⁷ Snow remained there until 1833, when he joined Mr. Watson of Burnop Field, where he stayed until the end of 1834.

A description of the gold figurines was published in 1832.⁵⁸ There were twelve in all. Empson had obtained the first five in Bogotá, and was assured that they had been found in Lake Guataveta, into which the Indians annually threw many such images as sacrifices to the Gods. A number of accounts of this ceremony have been published.⁵⁹ Also it was believed that much treasure had been sunk in this lake at the approach of the Spanish conquerors. A number of schemes to drain the lake had been launched over the years, and many speculators, Cochrane among them, had lost heavily or been ruined by failure to find anything of great value. There was also a breastplate, which, when it came to be auctioned after Empson's death, was described as part of the sacred armour of Montezuma, presented to Mr.

Empson by General Bolivar; but this may be regarded as auctioneer's hyperbole, because Empson himself did not make that claim in his own description of the artifacts. According to Prof. Warwick Bray, at least one of these figurines is now in the collection of the British Museum, and was exhibited in 1978.⁶⁰

Empson settled in Newcastle, where he started a business at 32 Collingwood Street as a fine art bookseller, stationer, and print seller, and established his home on the premises.⁶¹ This would have been only a few minutes walk from Hardcastle's surgery. He is described as having a refined and cultured taste for the fine arts, able to converse fluently and with ease in French and Spanish, and a naturalist of no mean degree, with a special interest in shells and shellfish.⁶² As a rule he wore full dress black cloth and ruffled shirt, which he varied in hot weather by wearing a white waistcoat and trousers and a white hat. His portrait, painted perhaps when he was in the early forties, shows that he continued with this form of dress. He was the perfection of politeness, being affable and kind hearted. His company was much sought after, and he was always a welcome guest at the castle, the mansion, or the country house of the nobility and the gentry for miles around. His shop was fitted up more like a gentleman's library than an ordinary bookseller's. Books and engravings of the best class were displayed in the window, and the rooms over the shop were crowded with oil paintings, antiquities, objects of vertu, a choice collection of shells and minerals, and several large portfolios of drawings and engravings, the whole forming a museum of considerable interest.



Empson's soon became the central meeting place for artists, the clergy, and literary, scientific, and professional men. Many of the nobility and leading gentry were frequent visitors. This was the Tory shop, but politics did not play a prominent part in the business; nevertheless, it was the distinctive character of its customers. Among the distinguished men of the town who frequented almost daily this shop was Robert Stephenson.

It appears that around 1831 Empson began to correspond with the young Edward Lear, then aged 19, and engaged in producing drawings and watercolours of birds and animals for Lord Stanley, later the Earl of Derby, and John Gould.⁶³ On October 1st 1831 Lear sent Empson a drawing of himself, and commented, 'this is amazingly like. Add only that both my knees are fractured from being run over which has made them very peculiarly crooked, that my neck is singularly long, that I have a most elephantine nose, and a disposition to tumble here and there, owing to being half blind, and you may very well imagine my tout ensemble.' He added that he was very little used to company or society. 'My Sussex friends always say that I can do nothing like other people' He was living at this time on the top floor of 28 Upper North Place, off Grays Inn Road, engaged in producing beautiful paintings of cockatoos and parrots, and warned Empson, 'should you come to town, I am

sorry I cannot offer you a home pro tempore [pro trumpety indeed it would be] ... for unless you occupy the grate as a seat, I see no possibility of your finding any rest consonant with the safety of my Parrots, seeing, that of the 6 chairs I possess, 5 are at present occupied with lithographic prints. The whole of my exalted upper tenement in fact overflows with them, and for the last 12 months that I have so moved, thought, looked at, and existed among Parrots that should any transmigration take place at my decease I am sure my soul would be very uncomfortable in anything but one of the Psittacidae.' He thanks Empson for information about South America. 'I am delighted with the flowers; if you have any more sketches of S. American trees they would be invaluable to me for I want to put birds on them when I draw for Lord Stanley which is very frequently.' It appears that Empson had asked about prints, for Lear explained, 'My reasons for so soon destroying my drawings were these. . . . I was obliged to limit the work in order to get more subscribers and to erase the drawings because the expense is considerable of keeping them on and I have great difficulty in paying my monthly charge, for to pay colourer and printer monthly I am obstinately prepossessed since I had rather be at the bottom of the River Thames than be one week in debt, be it never so small. For me who at the age of 14 & a half was turned out into the world, literally without a farthing & with nought to look to but his own exertions, you may easily suppose this a necessary prejudice & indeed the tardy paying of many of my subscribers renders it but too difficult to procure food & pay for publishing at once. . . . I have just nine and twenty times resolved to give up parrots & all & should certainly have done so had not my good genius with vast reluctance just 9 and 20 times set me a going again.'

No other evidence of a connection with Charles Empson is cited by any of Lear's biographers. However Lear was also friendly with the Reverend William Henry Empson, Vicar of Romsey, and his wife. Mrs. Empson purchased a painting of Mount Athos. In *Letters of Edward Lear* edited by Lady Strachey, London, T. Fisher and Unwin, 1907, 61-3, 77, 137, there are several references to the Empsons, who Lear visited in 1857 and 1859. The identity of W.H. Empson with Charles's youngest brother William has not yet been definitely established.

Empson frequently contributed to scientific and other journals, usually under a nom de plume, and did much to promote and diffuse a taste for the fine arts, and to encourage young people who showed any talent for drawing. It is said that at Christmas 1833 he printed on the back of his address cards the message *To wish you a Happy Christmas* and this is thought to be the origin of Christmas cards. 'But in spite of all his kindness and benevolence he became the victim of a cruel, malicious, and slanderous report, fabricated and propagated by a vile wretch whom he had employed as a tradesman, befriended, patronised, and supported, until his habits of neglect and intemperance compelled the transfer of his business to another of the same trade. In consequence of this, in spite, malice, and despair, he resorted to the blasting influence of slander, which so easily and stealthily permeates credulous society. This was too much for the susceptible bookseller, who disposed of his business and went to reside in Bath. Elsewhere it is said that in 1834 he was driven from Newcastle by a foul slander, which is said to have

had no foundation, and went to reside in Bath.’⁶⁴ Certainly, on 23rd March 1833, he advertised auction of pictures and prints in the local newspaper.⁶⁵

Empson was living at 9 Cleveland Place, Bath, when John Snow visited him in the late summer of 1836 during his long walk from Yorkshire to medical school in London. Snows route took him via Liverpool, and it has been suggested that he went there to visit the Stephensons. The connection between Empson and the Stephensons is most intriguing, and worthy of further investigation. So far it has not been possible to find any family relationship, or anything to indicate how they became acquainted. One can only speculate that Empson may have worked for George Stephenson, possibly as a surveyor.

In most of the Bath Directories Empson is described as a museum keeper,⁶⁶ but in one, more accurately, as a picture dealer.⁶⁷ The directories list other Empsons, and Snows also, but there is no evidence of any relationship. He was very active in the social life of Bath, and was instrumental in the purchase and erection of the celebrated statue of Jupiter that stands in Victoria Park. Although not placed on its plinth until 1839, in celebration of Victoria’s accession to the throne, Empson appears to have arranged for the statue itself to be purchased from the sculptor’s widow some four years earlier. In 1838 he published a more detailed account of the gold artefacts that he had brought back from Colombia.⁶⁸ By this time his *Narratives* of South America was already out of print.

Empson was a friend and confidante of several famous Bath residents, including the poet and essayist Walter Savage Landor, who bought several paintings from him,⁶⁹ and Reverend Kilvert, uncle of the more famous diarist. He became acquainted with Louis Napoleon, later Emperor Napoleon III of France, who lived during 1846 at 55 Great Pulteney Street;⁷⁰ and Benjamin Ward Richardson describes how, when Empson and Snow visited Paris in 1856, Empson had special imperial favours shown to him, in which the nephew participated. Dr. Richard Ellis, who transcribed John Snow’s casebooks, told me that during the whole of that year this visit could only have taken place in September, either between the 4th and the 10th, or from the 11th to the 17th.



Empson moved to 7 Terrace Walks, close to the Abbey, in 1843. This is now a video shop, but the remains of a fine interior can be seen. Empson was very active in advancing the interests of local artists; and among his other good works, he established a library for the patients of the Mineral Water Hospital. He seems to have travelled fairly frequently in connection with his business affairs, and one can imagine him visiting John Snow in Frith Street,

and later in Sackville Street, and can see how the company of this adventurous, romantic, artistic extravert who had been to foreign parts, must have appealed to the rather austere, self-contained Snow; and equally, how Empson must have appreciated that Snow, in his own field, was exploring completely new territory. It is conceivable that he provided John Snow with both financial and moral support during his difficult early years in general practice. Following the posthumous publication of Snow's *On Chloroform* the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, unlike *The Lancet*, printed a most laudatory obituary notice,⁷¹ to which Empson replied the following week, correcting a small point. Empson must also have inspired an annotation that appeared the week after, reprinted from a memoir in the *Medical Times*, which referred to the administration of chloroform by Snow to Queen Victoria, and his meeting with Prince Albert; the information it contained, and the reference to entries in Snow's diaries, could hardly have come from another source.⁷²

Empson's parents, in the meantime, had become landowners at Heworth, to the north east of York, where John Empson is first recorded as paying rates in 1824. The family gradually built up their holding, owning a house and two acres of land by 1828. John Empson died in 1850. The 1851 Census return shows his widow Mary to have been 81. Charles Empson's name appears on a deed of 1855, when more land was bought at Heworth, and he refers to this in his will.⁷³ John Empson died on 15th April 1850, and although his estate was valued at less than one hundred pounds for probate, he mentions lands and rents. After providing for his wife and his son John, he left to his daughter Hannah all his religious books, and to his son Charles all his pictures and paintings, and the remainder of his books. There was a legacy also to his natural daughter Fanny Snow, wife of Will Snow of Rawcliffe, farmer, for whom he expressed affection.

In mid-June 1861 Charles Empson was in London again. He was staying at 60 Doughty Street, a lodging house close to Charles Dickens's old home, No. 48, now the Dickens Museum, when he was taken ill with what sounds like pneumonia, and after an illness of three days he died. He is buried in the Brompton Cemetery.⁷⁴ Shortly before death he had made available to Robert Stephenson's biographer, Jeaffreson, Stephenson's early journals and nearly all the letters he received and sent during his stay in South America. 'Mr. Charles Empson, shortly before his death, contributed to my store of materials a most interesting collection of letters and documents; consisting of Robert Stephenson's early journals, and of nearly all the letters which he either received from or had written to friends between the termination of his life on Killingworth Moor and his return from South America.' Rolt comments that Jeaffreson clearly worked from sources that were not available to him. One wonders how Empson came to retain these documents, and whether they are still in existence somewhere. Empson is not mentioned in the Wills of either George or Robert Stephenson.

Charles Empson's Will is dated August 1858, so presumably he remade it after Snow's death in June of that year. His effects were valued at under £8000. He left some legacies to friends, and to charities in Bath, including the General Hospital, but most of his assets went to members of the family still resident in Yorkshire, including some land that he had bought there. Among

the legatees were John Snow's mother, Frances, and several of Snow's brothers and sisters. Empson's death was marked by a lengthy but not too informative obituary notice in the Bath and Cheltenham Gazette.⁷⁵ His estate was sold at auction; the sale lasted for five days. According to a newspaper report 3000 people turned up, and the property fetched excellent prices. The Bath Record Library still has a copy of the sale catalogue. This lists a number of gold artifacts from South America, which would be those exhibited in 1828. Several of these, according to Professor Warwick Bray, are now in the possession of the British Museum. There was also a silver dish and stand, said to have been presented to Empson by General Bolívar. Also, most tantalizingly, lots 843 to 845, a Portrait of the late Charles Empson Esq. in South American Costume by Houghton, a Portrait of the late Charles Empson by Willes Maddox,⁷⁶ and a Portrait of the late Mr. Empson's Father by Le Capelain; and, lot 941, a Medallion portrait of the late Mr. Empson, framed. That John Empson had his portrait painted, again argues that he was something out of the ordinary.

There was Smiles's *Life of George Stephenson*, many books on South America, Lear's *Journal*, Gould's *Resplendors*, many paintings and much antique furniture, a copy of John Snow's *On Cholera* and another described as *Snow on Anaesthetics*, which must have been his *On Chloroform*. There were books that must have belonged to Snow, such as Ure's *Dictionary of Chemistry*, and *Conversations on Chemistry*.⁷⁷

Also in the Bath Reference Library there are several of Empson's minor writings and poems, and his original sketchbook, with the pencil drawings, made in Colombia, including one of the Cottage, from which the published plates were prepared. They show evidence of considerable artistic skill.

One can get some idea of the regard in which Empson was held locally from the fact that his friends set up a fund to provide a memorial window in the Abbey, and this was installed about a year after his death. It is located immediately over the north-west door (designated by an arrow), which is the usual entrance to the Abbey. The inscription, at the base of the window, with a disconcerting disregard for the subjunctive, reads:



In affectionate remembrance of CHARLES EMPSON, of this city,
born 1795, died 1861.

Erected by public subscription, that the memory of a good and estimable citizen is perpetuated.

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Addendum

After the above essay was completed, a descendant of the Snow family supplied some anecdotal memoirs which purport to give an intimate view of how Charles Empson was regarded by his relatives. If anything, they deepen the mystery that surrounds this character. They will be found in the Proceedings of the History of Anaesthesia Society, available on the Society's web site at www.histansoc.org.uk

Ref: Zuck, D. An intimate view of Charles Empson and John Snow – some anecdotal notes. *Proceedings of the History of Anaesthesia Society* 2003; 33:35-38.

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- ⁵ Davis RH. *Historical Dictionary of Colombia*. Metuchen, NJ. Scarecrow Press, 1977; Cameron R. *Viceroyalties of the West - the Spanish Empire in Latin America*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968.
- ⁶ Hooker T. and Poulter R. *The armies of Bolívar and Martín*. London: Osprey Publ. Co., Men at Arms Series 232; and personal communication.
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- ¹³ Webster CK. *Britain and the independence of Latin America 1812-1830. Select documents from the Foreign Office Archives*. London: OUP, 1938, Vol 1, 381.
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- ¹⁷ Williford M. *Jeremy Bentham on Spanish America: an account of his letters and proposals to the New World*. Louisiana State University Press, 1980, 26, 40-42.
- ¹⁸ Duane W. *A visit to Colombia in the years 1822 and 1823*. Philadelphia: Palmer, 1826; and "An officer of the United States Army" (Richard Bache). *Notes on Colombia taken in the years 1822-3*. Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1827.

¹⁹ Tischendorf A. and Parks E Taylor (Eds). *The diary and journal of Richard Clough Anderson Jr. 1814-1826*. Durham, Carolina: Duke Univ. Press, 1964.

²⁰ The fullest account of Stephenson's stay in Colombia is contained in Jeaffreson JC. *The life of Robert Stephenson FRS*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green; 1864, 2 vols. Another account, which differs in small details, is in Smiles S. *Lives of the engineers vol.iii: George and Robert Stephenson*. London: Murray, 1868. The most easily accessible, though much abbreviated, is in Rolt LTC. *George and Robert Stephenson*. London: Longman, 1960, and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978. In the Penguin edition the account will be found between pages 94-102 and 119-127. Other useful information is contained in Davies H. *George Stephenson: a biographical study of the father of railways*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975.

²¹ Jeaffreson, op. cit., 74-5.

²² Jeaffreson, op. cit. 76.

²³ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 76.

²⁴ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 78-81.

²⁵ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 81-3; Empson, *Narratives*, 109.

²⁶ Empson, *Narratives*, 79.

²⁷ Empson, *Narratives*, 90.

²⁸ Bache, op. cit. 302.

²⁹ Cameron, op. cit. 172-3.

³⁰ Hamilton, op. cit. 210.

³¹ Empson, *Narratives*, 20.

³² Jeaffreson, op. cit. 91; Smiles, op. cit. 305.

³³ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 86.

³⁴ Empson, *Narratives*, 58-66.

³⁵ Empson, *Narratives*, 106.

³⁶ Empson, *Narratives*, 123.

³⁷ Empson, *Narratives*, 41.

³⁸ Empson, *Narratives*, 93-104.

³⁹ Deas M. *Types and customs of New Granada*. London: Royal Geographical Society, 1986, 20.

⁴⁰ Empson, *Narratives*, 247.

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- ⁴² Empson, *Narratives*, 118.
- ⁴³ Empson, *Narratives*, 180.
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- ⁴⁶ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 94-7.
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- ⁴⁸ Empson, *Narratives*, 259-265.
- ⁴⁹ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 105; Smiles, op. cit. 309.
- ⁵⁰ Bache, op. cit. 10-11.
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- ⁵² *New York American*, vol. viii, No. 2297, Tuesday, 18th September 1827, p. 2, col. 7.
- ⁵³ Jeaffreson, op. cit. 108-10.
- ⁵⁴ *Albion* (newspaper) Vol. 6, No. 19, 20th October 1827, p. 151, Col. 3.
- ⁵⁵ *Lloyds List* for Tuesday, 13th November 1827, p. 3, col. 1. Liverpool 16th November, Pacific, Crocker, arr. from New York, sailed 16th ulto. (Presumably the List was printed some days after 13th November.)
- ⁵⁶ Jeaffreson, op.cit. 113.
- ⁵⁷ S. Galbraith, *John Snow (1813-1858) his early years*. London, 2002, Royal Institute of Public Health in association with the John Snow Society, 51.
- ⁵⁸ *Archaeologia Aeliana: or miscellaneous tracts, relating to antiquity*. Published by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne: Vol 2. Newcastle: Hodgson, 1832, 252-5.
- ⁵⁹ Hamilton JP. op. cit. 187-194; Cameron R. op. cit. 183-5; Romoli K. op. cit. 40-47.
- ⁶⁰ Bray W. *The gold of El Dorado*. London: Times Newspapers Ltd. on behalf of The Gold of El Dorado Exhibition, Royal Academy, 1978, 111.
- ⁶¹ *Newcastle Directory* 1833 4, 37.
- ⁶² Hetherington RW. Newcastle fifty years ago No. 30. Old Bookseller. *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, Saturday, 17th November 1883, p. 3.
- ⁶³ Noakes, V. *Edward Lear - the life of a wanderer*. London, Collins, 1968, 33; and Noakes, V. *Edward Lear 1812-1888*. Royal Academy of Arts with Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1985, (Annotated catalogue of RAA Exhibition); also Chitty, S. *That Singular Person Called Lear*. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988, 21, 25, 33. All quote piecemeal from the letter of 1st

October 1831, which is now in the Pierpont Library, New York. I have not seen the original, but have tried to reconstruct the order of the paragraphs.

⁶⁴ *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 3rd Series, 1913, Vol. X, 178.

⁶⁵ *The Newcastle Chronicle* No. 3583, Saturday, 23rd March, 1833, p. 3, col. 2. Charles Empson, Bookseller, Collingwood Street, respectfully informs the public that he has on sale a large collection of Pictures and Prints, some of them well known originals ... which will be offered for sale by auction on Friday 26th inst. at one o'clock. (sic - Friday was the 29th.) The pictures may be seen at any time until the day of the sale at No. 4 Royal Arcade, where the sale is to be held.

⁶⁶ Silverthorne H. *The Bath Directory* 1841.

⁶⁷ *Bath Directory* 1848. London: Hunt & Co., 53.

⁶⁸ Empson C. *Observations and correspondence ... relative to various ornaments of gold ... in the possession of Charles Empson*. Bath: Wood, 1838.

⁶⁹ Elwin M. *Landor - a replevin*. London: Macdonald, 1958, 389, 433, 437.

⁷⁰ Haddon J. *Portrait of Bath*. London: Robert Hale, 1982, 120, 121, 138.

⁷¹ The late Dr. John Snow. *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 29th December 1858, p. 8. I am indebted for this and the next reference to Dr. S. Galbraith.

⁷² Chloroform at the Royal Accouchement. *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 12th January 1859, p. 7.

⁷³ I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Jennifer Kaner, local historian, of York, for the information about the Empson family's land holdings, and for locating John Empson's Will, which is in the Borthwick Institute, York, Register 223, f. 23.

⁷⁴ When I was making enquiries about the location of Charles Empson's grave the Cemetery Superintendent sent me the coordinates and offered to set up a marker; then he said, without knowing anything about the relationship, 'You can't miss it; its next to a tall stone belonging to a Dr. Snow', so I knew he had the right one. I assume that Empson reserved the plot when Snow died.

⁷⁵ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 3 July 1891.

⁷⁶ This is now in the possession of Mr Anthony Snow: see Zuck, D. Snow, Empson, and the Barkers of Bath. *Anaesthesia* 2001, 56, 227-230.

⁷⁷ John Snow took his first table of ether uptake from Ure's publication on vaporization.