

**On William's first tooth    Sept 26 1829    CJLT**

Just five months old - & lo! a tooth  
a little tooth that comes  
Working its way from under-jaw  
and pricking through the gums.

a tooth! a tooth! the nurse's eye  
and mother's finger finds it  
Sharp as a pin - & then no doubt  
There're many more behind it.

Poor little dear! full many a sigh  
They'll cost thee ere complete  
The twenty-four which nature gives  
In even whiteness meet.

To champ thy food, to form thy words  
To aid thee in thy prattle -  
To crack thy nuts, & be of use  
Perchance in bloody battle. -

Obtained with many a woful [sic] twitch  
of feverish pain they say, -  
Maintain'd with many a scrub & scratch  
From brushes day by day. -

Then toothache comes, a stinging pain  
(There's nothing half so cruel)  
Keeping you hourly on the rack  
Fed low on rusks & gruel.

You chafe, you writhe, you change your place, -  
Perhaps sigh & groan & weep  
and others try ten thousand ways  
of lulling pain to sleep.

But no! no case, till with a jerk  
That turns your head awry,  
and makes you gape with a sudden wrench  
You bid your tooth good bye.

O wicked teeth - of all the stock  
of implements we use,  
The worst to gain, - the worst to keep, -  
almost the worst to lose. -



*C. J. La Trobe*

Source: Mrs Leonard Seeley, Commonplace book, c.1825-1854, MS 13174,  
Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria.

See also Helen Armstrong, 'On William's First Tooth: a poem by Charles Joseph La  
Trobe', *La Trobeana*, Vol.14, No.1, March 2015, pp.42-43,  
[www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html](http://www.latrobesociety.org.au/LaTrobeana.html)