

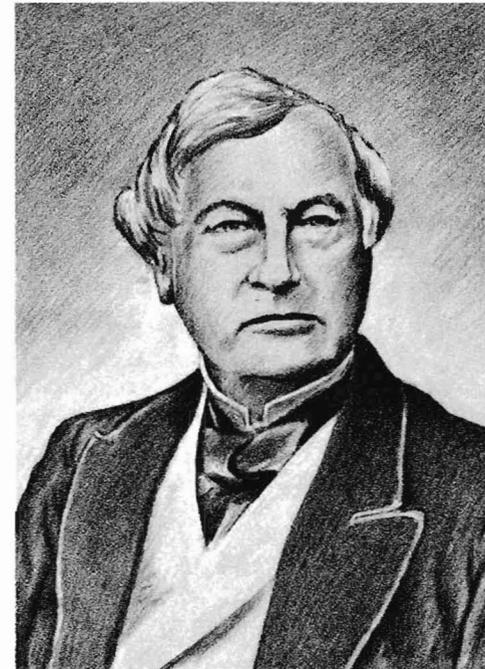
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SIR CURTIS LAMPSON

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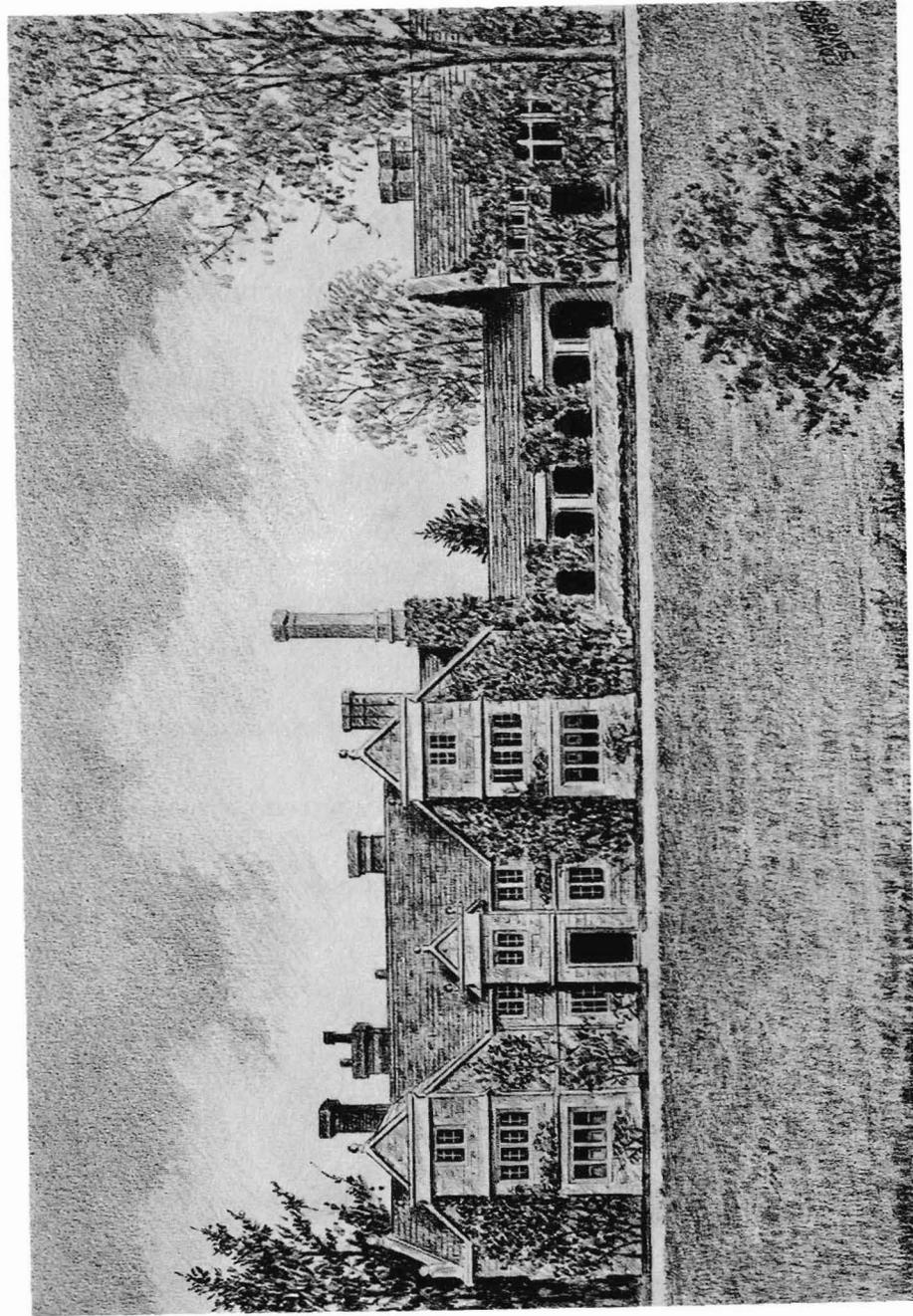
VERMONT *History*

Formerly the Vermont Quarterly



January 1960

The PROCEEDINGS of the
VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



"ROWFANT," THE LAMPSON ESTATE IN NORTH SUSSEX



SIR CURTIS LAMPSON, VERMONT BARONET

By MADISON C. BATES

VERMONTERS still remember that a son of their hills became a famous fur merchant, a leader in the laying of the Atlantic Cable, and the only Vermont-born baronet known to history. Outside the State of his birth, however, the name of Sir Curtis Lampson is, in our time, pretty well forgotten. This is not surprising; apparently no account of him longer than a few paragraphs has ever seen print. The following article is an attempt to find out more about him—what he did and what kind of man he was. The story has been reconstructed from widely scattered sources, and there are gaps in it that, it is hoped, readers of VERMONT HISTORY may help to fill in.

The boyhood of Curtis Miranda Lampson,¹ his first seventeen years, is the only part of his life spent in Vermont. He was born on September 21, 1806, in the township of New Haven, Addison County, at New Haven Mills. His father's house disappeared long ago and its site cannot be accurately determined. One tangible relic of the Lampson home still exists, however: a grandfather clock. It is now in the Sheldon Museum in Middlebury and is authenticated by a statement inside its case in the handwriting of Henry Sheldon himself. His mother was Rachel Powell (1766-1813), daughter of George Powell of Lanesboro, Massachusetts.² The father was William Lampson, birthplace unknown, who was born in 1761 and died at some time in the 1820's. The first United States Census, 1790, includes the name of William Lampson among the heads of families in New Haven; but no precise date has been found for the settlement of the Lampsons in the town. William and Rachel had eleven children, four sons and seven daughters, of whom all except Curtis remained in America. Curtis was the youngest son and tenth child.³ When the mother died in 1813 the boy was only seven. No doubt the father supported his large brood of children mainly by farming. The *History of Addison County*⁴ (referred to hereafter as the County History) states that William set up the first clover mill in New

Haven;⁵ and according to a news story in *The Middlebury Register* of November 13, 1866 (reprinted in the *Burlington Free Press* three days later), he "brought the first merino sheep to Addison County and was ruined financially by the speculation." The frequent appearances of his name in the town records are nearly all in connection with real estate transactions. These indicate, at least in the main, an effort to add to his original acreage rather than to deal in land speculation. If William Lampson took a hand in the public affairs of the young town, organized in 1787, the records do not show it; and no Lampson appears on the roll of members of the local Congregational church in the town clerk's office—a roster that purports to be complete from 1797 when the church was organized.⁶ Was William a Universalist? (There was a Universalist church in the area.)⁷ Even more heretically, could he have been under the influence of the "awful Infidel" Ethan Allen? (The phrase is from the diary of William's contemporary the Reverend Nathan Perkins, who made what he called an "Evangelical Tour" of Vermont in 1789.)⁸

It is tempting to let one's imagination construct a picture of what life was like for the youngest boy of a large family in an area that so late as 1769 was untouched wilderness.⁹ One safe guess is that he learned to hunt and fish—two activities that he followed as often as he could all the rest of his long life. But recorded details are scanty indeed. He learned the three R's in the village school—the only formal education he ever had.¹⁰ The County History says that the boy tended to the stove in the schoolhouse and was paid in the form of the wood ashes therefrom, which, one supposes, he sold to be used in the making of soft soap. When Curtis was seventeen or thereabouts he left New Haven for Canada and joined his oldest brother William who had already gone there; and so his Vermont boyhood came to an end.

The next seven or eight years, spent in Canada and New York City, were crucial to young Lampson's career, but only a little information about them is available. The account of this period in the County History says:

When about seventeen he joined his brother William, a fur trader in Canada, who was connected in some way with the Hudson Bay Company. He traveled among the Indians and hunters of British America, and acquired valuable knowledge of the fur trade. He went to New York and in the employ of John Jacob Astor's agent, and other dealers, went repeatedly to

London with cargoes of fur. In 1830 he established himself in London in the fur business.¹¹

Of this period the only thing left to record¹² is that in 1827, three years before he went to England for good, he was married in New York City at the age of twenty-one to Jane Walter Sibley of Sutton, Massachusetts.¹³

All the rest of Lampson's life was spent in England. In 1848 he became a British subject and his four children were born there.

The fur establishment that he set up in London at the age of twenty-four took the name of C. M. Lampson and Company. It prospered from the start and made him wealthy while he was still a young man. In the course of time several companies sold furs to the Lampson firm, but the Hudson's Bay Company seems to have been his main source of supply, and he became increasingly prominent in its affairs.

It was inevitable that the huge and powerful Hudson's Bay Company would one day come into conflict with the normal settlement and development of Canada. By the middle of the nineteenth century a bitter, tortuous, and stormy struggle had built up—the Hudson's Bay Company on the one side, the settlers, the Canadian Government, and eventually the British Parliament on the other. In the end (that is, in 1870) the Company surrendered most of the rights that Charles II had granted it in the all-embracing charter of 1670, which gave it proprietorship of "an area as great as European Russia."¹⁴ "Just two hundred years from the granting of the charter, the Imperial Decree was passed, and the Hudson's Bay Company, whose word had been law over 3,000,000 square miles of territory, subsided into a simple trading company in the Dominion of Canada."¹⁵ The organization of the Company was basically revolutionized.

Now it happened that for the last six years of the struggle Curtis Lampson was the Deputy Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and therefore deeply involved.¹⁶ From histories of the Company it is possible to form a fairly definite idea of the part he played. He came to believe that, as steamships and railways brought in an increasing tide of immigrants bent on agricultural and industrial development, the power of the Company was bound to weaken; that in such circumstances it would be folly to defy the Canadian and Imperial governments, as some of the embittered die-hards held out for doing, and that all the Company could do was to secure as favorable terms as possible.¹⁷ Historians seem to think that the agreement finally

reached was, on the whole, just. At any rate Lampson was among those who favored accepting it; and he remained in his high office a year or two after the climax—in order, we may suppose, to help in the reorganization of the Company at the beginning of its period of reconstruction.

It is a measure of the man's astonishing energy that during most of the years when he was so heavily engaged in the crisis of the Hudson's Bay Company, he was also giving much time and effort to another momentous matter: the laying of the Atlantic Cable. In 1856 he was appointed a director of the company formed for that purpose, and a little later he was made vice-chairman.¹⁸ It was not until ten years thereafter, on July 27, 1866, that the great project achieved permanent success after repeated failures—not failures in financial management but in the actual process of constructing and laying the cable. After the last failure most of the backers of the plan favored giving it up entirely, but Lampson and a few others persisted and one more effort was made. On October 1, 1866, two months after the final success, a banquet was held at Liverpool in honor of those who had been leaders in the project. At the dinner the presiding officer read a letter by Lord Derby, then Prime Minister of England, which said in part:

Her Majesty is further pleased to mark her approval of the public spirit and energy of the two companies who have had successively the conduct of the undertaking, by offering the dignity of a baronetcy of the United Kingdom to Mr. Lampson . . . to whose resolute support of the project, in spite of all discouragements, it was in a great measure owing that it was not at one time abandoned in despair.¹⁹

Accordingly, on November 16, 1866, the honor was formally bestowed on him and he became thereafter Sir Curtis Lampson. The same issue of the London newspaper that carried the item quoted above devoted a full page to pictures of "The Newly-Created Baronets and Knights Engaged in Laying the Atlantic Telegraph Cable."²⁰ There were four knights, one of them being the Captain of the *Great Eastern*, which was used in the laying of the cable; and two baronets, one of whom was Curtis Lampson. Five of the six worthies were so thoroughly bearded that their features were effectively hidden; the single exception was Sir Curtis, who was clean shaven. His picture was made from a photograph but it is so poorly engraved that it does not tell us much.²¹

One of Sir Curtis's fellow directors in the Atlantic Cable Company was George Peabody, the public-spirited citizen of Massa-

chusetts who gave money with such princely munificence to the founding of museums and other institutions at, among other places, Harvard, Yale, Salem, and Baltimore. When Sir Curtis met him does not appear, but they became very close friends, so much so that Peabody, who spent much of his mature life in London, never set up a household of his own there but lived a large part of the time in the London home of Sir Curtis;²² and the County History says that Peabody's death, in December, 1869, occurred at the Lampson house.²³ But there is another connection between the two men. One of Peabody's most interesting benefactions was a large sum to build and maintain what we should now call a low-income housing project for London workingmen. Sir Curtis was one of the trustees chosen by Peabody to administer the fund after his death. The project still operates and is known as the Peabody Dwellings.

How often Sir Curtis revisited the United States after he left it at the age of seventeen does not appear. The County History says that he made a "last" trip to his native country in 1857 and included a visit to New Haven.²⁴ In any case he did not lose interest in his birthplace. In 1867 or 1868²⁵ he gave \$8000 for the building of a new schoolhouse at New Haven Mills. It still stands—a roomy and substantial two-story wooden structure with high ceilings and tall windows—and continued to be used till about 1936. One reason why it was given up as a school is the opposite to the reason that led to the building of it. The old structure had been too small for the school population; the new one became in the twentieth century too big.²⁶ A noteworthy detail about Lampson's gift must be recorded. With the building, he presented to the school a library of almost a thousand volumes that he himself chose.²⁷ Inquiries made in New Haven point to the conclusion that these books have disappeared, but it is hard to believe that they have all perished; and it may be hoped that some of them may yet turn up. They could probably be identified, by an inscription or a bookplate. If we knew what these volumes were, we should have an excellent guide both to the donor's taste in books and to what he thought the younger generation ought to read.

The remaining pages of this paper chronicle a few of the happenings of Sir Curtis's later years but the main emphasis is on his personality. Until a few months ago it seemed inevitable that no light could be shed upon his traits of character except what could be inferred from the external events of his life—a few dates, facts, public activities, the dry bones of biography. Something can indeed be concluded even from these. Thus it is clear that he was a man of im-

mense energy, business acumen, and administrative ability, with a strong and Emersonian self-reliance. But what was he like in his family circle? How did he seem to his friends? What were his likes and dislikes? What was the essential man? Personal letters are an excellent touchstone to private character; but a diligent search failed to locate so much as a single letter, either in print or in manuscript, from his pen. Then in June of 1958 a new and valuable source presented itself. On a trip to New York one of Sir Curtis's great-grandsons, Jonathan Hawke Locker-Lampson, with extraordinary kindness, and at his own suggestion, brought from England all the family papers in his possession—a suitcase full of them.²⁸ They turned out to include a few legal documents, an incomplete but important genealogy, a fragmentary diary written by Sir Curtis's son-in-law, a diary, complete for one year, kept by his daughter Jane, some scrapbooks, and more than three hundred letters, twenty-one of them by Sir Curtis to the daughter, and almost a hundred letters written to her by various hands shortly after her father's death. The greater part of the rest of this article is taken from these family papers.

But first a sketch of Sir Curtis by his son-in-law, Frederick Locker, must be quoted. It occurs in Locker's autobiography and is the best (perhaps the only) *printed* account of him as he appeared to the members of his family circle.

I am told that as a youth he was wise beyond his years and intelligent in advance of his experience; that he was confided in for counsel by people old enough to be his father. He has foresight, judgment, a clear apprehension of men and affairs, a strong will and a sweet temper, and his success in life may be attributed to his own and sole exertions. . . . He is a simple unassuming person, but no one takes a liberty with him, and though disappointments have come, I never heard him complain. Sir Curtis is cheerfulest than I. . . . One afternoon Sir Curtis arrived [at his country place] by his usual train from London, was cheery at dinner, afterwards played whist, and was especially keen over the game. He has wonderful spirits, and when he won the ultimate rubber he could no longer contain himself; he sprang to his feet and shouted for joy, more like seventeen than seventy-one; then he said, gravely enough, "Now I'll tell you all a piece of news—MY BULL'S DEAD!" [Sir Curtis bred short-horn cattle and set great store by this bull, which he had refused to sell, and which was valued at £5000]. . . . Sir Curtis is now an old man, but still one of his chief characteristics is a manly cheerfulness, and with the manliness there is something tender . . . you see it in his countenance, in the delicate curves of his mouth, in the grave but frank and affectionate firmness of his eyes. He is . . . still an excellent shot, and still very handsome. He reminds me of Lord Herbert of Lee. . . . He has the same frank and thoroughbred manner. I knew Lord Herbert, and like

to think that he was as loyal, just, and upright a gentleman as Sir Curtis Lampson.²⁹

It will be noted that this sketch gives a hint or two of what Sir Curtis looked like—a subject on which a little additional light may be found. Printed descriptions of him are mere snippets. Thus a news story in *The Rutland Herald* of March 19, 1885, quoted from *The Springfield Republican*, calls him "a fine-looking man"; and an obituary in *The Burlington Free Press* of March 19, 1885, reprinted the next day in *The Middlebury Register*, says: "At the age of sixty-five he was a thin, tall man with a smooth-shaven face and gray hair. His personal appearance was rather commanding. . . ." (Here the adjective "thin" must mean only that he carried no excess weight; he was not slender.) But the best evidence is what may be gathered from an unusually distinct unpublished photograph, one of three in the possession of the Rowfant Club of Cleveland. Undated, but evidently rather late, it shows Sir Curtis almost full length, though seated. From it we may conclude that he had a powerful frame, large hands, and a fine head well furnished with hair. The clean-shaven face is strong, with a firm mouth, a rather large nose, steady level eyes, and an air of natural force and dignity.

The Lampson household was a large one: Sir Curtis and his wife, three sons (George Curtis, Henry, and Norman George), and one daughter (Hannah Jane, called Janie),³⁰ her husband Frederick Locker and their children (Godfrey, Dorothy, and a pair of twins, Oliver and Maud), and sometimes two boys who were grandsons of Tennyson and of Locker (sons, that is, by a first marriage, of Locker's daughter Eleanor to Tennyson's son Lionel). In a more literal sense also the family circle was a wide one, well distributed over the map of England. Sometimes the family, or a part of it, was at the London house, sometimes at a seashore house in Norfolk (named New Haven Court, in honor of New Haven, Vermont), sometimes in the Scottish Highlands where Sir Curtis owned a deer forest to which he repaired whenever he could to hunt and to fish for salmon, sometimes near the Tennysons on the Isle of Wight (he and Tennyson hit it off remarkably well), and sometimes at Rowfant, the Lampson estate in northern Sussex thirty-two miles south of London. This last was the chief center of the family. Sir Curtis's grandson Oliver, and others, have left pleasant accounts of Rowfant. It was at that time an estate of two or three hundred acres with a fine old many-roomed, many-fireplaced stone house built in Elizabethan days. The family

life that went on there can easily be imagined, for this was the secure and gracious time of Victoria; but we do not have to depend on imagination. There are accounts of it in print (in the Locker autobiography alluded to above and from the pen of the grandson Oliver Locker-Lampson);³¹ and the Jonathan Locker-Lampson papers, all believed to be unpublished, give us much that is new and revealing.

Among these papers, one of the most interesting items is the diary kept by Sir Curtis's daughter Jane. It is drawn upon here at some length—partly because it is in itself an engaging picture of a well-circumstanced Victorian home, partly because Sir Curtis often figures in it directly, and chiefly because, in recording with a vivid immediacy the day-to-day doings of the family group of which he was the head, the diarist tells us much by implication about the man himself. The diary covers the year 1864, when Jane was eighteen and when her father, to be made a baronet two years later, was immersed in the mounting climax of the Hudson's Bay struggle and in the final strenuous effort to lay the Atlantic Cable. Dashed off so rapidly that it is almost illegible,³² Jane's diary is an uninhibited record of her diversions, her serious occupations, her reading, her opinions, and her impressions of people and things—set down in a prevailing mood of gay spirits and spiced with touches of humor.

Of diversions she had a great variety. At parties or with her brothers and friends at home she helped to stage tableaux; she danced the quadrille, the waltz, and the Roger de Coverly; or played whist and bezique, or billiards, or blind man's buff, or forfeits, or twenty-questions, or something called "earth, air, and water"—and croquet. "We are really getting quite dissipated in the way of croquet," she writes on July 1. She attends the theater, sometimes with her father. She goes horseback riding, always properly accompanied. The entry for April 12, written in a breathless burst without benefit of punctuation, goes thus: "Normie [her brother Norman] & I rode & were joined by Capt. Harrison the impudent wretch however he made himself very agreeable tho' I call it rather cheeky to ride with us upon so short an acquaintance still I met him at the Tennants & the Wildes & he knows the Hinmans so it makes it respectable. . . ." This episode, we may suppose, occurred on Rotten Row, the fashionable resort of beaux, belles, and fine horses.³³ In this year of 1864 Jane is presented at Court, and in her diary there is much ado about her Court dress and about learning to curtsy. Of the ceremony itself on May 3 she says, "It was a most unsatisfactory business it was so quickly over. . . ." She goes shopping pretty frequently but says

she doesn't enjoy it because the male clerks have tousled hair and mouths blackened from sucking their pencils. She goes calling with her mother and leaves cards here and there. She is fond of walking. On June 5 she, her father, and a visiting American cousin she calls Willie went for a stroll in the Rowfant woods and "heard a nightingale very romantic";³⁴ but they were not in a poetic mood. "Papa's head was full of pheasants . . . Willie was . . . thinking that his cousin was . . . 'a little fast' & said cousin had the usual mixture floating about her brain." On another occasion she and a friend named Emily "had a charming tramp thro a . . . field where a Taurus was grazing but he evidently thought we were not worth running after tho' he condescended to wink at us." She is normally but not excessively interested in young men. They come and go in her pages. For example, Charlie Hampden "dreamt that I was playing Beethoven to him the darling." Later, to reward him, she did play Beethoven to him. Of her motives in playing croquet she writes that it is "a horrid waste of time but when a fellah is hard up & thinks he is going to be an old maid he must do it for purposes of 'husbandry.'"

But Jane, even at the age of eighteen, is not entirely frivolous. Among household accomplishments she learns knitting—the hard way (on July 8 she "finished Mr. Hoare's slippers & [had] the felicity of finding one is much *larger* than the other.") She goes to church rather faithfully (one Sunday she is the only member of the household to go, and she sits alone in the family pew, looking, she says, "like an owl in an ivy bush.") She quotes a remark of her father's to the effect that the local rector read the prayers so fast that he "gobbled" (was her father remembering Vermont turkeys of his boyhood?) She takes lessons in French, Italian, and German. She studies piano and singing, including choral singing ("I toss about on the waves and storms of the sopranos.") She attends public lectures. She visits the British Museum. She conducts a little school for five youngsters, of whom three were apparently the children of one of the household servants, and two were from a shepherd's family. By no means the least of her serious occupations, she does a good deal of reading. Indeed, it was, at least with respect to herself and her father, a reading family, much of the reading being done aloud. It does not appear that novels were thus treated, though Jane records several that she has read; but she and her father read to each other, often just the two of them, and the books thus shared were substantial food; Shakespeare, Tennyson, Longfellow, Boswell's *Johnson*, and Macaulay's essays were some of them.

Jane's father takes her to see the Peabody Dwellings, then under construction; and he shows her through the factory where the Atlantic Cable was being made. She tells how distressed her father was by the serious illness of a friend named Rigg and how he had recently sat up with the sick man till four o'clock in the morning. She chronicles some of her father's associations with famous people, among them Cyrus Field, George Peabody (many entries), Charles Francis Adams, and the Bishop of Minnesota. This particular Adams was, of course, Lincoln's gifted Minister to England during the Civil War. The name of the Bishop Jane does not give, but he was Henry B. Whipple, the first Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota, a prominent leader in championing the rights of the Indians, and an active worker for the Northern side in the Civil War. The Minnesota Historical Society has in its archives papers by and about him from one of which we learn that "he noted while in England late in 1864 [Jane tells of this visit] the partiality of Englishmen to the Southern cause and the notable work done for the Northern cause by Sir Curtis Miranda Lampson. . . ." ³⁵ This piece of information fits in with an entry in Jane's diary wherein she says that one day in their London home a young man of her acquaintance sang "The Union Forever"; and it also explains an entry of April 7: "Mama . . . very busy preparing the things for the 'American Sanitary Fair.'" These fairs, it is perhaps unnecessary to add, were large-scale organized efforts in American cities in the North to furnish bandages and other necessities for military hospitals during the War. ³⁶

So much for Jane's diary—a record, among much else, of a delightful father-daughter relationship. They were boon companions.

The New York Times of June 15, 1958, ran an article by Evan Jones about family letters. It begins with a quotation from Goethe: "We lay aside letters, never to read them again and at last destroy them . . . and so disappears the most beautiful, the most intimate, breath of life, irrecoverably for ourselves and for others." Jones follows this quotation by observing: "True as this is of letters in general, it is especially true of letters written by fathers to their children. . . ." Now Jane's father must have written her many letters. Most of them have disappeared; but among the papers that Jonathan Locker-Lampson brought over to New York is the packet of twenty-one letters, already mentioned, from Sir Curtis to his daughter. They fall between March 29, 1880, and October 13, 1884. Sir Curtis was by this time in his middle and late seventies. Jane was happily married and was bringing up her family of four. Their home was at Rowfant

with her parents. Not only do these letters show that the intimate and affectionate understanding between father and daughter was quite as strong as it had been twenty years earlier when Jane wrote her diary, but, trivial though some of the details may seem, they yield glimpses not to be found elsewhere into Sir Curtis's qualities, tastes, and interests.

One of the earliest of the letters, March 30, 1880, consists solely of a sheet of doggerel obviously written by Sir Curtis and called "The Lamb & the Lion, an ode dedicated to Miss Lucas by the Lion." As poetry it is pretty bad, but it is amusing—which is no doubt all its author intended it to be. Three other letters, in the spring of the same year, show us Sir Curtis in London writing to Jane on the Isle of Wight, whither she has taken her children for a vacation near the Tennyson family. The first one says he hopes to join her for a few days. This he does, and on his return he sends her a note of thanks that ends as follows: "I have enjoyed my week with you very much—it will be a long time before we have another such a talk—remember [me] kindly to the Tennysons and say how much obliged I am to them for having made my stay *with you* so pleasant

In haste
Your affect Dad CML"

In the last letter of this group of three he hopes "you & the chicks" will be home again soon. He says of a manuscript (poem?) that Jane has written and sent him: "It is not worthy of your pen although the thoughts are pretty. . . ." And he expresses his anxiety as to "who are to be the new ministers & I am anxious that Mr. Gladstone sh^d take up the right position."

From the letter of September 2, 1880: "I am going to a shorthorn sale."

From the letter of July 1, 1882, written at Rowfant to Jane at New Haven Court: "We are . . . enjoying this fine weather & the hay making greatly. . . ."

In the letter of June 29, 1883, he says he is sending by Frederick Locker "a box containing 8 bottles of the finest Claret," and he gives precise instructions for Jane to pass on to a servant about how to keep them and open them. He sends his love to Godfrey, Dorothy, and the twins.

In the letter of July 31, 1883, written in the Scottish Highlands to Jane at Rowfant, he encloses some seeds he has gathered of wild

lupine. "Give them to Gardener as I think they will . . . look well in the border by the river. Tell Mother that I send . . . tomorrow morning a fine small salmon [for] her, the only fish caught today. . . . I sh^d have had more sport had I remained at Home & fished for trout with Godfrey." Then, pondering upon this absent grandson, he adds:

"The aged Grandsire smiles the hours away
Pleased by the charms of innocence at play—
Delighted with each artless burst of joy
Forgets his age & acts again the boy."

Jane evidently thought these lines were by Goldsmith for in his next letter he writes, "Am surprised you credit Goldsmith with my poetry it is original."

In an undated letter from London to Jane at New Haven Court her father writes: "While Mother is with you catching shrimps I hope to go to Scotland for salmon & if I catch a whale will send it to you."

A letter of August 21, 1884, from Scotland to Jane at Rowfant says: "I killed a fine Royal [stag] yesterday at 190 yards." This, observe, was exactly thirty-one days before Sir Curtis's seventy-ninth birthday.

In the last letter, sent from Scotland to Jane at Rowfant on October 13, 1884, less than six months before his death, he says he is sending her two small haunches of venison and one large one; and he adds, "I long to get home again."

The last honor paid to Sir Curtis in his life-time was membership in the Athenaeum Club of London; and it should be noted that he was chosen without ballot. By the Club's by-laws the membership committee was permitted to add to the rolls, on rare occasions, without the formality of election, the names of men who had rendered outstanding service to their country. Sir Curtis was chosen on that basis.

Before his death it was understood between him and Jane, that Rowfant and New Haven Court would be bequeathed to her. At his death this was done, and the Lockers, at Sir Curtis's own wish, added his surname to their own.⁸⁷ Thus Jane's branch of the family has borne, ever since, the name Locker-Lampson.

Sir Curtis died on March 12, 1885, within six months of the completion of his eightieth year. He had been in vigorous health till five days before his death.

Jane kept, as has been noted, ninety-six letters written to her (a few of them to her husband) on the occasion of her father's death, and they are among the family papers now in the hands of his great-grandson Jonathan. They come from every rank of English society: the aristocracy, the neighbors in London, country neighbors at Rowfant and New Haven Court, old business associates, the clergy, famous writers—and two of them from the United States. A few extracts are here given. Allowance must of course be made for the fact that letters of sympathy following someone's death are certain to be partial. Yet when all due allowance has been made, these are remarkable letters. Hardly any of them are mere notes of condolence, written from a sense of duty. The feeling is clearly sincere and deep, and they help us to answer the question of what kind of man Sir Curtis was.

From a brother of Lady Charlotte Bruce, Locker's first wife: "Sir Curtis was always to me the embodiment of upright strength of mind and body."

From Matthew Arnold's daughter Eleanor: "I shall never forget him, or how good he was to me, and I did *love* him. . . ." (Arnold's wife wrote also, in her name and her husband's.)

From Hallam Tennyson, the poet's elder son, who became the second Lord Tennyson: "Sir Curtis is a great public and private loss—and my father and myself were particularly fond of him. . . ." He sends "our warm sympathy and love."

From Tennyson himself (to Jane's husband): "I am very grieved at your sad news. You know I have always admired and loved Sir Curtis. Please tell Janie how much I sympathize with her."

From a Sussex neighbor: "The poor will have lost a friend in him indeed."

From a business associate: "I remember Sir Curtis Lampson since 1847, and always thought him an excellent man of business with strictest probity."

From another business friend: ". . . Your dear father, my kind and excellent friend for so many years! He was one of the very first customers of the old firm of Barnetts . . . when I went there in 1834. Our friendship therefore lasted for fifty years!"

From a Rowfant neighbor: "I cannot walk anywhere without being reminded of him."

From Bishop Whipple of Minnesota: "I loved him as one of my own kin. . . ."

To Jane's husband from Robert Winthrop of Boston:⁸⁸ "I had seen

the announcement of the death of Sir Curtis with great sorrow. I had known him as the special friend of George Peabody, & as a valued friend of my own. He was everything that you say—'a most lovable person, with a noble uprightness of character.' He always seemed so strong & in such full enjoyment of life. . . ."

Like every other son of Adam, Sir Curtis Lampson must have had shortcomings and defects of character, but the surviving sources of information simply do not record them; and the writer of this paper has chosen not to supply them by sheer conjecture. If the picture of Sir Curtis that emerges from the foregoing pages is incomplete and perhaps a little out of balance, it is, none the less, quite enough to show that he was, in his public services and in his private character, an extraordinary and admirable man, an honor to the country of his adoption, to his native land, and to that corner of it that give him birth—the State of Vermont, where his memory deserves to be kept green.

He never lost his attachment to America, and to Vermont in particular. There was, to recapitulate, his lifelong friendship with George Peabody. There was his association with Cyrus Field, Charles Francis Adams, and Bishop Whipple. There was his active support of the North in the Civil War years. There was the contact he maintained with his American relatives, his hospitality to such of them as visited him, and the substantial help he gave to some of them when they stood in need of it.³⁹ There was the calling of his seaside house New Haven Court after the name of his native town. And there was the schoolhouse he gave to that town. Nor have his descendants failed to keep alive an interest in their trans-Atlantic rootage; one of Sir Curtis's great-grandsons, a brother of Jonathan, bears the name Stephen Reginald Vermont Locker-Lampson.⁴⁰

NOTES

¹ For the years of Lampson's life before 1866 when he was created a baronet, I have in most instances used his name without the title. I can throw no light on the rather surprising middle name. It sometimes occurs as a surname, but no evidence appears of a connection between the Lampsons and any family of Mirandas. Lampson seems not to have found the name embarrassing; late in his life he had a yacht called the *Miranda*—though the name of the vessel may have been taken from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

² *The Dictionary of National Biography* in its article on Sir Curtis wrongly gives the mother's birthplace as Louisborough, Massachusetts. Burke's *Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage* (London, 1881) shows it as Lainsborough (i.e., Lanesboro); and this is borne out by data in the New Haven town records, to which access was permitted by the Town Clerk, Miss Grace Merrill, who also has given generous aid in the interpretation of the records.

³ Primary sources on the Lampson genealogy are few: (1) In 1881 there was printed in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a fourteen-page booklet by J. W. Wright entitled *Family History of Sir Curtis M. Lampson, and Wife, Lady Jane Walter Lampson, of London, England*. Through the kindness of Miss Clara Follette, Librarian of the Vermont Historical Society, I was able to find, in the possession of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, a copy of this rare item. It traces the ancestry of Curtis's wife through several generations, and it lists, with birth dates, Sir Curtis's children and some of his grandchildren; but it has nothing on his forebears farther back than his father. (2) Among family papers belonging to Sir Curtis's great-grandson, Jonathan Hawke Locker-Lampson, to whom, as will appear, I am deeply indebted, are three genealogical sheets by unknown compilers. One of these sheets, typewritten and untitled, gives no hint as to when it was compiled; nor does it give any dates of birth and death except for Curtis's father. Another, in longhand, is called "Record of Lampson Family, American Branches." The only indication of a date for its compiling is to be found in the latest death date it includes, 1897. It records, however, many dates of birth and death; and its roll of the brothers and sisters of Curtis may be supposed complete. There is also a listing of Curtis's nephews and nieces, eighteen of them. These two sheets are not always accurate; for example, in the first the date of William's death is 1821, while the other shows 1827. The third of the sheets bears only indirectly on Curtis. It lists four brothers of the wife of Curtis's brother Miles and twenty-one of their children, together with fifteen grandchildren. For some of the names on the three sheets addresses are given, and these show that at the time when the lists were made the family connection was widely distributed: one branch in Canada and others in Vermont, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Texas. (3) If Burke's *Peerage* be considered a primary source, valuable data might be expected there; but although it names Curtis's brothers and his own children, the only ancestors shown are Curtis's father, his mother, and his mother's father. It may be noted that the volumes of *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 1847 and following, contain various references to Lamsons, Lampsons, and Lambsons. The variations in spelling are not necessarily significant; and it is possible that the New Haven Lampsons were descended from the William who came to Massachusetts from England in 1637 and was apparently the first Lampson to come to America.

⁴ H. P. Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont* (Syracuse, N. Y., 1886), Chapter XXVII, 522-555. A footnote to the first page of this chapter reads, "Prepared for this work, substantially, by the late Edward S. Dana, of New Haven"; and a footnote to page 540 states that Dana died on February 24, 1880, when he had "nearly finished" the writing of the chapter. Dana's account of New Haven and its citizens may be given considerable weight, not only because he was himself a citizen of the town (though not a native of it) but also because he was a man with broad experience, wide reading, and a highly trained mind (see page 540). Not born till 1834, he probably did not know Curtis Lampson; but he married a New Haven girl whose father, Calvin Squier, was born in New Haven and lived there till his death in 1880. It is very probable, therefore, that some of the data given by Dana (page 540) was derived orally from Squier who would certainly have firsthand knowledge of the Lampsons. It should be added that Dana drew upon printed sources, too, especially Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Addison County, Vt.* (1881-1882). Known to him also were no doubt the "Annals of New Haven" in Abbey Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (1867), I, 168-173; and F. W. Beers, *Atlas of Addison County* (1871). Where inconsistencies or inaccuracies are found in the published sources, it seems well to consider Dana's account the most reliable; and I have used it frequently in this article.

⁵ A clover mill was an ingenious machine, run by water power, for separating the seed from the dirt, stems, and seedheads before the hay was fed to the livestock. Readers of the Vermont Historical Society's *News and Notes* will remember the query about clover mills in the issue of March 1958 (p. 58), and the two answers in the issue of April 1958 (p. 65). See also the article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* under "Seed," subhead "Seed trade, Cleaning." An entry in the Town Records of New Haven (V, 434) concerns William Lampson's clover mill, and indicates that William and a neighbor named Cyrus Curtis were the inventors of the mill and had applied for a patent on it. The entry declares that Cyrus Curtis, for the privilege of cleaning his own clover in Lampson's machine, yields all his own "right, title, interest or demand" in it and that Lampson is free to take out in his name exclusively the patent "that I and the s^d Lampson have sent to Congress for."

⁶ The earliest Congregational church, dating from 1797, was at New Haven Mills; another, also Congregational, was organized shortly thereafter at New Haven village; and the two were merged in 1800. See Child's *Gazetteer* (182), and the County History (551). The roll of members in the Town Clerk's office presumably includes the combined membership.

⁷ According to County History (553) the Universalists in New Haven had a pastor in 1803, but the Society went out of existence (date unspecified) "long ago." For other references to the local Universalists see the County History (528 and 551), and Hemenway, *Historical Gazetteer* (1, 69). The County History also states (527) that there was an Episcopal church in the town just before 1800, that "at an early day" there was a Baptist church "which flourished for some years," and that ("it is said") a short-lived Methodist society was organized early in the nineteenth century (552). It is not likely that the church affiliation, if any, of the Lampsons can ever be determined.

⁸ The Reverend Nathan Perkins, *A Narrative of a Tour through the State of Vermont from April 27 to June 12, 1789* (Woodstock, Vermont, 1920), 24. Not content with the words quoted, he added that Allen was "one of y^e wickedest men y^t ever walked this guilty globe. I stopped and looked at his grave with a pious horror." He was distressed to conclude that a quarter of the inhabitants of the State were "deists and proper heathen" (19 and 26), and he "felt most severely to find y^e Deists flocking after me" (29-30), feeling evidently that they came to scoff and not to pray. Among the places where the Reverend Mr. Perkins preached was New Haven, of which he complained that there were "no comfortable victuals" and "nothing but brook water to drink." (p. 16)

⁹ Matt B. Jones, *Vermont in the Making, 1750-1777* (Harvard University Press, 1939), 304.

¹⁰ See a later page of this paper for Lampson's gift of money for the construction of a new schoolhouse at New Haven.

¹¹ *County History*, 545. For the weight to be given to this quotation see Note 4.

¹² The article on Lampson in the *Dictionary of American Biography* states that he clerked in a general store in his native town for "several years" and then "went to New York for further experience as a merchant and gradually worked into the exporting business." The article says nothing whatever about his having gone to Canada and learned the fur trade there and nothing to indicate that his business in New York was in furs. Since this is an extraordinary omission, and since the article contains three or four demonstrable errors of fact, the account is open to much doubt. It is, however, likely enough that during the brief years of his American apprenticeship to the fur business New York was his chief base of experience in marketing. He was married in New York, but it is impossible to say how often he was there and for what periods of time. The obituary of Lampson in *The Burlington Free Press* of March 19, 1885, quoted the next day in

The Middlebury Register, states that his first cargo of furs sailed from Boston. This may be correct but I have found no confirmation of it.

¹³ The booklet on Lampson genealogy referred to in Footnote 3 devotes nine of its fourteen pages to the lineage of Jane Sibley and her collateral kin, tracing the family back to an ancestor who settled in Sudbury, Massachusetts, in 1635. In the letters preserved among the family papers belonging to her great-grandson are occasional allusions to her, but they are fewer than one would expect and most of them are not of a kind to afford much insight. One of them, however, is more specific. It occurs in a letter from the pen of William Lampson (son of Curtis's brother Miles), a banker of Le Roy, New York. It is dated November 25, 1891, and after a reference to the death of Sir Curtis's wife "in April last," it adds, "She was very kind to me when I was in England, & one of the great objects I always had in view, when I thought of going to London, was to see her once more. She was a very good woman, kind, considerate, & hospitable." But her son-in-law, Frederick Locker, found her hard to get along with though he was the kindest of men, with a rare gift for understanding and liking almost every kind of person. We are given no light on the cause or causes of this lack of harmony. She is a shadowy and indistinct figure. She lived till 1890, five years after the death of her husband.

¹⁴ Douglas MacKay, *The Honourable Company, A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Indianapolis and New York, [1936]), 276.

¹⁵ Charles B. Reed, *The Masters of the Wilderness, A Survey of the Hudson's Bay Company* (The Chicago Historical Society, 1909), 170.

¹⁶ The chief administrative officers of the Company were two: the Governor and the Deputy Governor. The early Governors—Prince Rupert, the Duke of York (later James II), the Duke of Marlborough—were, however, nominal or honorary officers only, and the business of the Company was conducted by the Deputy Governors. This state of things did not last, but the authority of the Deputy Governors remained great. Lampson held the office from 1863 to 1871. (MacKay, on p. 337 of the work cited in Note 14, lists all of the Deputy Governors with their tenures.)

¹⁷ For brief treatments of the terms of the transfer arrangements see *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1957), XIV, 274; and, published by the Company itself, *Hudson's Bay Company, A Brief History* (London, 1934), 35-37. For a more detailed account, see MacKay, *The Honourable Company*, Chapter XVII.

¹⁸ This detail and some of the other data in the paragraph are taken from p. 10 of the (London) *Times* of March 13, 1885, the day after Sir Curtis's death.

¹⁹ Quoted in *The Illustrated London News*, December 8, 1866, XLVIII, 558.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 545.

²¹ For other pictures of Sir Curtis, see a later page of this article.

²² Phebe A. Hanaford, *The Life of George Peabody* (Boston, 1870), 222.

²³ Page 545.

²⁴ Page 545.

²⁵ Beers, *Atlas of Addison County* (21) gives the date as December 25, 1867. Child's *Gazetteer* (172) and the County History (545) give 1868. Since the date given by Beers is specific as to month and day, whereas the other two sources are not, it is perhaps more likely to be correct.

²⁶ The County History (527) offers statistics on New Haven school children: in 1803, 339; in 1828, 629; "upward of five hundred for a period of thirty years [thereafter], since which the number has yearly lessened"; in 1886, 260. If these figures are correct the school population of the town in 1867 would be somewhat less than 500; but there were several school districts and it is not clear how many of the children were assigned to the school newly provided by Lampson.

²⁷ County History (545), Child *Gazetteer*, (172). Lampson was fond of books and had a bookplate for his library. A later page of this paper gives a little evidence of what kinds of books he liked and read.

²⁸ Permission was given also for the use of this material in an article by the present writer recently published in the *Harvard Library Bulletin* (the last installment appeared in the Autumn issue, 1959), under the title "That Delightful Man, A Study of Frederick Locker." It contains some matter germane to the present paper—such as a description of Rowfant, a rather detailed account of the family life, and some glimpses of the generous hospitality practiced at Rowfant.

The writer wishes also to record his gratitude for courteous aid given by two other great-grandchildren of Sir Curtis (grandchildren of Frederick and Jane Locker-Lampson): Mrs. Jane Madden and Miss Betty Locker-Lampson.

²⁹ Frederick Locker-Lampson, *My Confidences* (London, 1896), 385-387.

³⁰ The four children were born in the following order: George Curtis in 1833, Henry in 1835, Hannah Jane in 1846, Norman George in 1850. All of the children married, and all except Henry left issue. Their families still continue, and a number of their descendants have attained distinction in public life and in other activities. On Sir Curtis's death in 1885, George Curtis succeeded to the title, becoming the second baronet. He in turn was succeeded in 1899 by the third baronet, whose heir is his cousin the first Baron Killearn, Miles Wedderburn Lampson, a descendant of Sir Curtis's third son, Norman George. Jane's four children also married and all of them left descendants. Her elder son, Godfrey Lampson Tennyson Locker-Lampson (1875-1946), became a member of Parliament and filled important posts in the Foreign Office. The younger son, Oliver Stillingfleet Locker-Lampson (1880-1954) held the rank of Commander in the Royal Navy and, like his brother, became a member of Parliament.

³¹ He published three articles bearing upon the life at Rowfant: "Frederick Locker-Lampson, with Some Unpublished Sketches and Poems," *Scribner's Magazine*, LXIX (1921); "Recollections of Frederick Locker-Lampson," *Cornhill Magazine*, n.s. L (1921); and "Kate Greenaway, Friend of Children," *Century Magazine*, LXXV (1907). Kate Greenaway's visits to Rowfant were so frequent that she became almost a member of the family group. She designed bookplates for Jane, her husband, and each of the children; and she made an appealing group sketch of the four youngsters.

³² For the decipherment of Jane's diary, and for much other invaluable aid, I am greatly indebted to my friend and former student Mrs. Edward L. Mach.

³³ In "Rotten Row," a set of light verses in his *London Lyrics*, Jane's future husband was to write:

And when I ride in Rotten Row
I wonder why they call it so.

³⁴ Rowfant is good nightingale territory. An item in the *New York Times* for September 8, 1957, says that residents of Nightingale Lane, Crawley (the post-office for Rowfant), had petitioned the town fathers "to take action against nightingales, which were keeping them awake with their nocturnal singing."

³⁵ From data on Whipple in *Guide to the Personal Papers in the Manuscript Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Grace Lee Nute and Gertrude W. Ackermann, compilers (The Minnesota Historical Society, 1935), 77-78.

³⁶ Among the family papers belonging to Jonathan Locker-Lampson is a printed broadside of 1864 advertising a Sanitary Fair to be held at Pittsburgh.

³⁷ Oliver Locker-Lampson's article in *Cornhill Magazine* (see Note 31), 66.

³⁸ Robert Winthrop (1809-1894) was, as no proper Bostonian needs to be reminded, a descendant of Governor John Winthrop, and a member of the Massa-

chusetts legislature, a Representative in Congress, 2 United States Senator, and for thirty years President of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

³⁹ For example, in 1847 when his brother William was threatened with bankruptcy, Curtis advanced for him the sum of 3000 pounds. This is recorded in a legal document among the family papers.

⁴⁰ The picture of Sir Curtis Lampson on the cover and the sketch of Rowfant shown as the frontispiece are used by permission of the Rowfant Club. The likeness of Sir Curtis is from the photograph referred to on page 9 above.

