

LETTERS OF THOMAS LANGTON



THOMAS LANGTON

BORN, OCTOBER 10, 1770, AT KIRKHAM

DIED, MAY 4, 1838,

AT BLYTHE, STURGEON LAKE, ONTARIO, CANADA

LETTERS OF
THOMAS LANGTON
TO
MRS. THOMAS HORNBY

1815 to 1818

WITH PORTRAITS AND A NOTICE OF
HIS LIFE

*PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION BY
HIS GRANDCHILDREN*

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PREFACE

THIS fragment of the correspondence of our grandfather with his only sister Cicely, Mrs. Thomas Hornby (of Kirkham), was in the possession of his daughter, our "Aunt Anne," possibly given to her by her cousin and lifelong friend, Margaret Hornby (the "Aunt Margaret" of our young days). It was thought by his grandchildren that the letters are too interesting as a family record to be lost, a fate which the condition of the paper and ink made too probable.

Some of the incidents mentioned are already embodied in our aunt's book, *The **Story of our Family***, a copy of which all surviving relations and many old friends possess.

These letters have the special interest of showing the kind of man that our grandfather was. He was the youngest of his family, and deservedly a favourite both with the elders and with those of his own generation. Two traits in his character come into prominence by these letters – his sympathy with young people and interest in their characters and pursuits, and his desire for information on all new subjects that came before him. He had the instincts of a traveller and explorer, and it was these which induced him at the age of 67 to join his son John in Canada, braving the difficulties and dangers of an Atlantic voyage in a sailing ship, and the hardships both on the land journey and during the winter spent in the log-house built for him and his family by his son. E. J. P.

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S. Z. LANGTON,

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H. PESTALOZZI,

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LANGTON LETTERS

MEMOIR OF THOMAS LANGTON

OUR grandfather, Thomas Langton, was the youngest son of Thomas Langton of Ash Hall, Kirkham, County Lancaster, where he was born in the year 1770. His father was largely interested in the importation of Russian produce into the Fylde country,¹ which led to our grandfather being sent to Riga at the age of seventeen, with the promise of a partnership in the house of Messrs. Thorley, Morrison & Co. on his attaining his majority. His generous disposition was shown by his consenting to take a smaller share in the business than that promised him, in order to promote the interests of one of the clerks, who he thought had earned promotion. He remained in Russia for fifteen years, only once visiting England during that time. At the beginning of the present century, and when the unsettled state of Europe made the Continent a very unsafe residence for Englishmen, he relinquished his partnership and returned to England.

On the 6th of April 1802 he married Ellen, daughter of the Rev. William Curre, vicar of Clapham, Yorkshire, taking up his residence at Farfield, Addingham, in the same county, where his two elder children were born. After the short peace of Amiens, when England was threatened by France he raised a company of volunteers at Addinham, of which he was captain-commandant.

Farfield not being in the market, he soon after purchased Blythe Hall, near Ormskirk, in Lancashire, where he lived for the next ten years, farming his own lands, and devoting himself to the education of his children. He was a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for County Lancaster, but at no time took any very active part in county business.

In August 1815 he took his family to the Continent, where he remained for five years, the first of which was spent at Yverdon in Switzerland. The following winter was passed at Montpellier, those of 1817 and 1819 in Rome, and the summer of 1818 at Naples and Sorrento. Frankfort was the headquarters of the party during the years 1819-20, and their foreign experiences were closed by a winter in Paris-1820-21.

During the years spent at Blythe and on the Continent, our grandfather, though taking no active share in the management, still kept up his interest in business, which was carried on by his partners with varying success, until the commercial crisis of 1826, when the heavy reverses he sustained by the fall in prices decided him to wind-up his affairs by private arrangement, his estate realising 19s. 6d. in the £. Our father was enabled afterwards, partly through some inheritance of our mother's, to pay the creditors in full with interest. The letter announcing this was the first to reach Canada after our grandfather had been laid to rest.

In 1826 our grandfather removed to Bootle, near Liverpool. During the struggles which ended in the abolition of the monopoly of the East India Company, he acted as secretary to the committee of Liverpool merchants who took up the cause of free trade, and the results of his labours and evidence on the subject of the East India Company's accounts, which he carefully analysed, appear in the Blue Books of that time. He was for some time president of the Royal Institution in Liverpool. The Manchester Commercial Bank employed him for a time in the management of a branch which they established in Liverpool, but it was not a success.

One disappointment succeeding another, and his younger son John having already settled in Canada, our grandfather, who had always taken the keenest interest in the emigration question, finally decided to join him there with his family. They left Liverpool on the 24th of May 1837, arriving in New York on the 18th of June, and reaching the new settlement of Blythe, on Sturgeon Lake, on the 15th of August. His health had, however, been gradually failing, and during the winter grew rapidly worse, so that he was entirely confined to the house.

On the morning of the 3rd of May 1838 he had been listening with interest to the account of the voyage of the first steamer, to cross the Atlantic, and then lay down on his bed and slept. It was almost immediately after rising from that last sleep on earth that he sank finally to rest. On the 27th of May his remains, attended by all the young settlers, were carried by water, under falling snow, to the Church Hill at Fenalon Falls, near Lindsay, Ontario.

H. C. L.

¹ The staple trade of the Fylde country was the importation of flax, which, when dressed, was given out to the country-people to be spun and afterwards manufactured. The making of sail-cloth appears to have commenced in Lancashire during the long wars with France, from which country and the Netherlands our supplies had hitherto mainly been drawn. Other articles of Russian produce were also imported, chiefly into Wyre waters, where there was a large wharf at Wardlees, and where as many as thirty master blacksmiths have frequently been known to sit down to dinner, come to buy iron when a ship was discharging. The business must have been an important one, although its headquarters were in a small county town.