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ENOCH LOUIS LOWE

Governor of Maryland, 1851-'54

BY

CALEB CLARKE MAGRUDER



ENOCH LOUIS LOWE.

GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND, 1851-'54.

From an oil painting in the State House, Annapolis, Maryland.

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ENOCH Louis Lowe was the only child of Bradley Samuel Adams Lowe and Adelaide Bellumeau de la Vincendiere. His birth occurred in the manor-house of The Hermitage, an estate of one thousand acres lying on the Monocacy River, Frederick County, Maryland, August 10th, 1820.

He descended paternally from the Lowes of Derbyshire, England, his immigrant ancestor having settled in Talbot County, Maryland, in 1675, and maternally from an aristocratic Parisian family, of strong royalist sentiments, who fled from France to escape the horrors of the Reign of Terror.

Bradley Samuel Adams Lowe was graduated from the Military Academy at West Point in 1814, with the rank of Third Lieutenant, at the age of eighteen. He saw service during the last year of the War with Great Britain, 1815, and served on the Florida frontier under General Jackson during the Seminole War of 1817-18.

Young Lowe's early schooling was under the guidance of the Jesuit Fathers at St. John's School, Frederick City. Impressed by his premature mental brilliancy the faculty induced his parents to send him abroad to complete his studies.

At thirteen he entered Clongowas Wood College, Ireland, where his instruction was thorough and his advance rapid. Among his friends and schoolmates was Francis Meagher, the Irish Patriot, whose influence was apparent in Lowe's after life. Three years later he matriculated at Stonyhurst, England. Here he was the intimate of Francis Mahony—"Father Prout" of Literature—and Miles Gerald Kean, the novelist.

Stonyhurst was proud of her pupil, and he was admittedly her most promising student. Graduated first in his class in 1839, he merited medals for philosophy and distinction for poetry. A year followed in travel through Continental Europe, and upon his return home he gave like time to the American states and territories.

Early in his collegiate years he evinced a decided talent and strong desire for the study of jurisprudence. Prepared for his profession by Judge John A. Lynch, of Frederick, he was admitted to the bar of his native county in 1842.

Forming a partnership with John W. Baughman, the firm quickly commanded a remunerative clientile, Lowe gaining an almost instantaneous popularity and an enviable prominence.

The political arena proved attractive and he was elected a member of the Legislature in 1845. Governors William Grason, Francis Thomas and Thomas George Pratt used their best efforts against repudiation by Maryland for interest owed on moneys raised for

internal improvements. The fruit of their efforts was realized during the administration of Governor Philip Francis Thomas. This executive thereupon determined to secure a new Constitution.

Maryland was living under the provisions of an instrument completed in convention November 11th, 1776, and never submitted to the people. On twelve occasions it had been changed and it was thought too heavy with amendments, and too antiquated for the requirements of a progressive state. Lowe ardently advocated the policy of Governor Philip Francis Thomas, and by his fluency of language and strength of argument won many friends to his cause and to himself.

With the growth of sentiment for a new Constitution there arose a pronounced demand to make its ablest champion the chief executive of the state. Responding to this demand the Democratic Convention of 1850 nominated him for Governor.

The Whigs were still strong in Maryland, and Lowe had a popular opponent in William B. Clark, of Washington County. Occasionally the gubernatorial candidates met in joint debate, and the contest grew in interest and excitement.

At this time Lowe was described as "strikingly handsome, with classic features of the most perfect Grecian type, a forehead that spoke command and a chin that meant determination; lips free enough to denote feeling, firm enough to prevent its riotous overflow; eyes that sparkled with keen intelligence." The maturity of his thought was in such striking contrast with his youthful appearance that after a most convincing argument he was once asked: "How old are you?" To which he quickly replied: "A wife and four children." It was a happy evasion for he was not then of the constitutional age—thirty—to serve as governor. The election was held October 2nd, 1850. A count of the votes showed that Baltimore had elected a Whig Mayor by 777, but that the city had gone for Lowe by 2,759, giving him the election in the state at large by 1,497.

The result meant the drafting of a new Constitution for Maryland. The convention assembled in Annapolis, November 4th, 1850, and adjourned May 13th, 1851. The proposed Constitution was submitted to the people at a special election held June 4th, 1851, and adopted by a substantial majority.

Lowe took the oath of office as Governor of Maryland on January 6th, 1851. The most important events of his administration were the adoption of the Constitution of 1851; the completion of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to the Ohio River, its originally surveyed terminus; and a reduction of the state tax rate from 25 cents to 15 cents on the \$100. All fear of repudiation having passed, the state rapidly recovered from its financial depression and Lowe boldly advocated this decrease in taxation.

In 1851 Louis Kussuth, the great Hungarian Patriot, was extended the honors of the state of Maryland, and most hospitably enter-

tained by Governor Lowe in the Governor's mansion. Kussuth thought Catholics generally antagonistic to his aspirations for Hungary, and requested Lowe, who was a Catholic, to interest himself in the formation of a society favorable to the Magyars. Assuring Kussuth of his interest in his people, Lowe kindly but firmly declined to act, saying it was contrary to official precedents.

After the opening of Chinese ports following the visit of Commodore Perry to China in 1853, the United States established important commercial relations with the Orient. Internal strife was serving the selfish ends of several European nations so that with a view of protecting American interests President Pierce offered the mission to Lowe but he declined it.

Governor Lowe surrendered his office to Thomas Watkins Ligon on January 11th, 1854, but retained the confidence and regard of the whole state. His official life saw neither sacrifice of lofty political principle nor any taint upon his personal honor and integrity. He was a delegate to the national democratic convention which nominated Buchanan and Breckenridge in 1856. When Buchanan became President Lowe was a second time offered the Ministry to China which he again declined. In 1860 he was an elector and active in the interest of Breckenridge and Lane. This was his last public service in Maryland.

The pessimist had prophesied a war between the states for nearly a score of years. After Chief Justice Taney's decision in the Dred Scott case, 1857, the optimist was forced to this belief. Lowe had dreaded the possible conflict but had always been friendly to the South.

On the 1st of February, 1861, a meeting of prominent citizens was held in Baltimore to sound the sentiment of the state toward the Confederacy. It was overwhelmingly favorable—in the impassioned language of Lowe—"Her heart beat for the South." On the 19th of April following there was bloodshed in the streets of Baltimore and the fratricidal strife was on.

As an evidence of his loyalty and faith in the Confederacy Lowe sold his patrimony, put the proceeds in Confederate bonds and went South. Here his voice and his pen, his heart and his mind, was dedicated to her cause. Impressed with his zeal and devotion, the Legislature of Virginia entertained him as a guest of honor and voted him the privilege of a seat on the floor of its assembly hall.

Living sometime at Milledgeville, Georgia, sometime at Richmond, he was bitter in his denunciations of Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks who called the Maryland Legislature to assemble in Frederick, instead of the capital of the state. Knowing the sentiment of the state he was confident that Maryland would have seceded from the Union had Virginia and North Carolina quickly followed the lead of South Carolina and the cotton states.

With the downfall of the Confederacy Lowe returned to Balti-

more wasted in fortune and crushed in spirit. Feeling that he could not take the oath required before resuming the practice of his profession he remained but six months and in May of 1866 went to live in Brooklyn, New York, carrying letters from his wife's uncle, Herschel Johnson, Governor of Georgia. It was a strange exile he made for himself leaving the land of his devotion, the state of his birth and youthful precedence, to build a new home among strangers and old enemies.

Joining Richard F. Clarke and W. H. Morgan, the firm became counsel for the Erie Railroad and James Fiske, the financier, who considered Lowe the ablest lawyer he had ever known. Apart from his professional standing he was little known in Brooklyn, preferring the pleasures of family privacy to public prominence.

Influential friends sought to arouse his interest in national affairs. He campaigned for Hancock and English, but office could not tempt him; his political heart was dead. His views on popular education were published in the *Catholic World* and *American Educational Monthly*.

In June of 1869 he was the orator before the Washington and Jefferson Society of the University of Virginia. The same year he delivered two brilliant lectures on "The Historical Destiny of Women and the Influence of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages." These were almost his sole public appearances. Being advised to submit to a surgical operation, he was removed to St. Mary's Hospital, Brooklyn, where he died at 2 A. M. on the morning of August 23rd, 1892, in the seventy-third year of his age.

His remains were buried from St. John's Church, Frederick City, on August 25th following, interment being made by the side of his mother in the Catholic cemetery on East Third Street.

One who knew him, writing editorially in the *Baltimore Sun* of August 24th, said:

"He was, perhaps, the greatest stump speaker of his day. * * * Few young men ever had a more brilliant career in this state than Enoch Louis Lowe. * * * He had the advantage of collegiate training abroad, with which was combined a pleasing address, winning speech and clear-cut, States' rights, patriotic principles."

James McSherry, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland, writing to a member of his family, paid this tribute to Lowe's memory:

"The superb attainments of your father as a forensic and popular orator were perhaps never equalled by any one who ever lived in this country."

When James Ryder Randall, himself a Marylander, wandering in the Southland wrote his great battle hymn he recognized Lowe as a kindred spirit and grouped his name with the state's warriors on many fields:

Come! 'tis the red dawn of the day,
Maryland, My Maryland!
Come! with thy panoplied array,
Maryland, My Maryland!
With Ringgold's spirit for the fray,
With Watson's blood at Monterey,
With fearless *Lowe* and dashing May,
Maryland, My Maryland!

A study of the life of Enoch Louis Lowe reveals youthful promise, splendid achievement in early manhood and a later crisis which "froze the genial current of his soul." His was a peculiarly consistent devotion to political principle and sectional sentiment. These were the tests of his loyalty and the dominating traits of a life and character of the loftiest honor. The weakling voice of personal ambition was never heard by him, but rectitude and sentiment claimed him as their very own.

In 1844 Lowe married Esther Winder Polk, of Somerset County, Maryland, granddaughter of William Polk, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland, and a kinsman of James Knox Polk, eleventh President of the United States. Eleven children were born of this union, of whom the widow and seven children survived:—Adelaide Victoire, married E. Austin Jenkins; Anna Maria, *religieuse* of the Sacred Heart, died 1889; Enoch Louis, died at the age of three; Paul Emelius; Vivian Polk; Victoire Vincendiere, married John M. Stubbs; Enoch Louis; Alexander Stuart, died at the age of three; Esther Polk; Mary Gorter, married Francis de Sales Jenkins; James Polk, died at the age of three.

Governor Lowe was the son of Bradley Samuel Adams Lowe and Adelaide Bellumeau de la Vincendiere, grandson of Lloyd Magruder Lowe and Rebecca MacCubbin, great-grandson of Captain Michael Lowe and Anne Magruder, great-great-grandson of Enoch Magruder and Meek Wade, great-great-great-grandson of James Magruder and Barbara Coombs, great-great-great-great-grandson of Samuel Magruder and Sarah Beall and great-great-great-great-great-grandson of Alexander Magruder, Maryland immigrant.

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