

CHAPTER

3

The Family of the Founders

THE history of Limestone College actually opens in England.

In the town of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, on the tenth of May, 1787, a son was born to John Curtis and his wife Juliana, the third daughter of the Reverend Francis Pinkney, rector of Neath, in Glamorganshire. The baby was named Thomas, for an uncle on the father's side. There were several other children born to this couple, one of whom died in infancy, and another, a daughter, died at the age of sixteen. Thomas lived to marry, cross the Atlantic Ocean with four children of his own, three sons and a daughter, and to establish a school for the higher education of women in the United States of America.

Little is known of John Curtis, the father of Thomas. An incomplete family chart mailed from England years ago, with almost illegible brief notations by the names of some of the listed members, gives the information that John was a "cabinet maker and upholsterer, much respected, good education."

Fortunately there is more biographical data of the mother, culled, in the main, from the printed memorial sketch written by her son, Thomas Curtis, and preserved for us among his "Early English Papers."

Juliana Pinkney, "a lady of good attainments," according to the notation on the Curtis family tree referred to above, was born on April 1, 1749, in Wales, and spent her girlhood there in the home of her minister father, rector of Neath, in Glamorganshire, in southeast Wales, on the river of the same name flowing into the Bristol Channel. "Her mother was a Miss Hutton," so Thomas

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Curtis says, "whose family had long been respectably settled in that neighborhood."

The Welsh are a poetic people and noted for their love of music their everyday speech is filled with sweet musical cadences. Their values even to this day, according to the British Information Service Travel Brochure published in the spring of 1969 to allure tourists to attend the official induction ceremony of the Prince of Wales in Caernarvon, "tend to be spiritual rather than material . . . and the cheerfulness and amiability of the Welsh still engage the affections of the casual tourists."

Juliana's rector father had been born in England, not Wales, and "entertained, through his political connections, hopes of considerable preferment in the church."

Reared as she was in the home of a minister of the Established Church of England and educated in strict conformity to the Established Creed, Juliana Pinkney "always professed to have received her first convictions of divine truth in the Establishment," and in early life had been "impressed with the fear, and rejoiced in the grace of God." She saw many great religious changes during her life, and "was no inattentive observer of them." A humble Welsh curate of her father's gave her mind a "decided turn to what was then called Methodism, and she became, in the estimation of her family, a decided Methodist!" She herself described this

"...as the all important change from 'darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,' which Paul was commissioned to preach . . . She was at this time about seventeen years of age.

"Her father being early removed by death, and leaving a considerable family unprovided for, Juliana Pinkney was obliged to avail herself of her own exertions for her future maintenance; she was introduced by her father's connexions into several families of distinction, and finally settled as a housekeeper in the family of Sir Henry Peyton, of Hagbech, Norfolk. During this period of her life she saw much of the gay and fashionable world, and had occasionally the strongest temptation to quit the plain and thorny path she had chosen....

"Mention has been made of a curate of her father's: this gentleman, it would seem, invited the Rev. John Wesley to officiate for him during one of the visits of that great man into Wales. For the writer has heard his dear mother speak of

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endeavoring to avoid observation, as one of the hearers of Mr. Wesley, by placing herself under the pulpit, instead of going into the family pew. Shortly after her going out into the world, however, she appears to have become decidedly Calvinistic in her sentiments. . . .

"In 1783 she married Mr. John Curtis of Wisbech, and entered upon that station of usefulness as a tradesman's wife and the mother of a family, which she so long adored. Speaking first of her personal religion, the avowed basis of all her character during the forty-one years that followed, she upheld a uniform profession of its consolations; she was remarkable for contentment with Divine Providence . . . 'The Lord has been very good to me,' she said with the greatest emphasis shortly before her death.....

"As a wife, she was a helpmeet... She knew how to make the most of all means of earthly happiness . . . As a rule of conjugal duty she frequently quoted lines which she knew not to whom to assign, but she exemplified them:

"He ruled because she would obey, and she
In so obeying ruled as much as he."

The son quotes excerpts from his mother's letters to the family. In May 1815 she writes to another of her sons expressing confidence in the future of Thomas after he had entered the ministry:

"My mind has been and is so occupied about my dear Thomas's proceedings, and not only his preaching and talking about the truth, but acting upon it. I have not the least doubt but that it will be well with him, whatever dispensations he may have to pass through. The King, his master, under whose banner he has enlisted, never forsakes His soldiers, never sends them on a warfare in their own strength 'and (what no other king can promise) His soldiers shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved them. I could write sheets on this business.' "

In August 1817 the mother says that she was much comforted to see Thomas looking so well. "One of the nether-spring blessings he possesses is his mother's natural spirits, but my dear S -----, he drinks also into the upper springs."

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She comments on the last marriage in her family:

"Your brother J--- is now going to see his fair intended. I think he was never *so* in love before. The lady bears a very excellent character . . . You may be sure she is become very interesting to me. I hope she can talk! Ask your brother to introduce you to her if he can; he will have so little time, you must excuse him if he cannot."

The mother's letters, as her son says, abound in proofs of her desire to fill every relation in life with propriety. She must have enjoyed good conversation, since she hopes her prospective daughter-in-law "can talk!" Thomas could talk; note reference to on solemn questions" with Samuel Taylor Coleridge mentioned by Coleridge himself in a conversation between the two. Coleridge is remembered as one of the world's best conversationalists. It would seem that he found in Thomas Curtis a compatible partner in the fine art of the give and take of "good talk," even though Curtis did not achieve the enduring fame along that line that the Lake Poet did.

Juliana Curtis writes to Thomas:

"Oh! my beloved Thomas, I trust you will indeed experience daily what it is (should it become your case) to be 'as having nothing, yet possessing all things; as poor, yet making (as an instrument) many rich with durable riches!'"

Her son did just this. The presidency of the college that he later was used "as an instrument" to make many "rich with arable riches." Mrs. Curtis was undoubtedly the embodiment of the happy Christian graces with which her son was endowed and with he was able to adorn the "young ladies" placed in his thus "making many rich with durable riches."

These letters are remarkable mirrors of the character and person of a remarkable woman, reminding one of that other mother, Wesley, who also through her renowned sons made an imprint on the culture of South Carolina and Georgia.

The last letter of the series, written shortly before the death of writer in 1824, "breathes," as the son says, . a last blessing on of the children, which all of them feel they shared."

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One is convinced that Juliana Pinkney had in abundant measure the only panacea for all of life's ills, and was able to transmit this to at least one of her boys. To her son, "she was a living exposition of that memorable promise of Isaiah's prophecy, Chap. LXVI. 13, As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

Thomas Curtis no doubt inherited much of his personal charm from his mother, her "natural spirits," to use her own phrase, and her gaiety and vivacity, and her "remarkable contentment with Divine Providence." He was indebted to her also for his life-long reliance on the Word of God and direct communion with Him. When last seen, thirty-five years later, he was sitting in his cabin of the doomed ship on which he lost his life, reading his Bible.

Scant information is available of the life and personality of the father, John Curtis. At least two destructive family fires consumed much that would have been of value to an historian. An old record says that John Curtis had a "good education." Basil Manly, grandfather of John Matthews Manly of Chaucerian fame and close friend of Thomas Curtis after his arrival in the United States, records that in his early youth Thomas Curtis "showed intellectual vigor and a fondness for books which his father cultivated" to such an extent that the son was enabled to get an excellent education, the result of which is obvious in his amazing later accomplishments .

While still a comparatively young man, Thomas Curtis competed for a prize in creative writing, a prize that entitled the winner to a "presentation" at Cambridge University. He was successful in winning the award. In making arrangements for his matriculation, however, he found that he could not conscientiously sign the "39 Articles" of the Church of England contingent upon entrance to the University. The presentation was reluctantly turned down, eager as the young student must have been to study at the great institution of learning.

Thus early did Thomas Curtis reveal that remarkable strength of character and conviction that he continued to exhibit throughout the seventy-two years of his life. After declining the scholarship, he became an open and avowed "dissenter," and, later on, associated himself with a Baptist congregation, even as John Bunyan had done before him.

When he turned down the opportunity to study at Cambridge,

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the young Englishman settled himself to the task of educating himself in the various fields of learning. It is probable that by 1809 he was living in London and was selling books. On June 15, at the age of twenty-two, he was married to Miss Susan Reynoldson, "a lady of attractive endowments, and sweet and gentle temper," the daughter of John Reynoldson and his first wife. Her father was the pastor of a Baptist congregation in the outskirts of London. Mr. Reynoldson had been a brewer before entering the ministry, and an export and import merchant in mahogany trade ,with Russia, a partner in the firm of Audley, Reynoldson & Company.

On the death of his father-in-law, September 6, 1812, Curtis became pastor of the Baptist congregation on Lemon Street to which Reynoldson had been ministering, and continued to serve, this church for some twenty years. His residence in London brought him into close contact with many men of influence and prominence , some of whom were Sir Thomas N. Talfourd, Rev. Francis Cox, Rev. Andrew Fuller, Rev. John Foster, Rev. Adam , and Dr. John Mason Goode, as well as the philosopher-poet Taylor Coleridge and many other men of note.

Among other intellectual skills, this avid scholar gradually acquired a sound knowledge of the Greek and Roman classics in their original tongues. He was able also to read the Old Testament in Hebrew. Many years later in a hemisphere away, his grandson, Lowndes Walthour Curtis, while studying at the Princeton Theological Seminary had an annotated Greek testament of his grandfather's in his library, which, to his dismay, "someone, alas took, and failed to return.

Because he loved books, the young husband chose to support his family by engaging in the book-selling business, and from book-selling he went on to book-editing and book-publishing. The firm, in Paternoster Row, was known as "Gale, Curtis, and Fenner." of the early original works of Thomas Curtis were printed ds firm and carry an advertisement of the business establishment. Among the "Early English Papers" on file in the Limestone .college library is pamphlet "Number 132," bearing on the title page

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A
SECOND ODE
to
NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE,
Partly a Parody on That of Lord Byron.

Humani Nihil Alienum.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY T. BENSLEY,

Bolt Court, Fleet Street,

FOR, GALE, CURTIS, AND FENNER, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1815.

The back sheet of this booklet carries the following interesting
information:

"Just published by Gale, Curtis, and Fenner, price 6s in boards,

THE DESCENT OF LIBERTY

A MASK;

To which is prefixed

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF MASKS,

BY LEIGH HUNT.

"Aprite, O Muse, i chiusi fonti, ap rite,
Cominci omai da questo di giocondo
Piu che mai bello a rinovari il mondo. Celio Magno.

Also, by the same Author,

THE FEAST OF THE POETS,

With Notes and Other Pieces in Verse,

Crown 8vo, price 6s. boards.

"In this Feast of the Poets, Mr. Hunt certainly shews himself to be a Poet;— his mind expatiates with most unbounded freedom; and his sentiments are expressed with a boldness and energy, of which we have few examples. His Notes may be considered as lectures for the modern school of Poetry.' Mon.Rev.Sept.1814."

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The services of this same firm, according to E. K. Chambers in his biography of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "were being solicited in 1811 by Coleridge himself for the reissuing of the old numbers of *The Friend*, the literary and philosophical periodical which Reappeared intermittently during Coleridge's opium-ridden years.

"Some revival, of public interest in *The Friend* now once more led him [Coleridge] to contemplate a reissue of the old numbers, to be followed by a new series. He found publishers in the firm of John Gale and Thomas Curtis, apparently the successors of Henry Baldwin.... The idea of continuing *The Friend*, however, fell through, and the original series was reissued by itself in the course of the year [1812], with the imprint of Gale and Curtis."

By March 1817 this reissue having long been exhausted, Coleridge "desired a new edition,

". - - for which he contemplated a revised text. The firm about this time became, first Gale and Fenner, and then Rest Fenner. But in fact Thomas Curtis, although he had taken orders and nominally discontinued his partnership, was still active in the management of the business, while his brother, Samuel Curtis of Camberwell, was employed as its printer. The firm, however, was of no estimation in the publishing trade. A letter to Gale about *The Friend* was answered by a personal call from Curtis, with whom there was I talk on solemn questions.' According to Coleridge's own account, much as he appreciated the literary and social relations which he might have at Murray's, he valued still more highly the principles of Gale and Fenner, and preferred 'forming a connection with a religious house.' And with Gale and Fenner (and their silent partner, Curtis) he made terms, not only for the disposal of the remaining copies of the original *Friend* . . . but also for the revised edition and for the Sibylline *Leaves and Biographia Literaria*.... The firm were also to have the right to publish anything he might write thereafter . . . But before the end of September 1816 there were already signs of friction between the author and his publishers. Neither the Sermon nor the *Biographia* nor the revised *Friend* was yet to hand, and Gale & Fenner, growing suspicious, refused to give Coleridge

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credit for a copy of the old Friend which he wanted to obtain.... But although Coleridge was largely justified in his claim that, while ill health and its results had deranged his volition, they had left his intellectual faculties unaffected, it must be added that the capacity to shape a book is itself an intellectual, power, and one which he never acquired."

To try to establish the elusive truth of the relationship between Coleridge and Curtis would be futile; the tragic breakdown of the brilliant Coleridge has been a subject for the shedding of much ink, and his personal and professional relationships aired in private and in public, with readers continuing to believe what they wished to believe in spite of the evidence for or against.

In 1817 Thomas Curtis became one of the editors and proprietors of the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, published by the firm of Gale and Fenner. When the firm launched the ambitious plan for the publication, Coleridge, so Chambers says,

". . . bad taken a leading part in the preliminary discussions, and bad drafted a prospectus in conjunction with Stoddart. The scheme commended itself to him, because it was not to be primarily on dictionary lines, but in accordance with what he regarded as a philosophic arrangement of subject matter, starting from the Pure Sciences, then taking the Applied Sciences, and lastly the Fine Arts as an intermediate link between the two. The dictionary element was to form a supplement . . . In less than two months after the engagement had been made dissension had broken out between editor and publishers. Gale and Fenner ... would not give it [an advance of £300] unless he [Coleridge] consented to leave Highgate and live at Camberwell, where no doubt they thought that Samuel Curtis could keep him up to the mark with copy. This Coleridge absolutely, and wisely, refused to do. He offered a compromise by which he would attend at Paternoster Row two days in the week. But this, after some delay, was not accepted, and evidently he withdrew from the editorship, and would do no more than supply the *Treatise on Method*. Thomas Curtis, whom he had regarded 'not as a mere tradesman, but as a convinced Christian,' now became 'a wretch who came to me with every holy name in his mouth, merely to suck my brains . . . The differences seem rather too extensive . . .

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But in any case, it is likely enough that the *Treatise*' as issued with the *Encyclopaedia*, may contain some fragments of Coleridge's writing,"

Thomas Curtis held no resentment against Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The 1849 issue of the catalogue of the Curtis school carried on the cover page the following quotations:

"We daily forget how soon and how much the boys and girls now at school will, become the bad or good men and women of the next generation."— Adapted from Dr. Watts.

"The true perfection of discipline in a school, is the *maximum* of watchfulness, with the *minimum* of punishment."— Coleridge.

M. C. Barnett in his *History of the Broad River Baptist Association* 12 quotes Dr. Basil Manly as saying:

"I have been informed that Coleridge, with all his excellencies as a scholar, was unable to write a prospectus of this work. He did write something, it is true; but Dr. Curtis, after examining it, with all the impartiality he could, was unable to make any sense out of it. He submitted it to Dr. Olinthus Gregory, and he could make nothing of it. This put Dr. Curtis under the necessity of writing two days and nights, almost without intermission, in preparing the prospectus for the work, which was hourly expected by the public."

A letter from Coleridge to Curtis is included in Ernest Hartley Coleridge's edition of the *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* in which the plan of the *Encyclopaedia* is aired. Coleridge, it would seem in the final analysis, was not equal to the grueling work involved in the editing of the *Encyclopaedia*. By 1819 Rest Fenner had become sole owner of the publishing firm and the firm went bankrupt. Moreover, the printing bill for *The Friend* had not been paid, and Samuel Curtis, whose business was at least nominally independent of the firm, clapped a lien upon the issue."

Writing to Mr. Thomas Allsop on October 8, 1822, Coleridge, Counts four grasping and griping sorrows in his past life," the second of which was the bankruptcy of Rest Fenner, the publisher, by which, unfortunately, Coleridge was a heavy loser financially.

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The Curtises were no longer connected with the firm when this occurred.

Dr. Manly, from whom much of the biographical information of Curtis comes, says that the skill and the erudition of Thomas Curtis established his reputation as a scholar to such a degree that when a revision of the King James version of the Bible was being planned, the British and Foreign Bible Society employed him as one of the scholars to assist in the revision and to correct a new edition for the Oxford Press. Curtis pointed out so many errors of the press in the new editions, "no fewer than 10,000," from the King James version, that the authorities became "alarmed for the results" and "withdrew their sanction to further proceedings," and "thanking him for his courtesy and ability abandoned their design. The manuscript is still among his papers," and no doubt it was at the time Dr. Manly was writing."

Another publishing firm, having undertaken to publish the *London Encyclopaedia* at the extraordinary rate of a volume a month, brought his valuable services to their aid as associate editor at a flattering rate of compensation, and realized large profits from the work, to which the best writers of the time in almost all fields, contributed."

Thomas Curtis had established himself so firmly in London, both personally and professionally as an ecclesiastic and as a scholar, that it is a matter of some surprise that he, at the age of forty-six, should have decided to leave England and emigrate to America. His friend Manly thinks that the loss of his wife by death, and his eagerness "to set forward his children," and prompted perhaps by "a love of our American institutions," caused him to set sail for the United States in 1833, with his sons, Thomas and William and Henry, and his daughter, Julia. His first-born, John, had died prior to this date.

The voyage ended in shipwreck on the Coast of New Brunswick "in circumstances of extreme peril." The Captain, it seems, lost his self-possession. An account sent to the present writer by the Princeton Theological Seminary librarian, taken from the *Baptist Biography*," and written by an unidentified hand, describes the situation thus:

"Only the extraordinary calm and resolution of Thomas Curtis in taking command of the crew with the Captain's permission, at the risk of his life from their uplifted axes, in the spirit-room, saved the lives of the passengers." Curtis and his children were

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saved, partly by swimming ashore. They proceeded to Bangor, Maine, where the family had friends.

In time, Thomas Curtis became pastor of the Baptist Church in the town, and also edited the *Bangor Journal*, a weekly literary paper. Always ardent for missions, he played an important rôle also in establishing in February, 1835, the Lumber Missionary Society which supplied religious services to the lumbermen of the Penobscot Valley during the months of the year when they were isolated from family and friends by their work.

In 1837, the Curtis family moved on to Augusta, Maine. Curtis attracted new friends easily, including such outstanding men as Dr. Leonard Woods, Jr., President of Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, and judge Prentiss Mellen, Chief justice of the Maine Supreme Court. Bowdoin College conferred upon Thomas Curtis the degree of Doctor of Divinity on September 4, 1839 and Baptist congregations in Boston and other cities of New England called upon him for sermons.

Even while in Maine, Dr. Curtis seriously considered the advisability of opening an institution of higher learning. In a letter to Charles S. Davies, an attorney of Portland and a member of the governing board of Bowdoin College, dated from Augusta, September 12, 1839, Curtis asks Davies for his advice, stating that some friends in Augusta had suggested that he, Curtis, should open a . superior Young Gentleman's School . . . that Maine is capable of sustaining an Establishment of this kind on high terms . . . I should add that I have a second son a good Classics scholar on the old English Grammar School plan who would assist me and take everything elemental, in great part.

Davies answers at length from Portland on September 22 stating that he should be much pleased to see such a school established. He also called to the attention of his friend certain obstacles that would inevitably be encountered in such an undertaking. The institution did not materialize.

It is William Curtis, later the co-founder of Limestone College, to whom Thomas Curtis refers in the above letter as a "good Classics scholar." This son had been born in Camberwell, England, on April 23, 1817, the third child of Thomas and Susan Reynoldson Curtis. He was therefore about sixteen years of age when the motherless family sailed for the New World in 1833. The oldest boy had died before the family left England.

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The seventeen-year-old boy was in Boston, "a city of strangers," in 1834, having "come on from St. John's," to continue his education, and had secured board in the family of the Reverend William Collier. After he had been in Boston some six weeks, his father paid him a visit and became acquainted while there with the editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, which was then in preparation, and was invited to write for that work the biographical, sketch of Richard Watson, English chemist and Christian apologist, and also to contribute "several articles" to the *American Baptist Magazine*.

The editor of this encyclopaedia records of this visit:

"We were greatly impressed with the richness of his [Curtis's] conversational powers, and the vast extent of his information. In one point—the revision of the various editions of the English Bible—probably he excelled most men living. But this sort of knowledge appeared to him afterwards, of far less value than it did then; and he soon gave himself to more useful studies ."

There is ample evidence that the influence of Curtis, as always, was used constructively while he was in New England in resolving religious differences, by being "firmly orthodox (to his personal convictions) but not irritating, litigious, or ungentlemanly; . . . anxious that the Church should put first of all her graces," to use the words that he himself wrote to the Reverend Leonard Woods, Sr., whose son was the prospective president of Bowdoin College'. Finding the Maine climate in winter too rigorous for his health, Dr. Curtis, after some five or six years' residence, moved southward to Georgia, upon the information and advice of his friend, Reverend Holmes Tupper of Savannah, and settled in Macon, serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Christ in that town in 1840 and 1841 at a salary of \$1200. He arrived in Macon in time to preach a New Year's sermon, 1840, on "Sentiments Appropriate for the New Year." On July 4 he addressed the city-wide Sunday School assembly. On November 23, the Macon Telegraph carried the announcement, as an advertisement, that Dr. Curtis was beginning a series of lectures in the Baptist Church on "The Poetry of the Bible." The tickets were on sale: "entire series, \$4; a family, \$6; single admission, 75 cents." On January 5, 1841, a letter addressed to the *Telegraph* requested that the Curtis lectures be

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published. These same lectures were delivered in Charleston later. A syllabus of the course is on file in the Limestone library.

After fifteen months in Macon, Dr. Curtis began a brief pastorate at Penfield, Georgia, the original seat of Mercer University, where he served both as pastor of the church and as chaplain of the college. It was during Dr. Curtis's residence at Penfield that the President of the United States died after only one month in office. President William Henry Harrison had caught cold during his inauguration, held outside in a howling storm, and died a month later of pneumonia. On file in the Limestone College Library is a copy of the memorial sermon that Dr. Curtis preached on Sunday, April 18, 1841, in the chapel, of Mercer University, following the death of the President of his adopted country. His subject was "God's Sovereignty in the More Important Deaths of Men." His text was from Deuteronomy XXXII.39., and the sermon was printed by request of the President of the University and the Faculty. The college chaplain closed his timely discourse thus:

"God's Sovereignty, properly acknowledged, is everywhere a perpetual, momentary preparation for living well. God's Sovereignty, habitually felt and sanctified, is a perpetual, momentary preparation for dying well.

"And now, Final, Arbiter of Life and Death, only Governor of all our affairs—Prosper Thou the Public Counsels in this Peculiar Emergency! Assist our weakness to cast itself on Thine Almighty Strength, our ignorance on Thy Teaching, our sinfulness on Thy Mercy—that, pardoned and purified by Thee, as a people, righteousness may defend and exalt us; and a remote posterity find that even the bereavement of this trying season has been overruled by Thy matchless Wisdom for our good, for our unfeigned humiliation, our everlasting prosperity, and Thy glory! Amen ."

In that same year, 1841, Dr. Curtis was called to the Wentworth Street Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, where he became widely popular, not only with his own members but with the leading citizens of the city and throughout the Carolina Low Country. His son William was also now a minister, serving the First Baptist Church in Columbia.

When William Curtis decided to enter the ministry, he completed his training, after his marriage, at the Old Presbyterian Theological

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Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, and was ordained there in 1844, and began serving the First Baptist Church of Columbia. Much later, in 1857, the South Carolina College, now the University of South Carolina, conferred upon him the honorary doctorate of LLD.

The wife of William Curtis was from Walthourville, Georgia. She played a most active part in the affairs of the Limestone Springs Female High School from its very beginning to its war-torn end.

Two years before Thomas Curtis moved his family from Maine, to Georgia upon the advice of his friend Dr. Tupper of Savannah, he had come down from Maine to participate in a service in the, famous old Midway Church near Savannah. According to the written history of this church,

"The custom of formally consecrating their children unto the Lord seems to have been rather common with the early Baptists of Liberty County, many of whom had gone out from the Midway Church, and still showing its influence upon them . . . So the Honorable A. O. Bacon, United States Senator, being presented by his grandmother, was thus publicly dedicated to the Lord at Walthourville, 1837; my informer being Rev. Thomas Sumner Winn (Presbyterian) who was present and witnessed the same. The prayer of consecration was offered by Reverend Thomas Curtis."

Among the more prominent members of the church were . the Andrew Walthours, who had emigrated from Holland with a colony that had settled at Ebenezer, near Savannah, and later moved on to Liberty County. The history of the Midway Church as written by James Stacy records that on December 16, 1827, the three children of George and Mary Walthour, Amanda, Ann Mary, and Andrew, were baptized. When Amanda grew to young ladyhood she attended Northampton, now Smith College. Later on, she became Mrs. William Curtis.

The twenty-year-old William Curtis was probably with his father on the occasion of the consecration of the child who became a distinguished United States Senator, and it may be that he met the young and vivacious Amanda Walthour at that time. The two were married on November 15, 1843, and her name is listed in the first Limestone catalogue as "Mrs. E[liza]. A[manda]. Curtis

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Superintendent of Domestic and Social Duties." The last catalogue bears the same. The next two chapters of this history indicate the deep affection in which Mrs. Curtis was held by the students of the school.

Thomas Curtis continued to live in Charleston until 1845, and fitted easily into the culture of the city.

Among the members of his congregation at the Wentworth Street Church was the family of a young nine-year-old girl who later was graduated from the Limestone Springs Female High School, Anna Maria Halsey. A letter written by her some sixty years later gives a pen-picture of the minister:

"At nine years of age children are not able to recall sermons, but they can, impressions. I recollect the Rev. Dr. Curtis as an English gentleman of dignity and refinement, the black silk gown which he always wore in the pulpit giving to me as a child a most formidable impression. He was in manner a trifle austere and stem, a manner which much belied him, who was of a trustful, gentle, and generous nature, as many of his pupils . . . could testify . . . He occupied a high position in the Literary circles of Charleston, to which he was entitled by his superior attainments ... He never, however, neglected his pastoral duties, as I can testify by being often called into a room on many of his visits while he prayed for the household, and afterwards saying many pleasant things to the children. During his Pastorate he at the urgent request of Madame Dupre, who was Principal of the largest and most select school for young ladies in Charleston at that time (location Laurens and East Bay Street, since burned down) consented to take charge of the higher classes in Literature ."

This privilege of lecturing in Madame Dupre's School must have encouraged the teacher-preacher in the interest he had long held in the education of women, and strengthened his determination to open a school of his own at the earliest opportunity. His knowledge of the sectional differences within the State of South Carolina—the Up-country "Unionists" versus the Low-country "Nullifiers"—may have prompted him to believe, as Manly suggests, that a school educating young women from all over the State would do much to aid in unifying the social and political factions that were in growing evidence.

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Consequently, Thomas Curtis was much pleased when the handsome and spacious hotel property at the Limestone Springs Up-country summer resort presented to him and his son the opportunity desired. The deal was closed with the Bank of the State of South Carolina, and on November 6, 1845, sixty-seven young women were enrolled in the Limestone Springs Female High School.

