

Classic Poetry Series

**Frederick Locker-Lampson**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2012

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

# Frederick Locker-Lampson(1821-1895)

Frederick Locker-Lampson was an English man of letters, bibliophile and poet.

## <b>Overview</b>

He was born at Greenwich Hospital. His father, who was Civil Commissioner of the Hospital, was Edward Hawke Locker, youngest son of the Captain William Locker who gave Nelson the memorable advice "to lay a Frenchman close, and beat him." His mother, Eleanor Mary Elizabeth Boucher, was a daughter of the Revd. Jonathan Boucher, vicar of Epsom and friend of George Washington.

After a desultory education, Frederick Locker began life in a colonial broker's office. Soon he obtained a clerkship in Somerset House, whence he was transferred to Lord Haddington's private office at the Admiralty. Here he became deputy-reader and precis writer. In 1850 he married Lady Charlotte Bruce, daughter of the Lord Elgin who brought the famous marbles to England, and sister of Lady Augusta Stanley. After his marriage he left the Civil Service, in consequence of ill-health.

In 1857 he published *London Lyrics*, a slender volume of 90 pages, which, with subsequent extensions, constitutes his poetical legacy. *Lyra Elegantiarum* (1867), an anthology of light and familiar verse, and *Patchwork* (1879), a book of extracts, were his only other publications in his lifetime.

In 1872 Lady Charlotte Locker died. Two years later Locker married Miss Hannah Jane Lampson, the only daughter of Sir Curtis Miranda Lampson, Bart., of Rowfant House, Sussex, and in 1885 he added his wife's surname to his own to form a new family surname, Locker-Lampson. He died at Rowfant on 30 May 1895 and is buried in Worth churchyard near Crawley, Sussex.

He had five children: Eleanor by his first wife, and Godfrey, Dorothy, Oliver and Maud by his second. Eleanor married first Lionel Tennyson, younger son of the poet <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/alfred-lord-tennyson/">Lord Tennyson</a>, and after his death married the writer and Liberal politician Augustine Birrell.

## <b>Literary and Bibliophilic Legacy</b>

Chronic ill-health debarred Locker from any active part in life, but it did not prevent his delighting a wide circle of friends by his gifts as a host and raconteur, and from accumulating many treasures as a connoisseur. He was acquainted with

practically all the major literary figures of the age, including Matthew Arnold, the Brownings, Carlyle, Dickens, George Eliot, Leigh Hunt, Ruskin, Tennyson, Thackeray and Trollope. He was also a mentor to the illustrator artists Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway.

He was a noted bibliophile and one of the foremost exponents of the "Cabinet" style of book collecting. He catalogued his own collection of rare books, first editions, prints and manuscripts in a volume named after his family home in Sussex, the Rowfant Library (1886). An Appendix compiled by his elder son, Godfrey, was published in 1900. The Rowfant Club, a Cleveland-based society of book collectors, is named after his home.

As a poet, Locker belongs to the choir who deal with the gay rather than the grave in verse, with the polished and witty rather than the lofty or emotional. His good taste kept him as far from the broadly comic on the one side as his kind heart saved him from the purely cynical on the other. To something of Prior, of Praed and of Hood he added qualities of his own which lent his work distinction in no wise diminished by his unwearied endeavour after directness and simplicity.

#### **Biographies**

A posthumous volume of his memoirs, entitled *My Confidences*, appeared in 1896. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) William James wrote of the 'amiable' personality shown in this book: "This is a complex, a tender, a submissive, and graceful state of mind. For myself, I should have no objection to calling it on the whole a religious state of mind, although I dare say that to many of you it may seem too listless and half-hearted to merit so good a name."

*Frederick Locker-Lampson: A Character Sketch*, which includes a selection of his letters, was composed and edited by his son-in-law, Augustine Birrell in 1920. This gives an interesting idea of his personality and literary connections as well as notes on his book collection.

# A Terrible Infant

I recollect a nurse call'd Ann,  
Who carried me about the grass,  
And one fine day a fine young man  
Came up, and kissed the pretty lass.  
She did not make the least objection!  
Thinks I, 'Aha!  
When I can talk I'll tell Mamma'  
- And that's my earliest recollection.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# A Word That Makes Us Linger

(Written in the visitor's book at Gopsall)  
KIND hostess mine, who raised the latch  
And welcomed me beneath your thatch,  
Who makes me here forget the pain,  
And all the pleasures of Cockaigne,  
Now, pen in hand, and pierced with woe,  
I write one word before I go --  
A word that dies upon my lips  
While thus you kiss your finger-tips.  
When Black-eyed Sue was rowed to land  
That word she cried, and waved her hand --  
Her lily hand!  
It seems absurd,  
But I can't write that dreadful word.

Frederick Locker-Lampson



# Loulou And Her Cat

GOOD pastry is vended  
In Cité Fadette;  
Maison Pons can make splendid  
Brioche and galette.  
M'sieu Pons is so fat that  
He's laid on the shelf;  
Madame had a Cat, that  
Was fat as herself.  
Long hair, soft as satin,  
A musical purr,  
'Gainst the window she'd flatten  
Her delicate fur.  
I drove Lou to see what  
Our neighbours were at,  
In rapture, cried she, 'What  
An exquisite cat!'  
'What whiskers! She's purring  
All over. Regale  
Our eyes, Puss, by stirring  
Thy feathery tail!  
'M'sieu Pons, will you sell her?'  
'Ma femme est sortie,  
Your offer I'll tell her;  
But will she?' says he.  
Yet Pons was persuaded  
To part with the prize:  
(Our bargain was aided,  
My Lou, by your eyes!)  
From his légitime save him, --  
My spouse I prefer,  
For I warrant his gave him  
Un mauvais quart d'heure.  
I am giving a pleasant  
Grimalkin to Lou,  
--Ah, Puss, what a present  
I'm giving to you!

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# My Mistress's Boots

THEY nearly strike me dumb,  
And I tremble when they come  
Pit-a-pat:  
This palpitation means  
That these Boots are Geraldine's --  
Think of that!  
Oh where did hunter win  
So delectable a skin  
For her feet?  
You lucky little kid,  
You perish'd, so you did,  
For my sweet!  
The faery stitching gleams  
On the sides, and in the seams,  
And it shows  
That the Pixies were the wags  
Who tipt these funny tags,  
And these toes.  
The simpletons who squeeze  
Their extremities to please  
Mandarins,  
Would positively flinch  
From venturing to pinch  
Geraldine's.  
What soles to charm an elf!  
Had Crusoe, sick of self,  
Chanced to view  
One printed near the tide,  
Oh how hard he would have tried  
For the two!  
For Gerry's debonair,  
And innocent and fair  
As a rose:  
She's an angel in a frock,  
With a fascinating cock  
To her nose.  
Cinderella's lefts and rights  
To Geraldine's were frights;  
And, I trow,



The damsel, deftly shod,  
Has dutifully trod  
Until now.  
Come, Gerry, since it suits  
Such a pretty Puss (in Boots)  
These to don,  
Set this dainty hand awhile  
On my shoulder, dear, and I'll  
Put them on.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# On An Old Muff

TIME has a magic wand!  
What is this meets my hand,  
Moth-eaten, moldy, and  
Covered with fluff?  
Faded, and stiff, and scant;  
Can it be? No, it can't--  
Yes, I declare, it's Aunt  
Prudence's muff!  
Years ago, twenty-three,  
Old Uncle Doubledee  
Gave it to Aunty P.  
Laughing and teasing:  
'Prue of the breezy curls,  
Whisper those solemn churls,  
What holds a pretty girl's  
Hand without squeezing?'  
Uncle was then a lad  
Gay, but, I grieve to add,  
Sinful, if smoking bad  
Baccy's a vice;  
Glossy was then this mink  
Muff, lined with pretty pink  
Satin, which maidens think  
'Awfully nice.'  
I seem to see again  
Aunt in her hood and train  
Glide, with a sweet disdain,  
Gravely to Meeting;  
Psalm-book, and kerchief new,  
Peeped from the Muff of Prue;  
Young men, and pious too,  
Giving her greeting.  
Sweetly her Sabbath sped  
Then; from this Muff, it's said,  
Tracts she distributed;  
Converts (till Monday!)  
Lured by the grace they lacked,  
Followed her. One, in fact,  
Asked for -- and got -- his tract

Twice of a Sunday!  
Love has a potent spell;  
Soon this bold ne'er-do-well,  
Aunt's too susceptible  
Heart undermining,  
Slipped, so the scandal runs,  
Notes in the pretty nun's  
Muff -- triple-cornered ones,  
Pink as its lining.  
Worse followed: soon the jade  
Fled (to oblige her blade!)  
Whilst her friends thought they'd  
Locked her up tightly,  
After such shocking games  
Aunt is of wedded dames  
Gayest, and now her name's  
Mrs. Golightly.  
In female conduct, flaw  
Sadder I never saw.  
Faith still I've in the law  
Of compensation.  
Once Uncle went astray,  
Smoked, joked, and swore away;  
Sworn by he's now, by a  
Large congregation.  
Changed is the Child of Sin;  
Now he's (he once was thin)  
Grave, with a double chin--  
Blessed be his fat form!  
Changed is the garb he wore,  
Preacher was never more  
Prized than is Uncle for  
Pulpit or platform.  
If all's as best befits  
Mortals of slender wits,  
Then beg this Muff and its  
Fair Owner pardon.  
All's for the best, indeed --  
Such is my simple creed;  
Still I must go and weed  
Hard in my garden.



# Our Photographs

She play'd me false, but that's not why  
I haven't quite forgiven Di,  
Although I've tried:  
This curl was hers, so brown, so bright,  
She gave it me one blissful night,  
And - more beside!  
In photo we were group'd together;  
She wore the darling hat and feather  
That I adore;  
In profile by her side I sat  
Reading my poetry - but that  
She'd heard before.

Why, after all, Di threw me over  
I never knew, and can't discover,  
Or even guess;  
May be Smith's lyrics she decided  
Were sweeter than the sweetest I did -  
I acquiesce.

A week before their wedding day,  
When Smith was call'd in haste away  
To join the Staff,  
Di gave to him, with tearful mien,  
Our only photograph. I've seen  
That photograph.

I've seen it in Smith's album-book!  
Just think! her hat - her tender look,  
Are now that brute's!  
Before she gave it, off she cut  
My body, head, and lyrics, but  
She was obliged, the little slut,  
To leave my Boots.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# Picadilly

PICCADILLY! Shops, palaces, bustle, and breeze,  
The whirring of wheels, and the murmur of trees;  
By night or by day, whether noisy or stilly,  
Whatever my mood is, I love Piccadilly.  
Wet nights, when the gas on the pavement is streaming,  
And young Love is watching, and old Love is dreaming,  
And Beauty is whirling to conquest, where shrilly  
Cremona makes nimble thy toes, Piccadilly!  
Bright days, when a stroll is my afternoon wont  
And I meet all the people I do know, or don't:  
Here is jolly old Brown, and his fair daughter Lillie --  
No wonder, young Pilgrim, you like Piccadilly!  
See yonder pair riding, how fondly they saunter,  
She smiles on her poet, whose heart's in a canter!  
Some envy her spouse, and some covet her filly,  
He envies them both, -- he's an ass, Piccadilly!  
Now were I such a bride, with a slave at my feet,  
I would choose me a house in my favourite street;  
Yes or no -- I would carry my point, willy-nilly:  
If 'no,' -- pick a quarrel; if 'yes' -- Piccadilly!  
From Primrose balcony, long ages ago,  
'Old Q.' sat at gaze, -- who now passes below?  
A frolicsome statesman, the Man of the Day,  
A laughing philosopher, gallant and gay;  
Never darling of fortune more manfully trod,  
Full of years, full of fame, and the world at his nod,  
Can the thought reach his heart, and then leave it more chilly --  
Old P. or old Q., -- 'I must quit Piccadilly?'  
Life is chequer'd; a patchwork of smiles and of frowns;  
We value its ups, let us muse on its downs;  
There's a side that is bright, it will then turn us t'other,  
One turn, if a good one, deserves yet another.  
These downs are delightful, these ups are not hilly, --  
Let us try one more turn ere we quit Piccadilly.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# Rhyme Of One

You sleep upon your mother's breast,  
Your race begun,  
A welcome, long a wished-for Guest,  
Whose age is One.

A Baby-Boy, you wonder why  
You cannot run;  
You try to talk - how hard you try! -  
You're only One.

Ere long you won't be such a dunce:  
You'll eat your bun,  
And fly your kite, like folk who once  
Were only One.

You'll rhyme and woo, and fight and joke,  
Perhaps you'll pun!  
Such feats are never done by folk  
Before they're One.

Some day, too, you may have your joy,  
And envy none;  
Yes, you, yourself, may own a Boy,  
Who isn't One.

He'll dance, and laugh, and crow; he'll do  
As you have done:  
(You crown a happy home, though you  
Are only One.)

But when he's grown shall you be here  
To share his fun,  
And talk of times when he (the Dear!)  
Was hardly One?

Dear Child, 'tis your poor lot to be  
My little Son;  
I'm glad, though I am old, you see, -  
While you are One.

Frederick Locker-Lampson



# Rotton Row

I hope I'm fond of much that's good,  
As well as much that's gay;  
I'd like the country if I could;  
I love the Park in May:  
And when I ride in Rotten Row,  
I wonder why they call'd it so.  
A lively scene on turf and road;  
The crowd is bravely drest:  
The Ladies' Mile has overflow'd,  
The chairs are in request:  
The nimble air, so soft, so clear,  
Can hardly stir a ringlet here.

I'll halt beneath those pleasant trees, -  
And drop my bridle-rein,  
And, quite alone, indulge at ease  
The philosophic vein:  
I'll moralise on all I see -  
Yes, it was all arranged for me!

Forsooth, and on a livelier spot  
The sunbeam never shines.  
Fair ladies here can talk and trot  
With statesmen and divines:  
Could I have chosen, I'd have been  
A Duke, a Beauty, or a Dean.

What grooms! What gallant gentlemen!  
What well-appointed hacks!  
What glory in their pace, and then  
What Beauty on their backs!  
My Pegasus would never flag  
If weighted as my Lady's nag.

But where is now the courtly troop  
That once rode laughing by?  
I miss the curls of Cantelupe,  
The laugh of Lady Di:  
They all could laugh from night to morn,

And Time has laugh'd them all to scorn.

I then could frolic in the van  
With dukes and dandy earls;  
Then I was thought a nice young man  
By rather nice young girls!  
I've half a mind to join Miss Browne,  
And try one canter up and down.

Ah, no - I'll linger here awhile,  
And dream of days of yore;  
For me bright eyes have lost the smile,  
The sunny smile they wore: -  
Perhaps they say, what I'll allow,  
That I'm not quite so handsome now.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# The Cuckoo

We heard it calling, clear and low,  
That tender April morn; we stood  
And listened in the quiet wood,  
We heard it, ay, long years ago.

It came, and with a strange, sweet cry,  
A friend, but from a far-off land;  
We stood and listened, hand in hand,  
And heart to heart, my Love and I.

In dreamland then we found our joy,  
And so it seemed as 'twere the Bird  
That Helen in old times had heard  
At noon beneath the oaks of Troy.

O time far off, and yet so near!  
It came to her in that hushed grove,  
It warbled while the wooing throve,  
It sang the song she loved to hear.

And now I hear its voice again,  
And still its message is of peace,  
It sings of love that will not cease -  
For me it never sings in vain.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# The Unrealised Ideal

My only Love is always near,  
In country or in town  
I see her twinkling feet, I hear  
The whisper of her gown.

She foots it ever fair and young,  
Her locks are tied in haste,  
And one is o'er her shoulder flung,  
And hangs below her waist.

She ran before me in the meads;  
And down this world-worn track  
She leads me on; but while she leads  
She never gazes back.

And yet her voice is in my dreams,  
To witch me more and more;  
That wooing voice! Ah me, it seems  
Less near me than of yore.

Lightly I sped when hope was high  
And youth beguiled the chase,--  
I follow, follow still: But I  
Shall never see her face.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# The Widow's Mite

A widow--she had only one!  
A puny and decrepit son;  
But, day and night,  
Though fretful oft, and weak and small,  
A loving child, he was her all--  
The Widow's Mite.

The Widow's Mite--ay, so sustained,  
She battled onward, nor complained,  
Though friends were fewer:  
And while she toiled for daily fare,  
A little crutch upon the stair  
Was music to her.

I saw her then,--and now I see  
That, though resigned and cheerful, she  
Has sorrowed much:  
She has, He gave it tenderly,  
Much faith; and carefully laid by,  
The little crutch.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

# To My Grandmother

(Suggested by a Picture by Mr. Romney) Under the elm a rustic seat  
Was merriest Susan's pet retreat  
To merry-make.

This Relative of mine  
Was she seventy-and-nine  
When she died?

By the canvas may be seen  
How she look'd at seventeen,  
As a Bride.

Beneath a summer tree  
Her maiden reverie  
Has a charm;  
Her ringlets are in taste;  
What an arm! and what a waist  
For an arm!

With her bridal-wreath, bouquet,  
Lace farthingale, and gay  
Falbala, -  
If Romney's touch be true,  
What a lucky dog were you,  
Grandpapa!

Her lips are sweet as love;  
They are parting! Do they move?  
Are they dumb?  
Her eyes are blue, and beam  
Beseechingly, and seem  
To say, 'Come!'

What funny fancy slips  
From atween these cherry lips?  
Whisper me,  
Fair Sorceress in paint,  
What canon says I mayn't  
Marry thee!

That good-for-nothing Time  
Has a confidence sublime!

When I first  
Saw this Lady, in my youth,  
Her winters had, forsooth,  
Done their worst.

Her locks, as white as snow,  
Once shamed the swarthy crow;  
By-and-by  
That fowl's avenging sprite  
Set his cruel foot for spite  
Near her eye.

Her rounded form was lean,  
And her silk was bombazine:  
Well I wot  
With her needles would she sit,  
And for hours would she knit, -  
Would she not?

Ah perishable clay!  
Her charms had dropt away  
One by one:  
But if she heaved a sigh  
With a burthen, it was, 'Thy  
Will be done.'

In travail, as in tears,  
With the fardel of her years  
Overprest,  
In mercy she was borne  
Where the weary and the worn  
Are at rest.

Oh if you now are there,  
And sweet as once you were,  
Grandmamma,  
This nether world agrees  
You'll all the better please  
Grandpapa.

Frederick Locker-Lampson