

# AN EARLY COLONIST.

GEORGE FORDYCE STORY, M.D., M.A.

To the Editor of "The Mercury."

Respected Friend,—Looking in a medical directory of 1878, under "Practitioners resident abroad possessing British qualifications," I read "Story, George Fordyce, Kelvedon, Swansea, Tasmania, M.A., Marischall's College, Aberdeen, 1821, M.D., Edinburgh, 1824 (Aberd. and Edin.), F.R.S., Tasmania, late district surgeon, East Coast, Tasmania."

I propose to furnish two of his early letters, which I copy, one of which I commend to the attention of "the rising generation"; the other, to everyone that is to come. The first is at the end of an old copy-book, containing many specimens of his writing—one page in Greek and one in Hebrew:—

"Finsbury-square, London,  
"December, 1813.

"Honoured Parents, — Encouraged by your permission, I present to you the above specimens of my writing. I flatter myself they are as far from faults as may be expected at my age, but I am satisfied that your candour and goodness will overlook any that might have occurred.

"I also indulge the agreeable hope that, supported by your parental kindness and protection, I may be enabled to exercise my talents with honour to myself and advantage to the community.—I am, honoured parents, your dutiful and affectionate son,

"GEORGE FORDYCE STORY.

"Aged 13 years."

In one of his MS. books I read:—"Appointed D.A.S. to the district of Great Swan Port, April, 1829." (I could also furnish "his youth's wide scope" at Scotland's colleges.)

The other letter tells of experience in a new land as far from England and her colleges as could be found. George Fordyce was the only son of George Story, D.D. (The "Dear George at the Preaching-house, Perth.") I quote the address of an old letter of John Wesley—pity these Wesleyans have become so respectable—

who, walking through Scotland, and zealously preaching Wesleyanism, which, at its advent, moved the world, for it "lifted Him up." His first wife and four children died of an epidemic of small-pox. Scotland was then bigger than this earth is now, for mails were slow and telegraphy was not. He married again in after years, and his only son, George Fordyce, was born when he was 60. The son died at 86. Father and son reach across a great arc of English history and progress.

This, then, is an extract of a letter:—"To the principal medical officer and inspector-general of hospitals, Dr. Arthur, —Having entered upon the tenth year of my appointment to the duties of district assistant surgeon, and having served the Government for more than nine years without having obtained the least increase of salary, . . . I can safely say that there is no department under Government so ill-repaid as that of assistant district surgeon. The surgeon must possess as great a fund of knowledge, both general and particular, as any other person holding office; and, yet, when the pay of the assistant police magistrate (10s. 6d. per diem) is contrasted with that of the district assistant surgeon at 3s. per diem, how great is the difference? Even the magistrates' clerk and the district constable are better paid. When I first arrived the district of Great Swanport was scarcely known—was without even footpaths through it—and was infested with a very ferocious tribe of aborigines, known by the name of the Oyster Bay tribe, in whose excursions through the district some, either soldiers or convicts, were sure to be attacked and injured, and these persons I was called upon to attend, not only without any other remuneration than my salary afforded, but also at the hazard of my life, having to travel alone, even when a garrison order protected the private soldier by prohibiting him from pursuing his route without a comrade, not to mention the dangers to which I have been exposed in crossing rivers swollen by the floods; or in travelling during excessive rains; or in the night to afford relief to victims of the aborigines' barbarity." He did not get a rise to his salary, nor ever got a pension, and he died, "without any fuss," as he wished, after three days of bronchitis, yet his voice was full and strong. To the doctor who had ordered warm flannel instead of the repeated mustard plasters Dr. Story had insisted on, who said, "Do not you find the warm flannel comforting?" He replied, "Yes; comforting, but the mustard had been more effective." To me he said, "I shall want thee about 10 o'clock." Did he know that was his limit of time? I asked how the disease was progressing? He said, "I do not know how it will go now, the breathing is becoming very laboured." "And if," I said—was it a little snort I heard—he had unfailing "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ"—"he felt the bottom, and it was good," as many a Christian has done? But he reverently and low repeated a stanza of that excellent Wesleyan hymn, which no doubt his father heard newly, and the "Preaching-house, Perth," may have rung to the everlasting sufficiency of it. Doubtless, it has come to many another Christian as he enters Jordan—

"Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.  
Leave, ah leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me.

All my hope on Thee is stayed,  
All my help from Thee I bring,  
Cover my defenceless head  
With the shadow of Thy wing."

The doctor we had called to him had said, "If ever he asks for a drink, give him broth." After a time he asked for a drink. My wife handed him some broth. He had a habit of putting his head back, and finishing the last of a draught. He did so with that broth, set the vessel down, and laid his head on the pillow. Some broth ran out of his mouth; he was dead, "without any fuss."

We dug his grave in the shadow of an Oyster Bay pine, within the sound of the waves of Oyster Bay. He rests in the sandstone that has once been the floor of a sea that covered much of Tasmania, whilst the granite, which now forms the east shore of Oyster Bay, was high in air. And he lies by two playmates of his early youth. Their three united ages attain 250 years. The first to finish was Anna Maria Tylney, whose forebear fought with that sea-wolf, Norman William, at Sonlae, who, at the dividing of England, was granted "the earldom of the East Saxons, entailed on the male line for ever." Frederick Tylney had lived and died a bachelor; herself, the eldest daughter of a Quaker, whose other children were daughters, held herself the rightful heir, and so, she said, did many able lawyers. (She looked it.) She was born at Chelmsford, near Kelvedon, in Essex, England. Her husband, Francis Cotton, lies beside her; a Quaker, too. They were the only thorough-breds in Tasmania in the early days.

Clive married into the Cotton family, and the younger sons of the Shropshire baronet went to India, and helped Clive to add an empire to the British Crown. These Indian Cottons have attained high places as soldiers and as engineers. The proclivity attends the offspring, but "my kingdom is not of this world," and there will be "wars and rumours of wars" till He takes charge. In the interim, "the tools to those who can use them," we thank Him for creating such; nevertheless, it needs a soldier to be a friend, and these were friends. "Requiescat in pace."

—Respectfully,  
E. O. C.

Kelvedon, November 29,