

IN MEMORIAM.

THE LATE DR. STORY.

The following record of this well-known colonist, who has lately joined the great majority, will be read with interest:—“George Fordyce Story, M.A. and M.D., the son of — Story, D.D. eminent among the Wesleyans in last century, was born in London on the 4th June, 1800. He was educated at Edinburgh, and his diploma is dated 1824. He was an ardent student for the profession he had chosen. In those days ‘subjects’ were not legally obtainable, and students had mainly to supply themselves. Dr. Story would sometimes tell of the adventures, expedients, and exploits he was engaged in during wild midnight parties with a select party of students procuring ‘subjects’ from fresh graves. Several parts of his share now await the resurrection in his museum, duly ‘prepared’ by a medical student. It was a hazardous enterprise (for graves were watched), and could only be undertaken in the wildest nights. Not many of the association were hardy enough to hold out. The choicest of them, Denne, brought home from New Zealand two baked New Zealand chiefs’ heads, clubs, adzes, gods, etc., and Dr. Story brought with him to Tasmania this collection, which was given him. Dr. Story set up in practice in London, and was doing well, but always determined to emigrate to some of the colonies or to India. On the death of his mother, whom he cherished in her widowhood, he came to Tasmania in the ship *Mary* in 1828. The vessel was bound for Sydney, and he had intended to settle there, having letters from many of his distinguished relatives in Scotland. The *Mary* had made a protracted voyage, being dismasted after passing the Cape, and arriving in the Derwent at the end of 1828. The beauty of the scenery and weariness of the sea beguiled him into staying. The only appointment available just then was district assistant surgeon and commissariat officer to Swanport and the party of military stationed at Waterloo Point (Swansea), which he at once accepted, glad to take the bush for he was an ardent botanist and geologist. There were no roads or tracks to Swanport then, so the voyage was made in ‘the Government boat.’ With Dr. Story went A. Petrie to inspect accounts at Maria Island which had got tangled. They stayed the first night with the guard of soldiers at Eaglehawk Neck, ‘where he first saw a damper made, and next day to Maria Island, then on to Swansea. A whaleboat coxswain, and guard and crew of six prisoners. It would be impossible to compress into a short notice the many incidents of his early life in an unsettled and wide district among aborigines, prisoners, bushrangers, or military party. The doctor was everywhere to attend flagellation, *post mortem* on any lone murdered body, or bushman found dead, to certify to death of outlaw shot in his lair, besides all his duties as district doctor. He had a great ‘organ of locality,’ and never failed of finding his way anywhere. No river was too flooded, and no night too dark for him, he was always there when wanted, to birth or death, or to all between. He had perfect uncomplaining endurance. An instance—Trying to urge a horse on Bicheno tramway he received a kick just over the heart, which crushed in five ribs, yet he rode home 40 miles, and a few nights after went some miles to attend a birth. In 1842 he was appointed to the charge of the Royal Society Gardens, Hobart, but in less than two years he returned to Swanport and country life, and continued his medical care till blindness (cataract) ended it. He kept on till he couldn’t find his hat when he rode into a tree and knocked it off, often coming home and saying where he had lost it. His benevolence was so large and active that he was ever more ready to give than to receive, and so he went about doing good, loving every living thing and loved by all. He has been known to make up a little parcel of crumbs to ‘give to the little fishes that swam round my horse’s nose drinking at the ford,’ and wherever he travelled, whether to Oatlands Supreme Court or elsewhere, he was way-laid by mothers with sick babies, and all others needing medical aid. ‘Himself and his havresack’ were equal to any emergency. Such a man could never become wealthy; selfishness was left out in his composition. As blindness gradually closed him in, it was noticeable how he would rather find anything in his rooms in the dark than take a light, and up to his death he could put his hand on any bottle or book, etc., of the many hundreds in his rooms. His memory was equally clear on all subjects. Whatever question was asked him he would without hesitation reply fully in a well-ordered and complete statement, and while there are few intellects of wider range, he was through life and to the end the liveliest companion for little children—loved of them all by his inimitable ‘rendering’ of nursery rhymes and tales, but the charmingest were extempore. His parents were of eminent piety (Wesleyans), and piety was ever deep in the foundations of him, broad and genuine right-wiseness. While having respect to all sectarianism—that was a gentlemanly respect to the possessors of it—not a bit to sectarianism itself, he knew the love of God to His creatures was over all that-like. During the visit of James Backhouse, a minister of the Society of Friends who travelled in these colonies during 1832-7, Dr. Story became more earnestly religious, and joined the Society of Friends, and has himself travelled in the ministry in several of the colonies of Australia and in New Zealand, to the comfort and edification of the visited, but except upon such occasions he was not often heard in public preaching or prayer, but whenever he was heard his speaking was clear, forcible, and brief—‘He is in heaven, and thou on earth, therefore, let thy words be few.’ But his religion shone out a comfort to those who were departing—a very comfortable doctor indeed. He could speak that he did know. His last illness was short. He caught a chill on his 85th birthday, on the 4th June last; but his entire independence, now as ever, would not submit to his being made an invalid, so he dressed himself as usual—always in Wellington boots, etc.—ready for the road. He never descended to slippers, nor would he go to bed till his usual hour. On the Sunday, June 7, he was induced to keep his bed, and toward evening when asked how the complaint was going on said, ‘I don’t know how it will turn now the breathing is becoming very bad.’ Then being asked if he did not recover how he felt in the prospect, he made brief and earnest reply, which told of humble and loving and confident rest in the Saviour, and he went on in patience and serenity, speaking occasionally, and taking medicine or sustenance at the right time, with no apparent increase of weakness or worse breathing till 11 p.m., when, without any move or intermittency in breathing, he passed away. He was buried, in the presence of a good assemblage, at Kelvedon, on the 10th June, beside his lifelong friends Francis and Anna Maria Cotton. They had been playmates in babyhood in the first years of this century, and now in death they are not divided—neither in the land of the living. Hearing a daybreak chorus of musical magpies in the blue gums over him next day, suggested Whittier’s lines—

“Where the dews glisten, and the songbird’s warble
His dust to dust is laid,
In Nature’s keeping, with no pomp of marble
To shroud his modest shade.
“But round his grave is quietude and beauty,
And the sweet heaven above,—
The fitting symbols of a life of duty
Transfigured into love.”

Mercury, July 1st, 1885.