

Born 11th January 1857

Died 8th January 1939

Written by George Henry Dewsberry. Artist

THOMAS

Dewsberry, born at South Shields, the son of a cobbler. He went to sea as a cabin boy at the age of eleven and eventually became Captain of his ship. By thrift he was able to purchase a sugar plantation in Demerara (East Africa) and he owned slaves - in those days the universal method of employing labour.

His home was situated in what was later known as ^{(SIC) TOXTETH} Toxteth Park, Liverpool. It was a large three-storey house and the attics were used as store rooms for miscellaneous provisions. It was the privilege of a Sea Captain to provide his home with foreign produce, free of duty. In those days everything was taxed.

His wife was Irish. She had red hair and a fiery temperament - quite the opposite of himself. They had a large family and most of them were seafaring men. In or about the year 1826, having decided to retire, he went to Demerara to sell his estate. With the proceeds of the sale in his possession he was returning by boat to his ship lying out in the bay, when the boat capsized and he was drowned. It was generally believed that this was due to foul play.

Henceforth home life was changed from abundance to desolation and starvation. My father, Thomas Dewsberry, born June ¹⁸¹⁷ 1819, was next to the ^(SIC) youngest of the large family and after the home was broken up he went to live in lodgings with an older brother and an Irishman. The landlady used to buy in food for them to her own advantage. Whenever she bought meat she would cut a piece for herself and say that the butcher had given her that as overweight. With the coffee she would get the first brew and they, the slops and the coffee pot was more than half full of grounds. When the landlady's husband died the Irishman played a practical joke on her. Without her knowledge he threw a white sheet over himself and the corpse, supporting the corpse by holding it up in front of him, and he went to the top of the stairs. Simulating the voice of her late husband he called in a sepulchral tone to the landlady who went to the bottom of the stairs. She got a terrible fright when the corpse told her he had come back to warn her of what was in store for her for robbing her lodgers. Needless to say, she was cured!

Father worked in the saggar house at the ^{Herculanicum} Herculanicum Pottery, Liverpool. Many times he has fainted at work through hunger, often going a whole day without food. One day he saw a boy who lived at a nearby public house, eating a tart on his way to school. The temptation was so great that father snatched the tart and ate it. He often said, when relating that incident, that he would like to meet that boy.

Later, when a youth, he went to work at St. Helens and there he came in contact with Grandfather (Richard Guest) who was a dipper at St. Helens Pottery. A Temperance advocate, he often walked to Preston where the first Temperance Society was formed by a group of eight worthies. I do not know whether Grandfather was one of the eight. Through the beneficent influence of Richard Guest, father joined the Temperance Society. Later he married Richard Guest's daughter, Sarah - my mother. They were married on the same day as the Temperance Tea Party was held in the Temperance Hall. There, the table talk was about the wedding which was remarkable in that it was the first Temperance wedding recorded since the Temperance Society was formed. Those at the table discussing the event were unaware that the couple were present, hearing their conversation.

As Grandfather was a widower and mother the eldest of the family, she was the housekeeper, so they all lived together. Mother was 19 when she married and father in his twenty-first year. (1839)

Later they all left St. Helens to come to the Potteries and as this was before the railways were open, they all had to walk. When they reached Kidsgrove, weary and footsore, they met a man with a donkey cart selling crocks and he gave them a ride to Burslem.

Grandfather, Richard Guest, was a native of Burslem but had left there and walked to Whitehaven when a young man. In later years Grandfather went to South Wales to superintend the building of the ovens in the South Wales Pottery, then under construction. He walked there, and often in later years, spoke of the hardship of that journey. The Welsh people could not understand his English and were very inhospitable toward him, being reluctant to give him lodging. In making purchases, he had to point to what he wanted. Later, after the Pottery was in production, Uncle David Guest followed him there.

I am getting on too fast. I must revert to an event which occurred before Grandfather went to South Wales.

At the time of the Pottery strike - I think in the year 1840, on the first day of the strike many people were afraid to spend their money in the market. Consequently the butchers in the shambles had a great deal of meat unsold on Saturday night. Grandfather made an offer to a butcher to take all on his stall at a very low figure and after some haggling, he accepted. All the

meat was put in pickle and lasted the family for the duration of the strike - eleven weeks.

Father, Thomas Dewsberry, was the first and only worker and general factotum when James McIntire started in business, potting at a small factory behind where the George Hotel stands at the top of Nile Street, Burslem. As the business grew, more hands were employed and Mr. McIntire wanted father to teach another man to fire the ovens. Father strongly objected because for another man to take over the firing of the ovens would mean that father would just be labourer. His wages up to then were only 18/- per week. Father left and the works was almost at a standstill. His employer sent for him but father refused to go and see him. He had been discharged so he would wait for Mr. McIntire to come to him. Eventually he did come in a more conciliatory manner and father dictated his terms which were three pounds per week for firing ovens only. The terms were conceded to and father stayed there until, years after, the Washington Works in Waterloo Road, Burslem, was built.

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George Henry Dewsberry was employed as an artist at Doulton's for a number of years. His elder brother, David, was employed at Doulton's nearly all his working life as an orchid painter. George went to the Burslem School of Art when he was 13 and the Art master, watching him paint (not in the way the art master was teaching) said "Go on, you know more than I can teach you already". George Dewsberry and another artist from Doulton's, Mr. F. Bates, went into business together as tile decorators at a time when decorated tiles were used as panels on each side of a fireplace. Some of their work is in Osborne House, Isle of Wight, then the residence of Queen Victoria. It is now a show house open to public view.