

**YONGE STREET AND
DUNDAS STREET.
THE MEN AFTER WHOM
THEY WERE NAMED**

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Yonge Street and Dundas Street. The Men After Whom They Were Named by Henry Scadding

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HENRY SCADDING

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A PAPER FROM THE CANADIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE
AND HISTORY.

BY

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YONGE STREET AND DUNDAS STREET.

THE MEN AFTER WHOM THEY WERE NAMED.*

When it has happened that a town, city or region has received a name intended to be an enduring memorial of a particular personage, it is natural to suppose that some interest in his history and character will there be felt. In the many places, for example, which have been, or are sure to be, called *Livingstone*, we may expect that hereafter a special acquaintance with the story of the great explorer and missionary will be kept up. But names quickly become familiar and trite on the lips of men; and unless now and then attention be directed to their significance, they soon cease to be much more than mere sounds.

The inhabitants of Lorraine probably seldom give much thought to the Lothaire, of whose realm, *Lothar's regnum*, their province is the representative. Few citizens of Bolivia waste time in recalling Bolivar. To the Astorians, Astoria speaks faintly now of John Jacob Astor; and Aspinwall, to its occupants, has by this time lost the personal allusion implied in the word. Ismailia, on the Upper Nile, may be a momentary exception. That is altogether too fresh a creation. Who Ismail, the living Khedive, is, must be sufficiently well known at present to the people there.

Nevertheless, I suppose, even where the notability commemorated has almost wholly departed out of the public mind, a recurrence to the story really wrapped up in the name of a given place cannot be unwelcome.

Sir Thomas Browne, in his "Urn burial," says: "To be content that times to come should only know there was such a man, without

* Read before the Canadian Institute.

caring whether they knew more of him, was a frigid ambition in Cardan. For who careth," he asks, "to subsist like Hippocrates' patients, or Achilles' horses in Homer, under naked nominations, without deserts and noble acts, which are the balsam of our memories, the entelechia and soul of our subsistences?"

And even so in respect of local names amongst us, borrowed from worthies of a former day—it may be taken for granted that thoughtful persons will not wish to rest content with "naked nominations;" but, on the contrary, will desire to become familiar with the "entelechia," as Sir Thomas Browne chooses learnedly to express himself—the true motive and "soul of their subsistences."

I accordingly proceed to summon up, so far as I may, the shades of two partially forgotten personages, commemorated and honoured in the style and title of two great thoroughfares familiar to Toronto people and Western Canadians generally—Yonge Street and Dundas Street. I refer to Sir George Yonge and the Right Hon. Henry Dundas, from whom those two well-known main-roads of the Province of Ontario respectively have their appellations.

I am assisted in my attempt to revive the forms of these two men of mark in a former generation, by the possession of an engraved portrait of each of them. That of Sir George Yonge is from a painting by Mather Brown, engraved by E. Scott, "engraver to the Duke of York and Prince Edward." It shows a full, frank, open, English countenance, smoothly shaven, with pleasant intelligent eyes; the mouth rather large, but expressive; the chin double; the hair natural and abundant, but white with powder. The inscription below is: "The Right Honourable Sir George Yonge, Bart., Secretary at War, Knight of the Bath, One of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, F.R.S., F.A.S., &c., M.P."

I.—SIR GEORGE YONGE.

Sir George Yonge was the chief representative of an ancient Devonshire family. He was born in 1732, and sat in Parliament for the borough of Honiton from 1754 to 1796. His father, the fourth baronet, Sir William Yonge, sat for the same place before him. Sir George was Secretary at War from 1782 to 1794, when he was succeeded by William Windham. He also held the offices of Vice-Treasurer for Ireland, and Master of the Mint. In 1797 he



SIR GEORGE YONGE, BART. (1732—1812).

AFTER WHOM YONGE STREET, PROVINCE OF ONTARIO, WAS NAMED.



became Governor and Commander-in-Chief at the Cape of Good Hope, succeeding Lord Macartney there. He died at Hampton Court, September 26, 1812, æt. 80.

In the debates taking place in the House of Commons during the movement in the American Colonies which resulted in their independence, Sir George Yonge took a favourable view of the intentions and wishes of the colonists. Thus, in reply to Lord North, when some resolutions were being adopted on a petition from Nova Scotia setting forth the grievances of that loyal colony, and calling respectfully for a redress of them at the hands of the Imperial Parliament, Sir George Yonge said: "The sentiments of the petitioners were the sentiments of the General Congress: they alike acknowledge the Parliament of Great Britain as the supreme legislature; they alike own it their duty to contribute to the exigencies of the State; and they alike claim the right of giving and granting their own money." He added, "that it was in the power of the Ministry so to frame the bill as to give peace to all America, and he wished that were their inclination." Thus his remarks are summarized in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of December, 1776. As a specimen of Sir George's speeches at a later period, as Secretary at War, I give the summary of one preserved in the same periodical, which will show that he possessed tact and address. It relates to a proposed reduction in the Household Troops in 1787, to effect which, however, a larger sum than usual was to be asked for from the Parliament. The point was to make it clear that the extra charge on the revenue would result in a "saving to the public."

The reporter of the *Gentleman's Magazine* informs us that "The Secretary of War rose and said, that when he presented the army estimates, he had not included in them those of the King's household troops, because, as he had long since informed the House, His Majesty had at that time under consideration a plan of reform in those corps by which a considerable saving might be made to the public. It being impracticable, however, to digest this plan so soon as was expected, the intended reform could not take place till the 24th of June next. It was therefore necessary to vote the pay of all the household troops from Christmas Day last up to Midsummer. After the latter period, two troops of Life-Guards would be reduced, and replaced by the Grenadier Guards. The pay would be continued

to the officers until vacancies happened in other regiments; and to the private gentlemen, all of whom had purchased their situations, it would be but just to make compensation. It was the King's intention," Sir George proceeded to say, "that the two colonels of the troops to be reduced should receive £1,200 each a year for life; but a vacancy having lately happened in a regiment of dragoons by the death of General Carpenter, one of them would be appointed to fill it, and thus £1,200 a year would be saved to the nation; the other Colonel (the Duke of Northumberland), who was far above all pecuniary consideration, and had nothing so much at heart as the good of the service, had nobly requested that the annuity designed for him might make part of the saving that was to arise from the reform. He (Sir George) said that the public would save by the reform, at first, between £11,000 and £12,000 a year; but that when the officers shall be otherwise provided for, or 'drop off' by death, the savings would then amount to £24,000 per annum. Such advantage, however, could not be expected this year; on the contrary, this year's expense would be much greater than that of any which preceded it; but then the cause of its increase would never occur again, particularly as he proposed to move that the sum of £28,000 should be allowed as a compensation to the private gentlemen for their purchase money." Sir George then concluded by moving for the full establishment of 715 men, officers included, of the four troops of Horse and Grenadier Guards up to Midsummer Day, after which one half of their establishment should be reduced; and for the several sums for compensation, which, on the whole, amounted to £79,543 5s. He remarked, before he sat down, that much had recently been said on the subject of patronage; but this reduction was a proof that the extension of patronage was not a favourite object with His Majesty, who proposed it, as it was clear he might have greatly lessened the expenses of the nation, and yet preserved the usual patronage, by reducing the privates and keeping up the establishment of the officers. It is then added: "The sums moved for were voted without debate, and the House was immediately resumed."

The nominally independent action of the King in relation to the Household Troops, and its open allegation by the Secretary, tell of an age when the Stuart ideas of kingly prerogative still, in theory, survived. The Duke of Northumberland spoken of, as intending