

## LETTER-BOOK OF THOMAS FORSYTH — 1814-1818.<sup>1</sup>

GOV. NINIAN EDWARDS'S<sup>2</sup> INSTRUCTIONS TO FORSYTH.

ELVIRADO, IOWA TERR., May 16, 1814.

The object of my wishing you to return to Peoria, is the preservation of peace between us, and the Potawatomes. As however experience has fully convinced us that there can be no neutrality with savages, in the vicinity of conflicting powers, and as we have found them faithless in all their promises, it becomes equally our interest and our duty,

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<sup>1</sup> Major Thomas Forsyth had been for several years engaged in the fur trade,—on Saginaw bay, at Chicago, on an island in the Mississippi near Quincy, and at Peoria,— and had acquired much influence over the Indians of Illinois, especially the Pottawattomes, previous to his appointment as government Indian agent for the Illinois district, at the outset of the war of 1812-15. His headquarters were at Peoria. Upon the close of the war, he served as agent for the Sacs and Foxes, closing his official relations with them previous to the Black Hawk outbreak of 1832. In *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, vi., p. 188, will be found a sketch of his career; and in the same volume (pp. 188-219), there are given the journal of his notable voyage from St. Louis to the falls of St. Anthony, in 1819, and a letter of his to Governor William Clark, of the same year. Further biographical material may be obtained in Scharf's *Hist. St. Louis*, pp. 1293, 1294; Reynolds's *Pion. Hist. Illinois* (ed. 1887), p. 247; Hurlburt's *Chicago Antiquities*, pp. 469, 470, and miscellaneous references in Washburne's *The Edwards Papers*. In 1868, Major Forsyth's son, Robert, permitted the Society to make a complete transcript of his father's letter-books, covering the period, 1814 to 1823. The selections given in vol. vi. of these *Collections*, above cited, are the only publications from these letter-books, thus far made. There are now selected such portions of the first book as refer to the war of 1812-15. They throw new light on this interesting period of our history, and are given in this volume, wherein the British operations are so fully set forth in the reports and letters of McDouall, McKay, Dickson and Grignon, as showing the other side of the picture,— the means adopted by the Americans to keep the Illinois Indians in line with our interests and prevent them from co-operating with the savage allies of England. In this important work, Forsyth's services are shown to have been of great value.— Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Governor of Illinois Territory from 1809 to 1818.— Ed.