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THE LATE DR. BURNS THOMSON, FOUNDER OF THE EDINBURGH MEDICAL MISSION.

At Bournemouth, on April 29, there passed to his rest the brother beloved who delighted on all suitable occasions to sign himself, "W. Burns Thomson, Medical Missionary."

His home-going closes a chapter in recent Christian movements which might be entitled 'The Rise of Medical Missions,' or, as a brother perhaps still more aptly puts it, 'The Modern Revival of Medical Missions.' When that chapter comes to be written in detail, it will be found that among the many worthy men whose names rise to memory in association with the earlier days of the movement, the central and most conspicuous figure is that of Burns Thomson. On him in particular God laid the burden and travail of lifting the cause of medical missions into the view, and commending it to the acceptance, of the Christian Church. His task was not an easy one. It needed a strong man—one in whom a clear conviction that medical missions form an important part of the Gospel method, and a resolute purpose that the Church should know it, should be blended with a simple and unswerving faith in the guidance and help of God. All who had the privilege of his closer acquaintance know that Burns Thomson was just such a man. And when, in 1859, the Master took him and his like-minded wife and planted them in 38 Cowgate, Edinburgh, he was initiating that wave of medical missionary interest which has since touched every church and every missionary society throughout the whole Christian world. From that time medical missions had at least one living exemplification in our midst, and the eloquent pen and speech of our brother, as in all the great cities of the United Kingdom he advocated a cause which was to him, for Christ's sake, more precious than life, accomplished a complete change in Christian opinion. Noble men have risen up since, and by the blessing of God have done much to extend and deepen the interest in medical missions, but Burns Thomson was the man whom God chose for the labor, if also for the honor, of a brave and successful pioneer.

Born at Kirriemuir, in Forfarshire, of godly parents, who died while he was still a lad, and owing much to the care and affection of his elder brother, it was at Golspie, in Sutherlandshire, when, about the age of seventeen, the great decision was made. A vivid reminiscence of those days by the one who was his companion on the occasion, is of a scene behind a hedge at Golspie, when the two lads knelt and dedicated themselves to Christ and to any service to which He might call them. Tutorial work in a private family followed Golspie, and it was then that, in repeated sailings round Cape Wrath, and in other excursions, Burns

Thomson developed that taste for natural science which, ere many years, brought him the honor of F.R.S.E., and supplied him through the rest of his career with those analogies which he could so deftly use in handling questions of the spiritual life.

He was well over twenty when he came to Edinburgh to enter on a University curriculum. Like many another Scotch lad, he knew something of the pathos of student poverty. I have heard him tell stories of times of utter pennilessness which became occasions of strong crying to God with tears, and of startling answers which awed him with the sense of the nearness of the Divine presence. Such experiences prepared him for an intense sympathy with all earnest student life. Poverty was a bar which he ignored when

hope were that he might have the privilege of preaching Christ in China. It was at the close of the Arts curriculum, and when he was about to enter on theological studies, that the incident took place which in the hand of God was to determine his career. We will tell it in his own words:—

"I was visiting in Ponton street, Edinburgh, when an incident occurred that changed the whole current of my life. I went into one of the lowest houses about twelve o'clock in the forenoon to invite the inmates to a prayer-meeting that was to be held on the following Sabbath evening. I had scarcely got into the house when a sharp little Irishwoman came springing into the middle of the floor, and, approaching me, abruptly said, 'What do you want, sir?' I was not so experienced then in

said I. She was entirely of the same mind. Why I was led to make such a remark I cannot conceive, for I knew absolutely nothing of medicine, and the thought of becoming a doctor had never entered my wildest dreams. The efficacy of one drug, however, I had satisfactorily learned in my youth, and, getting a cup from her—it had no handle I remember—away I went to the nearest druggist and got a dose of castor-oil. I brought it back and presented it to the poor woman, and she received it amidst many expressions of gratitude. On the Monday following, as in duty bound, I called back to see my patient. She received me with open arms, and actually came out with me to the end of the street with my hand in hers. She made the sign of the cross on her forehead, and struck a covenant of eternal friendship between us. I got access to that house ever after, and was freely permitted to tell of the great salvation offered by Christ."

It was a simple enough incident, but it was a revelation to the earnest student. He began to search his Bible on the subject of medical missions, and was surprised to find them everywhere in the New Testament, and the result was that, while still keeping the same ultimate life object in view, he became a student of medicine.

While yet a student he wrote a prize essay on medical missions, which was published and had much acceptance. 1859 he undertook the superintendship of the work of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society.

The great service of his life to medical missions is bound up with the years 1859—1878. It was a threefold service. He showed to the Church at home what a living power a medical mission could be in the worst part of a great city; how it could attract the poor in crowds, Roman Catholics and Protestants alike; how it could open their doors, when all other agencies had failed, to the entrance of the Gospel message; and how it was an agency which the Lord did not fail to bless, both to the bodies and souls of men. And this experience was an ever-fresh plea in advocating the larger employment of such missions among the heathen.

Then, second, as the head of the first Medical Missionary Training Home, he was able to show, in due time, a band of laborers who, having completed their studies, were fulfilling, at home or abroad, the great calling of the medical missionary. Valentine of Agra and Vartan of Nazareth, Hutchison of Sialkot and Husband of Ajmere; the late Drs. Thomson of Swatow, and Elmslie of Kashmir; Crabbe of Birmingham and Elder of Bristol, etc., etc., men whose names are held in honor to-day, and who have done much to extend the work of the Gospel, were among Dr. Thomson's students. And the influence exerted by the Training Home did not by any means end there. It began at once to tell upon the circle of Christian men in



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he met with real men who were struggling after fitness for service on the mission field. He could count on God to meet the needs of such cases. And, speaking here of prayer, there is one friend living, a friend of forty-five years' standing, between whom and Burns Thomson there was a covenant of prayer, a mutual agreement to ask the Lord concerning certain specified objects, the record of which was carefully kept and the Lord's answers noted, the list of subjects being extended as years went on; and the occasional opportunities of united supplication being ever gratefully welcomed. The last of these opportunities was given to the two friends just a few days before our brother passed away.

His purpose in coming to Edinburgh to study was to enter the ministry. But he looked further than that. His desire and

visiting as I am now, and the question disturbed me. Although it was only twelve o'clock her son was lying on a low settle at the side of the room the worse for drink. He looked up at me, and, evidently not liking my appearance, he cried to his mother, 'Pet 'im oot, mither.' As I lingered about the room, not knowing very well what to do, the youth got angry and cried with an oath, 'Mither, canna ye pet 'im oot?' This disturbed me still more, and I remarked to the woman, 'I was just going round your district, and I thought I would look in and see you. You are not looking well.' The thought seemed to flash upon her that perhaps I was a medical man, and in an instant her manner changed and she answered quite kindly, 'Sure and it's not well that I am, sir.' I think you would be the better of a little medicine,

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