

## Our Contributors

The Rev. Thomas Toye.

A CELTIC PREACHER.

The 6th of October, 1901, was the centenary of the birth of a remarkable Irish man—the Rev. Thomas Toye of St. George's Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast. With the familiarity, not of disrespect but of admiring love, he was known as "Tommy Toye."

He was one of the originals, not only in thought and speech, but in action, and the purpose in life to which he went straight, irrespective of precedent, was the winning of souls.

Nothing to his mind counted in value with an immortal soul, no matter what its human garb.

He was born in Clonakilty, County Cork, of an Episcopalian family, but a Puritan strain in him carried him into Presbyterianism. When he settled as a minister in the north, he brought with him a Celtic fire, ideality and sharp wit among the steady-going, level headed Ulster men, that sometimes shocked them, accustomed as they were to more conventional religious methods. One never knew what he would say or do next, and many stories are told of his quaint sayings and eccentricities. The men of his time recognized his unique powers.

His picture speaks for itself: the massive brow, the straight uncompromising glance of keen eyes, the satirical, humorous curve of the lips, but it gives a faint idea of the man as he appeared in the pulpit, possessed with his message, his eyes magnetising his listeners, flashing in scorn of hypocrisy, scathing the secret sinner, melting with the story of the Cross. While from his lips came trenchant sentences of sarcasm, denunciation, entreaty, appeal, with scintillations of poetic imagery and sparkling crystals of wit.

He was small and spare, and one saw at a glance that the mind dominated the body, and yet there was nothing of abstraction or self-absorption about him, he kept his audience well in hand, and his piercing gaze searched the remotest corners of the church.

The oriental imagery of the Old Testament gained a fresh charm in the suave accents of his southern tongue. In his prayers he took his congregation with him for a personal interview with a great Sympathetic Invisible, the promises of whose book were quoted to men by one who pinned implicit faith to their fulfilment. Sometimes from low, reverent monotone his Celtic oratory would swell into an agonised struggle for a blessing for his people. One who heard him preach from the text, "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley," says:—

"Ruskin himself, could not have discoursed more sweetly about the fragrance of the rose and the lily in the pride of their beauty. His knowledge of Scripture was unique, and his power of interpretation on the lines of the old evangelical theology unrivalled. That little white wrinkled old man, who climbed the pulpit stairs at the beginning of the service was changed into a wizard, an orator, a prophet, who looked down into the depths of your soul and permitted you to look into the depths of his. It was preaching—real, living, wonderful preaching—artless, bright with genius, burning with a message."

He knew his Bible by heart, and could verify any quotation by chapter and verse. He had the power of projecting his personality on his surroundings and his own strong assurance of faith lifted wavering hearers and set them on their feet. Stories are told of his quaintness and eccentricity. The Sabbath he called his market day, and he would say to his sexton—"Well, is the shop open? I wonder if we shall have a good market. There won't be a soul, please God, but shall have an offer of the rarest, richest, and most enduring blessings, and all without money and without price."

He had no doubts about a personal devil, and an actual place of torment and a subtle intuition, the heritage of the Celt, always guided him to the right point of attack. "Mary," said he, to a careless young girl, "It's a great pity the devil should have you. I cannot but think what a pity it is that that pretty face of yours should burn in hell."

The girl's heart was touched, and she became an earnest Christian woman.

His kindness was often imposed upon, but he took swift vengeance on deceit when he found it out. A woman came to him with a pitiful tale of poverty. She had no clothes, she could not go to church. He bought her a warm winter shawl. Passing down a side street shortly after, he saw her with his gift round her head, standing at the bar of a public house enjoying a glass of gin. He stepped in, and promptly whipping the shawl off her head, carried it home.

His evangelistic fervour was always governed by his sense of humour. A lively Evangelist was conducting a service in Mr. Toye's church in 1859, and this man thought of a new method of impressing converts. He asked them to march round the aisles of the church with him, singing. Mr. Toye leaned over the pulpit watching them. The evangelist looked up at him, and, not being a student of physiognomy, he asked:—

"Brother, aren't you sure we're going to glory?"

"Oh yes," he replied, "I hope so, but there's no need for you to make fools of yourselves on the road."

He was always of delicate physique, but he clung to his work among his people to the last.

"Let my poor body like Stephen's, be carried to its burial," he said, "and on my gravestone let this inscription be:— 'Thomas Toye, a sinner saved by grace.'"

His funeral was a remarkable one; it is said that from every alley and lane, from the crowded haunts of poverty, from wretched dens where human love seldom penetrated, came men and women with tears streaming down their faces to do the last honours to their friend.

His strong individuality, his shrewd common sense and sympathetic outlook made him a power in his time, and there are many living who retain a warm and loving regard for the memory of "Tommy Toye." He died in May, 1870.—Christian leader.

Herald and Presbyter: We are to be Christians not simply for the purpose of being saved ourselves, but for becoming able to save others. We are not only to get good, but to do good, and do all the good we can, to as many people as we can and in as large a way as we can.

## The Doctrine of Election.

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The doctrine of election has been grossly misunderstood, sadly perverted, and made into a bugbear for tender souls. That God created any man merely to damn him, is not true. That God arbitrarily passes any man by, and leaves him to perish, is not true. That only a small minority of the human race are elect is not true. These things are not part of the doctrine of election when properly interpreted, and to rid the Westminster Confession of some expressions which seem to allow these inferences is one cause of the agitation for its revision.

And yet God has an elect people. Who are they? Every penitent man is one of the elect. Every man who has faith in Jesus Christ is one of the elect as surely as his faith is genuine. A man who is inquiring the way to Christ need not concern himself with the doctrine of election at all. In teaching a child the alphabet, we do not make him learn Z before he has learned A. And no man seeking salvation can expect to learn election before he has learned faith. The first text he has to do with is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." After he understands the meaning of that, he may go on to "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." An employer was about to pay a sum of money to one of his workmen whom he knew to be a Calvinist, but before doing so said to him, "Jim, it is decreed that I shall pay you this money?" The man promptly replied, "Put it in my hand, sir, and I will tell you." That is the true principle. It is absurd to ask, "Has God decreed my salvation?" Has He put my name among the elect? There is no way to find that out. Repent, and believe the Gospel, and there is not a shadow of doubt as to your election.

Underneath even the grossest forms in which the doctrine of election has been preached, there lies a truth which ought to make it, not a bugbear, but a comfort to Christians. What is the truth? Just this—that every Christian is what he is by the grace of God. I bow before the Sovereign Mercy, saying, "O God, to thee alone, I owe my pardon, my Christian life, my hope of heaven." This is election. It does not mean that God has arbitrarily selected a few to bring them to glory, leaving all the rest uncared for. It means that God is graciously securing in this world a people for Himself—a multitude no man can number out of every tribe and nation. The question is often asked, "What is to be the fate of the heathen who never heard the Gospel?" Some earnest and thoughtful men have adopted the theory of a probation after death. That is to say, they hold that the Gospel will be preached in the region of the dead and the eternal fate of those who never heard it on earth will be sealed according to their acceptance or rejection of it there. But as a Calvinist I have a far better solution of the difficulty than that. I fall back on the character of God. I believe in His sovereign grace, which is choosing a people for Himself—seeking and saving the lost. That love of His has no limits, and so I am sure that every one, this wide world over, who ought to be saved will be saved. My hope for the heathen then, is not in a second probation, but in the character of God. His