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## THE TERCENTENARY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL MARTYRS:

BARROWE, GREENWOOD, AND PENRY.

(By F. M. Holmes, in *Great Thoughts*.)

Early one spring morning, three hundred years ago, two men were hanged on Tyburn tree; and near by stood two aged women who had carried the condemned men's shrouds to the gallows.

The birds, we may imagine, were singing brightly their morning song, the leaves of trees were budding with tender green, the April sky was flecked with lovely blue and dotted white with fleecy clouds, and streaks of light from the rising sun were beaming upwards over London city; life was awakening; but these men were dying, and dying calmly, quietly, and nobly.

What had they done to merit this terrible punishment? They were not murderers, they were not thieves, they had not proved traitors to their country. They had simply refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Queen Elizabeth as Head or Governor of the Church; they had refused to obey a severe law passed in the year 1582, and making worship in any method than that of the Church of England to be treason. For this the penalty was death.

It was for these crimes that these two men were executed. They held that the Church should be free from all State control, and they held also that persons should be free to separate themselves from the Church of England if they could not conscientiously accept all her articles of belief.

One of these daring men, whose name was Henry Barrowe, had actually refused before Archbishop Whitgift to take the Oath of Supremacy—that is, the Oath acknowledging Queen Elizabeth as Supreme Head of the Church, and the other, who was named John Greenwood, had been arrested while in the very act of holding a private religious meeting, which presumably was not according to the forms of the Church of England, in the house of a certain Mr. Henry Martin.

And so after long incarceration in prisons they were taken almost secretly to Tyburn early on April 6th, 1593, and hanged there. Tyburn was in those days, and continued to be so until 1783, the principal place for executions in London. It was situated somewhere about the spot where the Marble Arch now stands, at the north-eastern corner of Hyde Park, and at the end of Oxford street, once known as Oxford Road. And to this day the district of London just to the north of this place is called Tyburnia.

Nearly two months later, at St. Thomas-a-Watering, Old Kent-road, the place for executions for the county of Surrey, another noble martyr in the great cause of liberty suffered death. This was John Penry, who appears to have been one of the most just and righteous of men, a scholar and an evangelist; a man of the most abounding energy, and yet of great

faculties of reflection. He, like Barrowe and Greenwood, was an Independent—or to use the term now more usually adopted by that denomination—a Congregationalist. And these three men, whose testimonies and deaths the Congregationalists are celebrating this summer, were three of the most prominent of the Congregational martyrs in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Penry was a Welshman who had labored to evangelize his own country, and it is worthy of note that in those early days the English and Welsh Independents were so closely associated that among the three great martyrs for Congregationalism, one of them was a Welshman. They were all university men, and had all been at Cambridge, though Penry had been at Oxford as well. Greenwood was educated at Corpus Christi, and had become a Church of England clergyman, but we may suppose that his mind was imbued with the principles of the Re-

formers' Hall, and no fewer than a hundred were lodged in Bridewell Gaol, opposite the spot where the Ludgate Hill station of the London, Chatham, and Dover railway now stands.

For a whole year they appear to have languished in prison, and then seven women and twenty-four men were released. The prison was a filthy and most unhealthy place, and therein Richard Fitz, the minister, and Thomas Rowland, the deacon, of this little church died from gaol fever. In a document written apparently by some of these persecuted people they speak of themselves as 'a poor congregation whom God hath separated from the Church of England, and from the mingled and false worshipping therein used,' and they also speak of Fitz as their minister, and Thomas Rowland as their deacon, and assert that these two and others 'had been fined and killed by long imprisonment.' No doubt many

the pastor, was the first Congregational church in London of which we have any reliable and authentic record.

The occasion of that meeting in Plummers' Hall should have been a festive one. It was none other than a wedding, and the attendants appear to have made the nuptial celebration an occasion for meeting together to worship according to their convictions. At that time apparently, they had not actually separated from the Church of England, though we doubt not but they had held secret meetings before.

Then the grave religious service was rudely broken. In burst sheriffs' officers upon the startled worshippers, and they were hauled off to prison. For, any meeting for worship, except according to the order of the Church of England, and conducted by her clergy, was then illegal. And in the noisome prison apparently, these poor persecuted folk separated themselves from the Established Church, and formed themselves into a society or congregation.

That imprisonment of the hundred persons in Bridewell must have shown to men and women whose minds were seriously turned in the direction of religious reform, that there was little or no prospect of improvement in the Church itself, and it also must have showed them how autocratic Elizabeth had determined to be in religious matters.

Other survivors of that terrible punishment were released in about another year's time, and they held meetings in Southwark for worship. Then arose Robert Browne—a relative of Lord Burghley—an able and courageous man who, about 1580, began to formulate the principles and ideas of the Separatists, and soon after actually founded a church at Norwich on Congregational principles. The Bishop soon sent him to prison, and he escaped to Holland. But there appear to have been other meetings in the same county, and the Bishop strove hard to suppress them. Two prominent men were imprisoned—Elias Thacker and John Copping, and after being kept in gaol for some years, they were hung at Bury St. Edmunds.

Greenwood had been a chaplain in Lord Robert Rich's house at Rochford, in Essex, and Lord Rich was a leading Puritan; but Greenwood committed here the great crime of actually holding religious services different from the order of the Church of England; and we are not very surprised, therefore, when subsequently, his mind still tending in this direction, he separated from that Church.

It was toward Independency that he seems to have turned. At all events he was found holding a meeting at Henry Martin's house in London in October, 1586, and the persons there were forthwith shut up in the Clink prison in Southwark.

He had a friend in Henry Barrowe, who

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ON THE WAY TO TYBURN FOR EXECUTION.

formation, and pushing them a little further than did the Church of England, he came to

### PURITANISM AND INDEPENDENCY.

There appear to have always been men who thought the Church of England did not proceed far enough in the direction of reform at the time of the Reformation in the Tudor period, and such men and women are generally spoken of as Puritans. The word appears first to have been a nickname, and applied to earnest persons of pure lives, who objected to the discipline and ceremonies of the Established Church, but did not separate themselves from it. But as time went on some did separate from the Church, and there came a day—the 19th of June, 1567—when a number of them were discovered meeting in Plum-

mers' Hall, and no fewer than a hundred were lodged in Bridewell Gaol, opposite the spot where the Ludgate Hill station of the London, Chatham, and Dover railway now stands.

For a whole year they appear to have languished in prison, and then seven women and twenty-four men were released. The prison was a filthy and most unhealthy place, and therein Richard Fitz, the minister, and Thomas Rowland, the deacon, of this little church died from gaol fever. In a document written apparently by some of these persecuted people they speak of themselves as 'a poor congregation whom God hath separated from the Church of England, and from the mingled and false worshipping therein used,' and they also speak of Fitz as their minister, and Thomas Rowland as their deacon, and assert that these two and others 'had been fined and killed by long imprisonment.' No doubt many

more died in the filthy and unwholesome gaol, and should be counted up in the list of Free Church martyrs. The church of the Bridewell was one of the first Independent or Congregational churches in England, one existing at Horsingham, in Wilts, however, claiming 1566 as its date of foundation. Foxe, moreover, speaks of some 'congregations' existing in London in 1555, and it is asserted that there was a Baptist church in England as far back as 1417, two years after the famous battle of Agincourt! No doubt those persons whose minds were tending toward separation from the church were obliged to hold their meetings so secretly that all record—if any existed—is now lost. However this may be, this Congregational church, of which Fitz was