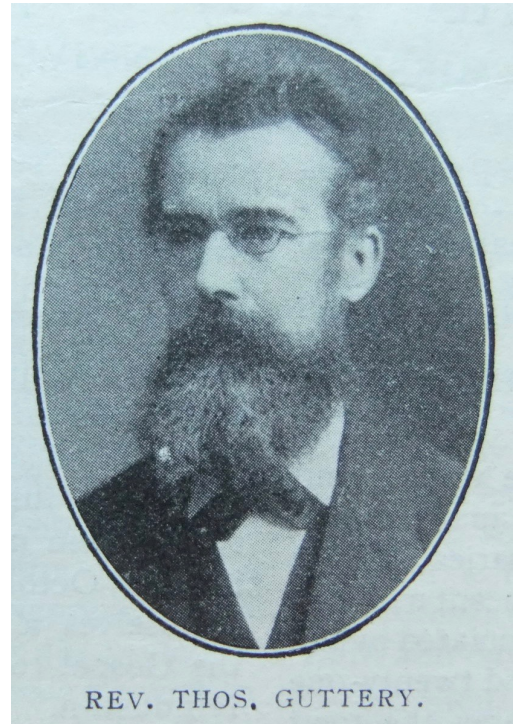


Transcription of article in the Christian Messenger by 'One who knew him' in a series 'Preachers of Thirty Years Ago'

THIRTY years ago, on both sides of the Atlantic, no name stood higher among our great preachers than Thomas Guttery. On days of high festival and Connexional assembly, he was welcomed as a watchman and a warrior. His memory is still a joy and inspiration to many who were thrilled by his faith and touched by his appeal.

He hailed from South Staffordshire, and owed much to men so far apart in type and temperament as James Prosser and Philip Pugh. The one kindled in him a simple faith, and the other a love of learning that never deserted him. He prized the fervid evangelism that saved the iron-workers of Staffordshire and added to it a culture that won him honour in the scholarly circles of the old and new world.

He first gained Connexional recognition during his term at Wolverhampton, and his appearances at the



Metropolitan Tabernacle and the Scarborough Conference are still remembered. His most successful terms of service were in Toronto, Canada, and Sunderland. In the former he was regarded as the most eloquent voice in the city, and there he built the famous Carlton Street Church, which remains one of the finest buildings in Canadian Methodism. In the latter he gained for the Tatham Street Church a foremost place in the life of the town; crowds attended his ministry, and his week-end services ranked among the largest in the country. In Southport, too, his influence was great, and the Cambridge Hall was none too large for the congregations that thronged to his appeal.

As these lines are penned the writer can almost see him in his pulpit. He was short of stature, of graceful figure and posture. He was instinct with life and full of nerve. His eyes were at times aflame with holy passion, and then would melt into the tenderness of loving appeal. His bushy hair crowned a forehead broad and pale. His mouth was large and sensitive, the natural organ of an orator. His voice was most musical, of full compass, and of deep quality. His gestures were full of meaning, till one writer said that "he talked all over him." He had a full command of simple Saxon speech, and his accent was faultless. It was natural for him to be eloquent, and for both pulpit and platform God had fitted him to be a leader of men. He possessed a rugged moral strength. Righteous indignation could set him aflame, but his love of culture, his gracious refinement, enabled him to be a minister of "sweetness and light."

The writer was privileged to sit under his ministry for several years. Certain features of his preaching will never be forgotten. He had intense fervour. His appeal was immediate and magnetic. There could be no dull moments as he spoke, for he was all aglow with the urgency of a tremendous appeal. He preached for an instant verdict, not of approval for himself, but of surrender to his Lord. Delay to him seemed denial, and he swept many a critical hearer off his feet. He had wonderful spiritual insight; the deep things of faith were luminous to him. The old prophets were heroes that he honoured, and he delighted to adapt their dark sayings to modern conditions. His power in prayer will never be forgotten, so sweet and solemn and searching. He had tender familiarity with the

Highest, and more than one worshipper has said, "I looked round to see the Lord with whom Mr. Guttery spoke face to face."

He had great dramatic power. He made the scenes live before a congregation. He marshalled the characters and analysed their motives; clothed names with flesh and blood, and brought historic incidents out of the misty past into the glowing present. He would have been a great figure on the stage, and when he let his dramatic genius have free scope, as in his lecture on "Wolsey," he thrilled the chilliest audience. In this dramatic gift he very much resembled the famous J.B. Gough, but had a deeper sense of solemn responsibility.

His message was always full of a large charity. He saw the best in men, and had hope for all men. His sympathies were boundless, and though he denounced tyranny with a prophet's wrath, he never forgot that the tyrant is to be pitied for his deeper shame. Naturally he was endowed with the gift of sarcasm. When he wished, his irony could burn like acid; but he took this sword seldom from its scabbard, for all that savoured of unbrotherliness was offensive to him. He loved the ministry with a great love; to him it seemed the highest calling on earth. And there are in our ranks to-day men whom he delighted to cheer and succour in their evil days.

In all his ministry he never lost his virile manhood. He was wholesome and natural, brave and true. How he enjoyed clean humour! His laughter was contagious, and to smite pretentious dignity was a sport in which he revelled. Though a seer and saint, he was never an ascetic; he delighted in the social grip and family love. He was a cheery comrade for a dark hour, and for this reason men were always conspicuous among his admirers.

He never knew the shadows of old age, for he was but fifty-seven when he was called to rest. He had burned himself down and worn himself out by ceaseless toil, but he lived long enough to win the love of multitudes, and to give to Primitive Methodism a great ministry that will live on in its finest genius and holiest tradition.

References

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