

Rev. Robt. Hill Thornton

Obituary borrowed from British American Presbyterian.

When Dr. Thornton arrived in Canada and commenced his labours and for a number of years after, the work of the missionary and even of a pastor were very different from what it is now; the settlements were so scattered and the roads so unformed that it required not only missionary zeal but no small amount of physical vigour and endurance to carry on ministerial work. The Christian labourer had in reality to "endure hardness" in those days. Dr. Thornton was indomitable in his journeys and labours. After a time he made Whitby the centre of his ministerial labours but these labours were extended far and wide around him. The truth is, Dr. Thornton may be regarded as the main founder of Presbyterianism in the whole region now known as South Ontario. Far and wide did his labours extend. He was particular in keeping appointments and even to the last never shrunk from any duty assigned to him.

Dr. Thornton not only was a diligent and faithful pastor but all along took a deep interest in the cause of education, and indeed in everything connected with the social, moral and spiritual good of the community. He did much by instruction and by personal intercourse to stimulate the young to mental and spiritual improvement.

Dr. Thornton was greatly blessed in his family. His was verily a happy Christian home. True the King of Terrors entered it repeatedly, and bore away near and dear ones. His eldest son was removed when verging on manhood and full of promise, as gladdens the hearts of Christian parents, a sweet little daughter was suddenly snatched from them by a painful accident. Not many years ago another daughter 'woman grown' gifted by nature but more by grace, was called away.....his wife died a year before him.

His end was peaceful. Owing to the nature of the disease, his prostration was so great that he could speak only in monosyllables, and that with great difficulty. But towards the close, the tongue which had so often told of Christ's love became powerless, but there needed not a deathbed declaration that he had felt the power of that Love. One that was present on the solemn occasion thanked God for the testimony of a long, consistent and zealous Christian life. Who that knows aught of his life and labours will not feel prompted to exclaim, "Soldier of Christ, well done!" ?

"His funeral took place on the 13th attended by many who had known and respected him in life. The number would have been very much greater but for the severe weather which prevailed at the time.

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