

In Memoriam.

JOHN TODHUNTER,

M.D., D.P.H., UNIV. DUBL.

PROBABLY quite unknown to the present, and, perchance, half forgotten by the passing generation of Medical Practitioners in Dublin, the name of JOHN TODHUNTER remains a living memory to the writer of these few lines of tribute to a life-long friend.

Born in Dublin in the year 1839, and therefore in his seventy-seventh year at the time of his death on October 25th, 1916, JOHN TODHUNTER came of a sturdy English and Quaker stock. His father was Thomas Harvey Todhunter, a Dublin merchant, long resident on Sir John Rogerson's Quay in this city. In the fine old dwelling-house in that much changed locality, young TODHUNTER spent his childhood. He was educated at the Friends' School, York, and afterwards at Trinity College, Dublin, taking the degrees of M.B. and M.Ch. in the University of Dublin in 1867. In 1869, he became a Licentiate of the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland, and in 1871 he took the M.D. Degree of the University on passing the first examination ever held for the newly-instituted Diploma in State Medicine. His fellow-candidates for the diploma were the late Dr. Arthur Wynne Foot, the late Professor Gerald Francis Yeo, and the writer—now the only survivor of the quartet.

DR. TODHUNTER, after obtaining his qualifications, studied for some time in Vienna and Paris. Returning to Dublin, he commenced practice as a physician, and in due time was appointed Visiting Physician to Cork Street Fever Hospital and House of Recovery, as well as to the Friends' Retreat Hospital, Dublin. In these institutions he did good work.

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But Literature and Poetry had already marked him for their own, and he yielded to the spell of their clarion-call. DR. TODHUNTER was Professor of English Literature in the Alexandra College from 1870 to 1874. In the latter year he left Dublin for London, in which he made his permanent home—a home that became a resort for artists and men of letters through many a succeeding year.

This is not the place to enlarge on DR. TODHUNTER'S literary and poetic powers, but two or three sentences may well be culled from an appreciating obituary notice which appeared in *The Times* of October 27th. They run as follows:—

“TODHUNTER'S first volume was a collection of narrative and lyrical poems entitled ‘Laurella’ (1876). Grace, tenderness, and melody marked these poems; in later years he did much stronger work under the influence of ancient Celtic literature, to the study of which he was led by the memorable rendering of the Cuchullin legend published in 1878 by Standish O'Grady. ‘The Banshee’ (1888) and ‘Three Bardic Tales’ (1896) contain the best of TODHUNTER'S work in poetry.”

One is tempted here to quote the third and last stanza in “A Song of Sustainment,” published in 1876:—

“Faint and weary, wait on God patiently:

It may be

He would have thee stand and wait,

Till He ope for thee a gate

Meet for thee.

Being strong, strive ever upward like a fire;

Still aspire

Toward the Perfect and the Pure—

God appoints thy life, be sure,

Never tire.

Trust that all things well-ordered from above

Rightly move.

God is just—hold fast that creed,

It will serve thee in thy need,

Till thou come to know indeed

God is love.”

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But to return—when the writer of this brief memoir entered the wards of the Meath Hospital and County Dublin Infirmary as a medical student in the winter session of the year 1866, he found JOHN TODHUNTER acting as Clinical Clerk to two great physicians, William Stokes and Alfred Hudson—men who were the complement of each other, Stokes, the philosophic physician; Hudson, the keen observer and the skilled and resourceful therapist.

TODHUNTER took the neophyte by the hand, initiated him into the mysteries of bedside teaching and learning, taught him the rudiments of clinical medicine, by his conduct and example brought home to his mind the solemnity of the work in which teacher and taught were engaged, and showed him in a practical way how precious a privilege it is to minister to the sick and suffering. Small wonder, therefore, that the writer remembers those far-off days with gratitude and pleasure.

J. W. M.
