

Rev. Thomas Holmes Timmons: A Tribute

by George W. Yarbrough, North Georgia Conference, 1914

Rev. Thomas Holmes Timmons was born in Coweta County, Georgia, June 2, 1848. There were seven brothers and one sister in his father's family. He survived them all—falling asleep, dying as quietly as "a wave along the shore," on Sunday, October 8th, 1914 just as a sweet prayer was being offered by his pastor, Bro. J. H. Mashburn, at the eleven o'clock service of the Methodist Church in Thomson, Ga. The day and the sacred circumstances of his passing into the heavens could not have been more fitting and more in accord with his wishes if the ordering of his exit had been directed by himself.

Brother Timmons was of noble parentage. His father's ancestors were of English origin. The great ancestor of his paternal grandmother was Rev. Wm. Turner, of Scotland. His great grandfather, Zaddock Turner, was one of the descendants of Rev. William Turner. He was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and fought with Gen. Washington in the battles of Brandywine and Trenton, in the campaigns of Philadelphia and New York, and was present when the British surrendered at Yorktown. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Sparta, Ga.

Rev. William Timmons, father of the subject of this tribute, was born in Hancock County. He was a man of rare consecration to Christ, a holiness man of the highest order, and it was under his preaching that W. C. Dunlap, a member of long standing in this Conference was brought to see the truth that the doctrine of sanctification and perfect love was within the reach of God's children—a doctrine advocated earnestly, and faithfully illustrated to the end of his life, a life we all remember to this day.

Brother Thomas H. Timmons drank of the same spring unsealed in the home of his saintly father from childhood to the end of his long and useful life. Four sons,¹ out of seven, followed in the steps of their godly father as earnest, faithful, successful preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This fact of raising four sons, out of the seven, for the Methodist itinerant ministry justifies associating the name of that noble father with the subject of this sketch and his three preacher brothers. Our Church has a right to look to the families of its preachers for recruits to her ministry and a failure here should awaken within us, thoughtful, earnest, prayerful, self-examination. A group of sons following a father who considered it his highest honor to preach the gospel, singing through the conflicts, trials and triumphs of the Methodist itinerancy "We are traveling home to God, in the way our fathers trod,"² is an uplifting sight and feeds the faith and hope of our cause for the future.

Brother Timmons was converted and joined the Church at the age of ten years, something rare, but not without precedent and not to awaken wonder when the atmosphere of his home is taken into account. From a child he knew the Scriptures which made him wise unto salvation; and while his early educational advantages were limited he availed himself of every help within his reach, and forming early in life, the habit of close observation and persevering application. He grew to be a student, the purpose to get all he could out of life never forsaking him.

About the time he was beginning to reach out into broader views of life and to seize its inviting opportunities, the Civil War broke out, and the patriotic blood of his Revolutionary ancestors moved him early to enlist in defense of his country. Joining in 1861 the 56th Georgia regiment he served in the Kentucky and Tennessee campaigns.

¹ Robert Abijah, Thomas Holmes, Benson Ellison Lane, and Docton Floyd Clarke.

² Opening lines of the second stanza of "The Pilgrims Song," a hymn by the English Methodist and Moravian evangelist John Cennick (1718–55).

The war over, he was ordained Local Deacon by Bishop Wightman at a session of the Alabama Conference in 1865, and through the influence of his brother, Rev. Robert A. Timmons, a member of that body, he was appointed to Calhoun, in the Florida Conference. He remained in Florida two years, but on account of bad health he did no work for more than a year. In 1869 he was appointed by the writer to a circuit in the Marietta District, North Georgia Conference, to take the place of a pastor who had broken down on the work. In December of the same year, 1869, he was admitted on trial by the North Georgia Conference at Rome, Ga. In 1870 he was junior preacher with John W. King on the Putnam Circuit; in 1871 on the Lafayette Circuit; in 1872, Long Cane; in 1873-74, Palmetto and Jones Chapel, Atlanta; in 1877, Cartersville.

In December, 1877, he transferred to the South Georgia Conference, where he remained one year, serving the Lumpkin and Weston charge. In December, 1878, he was transferred to the North Georgia Conference, and appointed to Forrestville for 1879. In 1880-81 he had charge of Appling Circuit; in 1882, Thompson; in 1883-84, Harlem; in 1885, Sparta; in 1886-87, Jackson; in 1888, Summerville; in 1890-81, Culloden; in 1892, Senoia; in 1893-84 Jonesboro; in 1895, Lawrenceville; in 1896, West Munroe; in 1897-89, Appling Circuit; in 1899 (close of the year) he was placed on the superannuated list, and this relation he sustained until his death.

He was ordained Elder by Bishop Paine at Newnan, Ga., December 1873.

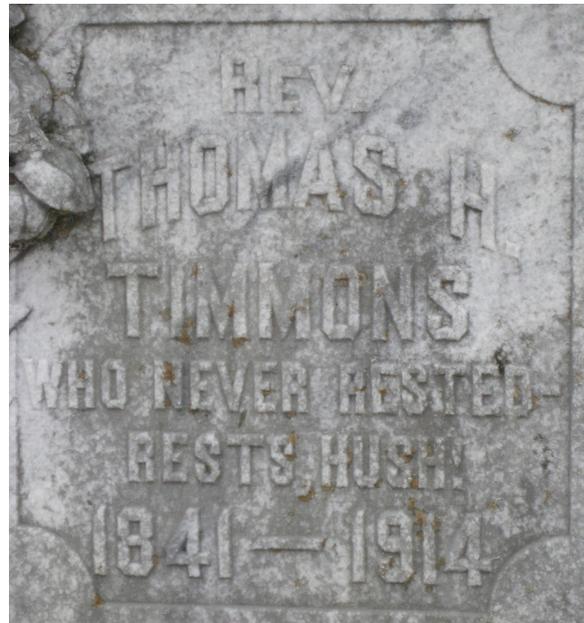
Brother Timmons' cast was military, chastened by a genial flow of spirits, a uniform kindness and affability of manner, warm and abiding in his social relations and all regulated by great prudence.

As pastor he was watchful over the flock, firm in discipline but never severe; the religious element of his character controlling his administration so clearly and impressively as to win the admiration, love, esteem of all under his care. By steady and persistent application he rose to the grade of a most acceptable and useful preacher, and as a Review writer and contributor to our Christian Advocate, he was recognized as reaching a rank of decided merit.

In his book published a short time before his death, *Beyond the Valley of the Shadows*, he shows a thorough delineation of Christian character, and the influence of the gospel in all the vocations of life, and the triumph of faith over death.

In one of his sketches, unpublished, of himself he records: "The soul, secure in its immortality, smiles at the drawn dagger and defies its point. I wish all men well. My motto has been not to live and let live, but to live and help live.

"I have no treasure here, and when this earthly house shall fall, I wish to be buried in the clothes I preached in, and when my body is laid beneath the dust and dew, I ask no costly shaft to mark the spot. I ask for no polished marble sculptured verse to designate my silent house of clay, but let some gentle hand trace on artless board, or simple stone, this epitaph: Thomas Holmes Timmons, who never rested, rest, Hush!"



Gravestone of Thomas H. Timmons in Thompson, Georgia containing epitaph from Yarbrough's *Tribute*.