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REV. THOMAS DIXON, JR.

He is a genius—nothing more nor less. There is no other way to explain his prominence and the mastery he has over audiences, whether educated or uneducated, North or South. Not yet twenty-four years old, Rev. Thomas Dixon, Jr., who leaves North Carolina next week to take charge of a leading Baptist church in Boston, has attained an eminence not before reached by any native North Carolinian of this generation, if in the entire history of the State. Elected to the State Legislature before he was twenty-one years old, he made a brilliant and conspicuous member, winning a State-wide reputation for oratory. Obtaining license, he soon after became a member of the bar and practiced law until something over a year ago. He then felt called upon to give up his practice and his profession to enter the ministry. Without theological training or extensive biblical knowledge, he started upon his work as a preacher as soon as he felt that duty required. From his first sermon he has attracted large congregations and made an impression unequalled by any other North Carolina preacher of today. Called to the pastorate of the Goldsboro Baptist church, Mr. Dixon entered upon his ministry with zeal. He was eminently successful there and left, to the regret of all, to come to Raleigh. His success in Raleigh has been phenomenal. He has grown as a preacher and his congregations have been large and constantly increasing. The two have gone *pari passu*. Fine sermons, well delivered, make large and attentive congregations. Mr. Dixon has sought—and has succeeded—in making every sermon better than the one that preceded it. With his growing hold upon the people and his increasing number of hearers, he put the whip and spur upon his endeavor and by hard study he made himself every day a more interesting and instructive preacher. In Raleigh we knew his incomparable talent and his growing strength. His fame early spread abroad through the State, and calls to preach and to lecture poured in upon him. Intent upon his systematic study of theology and kindred subjects, he declined these calls and devoted himself to his development. Raleigh was selfish, and, while hoping and predicting for him a brilliant career, we trusted that we might keep him on his native soil. But so bright a light cannot shine alone for the few. It throws its radiance over a wide extent. Soon there came invitations from the great North, and calls with large salaries were not wanting. The brilliant efforts of North Carolina's most eloquent young divine, coupled with the fact that his gospel had no tincture of anything antagonistic to the "old fashioned" religion, made many churches desire to install him as pastor. He resisted the consideration of every call until the one came to go to Boston. It had many advantages, chief among which was that it is the city of intellectual vigor. To preach to a congregation made up largely of Harvard and Yale graduates, to obtain release from all duties except preaching and abundant opportunity for study; to be in receipt of a salary sufficiently large to constantly add to his library; and the stimulus these things give to a young preacher—all these operated to secure the acceptance of the call.

The departure of Mr. Dixon from North Carolina is a positive loss to the State. This loss is not to-day fully appreciated, because Mr. Dixon is not fully understood. We know him well, and we have no hesitation in saying that he has no rival in the pulpit in the State, young as he is. There are preachers who are better instructed in theology, and whose scholastic attainments exceed his attainments, but there is no man in the North Carolina pulpit who is so popular a preacher. "The common people bear him gladly," and the scholars are instructed by his preaching. His success is wonderful and can be attributed to nothing but his great natural endowments and his close application. He knows the people. He knows politics and politicians. He knows the motives that actuate men and women. He has touched shoulder to shoulder with all kinds of men. This knowledge is most serviceable to him, and he knows how to use it. He believes—and every close observer knows it to be true—that there is no theme so popular as the theme of the gospel. He preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. He preaches that Christ is "mighty to save." He is not sensational, unless it be sensational to make the gospel interesting and attractive. He has no taint of unbelief. He has no theological vagaries. He is not affected by any of the skepticism which is so prevalent, especially among young preachers. He preaches a pure gospel, and holds up a high standard of moral excellence. The Bible is his book, but he brings to his use all the learning he has, or can obtain, to instruct and interest the people. He is a student and readily assimilates what he learns. He presents old truths in new settings. He makes maxims ring. He knows how to tell "the old, old story" so as to make it attractive and fresh. This power, combined with his acquirements and his eloquence, makes him a great preacher. This is high praise; we could not say less of him and do him justice.

The call to Boston opens up a wide field for Mr. Dixon. The ORMOND believes he will win great fame, and do a great work for his Master in that centre of highest culture. Regretting to see him leave North Carolina there is this gratifying reflection: This is one of other evidences that in the South is found the best type of the gospel preacher, and the North recognizes it. Mr. Dixon was called to Boston because a pastor was desired who would preach the Bible truths, and who had not been warped by the isms and false doctrine which so often makes preaching fall unheeded upon the world. Especially in New England have the preachers imbibed opinions which are regarded by us in the South as unscriptural. "Advanced thinkers" in pulpits spit theological hairs while souls perish for want of the gospel. The call of Mr. Dixon is equivalent to say-

ing what we know to be true: That the Southern preachers have not gone away from the "ancient landmarks." Boston wanted a brilliant, orthodox preacher to preach the gospel, and it turned to the South to find him. It is to be congratulated that Mr. Dixon accepted the call. North Carolina is loath to see him leave, but it will ever rejoice that it has a great preacher in a Northern centre whose assured fame will reflect honor upon the State of his birth.