

## **Dr. George Matheson**

We are indebted to Dr. R. L. Mackay of Wolverhampton, for notes on the life of Dr. George Matheson, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E., who wrote the well known hymn "O love that wilt not let me go", perhaps one of the most inspiring and at the same time most sympathetic hymns ever written. Indeed it is possible to read it simply as poetry and to admire its construction, choice of words and restraint in their use.

Dr. Matheson was born in 1842, in Glasgow, of middle class parents. His father, also George Matheson, was born in Dornoch and later was a founder of the business of Wilson and Matheson in Glassford Street, Glasgow.

Dr. Matheson was one of eight children and became a student at Glasgow University, attaining an honours distinction in Philosophy.

His eyesight was never good and latterly he saw only shadows, but he was always cheerful and dictated his essays to his eldest sister, Jane. He wrote many articles and a number of books using Braille and a typewriter.

He was at first Assistant Minister at Sandyford Church, Inellan, and his name became a household word throughout Scotland.

"O love that wilt not let me go" was written in 1882. Apparently he wrote it in little more than five minutes and it did not require any "re-touching", although the hymn committee asked him to change his original line "I climbed the rainbow through the rain", to the version we now know: "I trace the rainbow through the rain". Whatever the reason, one likes to know how he himself saw it and some may prefer the original.

He was called to St. Bernard's Church in Edinburgh in 1886, retired in 1897 and died in 1906. He was buried in the family vault at Glasgow Necropolis and this information may be helpful to those wishing to enquire further.

Dr. Mackay has also given us rather more information that it has been possible to reproduce in this Newsletter. His biography The Life of George Matheson, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E., by D. McMillan, was published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1907.

CONVENER.