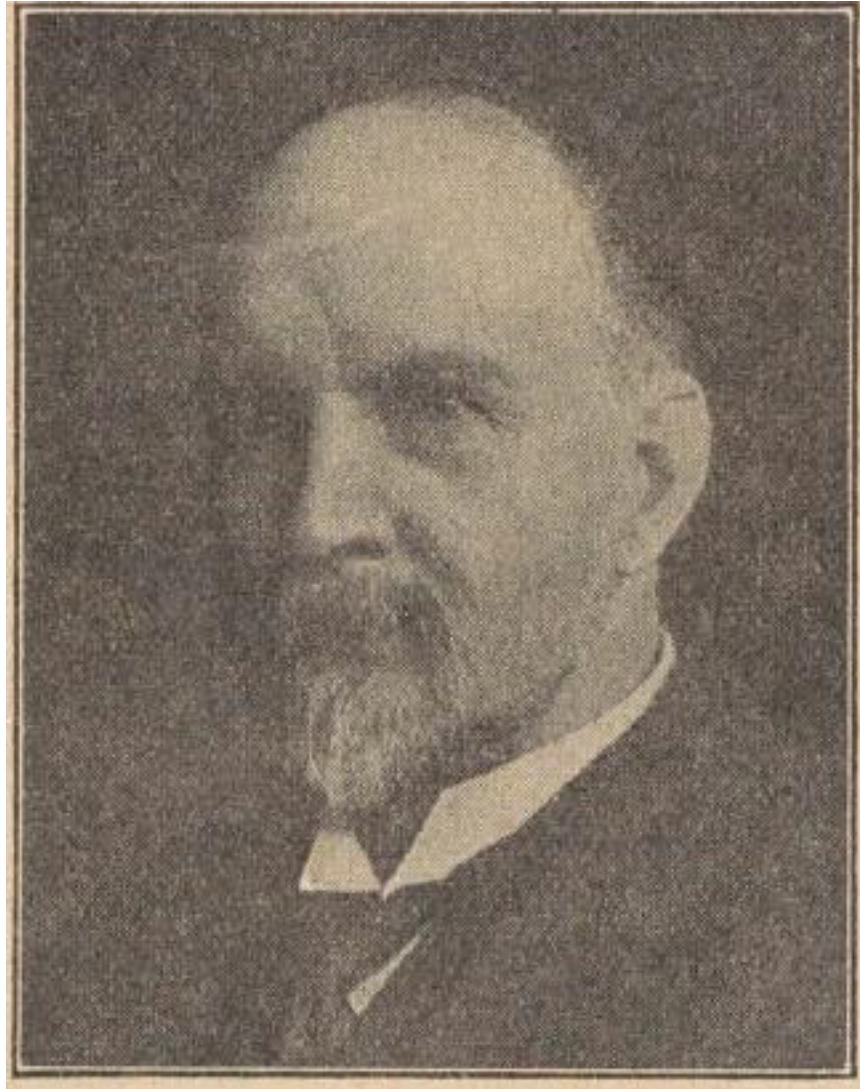


HENRY PICKERING

An Appreciation by J. B. WATSON



THERE passed from our midst on January 20th, 1841, Henry Pickering, a servant of God much loved and esteemed, well known as the Editor of *The Witness*, and as founder and chairman of the publishing firm of Pickering and Inglis, Ltd.

He had been in poor health for some time and had gone, some months ago, from his London home to stay at Largs, (a town on the Firth of Clyde in North Ayrshire, Scotland) and it was there he passed away. He was 82 years of age.

He was a Northumbrian, born at Kenton, near Newcastle, where his father kept the village store. When he was about 16 years of age, he was converted to God in a farmer's barn, where Gospel meetings were being held. The preacher was Mr. J. Cecil Hoyle, of Spain. He came into touch with "Brethren" right at the beginning of his Christian experience, and early showed a keen zest in Gospel work, joining with like-minded youths in preaching in villages and in the distribution of Gospel tracts and books. It was at this time that he turned from the profession of teaching which he had intended to follow, and began a very modest printing shop in his father's house. For some time, to develop this business, he travelled the district soliciting printing orders.

When he was 28 years of age he removed to Glasgow and began work in a Tract Depot there and in the following year married Miss Johnstone, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Through more than half a century Mrs. Pickering has been the devoted partner of his life and work. (Their family consists of one son, now a director of the firm, and three daughters.)

In Glasgow, he threw in his lot with the assembly then meeting in Marble Hall, where Messrs. J. R. Caldwell, C. P. Watson, Wm. Kyle and others were in fellowship, and soon became busily engaged in preaching the Gospel both in and out of doors. In 1897, he moved to Elim Hall Assembly, and for the next 25 years took a leading part, not only in the work and witness of the company there, but in almost every spiritual enterprise in which the assemblies of Glasgow joined forces. For a long period, he was a convener and organizer of the well-known Half Yearly Meetings.

In preaching, addressing Sunday school anniversary gatherings, teachers' conferences and general conferences, he was tirelessly active during these years, and the meetings in Glasgow and Lanarkshire owed a great deal to his devoted labours. The acceptance his ministry found, opened doors to a wider field, and he helped frequently in English, Welsh and Irish cities also.

As a preacher, he had a way all his own; a breezy, topical approach to his themes, with a spice of humour now and then. Ready, simple, orderly, often using alliterative headings, he appealed to the ordinary person with little or no Biblical or theological background. He did much to popularize the Gospel object-lesson and the blackboard lesson in children's work, methods now widely recognized and used as effective means of instilling Gospel truth into their young minds.

Meantime, he had made remarkable progress in his business. After seven years in Glasgow, he was joined in an ideal business partnership by Mr. William Inglis, and a printing works was begun in Bothwell Street. The now familiar name of Pickering and Inglis thus came into being. Since that time, the expansion of the business has been constant, and branches have been opened up in London (where the bookshop of Alfred Holness, 14, Paternoster Row was acquired in 1919), Liverpool, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Manchester, whilst there are overseas agencies in New York, Sydney and Auckland. The staple line from the first has been the publication and distribution of sound evangelical books, tracts and periodicals, and the concern is now one of the best known of its kind in the world. This result, from such small beginnings, is a tribute to the industry and sound business ability of Mr. Pickering as founder and head of the business. He moved his home to London in 1922 and has since then devoted himself mainly to his editorial work. In 1914, at the close of Mr. Caldwell's long period of editorship of *The Witness*, Mr. Pickering succeeded him. This was probably his best-loved work and he continued it with marked acceptance and success right up to the time of his death.

He wrote numerous tracts and articles, but it is by his work as an editor that he will be remembered. He compiled a number of books for Christian workers, among which are "Through Eye-Gate to Heart-Gate," "Bright Beams from the Blackboard," "One Hundred Twice-born Men" and "A Thousand Tales worth Telling", and some volumes of spiritual ministry—"Soul Food," "Fresh Minted Gold," and "The Believer's Blue Book." He was interested in all that bears on the history of the people called "Brethren" and edited a collection of short biographies of leaders among them, called "Chief Men Among the Brethren."

The writer enjoyed the privilege of his friendship during the closing phase of his life, the years of his residence in London. He could draw on an inexhaustible store of memories of his preaching experiences, and, when in the mood, his reminiscences were absorbingly interesting and entertaining. In character, he was a Valiant for Truth, set for the defense of "the old paths." His preaching and writing were "popular"—they appealed not so much to the small percentage of the studious-minded among his public, but to the man in the street, the office, the shop, the factory, and to the

woman in the kitchen. A shrewd judge of a man, he was strong in will and purpose, independent in spirit. He had even in old age, a marvellous power with children because he loved them. He was a staunchly loyal friend, and a doughty opponent to those whom he found it necessary to withstand. In his Home-call, we have lost from our midst, a truly remarkable personality, a gift to the churches of the saints, a wise counsellor, a true servant of God, and a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Harvester" March 1941