



RICE T. HOPKINS, well known in Britain and Australia.

RICE THOMAS HOPKINS.

THE writer has known R.T.H., as he was frequently called, for thirty-seven years. I have stayed in his house in Birkenhead before he went to Melbourne, Australia, in August, 1882, and my first wife (who was a sister of the late Mrs. R. T. Hopkins) and I lived for several years with him in Melbourne. We followed them to the Antipodes in November, 1887.

RICE T. HOPKINS lived in Ipswich some years after marriage before going to Birkenhead, which he considered a better centre for his Gospel work in England, Ireland, and Scotland. He had large meetings in the Town Hall, Ipswich, with JOHN VINE, and many were converted to God.

His father was a Plymouth man, a successful lawyer and newspaper proprietor. The son grew up with a liking for the law, and was in his father's office until he was about eighteen. At that age he linked himself with C. H. SPURGEON for a couple of years, and used to preach on Clapham Common under a tree, with C. H. Spurgeon as a hearer. When about twenty he saw further than being a Baptist, and for some years preached wherever there was an open door, in music halls, theatres, churches, open-air, and other places throughout the United Kingdom.

His father, I believe, was Welsh, and he has a grandson named Rhys (not Rice). He was born again in his teens, and loved to preach in many churches in Scotland with J. A. Boswell, "*Ye must be born again.*" Many religious sinners were thoroughly aroused to see they needed something more than religion; they needed Christ. Many in these campaigns, when R.T.H. was little out of his teens, were converted to God. He laboured also in the Orkney Islands fifty years ago, and he and D. Munro had wonderful times in seeing sinners believing on the Lord Jesus Christ unto Everlasting Life. One would preach "law" and the other would follow with "grace." The late JOHN HEWISON, Westray, told me that R.T.H., if he had been a politician, would have been Prime Minister of England. At any rate, I think he might have become a Judge. But he cared for none of these things, they were only as chaff to the wheat to him, and so he laid his talents at the feet of his Lord.

Between thirty and forty years ago there was scarcely a meeting in Great Britain and Ireland that did not know of his powerful preaching and of his equally powerful

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ministry of the Word to saints. He was, in a number of ways, the most energetic preacher I ever came across. I have walked with him after luncheon from Kingsland Road, Birkenhead, to the Ferry, one and a half miles, then boat, and a mile on the Liverpool side, and he has nearly walked me off my feet, although I was much the taller of the two. Then he would get up and give a most vigorous address to Christians. He did not spare his brain or his body. He could hold people spellbound in the open-air, and I have heard him preach in Kirkwall for, I am sure, an hour. He was one of the most indefatigable men I ever knew.

I remember his arriving from Orkney in a snowstorm at the house of the late G. SHIVAS, Aberdeen, for the conference in January, about thirty-five years ago. He was as fresh and cheerful as possible as he warmed himself standing with his back to the fire, rubbing his hands. Nothing seemed to daunt him. In Tasmania, on his way to a meeting in Montagu, he sprained his ankle badly, and a brother had to carry him to the hall on his back. However, he insisted on taking the meeting, although he was in much pain. After a good brother carried him home on his back, they had to cut the boot open to get it off.

Children of God frequently wrote him about the Lord's Word and work, and he always replied by return of post. He was ever ready to help struggling saints as to difficulties, as to individuals, or as to companies. He would travel many miles out of his way to encourage others.

He was a good all-round man in the things of God. He had his failures, but we can leave all that to Him who will sift out the good from the bad.

Although he had a large business to manage in Melbourne, he would go 1200 miles to conferences in Queensland, taking three nights in the train; or 600 miles to Sydney; or 200 to Tasmania to preach the Gospel and feed the saints upon the sincere milk of the Word. Sometimes the weather was very hot and trying, but he was ever ready with the Word. He had a wonderful memory, was a great and rapid reader, and had a very large private library.

In Balaclava he built a hall at his own expense. He used to address Christians on Monday nights for three or four months in succession each year. Three to four hundred believers used to crowd these weekly meetings, and

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the word was with power and much profit to the hearers.

At the annual races near Melbourne he would have 20,000 tracts given away by about fifty brethren. We used to go on a low cart or dray drawn by two horses to the races, and have on each side of the cart in large letters on calico words of warning, such as "Where will you spend Eternity?" "Heaven or Hell, which?" "Prepare to meet thy God." Many could be seen reading the words as we passed through the crowds. One day three Australasian governors passed us in a state carriage, and we saluted them respectfully, which they graciously acknowledged. Gordon Hopkins, a younger brother, was a great help in connection with these messages.

R.T.H. spent large sums of money on tracts, and gave liberally to the Lord's servants and the poor. When he and his second son, William, came to England on business about eighteen years ago, they took the opportunity of giving tracts at the world-renowned Epsom Races. He wrote many of these messages himself and had hundreds of thousands given away. He also took a great interest in Sunday school work. For some years at the commencement he edited the *Herald of Salvation*, and articles from his pen appeared in the earlier numbers of *The Witness*.

A number of the gifted men who attended conferences with him are "with Christ," including Henry Groves, Henry Dyer, Samuel Blow, Thos. Newberry, Wm. Lincoln, Theodore Boswell, Donald Ross, Donald Munro, Robert Kerr, A. J. Holiday, J. G. M'Vicker; but we still have our brethren J. R. Caldwell, J. A. Boswell, Alex. Stewart, W. H. Hunter, Alex. Marshall, and others in the body.

He was a good husband (and was blessed with a good wife) and a kind father. While he could speak boldly at conferences he was gentle at home, and he has left four sons and two daughters, all followers of the Lord, to mourn his loss. He has eleven grandchildren.

R.T.H. was born in July, 1842, and fell asleep in Christ in Camberwell, a suburb of Melbourne, on 22nd January, 1916. He had been in failing health for several years, although his mind was active to the last, and he still took a great interest in passing events. He passed away in his sleep. Let us follow him as far as he followed Christ, "till He come" (John 21. 22).

RICHARD GRAHAM.

REMARKABLE EARLY DAYS IN ORKNEY.

AS a student in Spurgeon's College, R.T.H. was on intimate terms with a fellow-student, Mr. Lennie, who had married the daughter of the pastor of the Baptist Church in Westray, and was on a visit to that island. Thus Mr. Hopkins found an entrance to Orcadians through his friend Mr. Lennie. Mr. Hopkins on this visit, about fifty years ago, preached in the Baptist and Established Churches.

A little while after, Mr. Wingate, the Established Church minister of Stromness, applied to the East Coast Mission for two evangelists to preach in that town. Duncan Mathieson and Donald Munro were appointed. The former was prevented by illness, and his place was taken by Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Wingate in announcing to his congregation the coming of these preachers, and in anticipation of some probable objections, said that while the Head of the Church had bestowed on him the gift of pastor, he had not the gift of the evangelist, and being convinced that their messages would be a means of blessing to his people and the community, he had invited these evangelists to come along. Thus Messrs. Hopkins and Munro commenced preaching in the Established Church, Stromness, in the month of January, 1867. The writer has talked with living survivors and converts of these early days, who say that people walked ten to twelve miles through snow covered roads, filling the church to overflowing. The order of preaching was new, and, moreover, was with power. The result was that many people were awakened and converted, and a few are yet living to tell the tale of these great days.

Some unkind things have been written by Church historians of Orkney about Mr. Hopkins. For the most part they have failed to recognise that in these early days Mr. Hopkins was not wholly associated with Brethren. With further light Mr. Hopkins took the Scriptures as his only guide, and this resulted in his preaching those things therein recorded. Thus it came to pass that during subsequent visits Christians sought to assemble themselves together, suitable and substantial halls were erected in various parts, and active preaching was conducted in these islands of the sea. Meetings still remain the result of these early days, and all historians have taken account of this movement as marking an epoch in many lives. So that

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even yet Christians meeting in assemblies are spoken of as "Hopkinites."

Many a story of these days and preaching have we listened to. The farthest recollection of a bright witness is when as a lad he attended the school of his island home and heard Mr. Hopkins, and still recalls these words, and these words alone, "Where will you be in Eternity?" Mr. Hopkins' preaching was of an arousing character, and, like one of old, he sought to warn men of "the wrath to come." While there have been occasional times of much blessing in various localities, there has not been such a wave of blessing in the islands since as was then experienced. The number of the saved must have been very many. If there is such a thing as servants being welcomed in Heaven by those whom they were instrumental in leading to Christ, surely Rice T. Hopkins had a good company waiting his "Welcome Home."

J. S.
