

**MEMORIAL SERVICE to the late MR. JOSEPH RANK, held on
Wednesday,
17th November, 1943, at 2.30 p.m. in the Grosvenor Hall, Belfast, which
has a tablet over its entrance hall in commemoration of his generous
benefactions.**

The service which was conducted by the Rev. J. N. Spence, Superintendent of the Belfast City Mission, whose work is carried on within the Grosvenor Hall, commenced with the singing of: "O for a thousand tongues to Sing." (M.H.B.1).

After prayer and announcing the second hymn "Jesu, the very thought of thee" (M.H. B. 108), the Rev. Mr. Spence explained that the hymns which would be sung at the service were known to be favourites of Mr. Rank's. Mr. Spence said that he was very much struck by the choice of hymns, which were a very clear indication where Mr. Rank's loyalties and his love were centred – round the person of Jesus Christ.

The scripture lesson was read, by the Rev. S. D. Ferguson, and Miss Muriel Childe, A.R.C.M. sang "O Rest in the Lord."

After prayer by the Rev. R. R. Cunningham and the hymn "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds (M.H.B.99) was sung and address was given by Mr. Spence, who took as his text:- "A Prince and a great man has fallen .-" Second Samuel, Chapter 3 Verse 38. He said:-

"I think it is very fitting that we should have the service in this hall, because this hall owes a great deal to the generosity of Mr. Rank. I am glad to be able to say that the two descriptive titles in the text can be applied without any flattery to our friend. He certainly was a great man and I think that he had in him many princely qualities, and so I want this afternoon, very briefly, to set before you some of the aspects of Mr. Rank's greatness.

First of all, he was a prince and a great man in the realms of commerce. He was a prince of commerce. He was certainly one of the great men in the world's trade. Judged by the world's standards - and perhaps, that is the lowest standard of all - he was a great man. You have only to think for a minute of what he accomplished to appreciate his greatness. He was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. When he was still but a boy he was earning a good part of his own living, working for 7/6 a week. I know well that the youths of today would sneer at a wage like that, even if you remember the difference in the value of money. When he was 21 he ventured in to business on his own behalf, and from a small windmill advanced until he became one of the great figures, not only in national, but in world trade. He accomplished great things in the realm of business. In deed he was a great man and from two sacks of flour per hour ground out by his own first mill, the concerns which he governed at the end of his life were able to produce enough flour to make bread for one-seventh of the population of this land. That is truly an astonishing record. He was not only a great man in the realms of commerce, but a prince in a realm much more difficult. He was princely in his benefactions; he was great in his givings. He did not wait until the end of his life to give, but made a rule through life to give in proportion to his earnings. When he was still a young man, and a poor man, he made up his mind that he would give a certain proportion of his income every year to God and His service, and he did that. But a little over 16 years ago he said on this platform:- "All the money that I make in business now, I am devoting to the service of God." He was assuredly princely in his benefactions.

In his native City he gave £300,000 in order that those who might be called some of the fallen soldiers in life's battle might be helped. He also helped the Infirmary there and in many other ways gave generously. You know all he has done for our own Methodist Church in Britain and in Ireland. One of his latest benefactions was to give £100,000 in order to make the lot of ministers in our English Church a little easier. Considerably more than a quarter of the entire cost of this Hall was given by him. Nor is that the only Irish cause he has helped. Only last year he gave a sum of £10,000 that will help to keep in order and beautify the little churches

belonging to our community that are scattered up and down the length and breadth of this land.

I cannot forget, also, that his interests were very much wider than Great Britain and Ireland. Year after year he liquidated any outstanding debt on the missionary activities of our church in its work overseas. He was a great man if he is to be judged by the standards of his givings, and I submit that that is a far higher standard than the standard of getting and a far greater test of character. He has not earned a very large place in the National Handbook - something less than three lines appear after his name in 'Who's Who', but I think he did not care much about that - for he was a humble man - so long as he knew that his name was inscribed in another volume, and we are sure of that.

But there is another test. Paul, you remember, made this claim, that the followers of Jesus Christ were to be kings and princes for ever. A Christian, if he is to be true to his character, will always be a prince on princely lines. Mr. Rank was a great man because he was a good man and I submit that that is the highest and best test of all.

Quite early in life he was led to accept Christ. One of his great reasons for love of missions such as this was that he was led to Christ in a mission. He was a devoted, loyal follower of Jesus Christ and he showed this characteristic in many different ways. I only want to emphasise three of them. First, in his use of money (and it seems to me that money is the most difficult of all instruments put into the hands of man to use rightly). It is easy for money to become the master rather than the servant, but Mr. Rank never allowed money to become the master. As his riches increased he did not build upon them. He still gave the increasing proportion to the Lord that he loved and feign would serve.

He showed his Christian character in the way that he used his money, until at last every bit of the profits from his business were devoted to the service of God. He was great in his simple faith in Jesus Christ and that is always the true test of a Christian. Let me illustrate what I mean in his case, in his early years as a married man with some young children he had no money or very little money, just having started his own flour mill, he asked himself what will happen to my wife and children if anything happens to me. He decided to insure his life and asked an insurance company to effect an insurance on his life. When he was medically examined, however, the insurance company would not insure him. They did not regard him as a fit subject for insurance as they regarded his hold on life so precarious. He was distressed because he could not make provision for his wife and family. On the following Sunday morning he was guided in some way to go and hear a local preacher speaking on the text: 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord.' Mr. Rank afterwards remarked to a friend that it seemed that every word was directed at him. To worry, he concluded, was a sin and the spirit of worry completely passed from him. He went out feeling that if he could not insure his life God would take care of him and his. That simple faith in the providential care of God never left him. He had a simple strong faith in Christ and he showed his loyalty as a Christian character, because every Christian must of necessity be a missionary. I do not mean that you have to go out to distant lands, but if you truly love Jesus Christ you cannot be satisfied until every man and woman has known of Christ's love and His saving power. He sought to use his money so that every man and woman might be led into contact with Jesus Christ. He himself has said that there was more pleasure in giving than in raking it in. He showed his interest in other ways and he sought by personal contacts to lead men and women to Christ and that interest for others persisted to the end of his life.

A month ago in this very building one who knew Mr. Rank very well said that he found him greatly anxious over one of his loved ones. When he found that this particular friend had been speaking to his loved one he was greatly pleased and relieved. That missionary spirit never departed from him. In this, perhaps most of all, he showed his Christianity. He was great in his loyalty to Christ.

Some of you may recall the words which he spoke on this platform over 16 years ago. He expressed his own creed: "I believe in Christ and I am trying to share this belief with others, I want to show him out in my life and to try to do the most good I can to people." That was his

testimony, but there are some here this afternoon who may remember a still more wonderful testimony.

On that same day he was a guest at a luncheon party given by one of the leading men of the City, at which the then Lord Mayor the late Sir William Turner, was present. After the luncheon there were many complimentary speeches, the speakers referring to Mr. Rank as a great man and as a great figure in the world of commerce. I can still see him, that great tall, strong figure (physically he towered over every man in the room) as he rose to reply, and in his pronounced Yorkshire dialect, he said: "Yes, I suppose it is true I have been able to do some big things in the world of business, but I want to say here and now that the biggest thing in my life is my own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, my Lord and my Saviour." No apology! And nobody felt that it was out of place; that was the strange part of it. A simple witness, and a loyal lover of his Lord and Master! Truly he was loyal to the core of Him.

We are met together as a smallish company here this afternoon" concluded Mr. Spence, "when no voice of Joseph Rank may be heard, but the voice of Joseph Rank's Saviour and Master is calling each one of us to such dedication of our lives, souls, bodies, powers, gifts and talents that we may seek to be a blessing to our generation and to establish the Kingdom of our Lord and Master."

Hymn: "Give me the wings of faith to rise." (M.H.B.831)