

THE LATE MR. H. LIPSON HANCOCK OF MOONTA MINES

By Rev. J. H. Crossley

THE sudden death of Mr. H. Lipson Hancock, in Sydney, last Saturday, has further added to the poignancy of the passing of the glory of Moonta Mines.

Moonta Mines was one of a great number of famous Cornish mining camps scattered throughout the world, forming a kind of international society, and treasuring a common stock of mining lore. They never lost touch with one another. Cornwall knows a great deal about Moonta Mines, as she does about California, Alaska and the Rand. These names constitute a galaxy of splendid achievement of which she is proud.

Since its earliest days the name of Hancock has been closely associated with Moonta Mines—it is impossible to think of one without the other. It is doubtful whether this family association could be matched anywhere in the world. The strong, rich personalities of both father and son provided a massive background for that unique and picturesque community-life which clustered about the giant "poppet-heads."

The Hancocks had not only managed a great and prosperous mine, but had succeeded in establishing a community of unusual and distinctive character. The restless ebb and flow which characterises most mining centres, and which prevent the development of social amenities, was conspicuously absent from Moonta Mines. Lipson Hancock, in particular, had a constant care for the domestic, social and religious conditions of the people whom he felt to be under his care, and in consequence Moonta Mines became a striking contrast to the hurried, drab, ramshackle appearance of most mining camps.

We see these things clearly enough now when the whole material and spiritual structure of the mines are shrunken to what is little more than a

mines are shrunken to what is little more than a rubbish heap and a battered palm or two.

It is not surprising that Lipson Hancock never revisited the mines after their demolition. He had had no interest in life other than to build up and sustain an industrially safe, a religiously sound, and a socially contented community. He pursued this ideal with resolute will and consuming passion. The closing of the mines removed the foundation of his life's work and his real interests. Although he devoted his talents and time to other enterprises during his sojourn in Sydney, the glamour of the old associations had vanished. The appropriate instrument for the expression of his specialized personal qualities was the life of the mines, it was impossible to find a substitute.

His supreme achievement was the creation of a new ideal for the Sunday school and Sunday-school work. Before Methodist union he was a teacher in the Infant Department of the Wesleyan School. After union he threw himself whole-heartedly into the heavy task of reorganisation. It was here that his qualities as a leader became fully apparent. Dissatisfied with the customary teaching methods, especially in the very young classes, he sought an

opportunity, while in America, of visiting the schools conducted by Marion Lawrence. He found there just the inspiration and guidance he needed, and on his return he commenced those swift changes by which in an incredibly short space of time he created one of the most remarkable Sunday schools in the world. Perfect to the last detail of organisation and marvellously officered, it must long remain as the picture of ideal achievement.

It may be said that he had unequalled opportunities and resources at his command, but that in no way detracts from the merit of his success, the essential qualities of which were his own overflowing energy and complete devotion to the welfare of children.

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The creation of this model Sunday school was not the sudden impulse of a man seeking self-aggrandisement, but the natural outcome of the dreams of a young man of extraordinary enthusiasm, teaching a small class of very young children in an unprogressive Sunday school.

His burning energy made it extremely difficult for men of casual habits of mind to keep pace with him, the day, which for him started very early and finished very late, was never long enough. Memories of evenings spent at "Kennedy" are linked with the constant ringing of telephone bells and frequent interviews with under-managers, between which he would snatch a little conversation or seek relaxation on the organ, which he played with excellent taste. Even then he was obviously burning the candle at both ends. Efforts were made to induce him to take definite relaxation, a golf-bag and clubs were bought, but they stood in their corner, highly polished and ready, but their use was always postponed. He never could resist the call of duty.

Nevertheless, Lipson Hancock was not a recluse. He loved to have interesting men and women about him, and none were more welcome than visiting ministers of our Church. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable, and he listened eagerly to the opinions of men and women who knew their business. He bought more books than he could possibly read, but he got over this difficulty by loaning or giving a book to a trusted friend, from whom he received a summary of the contents and an opinion of its value. Some of these books were of an advanced sociological character, but his mind was not shut, and he took their views with patience and sympathy. He thus attained a breadth of outlook which was surprising in a man of his singleness of aim and interest.

Although he wisely kept himself in the background in the actual business affairs of the

ground in the actual business affairs of the Church, he was, nevertheless, heart and soul in its well-being. He was always the minister's friend, and contrived, without obtruding himself, to render him encouragement and real helpfulness. The power of the General Manager never hampered the liberty of the minister; he was free to do his work in his own way. There are many ministers who will look back with gratitude to kindnesses delicately done them.

The reserve due to his official position as head of a powerful organisation, grouped over three towns, did not prevent him from following with deep interest the fortunes of the humblest of his employees. The family spirit typical of the early history of the industrial era never disappeared from Moonta Mines. His purse was ever open in times of trouble; his generosity was proverbial.

In looking back over those great and strenuous days, one wonders how so highly-strung a man carried the burden of heavy responsibility. The success of Lipson Hancock cannot be explained without acknowledging his wise and loyal helpmeet. She was his true counterpart, sharing his load and freeing his spirit to attempt great exploits in the Kingdom of God.

There will never be another Moonta Mines, there will never be another Lipson Hancock. They have passed, but only to the great rebuilding of a city of surer foundation.





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