

Foreword

I count it as one of the great privileges of my life to have had a hand in preparing this biography of Rees Howells. I first met Mr. Howells in 1928. I was then a missionary on furlough, and as I spent a few days with him at the Bible College of Wales, which was then in its young days, light simply poured into my soul as he took time to tell me some of the Lord's inner dealings with him. It was one of the great experiences of my life. I learned secrets of the Spirit—as the One come down to do His mighty work through human agents—which revolutionised my future ministry.

In the years that followed I had many periods of intimate fellowship with Mr. Howells, although I always wondered why I was allowed such a privilege, and it came to my mind on many occasions how much I would like to get that testimony, that light the Lord had revealed to His servant, those marvellous dealings of the Spirit with him, into print for the world. It now seems as if it was an unrecognised preparation for what was coming. I never dreamed that the Lord would so suddenly take His servant; but as soon as I heard, back came those thoughts of past years.

It was because of this that Samuel Howells, Mr. Rees Howells' only son, and Mrs. Rees Howells, offered me the great honour of writing his life. But I now want to make it clear that I have only been, as it were, the senior member of a writing team. First, Miss Mary Henderson, Mr. Howells' honorary secretary, for the past ten years had faithfully recorded his morning and evening talks in the college—eighty manuscript books of them and packed with references to his own experiences—and then in preparation for the biography had spent weeks in indexing them, so that I could get straight to the important passages. We have been daily co-workers in preparing the book, and she has been able to keep me on the straight and narrow path of accuracy on many points and add vital tidbits of information.

Then Dr. Kingsley Priddy, the headmaster of the Bible College School, has dedicated hours of his time to going over every chapter and offering many valuable suggestions. With his keenly sensitive appreciation of the spiritual content of Mr. Howells' life, he has been able again and again to put the needed touch to bring out the inner essence of an incident.

Combined with this has been the work of Miss Marie Scott, B.A. As teacher of English literature in the School and College, as well as being one of those whose life was revolutionised through her contacts with Mr. Howells, she has smoothed out many an uncouth passage, and often added touches of inspiration.

Miss Doris Ruscoe, B.A., the headmistress, has been another member of the team and helped particularly in hammering out the best methods of producing the biography; and finally, all has been checked by Mr. Samuel Howells, M.A., the present Director of the Bible College, and by Mrs. Rees Howells, who was with her husband from the earliest days of his ministry and was herself eyewitness of a great deal recorded in the book.

I have found it a most healthy and exhilarating experience to produce a book as a team instead of as an individual, and we have been wonderfully conscious every day of the Lord's good hand on us.

For some of the facts of Rees Howells' early days, we have been indebted to his eldest brother, Mr. John Howells, who was always greatly respected by the family, and to another brother, Mr. Dick Howells, a retired mine-manager, and to his sister, Nurse Catherine Howells, who was deeply devoted to him, and to Mr. Tom Howells, the only remaining member of the family still living in the old home.

Beyond measure large-hearted, irrepressible in the joy of the Lord which poured out of him ("The Spirit is full of jokes," he once daringly said), this man of God, who bore on his heart the world's deep suffering and sin till it broke him, could have told his own tale with so much more vividness than we could ever put into it; but may God reveal, even through these pages, Himself through the veil of human flesh, through a man "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

Mr. Morgan James, a retired official of the Great Western Railway, and a friend of Mr. Howells, well said, "He was the biggest-hearted Christian I ever met." The men of God of his generation recognised the peculiar anointing of God upon him: Lord Radstock; Mr. Albert Head, the chairman of the Keswick Convention; Mr. D. E. Hoste, the director of the China Inland Mission; Mr. Stephen Jeffreys, so mightily used in evangelism and healing, who in his last years leaned much on Mr. Howells' faith; Mr. Dan Williams, founder of the Apostolic Church; Mr. Paget Wilkes of the Japan

Evangelistic Band; the Rev. Andrew Murray, who wrote of him in a booklet and asked him to come for a visit; Miss Bentham of Dr. Barnardo's; Mrs. Charles Cowman, author of *Streams in the Desert*.

Mr. Henry Griffiths, a Group Accountant of the National Coal Board, said this of his first acquaintance with him in 1921: "I read about the mighty movement of the Spirit through him in Africa. He was coming to Llanelly, so I walked three miles to hear him. He was to me the most wonderful missionary I had read of. His way of speaking was different, the Spirit had so dealt with him. I remember one young Christian asking him how he knew God's voice, and he said, 'Can't you tell your mother's voice from any other?' 'Yes, of course,' the young man answered. 'Well, I know His voice just like that.'

"I shall never forget the meetings in the Llandrindod Convention after he came back from Africa. Frankly, he was by himself. He was only about forty years old and in the strength of his manhood. He lifted the meeting to such a plane that everyone was spellbound. No one could move, no one could follow him. He was requested to test the meeting and asked who would like to give themselves to God as he had done, and everyone stood up, ministers and all.

"At a ministers' meeting the next day, to which I was allowed to come, Mr. Paget Wilkes was speaking. He was quick enough to recognise the Spirit in Mr. Howells, and said, 'There is someone here among us, and I feel like going round the country with him, carrying his bag and cleaning his boots.'"

May God meet with many in reading this book, as He has met with the author in writing it.

Norman P. Grubb