

REV. GEORGE BOWEN.

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I do not propose even to sketch the life of this saintly man and eminent missionary; but having been his classmate and familiar friend during his theological course in Union Seminary, I would like to speak of some of those early experiences which gave tone and color to his unique spiritual life and career.

Of the class which entered the seminary in 1844 Bowen was almost the oldest man, having been born April 13, 1816. There was nothing striking in his countenance or personal appearance—of slight frame, quiet demeanor, unimpassioned utterance, and no magnetism of manner—a man who could hardly ever be an orator, and indeed who never came to be one—a most unpretentious man, and courteous as was to be expected of one who had been much in the world of men.

Within the few months during which classmates learn to place each other, we all came to know that Bowen was different from most men, and better than most of us. He had never been to college, yet his Greek and Hebrew recitations were among the finest, and his thoughts at our missionary and prayer meetings, expressed with choice simplicity, were original and quickening beyond the common run. He looked at Bible truth in a novel way, which yet was evidently his natural way. He was not communicative of himself, but we learned that he was newly born into the Christian life, and almost up to his entrance upon ministerial studies had been a skeptic, utterly unacquainted with religious truth, and as ignorant of the Bible as a man of his general intelligence and cultivation could well be. The remarkable and pathetic manner in which his mind was turned to the Bible and his striking conversion have been well told and will never lose their interest. Up to that period he was an infidel of the French school, and although never a mocker, he told me that he had always regarded the Bible very much as he had regarded Esop's Fables.

Out of this darkness Bowen came into sudden light, and the light was strange and wonderful and sweet. He probably never had a doubt of Bible truth, of the way of life through Christ, and of his own acceptance with God, from the beginning to the end of his Christian life; and it was at first matter of surprise to him that any believer should have doubts as to his spiritual estate. His expressions were the least hackneyed of any man I ever knew, which, no doubt, was because he had read almost nothing upon religious subjects and was so unacquainted with the views of other Christians. He drew water directly from the wells of salvation, and it is both interesting and profitable to know that he became an evangelical believer; without bigotry, caring little for denominational peculiarities, but evangelical through and through.