

## JOSEPH BOWES

### A Minister Beloved

(Eldred Dyer.)

The Rev. Joseph Bowes was—well, what was he? Who was he? His most intimate friends would answer, "Just old Bowes." But into that middle word they would put all the affection of their hearts—the things they would never dare to express in more deliberate words. And thus we really discover Joseph Bowes. He was a man who lived, and will live, in the hearts of very many men. Essentially, what is described as "a man's man," he built his life and work into the hearts of men.

#### A Son of the Manse.

A son of the Parsonage, he grew up among pioneers, and in the home of a pioneer minister. In this home and set round by such life, Providence fashioned him for a place and a share in other pioneering life. He saw life as it was on the Turon, and as it was where men pioneered on the coastal rivers. I have heard him tell of boyish adventures with his father and a gun and fishing tackle. Now and then his tongue could be loosened to tell of the real hardships that the dwellers in Parsonages experienced in the days of his boyhood; but it was not often that he would speak of such things. When he did tell of how he had seen the quarter's limited allowance divided into thirteen portions to cover the weeks of the next quarter; and how all expenditure was made to fit such a process of finance, a strange hush came upon listeners. Those were the heroic days of Methodism. People who can still remember the Rev. John Bowes and his devoted, gifted wife, will understand how such things would fashion the life on an imaginative, high-spirited boy.

#### Up North.

Nearly forty years ago Joseph Bowes went to Queensland after ten years of ministry in New South Wales; and so at the time of his death he was at the very close of the 49th year of his ministry—forty-two of these being spent in active service. But his was a life of perennial youth. Queensland soon took him to her heart and few men have had a larger place in that heart. He was the very kind of man, almost the ideal man, for such a young country. He was a great gift from this mother State to her daughter of the north. Gifted in large degree, and with some rare gifts, he gave to the land of his adoption a large service

gave to the land of his adoption a large service and a larger affection. It is not easy to estimate the value of such service as Joseph Bowes gave to Queensland. Slightly built, for many years not blessed with robust health, he was yet able to do much arduous work. A real horseman, the master of much bushlore and bushcraft, a great lover of nature, he was well qualified for an itinerant ministry in a new and very large country. A fisherman after Isaac Walton's heart, a real sport after young Australia's heart, he made many friends in all sorts of places. To the young Methodism of Queensland he was in a peculiar way their very own minister. A preacher of uncommon gifts, a leader who inspired younger men, an effective platform man, a debater with rapier-like thrust, he was yet a large-hearted brother full of kindness to all; men rejoiced to love him, and loved to hear him in debate, for they always knew he had no will to hurt another. They also loved his unconventional manner; it was fresh as a sea breeze, and how it fitted into the life of the pioneer. They all knew how reverent was his mind and heart. Gifted with a voice bell-like in tone, that lingered on one's ears, a laughter that was infectious everywhere, and a rare power of choosing fit words, he could often greatly move men. He was ever a man who attracted.

In Queensland he served the North and the South, and also Central Queensland as well as Brisbane; everywhere his work was faithfully done. Into it all his gifts were put with very abandon. His reward came to him in the love of the people. And their love for him deepened and broadened down the years. The very manner in which this fragile man went about his work, so gay and light-hearted he was, became a standing challenge to people, and they answered with an ever-increasing love. Of him it may truly be said that he sought nothing for himself. His interest in people was so large, so constant, so absorbing, that there seemed no place in him for the vanities of life. Blessed with a fine sense of humour, he was never troubled about his dignity or the honour that was due to him. Thinking back over years of very close intimacy with him, it is easy to indorse a remark made by the Rev. W. H. Harrison only the other day. On the day those young men from England were welcomed in the Conference Hall, Mr. Harrison was an interested member of the gathering. He was on his way to England, where he will seek young men for our Queensland work. Long ago he was my good superintendent, and so we had many things to talk of at the end of the programme. He said

good superintendent, and so we had many things to talk of at the end of the programme. He said to me, "First of all I must tell you about Bowes." And with deep emotion he told me of his last talk with our old friend and his fear that they would not meet again in this life. Then he said, "We have lost Henry Youngman, and he cannot be replaced; we shall lose old Bowes, and we can never, never replace him." And that, I think, is right.

God will give other men to that great State; but He will not repeat Joseph Bowes.

#### Varied Work.

The work Mr. Bowes did so well was very varied. He was, for instance, the first Secretary of the Queensland Conference; and that Conference has never had a better Secretary. He was the President of the Conference, Connexional Editor, Chairman of a number of Districts, Secretary of the Home Mission Society, also its Treasurer—and all these offices he was well qualified to fill. A man of fine culture, as well as a large knowledge of affairs, his was essentially a literary mind. For years past he has written stories of Australian life for boys. Many of these were published by the Oxford Press—a guarantee of their quality. He also wrote some war stories. These books were largely read, and they represent a fine service for youth. One of his last books was a story dealing with the settlement of Australia in convict days. This was a subject Mr. Bowes knew well, and his story was commended for its background of history. Mr. Harrison told me that he was taking to London the last MSS. completed by Mr. Bowes.

#### A Trial Sermon.

But Joseph Bowes was ever, and above all else, a Methodist preacher. Tennyson's well-known lines might be easily adapted to his life: he was "no angel, but a dearer being." He, too, ever swayed men to himself, but never selfishly. His great work was exalting Christ. In thought he was a man ahead of his generation, and fearless in his utterance. Shams he hated with a great hatred, and dealt with them as they deserved. But ever he was attractive.

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Nearly forty years ago three preachers, one Sunday afternoon, started from the Campbell Street Parsonage, Rockhampton, for a little church some miles away. One was the Rev. C. W. Graham, then Chairman of the District. The second was Joseph Bowes. The third, the writer of this. The last was a poor probationer appointed to preach a trial sermon that afternoon. As we went those two talked together, leaving the young man to his thoughts. Of that trial sermon I have no faintest recollection, very little of the service; but the return journey is a precious memory. As soon as we were on the way, Joseph Bowes said, "Now that wretched business is over, let us talk." He talked so graciously, so delightfully, to that poor probationer that a lifelong friendship was its result. I recall another trial sermon, when I preached with a rose-bud in my coat. For this offence the Synod directed the chairman to admonish me. The good and reverend father who raised the matter in the Synod insisted—so the chairman told me—that "a man who could preach as good a sermon as that young man preached ought to have enough sense not to wear a flower in his coat when he preaches." The chairman was a kindly man with a good deal of humour; and though he gave me a talk, he quietly told me that it was only done in his official capacity, and that it was better done privately than in the Synod. Trial sermons bring various rewards! Now those men are all gone home: I follow on. Looking back I say:

"O may I triumph so."