

REV. WILLIAM S. OWENS, D.D., a popular and eloquent divine and the efficient general superintendent of the Home Missions of the United Presbyterian church of the United States, is a son of Robert and Sarah (Stelle) Owens, and was born in county Down, Ireland, July 25, 1842. his parents were both natives of county Down and members of the Presbyterian church. They came to this State in 1844. The father Robert Owens, died in Allegheny, in the fall of 1848, when only in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His wife survived him but nine years, passing away in 1857, aged thirty-eight years. Both were members of what is now the First United Presbyterian church of Allegheny. They were the parents of four children, of whom two were: Rev. William S. and Elizabeth, now the wife of W. K. Hamilton.

William S. Owens was brought by his parents to Allegheny city, where the death of his father and mother left him, although but a child to make his own way in the world. He received his early education in the public schools and from the age of twelve to that of nineteen years he was engaged in making his own living at such work as a boy could procure at that time. He obtained his academic education in the Western University of Pennsylvania at Pittsburg and in 1861 entered Westminster College, at New Wilmington, Pa., from which institution of learning he was graduated in June, 1866. He then prepared for the work of the ministry by taking the full course of the Allegheny Theological seminary of the United Presbyterian church, from which he was graduated in the spring of 1869. Immediately after graduation he was called and settled as minister of the North United Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. He served that church until August, 1871, when he resigned to become pastor of the United Presbyterian church at Indiana. After laboring there six years, he removed (in July, 1877) to Steubenville, Ohio, and assumed charge of the United Presbyterian church of that place. His pastorate in that field of labor lasted for ten years and was pleasant and useful. His standing as a minister and as a public-spirited citizen was very high in the community. In June, 1886, he was elected by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian church as the general secretary of the Board of Home Missions. One year later he was requested to resign his pastoral charge and devote his entire time to superintending the home mission work. In order to discharge the duties of this wide and important field of labor which was placed under his charge, he resigned the pastorate of the Steubenville United Presbyterian church and returned to his former home at Indiana, in the spring of 1887. Since then he has been actively engaged in traveling in various parts of the United States in the interests of home mission work and in the development of the church with which he is connected. In 1888, Dr. Owens was elected chairman of the constitutional amendment county committee, and so well organized and directed the campaign that Indiana rolled up out of the total poll of seven thousand votes the surprising majority of two thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine in favor of the prohibitory amendment to the State constitution.

During the late war he was not lacking to devotion to the cause of the Union, and in August, 1862, enlisted as a soldier in Co. E, 123d regiment, Pa. Vols. He was true to every duty of a soldier and was present at the hard-fought battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. At the expiration of his nine months' term of service, he was employed as a clerk in the office of the paymaster general at Washington City, where he remained until near the close of the war.

August 26, 1869, he married, Elmira McCaughey, who was a classmate of his at Westminster college and is a daughter of Thomas McCaughey, of Fredericksburg, Wayne county, Ohio. They have seven children, three sons and four daughters: Sarah, Robert E., Elizabeth, Charles Truesdale, Margaretta, William Brownlee and Helen.

Rev. W. S. Owens, D.D., possesses that rare but happy faculty which so many men of genius and ability lack—that of throwing his whole soul and energy into his work. His has been a life of activity and usefulness in every field in which he has been called to labor, and they have not been few in number nor easy in the work they presented. He is probably the most widely known minister of his church in the United States in consequence of his extended mission travels, his many able sermons and numerous eloquent addresses. While pleasing and popular as a speaker, yet he is not lacking to earnestness of logic. Genial, courteous and self-possessed upon all occasions, yet sufficiently dignified and decidedly stern enough when necessity requires to rebuke severely and with effect, vice or folly in whatever place appearing or in whatever guise presented. He is a republican in politics and has a fine residence with beautiful surrounds in Indiana. In personal appearance he is rather below medium height with an intelligent face and winning manners. In the matured prime of life he is but in the midst of a career of usefulness and distinction.