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THE DEBT OF THE PRESENT TO THE PAST:
ITS PAYMENT.

THE ANNUAL ADDRESS

BY THE PRESIDENT,
HENRY C. MCCOOK, D. D., Sc. D.,
January 10, 1901.

Can the Presbyterian Historical Society be commended to the serious consideration of those who have money, time and influence to give for the advancement of the cause of Christ, and the perpetuation of that testimony for which the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches have always stood? We may answer unhesitatingly, "Yes."

I.

OUR OBJECTS.

1. The Presbyterian Historical Society stands for the *Justice of God*, and for the attribute of justice in man as communicated to him by his Creator. It is an act of justice to the worthy that their memory be kept green. Not, indeed, that they asked or had even thought that posterity would do them that justice. The pioneers, men and women, those noble and most beneficent servants of God's Church in America, were unconscious, for the most part,

The
Society
Stands
for
Justice.

of the greatness of the work they were doing. In this they were like the saints at the Judgment Throne, whom our Lord describes in the 25th Chapter of St. Matthew. They, too, had kept no record of their worthy deeds, and greeted with surprise the announcement of their Judge. Yet it will be observed that though the righteous had kept no record of their own deeds, the Eternal Judge had not failed to preserve upon the Recording Angel's book every act, even the most minute, that those sanctified souls had wrought. Shall we not do well if in this regard we seek to reflect the judgment of the Almighty?

The Fathers and Founders of the Church wrought for posterity. It is just that posterity should be concerned that the record of their deeds shall not perish.

The Fathers and Founders of the Church laid the foundation and corner stone of this great and beautiful superstructure which, in the opening months of the Twentieth Century, we have been looking upon with gratitude to God and with self-congratulation. Shall there not be a place upon the pillars and walls of this superstructure for the names of those who, with sacrifices and tears, in travail of heart and of body, and often in disease and death, laid the foundations and made it possible for the Church and the Nation to exist? Surely, we will answer: *There shall be!* That is the work of justice, the beautiful and seemly duty to which the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches have called the Presbyterian Historical Society.

2. This Society is worthy of support because it represents the *Best Instincts and Traditions of Cultivated Humanity*. Savages and brutes forget their ancestors. They have no history; they have no monuments. But in the degree that nations have risen in culture, and thus attained a right to exist, they have reared monuments to the sages, the soldiers, the priests, the sovereigns, the mighty men and women who have made their nations great. In fostering this institution we are working along the line of the highest traditions and noblest hereditary characteristics of the best peoples of our race.

3. The Presbyterian Historical Society represents *the Method of God in Holy Scriptures*. The Bible is largely a historical

book. The lives of the saints are therein embalmed. We are treading in the foot-prints of the inspired prophets and apostles, yes, we are following the methods of the Eternal God Himself, when we stand before the Churches and the world and declare that the deeds of the sainted dead are worthy to be recorded in history; worthy to be preserved by posterity; worthy to be set in such light that the world shall see and know and learn therefrom that God cares for His own; that in the presence of the Eternal "the memory of the just is blessed." If we think of our Theological Schools as standing for the "Epistles," and our Missionary Boards for the "Gospels," our Historical Society stands for the "Acts of the Apostles." It is a Biblical Institution.

Follows
God's
Methods.

4. The Presbyterian Historical Society is worthy to be maintained and enlarged to its utmost ability and beneficence, because *it gives Inspiration to the Present Generation, and must Instruct and Elevate the Future.* A painting, a statue, a history, a biography, a story told, an oration pronounced, a historical sermon delivered, make deep and lasting impressions, particularly upon young people. To set worthy examples before the rising generation, highly serves to make the rising generation worthy. Our ecclesiastical history abounds in great men and noble deeds. We are too careless to consider it, and to declare it. In the records of the past four centuries especially, and in every part of the world, among the names inscribed by fame as great and worthy, a large proportion has been gathered from the annals of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. If you turn to the history of sunny France, the lives of the Huguenots are there, with names like Admiral Coligny, Calvin and Farel. If you turn to Switzerland, the little Republic among the Alps, which so loftily upheld the standard of civil and religious liberty in the dark days of the human race, the record of the Reformed Church meets you with such names as Zwingli and Calvin. In Bohemia, in Hungary, in sea-girt Holland with such a master name as William the Silent; in Scotland, in England, in Ulster, and here on our own Continent, the part which our Churches have taken in the struggle for human rights, for national liberty and inde-

Inspires the
Present,
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pendence, for the evangelization of the people, for higher education, for purer morals, for the saving of the race from superstition and paganism, for all that has been good and noble and wise, the Churches represented in this Society have taken a part unexcelled by that of any other, and I might truly say of all others combined. It cannot but follow that the study of such a history must inspire the rising generations with new love for their Church, loyalty to its principles, and fidelity to its name, its organization, and its work.

II.

OUR ORGANIZATION.

The Presbyterian Historical Society belongs to no single branch of the Presbyterian family. It is true that the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, sometimes known as the "Northern Church," has had the privilege of an elder brother to furnish the major part of the money and the majority of the men who have contributed to bring the Society to its present estate. Nevertheless, that Church is only one of the Family. This Society represents catholic Presbyterianism. The so-called "Southern Presbyterian Church" is represented herein. That branch of the family was warmly interested in the Society's establishment in the days before the war of the '60's. That vigorous offshoot known as the "Cumberland Presbyterian Church" is one of our family. The United Presbyterian Church and the several Reformed Presbyterian Churches, known by divers titles, are represented here. The "Reformed Church," a child of the Mother Church of Holland, and the "Reformed Church" of the German Palatinate, are both actively interested in our Society. This is "Pan-Presbyterianism" engaged in the sacred work of preserving the memory of the noble founders of that Scriptural church which has had so large a part in the foundations of our national prosperity, and which, more than any other force, has moulded the ecclesiastical and civil history of those European nations from which we derive our descent.

All the American branches of the Reformed and Presbyterian family may be said to have an origin which is substantially one. In our Colonial days the unity of British and Continental Presbyterianism was recognized quite as cordially as it is to-day. The noble Reformed German Church, which has grown to such vast proportions, the Church of the Palatinate, the Church of Zwingli, was fostered in its origins in America by the Classis of Amsterdam, and rooted itself on our soil beneath the Dutch Reformed Church of Holland.

Common
Origin of
Reformed
Churches.

The Presbyterian Synod and Assembly gave sympathy and active aid. The three great branches known as Northern, Southern and Cumberland, began the Nineteenth Century under one organization; while our stalwart sisters, the United Presbyterian Church, and the closely affiliated Reformed Presbyterian Synods, all sprang from the common Mother Kirk of Scotland. Our history is one, our polity is substantially one, and we are united in the common purpose to send forth this Society, with her lamp of truth, to explore the ancient ways almost overgrown by the rubbish of the past, and to show where this Church and that Church, this hero and that heroine among our ancestors, planted the flowers of hope and faith in the wilderness reaches of this great continent.

The word "Catholic," as it is understood by us, has a sweet sound in the ears of the Christian who has come to the opening years of the Twentieth Century. For one, your President sincerely hopes that the opening decade of the new century may be marked by a closer union, and that the spirit which so lately brought about the organic union of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, may be felt on this side of the Atlantic in at least the closer drawing of fraternal bonds already strong.

III.

OUR METHODS.

1. We have accumulated many books, pamphlets, sermons, rare volumes, biographies and journals which relate or bear upon the history of our several Churches. We are gathering manuscripts, original documents, records of every sort that can

aid in the same work. It is well known how soon such objects disappear. In most houses they are material for the waste basket, the ash-bin, and the dust-heap. It is remarkable how thoroughly time destroys them, and in how short a space these old records disappear, most of them never to be recovered. We ought not to lose a day in pushing the work of recovery and accumulation with all energy possible. Not another year should pass ere our Society, in full operation, should be in the field doing its utmost to glean what remains of the harvest of history.

2. Another part of our work is to collect portraits, engravings and photographs of the heroes and heroines of the Church; also to collect drawings of the historical churches of the country, and thus to trace the development of our various congregations, especially those that have been most influential in moulding society. We have made the beginning of a gallery of painted portraits which will be enlarged as time goes on. We trust that it will become an established custom for the friends of the leaders and faithful servants of our Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, both clerical and lay, to present to the Society paintings or drawings of some sort to place in our portfolios or to be hung upon our walls.

3. Moreover, we have been collecting memorials or relics of the olden times, such as sacramental tokens, communion service, seals, models of primitive institutions, etc., and souvenirs of persons who have been distinguished in Church service. These form an interesting popular feature of our museum, and are not without illustrative historic value.

In short, we hope to make the home of the Presbyterian Historical Society a rallying point for all branches of our Presbyterian family, and the centre and seat of learning to which students of our history will resort for information required to complete their various studies. What time will further develop, who shall say? But if we can now get a fitting endowment, and shall put the energy, wisdom and historic aptitude of the various Churches to work in the great field thus presented, we shall have deserved well of posterity. And we shall surely receive the commendation of Him in whose sight "the memory

of the just is blessed;" who suffers not a hair to fall from our heads unnoticed, and who is jealous of the honor and of the works of those who have been true to Him and have toiled lovingly in His vineyard.

4. One other plan may be mentioned, and it is well to emphasize it because it marks a new departure in the methods of the Historical Society. One of the purposes of the founders was to disseminate a knowledge of the history of the Reformed Churches by the publication of historical material. This was a favorite plan of the eminent Dr. Van Rensselaer, who was one of the most intelligent and devoted friends of the Society. Something was done in this line, but the lack of funds compelled the Society to limit its publications to the printing of the Annual Report. It has now been determined to begin the publication of a "Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society," the first number of which is passing through the press. This initial number includes the Annual Report, and it is the earnest desire and purpose of the Society to make this publication a quarterly, and that it shall in all respects be worthy of the great religious organizations which it will endeavor to represent. Our plans in this respect must be limited by the gifts of the public, and the Journal will appear once, twice or four times a year, as the funds placed at our disposal may justify. The importance of printing current historic events is well understood by all who have thought upon the subject. It is equally necessary that the researches of students who are working with the records of the past, should be put in such shape that others can have convenient access thereto. It is hoped also that the publication of a quarterly will enable the Society, by way of exchange, to largely increase its library by securing journals of ecclesiastical history in Europe and America.

IV.

OUR FINANCIAL CONDITION AND PLANS.

How has the Society lived and how does it expect to live in the future? The statement will not burden many pages. Our endowment consists of \$500 bestowed by the broad-minded and

public-spirited divine, Dr. Backus, of Baltimore; \$500 by the widow of our late distinguished President, Dr. William C. Cattell; \$1,000 by Mr. John H. Converse, and \$1,000 by Mr. William J. Latta as a memorial of Rev. James Latta, an early Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Besides these there are \$1,435, accumulated from various sources, chiefly life memberships of \$100,—this yields an income of \$162 per annum. A few hundred dollars are raised every year, in part by annual membership fees of \$5.00 each, and by annual subscriptions of \$100, made by several gentlemen well known for good work in the Church in whose communion they live. Beyond that, we have no income, and the bulk of this is contingent and unstable, as yearly contributions must always be for learned institutions. True, we have fulfilled the apostolic bidding to "Owe no man anything save to love one another." We count no debts among our historic possessions. We are free-footed as well as empty-handed. The most important question which to-day confronts us is, How shall we live? Wherewithal shall we clothe our Society with the semblance of a vital and useful institution? How shall we give it that place to which it is entitled as the historic organ of the great family of Pan-Presbyterianism whose various members are represented in its organization?

First, we ask an immediate endowment of \$50,000 for current expenses. These expenses should include the maintenance of an active librarian, and a secretary and assistant curator, and janitor. Our beautiful rooms must be kept open, so that their treasures may be accessible to students of history, to ministers, to authors, editorial writers and reporters, to the public interested in the history of the Churches here represented, and to our youth who need to be trained in Church loyalty. We need some one whose sole business it shall be to look after the scattered treasures that are lodged here and there, buried from public sight and known only to a few, and to secure them, or at least copies or accounts thereof, to the library or the museum. If nothing else can be accomplished, it will be of value to keep a proper record of the places where such material can be obtained. In other words, our Society

Need of
Endow-
ment.

must have an adequate working force. It cannot continue to be wholly dependent as hitherto upon the voluntary service of ministers and laymen, whose minds and hearts and hands are already more than full of the duties of their various vocations, and whose labors and gifts, the fruits of great sacrifice, have brought the Society to its present honored estate. There will always be room for such service, which in the past has wrought the worthiest results. But voluntary work can no longer overtake the immense labor which requires to be done. How shall we secure this income? We will need at least \$2,500 yearly, and the present purpose is to secure a sum not less than \$50,000 by subscriptions to the endowment fund, as a part of the Twentieth Century Fund.

We further propose a special effort to largely increase the list of active members whose annual subscription of \$5.00 or more will supplement the income from our endowment. Moreover, we shall ask (as do so many other Societies) for annual subscriptions of less sums from those who do not wish to become active members. We appeal to the thoughtful and devoted members of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches throughout the entire country. It is our purpose to push this matter in all the great centres of ecclesiastical life and activity, and not to cease endeavors until we have secured a list of yearly contributors large enough to meet the growing necessities of the Society, and to enlarge its work in providing fields that cannot be occupied without larger means. Let us hope, moreover, that some wills have been written in which there is a clause providing a liberal portion for the Presbyterian Historical Society. And we venture to ask that there may be added to other written wills a codicil bestowing somewhat upon an institution so worthy and so needy.

Members
and
Contrib-
utors.

V.

OUR STANDING AND ACHIEVEMENTS.

Societies, like individuals, cannot be indifferent to the opinion of the general public, and of those most competent to judge of their merits. The Presbyterian Historical Society is pleased to believe that its standing with those best qualified to judge is

such as should satisfy its friends. More than once the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church has formally declared approval of its aims and achievements. The chief ecclesiastical Courts of other bodies which contribute to its constituency, have taken like action. Clergymen and Church Officers of the highest standing and character have borne testimony in many ways to the value of the Society's work, and have approved the purpose of its organization. Space does not permit us to quote these testimonials, but we may venture to give one which expresses in happy terms the judgment of visitors from our Mother-land to the rooms of the Historical Society. Naturally, we lose the fine edge of appreciation of those objects with which we are most familiar by daily contact; and visitors, less familiar with our surroundings, are apt to see with a sharper eye and a keener appreciation the merits of institutions and objects regarded by us with little enthusiasm.

The following words were spoken by Mr. Charles J. Guthrie, Queen's Counsel, Edinburgh, Scotland, a son of the eminent Rev. Thomas Guthrie, D. D., whose name is a sweet savor in all our Churches. Mr. Guthrie is a distinguished lawyer, a historian of note, a man of scholarly tastes and attainments; for a long time a leader in the Free Church of Scotland, and one of the principal figures in the union recently accomplished between that Church and the United Presbyterian Church. Mr. Guthrie has recently received one of the highest compliments that could be paid to a gentleman of his profession, in the appointment to be Principal Sheriff of the Counties of Ross and Sutherland by the Conservative Government of Great Britain, although he has been throughout his life a Liberal in politics. This office, as understood in Scotland, is totally different from the county office bearing that title as known among us. The position is rather a judicial than an executive one, and is held by an advocate practicing at the Scotch Bar, resident in Edinburgh. Mr. Guthrie was one of the Commissioners to the Pan-Presbyterian Council held in Washington, D. C., in the autumn of 1899, and attended the reception and banquet tendered to the British and Foreign

Approval of
Assemblies
and Synods.

Mr. Sheriff
Guthrie,
Q. C.

members of that body by the Presbyterian Historical Society and the Presbyterian Social Union of Philadelphia. At the banquet, Mr. Guthrie was one of the speakers, and in his remarks referred to the Presbyterian Historical Society in the following terms:

“Nothing in the United States has impressed me so much as the vast and rapid growth of educational institutions, of libraries, and scientific and historical and fine art societies and galleries. Since my first visit to America in 1867, the few that then existed have been immensely developed, and a multitude of new institutions, many of them richly endowed, have sprung up in all the States. I have had another example of this, here under the roof of your beautiful Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia. I confess to very misty notions indeed of the character, work and appointments of the Presbyterian Historical Society, when I read its kind invitation to this reception on my way to the Pan-Presbyterian Council. Even were I to say, as did the Queen of Sheba of Solomon’s possessions, ‘The half has not been told,’ the language would be inadequate.

An
Eminent
Scotchman's
Commenda-
tion.

“My visit to the Library Hall this morning brought not only a surprise but a series of surprises. It quite startled one from the old country to see there displayed the original manuscripts of books which have long been familiar to Britons. It was a pleasant surprise to find a display of portraits and prints, maps and charts bearing upon the history of the Westminster Assembly, which, as far as I know, cannot be equaled anywhere. It was a surprise to see old books of the Presbyterian-Puritan period which one is not apt to find outside of the great public libraries, and not always inside of them. I congratulate you most heartily upon what has been done and is being done here by the Reformed Churches of America. I know of no such Presbyterian Church historical society in Great Britain, and we certainly have none like it in Edinburgh. When I return to my home, I shall certainly feel called upon to speak of what I have seen here, and to urge my countrymen and fellow-churchmen to establish an institution on the lines of your Presbyterian Historical Society.”

Such is the invariable testimony of those who best know and are best qualified to judge of the merits and claims of the Presbyterian Historical Society of the United States. But, let members extend to all and singular an invitation to "come and see;" to visit the Society's beautiful headquarters in the Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, and investigate for themselves. We are confident that the conclusion will be, "This is one of the Institutions of Learning and Research which ought to be and shall be sustained in a way worthy of the great Churches and of the noble cause that it represents."