

THE  
Presbyterian Historical Society

---

FORTY-SIXTH YEAR

---

THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1897

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

---

---

Presented to the Society at its Annual Meeting in  
Philadelphia, January 13, 1898.



REV. WILLIAM C. CATTELL, D. D., LL. D.

Died February 11th, 1898.

---

## In Memoriam.

---

WILLIAM C. CATTELL, D. D., LL. D.

---

The Presbyterian Historical Society, at a called meeting February 12th, 1898, the first meeting held in the new quarters of the Society in the Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, adopted the following minute :—

In the death of Rev. William C. Cattell, D. D., LL. D., President of the Historical Society, both the Society and the Presbyterian Church in America, of whose history the Society is the official conservator, have suffered irreparable loss. Called to the presidency of this institution in 1890, after having served with distinguished success as President of Lafayette College, and while Secretary of the Board of Ministerial Relief, under whose administration that agency of the Church greatly developed its resources, his acceptance of the presidency of the Historical Society marked a new era also in the history of the latter.

Apart from his administrative genius, which would have insured his efficiency in any institution of the Church, he was most happy in the essential unity of the threefold work of his life. Devoting his youth and maturity to young men, his advanced years to aged and dependent ministers and their families, he combined with the latter a devotion to the memory of the men who have lived and died for the Church. Resigning from one and then from the other of these positions, he held to the Society, and continued to pour into it the unspent enthusiasm of his forceful and sanguine nature to the latest hours of his earthly life. Lafayette College, with its million of endowment ; the cause of Ministerial Relief, with the more than a million of its memorial fund ;

and the Presbyterian Historical Society, with its entrance on a new era under his guidance, will all remain a triple monument to his memory through generations to come.

Coming to the aid of the Society after its forty years of passive accumulation of historical treasure, he brought to it an organizing power that superinduced life on its chaotic materials. Gathering about him those whose historical tastes and personal congeniality were readily kindled by his own enthusiasm, for seven years he wrought with them in the light of his own lofty ideal of what the Society ought to do and to be. Sparing neither time, labor, nor money to lift this neglected institution of the Church to the high position belonging to it as the one organized centre for the preservation of the annals of the past, present, and future of Presbyterianism in the United States, he laid large plans for its furtherance.

Within the Society, though hampered at every step by want of means, he reorganized its working force and distributed its committees so as to cover all the aims of the Society under its revised constitution. He was himself the soul of all the committees, and inspired them with his own zeal in the performance of their duties. Slowly, but surely, the unsorted mass of materials in the library yielded to the sifting and classifying processes of wise discrimination, and became available for reference and study. At the same time a vigilant outlook was instituted over the whole field of the Church for the ingathering of precious and perishing memorials. In pursuance of these aims he subsidized his rare personal influence in the wide circle of his personal acquaintance, and in the Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies of the Church.

His heart was set on a twofold project, in the accomplishment of which, if God had spared him, he would have been the happy promoter, if not the real founder, of the Society. One of these was the securing of a proper fireproof building, in some accessible centre, furnished with all the various facilities for the work of the Society and the accommodation of historical students. In the good providence of God he lived to lead the Society to the borderland of its heritage in the spacious and beautiful quarters allotted it in the new Witherspoon Building. Like Moses, he had a soul-filling view of the prospect from a Pisgah height, but he was not permitted himself to cross over into the promised posses-

sion. It is a sad and inscrutable decree that brings his brethren of the Society together for the first time in their new quarters to mourn the demise of their beloved leader.

The other project, which lay even nearer his heart, and on which he labored with the consuming zeal of a ruling passion strong in death, was the procuring of a suitable endowment for the Society by the help of large-hearted and liberal friends of the Church, who he was sure would respond to the pressing and ever-growing needs of the Society by the contribution of such sums as would lift it above its struggle for existence and enable it to fulfill the noble function of its creation. He was sanguine that men of means and of enlightened devotion to the Presbyterian Church would join in the movement to set the Society on a permanent foundation, and signalize its entrance into its new fireproof hall by equipping it, for the first time, with a salaried specialist, whose whole time and energy should be given to the institution. Already in correspondence with leading men in the Church, he was nursing his strength for personal interviews with them when the summons came to him to lay down his burdens and come up higher and be at rest.

Humanly speaking, the Moses who had led the Society out of the wilderness would have been the choicest leader to have carried it over into the promised land of a proper endowment. But from him we must turn to the Sovereign of men and means for a Joshua who shall take his place and lead us over the hitherto impassable river. When he shall be found his first endeavor will be to secure a "William C. Cattell Memorial Fund," whose endowment will be a perpetual memorial of this noble leader, whose last laboring breath was spent for the Society.

To those of us who were intimately associated with him in the work of the Society, the privilege of such association was its own sufficing reward. Whatever interest we had in the Society was intensified by the irresistible contagion of his enthusiasm, and it must remain with us as an abiding inspiration to carry on the work for which he lived and died. Cherishing the imperishable memories of his personal intercourse with us, revering and loving him as sons their father, we gratefully shared in his confidence, and strove to rise to the height of his own self-sacrificing devotion to the cause for which we wrought with him. His image will ever

abide with us, his fatherly benignity, his cordial bearing, his beaming countenance, his sunny smile, his merry humor, his unfailing courtesy, his generous hospitality, making his society a gracious privilege even when he was pressing on us our duties or urging us on to the measureless devotion he felt for his work and ours.

We mourn him and cry, "My father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" In reverent submission to the Lord of life, who has caught him away from us into the heavenly glory, we return to the unfinished work he has left us with the prayer that his mantle may fall on another who shall be filled with a double portion of his spirit.

*Resolved,* That a copy of this minute, suitably engrossed, be sent to the family of the deceased, with assurance of deepest sympathy with them in their sore personal bereavement.

And also that a copy be furnished to the religious papers for publication, and that it be printed in the Appendix of the forthcoming Annual Report of the Council to the Society.

J. HENRY SHARPE,  
WILLIAM L. LEDWITH,  
*Committee.*

---