



CENTENNIAL VOLUME

OF THE

First Presbyterian Church

OF PITTSBURGH, PA.

1784 — 1884.

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1884.

DR. PAXTON'S ADDRESS.

At the close of the paper on Woman's Work, the Rev. Dr. Paxton, who kindly deferred important work to remain with the congregation, was called upon.

He intimated that certain humorous stories of the older time, kindred to others which had been already given, had been floating through his mind, and he had thought of contributing them to the occasion; but on second thought, it seemed best not to close so great and solemn a meeting with a recital of that nature. His mind had been particularly drawn, during the paper of Dr. Speer, to the convention of 1857. It was a revival conference in the truest and highest sense. It was attended by many representative men from the three large neighboring Synods. A remarkable sermon was preached on the opening evening. But next morning, on assembling, the anxiety which all felt seemed so deep as almost to amount to discouragement, and the services went forward most earnestly but with a feeling akin to depression. But before noon had arrived it seemed as though the exact word was given by the Spirit to the venerable Dr. Plumer. He directed the attention and the faith of the convention to the compassionate, the risen and glorified Christ. The name of "Jesus" seemed to waken the chords of tenderest feeling and joyful hope. And other work of the Spirit was also going forward. In the afternoon the letter of the convention addressed to the churches of the whole region was read. That letter Dr. Jacobus had been commissioned on the previous day to prepare. Keenly he felt the responsibility of it and took the matter to God—it is said—with "strong crying and tears." The letter was written after wrestling in thought and prayer continued until midnight and

beyond. When first read to the convention it was deeply impressive and was at once recognized as voicing the heart of that prayerful assembly. It was printed and read in hundreds of churches. This letter, and many other results of the convention, went abroad with power. The great movement which began soon thereafter has been largely traced to their influence. It is thought that the Week of Prayer originated within their circle, through the touched heart and strong faith of the Missionary Morrison, in India. There was an almost simultaneous outpouring of the Spirit in Philadelphia, and before long the land was ablaze.

The influence of the convention upon the First Church was direct and immediate. Dr. Paxton shortly thereafter met the one we were accustomed to call the model elder, Mr. Francis Bailey, who seemed deeply impressed with the conviction that an immediate and great blessing was impending. He said, "Do you know that Mr. Beer has been praying all night?" His faith was strong and proved well founded. Meetings were called. The work began straightway and continued long, and there was a large ingathering. The convention marked a period of great interest in the church, the region, and even in the world.

The Rev. Dr. Swift, who presided, closed the interesting services with a brief address of congratulation, in which he referred to the early relations sustained by the First Church of Pittsburgh and the First Church of Allegheny, and expressed the best wishes of his own heart and of the people of his charge for the continued prosperity of the church now celebrating the completion of its first century. The benediction was pronounced by Dr. Paxton.