

SKETCHES OF THE MINISTERS

Of the

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OF NORTH AMERICA

From 1888 to 1930

With supplemental sketches of ministers living in 1888 whose records were carried forward in Glasgow's History up to that date; together with sketches of the institutions, missions and organizations of the Church, and lists of missionaries who have served the Church during this period; containing also 42 portraits of Moderators of Synod besides the cuts of the institutions of the Church; also lists of Presbyteries and Congregations together with the dates of organization and disorganization of the same during the period covered by this volume.



By

THE REV. OWEN F. THOMPSON

Pastor of the Blanchard Congregation

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which occurred on May 6th, 1897. Thus closed a pastorate of 47 years, beginning at the age of 25 and closing at the age of 72, his only charge in this world's ministry under the King. It was his custom, though an aged man now, to make extended rides among his widely scattered people. On the day of his death he had returned from such a ride. Soon afterward he complained of serious illness, for which he felt he must have prompt medical aid. His wife crossed the street to ask a neighbor to go for the physician, and on her return found that the Great Physician had already come, and, in His wisdom and kindness, instead of giving him an extension of days on earth had granted him life forevermore in Heaven. His life was characterized by sympathy for all in trouble, and for those who were desiring to get forward in the work of the Kingdom. He gave freely both of his interest and of his slender means to help those who needed such help.

DAVID BURT WILLSON, M. D., D. D.

D. B. WILLSON, whose biographical sketch appears in Glasgow's History, published in the year 1888, was at that time Professor of Biblical Literature in the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Allegheny (now North Side Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania. He had occupied this chair since the fall of 1875. This position he continued to fill either in the active work of teaching or as Professor Emeritus to the end of his life. In 1908 he suffered a nervous breakdown, and was absent from his place during the year 1908-1909. On his return in 1909, he took up work along with the other professors until the death of Professor R. J.

George, D. D. In the fall of 1911 he resumed his place in his old department and filled it until 1916, when he resigned after completing forty years of service. With the exception of the period of his breakdown, he was never known to be absent from or late to his work during all those years. After his resignation he was made Professor Emeritus, and continued as such until the time of his death, though he did not teach. He departed from this life on February 13, 1919, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after a long life of exceptionally efficient and consecrated service for the Master, whom he loved and to whom he had dedicated all of his heart and his talents. Dr. Willson came from a race of ministers. His grandfather was the Rev. J. R. Willson, D. D. His father was the Rev. J. M. Willson, D. D. His uncle was the Rev. R. Z. Willson. He himself did not fall behind the others in the line in ability or influence. He was one of the greatest scholars reared in the Covenanter Church, a man whose talent and godliness made him stand in the front rank of the Kingdom. Though he was a man of humble spirit, his personality and influence could no more be hidden than that of Moses. He was a Christian from the heart out. Personal and private duties were performed with the same conscientious faithfulness that marked his rendering of more public and open service. He had a deep and personal acquaintance with the Word of God and with the God of the Word. Loyalty and faithfulness were corner stones in his character. He was the devoted friend of every reform that concerned the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ and the welfare of his fellowmen. He was the beloved friend of children, who felt that in him they had a true friend, for he did indeed have the spirit of a little

child, so perfectly had he become adapted to the Kingdom of Heaven. His teaching in the Seminary was of the sort to make a life-long impression upon his scholars. The Truth was above everything else to him. Those who were under his instruction learned not only the lessons that are to be found in the Word of God and in the text books studied in school, but the lessons that are learned only in the character and personality of one whom you have come to trust and follow. He was ever a ready defender of the doctrines of his Church, both on the floor of Synod and through the pages of the Church publications. Greatness of the soul; gentleness of spirit; regard for the truth; love for God and man; may be said to have distinguished this leader, who held his place for almost half a century as a minister of the Gospel and as an instructor of those who were preparing for the ministry. He continued with Dr. J. W. Sproull as Editor and Proprietor of the Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter for a number of years after the beginning of the period covered by this sketch, until that magazine ceased as a separate publication. In the year 1890 he was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Pennsylvania. His widow is still living; also one son, the Rev. J. B. Willson, and one daughter, Mrs. Mary Grier Coleman, the wife of Professor John Coleman, D. D., of Geneva College.

JAMES BURT WILLSON

J. B. WILLSON, son of David Burt and Mary Rebecca (Galbraith) Willson, was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, January 5, 1891, and baptized in the Union Church at Mars,