

## P R E L U D E.

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As a full quarter of a century has elapsed since the bequest of THOMAS STRAWBRIDGE, making provision for the preaching of an Annual Sermon, became available; and this being the twenty-sixth time that such sermon has been preached, in this church, it is fitting, as a prelude, that I state some facts relating thereto, which may be unknown to many of the present, and younger members, of this congregation of today.

It is proper to state that Thomas Strawbridge was of English descent, born in the north of Ireland in 1798, and came to America 110 years ago, and to Sangamon county in the year 1823. Settling first in Springfield, he followed for a time the trade of a saddle and harness maker. After a few years he removed to and settled upon an unbroken prairie, some five miles southeast from this city, and there during the rest of his life, engaged in farm life. He died unmarried June 7, 1880, aged 82 years. Some three years before his death he executed his last will and testament, making disposition of his property, then valued at something over \$45,000.

Among his various bequests he left \$1,000 to the Springfield Baptist Association, providing that a sermon be preached annually, for all time to come, in this Central Baptist Church, upon the "Unbounded Goodness, Greatness, Mercy and Love of Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of the World."

The first sermon preached under this foundation, was delivered in October, 1883, by the Rev. A. A. Kendrick, then President of Shurtleff College; the second was preached by the Rev. B. F. Simpson, then pastor of the Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Ill., in October, 1884. Both of those eminent and saintly men, have finished their earthly work, and entered upon the realities, which, by faith, while living, they foresaw, and in the interpretation of the word of God, they proclaimed to men.