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Mr. John Carr
May 31, 1889

Catharine Ledyard Van Rensselaer.

En Memoriam

A
DISCOURSE

IN MEMORY OF

Mrs. Cortlandt Van Rensselaer

Delivered in the Presbyterian Church, Burlington, N. J.,

February 25, 1883

BY THE

REV. EDWARD B. HODGE

Printed, not Published

Biog.
V274h
1883

OLL: 19524115

"SOON and forever"—such promise our trust,
Though ashes to ashes and dust unto dust—
"Soon and forever" our union shall be
Made perfect, our glorious Redeemer! in thee ;
When the sins and the sorrows of time shall be o'er,
Its pangs and its partings remembered no more ;
Where life cannot fail and where death cannot sever,
Christians with Christ shall be "soon and forever."

"Soon and forever" the breaking of day
Shall drive all the night-clouds of sorrow away ;
"Soon and forever" we'll see as we're seen,
And learn the deep meaning of things that have been :
When fightings without us and fears from within
Shall weary no more in the warfare of sin,
Where fears and where tears and where death shall be never,
Christians with Christ shall be "soon and forever."

"Soon and forever" the work shall be done,
The warfare accomplished, the victory won ;
"Soon and forever" the soldier lays down
His sword for a harp and his cross for a crown.
Then droop not in sorrow, despond not in fear,
A glorious to-morrow is brightening and near ;
When—blessed reward of each faithful endeavor—
Christians with Christ shall be "soon and forever."

Catharine Ledyard Van Rensselaer.

In Memoriam.

I STOOD last summer one stormy day on the top of Mount Marcy, the pride of the Adirondacks. When the driving clouds at last were ending their chase, and had gone by on the wings of the wind, the sun poured its radiance over a widespread scene. It was a mountain panorama; a billowy expanse of hills; lakes set among them, like gleaming mirrors, reflecting the beams of the new-revealed light; valleys darkened by towering peaks; forests of varying green; rocky slides; flitting shadows cast by the flying clouds. Many objects of interest were pointed out to me, many names were mentioned. One object, however, in particular, arrested my attention. It was a tiny lakelet almost at my feet. I had but a little while before spent a night on the bosom of one of the noblest rivers in the world. Its waters have been flowing year after year, a constant tide, affording refreshment, life, wealth, and joy to thousands of people, and a great area of territory; and that lakelet in the heart of the mountains was

its source. It was for that reason that, among a thousand other objects to attract, this in particular engaged my thought.

Certainly, dear friends, the life of Catharine Ledyard Van Rensselaer was, by the common consent of an unusually wide circle of friends, among the noblest, fairest, and best that have been given by the Father of Mercies to gladden and beautify the world he made. When we come, however, to make up the record and preserve the memorial, we find that it is not the story of a storm-tossed sea that we are to write, but rather that of a peaceful river, having a noble origin amidst the mountain-heights of a godly ancestry, and in the high, clear atmosphere of truth and sound principles; gathering volume, and breadth, and depth in its onward course; flowing through scenes of beauty, but itself the chief element of beauty in the landscape; bearing on its broad bosom, and helping on their way, many that found no such help elsewhere as they hurried along on various errands of business, pleasure, and care; extending over a wide area the most refreshing and beneficent influence; swept ever and anon by some sudden gust, like a summer's storm, violent enough to raise wavelets of agitation upon the surface, but flowing with so deep a current as never in the worst of them to be hindered a moment in its majestic course; showing rather, as the storm broke, the reflected glory of heaven, the rainbow-arch of covenanted mercies, thunder-

clouds suddenly transformed by outbursting sunlight into forms so splendid, and hues and shapes of such unearthly radiance, that no one could fail to acknowledge that the scene was but the fairer for the temporary disturbance; and losing itself at last with finished course in the ocean of eternal felicity.

It will be our first duty to look back at the elements of which this remarkable, beautiful, and useful life was made, the springs from which the stream started on its way, and so learn the materials which divine grace and goodness used to constitute it.

It was in the year 1770 that a young man, nineteen years of age, came floating down the Connecticut River all the way from Hanover, N. H., one hundred and twenty miles, in a canoe, which with Indian help he had cut, or burnt, out of a large tree. He landed at the foot of Prospect Street, Hartford, threw off the bear-skin in which he was wrapped, tied his boat to a tree, and went up into the town. This man was one of the most remarkable men of his time. His name was John Ledyard. He was not an immediate ancestor of our Catharine Ledyard Van Rensselaer, but he was perhaps the most distinguished member of that interesting and distinguished family, from which she derived a part of her blood, and the middle letter of her name; and I mention him, and speak of his character, in order to give an idea of the stock from which she was derived. Ledyard travelled with indefatigable energy over a large

part of the world, exploring and helping open to trade unknown regions, visiting and corresponding with such men as Franklin, Jefferson, and Lafayette, and dying at last in the midst of his labors at Cairo, in Egypt. He was a close observer, daring in his purposes, but guarded in his measures, a great linguist, a good writer, with early religion, and an ardent zeal to be something himself and to do something for others. It was his uncle, William Ledyard, who became famous for his brave defence of Fort Griswold against the attack of the British in September, 1781; no less than twenty others of his name and kindred helping in the fight.

Let these serve as specimens of the blood. And yet I would like to add that on the very day that Colonel William Ledyard fell mortally wounded by the English officer to whom he had surrendered his sword, his half-sister, Anne Ledyard, became Mrs. Andrew Hodge, of Philadelphia, known thus to my boyish recollection as "Aunt Nancy," and to Mrs. Van Rensselaer as "Aunt Hodge;" a woman whom I am the more pleased to mention in this connection because she affords an example to us of the Ledyard *women* as the others of the Ledyard *men*. Her husband was one of the original corporators of the old Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia.

If John Ledyard the traveller walked up into the town and visited the burial-ground of the old First Church of Hartford, after tying his boat at the foot of

Prospect Street, he could trace out on a tombstone there the name of one of Hartford's best citizens, a man of great distinction, influence, and literary culture—the name of his grandfather, John Ledyard like himself, who came over from Bristol, England, at the age of seventeen. He was born in the year 1700, and died September 3, 1771. He was the father of fifteen children, ten by his first wife, Deborah Youngs, and five by his second, Mary Austin. The second child of this second marriage was named after the mother, *Mary Austin Ledyard*; and in her we are particularly interested, as she was the mother of our friend. And so we have traced out the ancestry through one line of descent. Let us turn to another.

The good ship "Angel Gabriel" brought over in the year 1635, from the town of Westbury, Wilts County, England, a worthy gentleman, who had accumulated some means in his native land by the manufacture of fine woollen goods. He was accompanied by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. William Thompson, for twenty years rector of the parish church of Westbury, and sister of the Rev. Samuel Thompson, of London, England. They came to live on lands granted to them in Ipswich (now Essex), Mass., where their Cogswell descendants are still in possession. We pass over four generations, and find the great-great-great-grandson, the Rev. James Cogswell, D.D., in charge of the Congregationalist Church in Scotland, a

parish in the town of Windham, Conn. On Thursday, November 27, 1788, New England was keeping an old-time Thanksgiving. The modern Temperance Reform Movement had not robbed the fireside of the social mug of flip on Thanksgiving eve, nor modern religious indifference thinned the attendance at the meeting-house in the morning. The mug of flip, the pumpkin pie, and the parson's sermon were almost equally characteristic of the occasion. Neither the flip nor the pie were wanting at the Scotland parsonage, but the parson himself was indisposed. At the time of morning-service a young man, twenty-seven years of age, entered the church with the psalm-book in his pocket, and a printed or written sermon in his hand. Two things were evident. He was plainly filling an unaccustomed place, and he was equally plainly fond of music. The singing of the ninety-seventh Psalm, which with some tremulousness of voice he ventured to announce, so quieted his nerves that he was able, at its conclusion, to give out the text and go through with the discourse, acting the preacher to admiration. As the closing anthem from Isaiah, "Sing, O ye heavens," etc., was also most enchantingly sung, it is clear that the services were quite satisfactory to all concerned, notwithstanding the necessary absence of the good pastor of the flock. This scene in the old village church in the town of Windham, parish of Scotland, will serve to introduce to us *Mason Fitch Cogswell*, the

father, as *Mary Austin Ledyard* was the mother, of our departed friend. He was the fourth child of the Rev. James Cogswell, in whose place he officiated that Thanksgiving morning in the parish meeting-house. He had graduated with the first honors of his class at Yale College in 1780, and, having chosen the medical profession, was pondering in his mind, at that time, where he should settle and enter upon practice. More than sixteen years before the Thanksgiving I have described, his mother, Alice, had died in the forty-eighth year of her age, only a few months after the removal of the family to Scotland, from her husband's first charge at Canterbury.

She belonged to the great Fitch family of Eastern Connecticut; one member of which, James Fitch, was first minister of the Church at Norwich; and another, Ebenezer Fitch, was first President of Williams College. Dr. Cogswell was not unconscious of the honor and privilege of such an ancestry, as we learn from a manuscript diary of his, which recently came to light in a most remarkable manner, and an account of which was published in the *New Englander* of January, 1882, by the Rev. Dr. Bacon, of New Haven. The diary gives us an account of the journey he took to spend that Thanksgiving at his father's which we have recorded, and introduces us most delightfully to a view of life in the families of old Connecticut which he visited by the way, including the "Fitches," his relatives, whom

he mentions with pride. They were (to quote Dr. Bacon's comments) his "uncles, aunts, and cousins, fair specimens of the old Connecticut gentry; well-to-do people, living comfortably and honestly on their own acres, working six days and resting on the seventh according to the commandment; thinking people, whose intellectual life was nourished chiefly by the Bible and the doctrinal exposition of it from the pulpit—men and women whose hereditary Puritanism had not vanished into Æstheticism, and who were therefore characterized more by strength of opinions about right and wrong than by exquisiteness of taste; plain people with no aristocratic pretensions, yet *gentry* as descended from ancestry whom they honored, and for whose sake they were ready to welcome every cousin who did not dishonor the stock (the gens) from which they came."

Perhaps my hearers are not altogether unacquainted with the history of the early Indian wars in Connecticut; and if so they cannot fail to have in their mind the vivid picture of Major John Mason, the hero of those wars, sword in hand, storming the fort of the Pequod Indians, May 26, 1637, with only seventy-seven white men under his command; but accomplishing his task so bravely and successfully as to make his own name famous forever, and to put an end completely to the depredations of a tribe that had been the terror for years both of the white settlers and of the neighboring Indians themselves. It was from this Major John

Mason, so conspicuous a name in the history of the State, that Dr. Cogswell's mother, Alice, traced her descent on her mother's side, as she did on the father's from the Fitches ; and thus, too, it came to pass that the Doctor himself was designated by three very honorable names, and so is known familiarly to us as *Mason Fitch Cogswell*.

On Monday, December 15, 1788, Dr. Cogswell paid two visits in Hartford. One was to that noted physician, Dr. Hopkins, probably the foremost man in his profession in the State, and whose place in the profession in Hartford Dr. Cogswell was afterward, in some sense, to fill. He probably wanted advice from the best source about a plan he had talked over with Governor Huntington at Norwich, of settling in Hartford ; a plan which Dr. Hopkins appears to have commended, and which was soon afterward carried out. The other visit was to the house of Oliver Wolcott, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and afterward Governor of Connecticut. He came away after tea greatly impressed with the domestic happiness of his host and his excellent wife ; and he carried with him a wish, which, perhaps, when he reached his lodging, he turned into a prayer. It was that he might be as well married as that "charming couple," and "that anybody and everybody could say as much of him." That wish was gratified and that prayer answered. In the course of the year 1799 he was married to that estimable lady,

Mary Austin Ledyard, the line of whose ancestry we have already traced, and a most interesting household was established in Prospect Street, upon which it will be next our privilege and pleasure to look.

The head of the household we have already learned to know from his journal as a young man of fine talents and attainments, with a fondness for music indicating a refined nature, accustomed to move in the very best circles in the society of that day, where he was evidently an eagerly welcomed guest, giving by his social qualities and genial humor as much pleasure as he received. We see him now in maturer years stepping to the front rank of his noble profession, inspiring confidence everywhere by his happy power of correct diagnosis, good judgment, tact, and skill in treatment; and in addition winning to a remarkable degree the love of the entire community by his unflinching kindness and readiness to place his services at the command of all whom he found in need of them. His professional duties made it difficult for him to be master of his time, but he was scrupulous to attend at least one part of the day upon the Sabbath-services in the old First Church, and to conduct daily family-worship at home.

Mrs. Cogswell was evidently a very remarkable woman; and we shall find in her one of the most important and effective agencies which God employed to mould the character and influence the life of our departed friend. It is said to be characteristic of women

in general that they reach their decisions by a sort of instinct or intuition; that they thus judge all but instantaneously, and with assurance, yet hardly knowing the process by which the conclusion has been reached. But Mrs. Cogswell's mind appears to have been more of a judicial cast. She was deliberate in considering the questions, sometimes delicate and difficult, constantly submitted to her as presiding over a household of growing children. In a physician's home an unusually large share of responsibility often falls upon the mother's shoulders on account of the pressure of professional duties which absorb the husband's attention both by night and day. Mrs. Cogswell acquired the habit of weighing a subject carefully, looking at it from all sides and then announcing a decision. Her manner of reaching it, and constant experience of her apparently unerring wisdom, made her quite an oracle in the family, and no one ever dreamed of appealing from the sentence of her lips. Perhaps one reason that she was so trusted may be found in the fact that among the books of standard value, the reading of which in the circle of choice and cultivated people that loved to gather in that Prospect Street home made the hours pass helpfully and happily, the Bible held always the most honored place. It was not a book laid upon the shelf, used only on formal occasions, or as a repository of family genealogical lore; but it was read for example of the choicest literature, the sublimest

poetry, and the best instruction for the emergencies of life.

One of the most beautiful fireside-scenes that Hartford could boast in those days was that of the Cogswell household of a winter-morning—Mary, Elizabeth, Alice, and Catharine, with one or more friends that had come across the street to share the privilege—a charming group—with the mother, kind, loving, and wise in the midst, the presiding genius of the place—all poring with eager interest over their open Bibles, several chapters of which they read together, as the proper, pleasing, and profitable preparation for other literature and other work.

There was a son, too, in the household, bearing his father's honored name, succeeding afterward to his father's honorable profession. He was an only son, an only brother, a most important and beloved member of the family, of the same spirit with the rest, their joy and pride in the days I am describing, the counsellor and reliance of his sisters in later days when the father had been laid to rest.

If I single out one of the children, however, for a more particular mention, it is because her case was altogether so peculiar, the story of her experience so pathetic, that it exerted undoubtedly a powerful influence upon the life and character of her sister, and had besides a most important relation to great public interests. Alice Cogswell, in that circle of happy, bright,

intelligent ladies, cherished, guarded, instructed with tenderest care, was the most tenderly cherished and guarded of all. She had a place entirely her own in the bosom of the family, and lived actually enshrined in her father's heart. A severe illness in tender childhood had left her without the power of hearing or speech. But she had a face beaming with intelligence, exhibiting in its manifold changes every variety of thought and feeling, and a mind of unusual vivacity, ready wit, and strong affections. Everything was done to make amends for her life-long trial, and to secure for her that thorough education which her condition rendered so peculiarly difficult. It was to these efforts made in her behalf that the country owes those noble institutions, of which the one in Hartford was the first, where hundreds of the deaf and dumb have been enabled to have advantages of training all but equal to those enjoyed by persons in the full possession of their faculties. The skill of that distinguished teacher and authoress, Mrs. L. H. Sigourney, was early employed for her instruction; and she, like every one else who knew her, became greatly attached to her pupil. She wrote afterward, on hearing of her death: "To know the departed as I knew her in the expansion of her fine intellect, in the first warmth of her ingenuous and ardent affection, to witness her thirst for knowledge, and her delight in acquiring it, was sure to lay the foundation of no common attachment."

To know what music was excited her constant and eager interest, and was the subject of persistent inquiries. She would lean upon the piano, and could feel its vibrations, but was sure there was much more in it than that. "Why cannot you tell me," said she, "how music dies away? Is it like the smoke that curls so majestically and vanishes slowly? Is it like the wave that moves in different shapes?"

Her father's death occurred in December, 1830, creating a profound impression in Hartford, and deepest grief in the hearts of the loving circle in the Prospect Street home. But upon Alice the effect was fatal to life. She could not hear; but her sensitive nerves perceived the jarring of the air by the funeral-bell. She shuddered, and the shock reached her innermost soul. "My heart is so grown to my father," she said, "that I cannot live." The thirteen days that followed were the most painful in the history of the household, and made up a part of that "fiery trial" which God saw best now to employ to purify and refine the character of the subject of this discourse. At the end the same bell that so startled that young life by its tolling was tolling again for her.

I am sure if our own departed friend had been asked what was one of the most powerful of the agencies which had united to mould and influence her life, she would have answered: "My sister, Alice Cogswell." That sister's life threw a halo of sanctity over the days of

her youth, and at her removal to heaven she seemed to hear her voice from the skies. She kept the only likeness there was of her face, as long as she lived, in that room of her own home in Burlington, where she spent most of her own time. It was set low where her short-sighted vision could always enjoy it, and when, after the birth of four sons, God at length made her the happy mother of a lovely girl, she hastened to name that dear name of *Alice Cogswell* upon the baby-brow when baptismal water consecrated her to the service of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Others also felt as though there came a message from heaven; and the same Mrs. Sigourney, to whom I have alluded, put her view of that message into lines of poetry which no one can fail to admire, though a stranger, but which thrilled the fancy of immediate friends like the very voice of the departed.

“Sisters! there’s music here,
From countless harps it flows
Through this bright, celestial sphere,
Nor pause nor discord knows.
The seal is melted from my ear
By love divine,
And what through life I pined to hear,
Is mine!—is mine!
The warbling of an ever-tuneful choir
And the full, deep response of David’s golden lyre.
Did kind earth hide from me
Her broken harmony,

That thus the melodies of heaven might roll,
And whelm in deeper tides of bliss my rapt, my wondering
soul ?

Joy! I am mute no more ;—
My sad and silent years,
With all their painful toils are o'er.
Sweet sisters! dry your tears,
Listen at hush of eve—listen at rising day—
List at the hour of prayer. *Can ye not hear my lay?*
Untaught—unchecked—it came,
As light from chaos beamed,
Praising *His* glorious name
Whose blood on Calvary streamed ;
And still it swells that highest strain—the song of the re-
deemed !

Brother! my only one,
Beloved from cradle-hours,—
With whom beneath the vernal sun
I wandered, when our task was done,
And gathered early flowers^t;
I cannot come to thee,—
Though 'twas so sweet to rest
Upon thy gently guiding arm, thy sympathizing breast ;
'Tis better here to be.
No disappointments shroud
The angel-bowers of joy ;
Our knowledge hath no cloud,
No limit, no alloy,
The fearful word *to part*
Is never breathed above ;
Heaven hath no broken heart ;
Call me not hence, my love !

Oh mother! *He* is here
To whom my soul so grew,
That, when Death's fatal spear
Stretched him upon his bier,
I fain must follow, too.
His smile my infant griefs restrained,—
His image in my childish dream,
And o'er my young affections reigned
In gratitude unuttered and supreme.
But yet till these effulgent skies burst forth in radiant glow,
I knew not half the unmeasured debt a daughter's heart
doth owe.
Ask ye if to *his* soul the same fond thrill is given?
Ask ye if filial love remains unchanged in heaven?
I bend to soothe thy woes,—
How near thou canst not see,—
I watch thy lone repose. May I not comfort thee?
To welcome thee I wait. Blest mother, come to me!"

I cannot omit from the picture of the Cogswell household the face of another important member. She was the daughter of a king, but thought it her highest privilege, while she lived, to be the devoted servant of one whose medical skill and large-hearted kindness preserved her life in a great emergency. Her father reigned in Africa. She reigned, too, in her own sphere; and the love and fidelity with which "Old Purchase" discharged her duties so predisposed the future Mrs. Van Rensselaer to an interest in the colored people that she was ready, on her marriage, to sympathize heartily in her husband's feelings, who be-

gan his ministry by preaching to the slaves of Virginia, and to be the lifelong friend of the race.

One more face we must not omit, for *she* used constantly to see it, when, on a ministry of mercy, she took her way to a rather dilapidated house not far from the foot of Dr. Cogswell's garden, where lived, in a pleasant southeast front room, "Aunt Katy Skinner," as the young ladies called her. That room was one of the rooms in the "Interpreter's House," to which the then young Christian pilgrim, whose course has just ended in the Celestial City, was taken for instruction preparatory to her long journey. There she learned that heaven might, in a large measure, be reproduced on earth in the presence of almost entire poverty, extreme bodily suffering, and complete isolation from cheerful companionship. The moon and the stars kept this old woman company at night when pain prevented sleep. She was conscious of angelic guardianship, and was never afraid. An inventory of her possessions showed little more than table, and Bible, and hymn-book, and a cat reposing beneath; yet she thought herself one of "fortune's favorites," and happier than "any king on his throne." Twenty years this woman was slowly dying from a terrible disease. Twenty years of instruction in that chamber of suffering, where she saw the unflinching exhibition of faith, love, peace, and hope, exerted a mighty influence upon the future life of the beautiful young lady who ministered to her, getting

always more than she gave, and who became a bride only a few months after death came to raise to heaven the sufferer who had so long been her instructress.

It was some time about the year 1824 that Miss Catharine E. Beecher opened a school for young ladies in Hartford, and soon after took charge of the Hartford Female Seminary. Her qualifications for such a position were so marked, and the happy religious influence which she exerted over her pupils was of so healthful and decided a character, that the best people of the city thought it a privilege to place their children under her care. She felt no little pleasure when she discovered among her first pupils a young girl, bearing her own name of Catharine, about thirteen years old, and of unusually attractive appearance, the daughter of Dr. Cogswell. She never had occasion to change her opinion of that little girl. She proved to be a favorite among the pupils as well as with the teacher. Her companions fail to remember having ever seen a frown on her face, or a shade of ill-temper in her conduct. If such were ever exhibited, the all but perpetual sunlight of bright and happy demeanor has effectually effaced the recollection. Her religious impressions were developed and deepened most happily at this period. Miss Beecher's evident desire to see every pupil in the school an earnest-hearted and active Christian made upon her a strong impression. At the same time there was presiding over the old First Church (commonly

known as the "Centre Church") one of the most distinguished divines of that period. The name of Joel Hawes must always be remembered with gratitude and reverence. The church itself, one of the most venerable in the country, having been organized two hundred and fifty years ago, has looked down upon all the changes which have transpired in the valley of the Connecticut since June, 1636, when, with its two pastors, its ruling elder, and its deacon, it emigrated in a body from Newtown (now Cambridge), Mass., to its present position, then a wilderness. Joel Hawes was the tenth in the line of honorable names that filled the pastoral office in this grand old church. He is described as a man of practical zeal, devotion to revealed truth, sanctified earnestness, honesty of purpose, consistency of conduct—the model of an old-time divine. Under the ministry of this devoted servant of God great religious interest was quickened in the congregation to which he preached. It was a remarkable congregation. Judges, governors, lawyers, doctors, merchants, and people of the highest grades of society, as well as those of humble degree, filled the pews—probably as dignified, intelligent, thoughtful, and devout a gathering of men and women as could be found in the land. It was a matter of no small interest to young Catharine Cogswell, then nine years of age, to find that the celebrated Dr. Lyman Beecher, of Litchfield, had been sent for to aid the pastor in his overwhelmingly difficult

labors at that crisis. The two ministers not only preached with great power, but visited together from house to house among the people. During that year more than two hundred persons of every age and standing in society were admitted on confession of Christ to the Lord's Table. Another period of great religious interest in the Church occurred in 1826, showing its fruit largely among the young.

Already young Miss Cogswell was feeling deeply herself upon the subject of religion, and the influences of the school combined with those of the home and of the Church to bring her mind to a clear conviction as to her personal duty. She celebrated her sixteenth birthday on September 22, 1827. In the following February she appeared in the presence of the congregation with her two sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, and was baptized at the same time with them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The solemn service affected her so deeply that at its conclusion she fainted, and was carried from the church.

The whole period from 1830 to 1840 was one of unusual interest in religious matters, not only in Hartford, but through a large part of the country. Dr. Nettleton's preaching had produced a wonderful impression, and had been followed by the most happy results both in the Middle States and New England. Dr. Hawes and his people shared the religious fervor of the times, and in the fall of the year 1833, between sixty and sev-

enty publicly professed their faith in Christ at one time. God was using during that fall and winter, however, other means, besides those of the Church-services, to elevate and intensify the religious feelings of our dear friend. She was absent from Hartford, at her sister's home in Albany. During that visit, one to whom she was particularly attached was taken ill, and died a few weeks later, on December 4th. It was the illness and death of a true Christian that she witnessed, and she returned to Hartford not only touched with grief, but under such stress of religious feeling that she was led to seek every opportunity for private communion with God by meditation and prayer, by means of which such heavenward progress was made that we must mark the winter of 1833 as a crisis of great importance in her religious experience.

In the city of Albany there stands on the level ground between the hill and the Hudson River, a little north of the comparatively modern Delavan Hotel, a large and comely building, with the date 1765 on the side in great iron letters. The ceilings are lofty and the rooms extensive. The great hall is decorated with paper imported from Holland before the Revolution, and on every hand the finest wood-carving adorns the apartments. In the great dining-room, extending along the entire west side of the house, many noted characters have enjoyed the splendid hospitality of this famous old manor-house. But the best fame of the establishment is de-

rived from the fact that the lords of the manor have ever been known as the champions of their country's liberty, and the friends of true religion. To this palatial home, when just completed, Stephen Van Rensselaer, at that time twenty-three years of age, brought in a sloop from New York his beautiful bride, Catharine, daughter of Philip Livingston, signer of the Declaration of Independence. To the same home, seventy-one years later, in 1836, his grandson, Cortlandt Van Rensselaer, was conducting another Catharine, the bride, certainly equally beautiful, whom he had just been taking to himself in the city of Hartford. They had been married on the 13th of September, at the house of the bride's sister, Mrs. Weld, where Mrs. Cogswell had gone with her to live a few years after her husband's death.

It is the enthusiastic testimony of all who knew Mrs. Van Rensselaer at this period of her life that the beauty of her person and the grace and sprightliness of her manners were such as to attract universal admiration. Persons of the soberest judgment assure us that without having seen her it is impossible to form an idea of her surprising beauty as a young lady. She was indeed a perfect picture. Her head and neck were so posed upon her shoulders as to give a grace and dignity to her carriage that were simply indescribable. And there was this peculiarity about her beauty that no one, however charming, looked fair by her side.

This may appear extravagant, but I record it as the deliberate and emphatic testimony of her contemporaries. She was, however, excessively near-sighted, and did not see the looks of surprise, admiration, and delight which were continually upon her. She was besides so modest and humble, and already so disciplined in the school of suffering, that she appeared to be totally uninjured by all the attention which she everywhere received. She was very soon after made mistress of a modest mansion on the bank of the Delaware River, in the old city of Burlington, N. J., which her husband had chosen as the headquarters for his life of labor and usefulness as a minister of the Gospel; and with that pleasant city, their names, their lives, their holy influence, became linked forever. They fastened their fondest affections upon the place, and were pleased to have their names recorded on the roll of its worthies. For here lived Elias Boudinot, President of Congress; Charles Chauncey, and Horace Binney, "those great masters of the law;" George W. Doane, that remarkable and eminent prelate; Eliza P. Gurney, that queenly benefactress; Stephen Grellet, that saintly man and apostolic missionary. What Burlington possesses to-day of what is really valuable is largely due to these, and such as these, who have made it their home; and it is not hazarding too much to say that the dear old city owes no small share of its real prosperity and best religious life to the long residence in

the place of that devoted couple who came so quietly and unostentatiously in 1836 to give time and thought and energy to promote its best interests and to serve the glory of God.

It was the delight of Mrs. Van Rensselaer to enter with warmest sympathy into the life and labors of her husband while he served the Church, which he helped to organize, as its first pastor; while he travelled all over the country raising an endowment-fund for Princeton Theological Seminary; and while he toiled in the cause of Christian education. When he was removed to heaven the life and affections of the Church still gravitated toward the home on Green Bank, and its holy activities still moved about its surviving head as a centre. Long before we of later days had the oversight of the flock, "had she" (says one who knew her well) "infused her rare spirit into it. The attractive and cohesive power by which so many and diverse elements were drawn together so harmoniously, without disparagement or injustice to any one, belonged to her." Successive pastors "witnessed and wondered at it" to the end. Her quiet unobtrusive life was constantly manifesting itself in the growth, development, and prosperity of the Church, as the living juices of a tree manifest themselves in the buds and leaves and flowers which betoken its health and thrift. If the Church was constantly adding to its buildings, and possessions, constantly multiplying its

benevolent agencies, and extending its helping hands to the heathen in the very ends of the earth, it was a token that praying, and planning, and working, and giving for Christ were constantly proceeding at Stone Cottage. But I am afraid to write more lest I should offend against the disposition which so characterized her whole life; the disposition to keep her good deeds a secret with God. I may safely say what I have, however, with the explanation that all that was accomplished was felt by herself, and recognized by her friends, to be the wonderful work of God, who had been pleased to choose her as the instrument of his grace.

She was the best of mothers. Her heart never seemed to grow old. The sleigh-bells ringing through the crisp air of winter made the same flutter of excitement in the breast of the mother that they excited in the children; and they were *so* happy in possessing her sympathy in full measure to the last; sympathy in all the gayety of childhood; sympathy in the cares and duties of maturer years. Hers was "that ideal mother-love that never loses warmth, or faith, or hope in the beloved." We may truthfully say of her, as well as of Jesus: "Having loved her own which were in the world, she loved them unto the end." She never forgot a friend. She seemed to spend her time thinking and planning what she could do for each. She was famous among all for *her skill as a letter-writer*, and main-

tained a large correspondence to the very last. She carried *magnanimity* almost to a fault, so fearful was she of doing the least injustice to others. The *purity of her life*, the *sweet dignity* of her presence, her *attractive manners*, won for her respect and admiration in every period of her life. Her nature was one that to a remarkable degree craved *sympathy*, and the disposition to pour out her heart, when she found one whom she felt she could trust, in loving confidence, created a feeling of answering love to her, deeper and more intense than she herself ever knew or dreamed. This is one reason why more than ordinary grief was felt by not a few at her death.

The trials of her life came chiefly in the way of a *succession of bereavements*. Those nearest and dearest to her preceded her in long array to the heavenly country. All who watched her, and went with her, through those years of clouds and darkness, wondered both at *the elasticity of her temperament* and the unshaken confidence of her *unfaltering faith*. Although the days might be many when neither sun nor stars appeared, it never seemed to enter her mind to doubt that they were shining in full glory on the other side. And when the clouds broke and the light shone, her face took on a heavenly radiance, and a look of triumph, for she knew all along that it was so.

Although so large a proportion of those dearest to her were in the better country, she never grew weary

of life on earth with those that remained. So much was *there*, and so much was *here*, and Christ was both there and here, that she never thought to choose whether to abide or to depart. There were evidences, however, during the last months, that the time was not very far distant when her summons would come. That she was awake to these evidences was plain to those who heard her conversation, and noticed the direction it took; who heard her whispering hymns of heaven, and quiet ejaculations of confidence in Christ, and expectation of "eternal peace."

It was Christmas eve. The shadows had fallen. The evening-service of the Church was ended. The people who had offered their prayers that night, mingled with tears, had gone to their homes. About the bedside were gathered those whom she loved best on earth. Above, unseen, were the faces of those she loved best in heaven. In a moment in the still chamber the mystery transpired. She who had closed her eyes upon the group on earth opened them on the group in heaven. She was "absent from the body," "present with the Lord."

"Angels, bear the young immortal
Through the wonder-teeming space
To the everlasting portal,
To the spirit's resting-place.

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“Angels, let the ransomed stranger
In your guardian care be blest,
Hoping, trusting, free from danger
Till the trumpet end her rest.

“Blessed fold ! no foe can enter
And no friend depart from thence ;
Jesus is their sun, their centre,
And their shield Omnipotence.

“Blessèd, for the Lamb shall feed them,
All their sorrows wipe away,
To the living fountains lead them,
Till fruition’s perfect day.

“Lo it comes ! the day of wonders,
Louder chorals shake the skies,
Hades’ gates are burst asunder,
See the new-clothed myriads rise.

“Thought, repress thy weak endeavor ;
Here let reason prostrate fall.
Oh, th’ ineffable *forever*,
And the eternal All in All !”

