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# In Memoriam.

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ELBERT S. PORTER, D.D.,

ENTERED INTO REST

FEBRUARY 26TH, 1888,

AT

CLAVERACK, N. Y.

**(RECAP)**

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## CONTENTS.

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1. Introduction. Margaret E. Sangster, - - - - 5
2. Services at the Funeral, - - - - - 11
3. Minutes of the Consistory of First Reformed Church,  
Brooklyn, - - - - - 12
4. Remarks of the Rev. William J. Leggett, - - 13
5. Address of the Rev. Dr. F. N. Zabriskie, - - - 15
6. Memorial Sermon by the Rev. Dr. E. P. Terhune, - 29
7. Historical Sermon. By the Rev. Dr. Porter, - - 43
8. Poem. By the Rev. Dr. Porter, - - - - 70

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## INTRODUCTION.

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Thirty-four years, spent in acts of love, among one people, to whom he brought the strength of his young manhood, and to whom he gave the best work of his prime, make fitting in remembrance of Dr. Porter, the best memorial that reciprocal love can suggest. Into such work as church-building and the pastoral care of a flock, enters the full personality of the man. It is more than thought, more than plan; he becomes a part of the result; his hope, his earnestness, his individuality in all that characterizes it, perpetuated in lasting forms.

Of Dr. Porter's peculiar gifts and unstinted service tender and grateful mention will be found in the pages that follow. On the winter's day when loving hands bore him to his rest, his brethren in the ministry and the friends of his life, spoke with affectionate eloquence of what he had been and what he had done. Their words are here preserved as precious tributes, and even on the printed page they retain the freshness and fragrance, which belongs to the bloom of the heart. Later, in the church which was his dear delight, and from the desk where his form had been so long familiar, his successor, in the ear of a sympathetic throng, bore touching testimony to the fidelity and gentleness of the departed pastor. That sermon is also here, and following it, awaking

soft chords of sweet retrospection in the hearts of his older parishioners, is a sermon of Dr. Porter's own, included by request. As the farewell to the outworn edifice, and the rallying-cry of a leader who incited his people to the beginning of an arduous enterprise, that sermon shows the tact, fervor and sanguine disposition of one whom, in his best years, reverses could not discourage nor difficulties daunt.

My own part in this little volume is the pleasant task of arrangement and revision, binding the bouquet with the white ribbon which holds the flowers together. So much has been said, so tenderly and so truly said, of Dr. Porter in his public relations, that perhaps one who knew him in the intimacy of a unique and sacred friendship, may be pardoned for dwelling on another side of his character. Looking back past the years of illness and pain, to the pleasant days of health and vigor, I remember him as the brightness of his home, the most thoughtful and devoted of husbands, the most indulgent of fathers, the most courteous of hosts. What a pleasure it was, in vacation days, to visit at Oakledge, when, the cares and solitudes of the Brooklyn life laid aside for a time, Dr. Porter reveled like a boy in the freedom of the fields and woods. With what élan he planned the drives and fishing excursions, himself the life and center of every party, heedless of inconvenience or hardship, and bringing an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, and a flashing gayety of repartee to enliven the hours. To be dull in Dr. Porter's company, on those summer days, was a sheer impossibility. When his little



grandchildren grew old enough to be the sharers of his walks and drives, his delight was effervescent, for Dr. Porter was always a child-lover, and at home or on the street the little ones fearlessly clustered about him, while he always had a kind thought for the dear little heads in the pews. How closely some of our hymns are associated with him, so that "In Heavenly Love Abiding," "We are on Our Journey Home," "Jesus, These Eyes Have Never Seen," and "Rise, Glorious Conqueror, Rise," are never given out from the pulpit, without calling to mind the peculiar cadence of enjoyment with which he was wont to announce them. Of one Sunday School hymn, a special favorite with Dr. Porter, I never think without a picture of him in my mind, as in the Sabbath twilight, a daughter at the piano, and the home voices all blending in the strain, he would say, "Now, before we stop, let us have

‘ My life flows on in endless song,  
Above earth’s lamentation.’ ”

In family prayer his directness, simplicity and realization of the invisible but ever-near Redeemer made the morning and evening worship at Claverack as real trysting-places with the Most High. To those who knew him in his household life it was inexpressibly pathetic to learn that among the few gleams of brightness which could penetrate the enveloping mental cloud of the closing days, was the pleasure of hearing his youngest daughter sing. Her voice, uplifted in anthem or hymn, never failed

to tranquilize his mood, and would often bring a smile of childlike pleasure to the worn and weary face, as he would murmur something about "church" and "praise."

The editor who accepted my earliest girlish contribution to the press, he continued during the changeful and busy years, my closest literary confidante and my most judicious critic. When that which had been a pastime became a profession, no one else was so scornful of possible failure, so certain of the happiest success. I recall now, with a tender gratitude, his constant interest and sympathy; his scholarly resources ever at my disposal, as he gave me the freedom of his library, and not content with so great a boon, himself guided my reading. Introducing me to his favorite Wordsworth, he imparted to my sluggish appreciation something of his own enthusiasm for the poet of all thoughtful minds; and, a red-letter day in memory, is the August morning, when he appeared in my parlor, with a half dozen brown volumes under his arm, and the injunction: "Since you cannot go out of town this summer, you must get acquainted with Frederick Robertson."

It was Dr. Porter who roused me from the apathy of a great sorrow, by the practical advice that I should learn to read the New Testament in Greek, patiently guiding my stumbling study through the mazes of the irregular verbs, and illuminating each lesson with his picturesque comments. What he did for me, in lavish kindness, he did along one or another line, for others, the wonder being how

the days were long enough for his unselfish benefactions.

For so many tedious months the beloved one lingered in the Valley of the Shadow, and for so many days and nights, was his name always among those which I mentioned at the Throne, it was at first hard to break the sweet habit of praying for him, when the weary vigil was over. When the tidings of his going Home flashed over the wires on a Sabbath night, to many a heart, with the springing tears, came the irrepressible "Thanks be to God!" And to-day, when the bluebirds and the robins are singing about his old home, and the spring, of which he loved to watch the earliest tokens, is kissing the leaf-buds and flushing the willows, it is joy to think that he has gone where

" Everlasting spring abides  
And never-withering flowers!"

There were many to welcome him there—a host whom he had helped on their journey; and I cannot but think, as the pilgrim shook off the drops of the chill river and stepped on the green and blooming shore, feeling in his veins the gladness of youth renewed, and dropping age and sickness and pain forevermore, of the words of one of old, the personal experience of every saint who wins the victory:

"I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

*Brooklyn, April 19, 1888.*

## The Funeral Services.

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The funeral was held in the Reformed Church of Claverack, on Wednesday, February 29th. There was not only a large attendance from the community among whom for many years was his summer home, and in the midst of which he had resided for the five years of his retirement from the active pastorate, but a large delegation, including his successor, Rev. Dr. E. P. Terhune, and members of the Consistory, from the First Reformed Church, Bedford avenue, Brooklyn; also many from Chatham, Dr. Porter's first charge, from Hudson, and other places where he was known and had frequently ministered. The pastors in the Classis of Hudson and Rensselaer were many of them present, with Rev. Dr. Holmes and Rev. Mr. Yeisley, of the Presbyterian Church, and representatives of other denominations. The profusion of floral gifts, very many from Brooklyn, was such as to encircle the casket, and convert the pulpit platform into a mass of bloom. The services were conducted by Rev. W. J. Leggett. Rev. Dr. Van Gieson offered prayer and read the Scripture lessons. Rev. Mr. Leggett spoke of the closing years at the Claverack home, Dr. Zabriskie gave the admirable sketch and estimate of the man and his work, and Rev. Mr. Brown, pastor at Chatham, gave an account of the

excellent and abiding work done there in the early ministry of this veteran now at rest. Rev. Dr. Terhune was to have spoken of his work in Brooklyn, but was precluded by hoarseness, and in lieu, the minute adopted by the Consistory of the First Reformed Church on Bedford avenue, was read, as follows :

The life of Dr. Porter was mainly consecrated to the interests of this church and congregation. Its third pastor, to him it was given to see its growth, its fullest vigor, and to conduct it to its wider sphere and more desirable present locality. In large measure this growth was due to the ceaseless fidelity of Dr. Porter. Instant, in season and out of season, in his pastoral work, eminent in his qualities as a writer and as a preacher of the Gospel, sympathetic in his association with those who needed his personal ministrations, self-sacrificing to an almost limitless extent in promoting the interests of others, it was but reasonable to anticipate, that the earlier years of his work should be crowned by a success of which our present edifice is the memorial. At his suggestion and by his laborious efforts, the First Reformed Church on Bedford avenue was built and dedicated. That Church to-day stands and will continue as a monument to his faith and zeal. His consecration to its interests, until physical weakness compelled his retirement, incites us to a renewed resolve and prayer for its welfare.

As a Consistory representing this church of his love, we desire to bear our testimony to his fidelity in work, his affection for those who were attached to his charge, his conscientiousness as a preacher, and his invaluable services in this community in which he was permitted so long to minister. Bearing a part in their sorrow, and soliciting for them the consolation of the husband's and father's God, we direct that a copy of this minute be transcribed for his family and sent to them as expressive of our sympathy.

*Resolved*, That a copy of this minute be furnished for publication to the *Brooklyn Daily Times*, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and *The Christian Intelligencer*.

# Introductory Remarks.

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BY REV. WILLIAM J. LEGGETT.

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We are met this afternoon to honor a man who has been long and well known in our community. Perhaps some present have known him since he first came to this county, forty-six years ago, to labor as a missionary at Chatham. Some date their acquaintance at the time this church sought the young dominie to fill the pastorate made vacant by the death of the zealous Sluyter. More of us remember him, first, as a summer resident, who occasionally occupied this pulpit, and in voice most melodious, and language most vivid, set forth the riches of God's grace. We *all* have known him as a *sojourner* here, patiently waiting until he should be called to his reward. Once during this period he preached with his usual acceptance in this pulpit, and many times he assisted in the service, the last being the second Sabbath in July, 1886, when before reading the closing hymn, he commended the attention and devout spirit manifested during the service, by a very little child who sat near the pulpit. These were his last words from this desk.

For more than a year he had been shut in from

the world, and in a great degree from the dear friends about him, but he was always able to give some evidence of appreciation when his pastor prayed with him, and only a few weeks ago he was permitted to say to his dearest human friend, "God has been good to us, He is precious." About the time paralysis laid its grasp upon him, he said, "If this is my last day, 'I know whom I have believed.'"

During the year 1886 he occasionally noted on the margin of a book of daily readings, thoughts suggested by the day's experience. The first day of the year has this entry :

"Day by day to Christ I live,  
Trusting all to Him."

Other entries are: "Prayer is a present joy." "My experience testifies that it has been good to be afflicted, through suffering to drink the elixir of tears." "Ex-Senator McCarthy, John B. Gough, Winchester Britton, added to the pale army, I wait until called; am very comfortable, with many mercies." "I see daily, and have for more than two years, the nearing of the last hour. But I do not live, or breathe, or hope for aught apart from Him, and therefore death has no terrors."

The messenger so long expected has come and wrought a blessed release for dear Doctor Porter. On the Lord's day, about the time that morning worshipers left the house of God, the "earthly house of this tabernacle was dissolved," and he entered the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

# Address

OF

REV. F. N. ZABRISKIE, D.D.

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"A GOOD FIGHT," AND A PEACEFUL END.

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ELBERT STOTHOFF PORTER (I do not pretend, of course, to give an adequate biography of so long and busy and conspicuous a life) was born in the town of Hillsboro, Somerset County, New Jersey, on the 23d of October, sixty-eight years ago. His father was a farmer, and when Elbert was six years old took his little boy with him to Michigan, expecting to select a home there and emigrate, but was deterred by a prostrating attack of fever and ague. On his return the child was sent to a school in New York, kept by the father of the famous lawyer James T. Brady, in Broome street, near the old Central Presbyterian Church. After a year in a country store at Millstone, Elbert was sent to the Somerville Academy, then under the care of the Rev. William J. Thompson, of whose qualities as an educator Dr. Porter always spoke in the highest terms. His aspirations for a liberal education were first aroused by a visit to Princeton, whither his father took him to see a reception given to President Jackson in 1832, on his way to the National Capital.



Elbert must have been at this time a peculiarly bright and attractive boy; and his social qualities, as well as his intellectual, were most favorably developed by his three years of life at Somerville, which could boast a society of almost unequaled brilliancy and cultivation. He was ready to enter Princeton College as a Sophomore when not quite sixteen, and was graduated in 1839. The salient features of his college life, as narrated by himself, were the growing resistance of the Northern students to the aggressive spirit of the large body who came from the South; the impression made upon his mind by such preachers in the chapel as Archibald Alexander, John Breckinridge and James W. Alexander; the personal influence upon him of two instructors, the Rev. John Owen, afterwards a missionary to India, and James C. Moffat, then a tutor, and still the honored and veteran Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the Theological Seminary; and the great revival, which wrought such blessed results in the College in 1836-7.

There can be little doubt that his Christian life began at this time. It introduced him (to use his own expression) "into a new sphere of mental being." But he did not become a communicant till nearly a year after his graduation, and then through the influence and urgency of Dr. Talbot W. Chambers, whose church at Somerville he joined. There were two special influences which led to this indecision, and also to his delay in preparing for the ministry. One was the fact that at College he had for a while been led into reading "skeptical books with avidity;"

and he was too earnest a mind to take a religious stand, much less to think of becoming a religious teacher, till the doubts thus suggested were set at rest—as they were set at rest, utterly and forever.

The other reason was, that his young imagination had been dazzled by the fame and achievements of the great lawyers of that day, of whom many of the most distinguished adorned the bar and bench of New Jersey, and some (such as the Frelinghuysens, the Southards, the Vrooms, and the Dayton) were from his own county. It took a long time, and a severe struggle, for him to forego this cherished scheme of life. Immediately on leaving College he entered a law office in Somerville. But on a bright September afternoon of that year, while taking a long and solitary ride on horseback, the question of duty so pressed itself upon his mind and conscience that he was forced to consider the ministry as a matter to be first decided. His method of testing the question was a novel and characteristic one. He went to the Theological Faculty at New Brunswick, and offered to study the Bible under their instruction, if he might do so unpledged as to his ultimate profession. It will be noted that he was not yet a member of the church in full communion. But not many months elapsed before, as might have been expected, he took the decisive step of publicly confessing Christ; and with it, not only his spiritual life but the call of God became unmistakably clear.

Dr. Porter was peculiarly fitted for a lawyer by his keen intellect, his industrious habits, his tact in

dealing with men, his business capacity, and his persuasive eloquence; and he could hardly have failed to attain to a place beside the great men of the profession whose success had stirred his young ambition. But we cannot help thinking that he chose the better part, and, though reaping less of earthly rewards, that he shines brighter to-day in the firmament of those that be wise, and have brought many to righteousness.

Dr. Porter's theological course was pursued at New Brunswick under Professors Milledoler, Van Vranken, Cannon and McClelland, all men of strong personality, sound and thorough instructors, and, in the case of the latter, of phenomenal brilliancy of scholarship and eloquence. Among the members of his class were Professors Dewitt and Crispell; Drs. V. M. Hulbert, John A. Lansing, Samuel W. Mills, M. V. Schoonmaker and W. W. Halloway; and the Rev. Messrs. Himrod, A. B. Taylor, Ralph Willis, C. J. Blauvelt, and the lamented Theodore F. Wyckoff, whose relations with him were peculiarly congenial and fraternal, and whose early death Dr. Porter never ceased to recall with pain.

On leaving the Seminary, young Porter's mind was somewhat inclined to become a missionary to the heathen, being impressed by conversations with Drs. John Scudder and David Abeel. But he was led into what was just then a still more inadequately worked field by our church—that of Home Missions. He was directed “by semi-ecclesiastical authority” to the opening for evangelistic work at Chatham Four

Corners, a place at that time without any religious services, and a center of vice and infidelity. There was not a male communicant to organize a church with, and the five men who "called" him, and whom he laughingly styled his "great consistory," were two Hicksite Quakers, a Universalist, a physician whose Bible was "Combe's Constitution of Man," and a lawyer "without religious affinities, but of many religious antipathies." These men not only stood by him with their support and attendance during the seven years in which he labored in Chatham, but helped him to inaugurate a Sunday-school and other Christian work. A church was ere long organized, and a building erected, and, when he left, this uncleared wilderness was already a fruitful field, and has been a strong and flourishing parish to this day.

Nothing could more strikingly illustrate Dr. Porter's almost audacious enterprise, his indomitable energy, his skill in dealing with all sorts of men, and his versatility of talent, than a work like this—chosen on account of its absolute newness, undertaken in utter independence of all external reliances, and carried to success by not only surmounting all obstacles, but by rendering them accessories and stepping-stones. It may be added, that the difficulties of the work in such a community were enhanced at that time by the anti-rent troubles, and the beginnings of the total abstinence movement.

A man like this could not long be kept in obscurity, and in 1849 the First Church of Williamsburgh, L. I., was so fortunate as to secure his services. He

took it at a very low point in its history. The results of his energy and of his personal and pulpit attractiveness were immediately seen in the rapid growth of the church, the overflowing congregations, and the necessity of rebuilding and ultimately of removal to a more central and commanding site in the expanding city. This final step was unfortunately delayed so long that, in common with many other of the churches of our country, the financial collapse came just in time to cripple the supporters of the Bedford Avenue Church, and to leave them under an almost crushing load of debt. It devolved upon Dr. Porter, in this as in everything else with which he was connected, to bear the heavy end of the burden, and to assume the chief responsibility for the extrication of the church from these embarrassments. He succeeded, but it was at the cost of his own vitality and his premature breaking down from overwork. I used to see much of him in those days, as he came to Claverack to get a few hours or days of respite, and I never saw a more utterly tired man than he seemed to be at such times. He had a wonderful faculty of renewing his strength by sleep and country quiet, and he also had a genius for doing his work with as little wear and tear as possible. But he discounted too rapidly his vigor and vitality, and the undermined fabric collapsed almost in an hour.

To his peculiarly arduous pastoral duties he added the editorship of *The Christian Intelligencer* for sixteen years, writing incessantly and directing its policy and management, with all the toil and thought

and excitement incident to such a work, especially during the civil war, and in others of the most agitating crises in the history of our church. In addition to this, his public spirit and ready eloquence kept him in constant demand, not only in the affairs of his own city, but in the advocacy of causes involving far wider interests. He was the chosen champion of the American Tract Society in the critical years of its history occasioned by the Anti-slavery agitation, traveling over a large part of the Union upon this and similar missions. During the Civil War he exerted himself in raising troops, and acted as chaplain of a regiment, and in Christian Commission work. He was active in our Church Board, and in all the undertakings of our denomination. He was a leading member of the Evangelical Alliance, and was a delegate of the American Branch to the world's meeting in 1879. He was particularly interested and active in common school education, especially in its relation to religion. He was a frequent lecturer also.

Thus it is that he was forced by a complete failure of his physical, and a partial debility of his mental, powers to retire from public life at the early age of sixty-three; and that, after a brave but losing fight of five years, the worn soldier lies to-day with his hands folded across his breast, and his warfare accomplished.

In view of the life which was briefly sketched last week, I cannot help anticipating the ultimate tribute of the Judge, and saying, "Servant of God, well done!" I do not claim that this man was perfect,

nor that his work was above criticism. But I flush with admiration as I think of the brave, bright, indefatigable, and in many respects heroic struggle of this farmer's boy of Somerset County in the front ranks and the hard work of an earnest and devoted minister's life.

No wonder he was a leader. He deserved to be, for he *led*, taking always the burden upon his own shoulders, and going before. But he was born to leadership, by his intuitive knowledge of men, and how to influence them. He had a reserve of will-power, a masterful captaincy of command; but usually his sway was that of persuasion and negotiation. His talent and taste for diplomacy were sometimes misconstrued by those whose natural tendency was to go more directly, and probably blunderingly, to the point. There is no limit to the success and distinction which he might have gained in public life, or, as I have said, in the practice of law. But (to use his own language, as after thirty-nine years in the ministry he related the wrestlings of spirit which agitated him at the time of choosing his life-work) "no selfish distrust of the Master's love has ever diminished my preference for the Christian ministry above all other callings, pursuits, professions, or avocations."

Dr. Porter's qualities for leadership consisted largely in his marvelous nerve, coolness, patience, and courage, which no opposition seemed to ruffle or difficulties to daunt. There was a quiet courtesy and gentleness about his manner, singularly mingled with

a boyish freshness and a manly dignity. There was a wise and thoughtful look upon his face, indicating deep and patient thought, which passed readily into the most playful and even jovial expression. I think he was one of the most fascinating talkers I ever knew. He seemed always to have the time and the mood for saying something bright and interesting; and when he was at leisure, or receiving you at his home, or taking a stroll or a ride with you, there were few enjoyments so great as to listen to his steady, yet never prosy, flow of reminiscence, criticism, suggestion, anecdote, or wise counsel. His scope was as varied as the range of literature, of public questions, and of life itself. His brethren in the ministry, young men, persons in every walk of life, were continually resorting to his practical wisdom, his fertile ingenuity, and his kindly sympathy, for advice.

He was recognized by our church as a leader, receiving many of her highest honors and trusts, and was nearly always followed to victory in the great movements to which he lent his advocacy in the Synod and through the press. He was what may be styled a progressive conservative. He did not accept new ideas or methods because they were new, but was disposed to say, "The old is better." It was so in politics; it was so in reforms; it was so in ecclesiastical affairs. But when he became convinced that the old was spoiled, or obsolete, or becoming an obstacle to the true or right, he threw his whole force upon the side of renovation, or displacement. He was the farthest removed from a bigot, or a narrow



sectarian, and yet was staunch and immovable in his theological convictions, and a devoted son of the church to whose service he gave his life.

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He had not, so far as I know, pursued any one branch of study exhaustively, but he was well informed and could talk instructively on almost any subject, and learnedly on not a few. His knowledge of classical and English literature was especially noticeable. He loved poetry, and wrote creditable verses himself. Some of his hymns are standards, and have the true lyric ring. He was too busy a man to write anything but occasional and fugitive contributions to literature; but of these, in the form of sermons and addresses, articles such as his "History of the Doctrine and Spirit of the Reformed Dutch Church," and "The Literature of the Reformed Church," and his editorials and other writings in *The Christian Intelligencer*, there is a vast and valuable store.

I need not say that he had exceptional tastes and aptitudes for editorial work. His wide and varied intelligence, his interest in all the topics of the time and in all that concerned humanity, his positive convictions, and love of influencing other minds, his facile pen and incisive style, all made him a leader in the religious press, as well as made it possible for him to add this enormous and unceasing labor to his other duties. He lifted *The Christian Intelligencer* to the front rank of religious journalism, and will probably be longest remembered by this, which, with

all its tribulations and collisions, I think he always regarded as his most congenial intellectual work.

And yet he was a gifted orator, and rejoiced in the mere exercise of his preaching function. He carried the same felicity and fascination into the pulpit or the platform which he had in private life. His manner was usually quiet and conversational, but he would rise with the occasion into a stirring and electric eloquence, or break, like the placid water, into sparkling ripples of speech. In his best days there were few even in the City of Churches who were his peers in popularity or preaching attractiveness. And while ever seeking to associate the truth with the tastes and thought of the day, as well as to illustrate it from the stores of his varied knowledge, he would not sacrifice nor subordinate the Gospel, which alone could make his hearers wise unto salvation.

What a pastor he was is attested by the clinging devotion of those to whom he ministered, and the large numbers who last Tuesday followed him to the tomb, in weeping memory, if not by their personal presence. I want to tell these faithful ones what a joy and crown they have been to their old pastor's infirm and exiled days. The constant assurances which he received that he was steadfastly and lovingly remembered by the people to whom his whole heart, and his very life, were given, was one unfailing spring of joy and strength, and cast an unfading light over the deepening shadows of the evening amid which he has been waiting for his rest.

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Those latter days, so far as they came under my observation—that is, up to my removal from Clav-rack nearly three years ago, and brought me into special association with Dr. Porter—will always have a singular and sacred charm for me. I account it a blessing that I was here to receive him on his retirement from active life, and to do somewhat to cheer his comparative solitude. I am thankful, too, for the opportunity thus afforded of knowing him better than ever before. And our friend was one who could afford to be better known, and to some people needed to be better known in order to be rightly understood and appreciated. It was now that the innate simplicity and godly sincerity of the man came fully out. The world was no longer with him, to be wrestled with, and persuaded, and guarded against. He was alone with his family, his familiar friends, and his God. He was veritably a little child. It was wonderful to see how he surrendered at once to his Father's will, laid aside uncomplainingly the activities and ambitions of a wide career, and adjusted himself to the petty occupations and satisfactions of his isolated life.

It was an unceasing and tender marvel to me—the change which had come over our relations to one another. Whereas, I had always looked up to him, and sat at his feet, as one far wiser and stronger than I, now he seemed to wait almost wistfully for strengthening words from me and for authentic advices from the world of men and thought. It was not all the result of conscious weakening of his

mental vigor, for the cloud lifted at times, and for one long and clear interval in which his intellectual life seemed only limited by physical debility. He would spend the long day in reading, in writing letters to his cherished correspondents, in occasional composition and jotting down of thoughts, varied by the reception of visitors, and long rides over the hills and valleys of this beautiful country. The picture which I have in my mind of those days is a very lovely and enduring one. It brings up before me the large old-fashioned room in which he spent the last winters of his life. The sun is hastening to its early setting, and is casting its crimson glow over the distant and snowy peaks and slopes of the Catskills, whose entire range with the intervening and picturesque foreground is visible from the window. Within, among his books and papers, sits the once strong man who had moved mountains in his day, and illuminated the path of multitudes, but now is hastening to his own sunset in the peace of God and the patience of hope. I am reminded of the beautiful picture of Petrarch's last days, as he sat in the sunlight of the Lord among the vines and olives of the Euganean hills (as he testifies of himself) "infirm of body yet tranquil of mind, reading always and writing and praising God, and thanking Him as well for evil as for good."

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My dear, true friend, thy memory is very pleasant and precious to me, as was thy love and companionship. But none of us—even the most deeply and

irreparably bereaved—would recall thee from thy well-earned rest, in the mansions from whose windows the light never fades, and the life whose labors never weary and whose warfare is all victory.

# Memorial Sermon.

BY

REV. E. P. TERHUNE, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST REFORMED CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 4, 1888.

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“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”—*Psalm 121st, 1st.*

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The sermon this morning, though commemorative of the late beloved pastor of this church, is not designed to be biographical. The details of birth and parentage, of education and of occupation in successive fields, have been elsewhere repeated, and are especially uncalled for here in a tribute to one who for a whole generation, in living and most efficient personality, was among you. It would be an assumption, from which I shrink, even to recall features and facts which are only second-hand to me, but of which you were both witnesses and a part.

To my own view there is something inexpressibly tender in the last few years of Dr. Porter's life, such years as make evident the truer part of every biography—the spiritual character and resource. We

scarcely know the racer, as with panting lungs and flying feet he is hastening for the goal. He is in competition; he seems self-absorbed. But the contest over, the olive won, as he sits meekly, calmly awaiting the higher acknowledgment, when it shall be the Master's time to award it, we can see him as he is, see him in the courage, the patience, the still mightier faith that, having done all, can stand.

It is in such consideration of our brother I have selected the words of this text, as both literal and representative of the feeling which these later years have manifested. As from the windows of his home his eyes with fondness looked upon the hills that made the intervening scene an amphitheatre, there was more than rest, more than the delight of a taste cultivated to enjoy the beauties and glories of nature. There were the inspiration of a ceaseless suggestion, lines of association along which devout thought ran, or upon which it lingered, which made those hills to him as the memorials of an eternal steadfastness; each peak upon which the light rested, and every valley, solemn in its shade, a sermon to his spirit.

They who in these later years have been permitted to read the letters in which he beguiled the waiting time, or who, more favored, listened to his words, will recall the joy, the unfailing delight, which those grand features of the natural scenery were to him. Indeed, I recall scarcely any communication from him in which his pen did not, for a few moments at least, linger upon his gladness that God had appointed him for his retirement a home where that

scene was ever before his gaze. To him the words of the text, in all they suggest, must have come to mind unnumbered times, the direction, the stay, the comfort of his heart: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

In his private memoranda of these later days are numerous expressions of devout aspiration. Written upon the margin of devotional compends, which he did not dream would be seen by other eyes than his, are the communings of his heart with his own thoughts and with God. They are the mediators of one who is dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.

First, I ask you to observe this line of suggestion in the Scriptures. We find here a remarkable association of the mountains with Deity; and with the divine characteristics certain of their features might very readily suggest such association.

Their loftiness seeming at times as pillared heights supporting the sky; the pure dazzling light of their summits when, as on Hermon, the unsullied snow rested a glistening crown; their firmness, as anchored in the foundations of the earth, symbols of strength, for "the strength of the hills is his also;" their sublime solitudes, the deep recesses and ravines of which are so awe-inspiring, they might seem a fit dwelling-place for Deity.

So God, instead of coming down upon the plain, speaks from Mount Sinai, and thence issues the Law. So Moses is called up to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, to die there. The Sacred Temple stood upon



Mount Moriah; while "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth was Mount Zion, on the sides of the North." The psalmist, describing the encompassing care and love of Deity, says: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever."

So the frequent and more august manifestations of Christ are upon the mountains—the mountain on which he was transfigured; the mountain into which he retired for nights of prayer; the Mount of Olives, sacred with the associations of that discourse which has ever since born the title of "The Sermon on the Mount," and whence he ascended to the skies; and, last of all, that mountain, the Golgotha of blood and yet of salvation to the world, the Mountain of the Cross.

Such associations of Deity with the high places of the earth are not accidental. The mountains appear to stand intermediate between heaven and earth, and to be suggestive of that divine and human intermediate ground on which God and man meet in the person of Christ. I have given only an occasional allusion to those sacred eminences that emphasize the history of God's people, heights for the display of majesty, of providence, of grace that could scarcely exclude the idea of the mountains as the habitation of his holiness. Very naturally, therefore, the devout Psalmist, in contemplating the source of the care and protection which are his, turning away from human resorts, should say: "I

will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.”

I feel, indeed I *know*, that it was more than the contemplation of the mountains as natural features of the landscape that gave the daily vision such exquisite joy to Dr. Porter. The eye of the spirit always looks through the natural organ. To devout souls, to hearts trained in intercourse with God, that is not a figure of speech of “looking up through nature to nature’s God.” The association is instinctive and immediate.

Reflect upon certain of these features as in harmony with the character and nature of our brother. One of these, that I venture to name, was the peculiar freshness and vigor of his nature, ever in responsive communion with such surroundings.

The biography of the lived life, the life in its expression, its emotions, which are the springs of action, is the sincere biography, for it presents one in his own manifestation. That freshness and vigor to which I refer were entirely independent of physical states. Marked as they were in him intellectually, they were even more evident in the spiritual man. Indeed, that that invisible, almost unknown realm, the spirit, was their source, is the more apparent in the fact that this inner light suffused all, and lent to his other powers its brightness. The geniality of his heart—and who ever possessed geniality in fuller degree—the freshness of his feeling, entered into all that he wrote, as it did in the conversation that made

so many his willing listeners. Your homes are full of the memories of bright and cheery utterances, as you recall the hours when, seeking to refresh his own strength, he brought even fuller refreshment to yours, as a genuine breath of air from his own beloved mountains. Poetical in taste and in description, much that he wrote and said shows a spiritual elevation that rises far above the ordinary level in clearness, beauty and originality. He was in the foremost rank of critics of books and men, because of his own appreciation of the worthy in literature and in character.

In pulpit style and in written contributions Dr. Porter gathered from none. The articles which I recall from the columns of the *Intelligencer*, during his editorial connection with that paper, showed an independence in thought, a clearness and directness in statement. That was his reputation throughout the church, a man of rare mental vigor, of intellect and attainment ever to be respected. However fragile the body appeared, no one could think of that mind as other than bold and firm, self-sustained and hopeful.

Yourselves remember well the conditions that might justly have depressed the boldest heart. The struggle he made for this church, involved in a lasting embarrassment by an unhappy conjunction of its inception with a time which none could foresee, must have borne with unspeakable weight upon his soul. That he felt it unintermittently everyone could see. One cannot escape the responsibility, to his

own mind, in a venture which, undertaken with the best and purest of motives, meets reverses.

Yet, while it depressed and often drove him to painful straits, it never succeeded in crushing his elasticity. It was a world of care and solicitude, but as long as the physical strength held out, the faith sustained the weight. "I have now," he writes in a letter to a friend, when that struggle was the hardest, "I have now been twenty-eight years in the same field, and it seems to me that I never had so much courage and patience of hope and faith in the great cause as I have now, and perhaps too I have a deeper longing to do good as the afternoon of my day advances. Let us be cheerful, zealous, and hope to the end." In a dual sense his eyes were lifted up to the hills from whence cometh help. With my own theory as to the inestimable value of change of scene and atmosphere as nature's remedial agent, I can well believe that his retreat to the uplands and to communion with the mountains renewed his strength, as the upward flight of the eagle, so that he returned again and again in the power of the spirit. Yet there were invisible heights also up which his soul clambered, where, as was Moses upon the mount, he was in strengthening communion with God.

Another of the features which I name, as suggested by the text, was the connected strength and beauty of our brother's mind. "Which by his strength," says the psalmist, referring to God, "set-teth fast the mountains; being girded with power." They are the monuments and emblems of solidity,

“the everlasting hills.” And yet while the eye rests upon their grandeur, who loses sight of their surpassing beauty, often suggesting the peace and loveliness of the Delectable Mountains as they must have appeared to the sight of Bunyan’s pilgrim? To the people dwelling among them the mountains bring not only strength but peace.

Wherever Dr. Porter received that virile strength of mind, that solidity which made him in debate an antagonist to be respected, he certainly possessed it. My own memory, more frequently than elsewhere, recalls him upon the floor of the General Synod in those discussions in which he bore so conspicuous a part, and in which he was ever ready to give an answer for the faith that was in him. In his editorial capacity he could not be other, at times, than a controversialist, and none was more ready to meet an issue and to maintain his convictions.

So his was a conservatism in doctrine that never swerved. His reputation in all the church of our denomination, is for fidelity to the truth in which he was educated, and which in the position referred to, and in his pulpit, he had so constant opportunity to defend against the errors of liberalism. His desire, as he himself expressed it, was to stand upon the summits of the great spiritual truths, and to draw his people up to his own standing-ground. The looseness and doubtfulness of other creeds made him the more staunch to maintain his own, and in this attitude he was as fearless as his words were incisive.

But the strong man could also be gentle when it

became his office to soothe, to comfort, to bind up the bruised reed. It is the same atmosphere that sweeps with the tempest's wing and that sighs in the zephyr's breath.

It would be almost an impertinence in one to whom personally, in comparison with yourselves, he was so little known, to do other than modestly reflect the knowledge of his gentleness and tenderness as I have received it from your lips. Dear brethren, no fondest friend will ever do him justice in this respect, not for want of will, but because that heart was too deep and too tender to be translated into language. To have known it you must have been with him, or rather he must have been beside *you* when your own griefs were pressing and sympathy was inexpressibly dear.

To some it is not given to act as physicians or nurses at the bedside of the sick; their natures are so intensely sensitive, so sympathetic to every pain, that symptomatically they give answer to every labored respiration, every expression of the sufferer's face.

To Dr. Porter the bereavements of his people were his bereavements. His heart was as a finely strung harp, that thrills and trembles, though itself untouched, with every chord that is struck upon another instrument.

This accounts for the unequaled beauty and tenderness of his funeral discourses, a fact so entirely recognized in this community, that I have heard them named ever since I came among you as unap-

proachable in their beauty and pathos. The truth is he was himself a mourner with you. His heart and your hearts had grown together in that long pastorate, until you were as his brothers and sisters, your parents the objects of his reverence, your children as his own children.

When God called one of your little ones to His arms, it was as a lamb taken from his own fold. When the aged father or mother was taken away, he wept as himself orphaned. God's most precious ministry is realized in such hearts, for they have tarried very near to the fountain of sympathy in the heart of Jesus. I find that life here in contact with so many points in other lives, that I feel impoverished to tell the half its story. Thank God, it isn't necessary to tell it, to hunt for incidents that would quicken your appreciation, for it is in the hearts of all that were among his people to say to-day, "in this and that joy and in this and that sorrow he was with me," and that is enough.

But the strength and the beauty of the mountains are not dissevered; and in this man these attributes were not. The strength was in the beauty, and the beauty was in the strength. Inflexible in his determination and effort to resist every wrong without compromise upon great public and religious questions, he never for a moment allowed his antagonisms to cross the line of courtesy, or to mar the friendliness of his association with those whom he in debate opposed. It is to his lasting honor that however fearless in his attacks, upon what he conceived to be a false system

he was to the last day of his residence here, respected and more warmly cherished, by those whose beliefs he had criticised and rebuked. Friendship could prize the nobility of a heart that loved even while the mind differed.

What good cause did he ever fail to advocate? What wronged member of the community could not he, first of all, be depended upon to champion? The defender of the innocent, the intercessor for the unfortunate, the counsellor of the distressed, the resort alike of the sincerely troubled, and of those who would play upon his sympathies to deceive, one wonders how the already overfilled days of his legitimate work could have borne the added strain.

The memory of such things does not easily die. It is interwoven in the careers, perhaps in the entire lives, of others, as a word of courage may change a failing, fainting one into a hero. Such a character has much in it that is born of God. It is the force of one who lifts up his eyes unto the hills, from whence help cometh, and in that communion realizes that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

I might carry the suggestiveness of the thoughts inspired by the text, to a very much fuller illustration of our brother's characteristics. Yet for only one more, and for that briefly, have we space. The mountains are suggestive of resort and refuge. How often to the psalmist did they represent retreat from the foe, the hiding-place in which he found deliverance in God. How often to the Son of God did they bring the required retirement and opportunity for



restful communion? One can feel as he gazes upon their sloping heights and intervening valleys, as if these are to be the arches and aisles, of God's grander temple in the regenerated earth.

I rejoice that it was given to our friend to find the elevation of his spirit in such association. "How he loved nature!" said one to me a few days ago. "How he loved to sit and gaze upon the changing light of the mountains!" Their towering summits seemed suggestive to him of the eternal calm, into which his soul entered and remained in the two years of his life at Claverack, before the mind became clouded. As I looked at them beneath the transparent sky of last Wednesday, lifting up their heads in the serene atmosphere, I thought how frequently the then closed eyes had gazed upon them until the spirit was lifted into their tranquillity, and Heaven appeared to come very near to earth. Let me quote his own language in a letter of those days, in which this very thought was evidently his contemplation: "I look now to the west and gaze upon the mountains almost touching the sky, all covered with silver and diamonds and gold, and purple envelope of cloud and amber-shade of magnificence, and exult in the glory which the mighty Maker hangs over the landscape; and I think of the glory, greater and grander far, where the splendor of the white-robed multitude is seen, and where the music, and the worship and the peace and the rest of the redeemed are—beyond the mountains in the many mansions—and I feel that some hour, not far distant, the Master will call."

*There* was the lifting up of the eyes unto the hills whence cometh help. The Master *has* called, and our brother has passed "beyond the mountains."

And now what is *our* resort—as the resort of those to whom this comes with all the weight of a personal sorrow? Simply this: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." *His* help *your* help, his retreat your refuge, his fellowship your communion. The eternal God was his refuge, and underneath were the everlasting arms.

We will not speak of him as dead, but only as gone from us. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Much, *besides* these precious memories, he cannot take from us. The sunshine of last year, is to-day in the garnered harvests of the storehouse, in the seed and bulbs that are to crown the earth of this year with beauty. God's provision for the future is in the labor of the past. We call it "influence"—that is but a name—it is other lives in our lives. We are physically not more parts of the departed than we are mentally and spiritually. This man's life is in your impressions of truth, in your Christian faith, in your language of prayer, in your hope of Heaven. It is a continued and augmented immortality, stronger than memory, more lasting than earthly love; and that life in you will be recognized in eternity, as it is now, by that God to whom nothing ever dies, with whom is the continuous and universal life.

I want to lay to-day this tribute upon his grave, a little chaplet of rosemary—and that's for remem-

brance—all that I can bring to one who from the day of my coming here, was the most generous to me as his successor, most earnest in commending me to the confidence and love of those who loved him, most cheering in the treasured letters that bade me God-speed, and in prayers for my ministry among you. God keep his memory green.

# An Historical Discourse,

DELIVERED ON

SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1866,

BY

ELBERT S. PORTER, D.D., PASTOR,

IN THE

OLD CHURCH, 4TH STREET, COR. SOUTH 2D STREET.

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Just about midway between the Adriatic and the Hellespont, on the shore of the Thermaic gulf, once stood in beauty, and still in faded splendor stands, the Thessalonica of the Scripture narrative. The date of its foundation is hidden among the uncertainties of a remote antiquity. Its earliest name was Therma. There Xerxes rested for a time, while his immense and motley host was marching to the expected conquest of Greece. When Alexander, the Thunderbolt of Macedonia, began his martial career, the name of his sister Thessalonica was given to the ancient Therma. Its names, its fortunes and its history—all have ever since received the attention of commerce, literature and religion. To it Cicero resorted when the violence of party factions drove the noblest Romans into exile. There Mark Antony and Oc-

tavius Augustus met to take counsel, after they had defeated the republican army at Phillipi. For a few centuries it was the commercial metropolis of the Levant, and gathered to its treasure-houses the wealth of Asia, Africa and Europe. It continued to be a place of great magnitude long after Constantinople had been founded upon the partial ruins of the ancient Byzantium. Its present name is Saloniki, and it still has a population of nearly 100,000 souls, composed of Jews, Franks, Greeks and Turks.

The blessed Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ was first published in Europe at Phillipi. There Paul and Silas were arrested, thrown into prison and delivered by a Divine interposition. Passing thence through Appolonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there were many Jews and a synagogue. For three consecutive Sabbaths, Paul preached in that synagogue. He proved from the Jewish Bible, that Messiah must be put to death and rise again, and that all the law and all the prophets were fulfilled in Christ. Some Jews and many Greeks believed, and a Christian Church was there organized. It became at once the source of a widely-diffused Christian influence. Paul and Silas, driven away from Thessalonica, retired to Berea, and thence to Athens. But Timothy—the amiable, earnest and faithful Timothy—was sent back to comfort and instruct the Thessalonian converts. Both the Epistles of Paul addressed to them, appear to have been written at Corinth, and not long after the church at Thessalonica had been established. Notwithstanding the prevalence of certain errors of

interpretation, into which these Christians had unintentionally fallen, still they seem to have had the best graces of character—faith, hope and charity. Exposed to taunts and jeers, threatened with violence, and beset daily by the fanatical rage of malicious Jews and licentious Pagans, they nevertheless conducted themselves so as to draw forth the admiration and praise of the Apostle. He says that he took a special pleasure in holding up their example of constancy and brotherly love in all the churches. If one should carefully analyze the contents of the two letters written by apostolic hands to the church at Thessalonica, he would discover that having received the gospel they loved it, despite all tribulations endured for its sake; that, at the outset, being but imperfectly instructed, they had nevertheless a holy practice which led them to grow in understanding of the Scriptures; and that, as a church, they were characterized by a truly apostolic zeal, which impelled them to abound in good works, to sympathize with their fellow Christians generally, and to give money liberally to aid in sending the gospel to regions beyond themselves. No higher praise can be bestowed upon a church than what is contained in our text: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds.”

Faith growing, and charity abounding among its entire membership, are the characteristics of the very highest style of a church. Whatever else it may

have, without these graces it were poor, and with these it is rich, no matter what else for the time being it may lack. For where faith and charity are there will be heart and purpose and unity and the favor of God.

Not claiming any measure of apostolic discernment, still I have chosen this text by design, as the rightful index to the final meaning of this discourse. While flattering lips are an abomination, yet it is true that where praise is deserved it should be generously accorded. Conscious personal partialities must, of course, soften the atmosphere through which a critical eye exercises its vision; but on the other hand a long series of consistent testimonies, running only in one direction, deserves to be trusted. Even the most petulant and querulous temper would hardly dare to challenge such authority.

As a natural foundation to this sermon, which is intended to be mainly historical, I shall briefly set in order before you some facts respecting the earliest establishment of the Reformed Dutch Church on Long Island. These facts will serve, I think, to exhibit something of the sturdy life and healthful growth, which have distinguished the portion of our denomination located in this insular region.

In 1664, when English superseded Dutch rule, there were in what is now New York about one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and throughout the colony of New Amsterdam *ten thousand*. Among these people, in town and country, there were five organized churches, viz.: the Collegiate in New

York; one at Albany; another at Kingston, Ulster County; a fourth at Bergen, N. J.; and the fifth at Midwout or Flatbush. With the termination of the Dutch authority, emigration from Holland almost entirely ceased, and as a consequence the growth of the Reformed Church from that cause alone was retarded. But there were other causes. The English, in the time of Fletcher, undertook to establish the Episcopal Church by law, and to this end imposed a tax on all dissenters. Political influence, also, was steadily exerted to discourage the Presbyterians and the Independents, and to favor the growth of the Prelatical schemes. But more than all other causes combined, the continued use of the Dutch language in the pulpits of the Reformed Church for an entire century, not only retarded its progress, but the wonder is that it did not destroy it as a distinct body. May it not be hoped that this generation, will take warning from the errors of its ancestors, and correct the present improper title of the Church by simply accepting its just, historical designation, which is that of *The Reformed Church* of North America? This question is now before the people of the denomination. The General Synod, at its last session, appointed an able committee to report upon the matter; and that report is to be presented next year for legislative action.

The Church in its infancy suffered during one hundred years through the grave mistake of insisting upon the use of a foreign *tongue* in its public services. It has suffered another hundred years, during



its adolescence, from its foreign *name*. Surely we may expect that at the beginning of its third century, having come to years of manhood and of wholesome vigor, it will put away weak and childish prejudices, and be content with a title to which it has a just right, and which is as catholic in meaning as the gospel on one hand, or the wants of the world on the other. Our American life is patient and forbearing, but because it is American and not English, or French, or Scotch, or Dutch, it must desire to be rid of foreign national designations, which have little power for good, and a prodigious capability for mischief. So many, if not the majority, of our pastors and influential laymen think, and for this reason another, and I trust a successful, effort is under way to rectify the title of the Reformed Dutch Church. If there be those who love it for no higher or better or more Christian reason than that it carries the word *Dutch* as a memento of the past, they will oppose the intended correction, and be grieved if it shall be accomplished. But those who love the Church for the truth it maintains, for the spirit it inculcates, for the order it upholds, for its freedom from straight-laced ritualism on one hand and indefinite license on the other—who love it for its fidelity to Christ's cross and crown, for its glorious history, and its tolerant and its charitable temper—who love it for its sacrifices in behalf of civil and religious liberty, and its zeal in defending the very Gibraltar of Protestant Faith—a Free Bible—such will love it all the more when they see its last shackle removed and its every

limb at liberty to go forward with glad alacrity to do the work of our Lord.

The Dutch Churches on Long Island were founded in the following order: The one at Flatbush in 1654. Its first minister was John Theodore Polhemus, some of whose descendants are well-known residents of this county at this day, and who by their private and public virtues honor the name of their great ancestor. The first church in Brooklyn was organized in the year 1660, and its first pastor was Henry Selyns, a devout and eloquent minister of the Word. The next in order was the church at Jamaica, founded in 1702. The church of Bushwick was organized in 1709; that of Newtown in 1731; and that of Gravesend in 1765. These were the six original churches of the Island, the elder being over two hundred years old, and the younger of the group a little over one hundred. When the first General Convention of our churches, was called to meet in New York, in the year 1771, it appears on the records that there were but two ministers then serving these churches. These were John Caspar Rubbel and Ulpian Van Sinderin. These particulars will aid in tracing the subsequent progress of our denomination hereabouts, and this we shall now proceed to do.

In the first year of the present century Brooklyn contained only 3,298 inhabitants. In 1834 it was erected into a city, and its population then numbered a few over 24,000. It had then—thirty-two years ago—but one church of our order. Since some will insist upon being ignorant enough to say, without

any shame of conscious falsehood, that the Reformed Dutch Church is slow and unprogressive, it will be well to note from what follows, that this very slow church has grown within the period named more rapidly than any other of the Presbyterian family. At the present time we have in the Western District eight, and in the Eastern District seven churches, being fifteen in all. There are not so many as there ought to be. Yet as there were only three in 1830, viz., the First of Brooklyn, the First of Bushwick, and the First of Williamsburgh—the last in its very infancy—we cannot help feeling grateful that these three have multiplied five-fold in number, and twenty-fold in resources and influence.

In the year 1817, a ferry was established between the foot of Grand Street, New York, and the foot of what is now Grand Street, Williamsburgh. Prior to that period, the inhabitants along these shores reached the city across the river, by sail or paddle boats. The ferry just named soon contributed to the establishment of a considerable settlement along the shore, from Grand to North Second Street, through which ran the turnpike to Newtown. During the period of ten years, that settlement increased to a magnitude which justified its incorporation under a village charter, which was done in 1827, when its population amounted to about *fifteen hundred*.

At that date, the shore from the Wallabout Bay to Newtown Creek was dotted with comfortable farm-houses, occupied by the Johnsons, the Remsens, the Boerums, the Duboises, the Berrys, the Meseroles,

the Millers, the Morrels, the Devoes, and beyond Bushwick Creek, by several branches of the Meserole family. What a change has come over all this once peaceful and fertile agricultural space within the last forty years! Instead of the fathers are the children. One can picture to himself what must have been the almost Arcadian beauty, that environed the rural abodes of these forefathers of our city. The picture must be seen, however, by the imagination, if seen at all. There are a few here, and but a few, who as children sported in the free waters at the river's brink, or played at summer-tide beneath the venerable trees which patriarchal hands had planted. Yet of the mighty process of change here, through nearly half the period named, I have been a personal spectator, together with a multitude beside.

Forty years ago, one single house of worship accommodated all the church-going people of this District, and that was the old house of the older Bushwick church. But there began to be need for more room for worship on the Sabbath-day. To provide this, the project of establishing a chapel, westward of the old church, was started and entertained by some at least of the members of the Bushwick organization. For a little while, difficulties with respect to location and other matters, delayed the execution of the proposed undertaking. At length, however, on the 28th day of September, in the year of our Lord 1828, the corner-stone of this edifice was laid. The Magazine of the Dutch church for that year says: "Dr. Brodhead of New York, and the Rev. Messrs. Jacob

Schoonmaker of Jamaica, and S. H. Meeker, pastor of the Congregation, were present, and officiated on the occasion. The ceremony of laying the corner-stone was performed by Mr. John A. Meserole, a sharer in the toils of the Revolution, and for many years actively engaged in the cause of Christianity, and who, in pious regard for the interests of our Reformed Zion, deposited a handsome donation to aid in the erection of their house of worship to the living God." The corner-stone contains the Holy Bible and the Confession of the Faith of the Church.

In the following year, 1829, on the 26th day of July, this house was dedicated to the service of the Triune God. The sermon was preached by Dr. Brodhead, from II. Cor., chap. 7, verse 16, "I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things."

So soon as this edifice was under way, the congregation at Bushwick resolved also to erect a new house of worship, which was finished and dedicated on the 20th of September, 1829. The congregation here then wished to be organized into a separate church, and this was done by the Classis of Long Island on the first Sabbath of November, 1829. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Dr. Schoonmaker of Jamaica, who ordained Abraham Meserole and Abraham Boerum as elders.

This act of the Classis was not taken kindly by the church of Bushwick. Indeed, so displeased were the authorities of that church that they refused to hold farther ecclesiastical intercourse with the Classis

of Long Island. Accordingly the Bushwick Church was joined to the South Classis of New York, in which connection it has ever since remained. There is, however, I am sure, no improper feeling now in existence, which needs to be gratified by the continued separation of this church from most friendly intercourse with its sisters of the same family.

Immediately after its organization, this church received to its service the Rev. James Demarest, who, during the preceding August, had been graduated from our Theological Seminary at New Brunswick. For the first six months he served in the capacity of a Missionary, and was supported in part during that time by the Board of Domestic Missions. On the first Sabbath of his labors here he preached to sixteen people, on the second to eighteen, and on the third to twenty-four. It is instructive to look back at this beginning. It was in a sense a day of small things. But a handful of the incorruptible seed of the Gospel, fertilized by Divine grace, can be made to wave like the cedars of Lebanon in their stately majesty. Knowing, as we now do, how steadfastly this church has grown in faith and abounded in charity; how it became in after years a joyful mother of children; how it has helped plant other churches, and added to the ranks of the ministry, and sent forth its influence even to the uttermost parts of the earth—it seems almost wonderful in our eyes that from so feeble a beginning it should have come to a history so instructive and encouraging.

In tracing the career of the church, some note

must be taken of the progress of the community here, and this may be shortly done.

When this building was opened for Divine worship, it stood in fact remote from the village, which was forming around and above the foot of Grand Street. Fourth Street was then but a farmer's lane, rough, uneven with boulders, and studded here and there with stumps or with trees of the original forest. Flagged sidewalks and pavements as yet there were none. The church, in its surroundings, was made a sort of John the Baptist, crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Population, however, rapidly increased. In 1835 the inhabitants numbered but 3,328; in 1840, 5,095; in 1845, 11,328. The Rev. Mr. Demarest, having labored here with fidelity and success for a period of nine years and nine months, resigned, and the pastorate was next filled by the Rev. William Howard Van Doren. During his ministry here the church and congregation experienced many changes, some prosperous and some adverse. There were seasons of revival enjoyed, when many entered into covenant with God. But there had been gathered into the congregation, some who retained special personal preferences for other church organizations. So long as they were without sufficient force to form and sustain separate churches, they remained to worship here. So it happened that for years Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists, very cordially joined together in these courts in the sacred services of the Sabbath-day. At length a number withdrew and organized the First Presbyterian Church. Not

long afterward that was divided, a part becoming Old School and the other part remaining in connection with the New. This withdrawal weakened the congregation here, and many other causes, such as commercial panics, social changes, and the comparative inability of a somewhat sparse population to sustain the several churches which had sprung up—all combined to keep this church and congregation in a condition neither healthful nor vigorous. At the expiration of the first half of its existence it had a house of worship, antique in style, unattractive both internally and externally, and was in debt for the whole cost of its lecture-room, besides owing about five thousand dollars more, to individuals who had made advances for its support. At length, toward the close of 1848, measures were taken by Nicholas Wyckoff, Jonathan S. Burr, William Ferris, Samuel Groves, and others—some of whom were, and some not of the Consistory—to repair, modernize and beautify this edifice. They were greatly encouraged at the outset by the generosity of Messrs. Abraham Meserole and Abraham Boerum, each of whom relinquished a considerable claim held by him at that time upon the church. In the Spring of 1849 the improvements were completed. These consisted of an addition of twelve feet to the front of the building, with a tower and handsome spire, the substitution of new for old pews, together with sundry decorations of the interior. Early in the Spring of that year the Rev. Mr. Van Doren resigned, and for some months the Rev. Job Halsey served here as a stated supply.



In October, 1849, by a vote of the congregation, the Consistory were authorized to make a call upon your present pastor. Their action was embodied in a resolution and transmitted to him for consideration. The regular call bears date November 13th. It is in the handwriting of the late Dr. Schoonmaker, who seems to have been a special friend and adviser of this church, from its beginning to the time of his death. My installation took place on the third Sabbath of December, on which occasion Dr. Schoonmaker preached the sermon, and the Rev. John Ward of Greenpoint addressed the pastor and people. According to the stipulations of the Consistory, my call took effect on the 1st of November, so that, technically, to-day is the seventeenth anniversary of my pastorate here, and exactly completes the thirty-seventh year of the church, inasmuch as it was organized on the first Sabbath of November, 1829.

In what follows I shall be obliged to speak of the growth, activity and influence of this church, but in so doing I trust that no one will be ungenerous enough to accuse me of indulging in a weak and foolish personal vanity. Believing that the church itself is entitled, to a full share of such praise as is accorded to those who do well, I shall not hesitate to speak in truthful and becoming terms, of a communion whose order, steadfastness and fidelity to Christ, I have witnessed with ever-increasing satisfaction and pleasure. Looking back to the point of time when first I became your minister, and contrasting what

was then with what is now, I cannot fail to see abundant proofs, that the Lord has been with you and prospered your undertakings. There are many here who cannot draw encouragement from such a view, because they have not been long enough here to observe the progress of affairs, whether ecclesiastical or municipal. They may be interested in the rehearsal which shall now follow.

It may be well questioned, whether another city in the United States has grown so rapidly as this has in population. The figures are instructive: In 1845, there were 11,328 inhabitants. In 1850, there were 30,780—very nearly a three-fold increase in five years. On the 1st of January, 1852, Williamsburgh became a city; and on the 1st of January, 1855, it was consolidated with Brooklyn and Bushwick, under one charter. At the date of its consolidation, Williamsburgh had a population of about 50,000, and Brooklyn about 120,000. The U. S. Census of 1860 places the aggregate population of the consolidated city at 206,661, and makes its ratio of increase to have been a little over 175 per cent. The Eastern District, bounded by Flushing Avenue on the south, and Newtown Creek on the north, is believed to contain at the present time not less than *one hundred thousand* people. The improvements in affairs of all kinds here have been very great. In the beginning of 1850, Grand Street, Fourth, South Fourth, South Seventh, and First Streets, along the river, were the only streets here that were both paved and flagged. South Seventh Street, leading to the main ferry, had

only a few buildings on its north side; part of an orchard still fronted on the street, and a single breadth of flagging-stone accommodated pedestrians. Fourth Street was occupied almost exclusively by private dwellings. The streets were unlighted by night, save only when the moon relieved their darkness. Since then every one of our local secular institutions have been established, such as banks, markets, libraries, and associations for public beneficence. The churches were few and their membership not large, consequently each church was compelled to struggle as it were with a sea of difficulties. At the beginning of 1850 the church edifices in this district were only *eight* in number. There are now, I believe, *fifty-two*; being very nearly a seven-fold increase in sixteen years. There is no better index than this to the general character and condition of a community. True, some of these many churches are still weak, but they have been planted, and will, we trust, all thrive and prosper. Every successive year of my residence here, I have noticed a sure and solid improvement in every element comprising what is styled the public welfare. Material wealth has increased, educational institutions are established, and the common agencies of Religion, have been employed with ever-augmenting measures of success. Those who are afflicted with tempers which can never find sunshine anywhere, or who think that fault-finding is the chief end of man, may nurse their unhappiness by pointing out still existing deficiencies in our social, civil, and religious organizations. But if one will take

the past fifteen years of the history of this portion of the city, as a visible proof of what may be done even in Williamsburgh, he may possibly consent to say that the next fifteen years may yield an equal reward to our people here. Fifteen years hence, and Fourth Street will be lined with stores from one end to the other. A broad avenue will extend from the foot of South Seventh Street, along which the tide of travel will roll as it now does through Fulton Avenue. Fifteen years hence, and property will be worth more in this Thirteenth Ward than it will then be on Brooklyn Heights. The merchants of New York, having a short, easy, and direct access to Division Avenue Ferry, by four city railways in New York leading through the very commercial vitals of the metropolis, will come hither in crowds to tear down our old buildings and erect new. Fifteen years hence, and New York will be still more a foreign city than it now is, and relatively a larger number of its merchants than at present, will have their residences outside of its limits. A proper public spirit, forecasting future events, may well consider the inevitable tendency of population, and prepare the way for a large augmentation of the community here.

I am aware that it is the fashion of a few to declaim against the character of this place. Yet, in spite of all their declamations, the place grows and thrives. Its local business increases, wealth accumulated in New York is expended here, and population advances. True, we are destitute of theaters, of

magnificent palaces of sin, and of many other establishments of evil, ever ablaze as with the fires of hell. But we can live here better without the demoralizing agencies of a corrupt civilization than we could with them. Let it be the care of the people to provide churches and schools and libraries, to sustain institutions of charity and of philanthropy; let them strive to make the community increasingly intelligent and virtuous and enterprising; let those who own property, favor every wise measure designed to improve the same, and time and patience will bring them satisfying rewards. It was not until about two years prior to the commencement of the war, that this place came into the possession of full facilities to render it attractive for residence. During the war, and since, there have been hindrances. But population has exceeded accommodations, and dwellings must go up, no matter what their cost.

There are, I am sure, the soundest reasons for thinking that our future as a community will be, in all respects, brighter than our past has been. It will be safe to act on this conviction. The past fifteen years have completely revolutionized affairs here, and the next fifteen will roll on the wheels of improvement with accelerated pace. We, of course, grieve to lose the personal presence and society, now and then, of some of our most worthy citizens. But such losses are inevitable, because controlled by laws of liberty, which belong to the urgent currents of American society—laws which operate for our good as well as for our occasional injury.

I shall now draw toward my conclusion by briefly enumerating what seem to me to have been characteristics of this church during my acquaintance with it:

1. It has never been demonstrative, in the sense of being *sensational*. It has desired and sought a steady, substantial growth on the good soil of divine Truth. And what it has thus sought it has obtained. There have been in it no spasmodic fits of unwholesome exertion, and there have been no consequent periods of lassitude and weariness and decay of power. This characteristic has secured an unusual amount of stability to the elements composing the congregation. In a community like this, where fickleness and change are active as the tides, we have felt them here but slightly. I have been surprised and gratified on running over our records, to find how large a proportion of this congregation has been here almost from the beginning of my ministry in this church, or during the larger part of it. True, death and the constraints of Providence have taken many from us. Yet all over the floor of this sanctuary are seated families or parts of families who have occupied almost the same places for a series of many years. Many even of those who have removed hence have left their hearts with us, and some have come back again to gladden us by their presence, and to edify us by their pious labors. Such steady and uniform continuance in well-doing, as has characterized the life of this church, is in itself the best evidence of the constant presence of the Holy Spirit among you.

2. It has shown a true Christian liberality. The Reformed Dutch Church is not sectarian or bigoted or selfishly exclusive. It neither believes in nor teaches that any separating and excising shibboleth is to be magnified above the name of Jesus. Its motto is, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all, charity." Its spirit and temper are therefore ruled by its conviction that the test of a true church, is not to be found in the accident of an external form, nor in the groove of a rigid uniformity of government. They who are Christ's compose the universal Church, which is his body. And to love and cherish and rejoice in the welfare of all those whom Christ loves, would seem to be an elementary part of practical Christianity; on the other hand, selfishness is never more odious, nor pride more detestable, than when they claim the possession of the Divine Warrant as a license to their indulgence. When man has embodied his depraved passions into a religious creed, he becomes the victim of the most wicked of all forms of idolatry. Therefore our Denomination has protested always against the intolerance and illiberality of every system of religious training which denies Christ by denying his people.

You have not neglected to provide for your own ecclesiastical household, nor have you refused to extend the hand of friendship and of help to those of other faiths than your own. You have suffered no real loss by this most Christian course of conduct, and will not. And if now others shall in any measure

do by you as you have done by them, you will be reaping as you have sown.

The liberal spirit which has been cultivated here toward sister denominations has also exhibited itself in specific forms toward younger congregations of our own order. In 1850, this was the only Dutch Church in this portion of the city; now there are five others, every one of which you have aided by your sympathies, your prayers, and your money. As they have prospered, you have rejoiced; and while some of them have been growing strong, you have not become weak nor disheartened on beholding their successes.

Nor have you been wanting in the grace of giving of your substance for the support of the institutions of religion. For the endowment of our College and our Seminary; for the support of our Church Boards; for maintaining your Sabbath schools, which are now three in number; and for other objects—you have contributed with a promptitude and frequency, wholly inconsistent with the notion of illiberality.

3. This has been a fruitful Church. In 1848, twenty-three members were dismissed by you to form the Church at Greenpoint. In 1851, several were dismissed to aid in the organization of the South Bushwick Church; and for three consecutive years you contributed directly to the support of its pastor, the Rev. J. S. Himrod. In 1854, you dismissed members to organize the Lee Avenue Church; gave its school at the beginning a library; furnished



a superintendent, with more than a dozen teachers; and for two years you also contributed to the salary of its pastor, Rev. Mr. Halloway. In 1854, the spire of this church was prostrated by a tornado, and while contemplating repairs needed, you resolved to enlarge this edifice. The building was carried to the rear line of the lots, and forty-four new pews placed in the edifice. Other improvements were made at a cost of about \$5,000 for all. Eleven years ago the Mission School in Ninth Street was established, and has been maintained to this day, in great vigor and efficiency, at an expense of never less than \$500 per annum. In 1858, a plan was arranged for the purchase of the North Sixth Street Church, into which many members of this congregation entered heartily. The price was fixed at \$6,000. An application was made to the Consistory of the Collegiate Church for aid to the amount of \$1,500. The application was granted by that Consistory upon condition that \$1,500 should be raised here. We secured \$2,500 here, and I then went to New York to draw the amount there pledged. I found a technical error in the wording of the resolution of the Collegiate Consistory, which had to be rectified. To secure this, I visited personally a majority of the members of that Consistory, who said the rectification should be made. But when that Consistory met, one vote prevented the rectification, and we failed to secure the property in North Sixth Street. My own private loss in that failure was over \$400, but that was the least. We were obliged to turn a Sabbath school of nearly three hundred chil-

dren into the street, and worse than all, the Consistory of this Church and its Pastor were severely blamed by excellent and worthy members of the Church and congregation, for not having accomplished an impossibility. I do not make this disclosure now in any spirit of unkindness, but simply because I believe that, at this late day, when all passions are cooled, the plain and simple truth respecting that matter should be known. We meant well and did well, but one sinner can destroy much good, and especially if he be a member of a body where nothing can be done except by a unanimous vote. My wish was to see a Dutch Reformed Church in every section of this district, and but for one adverse vote in New York, that wish would have been gratified. Last year it was proposed to take the German Evangelical Church in Union Avenue under the care of the North Classis of Long Island. It had a floating debt of \$800 which had to be liquidated. The Classis assumed the debt, and this Church bore its full share of that amount. Mr. William Ferris has charge of the Sabbath school there, and I heartily wish that he may receive additional assistance, in books and teachers, for the supply of that very interesting and promising field of Christian labor.

4. This has been an united Church. You have sent forth colonies, larger or smaller; but during the present pastorate there have been no secessions, no parties, no quarrels, and no bone of contention. Even on the question of removal to another location

we have had no disputes nor controversies. Eight years ago the necessity of sooner or later removing from this place, began to be foreseen and talked of. Every month almost the conviction grew that some steps should be taken to provide this congregation with a better edifice, in a more advantageous position. At length, in 1860, a contract was made for the purchase of a site. The war and its confusions arrested plans at that point. Three years ago the congregation, at a public meeting regularly called, directed the Consistory to sell this property. For three years the Consistory tried to find some purchaser, who would not convert the property to common secular uses. At length, in July last, what the congregation had ordered was done, and this property was disposed of, on conditions mutually advantageous to buyer and seller. I will not say that, from the beginning, there have been no differences of opinion respecting methods of procedure. But I will say, that even in this grave and important undertaking, the Consistory have taken no steps save by consent of its every member, and have concluded upon no action other than the congregation, in regular form, sanctioned by their vote. May I not hope that our unanimity in the past will continue unbroken, and that we may go forward in our most important work as with one hand and one heart.

Thus far I have spoken chiefly in a historic way. The external record of this church has been surveyed to show how the Good Father has loved and helped His children here.

But no words can tell what have been the nature or the number of the ministries of grace received by the worshippers in this sanctuary from Him, who not only meets with, but abides in, the assemblies of His saints. Here a multitude have been introduced into the Kingdom. Here joy has been found by the mourner; strength by the feeble; and the ripening bloom of holy culture has gathered upon the hearts of those who have the fruits of the Spirit. I do not propose on this really tender occasion to make any applications to the fountains of sympathy for a contribution of regretful tears. Together we have all loved these gates of Zion. Here we have been united as a family, united by all the sacred ties of spiritual kinship. Here we have heard the sound, above all others the sweetest, which has called us into the inward fellowship, which nor time nor change nor even death can destroy. Here, seated in heavenly places, we have had visions of the glorious company above; of the ransomed congregation; of the white robed and the worthy; of the Throne and the King in His beauty. Often this place has been lighted by the sacred passions of the hour up to the moment of Transfiguration, and we have seen no man, "save Jesus only." It would be strange, indeed, should our natures refuse to cherish sentiments of regard, even for the material structure which has stood as sentinel over our spiritual festivals. But a *living* church can never consent to entomb itself voluntarily from mere devotion to the perishable. Long ago you outgrew this edifice. It has been

decaying while you have increased in capacity to work. No longer is it adequate to your wants, and, indeed, has not been for years past. You propose, therefore, to remove hence, not to gratify pride or foster secular ambition, but that you may do the will of your Master and edify yourselves, your children, and the community here.

If there be some who shall feel a pang of sorrow in taking a farewell of this sanctuary, I can respect and share that sorrow. This desk has long been the shrine of my heart. After a short experience in the ministry elsewhere, I came hither seventeen years ago, "to offer myself as a sacrifice in the service of your faith." Our union was legally formed and sanctified by secret vows of mutual fidelity. On neither side has there been distrust or suspicion to impair our confidence. The bond of union has been strengthened and brightened through successive years. And, therefore, I can say with perfect truthfulness, that to stand here before this congregation, in the hours of Sabbath service, and proclaim the glorious gospel, has been not so much a duty or a labor as an ever-increasing delight.

Though head, and heart, and hand—all the strength of whatever sort God has been pleased to give me—have been taxed and tasked, and often strained, to bear a double burden; while duty to the denomination we love has exacted with fatal and unintermitted regularity the performance of much work for the columns of the weekly press, still you are my witnesses that I have never neglected the

first, and in a superior sense, the superior, claims of this desk. And now, after having ministered many years to one people, my satisfaction is to know that I have faithfully tried, in simplicity and Godly sincerity, to speak to them according to the oracles of Truth. Your approbation has been an encouragement too great for words to express. And the proofs received of your love have been too many, to permit me to think they have been offered, except in testimony of your appreciation of the truths it has been my study to set forth.

We shall go out to build another sanctuary. Let us all devoutly pray that our faith and charity may abound yet more and more, and that God may be pleased to give us success, and establish the work of our hands. The site secured for the future structure is believed to be as desirable as any in this portion of the city. It consists now of seven lots, for which full payment has been made, so that they are entirely clear of incumbrance. Our plans will quickly be ready, and when adopted, measures will at once be taken to prosecute the work before us. Meanwhile we shall enjoy the hospitality of a sister church, where our presence will be welcome, and, I doubt not, our concord unbroken. Preserving distinct as we shall our family meetings, for prayer and the study of the Scriptures, I fervently trust that we may continue as united in the future, as we have been in the past, and that with one heart and one purpose we may go forward, asking the Good Shepherd daily to show us the way. Amen.

## A THRENODY.

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A Smile! A Tear!  
A Hope! A Fear!  
Like ripples on the stream,  
Like moonlight's fading beam,  
They come—they pass.  
Ah me, alas!  
This life is vapor—  
A flickering taper!

In flowing sympathies, in surging sorrows,  
In hopeful ecstasies, in glad to-morrows,  
Its rapid current runs its mystic race,  
And man at last awakes in Death's embrace.

A Truth! A Lie!  
A Joy! A Sigh!  
Flow mingled in a wave  
That swallows, as the grave,  
Both good and ill!  
Mysterious still  
Its surface shining,  
Its depths repining!

With warring passions that can never rest,  
The heart is throbbing in the troubled breast;  
Eager for joy, it seizes present pain,  
And worships phantom pleasures o'er again.

A Birth! A Breath!  
A Toil! A Death!  
Then yawns the hungry tomb  
To which all flesh must come,—

And life is done,  
 A goal is won!  
 Dreams all are ended,  
 Strength all expended.  
 In awful silence now the dust asleep  
 Throbs with no love, nor hears if friendship weep;  
 The marble cold, the flower-encircled knoll,  
 Conceal and guard the palace of a soul.

A Soul! A Sin!  
 Ah, how! Ah, when  
 Shall these parted be?  
 What holy ministry  
 Shall work the cure,  
 And make Faith sure  
 That piteous Heaven  
 Death's hold hath riven?  
 A loving Presence shines upon our sight—  
 Incarnate Truth diffusing living light!

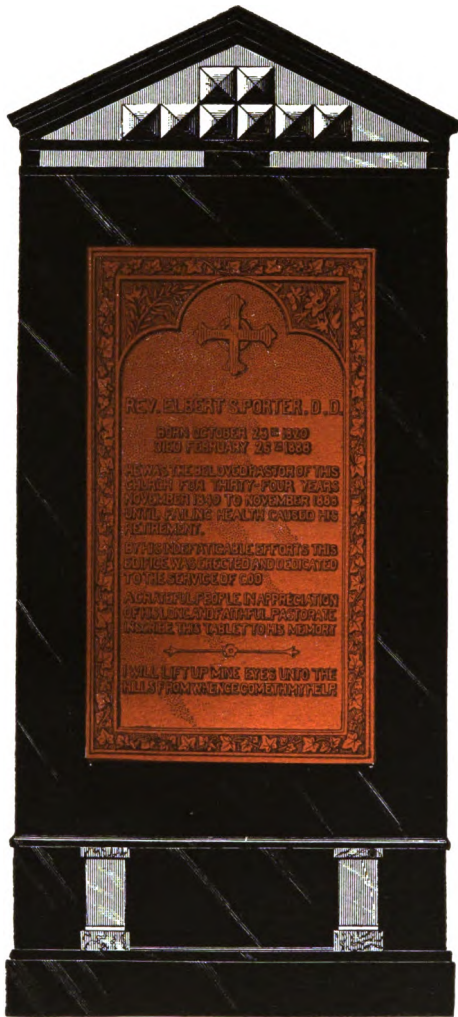
ELBERT S. PORTER.

—From *Princeton Poets*.



## **BRONZE TABLET**

**MOUNTED ON MONUMENTAL WORK OF BLACK MARBLE AND MEXICAN ONYX,  
PLACED BESIDE THE PULPIT OF FIRST REFORMED CHURCH,  
BROOKLYN, E. D., IN MAY, 1888.**



REV. ELBERT S. PORTER, D.D.

BORN OCTOBER 23 - 1830  
DIED FEBRUARY 28 - 1886

HE WAS THE ELDEST SON OF HIS FATHER FOR THIRTY-FOUR YEARS FROM 1830 TO NOVEMBER 1886 UNTIL HIS ILL HEALTH CAUSED HIS RETIREMENT.

BY HIS DEVOTED AND EFFICIENT SERVICES THE CHURCHES WHICH HE SERVED WERE BLESSED TO HIS SERVICE OF GOD.

A GRATEFUL PEOPLE IN APPRECIATION OF HIS LIFE AND VALUABLE PRESENTS BEQUESTS HIS VALENTINE MEMORIAL

WILL LIFT UP LIKE EYES INTO THE HEAVENS FOR HIS WORTHY SERVICE

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