Memorial

OF

MISS LYDIA VAN DYKE,

(Who Died in New Brunswick, N. J., Oct. 12th, 1865,)

FOR THE PERUSAL OF HER RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.

NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J.
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MEMORIAL.

In the retired, unobtrusive walks of life, amid family connections and social acquaintances, a memory tho’ less brilliant, yet as dear and precious to the living as that which crowns the labors of genius, or the achievements of the hero, may be earned, rendering a memorial of affection, a duty and a pleasure. The life deeds of the undistinguished dead, their humanity, benevolence and practical christian example, may, under the providence of God, conduce more effectually to the well being of society, than the elaborations of highly gifted intellect, or the lustrous exploits of the mighty warrior.

The subject of this humble memorial, Miss Lydia Van Dyke, the fourth child of Frederick Van Dyke Esq., and Lydia Van Dyke, was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on the 12th day of February, 1787, and died on the 12th day of October, 1865, in the 78th year of her age.

Her lengthened life, spent under the paternal roof, where her infantile and youthful years were passed, surrounded by endeared objects and tender memories, (often recognized by her, as a boon of a gracious providence), presents a striking testimony of the value of years devoted to the discharge of duties, which God enshrines in the relationship of family, friends and society. As the elder Sister, she filled the beloved Mother’s place, in her regard and care for the interests of brothers and sister, and formed for them a centre
of attraction and a joyful, refreshing rallying point in their childhood's home. She lived to see nearly all her youthful friends fall into the sleep of death, and to become the near and reliable friend, and adviser of their children, to whom she readily transferred her love, interest and sympathy. —

While the advanced in years honored her many social virtues, and enjoyed her enlivening conversation, the young loved and delighted in her easy and attractive companionship. It may not be presumptuous to say, that her name will be often thought of by the former and is embalmed, a sacred uniting bond between them, and their mothers, in the hearts of the latter. Her whole life was beautified by the amenities and hospitalities of the polished society of former days.—Polite and civil to all, untiring and constant in devotion to relatives, a daughter and sister blameless and loving—in friendship, faithful—cheerfully rendering kind offices in times of trial and affliction, and never forgetful of the worthy poor. She was permitted to rejoice in the possession of many true and loving hearts among relatives, friends and citizens. The perusal of her correspondence with the companions of her youth, scattered through the Northern and Southern States, as well as the kind and unremitting attentions of her numerous friends at home in days of health, and during her last illness, bear full and unerring testimony to the general estimation in which she was held. Her appreciation of the kindnesses which attended her declining days was often expressed, without reference to the idea, that they were the fruits of her own, to others, in the exclamations,—"how I am blessed! What comforts are mine! How good my God is to me!" Her entire life was unselfish—her tongue never indulged in utterances of scandal, nor her heart in feelings
of enmity or hate. To a life of Christian practice, she added a firm, rational and unostentatious faith in the promises of the gospel and the redeeming love and sacrifice of Christ for guilty sinners. She occupied a pew, and was a communicant in the First Dutch Reformed Church in New Brunswick, in which her parents worshiped, sitting under the ministries of Drs. Condict, Livingston, Ludlow, Hardenburgh and others. For her aged, truly reverend, and now retired pastor, Dr. How, under whose faithful and able ministry, she sat 29 years, she felt a most affectionate regard. His kind pastoral visitations during her last days were spoken of as precious to her soul, in terms of deep Christian acknowledgment. Their conversations on spiritual subjects seemed to the by-stander, the preparatory interviews of two aged servants of God, before entering his blessed kingdom.

She lived and died a Christian!

As her whole life was passed in the home of her infancy, so her body rests most befittingly with parents and brothers, under the same green mound of earth and monumental stone, in the burial ground of the First Reformed Dutch Church, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The same living home, the same last resting place!

Her spirit dwells with God!!
FUNERAL SERMON

PREACHED IN THE FIRST REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, BY

REV. SAMUEL B. HOW, D.D.

PHILIPPIANS, I. 21.—"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The Apostle in the first clause of our text asserts that the great object of his life was to serve and glorify Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of men, in firm reliance on his promise that all who do so, should be with him where he is to behold and to partake in his glory in Heaven. It is to the latter clause of our text that we desire to call your devout attention. Waving all remarks by way of introduction or exposition of the words of our text, we proceed at once to consider in what respects to die was gain to the Apostle and in common with him to all the true followers of Christ. We remark in the general that it is their gain because they then go away to a better world; are admitted to better company; to better employments; to purer and higher pleasures and to a state of perfect and unchanging holiness and bliss.

But to descend to particulars; to them to die is gain, because,

1st. They are then brought into the immediate presence of Christ the Mediator between God and man; the procurer and the bestower of everlasting life. In his intercessory prayer for his disciples which
he offered a short time before his crucifixion he said, 
"Father I will that they also whom thou hast given
me be with me where I am, that they may behold
my glory which thou hast given me."—John 17. 24.
The Apostle informs us that the reason why he con­sidered death as gain was because he would then be
brought into the immediate presence of Christ, to
dwell with him forever. Not that he was wholly
indifferent to this world, or alienated from it or in­sensible to its many enjoyments; but because in the
comparison he judged Heaven to be far more desir­able; for he says “I am in a strait betwixt two,
having a desire to depart and to be with Christ
which is far better.”—Philippians, 1. 23.
As the Mediator between God and man Christ has
ascended to Heaven and dwells there exalted to the
highest authority and glory in the Universe, not only
as the Eternal Son of God, but as Mediator between
God and man; the Redeemer, the Forerunner and
the Covenant Head of all who believe in him. In
this exalted state and character he is the object of
their highest love and liveliest gratitude. They
view him as altogether lovely in himself and as their
best and highest benefactor who by his perfect obe­dience unto death and his bitter sufferings to atone
for their sins has rescued them from eternal woe and
procured for them peace with God and eternal life
and bliss in Heaven. It is their warmest and highest
desire to be with him, to see his glory; to acknowl­edge their deep indebtedness to him; to offer to
him their highest worship and praises and thanksgivings for all the way by which he led them to their
everlasting home and rest with God. They therefore welcome death as their greatest gain because it brings them to him. Their last act on earth is to commit by faith their spirits into his hands and then to pass away into his presence to dwell with him forever. The excellent Dr. Owen just before he died wrote to a friend thus: "I am going to him whom my soul has loved or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love which is the whole ground of all my consolation."

Through him as their Forerunner they are introduced into the abodes of the blessed and are presented without spot or blemish to his Father and become members of the great family of Heaven. What are the peculiar manifestations which God makes of himself to its blessed inhabitants, or how the disembodied spirits of just men made perfect behold these manifestations we know not. But of this we are sure that they find themselves in his immediate presence and encompassed by his glory, and that their knowledge is made perfect. They no longer behold him through a glass darkly but face to face, and all their thoughts of him are ennobled and made holy, for they see him in the fullness of his perfections and the light of his glory even as the holy angels themselves see him. Their vision is transforming for they openly behold "the glory of the Lord and are changed into the same image from glory to glory."—2 Cor. 3. 18. Their joy is now full and their love to him is made perfect, for they are assured of his love to them. While they contemplate with rapturous emotions his boundless perfec-
tions and glories they rest in him with unutterable delight as their everlasting portion. They now pronounce the words "my God, my Father, my eternal all," with an emphasis and ecstasy of bliss of which we now have no conception.

2. To sincere believers in Christ to die is gain because death introduces them into the society and friendships of the highest and loveliest creatures in the Universe.

A chief cause of the bitterness of death is the separation which it makes between beloved relatives and friends. It takes away from us the desire of our eyes; it crushes the tenderest feelings of our hearts; it blights our sweetest joys and fondest hopes; and separating those who were bound together by the strongest ties of nature and of love consigns them to the solitude and darkness of the grave. If these separations were eternal how dreadful a foe would death be to human happiness and with what terror would we recoil from the grave as the horrible abyss in which is swallowed up all that is lovely or good on the earth. But they are not eternal. In heaven there is a blessed re-union of the spirits of the pious whom death for a short season had parted, and they there renew the friendships and intercourse which they had cherished here on earth. That they there recognize each other we think is unquestionable. The separation of the spirit from the body does not diminish but greatly strengthens its powers. The spirits of the just made perfect retain in Heaven a consciousness of their own personal identity and a remembrance of the various scenes through which
they passed in this world and of the various persons with whom they were connected. But if they recollect the scenes of their earthly pilgrimage and hold intercourse and have powers of communication with each other such as we now have, surely they will find no difficulty in recognizing each other, or of informing one another who they are and what was the way by which they reached their heavenly abodes. When our Lord Jesus was transfigured, Moses and Elijah were present with him on the mount and doubtless they too knew each other as they knew and were known by the three disciples who witnessed this wonderful event. If the rich man in torment knew Abraham and Lazarus and was known and bid by Abraham to remember his condition and conduct while he was here on earth, much more may we infer that the children of Abraham in Heaven know and are known by him. In comforting his brethren in Thessalonica who were lamenting the death of their pious relatives and friends the Apostle says, “I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”—1 Thess. 4. 13, 14. No—the separation of friends who sleep in Jesus is not eternal. The one only goes before to be followed by those whom, for a short season, he leaves behind and whom he welcomes with rapture to his and their eternal abodes. But what pleasure would their re-union confer if they were wholly ignorant of each other? or with what
propriety could the Apostle say to those Thessalonians of whose conversion he had been the instrument that they were his "hope and joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"—1 Thess. 2. 19. It has indeed been objected that God mercifully conceals from the glorified spirits of the saints the knowledge of each other that their happiness may not be diminished by the absence of some whom they tenderly loved while they dwelt on our earth. To this objection we think it enough to reply that they there have such a discovery of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God as causes them to acquiesce in all that he does; that all their affections centre supremely on him; and that their wills are swallowed up in his.

How does this truth of a blessed re-union in Heaven of all those who sleep in Jesus diminish the pain of separation between pious friends. They shall meet each other in the abodes of glory and be united in a friendship that can never be broken. They shall become the inhabitants of that good land which now is afar off from us, that better and heavenly country of which we now read in God's holy word, in the faith and desire of which they lived while among us here, and the hope of which took from death its terrors. They shall be the dwellers together in that Heavenly City whose foundations are eternal, whose builder and maker is God and which is continually enlightened and ennobled by his presence, and there freed from sin and from all fear of outrage or wrong or suffering or sorrow they
will hold sweet intercourse and communings together and sorrow and "sighing shall fly away forever."

3. To the true followers of Christ to die is gain, because death introduces them into the society and companionship of the highest and loveliest created beings in the Universe; for they then are joined to the innumerable company of the Holy Angels of whom Christ is the Head while they are put in subjection to him and delight to worship and obey him. The Holy Angels he confirmed in their state of perfect holiness and blessedness so that they are free from all sin; while he redeemed from their sins and confirms in their state of holiness and bliss all those of our fallen race who by faith received and obeyed him.

When the Holy Angels were first created we know not. From a passage in the Book of Job we learn that they were living and present at the creation of our world, for then "the morning stars* sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy."—Job 38. 4, 7. For thousands of years they have been employed by God in the execution of his purposes, and have been present and witnessed his works. Their number is innumerable. They are pure Spirits. Their knowledge and power are vast. They excel in glory and are perfectly holy, wise and happy, and having been confirmed by Christ in the integrity and holiness of their nature they are assured of an immortal existence with God in glory.

These holy Angels God employs sometimes as messengers of his wrath to inflict on his foes merited
wrath and punishment; but he employs them more frequently we think on errands of goodness and mercy and as messengers of his love and grace. The Psalmist says that "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them."—Psalm, 34. 7. They perform many kind offices to the children of God while they dwell on earth, guarding them from danger, suggesting to them good thoughts, thus encouraging them in the performance of duty and assisting them to repel temptation and to endure affliction. But they are especially present with them in their last conflict with death. We are told that during the awful agony of Christ just before his crucifixion "there appeared an Angel unto him from heaven strengthening him." Luke 22. 43. But their ministry is not confined to Christ the Head of his Church; it extends to each individual and to the whole number of his redeemed and sanctified people; for we are told that they "are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."—Heb. 1. 14. As an angel appeared to sympathise with and strengthen Christ in his conflict with death, so we believe that they often leave their seats of glory in Heaven to wait around the death beds of the saints of God, to protect them from the assaults of Satan, to whisper to them thoughts full of heavenly consolation and joy and peace and to welcome their departing spirits from these frail and perishing habitations in the body and to conduct them to their own native skies, and to the presence of their Saviour and their God. There the hosts of Heaven gather around and wel-
come them with rapture to their company, to their exalted employments and to their never ending joys.

4. To the true followers of Christ to die is gain because death is their deliverer from every evil, their purifier from every sin and their introducer to an eternal life of holiness and bliss. In the sublime language of the Book of the Revelation of John, (chap. 7. v. 14, 17.) they are represented as “clothed with white robes” or “the robes of righteousness” the emblems of honor and acceptance, of purity and sublime pleasure, and “with palms in their hands” the tokens of victory and triumph, joy and praise. (see Guyse on this passage). They have come out of all their tribulations, and “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Death, formidable as it is to the wicked, is to the sincere followers of Christ the commencement of nothing but bliss. It is the remedy that removes every ill; the Physician that heals every disease; the hour of transition from earth to Heaven. There they are wholly freed from error and frailty and sin, and arrive at the complete perfection of their nature. Their bliss too is complete, for their desires are all of them holy and are all
satisfied. They burn with the intensest love to God and their highest delight is to worship Him; to do his will, and to submit to his disposals. They have now entered on eternal life. Their bodies indeed must for a season sleep in the dust, but they will not perish there for they belong to Christ who has redeemed them by his blood. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."—1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. Their liberated spirits wait in the realms of glory till the resurrection day when the slumbers of the grave shall be broken and at the command of Christ their dead bodies shall come forth to new life and reunited to their spirits shall be made spiritual and glorious like Christ's own glorious body, and "so shall they ever be with the Lord."—1 Thess. 4. 17.

It was in the firm belief of these glorious truths and the expectation of this exalted bliss that the Apostle said that to him and with him to all true christians "to die is gain." Death is the passage to the glories of Heaven and to the presence and enjoyment of God, and they are willing to be "absent from the body that they may be present with the Lord." It was in the faith of these glorious truths and the hope that she was going to the presence of Christ and to eternal life that our highly esteemed friend and sister in Christ Miss Lydia Van Dyke died, after a long and painful sickness which she bore with exemplary patience and submission to the will
of God. She might well say "days of vanity and wearisome nights are appointed to me." But these wearisome days and nights, painful as they were to her, were blessed to lead her to look away from earth to heaven and from man to God. In the early part of her sickness her mind was deeply and anxiously exercised as to the reality of her repentance for sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as to her peace and acceptance with God. By constant and fervent prayer she sought for divine instruction and assistance and consolation. Her prayers were answered, and for some time before she died she found peace and rest to her soul. By faith she looked to Christ and committed her soul and her all to him as her Redeemer from sin and death. Her fears were dispelled and she found peace and joy by believing in him.

The following highly interesting account of the closing scene of her sickness and sorrows was furnished to me after her death by her excellent and highly respected brother Dr. F. A. Van Dyke.

"The death of my beloved sister was like the falling to sleep of a babe. Not a sigh, groan, nor struggle marked the separation from earth. All was peace, serenity, well grounded faith in the promises of the Redeemer. When asked by me "if anything could be done for her?" her reply was in soft cadence "Heaven, Heaven," her last utterance of thought to human ear. She thus passed into the sleep which has no awakening here: a ministering angel winged her immortal spirit through the radiant glories that illumine the portals of Heaven, to
the God who gave it. She lived and died a christian. No murmur, no complaint was heard from her during her long and suffering sickness. She spoke only of the comforts and attentions of friends which were so abundantly vouchsafed to her. Oh! that my departure may be as full of peace and child-like christian confidence as was that of my ever dear and beloved sister. Of you sir, she often spoke in terms of affection:—to all to her last hours she was ever kind and attentive. Her life has been useful; her end blessed; her “lamp trimmed and burning.”

It is proper to add that Miss Van Dyke belonged to one of the oldest and most respectable families of this city and congregation, while she herself was one of its oldest and most respected members. She possessed a strong and cultivated mind, and in her intercourse with others she exhibited the manners and temper of a true lady, so that she secured their esteem and confidence and friendship. She had a strong attachment to this church* both as the church in which her forefathers and her own family and she herself from her childhood had worshipped, and also because of her love to the evangelical doctrines that have ever been preached in it and to the government and order established in it. She was the friend and supporter of her minister, who found her such throughout the whole of his pastorship which had reached its thirtieth year when it was terminated by protracted and serious sickness which compelled him to offer his resignation of his office. This, however, instead of diminishing her friendship to him seemed

* The First Reformed Dutch Church.
rather to increase it, and at her request he visited her during her protracted sickness and noticed with high gratification her earnest desire to be found in Christ, her humble confidence in him as her Redeemer and its gradual increase till it at last reached an assurance of her salvation through his merits. The fear of death was removed and she found joy and peace in believing.

The beloved disciple who had those glorious revelations in the Isle of Patmos, of which he has given us the history, informs us that he heard a voice from Heaven saying unto him “Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the spirit that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”—Rev. 14. 13. Absent from the body they go away from the conflicts and sorrows and sins of this world to the abodes of the blessed in Heaven. Thither Christ ascended after he had arisen from the dead and thither he has been gathering through every successive age all the excellent of our earth who have been removed by death. How delightful is this view of Heaven as the place of the re-union and everlasting abode of all the truly pious who have ever lived on earth. The tie that unites them to Christ unites them to each other and that tie death cannot unloose. As death is the pathway to Heaven and brings into the presence of Christ all his true followers, so it brings them into each other’s company to renew the friendship and pious intercourse which existed between them while they were here below. My respected christian friends, the near
relatives of our departed christian sister, permit me to present to you her example of faith in the Redeemer of sinful man and of the fear and love of God for your imitation and to exhort you to follow her as she followed Christ. Then and then only will you have a good hope of eternal life, and like her will be able to tell your nearest relatives and friends who stand around your death bed that all is joy and peace within, and that you are going to that blessed Saviour whom not having seen you love, to receive from him a welcome to the abodes of everlasting life and bliss. The removal of our christian relatives and friends should teach us to prepare for our own departure. While then the world is passing away and every thing here is dying let us give our hearts to God and seek our home in that glorious world where sin and sickness and sorrow and death are known no more forever.