

**IN MEMORIAM. STEPHEN
VAN RENSSELAER. BORN
1789, DIED 1868**

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In Memoriam. Stephen Van Rensselaer. Born 1789, Died 1868 by Rufus W. Clark

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RUFUS W. CLARK

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STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER.

BORN 1789, DIED 1868.

ALBANY:
JOEL MUNSELL.
1868.

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A DISCOURSE,

IN MEMORY OF STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER, PREACHED IN THE FIRST REFORMED CHURCH, ALBANY, SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 31, 1868, BY REV. RUFUS W. CLARK, D.D.

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.—JOB v, 26.

This promise; has, in relation to one of our number, been recently fulfilled. Ripe in years, in honors and in virtues; after having passed through the spring, summer, autumn and winter of human life, our venerable brother has been taken, by the great reaper, to the harvest world above. On Monday last, at noon, when the sun was in the meridian, he passed to the world of light, where there is perpetual day, and where no nights' shadows fall upon the children of God. At the very hour, when nature was clothed in her spring beauties; when the leaves and the flowers were filling the air around his mansion with their fragrance, and the birds were singing their sweet songs, his spirit passed to the Paradise above, where flowers never fade, nor fruits decay—where

the atmosphere is ever filled with the far sweeter songs of angels and the redeemed.

Through a kind providence, he was permitted to go to heaven, from the very house, in which, on the 29th day of March, 1789, he was born. After an eventful life of nearly eighty years, during which he had passed through perils, incident to a long earthly career; and had varied experiences of joy and of sorrow; after returning to his home and enjoying years of tranquillity surrounded by an endeared family, and a large circle of friends, he peacefully resigns his earthly life where he had received it, and departs to enjoy the life everlasting.

In entering upon a sketch of the life and character of our beloved, venerated friend, I am greatly embarrassed at the outset, by his known and expressed aversion to any public eulogy, or even to a recital in a funeral discourse of the prominent events in his life. And in this feeling, those, most intimately related to him, so fully concur, that I am constrained, though very reluctantly, to suppress many facts of interest, and to sacrifice the desires and cherished purposes of a grateful pastor, to the

wishes of those to whom the memory of the departed is most dear.

Were I permitted to give expression to my own feelings, and to testify, as fully as I might, to the value of a signal illustration of a sincere Christian friendship, I would say much, with the hope of stimulating others to the culture of this most important feature of every genuine Christian character. For when I say that in this death I have lost a friend; that this church has lost a long tried and valued friend; that our institutions of learning and benevolent societies, mourn the loss of one of their noblest benefactors; and that multitudes of the poor will sadly miss the hand that has so often been generously extended for their relief, I use language, the full import of which can be realized only by the bereaved. And associated with these munificent private and public charities, there was an absence of the spirit of ostentation, and a desire that they should not be spoken of, such as I never knew surpassed in any other individual. On one occasion after he had been giving very large sums to the educational institutions of our church, reference was made to

the feelings of approbation with which his gifts were regarded, when he remarked, "All that is nothing to me; if I can only secure the approbation of God, it is all that I want." And the manner in which he expressed this desire showed that it came directly from his heart.

We have said that this church has lost a long tried and valued friend. From ancestral ties; early associations, and personal attachments, this church was very dear to Elder Van Rensselaer. As a worshiper, or as a member, he has been connected with it from childhood. There are some now living who can remember the family pew in the old church edifice in State street where sabbath after sabbath gathered the sainted father, the beloved mother, the only son, and the only sister, all of whom now rest, in the silence of the grave. But what was most remarkable, in this changing country of ours, was the fact, that for nine generations back, the ancestors of our departed friend, were connected with this church organization, and were devoted to promoting its spiritual interests and prosperity.

The precise date of the origin of this church

cannot be given with any degree of certainty. It is said by some that the Collegiate church in New York was organized as early as 1619. Among the manuscripts of the late Rev. Dr. Livingston, there is reference to a list of the members of that church in 1622. But Dr. Livingston, in another of his manuscripts, says that "in Albany they had ministers, as early as any in New York, if not before them." It is therefore possible that this is the oldest church in the country.

But however this may be, it is certain that Killian Van Rensselaer, who came to take possession of his colony here in 1637, was identified with it, and the church in its then feeble state derived no small degree of its support from him, and his descendants. And, in devotion to its interests, the mantle has literally fallen from father to son, in an unbroken succession. Of the father of him whose remains we so lately followed to the tomb, it was said in a discourse delivered soon after his death: "An elder in the church of his fathers, he seemed to count it his best honor to serve the followers of Jesus; and when a member of eccle-