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Rev. Dr Peabody
with the affectionate regards of -

1854 copy

W.P.S.

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XP6458

SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF

MRS. CHRISTINA LEE.

XP6458

A

S E R M O N

DELIVERED IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALBANY,

On Sabbath morning, August 20, 1854;

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE CHARACTER OF

MRS. CHRISTINA LEE,

WIDOW OF THE LATE THOMAS LEE.

Buel
BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.,
MINISTER OF SAID CHURCH.

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SERMON.

ACTS IX. 36—42.

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas ; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died ; whom, when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there they sent unto him two men desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into an upper chamber ; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed ; and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes ; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up ; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa ; and many believed in the Lord.

This story is told with such admirable simplicity, that any attempt to expand or illustrate would only mar its beauty and impair its force. The only explanatory remark that seems necessary, has respect to the name of the individual who forms the main subject of the narrative. The Syriac word *Tabitha*, and the corresponding Greek word *Dorcas*, literally signify a *roe* or *fawn* ; and it has been conjec-

tured that the name was given her by her parents on account of something in her appearance that rendered her peculiarly pleasant to them. Who she was we are not informed; but it is not improbable that she may have been one of the Hellenist Jews, or Jews who spoke the Greek language.

We will keep this story before our minds for a few moments, pausing at the more prominent points; and I trust it may help us to a suitable improvement of a recent dispensation of providence, which is deeply felt by the community at large, and which falls upon many as a severe personal affliction.

I. The Apostle sufficiently indicates the *character* of Dorcas, in representing her as "full of good works and alms-deeds which she did."

By *good works* we are to understand whatever is legitimately comprehended in a course of Christian obedience. The spirit of Christianity is essentially a spirit of well-doing; and no one has a right to claim the character of a Christian disciple, in whom this spirit has not a living and visible operation. Not only are good works absolutely required

by Him whose authority the Christian recognizes as supreme, but they are the necessary result of an evangelical faith, according to a law which God Himself has established. They may be more or less abundant, and more or less perfect, according to the relative strength of the principle from which they flow; but in some degree or other, and in some form or other, they certainly will exist, if the breath of a regenerate life has been breathed into the soul.

Good works, as marking the Christian character, may be considered in opposition to *good words*, or *mere professions*. Every one who makes a public profession of his faith in Christ thereby virtually declares his purpose to live a life of holy obedience; and if he fail to do this, his profession serves only to brand him with inconsistency and hypocrisy. But there are those who not only profess to be Christians by taking a place in the visible church, but make pretensions to extraordinary sanctity, and even set up to be both reformers and dictators among their brethren, who yet, after all, are but very poor examples of holy living. They are full of earnest, sometimes burning,

words; they are quick to discern, and forward to denounce, what they deem apathy or error in others; and in reference to some extraordinary, perhaps some equivocal, object, they can show themselves vigorous and resolute in action; but in regard to the every day duties of the Christian life, the best you can say of them is, that they are lamentably deficient. The good works which Christianity enjoins and produces, we expect indeed to find associated with a Christian profession; but we do not expect to find them in connexion with an ostentatious and vain-glorying spirit; much less can we allow such a spirit to be a substitute for them. Or if we are obliged to admit that the workings of a principle of genuine faith are sometimes found in intimate alliance with somewhat of a pharisaic temper, discovering itself in claims to marked spiritual superiority, we cannot but feel that such a temper, in proportion as it prevails, damages the good fruits of Christianity, and throws her into a doubtful, not to say a revolting, attitude.

I remark, further, that the good works referred to in the text, possess an *evangelical* character—that is, they are performed from a

regard to the authority and glory of Christ, and are the natural fruits of faith in his Gospel. Dorcas was a disciple of Christ. She believed in his divine authority as a Teacher and Redeemer; and her faith prompted her to yield a hearty obedience to his commandments. It is not to be supposed that the great idea of his Messiahship was distinctly present to her mind in every good action she performed; but her habitual confidence in Him was the spring of all her conduct; so that He was really recognized and honoured in her most common duties. An action in the sight of God takes its complexion wholly from the motive in which it originates; and hence no doubt many actions which are externally good, and even awaken the gratitude and admiration of men, find no favour with Omniscience, inasmuch as they are seen to be dictated by a selfish or criminal motive. I say then, works, in order to be truly good, must be performed from a principle of evangelical love; they must be the fruit of sincere and sanctified affections.

But the Apostle represents Dorcas, not only as abounding in good works in general, but

as being specially distinguished for "*alms-deeds*;" in other words, as being a model in the department of Christian charity. There was no doubt, at that day, a great call for benevolent effort among the poor; for the friends of Christianity were generally in humble circumstances; and many of them were obliged to sacrifice every thing but their life, if indeed they were permitted to retain that; and this state of things, in connexion with the ordinary vicissitudes incident to humanity, furnished wide scope for the labours of Christian philanthropy. And though we, my friends, have fallen, in some respects, on more favoured times, yet the poor we have with us always; and there is always good reason for our being on the alert to minister to their wants. And the example of Dorcas teaches us that this office is not to be monopolized by the stronger sex, but may very properly be shared by females. Nay, woman has here, in some respects, a decided advantage; for her spirit comes more readily into sympathy with scenes of want and wo; she has a more instinctive sense of the delicate proprieties often necessary to be observed in a ministration of

charity; and she addresses herself to the work in the spirit of a more graceful as well as more effective kindness. I say then, woman is in her own appropriate field—is fulfilling the mission which Heaven has ordained for her, when she is devoting herself to the relief and comfort of her suffering fellow creatures.

The word *alms-deeds*, here used by the Apostle, may denote that Dorcas was distinguished rather for contributions of *service* than of money; and of the latter she had probably very little to give. No doubt she was accustomed to thread the streets and lanes of the city of Joppa, to find out the proper subjects for charity; and while she made garments for them with her own hands, we must suppose that she supplied their wants according to her ability, in other respects also; especially that she sympathized in their sorrows and administered to them the consolations of the Gospel. Let no one, then, especially let no female, imagine that she is either denied the privilege, or exempted from the duty, of ministering to the poor, because she is not rich. Let her remember what importance the Sav-

our Himself attached to the widow's mite; and even though she may not have so much as that to give, yet, by her timely and welcome visits, her offerings of Christian sympathy, and the fruits of her skill and industry, and especially by enlisting other minds and hands in the same godlike co-operation, she may actually become a far greater benefactress to the children of want, than she could be by any amount of pecuniary contribution. Let the rich give out of their abundance—we thank them for it; and we pray that they may have their reward in Heaven—but after all, it is those who are willing to labour as well as give,—to labour, though they have nothing to give, who stand out as the brightest examples of Christian charity. If God ever beholds an angel in the form of a human being, methinks it must be in one like Dorcas,—identifying herself with the cause of the poor, denying herself for the sake of blessing them, and attracted by the misery of a hovel as another would be by the splendour of a palace.

II. But the most active and useful career cannot continue long *without interruption*. The

human body is a frail and crazy thing; always liable to disease, and not unfrequently from causes so obscure and subtle, that the profoundest medical skill cannot detect them. Accordingly we find that the excellent female disciple to whom our text refers, was seized with some *malady* that suddenly withdrew her from her accustomed walks of benevolent activity. What it was, we are not informed—possibly it may have been occasioned by overtaking her strength in her daily labours among the poor. But whatever it was, it must have been a great alleviation to reflect that her life had been devoted to doing good; for though, in the great concern of her salvation, her whole reliance was upon the merits of her Redeemer, yet in the recollection of her good deeds, she found at once evidence of the sincerity of her faith, and fresh occasion for magnifying the grace by which she had been enabled to perform them.

And the experience of this good woman has been, still is, substantially that of multitudes. While they are glorifying God by their works of faith and love, their gracious Master lays his hand upon them, and bids them at least

suspend their active engagements. You hear of them now shut up in their dwellings; though not improbably, if you go to visit them, you will find that their ruling passion for doing good is as strong as ever; and that, however disease may have palsied their physical energies, their heads are teeming with benevolent projects, and their hearts overflowing with kind affections, as truly as while the flush of health yet remained upon them. Who can tell, in any given case, what the issue of that malady will be? Suppose it be the very worst—or should I not rather say, so far as the individual herself is concerned, the very best?—suppose life is quickly to be extinguished—is there any thing to justify alarm or even anxiety? No doubt sickness is in itself an evil—the pain which it often brings with it is hard to be endured; and when viewed in connexion with the prospect of death, there is the breaking of tender ties, and possibly the leaving of a family in dubious and trying circumstances; but as an antidote to this in the case I am supposing, there is the consciousness of having lived and laboured for Christ, and an assurance that He

will keep that which is committed to Him against the day of his appearing. No, languid, suffering disciple, thou hast nothing to fear; for behind thee are the monuments of thy Christian beneficence; before thee the immortal rewards promised to the faithful; within thee, Christ the hope and the pledge of glory; and in respect to all besides, thy heart may well be at rest.

III. The sickness of Dorcas had a *fatal termination*. How long she lingered, or in what circumstances she died, we are not informed. No doubt every thing was done for her restoration that could be by human means; for so useful a life as hers would naturally call forth every effort for its preservation; but the time which Heaven had ordained for her departure had come; and nothing remained but that she must fulfill the divine purpose. Perhaps she might have died in the full vigour of her faculties, and at an age when it was reasonable to hope that she might see yet many years of active usefulness. Perhaps it was when she was just carrying out some cherished plan for doing good which must fail for the want of her influence. But whatever reasons hu-

man wisdom may have seen for the continuance of her life, she died. God had indeed an ulterior purpose to accomplish by her death—that of making her, after she was dead, the subject of an illustrious miracle; but no such purpose had then transpired; and her death must have been regarded by those who witnessed it, just as the death of any other friend of Christ or generous helper of the poor.

My friends, has it been the lot of any of you to witness such a departure as this? Have you ever mingled in the death scene of an earnest lover of Christ and the race, especially of a devoted Christian female, struck down in the midst of life and usefulness? Have you felt that it was impossible she should be spared from a field she has occupied so well; and has it seemed to you almost a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of God to suppose that such a life should terminate at such a time? Have you entered into your closet and offered up fervent prayers in her behalf, and then joined in the prayers of others; and have you watched the developements of each successive moment in the hope of seeing

some sign of recovery? And yet, has the current of life revealed to you, by its sluggish movements, the fact that it was already in the act of being congealed? And when you have seen that the living principle was gone, have you felt your spirit sink within you at the thought that she who was so mighty in good works, has performed her last beneficent act on earth? Believe me, you have no right to yield to despondency in these circumstances; for your Redeemer still lives to take care of his suffering poor, and faith in Him should teach you that He will raise up others who will not forget them. Especially are you yourself bound to enter into the labours of the departed, and to walk in the footsteps of her faith and charity, until you also shall be called to your reward.

IV. The next noticeable incident in the story of Dorcas is the *mourning* by which her death was followed. The widows whom she had assisted, we are told gathered around her lifeless body, and testified their affectionate regard for her memory by weeping, and showing the coats and garments which she had made for them in her life time.

Was there ever a more beautiful instance of the simple workings of a tender and smitten heart? These women belonged to a class whose very name indicates that they had received a baptism of sorrow. And not only were they widows, but they were poor widows; and as such were suitable persons to be looked after and provided for by Christian charity. But the watchful eye that had looked after them, and the generous hand that had provided for them, were now closed in death; and how natural, when this fact was brought home to their senses, that it should awaken their tender sensibilities into vigorous exercise. How natural, when they saw that the spirit that had loved and blessed them, had fled, that they should have lingered tenderly around the forsaken tabernacle; that they should have given play to their grateful affections by showing what their departed benefactress had done for them; and that they should have wept that a career of Christian usefulness, so fruitful in blessings to themselves as well as others, had now apparently come to a close. Even though they might then have had some faint hope that

their departed friend would be given back to them by a miraculous interposition, they had as yet no evidence of it; and it is not certain that they had any knowledge even that the disciples had sent for Peter, until he actually made his appearance among them. Their mourning therefore, was probably, at best, but slightly qualified by any hope of a speedy resurrection.

In the case of these afflicted women, we have a striking instance not only of simple grief, but of true Christian mourning. We too, from time to time, are called to stand beside the remains of those who have been signalized in the walks of Christian usefulness. They have been the benefactors of the poor—perhaps our own benefactors; or else they have been fellow-helpers with us in the common cause of Christ and humanity. And while nature, reason, religion, each bids us mourn for them, what more fitting tribute can we render, than to embalm their good deeds in our own grateful remembrances? Do we not hereby testify most effectually our gratitude to the divine goodness for the benefactions they have dispensed, for the shining ex-

ample of Christian activity they have given to the world, and at the same time bring ourselves most intimately in contact with their spirit, and thus preserve a sort of hallowed fellowship with them, even after they have become the companions of seraphs?

V. In all ordinary cases, death closes an individual's history. But in the case of Dorcas, it was not so: she was one of the few that have passed through the dark valley, and then *come back* for a second sojourn upon earth. As soon as she was dead, the disciples with whom she was immediately associated, seem to have entertained the idea of at least the possibility of her being restored to life. Accordingly, they sent for Peter who was then in the neighbouring city of Lydda, hoping that, as he had just before performed a miracle in raising Eneas from the bed of languishing, he might now perform a still greater one in bringing Dorcas out of the slumber of death. Peter readily obeyed the call, without being informed of the purpose for which they had sent for him. When he came into the chamber where the corpse had been arranged—whether for a burial or a resurrection the dis-

ciples knew not—he requested all who were present to withdraw, (unless perhaps some near relatives or leading members of the church might have been suffered to remain to join with him in prayer,) while the object for which he had come should be accomplished. This done, he kneels down, and pours into the ear of Heaven the strong prayer of faith. The next moment he calls upon the dead disciple to arise; and Dorcas is alive again; and he reaches out his hand to her, as if to welcome her back to life. The event spread joy through the whole circle of saints and widows who were anxiously and reverently awaiting the result; and besides, it was instrumental of giving a fresh impulse to the infant cause of Christianity. Of the subsequent history of this excellent woman we know nothing; though we may safely presume that she was not the less a lover of Christ and his poor, for her experience either of death or of the resurrection.

Blessed be God, there is no longer occasion for bringing back the dead to life, or for any other miraculous display of divine power; for Christianity is now too thoroughly established

to need any such aid. If you imagine that it would have been a blessing to live in that age of miracles, let me tell you that it is a still greater blessing to live in this age, when there are *no* miracles; for the absence of them tells that the kingdom of Christ has now come in a far higher sense than when they were actually performed. Yes, I repeat, Christianity has outlived the necessity for any further supernatural vindication—her triumphant career on earth is not only begun, but far advanced; and nothing but the energies of the church, and the ordinary influences of the Spirit, are necessary to secure her universal reign.

I cannot but think, my friends, that the story of this ancient benefactress of the poor has, in some respects, a remarkable parallel in the history of a life which has just closed in the midst of us. You will all understand that I refer to the late Mrs. Lee; and so remarkable was her character and her life, that I am sure I shall only fulfill a reasonable expectation, in holding her up at once as a subject for grateful remembrance, and an example for close imitation.

I cannot imagine that a more accurate or striking description of her character could be embodied in a single sentence, than is furnished by our text—"This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." I hazard no doubtful statement when I say that to do good, especially to the poor and the wretched, was the ruling passion of her soul, the commanding object of her life. I do not believe that the most devoted worldling among you, nor even the miser whose very god is gold, labours with more intensity of feeling and purpose than habitually marked her benevolent career. She may be said to have been professionally, though without the semblance of ostentation, a Christian philanthropist. You could not meet her in the most casual interview, but the benevolent workings of her spirit would reveal themselves—perhaps in some tale of wretchedness designed to enlist your sympathy and aid; perhaps in an account of some family recovered from degradation and saved from ruin by a timely benevolent interposition; perhaps by some new plan for enlarging the field of Christian beneficence, or enlisting new labourers, or

replenishing the Lord's treasury. Instead of staying at home to have her compassion invoked by the poor, she went forth continually to search them out; and where the most revolting signs of suffering and vice were to be found, there her footsteps were sure to be heard. You could hardly say that there was any self-denial in these humble and arduous labours; for that which would have been self-denial to another, was her meat and drink; and the happiness of her life seemed to consist chiefly in seeing the destitute supplied, the sorrowful comforted, the ignorant enlightened, and the vicious and profligate reformed.

Perhaps the qualities most conspicuous in her philanthropic career, were courage and perseverance. In her daily round of charitable labours, she was sometimes brought in contact with scenes not only of appalling wretchedness but of loathsome and brutal vice; but her step never faltered, her spirit never quailed, before any such exhibitions. The same firmness of purpose was manifested in gathering the necessary pecuniary means for carrying out her benevolent plans—not only did she not shrink from making personal

application to her own friends and acquaintances, but she hesitated not, even at the hazard of being charged by some with questionable delicacy, to solicit the charitable aid of strangers; and so reasonable were her claims, and so well did she represent them, that they were rarely, if ever, dishonoured. She had always an eye for the bright side of every thing; she would never abandon what she believed a good project for any difficulties that might be in prospect; and sometimes the faltering of other spirits seemed to inspire her with fresh confidence of success. During the last winter, one of the benevolent institutions of the city, in which she had always taken a deep interest, had so far declined in activity and resources, that, after an unsuccessful effort to restore it to public favour, all the members, herself only excepted, resolved that it was expedient to abandon the organization; but instead of listening for a moment to such a proposal, she declared that the society should still exist, if it were continued only in herself; that she would actually, to the extent of her ability, perform the whole work which had hitherto been shared between herself and

her associates. Her plea prevailed, and the society still lives. And this was but a specimen of her daily life. There was no obstacle in her way but was sure to yield to her unflinching resolution. She struggled on, sometimes against the apathy and even the opposition of the community at large; but faith and patience sustained her; and she succeeded gradually in enlisting one and another in active co-operation, until, at no distant period, the public sentiment was declared in her favour. A remarkable instance of this occurred in the establishment of the "Home of the friendless;" an institution which need not now shrink from a comparison with any other benevolent institution in our city. Mrs. Lee has undoubtedly the honour of being its projector and founder. Her familiarity with the condition of the humblest classes of society had fastened upon her the conviction that such an asylum was greatly needed; and she conceived the noble purpose of its establishment. But the plan, when it was suggested, found little favour even with our most benevolent citizens. Nothing daunted, however, but rather quickened and strengthened, by oppo-

sition, she addressed herself calmly and earnestly to the work, full of faith that God's blessing would crown the effort. And she was not disappointed. She soon found herself surrounded by a circle of efficient co-adjutors, who appreciated the wisdom as well as the benevolence of her plan, and whose money and influence and personal efforts were cheerfully proffered to carry it out. That institution grew so quickly into public favour that it can scarcely be said to have seen the day of small things.

It would be difficult to arrange the labours of such a life as we are contemplating under distinct heads; and yet it may be well to allude to two or three of the more important channels through which her good influence operated. In 1833 she became a teacher in our Sabbath school; and with only slight intermissions, occasioned by the peculiar state of her family, she continued her labours in that capacity up to the last Sabbath of her life; and how diligent and earnest and faithful she has been, those who have been associated with her as teachers, or who have enjoyed the benefit of her instructions, can best

testify. In 1836 she became a Tract distributor, in connexion with the society then recently formed in the city for thus carrying the Gospel to the poor; and the amount of labour she has performed, and of good she has accomplished, in this relation, the light of the eternal world only can reveal. She was one of the originators of the Dorcas Temperance Society—an institution for which she was ready to make any sacrifice, and in which she retained an unabated interest, to the last. But her greatest enterprize, and that with which her name must always be primarily associated, was the establishment of the “Home of the friendless.” Around this her best affections were gathered; to it her untiring energies were devoted; and in it her benevolent spirit will continue its silent but powerful operation, long after she shall have become used to that better *Home*, where there is no suffering to be relieved, and where all are enriched to the extent of their capacity, from the fulness of infinite perfection.

I have said that the grand characteristic of our departed friend was the spirit of benevolence carried out in a course of daily action;

but it can scarcely be necessary to add that she did not neglect the culture of the more silent and passive graces, and that she knew how to suffer, as well as how to labour. She had taken many a lesson in the school of affliction; and well do I remember her telling me, the first time I ever saw her, what a bitter cup had been measured out to her, not long before, in the death of a dear child, under the most agonizing circumstances; and I was struck with the submissive and cheerful tone with which she referred the event to God's all-wise providence. In her domestic and social relations she was always gentle and affectionate; and some of her children have told me that they never saw in her the semblance of excited passion. For the interests of her family she evinced the deepest concern; and it was not till they were in circumstances to require little of her care and supervision, that she felt herself at liberty to give full scope to her more enlarged benevolent affections. She was a most charitable interpreter of the actions of others, and was even tolerant towards their errors, so far as would consist with Christian fidelity. She was no where

more at home than in her closet; and one day of each week she sacredly devoted to private fasting and prayer. She was a diligent student of God's word, a watchful observer of the dispensations of providence, and a faithful keeper of her own heart. It was in the depth and strength of her religious convictions, in the spirit of dependance and trust and devotion that was kept ever glowing in her bosom, that the springs of her Christian activity were fixed. Indeed her character was a beautiful compound of faith and works, prayer and alms; and even those who knew her best, would now find it difficult to say what was her besetting infirmity.

But this excellent woman, like Dorcas, whom she so much resembled, was, in the midst of all the "good works and alms-deeds which she did," overtaken with sickness. The morning found her, not indeed in possession of her full strength—for the severity of her labours, in connexion with the intense heat of the weather, had already considerably debilitated her system—but still apparently as free from disease, or from any symptoms of disease, as she had been at any preceding period.

The pestilence had indeed been raging in her neighbourhood; but it does not appear that she had had any serious apprehensions of its nearer approach. In the course of the day, she called upon some of her friends, and in a conversation with one of them, remarked that to those who were prepared to die, death by the prevailing disease could not be otherwise than desirable—it would land them so speedily in Heaven. Towards the close of the afternoon, symptoms of illness began to appear, and she reached her own dwelling in great feebleness, though, as it would seem, without apprehending the nature of her disease. In the course of the night, however, it was so far developed that all doubts were removed; and she felt that she was already in the destroyer's grasp. The morning light showed her to her friends who had gathered anxiously into her chamber, another person; for by this time the awful malady had more than half done its work. But she was another only in her wasted strength and ghastly look—the gentle, loving, Heaven-moulded spirit was the same. And now that the great trial had come, she felt that she could trustingly and cheerfully bow

to it. She knew well that the cold shadows of the night of death were thickening around her; and she diligently improved her few remaining moments in offering pertinent counsels, and leaving kind messages, and testifying with unwonted force and fervour to her Redeemer's faithfulness and grace. Behold her traversing the dark valley without a chill of apprehension—nay, with perfect confidence that beyond that darkness is the splendour of celestial day. That was a brief illness; but it was at once terrible and glorious!

Yes, like Dorcas, she died. Medical skill was there, and did its utmost. Weeping friends were there to afford every kindly alleviation. Earnest prayers went up from that bed-side, that God would hold back the monster, and give back the apparently dying friend. The cause of the poor seemed to present itself, as if in the person of a thousand sufferers, imploring the continuance of a life which had been one unbroken ministration of mercy. But no—God's time for taking that saint to Heaven has come; and neither tears nor prayers can postpone the event. There were those who saw her gently pass out of

the arms of death, and whose spirits were at once bowed with solemnity and thrilled with gratitude, as they felt that that was the very moment when her voice first mingled with the voices of the ransomed.

And there was mourning for her, as truly as there was for Dorcas. Of course there was mourning in the house; for bereaved children, and brothers, and sisters, were there. And when the tidings went forth through the church of which she was a member, through the circles of benevolence in which she was a principal agent, through the dwellings of the poor in which she was a ministering angel, the number of mourners increased till they became a host. When we went to the desolate dwelling to join in the last sad rites, let those who were present say whether there was not genuine mourning there; whether there was not evidently in many a heart a sense of bereavement, of loss, of desolation, that rendered peculiarly needful and welcome the Comforter's presence.

But we can extend the parallel between Dorcas and our departed sister no farther. Both chambers in which these dead bodies

were laid were scenes of weeping; and, in each case, both the disciples and the poor felt that they had sustained a heavy loss. But when our friend ceased to breathe, there was no Apostle to come with divine authority and miraculously reverse death's doings. The Saviour was indeed there to comfort the living, but not to raise the dead. But after all, the difference between her and Dorcas had respect chiefly to time; for if one has experienced the resurrection already, the other will certainly experience it hereafter—otherwise the pledge of the Son of God cannot be redeemed. Let it be remembered too, that the resurrection that awaits our friend, in common with all the saints, will be incomparably more glorious than was that of which Dorcas was then the subject; for whereas she opened her eyes on the same light upon which they had just been closed, and came back to share again the imperfections and sorrows of our fallen humanity, the saint whose death we lament, will awake to the light of an immortal life, and will be exalted, in respect to both body and spirit, into a glorious conformity to Him who sits upon the throne.

Need I say that there is consolation to the mourning family, associated with every recollection they have of their lamented friend, even the tenderest and the saddest? There is consolation, ye children, in the remembrance of her maternal love and faithfulness; of all those virtues and graces that have so gladdened your hearts and consecrated your early home. There are dwellings of want and woe scattered all over the city, whose inmates are witnesses to her abounding charity; and the very lamentations they utter are words of comfort to you; for they recognize that exuberance of Christian love that makes her name so fragrant on earth, and her record so bright in Heaven. And may I not say that there is consolation, rich consolation, springing up even from amidst that last scene, still so fresh as almost to seem present; for you saw that she was an overmatch, not indeed for death's power, but for death's terrors; you saw her look the monster in the face as calmly as if her eye had been resting upon one of her own dear children. And now that she is gone, a voice of consolation to you, comes down from Heaven, and another comes back from

her grave; the one testifying of the raptures of her glorified spirit, the other proclaiming, in the name of the Lord of the sepulchre, that her flesh rests in hope. Is it not meet then, that you should shed more tears of gratitude than of sorrow; nay, that you should begin your mourning by keeping a jubilee in honour of God's grace? Above all, remember that you will offend against her memory, if you do not by your reverent and grateful recollections of her exalted worth, so perpetuate her presence with you, that she shall still be your helper on the way to Heaven.

Christian friends, members of this bereaved church, there is much in the present aspects of providence towards us, to lead us to pause in humble submission, in solemn reflection, in docile regard to the teachings of the rod. We can hardly fail to connect with the event we are contemplating to day, a very recent dispensation, by which another sister in the church, of kindred spirit, and of extensive influence and usefulness, was hurried away, under the power of the same fearful malady, from all earthly scenes.* They were fellow-

* Mrs. Lyman Chapin died on the 20th of July.

helpers in their labours of love on earth, and I doubt not, they are united now in the nobler employments of Heaven. But surely they have left us to some more important duty than to shed tears of unavailing sorrow around their graves. Heaven had a right to take them to itself; and we have no right even to wish to reclaim them; they have entered on a brighter career—let them move on from glory to glory. But let not the places of usefulness which they have vacated on earth, mourn for want of fresh labourers. Gird yourselves, ye disciples of Christ, for higher efforts in his cause. Come ye up to the work, who have hitherto always preferred the service of another master. Let new Sabbath school teachers rise, to fill the honoured vacancies which death is making. Let new Tract distributors offer themselves, to carry the light of life through dark alleys, and into miserable hovels, where have so often been heard the footsteps of those, who have now performed their last circuit, and are reposing in their last slumber. Let new friends of the suffering poor come up, who shall minister to the wants of the body as well as the spirit; who shall

be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and garments to the naked. Let the Temperance cause receive fresh and earnest recruits—such as will not fear to reach forth and pluck the brand out of the fire. Let the “Home of the Friendless” be sustained and cherished, and the more, because its lamented founder is no longer here to watch over it. Let its managers lose no opportunity for advancing its interests. Let the rich be liberal in their contributions for its support; and how know they but that she whose countenance was so often lighted up by their generous donations, while she was on earth, may still look gratefully upon their offerings from beyond the veil? I charge you, my friends, to see to it that these vacancies and all others that may occur, in the walks of Christian beneficence, be filled. I charge you to take up and wear the mantles of those who have ascended. While we are thankful to be so well represented in Heaven, let us take heed that our strength as a church is not diminished but increased, by the contributions we make to the general assembly and church of the first born.

And now let me ask—and with this inquiry

I conclude—who, who would not rather be the character we have been contemplating, than the mere worldly and fashionable woman? The former, as we have seen, was an humble follower of Christ, and found her meat in doing his will. She lived quietly, unostentatiously, contentedly, and always seemed happy in her humble dwelling. She spent her days in acts of beneficence, and when the night came, she had no hard accounts to settle with her conscience. She sowed beside all waters, and she believed that the seed she scattered would bear fruit unto everlasting life. The good were all her friends; the great and rich who knew her, were her friends too; but she had another class of friends still, that lived in lowly places, and, but for her bounty, might have well-nigh starved and perished; aye, and some now walking humbly with God, who, but for her Christian fidelity, might have been at this hour fearfully ripe for the second death. She hurried by the splendid mansion in which was going forward the preparation for a night of gaiety and pleasure—for she had no interest there; her errand was to some hovel of wretchedness that lay far beyond it. When

she found herself upon her death bed, her mind was occupied with God's precious truth, and her heart warm with a sense of her Saviour's love; and she shrunk not from the cold baptism about to be administered to her. Words of perfect trust died away upon her lips, and the fixed eye seemed to tell of an angelic, nay a divine presence. And now her memory is embalmed, and even here before God, we feel that we have a right to speak of her virtues; for she was one of his own dear children.

Now turn, and mark, in contrast, the character, the course, the end, of the woman whose chosen element is in the circles of fashion. Her whole life is a perpetual contradiction to life's true end; for she was made primarily to do good, but she lives only to enjoy; and her chief enjoyment is utterly unworthy of her immortal nature. She fancies that she is happy in the crowd, in the bustle, in the hour of festive excitement, and while the warm breath of flattery falls gratefully upon her; but when the mind has once registered such a scene as past, oh how apt is conscience to make capital out of it for carry-

ing on a fierce war in the soul. Her bosom is the home of corroding passions—she is mortified at having carried out her purposes so poorly, or envious at those who have succeeded better, or perhaps she malignantly exults in the downfall of a rival. As all her interests and hopes are identified with the world, when that fails, she has nothing to fall back upon. Days of sickness, days of bereavement, days of withered hope,—oh they are not to be found in that calendar of life which her foolish imagination hath framed. And yet they are in God's calendar; and they are as sure to come as that the order of nature and providence will not be stayed. They *do* come, and fill her soul with darkness, and quicken into life the seed of a thousand stings which pride and fashion and gaiety have sown there. And afterwards cometh death; and lo! he findeth her waiting and watching, not for his approach, but perhaps for some scene that is designed to banish every thought of it. There she lies, with the record of a wasted life spread before her eye, as the basis of the retribution on which she is entering. She dies and makes no sign of hope. What say

you now of the mere woman of fashion? What think you of the life—what think you of the death? Is it not a relief to turn away from such an object and such a scene, to yonder new made graves, where we have so lately laid to rest our friends who lived to honour their Redeemer and to be moulded into his image?

NOTE.

Mrs. Lee was the daughter of Daniel and Mary Pohlman, and was born in Albany, November, 1793. In December, 1815, she was married to Thomas Lee, who died in March, 1848. She was the mother of eight children, six of whom survive. She became a member of the Lutheran Ebenezer Church in Albany in 1810, and transferred her relation to the Second Presbyterian Church in 1821. She died of the cholera, August 4, 1854.

