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In Memoriam Lucinda Freeman Hoyt

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✠IN MEMORIAM✠

Lucinda Freeman Hoyt.

MRS. HOYT was a daughter of Thomas and Rebecca (Swift) Freeman, of Barnard, Vermont, where she was born Dec. 23, 1793. Her ancestors on both sides were of the early Pilgrim stock; and representatives of the Freeman and Swift families have occupied important posts of influence and honor in the official and professional life of New England for many generations. Mrs. Hoyt's parents were brought up under the religious and doctrinal teachings of the Congregational Church, but they were among the first Methodist converts in Vermont, and their home always afforded a welcome and bountiful hospitality to the bishops and preachers of the Church. In his journal, under date of June 18, 1806, Bishop Asbury has the following entry: "We reached Barnard, and I preached at Thomas Freeman's on Acts xxvi, 17, 18. Here is a lively, large Society. We had a full house at a short warning."

She was married Dec. 3, 1812, to the Rev. Benjamin Ray Hoyt, who was in the active ministry from 1807 to 1855, and whose name was borne in the records of the Conference for sixty-three years. The

greater part of the early married life of Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt—subsequent to the first few years—was spent in important appointments in Rhode Island and Eastern Massachusetts. In the year 1821, at the close of a pastoral term—full of overwork—in Boston, Mr. Hoyt was compelled by impaired health to remove from the sea coast, and was appointed to Lyndon, Vt., where he remained two years, and was then appointed to the New Hampshire District, which then embraced the entire State. Upon the division of the New England Conference in the year 1829, for climatic reasons he remained in the Northern portion, known, until the year 1844, as the New Hampshire and Vermont Conference; and within one or the other of those States he continued to reside during his active ministry and the seventeen subsequent years of his life.

During many of these years—especially during the five terms in which he served as presiding elder—owing to the great extent of his fields of labor, and not less to the inconvenient modes of travel then existing, Mr. Hoyt was necessarily absent from his home a very large proportion of the time. These absences were not infrequently prolonged to six, eight, and sometimes even ten, weeks. To Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt during these years were born eight children, of whom six reached adult age, and three still survive. Owing to the circumstances just mentioned, the constant care and the early training of their children devolved to a large extent upon the mother. With but a slender income—slender, indeed, compared with the comfort and comparative luxury of these days—these parents reared their children, and enabled them to secure a good education.

Mrs. Hoyt inherited a heroic nature, and never, when in health, shrank from the labors or the hardships incident to the early itinerancy. The toils, sacrifices, and privations of such a life could not destroy, nor weaken, her lofty sense of duty. By her fidelity, her prudence, and her devotion to the lot she had deliberately chosen, she greatly aided her husband in his long and very laborious career. No murmur or regret ever escaped her lips. While she highly esteemed all men who made “their lives sublime,” godly and useful Methodist ministers always had the highest place upon her roll of honor.

She became a member of the Church in girlhood, and her Christian faith grew in strength and clearness to the last. It was a cheerful faith, dwelling habitually upon the mercy and love of God in Christ. “The Rock of Ages” was the refuge to which she betook herself in prayer and song; and no matter how hard the storms beat without, there her heart was always in sunshine. This phrase, “The Rock,” was often on her lips. Her faith found most frequent expression in well chosen passages of Scripture and in religious hymns. Throughout her life she was remarkably fond of good reading of all kinds. This taste she was able more fully to gratify during the greater leisure of her later years. But no other books had for her so much interest and solace as her Bible and hymn-book.

She had by nature an active mind, learned easily when at school, and to the very last kept her mind alert and interested in all that concerned the Church and the public. Very few men, comparatively, very few ministers even, have been more diligent to keep

themselves thoroughly informed in regard to all the principal enterprises and movements which her Church was carrying forward.

She took especial interest in the young, and to them her conversation and remarkable power of apt quotation gave great pleasure. The following is an illustration of this characteristic: At breakfast, soon after entering upon her ninetieth year, she charmed the large circle of young ladies and the members of the family present, by the recital of a favorite prayer-hymn as expressive of her experience and feelings. Those present will never forget the impression then made. The lines, as nearly as we can give them (and we wish we had them complete), ran thus:

“The day is ended; ere I sink to sleep
My weary spirit seeks repose in thine;
Father, forgive my trespasses, and keep
This little life of mine.

With loving kindness curtain thou my bed,
And cool in rest my burning pilgrim feet;
At peace with all the world and thee, dear Lord—
So shall my sleep be sweet.

Trusting thy mercy and thy power to save,
I sleep secure. In thee shall I awake,
No matter whichsoever side the grave
The morning light may break.”

Her remembrance of what she had learned in her youthful and maturer years from the Bible and from the great hymn-writers, was an unfailing source of comfort to her in her old age, and of spiritual profit to those who had the privilege of religious conversation with her.

In a close conversation held with her less than two days before her death—but with no expectation that her end was thus near—she expressed to the writer of these memorial words, in strong terms, her loyalty to her Savior, her deep sense of his infinite grace and love, and her entire trust in him for guidance, discipline, and support. After a very brief allusion to the infirmities and pains incident to her advanced age, she clearly indicated her submissiveness, the waiting and receptive state of her mind, in the language of a hymn—numbered 772 in the old hymn-book, but not found in the new. Some of the lines she repeated and emphasized:

“Why is my heart with grief oppressed?
Can all the pains I feel or fear
Make thee, my soul, forget thy rest—
Forget that God, thy God, is near?

Lord, form my temper to thy will;
If thou my faith and patience prove,
May every painful stroke fulfill
Thy purposes of faithful love.”

Though she had fixed and intelligent opinions, and her convictions as to matters of duty and conduct were strong, she was eminently candid, and tolerant of the feelings and opinions of other people. While intensely attached to her family and her relatives, she was ever warmly interested in the welfare of all who came within the circle of her life. This was a very marked feature in her character. Her servants always became deeply attached to her. One of those who served her in her last years, said: “I should be willing to get down on my hands and knees to do any thing I can for her.”

After the death of her husband, in October, 1872, she resided with her children in Cincinnati—about five years with her son, Rev. Francis S. Hoyt, and the remaining years with her daughter, Mrs. George K. Bartholomew, whose assiduous and affectionate care gave to this closing period of her life the utmost restfulness and comfort.

This long and honored life—of eighty-nine years and seven months—came suddenly to its close. Cheerful, even vivacious, on Wednesday, on Thursday, July 19th, she swiftly and unexpectedly, after only a few hours of illness, passed to the Savior whom she had so long served and loved. On the following Monday, at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. G. K. Bartholomew, very impressive funeral services were conducted by Rev. Asbury Lowrey, D. D., and Rev. Frank G. Mitchell, of the Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

For the information of her numerous friends, we add that, at Mrs. Hoyt's special request, her remains were conveyed to New England for interment. They were accompanied thither by her son, Col. A. H. Hoyt, of Boston, and her son-in-law, Mr. John M. Corliss, of Troy, N. Y., and, with pious care, laid to rest beside those of her husband and of a grandson, in the cemetery by the sea, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire.