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Hope College Student R. H. Joldersma Wrote a Seven-Page Essay on the Passing of Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte for the Student Publication, *Excelsiora*

R. H. Joldersma

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20 December 1876

Holland, Michigan

Hope College student R. H. Joldersma wrote a seven-page essay on the passing of Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte for the student publication, *Excelsiora*. Van Raalte was duly lauded

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A Solemn Day.

Dec 20

1876

The election day, Nov. 7th 1876 was a day which created great excitement throughout our Country, because the results were considered to be of the greatest importance to the welfare of our Republic. Every Village, Town, and City was apparently aroused, and Holland was not an exception. This 7th day of Nov. last, will long be remembered by this Republic. This day will especially be long remembered by the citizens of Holland.

Because, while they were performing their duty as citizens of America, by uttering their voice at the polls, and while they were in the midst of the excitement which accompanies election day, the death Angel visited their city and smote Dr. A. C. Van Raalte.

The man who had been the founder

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of these colonies, and who had stood
by them in every trial and diffi-
culty, from the beginning of these
colonies till the day of his death.

Dr. A. C. Van Raalte had preached to
them the Gospel of Christ for many
years. He had cheered and encour-
aged many a downcast soul.

He had sought both their eternal
and temporal welfare, with all
the zeal and earnestness of a servant
of Christ. He was always ready to
give them counsel concerning tem-
poral matters, and whenever they
were in want, he went to the oldest
colonies of both Holland and Amer-
ican people, and, sharing their want,
procured such things as were nec-
essary. And well may the day on
which such an earnest Christian
pastor and leader expired, be called
"A solemn day". We can imagine
how the wild ^{excitement} political was subdued

by the report of his death. The very men, who, a few minutes before, were eagerly discussing some political questions, stood now quietly together; deploring the loss of such a noble and worthy man. The flags which had been hoisted to ^{the top of} the spar, were now dropped half-mast.

Dr. A. C. Van Raalte was Pres. of the Council of Hope College and its interests had always been dear to him; when his death was reported to the institution, all the classes were immediately dismissed until after his burial. Friday was appointed for his burial; and during the intervening days the church and college were draped in mourning. Great was the feeling of grief in Holland and in the surrounding places. On Friday the weather was beautiful.

Early in the forenoon people came from surrounding places, in order

to bestow the last honor upon the beloved father deceased. Among the various persons who came in from abroad, was the Hon. T. W. Ferry vice President of the U. S. In the afternoon all the business places, and public schools in town were closed. Nearly all the public and private buildings were draped in mourning.

It was vividly manifested, that the loss of such a ^{venerable} man, was felt by the citizens of this town, and by all the Holland people of the West. Prayer was offered by Rev. Knicker of Ebenezer, in the presence of the relatives and friends before they left the house. Thence they proceeded to the First church, where the funeral sermon was to be delivered.

The church was crowded with people, and a great number had to remain outside, as the church could not contain them all.

The funeral sermon was delivered by Rev. R. Pieters in the Dutch, and by Dr. P. Phelps in the English language. How much he was loved, and esteemed by his people, was strikingly manifest by the numerous tears shed when they took the final view of the corpse of the worthy father. After this the several bodies, which had been invited to attend the funeral, were under the direction of Ex Mayor Clappon, formed in a procession, as follows:-

- City Council and Townboard.
- Rev. R. Pieters.
- Palbearers.
- Hearse.
- Carriages with Relatives and Friends.
- Ministers and Elders.
- Vice President of the A.S.
- President and Council of Hope College.
- Faculties of Hope College and Representatives of the Union School.
- Students of Hope College.

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Justices of the Peace.

Citizens, a foot.

Carriages.

It was the largest funeral ever witnessed in this town. Seventy six carriages besides the procession which walked, followed to the Cemetery. At the Cemetery they all gathered around the open grave, when Rev. Aitenwyk made a few fitting remarks. As the coffin was lowered into the grave, the youngest student in Hope College laid a wreath of evergreen upon it, "in the name of Hope College." After Dr. Crispell had closed with prayer, we left the Cemetery fully convinced that a great man had fallen. Dr. A. C. Van Raalte was born on the seventeenth day of Oct. 1811 at Wamperveen, in the Province Overijssel, Netherland, where his father was a Minister of the Gospel. He received his Theological education at Leyden, Neth. In 1846 he came to this country, and

and founded this colony. His ^{master} has now released him from these earthly duties. He has gone the way of all flesh, but his kind words and noble deeds are still resounding in our ears. Long will he be remembered by those colonists, for whom he has sacrificed and done so much.

Let us be thankful to God that He gave us such a man, who was able to manage the affairs of the colony, however, critical and discouraging they were at times.

Let his kind advice and worthy lessons attend us through life. And, by giving heed to his lessons, and walking in his footsteps, may we all be enabled to meet him in the home of the blest.

R. H. Joldersma.