

[Kenyon, Bertha Payson]

FUNERAL OF MRS. KENYON
And Memorial Tribute Prepared for Publication by Her Husband

The funeral of Mrs. Kenyon, wife of the Rev. John Kenyon, formerly pastor of the Universalist church in Cortland, was held yesterday afternoon at 2 o'clock at the home of Dr. L. A. Strowbridge on Monroe Heights, where she died, and was attended by many friends of the deceased. The floral tributes were very numerous and beautiful. The services were conducted by Rev. U. S. Milburn, pastor of the Universalist church. A quartet consisting of Misses Ruth McNett and Jessamine Ellsworth, Messrs. J. B. Hunt and T. N. Hollister, sang "Lead Kindly Light," and then Mr. Milburn read the Twenty-third Psalm and some selections from the New Testament, following them with an appropriate poem written by Rev. M. J. Savage of New York. Prayer was offered by Rev. O. A. Houghton, D.D., pastor of the First M. E. church, and the choir sang "We're Going Down the Valley."

Mr. Milburn then made some remarks of a fitting character, in which he spoke of the resurrection, of the beauty of the life of the deceased, of the fact of her continuing to live in the thoughts and incentives of those who had known her. He carried out in detail somewhat the wish of George Eliot which he quoted, "Oh, may I live again."

After the chant, "Thy Will be Done," by the quartet, the benediction was pronounced.

The remains were taken on the 4:15 train, accompanied by Mr. Kenyon and his little 5-year-old son, to Hope, Me., Mrs. Kenyon's old home, for burial.

The following memorial tribute was prepared by Mr. Kenyon to be read at the funeral, but he afterwards decided to have it published instead of reading it there:

MY TRIBUTE TO MY WIFE.

A little over seven years ago I first met my wife. I was then preaching at Hope, a little hamlet in the Switzerland of America. One day in the month of July I met the most charming one in the world, the one, whose loveliness is continued even beyond death, as all can witness here.

I had wandered about in Australia, England, Canada, and the East and West of the United States for many years, without finding my long-sought ideal of womanhood, and just where I least expected to find it, I saw it. At that memorable hour I could only worship afar off. Homage was mine to give, and hers to receive, but I could show it only by a look. I did not allow my admiration to develop into desire. I was content to nurture my love in silence and secrecy.

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The months passed, and Bertha returned to Waltham to resume her avocation. I stayed in Hope, and daily grew more ambitious. I fancied the world was ignorant of my state of heart, but now I know every one who met me more than once, knew what was the matter with me then.

There is no deception except to the enslaved. Love has, at least, once in its existence only one eye, and that is turned in only one direction. Daily my soul grew too large for its body, and it longed to fly away from its trammels to its affinity, but the courage of expression slowly came, by degrees, and there was an eternity to be suffered before the first word was penned.

At last the suspense became more unbearable than utter failure, and I wrote for the privilege of correspondence. It was granted almost reluctantly, and the maidenly modesty found many difficulties; but I felt confident that my heart of fire would triumph over the limitations of ink and paper, and warm the royal nature of my queen. My aspiration was a prophecy, for my love succeeded in kindling hers, and the union took place in September, nearly six years ago. Since that time, I have lived with an angel, robed in all the comely garments of womanhood made refined and sweet by contact with a presence not of this world. I have not for a moment been disappointed by any of her characteristic revealings, and my love has continued to be as loyal [and] as fresh for her as it began. For in all my wanderings, before and after marriage, my eyes have never seen a woman for whom I could exchange my wife.

We two have been in all sorts of trouble; we have been confronted by all kinds of dark prospects; we have weathered adversity, sorrows and failure together, over and over again. Yet I can truly say that in all of it she has never been found wanting. Her natural goodness has always burst the bands with which bitter experience has tried to fetter it. Her sweetness has never turned sour. When most of women would return a frown for a scowl, she always remained the same, the most beautiful smiler who ever transformed gloom into sunshine. She never learned the art which the cruel world so speedily teaches her competing proteges of striking back. So true is this that all but just and generous persons continually imposed upon her burdens which she could ill carry.

She helped her parents more than I can tactfully confess. She aided her sisters and assisted her brothers in a self-assumed responsibility far beyond her strength. And in all her church life, she has been as unstinting of her precious energy as if she had all the resources of omnipotence at command. In Waltham, Mass., where her longest residence was made, she was the most beloved woman in the city. Her winsome, gladsome and serene presence attracted all strangers, and her permanent sweetness, and her enthusiastic friendliness in a moment changed them into faithful friends.

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Whatever she was, and all that she had was always at the disposal of the needy, and she never refused a request she could grant. And when she said "no," it pained her far more than it did the unsuccessful applicant, for her refusal was never blunt or pointed; it was always framed in reluctance, and presented with a charm that left an abiding image of her personality upon the mind. As a result of her friendliness with the world, Bertha could not antagonize a single soul, and she died without an enemy to jubilate over her sudden departure.

Beautiful enough to be a model for classic sculpture; true enough to remain a standard for my own fidelity; sweet enough to abide forever in the world's recollection with a fragrance that nothing can diminish, this woman has gone to the sphere best fitted for her better work. I count those who knew her most intimately the happiest of mortals; and those who did not know her at all are to be pitied. For she was something more than an entity, an individuality, a mere human person; she was so much divinity encased in matter thin enough to be transparent; she was endowed with heavenly graces and they were improved by constant exercise; she was God incarnate in a woman.

As I look back to her career, I see her moving in a limited environment, but unlike a slave of circumstance, she moved about everywhere like a queen of gracious presence and loving instincts. and though her worldly learning was not marked by scholars, her heavenly culture was to be openly acknowledged wherever she has walked on earth.

Her spiritual intuitions were true guides, for they never failed us. Her religion was love enlarged to include everybody. And all her actions were filled with the wisdom of her pure heart.

The thing that I regret above all is that she was not permitted to educate her children so that they would grow up like her. The regret next in intensity is that she gave me no notice of her dying state, so that I was not at her deathbed to record her last counsels, and fold her in my arms before the gentle messenger from God carried her away. And as I think, I regret many things, for what might have [been] is teeming with pictures of what has been, and I cannot copy them for any one, because they will form the furniture of my future.

On Sunday night as I lay on my sleepless bed wondering when slumber would again ease the eyes so tired with watching for the loved one who never came, I suddenly became aware of the wished for presence. I put out my arms, and into them Bertha glided as of old, and for a few, but so very few, moments my whole being was thrilled with ecstatic sensations that first taught me the difference between earthly and heavenly embraces. She could not resist the persistent call of the love to which her nature always had

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responded. And I was happy, supremely happy, in the assurance my beloved could and would return to me.

Time may reduce the dear body to dust; it may erase her name from the tombstone; it may so obscure this sad day that we shall search for it in vain; but as long as we love the memories of the past that reflect hope for our present; as long as we build our future with the ideals of to-day; as long as true motherhood is beautiful, or rich friendship is rare, or men worship the divine woman, Bertha Payson Kenyon will be remembered, and her influence will not abate, till having widened out in circles ever growing larger, her nobility and fidelity, her unselfishness and spirituality shall have accomplished the will of God upon an earth, that in this way is to be made another paradise.

JOHN KENYON

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