

[Markham, Edwin]

Body of Edwin Markham Starts Journey West;  
800 at Boro Services Hear Recording by Poet

"So comrades, If you pass my grave sometime,  
Pause long enough to breathe this little rhyme:  
Here now, the dust of Edwin Markham lies.  
But lo, he is not here, he is afar on life:  
great errands under mightier skies,  
And pressing on toward some melodious star."

These lines, from Edwin Markham's own "The Epitaph," were spoken by the Rev. Cornelius Greenway, pastor of All Souls Universalist Church, during funeral services for "The Poet Laureate of Labor" yesterday in the church, Ocean and Ditmas Aves. Dr. William Lyon Phelps, professor emeritus of English literature at Yale University, delivered the eulogy.

This morning the body of Mr. Markham, 87, who died Thursday at his home in Staten Island, was taken from the church, where it had lain in state, to start its last trip across the continent the poet loved so well. Burial will take place in Los Angeles, beside the resting place of his wife.

**LAUDED BY BORO**

His farewell to Brooklyn, for which he had a particular warm spot in his heart and where he spent much of his time in later life, was signaled by eloquent tributes. None was more stirring than his own voice, reproduced on a phonograph disk, reciting lines from "The Man With the Hoe," his most famous poem.

The body of the poet was on the altar, his flowing white beard visible to all of the 800 members of the congregation, leading figures in public and professional life, friends and relatives who attended, while his voice, recorded just before his death, gave the immortal stanzas.

Included in the floral tributes was one from the American Academy of Poetry and Letters. Another, in the shape of a huge candle, bore the inscription in Mr. Markham's own words, "Candlelights in my abode."

**POEM 'UNIVERSAL'**

Dr. Phelps described "The Man With the Hoe" as universal in its appeal and said that poets are far more important than politicians and statesmen. "The religious soul, backed up by poetry and music, is worth more than all the money in the world," he observed. "Poetry, religion, music and painting cannot die.

"Edwin Markham, of course, wrote other poems in addition to "The Man With the Hoe," but he is best remembered for that poem because he said something of universal importance in it. He found an immediate response in

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every human heart. He was known wherever the English language was spoken and in other places, as well.

“ ‘The Man With the Hoe,’ he declared, is a poem whose range and power is impossible to estimate, for poets may pass away, but the inspiration of their work goes on forever.”

A poet, Dr. Phelps said, stands up for the worth of the individual and “takes the familiar scene and infuses it with this own soul to make something glorious.”

**BORN AT COAST IN 1852**

Dr. Phelps alluded to the significance in Mr. Markham having been born on Shakespeare’s birthday, April 23. He said Wordsworth’s lines on living between two oceans had been fulfilled by the fact that the great American poet first saw the light of day in 1852 on the shores of the Pacific Ocean and died beside the Atlantic Ocean.

Dr. Phelps read a poem written about Mr. Markham by Miss Estelle Duclo, Brooklyn poetess, which began:

“Your message has gone forth upon the wind,  
Bearing a protest to the heedless world;  
Your words are javelins of justice, hurled  
To smite the fell oppressors of mankind.”

The wish of “The Poet” that his funeral services be held in whatever church Dr. Greenway, his warm friend, was associated with at the time of the service was carried out explicitly by the pastor.

**CARRIED OUT WISHES**

Mr. Greenway recalled the poet’s habit of celebrating his birthday at the All Souls Church. He read selections from Mr. Markham’s “The Heart’s Cry,” “A Song at Sunset,” and “The Poet,” in addition to “The Epitaph.”

His concluding remarks included a poem eulogizing Mr. Markham, written by Miss Laura Simmons, who in 1932 was awarded the first national Edwin Markham prize by the National Society of American Poets.

The poem, in part, read:

“Lend of your fire to souls benumbed;  
Laughter for phantom fears—  
Your ermine for our tarnished hopes,  
And bruise of ruthless years.”

Mr. Greenway read tributes to Mr. Markham from Dr. Walter Damrosch, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Daniel Beard, the Boy Scout pioneer, and William Rose Benet and Edgar Lee Masters, noted American men of letters.

The service, which lasted for more than an hour and a half, was witnessed by Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Markham, son and daughter-in-law of the poet.

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The Rev. Dr. Charles R. Kingsley, pastor emeritus of Immanuel Union Church in Westerleigh, S. I., gave the invocation. The Rev. Dr. Charles W. Roeder of The Flatlands Dutch Reformed Church and the Rev. Dr. Roger F. Elz of the Church of the Redeemer in Newark also participated. A mixed choir, led by David S. Rodgers, led the singing of the hymn, "Abid With Me," "Now the Day Is Over," and "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand."

Carl F. Tollefsen, violinist and close friend of the poet, played Bizet's "Adagietto" and Handel's "Largo" on a 1740 Guarnerius instrument.

Twelve ranking Boy Scouts of the church troop served as a guard of honor.

At the conclusion of the service, the mourners filed past the bier. The church was kept open all last night, while a patrolman assigned to the post kept a vigil.

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Transcribed on 15 Jul 2023 by Karen E. Dau of East Rochester, NY