

The Beautiful Address of Augustus Thomas, the Well-known Playwright, Over the Body of His Friend, James A. Herne.

We are met here to say farewell to all that is mortal of an old friend and to pay our tribute to the part that is enduring.

There is no need now to speak of the work of James A. Herne except as it disclosed the man. It is a legacy distributed while its testator still was here and it rests secure in the hearts of millions.

As a dramatist he won his high place in the esteem of his countrymen as much by the personal quality that showed through his work as he did by his art, which was rare and of fine perfection.

The great seer of Concord wrote "to believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius."

James Herne by an undefiled right believed in himself. For useless convention of any kind he had that disregard which is a mark of genius. Whenever a so-called maxim of his art was an unpleasant bond he turned from it and appealed successfully to the heart of his public.

His sincerity was imperative. His fidelity in every work was compelling, and he added a gentle ideality hopeful and uplifting as the breath of morn.

In all he has ever written affection and charity dominate. His men have moral bravery, his women have abiding trust, for he himself had the courage of the truth and an enduring faith in humanity.

Every cradle song we know is of the poor—papa has gone a hunting—or he is a fisherman who will sail home in the dusk, or he is a harvester fetching in the perfumed hay. No singer has ever dedicated a lullaby to the rich. Poetry has always dwelt in the valley of obscurity. James Herne was a poet of the poor. He saw and knew the sublimity of plain living. He was the apostle of simplicity.

He was good because wrong is complex and was hateful to the directness of his way. He was strong because he was attuned to Nature's will and because his efforts were enlisted in not perverting but expressing her.

He had a spiritual magnetism that drew to him souls of his kind, and without robe or scepter he swayed an empire that had sworn no allegiance, yet which gave its unconscious tribute of laughter and of tears wherever he raised the standard of his heart.

He made his character Margaret Fleming take the babe from the arms of a dead girl who had enticed the husband and put its famishing lips to her own maternal breast. No evangel ever framed a higher concept of charity and fraternal love.

James Herne loved his fellow men. Into this world he brought a kindness that it does not teach. He was a medium through which an exalted tenderness found voice. He spoke for the children, for the slave, for the oppressed of toil. To the weary-worn and sick of heart he sang a sustaining patience that was not of Time alone.

He gave his message and is gone.

His simplicity and his love both rejected warring creed and dogma, but when unimpassioned science proclaimed the indestructibility of a single atom of all the matter in the universe, this wise and gentle man must have taken to his heart the corollary that the spirit which informed and animated all was equally immortal.

He sleeps! But in his waking he was too close to Nature's breast to have missed the whispered assurance that smiles through every act and spectacle of hers; the gentle and reiterating allegory of seed and grain, of worm and butterfly, of sleep and consciousness, of dark and dawn, of rising mist and falling dew, the ebb and flow of tide, the ceaseless procession of recurring seasons, the obscuration and alternate splendor of the eternal stars.