

A MEMORIAL
OF
EDWARD ROWLAND SILL

WHO DIED FEBRUARY 27TH, 1887.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEMORIAL MEETING HELD BY HIS FRIENDS
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE BERKELEY CLUB, AT
OAKLAND, CAL., 14TH APRIL, 1887

TOGETHER WITH
EXTRACTS FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE

*“At every hour, in every place of meeting,
Where we together shared delight and pain,
Yes, everywhere will dear thoughts keep repeating,
‘Here, too, his voice, his look, his touch, remain!’”*

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MY DEAR MCCHESENEY :

Nothing that I can say about dear Sill seems to me just now worth saying at all. It was my fortune to stand for some years very near to him in certain regards, and to gain an insight into his fearless, devoted, and generous heart that I may not hope to describe to anybody else. It was also my lot to owe to his friendship, counsel, and intercession, the attainment of some of the greatest prizes that I shall ever dream of finding in life. Meanwhile, so much about his nature remained in the midst of all this intimacy beyond my power to appreciate as I ought—in so many ways he was too wealthy a soul for me to respond to—that I am sure you could not find a worse person among his friends than myself if you want to get a fair account of his genuine character and quality. I know too little of him, after all. What most strikes me about him, at this moment, is the

fact that he was, I might almost say, slain solely by his zeal for his ideals. With other men ideal aims are often matters of aspiration. With Sill they were his constant companions from moment to moment. With other men, too, such ideals are apt to be rather dreams than task-masters. Sill's ideals were as exacting as the calls of the most prosaic and harassing business, even while they were the ideals of a born poet. You could never catch him at a moment when he was or could be false to them. He was full of humor, but he could never jest at his ideals. Once in sportive conversation I remember his chancing to say, in condemnation of some philosophic doctrine: "If that be wisdom, may I never be enlightened!—But no," he added at once, and reverently, "I will not say that even in jest. Whatever comes, may we be some day enlightened." Sill loved his friends, and was the most loyal of men to them, but he could never hear from them an offence to these ideals; and at such a time he always spoke plainly.

In the service of these ideals he cared of course nothing for popularity, although by nature he was intensely sensitive to personal conflicts of all sorts. Once I found him very gloomy. His work at Berkeley was wearing him out, and certain of his worst pupils, to whose interests he had been showing his usual unsparing devotion, had just been paining him by bitter speeches and cruel misunderstandings. I gossiped on about the affair to him, in an irresponsible way, of course, until among other things I said: "You see, Sill, all this comes from your determined fashion of casting pearls before swine. Why will you always do it?"—"Ah, Royce," he responded, with a perfectly simple and calm veracity in his gentle voice, "you never know in this world whether you were really casting pearls at all until you feel the tusks."

As for Sill's ideal itself, it was an ideal of the highest manhood, an ideal towards which he desired all his friends to strive. His ideal future man was the combination of the truth-

seeker and the doer of good into the one person of the true poet. He never would admit any real opposition between the scientific and the poetical spirit, or between either and the capacity for simple practical devotion to one's daily tasks. We ourselves, he taught, make in our false one-sidedness the so-called oppositions of these ideals. In themselves they are one. Science is, or ought to be, poetry, and poetry is knowledge, and the humanity of the future will not divide life, but will unite it. To bring such manly unity into his own life was his constant effort, and he perpetually invited others to join in the truly humane task that he wanted to have proposed to the men of this so divided and unhappily specialized generation. Laboring in the service of such things, Sill sacrificed his health, and finally his life.

I beg your pardon for the inadequacy of these few pages.

Yours very truly,

JOSIAH ROYCE.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS, April 6, 1887.
