

A Tribute to a Wife by a Man Who Lost One

"Somewhere," Says J. Max Barber, "in a sparkling, Golden World, Spangled With Joy and Radiant With Peace, She Surely Lives On."

(A Tribute to My Wife, Hattie Taylor Barber).
(Delivered before the John Brown Memorial Association, Lake Placid, N.Y.)

By J. MAX BARBER

Upon my life there lies the imprint of a good woman's love. Hattie Taylor came to me as my bride at high noon, November 9, 1912. On the arm of her father she came tripping to the wedding march to lay the gold of her soul in the arms of her lover. Sacred to me are those years of wedded bliss as we came tripping down life's pathway together. Those were the days when the world seemed young and the humdrum was spaced with dreams and there was wine and spice in living.

Just a year has passed since Hattie Taylor Barber went up the angel's stairway to God. I undertake to do now what I could not have done then. I want to pay her a public tribute. Then my emotions were too overpowering, my suffering too poignant, my heartache too keen. Words choked in my throat. It seemed as if I was face to face with a tragedy that would overwhelm me.

Though it may not heal, time does dull the wound. I am now ready to lay my public tribute at her feet.

You, of the John Brown Memorial Association, you, her friends and co-workers, tarry here with me while I consecrate this moment to her blessed memory. She loved and worked for this organization as she had never loved and worked for any other institution. Memories of her cluster thick around all of our history. In our monthly meetings, in our entertainments to raise funds, on our jolly pilgrimages—everywhere she was indefatigable in her efforts to help put over the objects and ideals we had set before us.

And so I feel that it is peculiarly fitting that I bring my humble tribute here and lay it on this altar.

She left us a fragrant memory, a high inspiration, the pattern of a loyal heart.

She impressed me as being almost wholly unselfish. There were times when that unselfishness would cause me to remonstrate. She would reply: "I do good to others because I enjoy it and not for any reward. I try to live my life so as to be ready when Fate calls."

She possessed that degree of affability and constancy which bound her friends to her as if with hoops of steel. Most women have some one or two confidants, but a dozen women considered her their best friend. They were almost jealous of each other. Her larger circle of friends she numbered by the hundreds. She moved among them like an angel of peace with the gift of healing love.

She saw through subterfuges with a rare intuition and yet she might go on as if she had not seen. She brought to bear practical wisdom on what appeared to many of us difficult situations.

Here was a loyal heart. Foreign to her very nature was infidelity, hypocrisy or malice.

Truly she went about doing good. In her work for the old people as a member of the board of the Old Folks' Home, in her numerous charities to the poor, in her tireless services to the John Brown Memorial Association, in her sympathy with and understanding of the youth of today, she has left a record of beauty and love and crystalline loyalty which is embalmed in the hearts of all of those who knew her.

Her courage was contagious and inspired all of those who touched her life.

It is far beyond the power of my poor words to convey to you any idea of our happy years together. There are those who tell me that I should forget. How can I? Day by day those memories of other years come trooping by to salute me. And I nurse and coddle them tenderly.

She was a pal to me. Without surrendering her individuality she sought to accommodate her life to the best ideals and ambitions of her husband. Drudgery was a pleasure to her if through it she could beautify and make happy her home. We were one in toil, one in sorrow and one in our joys. Our lives merged in all of those essentials that belong to man and wife.

Behind closed doors she censured my addresses and literary efforts. She mustered all of the objections a critical public might muster. Here was a phrase that was too harsh and here another case of brusqueness which ought to be eliminated. But no one has yet heard her criticize me in public.

If the road was rocky, we discussed it together, but the public never knew there were any thorns in the pathway of her life. To it she brought a smile, a tolerance,

an abounding vitality and a kindly word of optimism. She was like a tonic to the downcast.

Hattie Barber loved life. She loved merriment and games and the small time chatter of society. But no matter where she was she would leave for home at the hour she was to serve my meals or help me in my work. No amount of pleasure could deter her from her duty. She loved dancing and yet she gave it up voluntarily because I did not dance. She interested herself in the sports and amusements I was interested in. If I was going fishing or gunning, no matter how early the hour in the morning, she always insisted on getting up and serving me a hot breakfast.

She loved to spend her vacations with her husband. In the springtime, when the woods were shot with a carpet of blue and yellow and red flowers, and the bird choirs of the forests chanted in the trees, and the brooks and rivers sang on their merry way to the sea, we motored to some quiet nook in the country and picnicked together. In the summer we made long tours and admired together the handiwork of man and Nature. When the winter rains and snows came we read together or played games or visited friends together.

Here was an episode of pleasure. Here was a golden tide of peace. It haunts me like the fabric of a golden dream.

Of course our lives, like all lives, were tapestried with mists and sorrows. During those nineteen years of our married life she lost her brother, John B. Taylor, the famous track runner. She lost her father, her mother, and yet another brother. The seeds of sorrow were sown thickly in her pathway. Business reverses came to our door. But through it all she was a game heart and a real optimist.

She was robust in health and rarely complained. And thus the blow was all the more shocking to me. She went upstairs to bed from the dinner table in March and was never downstairs again.

I kept my lonely vigil by her bedside for seven long weeks. She realized that she had a battle on her hands and fought gamely though silently. As in health, even so she was in sickness—uncomplaining, unselfish, considerate of others. She made a desperate effort to get better so as to permit me to come to the last pilgrimage. Three days before the end she told the nurse she would not be here long. That same day she gave one of her physicians the same message. But she pledged them not to tell me. She had made her mute but unavailing appeal to heaven for life. She now turned her face towards that other Country from which no traveler ever returns.

As the sun sank in the west on May 7, Destiny came stealing into the room on velvet toes and gently tapping her on the shoulder, whispered: "Harriet Taylor Barber, I am bidden to get thee hence." She smiled peacefully and was gone.

That was a dark night to me. My hands were empty, my lips hungry, my eyes misty, my heart desolate and all the world cold and dreary. The blackest mists trooped up from the valleys of the Nether world and covered me over.

She is tenting today on other camp grounds. Somewhere in a sparkling, golden world, spangled with joy and radiant with peace she surely lives on. To that world she carried a character rich in loyalty and fidelity and burgeoning with unselfish devotion. By leave of circumstance I am left to linger here alone. The sun still shines, the rivers still run to the sea, the birds still sing in the trees, but life can never be the same to me.

Gray loneliness sits perched on an aching memory. Upon my life there lies the imprint of a good woman's love. I consecrate this moment to her memory. God has left me the ability to recapture some of her happy moods. The memory of those dear days with her in the parks, on the high roads, at Langhorne, sometimes bring a tide of peace to my broken, distorted heart. This very room today is eloquent with her presence. The fragrance of her memory should give to all of us a revived and ennobled determination to do our best. Her high example determines me to reconsecrate my life to the work which she so nobly helped in while she was here among us.

Her example is like the voice of a silver trumpet in the night. It summons us to gather together out of the valleys and marshes of despair and sordid selfishness onto the high place of altruism and idealism.

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up of one voice and twenty-three echoes. When they are not eager enough to defend their own reputations against fraud and similar charges, they are not likely to disturb the administration. They constitute a group "in favor of" all recommendations. They have placed "aye" at the top of their vocabulary.

They surprised the country when they drove out the professor who wrote such terrible things about himself, but who enjoyed the confidence of the administration. He and his other fellows might have been at Howard today, if he had not crossed the color-line, to carry on some of his escapades with some of the "forbidden" race. When the trustees learned about the hue of some of the "women in the cases," they acted without hesitation. The dismissal was accepted as a moral victory for decency, though it was settled as a race issue.

The propaganda, that Dr. Johnson's enemies are merely using his most recent indiscretion to feed fat their ancient grudges, is good defensive mechanism, but ought not to blind Congress. Dr. Johnson undoubtedly has enemies. A man in public life has to have such creatures on his back.

In this recent trouble of Dr. Johnson, his sincerity is at stake. The people whom he addressed ought to know if he was talking merely for effect, or if he meant to inspire them to adopt his "new religion." They ought to know if he was playing with them when he declared he loved to be called a Red, or if he is opposed to the "new religion." It is somewhat difficult to see how a person can be opposed to a doctrine which he advocates.

In justice to Dr. Johnson, these columns will enumerate his accomplishments at Howard University, as well as his shortcomings.

Has Dr. Johnson meant as much to Howard as some reports have suggested? What has the university brought its president in prestige and financial income?