

Jan. 1914  
Obituary

# Helen Mears.

A beautiful word tribute to Helen Mears, the gifted daughter of Rev. Dr. U. Mears and Mary Grinnell Mears, comes from the pen of Rev. James L. Hill, an old and valued friend of the Mears family as well as of Grinnell. Writing in The Congregationalist, Dr. Hill says:

## MEMORY COMFORTING SORROW.

"In choosing for himself the hour, to give the sign to parting friends, James Montgomery tells us that, 'Night is the time for death.' Early Sunday morning, Dec. 23d, the chimes of Harvard Church, Brookline, broke out upon the air with the notes, 'When He cometh, when He cometh, He has come.' 'He has come,' was remarked with intensest feeling by one to another at the Hotel Coolidge, across the street from the church, the family's winter home where Helen Grinnell Mears had just died. The requiem appeared personal from the fact that, when she at nine years of age united with her father's church, this text was named upon her. 'And they shall be mine saith the Lord of Hosts in that day when I make up my jewels.' She looked so young, some and seemed to so radiate health and happiness that the most of her friends had no knowledge of the fact that her translation was imminent.

"But when the sun in all his state illumed the Eastern sky,

She passed thro' glory's morning gate

And walked in Paradise."

"She had in her ancestry four Mayflower pilgrims and five Colonial Governors, she was a direct descendant of John Elliot, who 'with much sweet affection preached Jesus Christ to the Indians as their only Saviour'; of Deacon Samuel Chapin who laid the beginnings of Springfield, Mass., and of Hon. J. B. Grinnell who founded the clean, beautiful model college city where upon the campus stands today, beyond the great river, the Mary Grinnell Mears cottage for young women named in honor of his daughter, the mother of 'Our Helen,' who had the qualities that go with the blood. She was obviously well born. She stood in a very remarkable line. Heredity and early association did much for her.

"James Russell Lowell speaks of the impression made upon him by meeting unexpectedly this epitaph upon a headstone: 'She was so pleasant.' The instant those words came to my attention, unaided by anything in my surroundings I thought of Helen Mears. Her friends, who are a host, testify to her 'sweet and radiant personality,' and of her great capacity for making others happy. 'I do not know of any person I ever met who was nicer to have about. She was always so sunny and cheerful and sweet.' She was radiant with life, happiness and love, keen in her enjoyment of them, glad to give herself, her time, her glorious voice, wholeheartedly to others. Dr. Henry M. Tenney, her pastor while she was in Oberlin College, from which she graduated with the degree of A. B., says in her, 'brilliant in her personality and in her leadership in the choir.' And the wife of a New York physician asserts, 'to me she will always live as a perfect half-open, moss-rose touched by the rays of the spring sun which illuminates and vitalizes the petals until they burst open, and exhale the fragrance of a perfect spring day.'"

"At her birth, nature conferred upon her the outright gift of song. When three and a half years old the Worcester Telegram says, 'She sang sweetly and prettily' at a children's service in the Piedmont Church. She thus early voiced a prophecy of her subsequent life, How to be a sunbeam. This she more fully demonstrated later. The noted temperance worker, Mrs. J. Ellen Foster said, 'Her voice is music itself.' Within a few days of each other she had twenty-two invitations to sing in ten cities and towns. She was alto soloist in the far-famed vested choir of Oberlin with its one hundred and sixty selected trained voices. She was pupil of Mrs. C. W. Morrison, wife of the director of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, of Mr. Theodore Toedt, a teacher of oratorio and concert singers, and of Dr. Mollenhauer, leader in the Handel and Harbin society.

"She was born at the time of her father's brilliant pastorate in Worcester and was received into his church at Cleveland. Like Samuel in Scripture, she seemed to be one of those rare natures that need no conversion. During her father's ministry at Albany her

early and chief professional victories were won. Around the beautiful young life there was a bow of great promise. She was like snow in the truthful purity of her heart. The funeral at Orchard home, an ancestral estate, the family's summer dwelling, near "The Ground in sweet Essex," was conducted by Dr. Conrad of Boston, and by Dr. Clark of Salem. On the day of the summons, the choir in Essex, which Miss Mears, with her passionate love of music, and with rich voice, that she always had the strength to support, had repeatedly led, were expecting to use Christmas music, but Sabbath morning finding themselves so heart sick and grief-stricken they were wholly incapacitated for any such service. The pall that fell over the town was affecting to visitors.

"Beside her parents, Dr. and Mrs. David O. Mears, she leaves two brothers, Kirk Mears, a practicing physician, and Elliot Mears an administrative officer of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. It had been planned to have her engagement to Mr. Charles A. Sawyer, a practicing attorney, a member of the Common Council of Cincinnati, announced on Christmas day.

"The family that enjoyed the rare beauty of her life in the home now knows what it is to have sacred things in it. She gave it atmosphere. By the law of association the house is not filled with furniture and objects of art. It is filled with memories. Who can look into the artistic music room, specially built for her in an elaborate addition to the summer residence, and experience no suggestion of a contralto singer now gone to join the choir inviolable for the voice that once through spacious halls 'the soul of music shed' is here mute?

"As a piece of music ends upon the key, so with a strange and beautiful provision of dying grace she came round to the prevailing note to which her life was keyed, and as the event approached, no fear of death appeared at all, and she went singing well nigh to the gates of Paradise. As she has had a few days there already, they must have been made wonderful by that flood of melody; that august oratorio which shall ever rise up like the sound of many waters, and by having her part assigned in a new song which no one can learn but those who are redeemed. All service is not done here. Forever will The Messiah have a hallelujah chorus and one of her admirers growing enthusiastic exclaimed that if there were choirs in heaven Helen Mears would be a leader there as she had been accorded the place of soloist here. Her life was all of it preparative. She had not done, at the end, or shall we say at the beginning, when she was added, to the church of the redeemed, in heaven, all that it was in her to do.

"It singeth low in every heart

We hear it, each and all.

A song of those who answer not

However we may call.

They throng the silence of the heart

We see them as of yore.

The kind, the true, the brave, the sweet

Who walk with us no more."

"JAMES L. HILL"

Salem, Mass.