

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LANGTRY'S FUNERAL.

"Bear him comrades, to his grave;
Never over one more brave
Shall the prairie grasses weep,
In the ages yet to come,
When the millions in our room,
What we sow in tears shall reap."

Somewhat of the wind's fury had ceased, but the white flakes of snow were still falling when the hour came for the last sad rites of the funeral service for the martyred dead. Notwithstanding the severe cold which still prevailed, the streets were thronged with wagons and carriages, and people hurrying on foot to the hotel, which had now become the place for holding all public gatherings. Boards had been brought into the dining-room and arranged for seats, and soon every place was filled; while in the hall, on the stairs, and in the rooms beyond, scarce standing room was to be found. There were gathered representatives from almost every State in the Union. There were men and women from Eastern homes of luxury and refinement, seated side by side with the sons and daughters of toil. There was the infant, borne in its mother's arms, and the gray-haired grandsire, mingled with the far greater number in the prime and vigor of life; and over all the numerous assembly, composed of such varied and dissimilar elements, was spread the chastening influence of a common sorrow.

A deep silence pervaded the house, and many a heart

whose tendrils still clung unbroken to its loved ones, who had come unscathed through the past week of perils, found relief in a deep sob, half grief, half thanks.

There was a hushed sound as Agnes Langtry, leaning on the arm of her brother, and followed by John Alden, with wife and daughter, still suffering from that first sad blow, passed in, and took the seats reserved for the mourners. John had tried to dissuade Grace from going; but the remembrance of the healing balm of sympathy poured upon her own wounds by gentle Agnes, constrained her to make the effort, and they sat with hands clasped, while the choir sang a sweet, sad hymn.

And then the white-haired minister, who had known and loved the noble dead in his far off, early home, spoke of the reward prepared for one taken in the performance of duty—a duty cheerfully performed in obedience to conscience and for the good of his country—from whose service he had been taken to a higher sphere, and broader field of action—of the evanescence of human life, and of that fairer country beyond the dark river of death.

He discoursed of that infinite, omniscient power which treasures up every fragment of sacrifice, of effort, of devotion to a holy cause, until the whole combined, moves with resistless power the veriest stronghold of wrong.

"Ah!" said he, in conclusion, "though we commit his body to the dust, and his spirit returns to God who gave it, yet does he still live, and move and work among us. The scintillations from the holy fire which burned in his bosom have passed into other lives, awakening and inspiring them to nobler deeds and aspirations;" and then, with a commendation of the grief-stricken widow to Him who has promised to be more than husband or child, the services were over, and preparations were made to bear the lamented dead to burial.

The military companies, with arms reversed, walked first—the Generals, upon horseback, leading the way.

There was the Warsaw company and the Walnut Grove company, deputations from each acting as pall-bearers; then the body of the dead and the sad mourners; then all of his immediate neighbors, and, lastly, the whole community. All kinds of vehicles, wagons, and carriages fell into the rear, and in solemn procession wound their way—a long, sad line—over the prairie, up the lone, steep heights of Mount Olympus, and still yet a mile further on over the elevated plain, then halted; the soldiers formed in two lines, with bared, bowed heads, and the mourners and friends passed through and stood around the open grave. The coffin was gently lowered; the ominous sound of falling earth, mingled with the bitter wailing of the desolate, childless widow, rose above the sad moaning of the wind, and broke in upon the solemn words: "Earth to earth, and dust to dust. I am the Resurrection and the Life."

The mourners then fell back, giving place to the soldiers, who, advancing by divisions, fired their rifles above the last resting-place of their loved and honored comrade.

"Frozen earth to frozen breast,
 Lay our slain one down to rest.
 Lay him down in hope and faith,
 And above the broken sod,
 Once again to Freedom's God
 Pledge ourselves for life or death."

—Whittier.

