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The Love-life of Dr Kane

Elisha Kane (1820–57) was a famous U.S. Arctic explorer who fell in love with the well-known New York spiritualist Margaret Fox (1836–93). When their secret engagement was revealed, it caused much controversy and Fox was later accused of fabricating their subsequent marriage. She wanted to publish their correspondence in 1862 to clear her name, but Kane's family – who disapproved of Fox and did not believe the couple ever married – halted the book's publication and they reached a settlement. When they failed to make agreed payments to Fox, she decided to publish the letters in 1866. The subsequent volume charts the couple's courtship from its beginnings in 1852 until Kane's death, and reveals the ups and downs of their tumultuous relationship, especially Kane's desire for Fox to stop her spiritualist practices. It presents an intimate account of the romance between two prominent nineteenth-century public figures.



More information

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MARGARET FOX MANE.

From a Portrait taken 1862.

CARLETON PUBLISHER NEW YORK.



THE

LOVE-LIFE OF DR. KANE;

CONTAINING

THE CORRESPONDENCE, AND A HISTORY OF THE ACQUAINTANCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND SECRET MARRIAGE BETWEEN

ELISHA K. KANE AND MARGARET FOX,

WITH FACSIMILES OF LETTERS,
AND HER PORTRAIT.



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PREFACE.

It is customary, in publishing personal memoirs or private correspondence, to make some apology for presenting to the world that which was never intended to meet the public eye. In the case of love-letters this seems especially necessary, if one would avoid the imputation of want of delicacy. Perhaps many will think that no circumstances could justify the publication of the letters contained in this volume. But, after long consideration, those whose opinions are entitled to respect, have judged differently. The lady to whom they were addressed has ever held these letters as too sacred for any eyes save her own to rest upon. She has borne poverty and privation, when their publication many years ago might have given her an independence; and that, too, notwithstanding that the small sum left in trust for her by Dr. Kane has been (except the interest for a time) withheld from her. She has borne the sneers of the world, and the neglect of those whose regard for the deceased should have induced them to protect, comfort, and befriend her. She has borne most injurious calumnies, which from time to time have reached her in her seclusion. Those slanders against her fair name have been repeated in various publications; yet she might be willing to receive in silence even this bitterest portion of her cup of sorrow, and



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go down to the grave covered with unjust obloquy, were the choice left entirely to herself. But it has not been so left. After repeated threats that Dr. Kane's letters (her only treasure and vindication) could and would be taken from her by process of law, she reluctantly consented to have copies of them made. After this was done, the judgment of friends overruled her objections, and the letters were incorporated in a memoir. Their publication, it was urged, would vindicate the honor of both parties to the correspondence; for both had severely suffered from the slanders spread abroad.

In 1862, the volume was in press; but its publication, as well as a suit in the Orphans' court, Philadelphia, for dower, on the widow's part, was stopped by a compromise with the brothers and executor of Dr. Kane. One of the brothers agreed to pay her an annuity equal to the interest of the money left her, in quarterly instalments, and the sum of two thousand dollars down, to repay the expenses she had incurred, provided she would discontinue the suit for dower, and would seal up the letters and copies, with the MS. memoir, proofsheets, &c., and place them in the hands of a Trustee, who should be bound to prevent her access to them, and to surrender them to the Kane family at her death. The Trustee selected was Dr. Edward Bayard, of New York. A bond was executed by the brother aforesaid, for the faithful performance of the stipulated terms. In the event of the failure to pay any quarterly instalment of the annuity, Mrs. Kane was permitted to reclaim her



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letters, &c., from the Trustee. This agreement was soon violated by the refusal of the brother of the late Dr. Kane, to pay more than one half the sum named in his bond for her expenses. A demand was made on his part that she should release him from this obligation, which, in justice to those to whom she was indebted, she could not do. For the sake of others who had trusted her, she was compelled to resort to another suit in hopes of obtaining the remaining half of the promised sum; but she was unable to afford the expense necessary to carry it on, or to encounter the "legal dodges" and delays resorted to by the defendant to evade the fulfilment of the conditions of his bond. Then her quarterly payments of annuity-which she had regarded as strictly her own-the interest of money bequeathed to her-a mere pittance, insufficient of itself for the humblest maintenance *-were withheld from time to time, till she was forced to repeated applications and solicitations therefor. Threats were made of refusing payment of the annuity entirely, unless she released the thousand dollars aforesaid, and discontinued the suit to recover the same. Mortified at being compelled to receive as a grudged bounty what she was entitled to under any circumstances and without any contingenciesand worn out with the continuance of a strife so vexatious and humiliating-Mrs. Kane at length allowed matters to take their course; and when the quarterly annuity due in May, 1865, was in default, she availed

^{*} It is said that the Kane family have received one hundred thousand dollars from the copyrights of the late Or. Kane.



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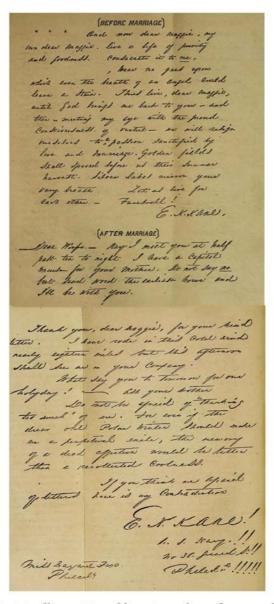
herself of the privilege guaranteed to her by the terms of the bond, and reclaimed her letters of the Trustee. She declared her determination never again to part with a treasure in which her very life was bound up.

When the fact of her marriage with the late Dr. Kane was alluded to in the newspapers a short time since, a telegram from Philadelphia, pronouncing "the story" "a canard," was sent in the name of the Kane family to the Associated Press. Could any woman who respected herself, submit to such an indignity? What was there about her whom Dr. Kane had wooed and wedded, that she should be thus insulted, and denied common justice under an outrageous imputation? Her sole means of defence, her only vindication—was the publication of this correspondence.

The world usually sides with the rich, the proud, and the powerful; and it is not expected that the poor, the humble, and the weak, will receive either justice or sympathy. But some good will be accomplished in the unquestionable proof afforded of the pure and spotless character of the two persons whose hearts are laid open in this correspondence. The publication may do service also to the community, in exhibiting the folly of that spirit of prejudice, which in this instance helped to cut short one valued life, and irreparably blighted another.

Several unimportant letters, and some nearly repetitions of others, have been left out of the collection; and in one or two instances, portions in which persons are mentioned or alluded to, have been omitted. Portions of other letters were taken out by Dr. Kane himself.





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