

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION.

A REVIEWER of Dr. Elder's Biography of Dr. E. K. Kane, noticing the author's statement that he had access to the private correspondence of the great explorer, and claimed the credit of showing all the important points of his life and character—says: "It is because we are satisfied that Dr. Elder only had access to *part* of the Doctor's private correspondence, and because the book records only the exterior and gilded life of Dr. Kane, that we are obliged to look upon it as defective. There was a deep under-current in the navigator's life, which the distinguished biographer knew nothing of, and which the family did not place at his disposal. We allude to the love-life of Dr. Kane; the spontaneous feelings which produced the extensive 'private correspondence' with a young lady in New York, in which his real inner existence is manifest. The biography would have been more strictly true, if it had revealed the fact of an engagement there, in which his feelings were fully enlisted; but which he repudiated when he returned covered with the tinsel and show of glory, because

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

his friends thought it beneath him to marry one who had not the stamp of dollars and aristocracy to add to his renown. In this his courage failed, and he yielded his own higher feelings to the vain applause of the world; while he insisted on keeping up a correspondence with the young lady after he went to Cuba, and until near the time of his death. Here is a phase of Dr. Kane's life which should be made public; and if the letters are ever published (an event not likely to occur, we learn), another important leaf can be added to the biography which has just appeared."

There is certainly no kind of correspondence that so reveals the inner life and soul of a man as his love-letters. No experience, like that of the heart, commands sympathy, because none so fully discloses and renders us intimate with the individual. The most detailed record of Dr. Kane's plans, adventures, and achievements, could not throw half the light on his personal character that a memoir of his love-life does.

The loves of eminent men, through the world's literary history, have not only shared their renown, but have aided them to deserve it. Petrarch—the model after whom the early poets shaped their amorous fancies—does not the world owe him to Laura? And does not Waller live in Saccharissa? From Wyatt and Surrey—through the poetical literature of Elizabeth and the First and Second Charles—down

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

LOVE-LIFE OF DR. KANE.

15

to the "Grand Turk of amatory verse," Lord Byron, and the bards of the present day, the love-element has contributed vastly to the popularity of poetry. It is by the story of his love for the fair Geraldine—marvellous as a knightly romance—that the Earl of Surrey is held in remembrance; it is for Stella's sake that we linger over the sonnets of Sydney. Who thinks of Klopstock without Meta? And who forgets the tender sadness that breathes in Donne's complaints, in his laconic epistle—"John Donne—Anne Donne—undone!" The loves of Burns—numberless as leaves in Vallambrosa, or "the gay motes that people the sunbeams,"—what would his poetry be without them?

Letters between lovers are still more interesting, because they bring the actual life and feelings of the writers closer to our sympathies. The letters of Stella and Vanessa to Swift have embalmed their names. How many have sighed over the tender sorrows of Abelard and Heloise! The correspondence of Goethe with Bettina will live as long as the most elaborate works of the great poet.

The letters of love and friendship of a man of science and heroic adventure are the more valuable as they form almost the only outlet for his proper individuality. The learned man or the hero, in such outpourings of his secret heart, appears in an aspect contrasted with that of his public life, and the more affecting in proportion to the contrast. Thus we

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

become convinced—to use the language of the biographer of Dr. Kane—that “our man of mighty enterprise and world-wide notoriety had a heart and soul in him; all nerve to the demands of duty, but in the deepest, dearest sense, all tenderness, devotion, and tact in the offices of affection.”

The brief and brilliant career of Dr. Kane was marked by more of both suffering and achievement than has been crowded into the history of as few years in the lives of the most remarkable men. It has been well said that “no human quantity of omniscience and providence would have been a full match for the duties with which this one man was burdened.” When we see the man thus pressed under his multitudinous obligations—“while his pen was running, his telegraphs flying,”—while “he was worrying the Department, examining recruits, inventing cooking-stoves, pricing rounds of beef, rummaging the Medical Bureau at Washington—till he had succeeded in begging some two thousand dollars’ worth of outfit, all the while up to his elbows in a batch of Department dough, that was only souring while he was trying to make it rise,”—when we see him at a milliner’s choosing a little girl’s bonnet, trying to catch an escaped canary bird in Philadelphia, or quitting his work on the very eve of embarking upon his great expedition, to go over a hundred miles to comfort a homesick schoolgirl in her country seclusion—we are all the more touched by his tenderness, and

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

wonder at the depth and ardor of the love that impelled him. So the little incident of his carrying the portrait of his beloved one strapped to his back, through the dreary Arctic wastes, gives us a better insight into a true and noble heart than all the anecdotes collated by his biographer.

There was a complication in this attachment of Dr. Kane's which does not belong to ordinary love affairs. The young girl to whom his heart was given, whom he so often called his "godsend," was inferior to him in social position. This may sound strangely in America, where, in theory, no social distinctions are recognised, and where ability and education every day elevate their possessor to superior power and influence in spite of difficulties. But it was not want of fortune nor want of education that *alone* stood in the way. The profession of mediumship for "spiritual manifestations" was from its commencement under the ban of public disfavor and suspicion. It was generally supposed that deception was practised on the credulous by artful persons who made money out of the delusions they created. That one so distinguished and highly esteemed as Dr. Kane should love and wed an untutored girl, with only beauty and virtue for her dower, was scarcely pardonable by a proud family; but the added odium of the spirit-rapping association his family could not possibly bear; his friends shrank from it; he, himself, with all his tried bravery, trem-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

bled to encounter it. This dread of public derision, of the censure and pity of those he esteemed, of the lowering which his reputation might suffer, caused the struggles apparent in many of his earlier letters, between his regard for the world's opinion and the love that had entwined itself with every fibre of his being. How deep and strong must that love have been, to come off victorious from such a conflict!

His affection was not strengthened in its first growth by any fervent response from its fair object. She was in years almost a child, in experience wholly one; surrounded by the disciples of spiritualism, who regarded her as a chosen apostle of the new belief, and by kindred most unwilling to give her up to a destiny that would remove her far from them. There was opposition, rather than favor, among her nearest relations, to the suit of her lover. She was proud, too, in her gentle way, and perhaps not disposed to open her maiden heart unreservedly to one who despised her associates, condemned her calling, and often thought himself bound in self-respect to give her up for ever. The consciousness of his own superiority seemed ever present, even in the warmest expressions of his regard; and she was too young to perceive in this unwilling condescension the strongest proof of the power of her own attractions. This state of things should be borne in mind while reading letters that appear strange on the Doctor's side, or cold and reserved on hers. It was, in Dr. Kane's

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

own words, "a mutual dread" that trammelled both;—this fear of the censures and the misconstruction of those around them. Never was a "course of true love" pursued under circumstances more unpropitious.

In both, the affection proved strong enough to triumph over adverse circumstances. The young girl abjured "the spirits" for ever; suffered herself to be separated from kindred and early associations, and gave herself irrevocably in a life-consecration to the chosen of her heart. Her coldness was changed to a devotion which death itself has had no power to chill or destroy. The lover, after a severe conflict with the tyranny of Prejudice—that absolute sovereign of the American republic—returned to his allegiance to his soul's first and only idol. Faithful to death was he, and the victory thus gained in the strength of a noble nature, does him as much honor as any achieved under the banner of science.

The account given by Smucker in his *Life of Dr. Kane*, is incorrect in the statement that the engagement of Miss Fox and Dr. Kane commenced before the Doctor's first Arctic Expedition. It was shortly before his last one. Nor could the young lady be considered as of "inferior" birth. Her father was a reputable and well-to-do farmer, who owned a fine estate in Canada, where Margaret was born, and considerable property in the western part of the State of New York. His ancestors were highly respectable

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Germans, the name being originally Voss. Mrs. Fox was of the Rutan family, of French origin, and of ancient and honorable lineage. Some of her relations of that name still reside near Montreal, possessors of a magnificent estate, and esteemed among the wealthy aristocracy of the country. Mr. Fox unfortunately lost his excellent Canadian property, but retained a small farm in New York. He and his wife were members of the Methodist church in good standing, and were always respected by their neighbors.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

MEMOIR.



I.

LATE in the autumn of 1852, Mrs. Fox and her daughter Margaret were occupying rooms at Webb's Union Hotel, in Arch Street, Philadelphia, for the purpose of giving receptions to those who wished to investigate the phenomena of what was called "Spiritual Manifestations." Some years had elapsed since this marvel had originated in the famous "Rochester knockings," in the family of Mr. Fox. Public attention had been drawn to the strange occurrences which were reported in the newspapers; committees of inquiry had visited the house of Mr. Fox, and had conversed and tried experiments with the little girls in whose presence the sounds were heard. No one could penetrate the acknowledged mystery; although, when exhibitions were given in New York, many gentlemen distinguished for scientific attainments had examined the matter repeatedly. The attention drawn to it spread rapidly throughout the United States and throughout the world. Invitations to visit the principal cities poured upon the family, sometimes half-a-dozen telegraphic despatches being

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05012-8 - 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

Anonymous

Excerpt

[More information](#)

received in a day. In compliance with these urgent and importunate requests to allow the curious an opportunity of investigation, the mother of the youthful but already celebrated “mediums” determined to make a short sojourn in Philadelphia and Washington before taking up her residence in New York.

It is at all times easy to create a sensation in Philadelphia. The number of Quakers who live there, the social habits of the people, the absence of public amusements generally patronized, render the population—especially the higher and more educated part of it—peculiarly susceptible to any excitement stirring their neighborhood or their quiet city. Such a wonder as “spirit-rappings” would naturally cause a prodigious commotion. It is not surprising that the receptions were thronged, and that the “medium” and the “manifestations” were the subject of general comment. Mrs. Fox had left her youngest daughter, Katharine, then a mere child, at school in New York; and Margaret, then scarcely thirteen years of age, was the one through whom “the spirits” held converse with those of this world who sought communication with their ghostships. The rappings made in her presence were startlingly loud, and the invisible agents seemed to derive great power from her organization to make their various demonstrations. She herself never had looked deeply enough into the mystery to have any belief at all as to the phenomena.