

Harry Yates Miller

(- 6 Jan 1882)

Miller. Of diphtheria, on Thursday evening, January 5, 1882, Harry Yates Miller, in the 7th year of his age, son of George O. and Mary E. Miller. Funeral from the family residence, 1915 Vermont avenue, Sunday, at 2 p.m. Friends of the family invited.

The Evening Star, January 6, 1882

Locals

Detective George W. Miller lost his bright little son Harry, 6 years old, who died last night from diphtheria. There are three other of his children now sick with the same disease.

The Evening Star, January 9, 1882

Col. Robert G. Ingersoll's Remarks at a Child's Funeral

At the funeral of Harry, the little son of Detective George O. Miller, yesterday afternoon, Col. Robert G. Ingersoll spoke at the grave. There was no service at the house. The casket was taken to Congressional cemetery, where Col. Ingersoll joined the funeral party. Just before the casket was lowered into the grave, Col. Ingersoll, at the request of Mr. Miller, made a brief address, in the course of which he said--"Why should we fear that which will come to all that is? We cannot tell, we do not know, which is the greater blessing--life or death. We cannot say that death is not a good. We do not know whether the grave is the end of this life, or the door to another, or whether the night here is not somewhere else a dawn."

The Washington Post, January 9, 1882, p. 1

"Whence and Wither"

The Eloquent Ingersoll At A Little Boy's Grave

A Funeral Address Replete With Tender Sentiment and Touching Pathos -- "

Our Religion -- Help for the Dead --

Hope for the Living"

In a remote corner of the Congressional Cemetery yesterday afternoon, a small group of people, with uncovered heads ranged around a newly-opened grave. They included Detective and Mrs. George O. Miller, and family and friends, who had gathered to witness the burial of the former's bright little son Harry, a recent victim of diphtheria. As the casket rested upon the trestles, there was a painful pause, broken only by the mother's sobs, until the undertaker advanced toward a stout, florid complexioned gentleman in the party and whispered to him, the words being inaudible to the lookers-on. This gentleman was Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, a friend of the Millers, who attended the funeral at their request. He shook his head when the undertaker first addressed him, and then said suddenly: "Does Mr. Miller desire it?" The undertaker gave an affirmative nod, Mr. Miller looked appealingly toward the noted orator, and then hastily Col. Ingersoll advanced to the side of the grave, made a motion denoting a desire for silence, and in a voice of exquisite cadence delivered one of his characteristic eulogies for the dead. The scene was intensely dramatic. A fine drizzling rain was falling, and every head was bent and every ear turned to catch the impassioned words of eloquence and hope, that fell from the lips of the distinguished speaker. Col. Ingersoll was unprotected by either hat or umbrella, and his invocation

thrilled his hearers with awe, each eye that had previously been bedimmed with tears brightening, and sobs becoming hushed. Col. Ingersoll said:

My Friends: -- I know how vain it is to gild a grief with words, and yet I wish to take from every grave its fear. Here in this world, where life and death are equal kings, all should be met. The future has been filled with fear, stained and polluted by the heartless past. From the wondrous tree of life the buds and blossoms fall with ripened fruit, and in the common bed of earth the patriarchs and babes sleep side by side.

Why should we fear that which will come to all that is? We cannot tell, we do not know, which is the greater blessing -- life or death. We cannot say that death is not a good. We do not know whether the grave is the end of this life, or the door of another, or whether the night here is not somewhere else a dawn. Neither can we tell which is the more fortunate -- the child dying in its mother's arms, before its hips have learned to form a word, or he who journeys all the length of life's uneven road, painfully taking the last slow steps with staff and crutch.

Every cradle asks us "Whence?" and every coffin, "Wither?" The poor barbarian, weeping above his dead, can answer these questions as above his dead, can answer these questions as intelligently and satisfactorily as the robed priest of the most authentic creed. The tearful ignorance of the one is just as consoling as the learned and unmeaning words of the other. No man, standing where the horizon of a life has touched a grave, has any right to prophesy a future filled with pain and tears. It may be that death gives all there is of worth to life. If those we press and strain against our hearts could never die, perhaps that love would wither from the earth. May be this common fate treads from out the paths between our hearts the weeds of selfishness and hate, and I had rather live and love where death is king, than have eternal life where love is not. Another life is naught, unless we know and love again the ones who love us here.

They who stand with breaking hearts around this little grave, need have no fear. The larger and the nobler faith in all that is and is to be, tells us that death, even at its worst, is only perfect rest. We know that through the common wants of life -- the needs and duties of each hour -- their grief will lessen day by day, until at last this grave will be to the man place of rest and peace -- all: Help for the living -- Hope for the dead.

At the conclusion of Col. Ingersoll's remarks, the little coffin, covered with beautiful and fragrant flowers was lowered into its last resting place by the pallbearers, Detectives McElfresh, Foss and Coombs and Mr. John Sergeant.