

Obituaries

MARK ANTONY DE WOLFE HOWE

Mr. Howe was born in Bristol, Rhode Island, on August 28, 1864, a son of the Reverend M. A. De Wolfe and Eliza (Whitney) Howe, and was brought up in Philadelphia, whither his father had been translated as bishop of central Pennsylvania. He attended Lehigh, where he made his mark as editor of a student periodical and graduated in 1886. Moving on to Harvard, he studied for a year and became a member of the Class of 1887 at the Commencement of that year. The next year was spent in Cambridge in study and as, for a time, editor of the *Harvard Monthly*. In September, 1888, he moved across the river to become associate editor of the *Youth's Companion*, with which he remained until 1893, when he became assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

In 1895 Mr. Howe was driven by eye trouble to retire to a family home in Bristol where for several years he farmed, played tennis, sailed, and, as his vision improved, wrote more and more, turning out several biographies. His first book, *Shadows*, which appeared in 1897, was the first of five volumes of verse, but his output in the field of biography through the long period of his life was prodigious. Of this work, *Barrett Wendell and His Letters* received a Pulitzer Prize, but for those who knew the author the quality of the writing was disappointing. He was gentle, kind, charming, social, and gifted with a wit very like his dear Gilbert and Sullivan, but little of this comes through in his writings.

Perhaps he wrote too much, or perhaps he had Victorian ideas of the dignity of biography.

Mr. Howe's marriage on September 21, 1899, to Fanny Huntington Quincy, and his return to the *Youth's Companion*, marked the beginning of an era in which he was practically the spirit of Boston. His houses in Brimmer Street and Louisburg Square, and his summer home in Cotuit, were centers for the most recent literary flowering of New England. In 1911 he became a vice-president of the Atlantic Monthly Corporation, and two years later he left the *Youth's Companion* to edit the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* and later the *Harvard Graduates Magazine*. In 1929 he left the Atlantic Monthly to go to the Library of Congress as a consultant in biography, and later he went west as a resident scholar at the Huntington. He was back, very appropriately, as director of the Boston Athenaeum in 1933. He had been a trustee of the Athenaeum since 1908, of the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1918, and an Overseer of Harvard College since 1925. In 1916 he had gathered the first of his four honorary Litt.D. degrees.

It was as a famous literary figure that Mr. Howe was in 1925 elected to the American Antiquarian Society, which he had never visited. In fact, although he was a reasonably active member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, and the Club of Odd Volumes, he rarely attended meetings of this Society during his first twenty years. After his retirement from business, and particularly after taking the helm of the Boston Athenaeum, he became quite faithful in attendance. He remained active and in full possession of his faculties for much more than the normal span of years, and died at the Cambridge home of his son, Professor Mark DeWolfe Howe, on December 6, 1960.

C. K. S.

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