

Novelist Zona Gale Buried in Portage as Hundreds Pay Tribute to Her Spirit

Dr. Hindman, the Rev. Berger,

Dr. Frank Talk

By **RUSSELL B. PYRE**

PORTAGE—They laid the frail body of Zona Gale to rest in Silver Lake cemetery today, but her departing spirit was warmed by words of love that clothed her with the qualities of a Joan of Arc, and even more than that—with Christlikeness.

On this bitterly cold, snowy day, friends filled the First Presbyterian church here in final tribute to Wisconsin's most famous author, who died in a Chicago hospital Tuesday night after a 10-day battle with pneumonia.

And in the prayer of the Rev. John Van Eman Berger, the remarks of Dr. Ralph B. Hindman and the funeral address of Dr. Glenn Frank they heard that Zona Gale, the woman, was greater than anything she ever wrote or did.

"We give thee thanks," prayed Dr. Berger, "for the life of this thy child and for all the rare gifts of life by which thou hast blest others through her; for her deep spiritual insight and understanding; for her love of humanity; for her readiness to enter into the problems of humble and needy people; for her passion for truth and justice and peace; for her sincere loyalty to that which she believed to be right; which she ac-

cepted and heeded as thy word spoken to her mind and spirit.

Provided for Resting

"We thank thee for her love of beauty as she saw it in nature, as she shared it in the simple human relationships, for her friendship and love, and for all that she has done to help others attain richer life.

"It is in sorrow of heart that we bow before Thy providence, our Father, but we come sharing that Christian faith that was at the center of her understanding of life. We know Thee through Him who lived for others, the Son of Man whose greatness was in the spirit of His service. We believe that where love is at the center of life, life can never come to defeat, that 'love never faileth.'

"We believe, that the beautiful house that love builds shall never be destroyed. Strengthen in us the assurance that what she has given of herself to bless the lives of others will keep her life living on in love and friendship and service. We believe also that Thou hast provided for the destiny of such life in the home that is beyond.

Not Without Honor

"Be near to bless with the assurances which Thou only canst

give the boundless circle of friends near and far to whom her life has come to mean so much. Bless the memories of those who have been closely associated with her in the friendly contacts of this community which she loved so much and in the fellowship of this church which had so large a place in her affection. We pray especially that Thou will grant Thy comfort to those who were dearest to her, to those of that little circle to whom, as to no others, she belonged; especially to him who has shared the beautiful companionship of the home they together made. . . .

"O, Thou, in all Thy might so far,

In all Thy love so near,

Beyond the range of sun and star,

And yet beside us here:"

strengthen our faith in Thee and Thy power to make life triumphant."

The old proverb, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country," does not apply to Zona Gale, said Dr. Hindman, pastor of the First Presbyterian church, Buffalo, N. Y. Dr. Hindman came to Portage to take part in the services as an intimate friend of the Gale family. He was formerly pastor of the Portage church, and he spoke as one who knew Zona Gale as the world at large would not.

Morality of an Author

"Renowned in the world of literature, famous in New York, Chicago, London and Tokyo," he declared, "she was greater to us who lived with her in the Wisconsin she loved and the Portage she always called home.

"The visit she made when the baby came, the note she wrote when the father died, and the practical aid she gave to the neighbor in need, all of these things we know as the world can never know.

"A great literary critic wrote of her art as revealing in its development from 'Friendship Village' stages through 'Miss Lulu Bett' to 'Faint Perfume' the trend of the American novel from romance to realism. Those of us who lived with Zona Gale knew that and something more. We knew her spiritual nature that gave beauty to the commonplace. We knew her social vision that was never content with things as they are. We knew her deep sense of relationship to an inner order and her urge to join in its operations."

Biography Awaited

Supreme greatness, godlike tolerance, loyalty incarnate, and a

Joan of Arc quality "that would have enabled her, had the occasion arisen, to lead a whole people in the white passion of a great human cause." were attributed to Miss Gale by Dr. Frank.

Long a friend of Miss Gale, and more closely associated with her after he came to the University of Wisconsin as its president, chosen by a committee of regents of which she was a member, he declared her memory "mutely rebukes the new dark age of intolerance that seems now settling over so much of the world."

"I shall leave to other voices, other pens, and other times a rehearsal of the sheer facts of the biography of this beloved friend of yours and mine," Dr. Frank said. "Of none of the daughters of men in this generation do the ordinary facts of when she was born, the books she wrote, the posts she held, or when life left her body seem of so little importance in comparison with her own incomparable self—the grasp of her mind, the richness of her spirit, the limitless reaches of her sympathy, her unerring devotion to the values that are deathless.

"Crisis of Conviction"

"You are thinking today, I know, as I am thinking, of just Zona Gale Breese—not of what she said or wrote or did—because, like the great spirits of the renaissance, despite the consummate genius that warmed and illumined even the littlest things she said or wrote or did, she was herself greater than anything she ever said or wrote or did.

"Zona Gale Breese was a supremely great woman. And part of her greatness lay in the fact that she seemed never aware that God had touched her with uniqueness of insight and power. Wherever life or its labors took her, she moved among even the simplest of folk with no sense of separateness from them. She walked with the kings of ideas and the arts without losing the common touch. With the plaudits of the gifted of earth in her ears, she was humble of spirit.

"She was gentle. She was serene. She came as near as mortals may to being pure spirit. But it was spirit that stayed close to a very real world. Her serenity was not the serenity of the ascetic who refuses to touch the raw edges of life lest the touch be too disturbing. And her gentleness was not the gentleness of the weak, afraid to do other than compromise with life. Her ex-

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quisitely sensitive spirit, housed in a fragile body, had in it the strength of marching armies. She never ran from an issue or dodged a decision that involved the principles upon which her being was

grounded. There was a Joan of Arc quality about her that would have enabled her, had the occasion arisen, to lead a whole people in the white passion of a great human cause.

"All this may have been hidden to many who knew her but casually. One had to know her in moments when some profound crisis of conviction swept over her to realize this strength that was hers. I have known her, my wife has known her, and many of you have known her in such moments.

Preserved a Balance

"More than anyone I have known in my lifetime, she combined militant convictions with a godlike tolerance for the judgments of others. Her memory mutely rebukes the new Dark Age of Intolerance that seems now settling over so much of the world. In a world in which Zona Gale Breese has lived it should be impossible to think that tolerance is at war either with ardent convictions or with effective action.

"There was an amazing directness to her mind. She pierced through appearance to essence always. There was about her a rare intuitive quality that seemed to cut across the laborious processes of research and drive directly to the heart of reality in any problem she touched.

"She called up out of the depths of her nature the inner forces of life to preserve a balance with the outer forces which, when given the right of way, so often cheapen and tarnish and rob life of its meaning.

"She was loyalty incarnate. With her, friendship was a holy thing like love or religion. The sense—the living sense — of the fact of her friendship will be with me and with my wife as a benediction as long as life lasts. She demanded nothing of friendship but that it be worthy. She was at once the most intensely personal and the most intensely impersonal spirit I have known. I have said that she was loyalty incarnate. But her ultimate loyalty was to truth, to justice, to sincerity. She was capable of scrapping the loyalty of a lifetime to friend or cause if that loyalty was betrayed by deceit, injustice, or a manifest breach of sincerity.

Comforting Words

"She was unmoved by considerations of place, power, or prestige. Her heart went out to the lowly, the underprivileged, and those to whom the community never gave the warmth of its attention. And, with her, this concern for the least blessed of earth was not professional. It was not pose. It was the genuine outgiving of a great soul.

"There was a Christlikeness in the qualities she showed to those who knew her most intimately.

"She was—let me say it again—a supremely great woman, with a greatness that did not depend on any external trappings or recognitions. She would have been a supremely great woman had she never written a book, never given her mastery of insight and expression to the theater, or struck a poem like a spark from her spirit.

"Words that have comforted mankind over the centuries have been in our minds today—words that tell how the mortal puts on immortality when, to our earth-bound vision, life comes to an end. In hours like these, we cling like frightened children to our hope of immortality. But, if no doctrine of immortality had ever been given to men to heal the hurt in their hearts, I would know that Zona Gale Breese has put on immortality and, even as we speak of her here, is alive with a re-found richness of life. For she linked her life on earth with deathless values and, in the deeper sense, such spirits cannot die.

"On the Acropolis in Athens are the ruins of a little temple dedicated to the wingless victory. It is said that, in commemoration of some glowing achievement, the sculptor chiseled this symbol of victory without wings to express the hope of the Athenians that victory would never again fly from their city.

Devoted Husband

"All of Zona Gale Breese's life was a wingless victory. She did not pursue victories that would fly from her once she had won them. And she did not spend her life in quest of achievements that would turn to ashes in her mouth.

"But, beneath and beyond all her ventures in the worlds of art and affairs, Zona Gale was a woman, with a woman's hunger for the warmth and devotion of a home a husband has helped her create. Again and again, to her most intimate friends, she has said that life touched its supremest happiness in the years with her

husband.

"His devotion to her was matched only by her devotion to him. The memory of those years must remain to him, and to all

those who shared the life of the Breese home, a legacy beyond price and a solace that nothing but a great love could leave in its wake."

Capitol Times
December 30, 1938

Zona Gale Was 'Supremely Great Woman,' Glenn Frank Says at Funeral Services Today; Notables Fill Portage Church for Rites

(Special to The Capital Times)
PORTAGE, Wis. — "A supremely great woman," noted for loyalty, tolerance and an abiding love of her fellow men: this was Zona Gale Breese, Dr. Glenn Frank declared at funeral services here this afternoon for the famous novelist and essayist.

"She would have been a supremely great woman had she never written a book, never given her mastery of insight and expression to the theater,

or struck a poem like a spark from her spirit," the former president of the University of Wisconsin said.

Dr. Silas Evans, president of Ripon college, gave the invocation prayer at the services in the First Presbyterian church. The scripture reading and prayer were given by Dr. John Van Eman Berger, pastor of the church. Dr. Ralph E. Hyman of the First Congregational Church in the Circle, Buffalo, N. Y., also took part in the

services. Burial was in Silver Lake cemetery here.

Church Is Filled

Despite the sub-zero weather, the church was filled to overflowing with notables from the state, and with residents who had come to hear tributes to the "first citizen" of Portage. Stores and offices were closed during the services.

Preceding the public services, private services were held at the home Miss Gale shared with her husband, William L. Breese.

The tribute given by Dr. Frank follows:

"I shall leave to other voices, other pens, and other times a rehearsal of the sheer facts of the biography of this beloved friend of yours and mine. Of none of the daughters of men in this generation do the ordinary facts of when she was born, the books she wrote, the posts she held, or when life left her body seem of so little im-

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