

[Force, Ellen Whitney]

Obituary

Mrs. Ellen Whitney Force, widow of the late Maj. Geo. B. Force, of Plainwell, Mich., and sister of Mr. John Whitney, of this town, died at the residence of her brother on the 23d inst. We copy the following obituary sketch from the columns of the *Rochester Union* of Saturday.

Ellen Whitney Force has passed the portal men call death. She was born March 2d, 1835, at Niagara Falls, and died at that place on the 23d of the present month. The early years of her married life were spent in Rochester, but for several years past she has resided at Plainwell, Michigan. She leaves an only son, Charles Force, of Plainwell, and an adopted daughter, Alice Force<sup>1</sup>. She was the widow of the late Major George B. Force, of this city, who was killed while in command of his regiment, 108th New York, at the battle of Antietam in 1862. He was the brother of Major I. [Isaiah] F. Force, of Rochester, who was then also major of the 140th New York regiment.

It became the sad duty of the writer of this to convey to Mrs. Force the terrible news of that event. At the time she was visiting friends in Ontario county, and upon meeting her—she then having with her her dear fatherless boy, aged but a few months—her quick perception anticipated what I would tell, and the deathly pallid face, her suppressed breath and quivering lips, forbade my lips to speak the word. And after due preparation she returned with me in a carriage to Canandaigua, holding in her arms her babe. Very few words were spoken by either person during that ride of about 14 miles. When the silence was at length broken by her asking with suppressed breath in a whisper, “was he killed instantly?” I could not answer. But oh! the anguish of that hour. Since then she has shown a buoyant and cheerful spirit to the world, but that anguish ceased only with her last breath. The love she bore her noble husband was always uppermost. Yet her duty to others and especially to her son, who is now grown to manhood—with attributes to fill a mother’s heart with joy—presented other attractions for life, causing the cheerful smile and kind word for all. Whilst the underlying tension upon the silver cord of life produced that fell disease consumption, and like the ripening leaves, unseared by frost this early Autumn, she has fallen asleep; her spirit has returned to God who gave it. A more pure, lovely and gentle spirit has not inhabited mortal frame. Her dear son and her adopted daughter (her deceased brother’s child) will mourn for her whose love can never be replaced, and her friends here, numerous and true, will listen silently for that voice, whispering from the other side—No, he was not “killed instantly,” he still lives. I have met him in heaven.

C. P.

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<sup>1</sup> She was Alice K. Whitney Hutchinson, who in 1890 became the secretary to Rochester philanthropist George Eastman and worked for him for 42 years. She was the daughter of Ami Whitney and in 1927 she became the wife of Charles F. Hutchison.