

ANSON B SEVERANCE

OBITUARY

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PROF. SEVERANCE DEAD.

Picturesque and Widely-Known Person- age Passes Away.

Prof. A. B. Severance, the pioneer dancing master of Wisconsin, who had conducted dancing classes in Waukesha many years and who expected to open a class here last Monday evening, died suddenly at his home in North Chicago last Friday. He was sick only twelve hours of dropsy of the heart, but suffered intensely. The remains were brought to Eagle this county and were interred in the family lot.

Mr. Severance was widely known throughout the state and was a picturesque and handsome figure with his well-knit frame and his long white ringlets flowing over his broad shoulders. He lived in Milwaukee 33 years and removed to Chicago only a few months ago.

Born at Windsor, Vt., Anson B. Severance came with his parents, a boy of 15, to the West and established a home at Eagle, this county. Here he grew to man's estate, upon his father's farm. He was eccentric even in his boyhood days, and having heard the old expression in the parlance of the country corners, "as drunk as a fiddler," applied to everyone who showed signs of having tarried too long at the cup, young Severance became impressed that it was his duty to learn to play the fiddle and become a teetotaler in order to redeem the unfortunate musicians from the slander. He learned to play the fiddle; he became famous in that primitive day as a musician, and in later times he was given the prefixure of "professor of music and dancing," and yet he has lived his life of 74 years and has gone down to his death without ever having allowed intoxicating liquors to pass his lips.

ORGANIZED A BAND.

Having learned to play the violin, it became the means for his making his way in the world. As a young man he organized the Severance & Williams Quadrille band, and although its headquarters for years was at the little settlement in Waukesha county known as Eagle postoffice, the reputation of the band was as wide as the civilization of the state.

It was called to Madison to play at inaugural balls, and to all the towns and cities and villages within a radius of fifty or sixty miles, to furnish music for the dancing parties that came as an appendix to the quilting bees, the barn raisings, and to the weddings and other events, marking with distinctness the primitive age of society in Wisconsin. There was fun and frolic in those days, and young Severance caught the infection and learned to dance with the rest of them;

he graduated into a teacher of dancing, and this is the vocation that he followed through his long life.

At the age of 74, with his fiddle under his chin, he would step off the measures of the waltz or the polka as lightly as the boy of 20. He was never sick in his life, and when the number of his days had lapsed he died suddenly.

WAS A VEGETARIAN.

Prof. Severance had no use for physicians, nor did he believe in medicine. He regulated his diet to preserve his health, ate largely of fruits, fish and eggs, and abstained from meats. He was in theory at least a vegetarian.

As a reformer he joined the Knights of Labor when that organization was in the zenith of its power, and remained a sympathizer with the laboring man to his death. When it was proposed to organize a sick benefit branch to the Knights of Labor, Mr. Severance was asked to join it. "Do you think I am a fool," he replied, "that I should pay dues to provide for those who don't know enough to keep well?" He ate but two meals a day, and never used tobacco or liquor in any form—he was in fact, temperate in everything.

While Prof. Severance would not contribute to the organization of a sick benefit fund for the Knights of Labor, he showed his liberality in other directions.

FOUNDED THE LIBERAL CLUB.

He organized the Liberal club and not only bore the greater part of the expense of its early maintenance, but he devoted his time to provide it with lecturers and debaters, and when the supply ran short stood ever ready to fill in the gap. He was a free-thinker—not an arbitrary free-thinker who believes that everyone must be made to think as he does, but a free-thinker with a respect for the opinions of all. He was a spiritualist, but he did not intrude his belief upon others.

In 1869 he was married, and his wife became widely known as Dr. Juliet Severance. Mrs. Severance gained a reputation as a lecturer on health and reform.

FINDS A NEW HOME WHEN 74.

Last April Prof. Severance decided to take up his residence at North Chicago. He went there and purchased a house and a plot of ground. There he spent the last few months of his life, old in years but vigorous to the end. The man of 74 had worked upon the soil about his little home and transformed the prairie land into a garden.

"I never was so happy in my life," he wrote his brother last week, "I have raised enough vegetables in my garden to supply our wants during the winter."