



The Poetry Of Joyce Kilmer

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Joyce Kilmer was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey on December 6, 1886, the youngest of four children. Kilmer's birthplace is still standing, housing a small museum to Kilmer and a few government offices. Kilmer entered the Rutgers College Grammar School at the age of 8, graduating in 1904 to continue his education at Rutgers College for the next two years. Whilst there he became the associate editor of the campus newspaper but found his mathematics course too difficult and transferred to Columbia College of Columbia University in New York City. At Columbia, Kilmer obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree and graduated on May 23, 1908. A few days later on June 9, 1908, he married Aline Murray, a fellow poet. They had five children: Kenton born in 1909, Rose in 1912, Deborah in 1914, Michael in 1916, Christopher in 1917. With the United States declaring war on Germany in April 1917, Kilmer enlisted in the Seventh Regiment of the New York National Guard. In August, Kilmer was initially assigned as a statistician to the U.S. 69th Infantry Regiment. Rising to the rank of Sergeant he refused commission to be an officer preferring to remain with his regiment. In September, a few weeks before being sent overseas Rose, now aged five died. Twelve days later their son Christopher was born. Kilmer sailed to Europe with his regiment on October 31st 1917 arriving a fortnight later. During his time in Europe, Kilmer wrote prose sketches and poetry, most notably the poem "Rouge Bouquet", which was written after the First Battalion of the 42nd Division, which was occupying the Rouge Bouquet forest northeast of the village of Baccarat, at the time a quiet sector of the front, was struck by heavy artillery bombardment on March 12, 1918 that burying 21 men, of which 14 remained entombed. As a leader his men spoke in awe at his cool nerve in scouting patrols and his enthusiasm for the more dangerous missions. During the Second Battle of Marne, in July 1918 there was heavy fighting for many days. On July 30, 1918, Kilmer volunteered to accompany Major William "Wild Bill" Donovan when Donovan's First Battalion was sent to lead the day's attack. During the course of the day, Kilmer led a scouting party to find the position of a German machine gun. When his comrades found him, some time later, they found him dead. A sniper's bullet through his brain. He was 31. For his valour, Kilmer was posthumously awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French Republic. Kilmer was buried in the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial, near Fere-en-Tardenois, Aisne, Picardy, France. A cenotaph is located on the Kilmer family plot in Elmwood Cemetery, in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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