WITH the passing of Ethelwyn Wetherald, beloved Canadian poet, another of that shining company in Canadian literature, known as the Group of '61 (Carman, Lampman, Drummond, Pauline Johnson, and represented now only by Roberts) has crossed into the realm where beauty is eternal. To those who knew and loved her poetry, its singing heritage remains. And to those who knew and loved Ethelwyn Wetherald herself, there remains a vivid memory of a gallant soul and a sparkling personality.

Her intense zest for life is the thing about Miss Wetherald that will always stay with me. That and her scintillating wit and ready humor. Straight and slim as one of the tall evergreens marking the road to her home, Miss Wetherald's body, like her spirit, made little concession to advancing years. Deafness rather increased the solitude in which she lived at her country home near Fenwick, Ontario, but poetry lovers still found their way to her door. Only last summer she was garden party hostess to the Canadian Authors' Association. As we met once at "The Tall Evergreens" near Fenwick, Ont., who would live long in the hearts of those privileged to attend.

T'was through requesting a hand-written copy of what is probably her most widely known and best loved poem, "Legacies," that I first became acquainted with Miss Wetherald several years ago. In complying with characteristic graciousness, she remarked wistfully that she wished she too were young again, and at the beginning of a literary career. That this enthusiasm for life, which was amazing in one of her years, stayed with her to the very end, was evident in a letter written several weeks before her death.

"I am feeling divinely happy today, partly because light came early this morning, and will come earlier tomorrow. I am almost unnaturally well and feel correspondingly gay. I hope you too are going on your way rejoicing."

On her way rejoicing! What a rare and admirable attitude for a deaf, solitary old lady of eighty-three! People half her age might well envy this spirit. It was through keeping alive her interest in the changing work, and in the younger generation, that Miss Wetherald retained her youthful outlook and verve. She wanted to know what the younger Canadian writers were doing. For in the letter she wrote me just a week before her death, received with an autographed gift copy of the life of Homer Watson she wanted me to have, was this adjuration: "Tell me about the younger poets with whom you feel in closest affinity. I am always interested."

Then she spoke a few words of artistic perception, evoked by her reading of a review of my book of poems to which she had written the foreword last April: "After all, your own best critic is yourself. Your knowledge of your own aims, your own soul, your own invisible personality is greater than any attained by others." Words which any writer, surely, would do well to ponder.

(And nowhere is Miss Wetherald's own "invisible personality" more evident than in the final lines from the personal poem with which she greeted her friends last Christmas: "Be true to sense of wings, the subtle call That comes from some bird-breasted waterfall; The comradeship of trees, the hearts of friends, And one Near Presence where the footpath bends."

ETHELWYN WETHERALD: An Appreciation

By Clara Bernhardt

The death of Ethelwyn Wetherald removed one of the most gracious and best loved figures in Canadian literature. Born in 1857, for over fifty years her personality has been a quiet, vital force in our literary scene, her poetry attaining rightful rank alongside that of Lampman, Carman and Roberts. And while her poetry had the universality of appeal without which nothing enduring is written, Miss Wetherald was also a poet's poet. The delicacy of her perceptions, the sincere intensity of her emotion, and the careful craftsmanship with which her ideas were moulded into lyric form, are a delight to lovers of fine poetry. Lines linger in the mind long after the poem is read: "The wind blows loves like leaves apart— "The words of earth are of little worth When a song drops out of the sky."

Although Legacies, which she once told me would be graved upon her tombstone, and The Winds of Death are probably her most widely known pieces, much of her work meets what she herself considered to be the final test of good poetry: It is worth reading aloud, and worth memorizing. It was my privilege to know Miss Wetherald through correspondence during the last three years of her life, during which period we met once at "The Tall Evergreens" near Fenwick, Ont. Her unquenchable zest for living never ceased to amaze me. She was generous with her appreciation, and had an unfailing interest in the work of younger poets, though possessing little patience for strictly modern verse.

Her quick mind, ready humor, and deep understanding made her a delightful person to know. Among reviews of my book of poems to which she contributed the foreword last April, she had this wise word to say: "After all, your own best critic is yourself. Your knowledge of your own aims, your own soul, your own invisible personality is greater than any attained by others."

Only a week before her death, which occurred on March 19th, I received an autographed gift copy of Page's life of Homer Watson, accompanied by a gay letter requesting copies of my newest poems. She was, she said, divinely happy, because light was coming earlier now, and she was going her way rejoicing. Which is how I shall always think of Ethelwyn Wetherald—going her way rejoicing.

LET MUSIC SOUND

(For Ethelwyn Wetherald)

And can it be that you who loved the earth Now lie beneath its stirring, unaware? That all the songs you sang of lyric worth Are mute along the Panther Path you fare? There will be other Aprils now for you Who loved the scent of lilacs after rain, And more exultant songs to sing; a view Unlimited by finite hope and pain.

Play Mendelssohn and Chopin—but in joy! Let music sound in accents of delight, For one whose gallant spirit could destroy The fears which rise in silences of night. In tribute now of this intrepid voice, The very hills and meadowlands rejoice.

Clara Bernhardt.

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