

***ELLA WHEELER
WILCOX***



YESTERDAYS

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YESTERDAYS

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Yesterdays

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FOREWORD

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This little volume might be called 'Echoes from the land of youthful imaginings'; or 'Ghosts of old dreams.' It has been compiled at the request of Messrs. Gay and Hancock (my only authorised publishers in Great Britain), and contains verses written in my early youth, and which never before (with the exception, perhaps, of three or four) have been placed in book form.

Given the poetical temperament, and a lonely environment, with few distractions, youthful imagination is sure to express itself in mournful wails and despairing moans. Such wails and moans will be found to excess in this little book, and will serve to show better than any amount of common-sense reasoning, how fleeting are the sorrows of youth, and how slight the foundation on which the young build towers of despair.

In the days when these verses were written, each little song represented a few dollars (to my emaciated purse), and so the slightest experience of my own, or of any friend, with every passing mood, every trivial happening, was utilised by my imaginative and thrifty muse.

That the writer has always possessed robust health, and has lived to a good age, is proof positive that the verses are not all expressions of personal experiences, since no human being could have borne such continual agonies and retained life and reason.

All the verses in the book were written while I bore the name of Ella Wheeler, and are quite inconsistent with the

ideas and philosophy of

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

August 1910.

AN OLD HEART

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How young I am! Ah! heaven, this curse of youth
Doth mock me from my mirror with great eyes,
And pulsing veins repeat the unwelcome truth,
That I must live, though hope within me dies.

So young, and yet I have had all of life.
Why, men have lived to see a hundred years,
Who have not known the rapture, joy, and strife
Of my brief youth, its passion and its tears.

Oh! what are years? A ripe three score and ten
Hold often less of life, in its best sense,
Than just a twelvemonth lived by other men,
Whose high-strung souls are ardent and intense.

But having seen all depths and scaled all heights,
Having a heart love thrilled, and sorrow wrung,
Knowing all pains, all pleasures, all delights,
Now I would die—but cannot, being young.

Nothing is left me, but supreme despair;
The bitter dregs that tell of wasted wine.
Come furrowed brow, dull eye, and frosted hair,
Companions fit for this old heart of mine.

WARP AND WOOF

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Through the sunshine, and through the rain
Of these changing days of mist and splendour,
I see the face of a year-old pain
Looking at me with a smile half tender.

With a smile half tender, and yet all sad,
Into each hour of the mild September
It comes, and finding my life grown glad
Looks down in my eyes, and says 'Remember.'

Says 'Remember,' and points behind
To days of sorrow, and tear-wet lashes;
When joy lay dead and hope was blind,
And nothing was left but dust and ashes.

Dust and ashes and vain regret,
Flames fanned out, and the embers falling.
But the sun of the saddest day must set,
And hope wakes ever with Springtime's calling.

With Springtime's calling the pulses thrill;
And the heart is tuned to a sweeter measure.
For never a green Spring crossed the hill
That came not laden with some new pleasure.

Some new pleasure that brings content;
And the heart looks up with a smile of gladness,
And wonders idly when sorrow went
Out of the life that seemed all sadness.

That seemed all sadness, and yet grew bright
With colours we thought could tinge it never.
Yet I think the pain though out of sight,
Like the warp of the carpet, is there for ever.

There for ever, and by and by
When the woof wears thin, or draws asunder,

We see the sombre threads that lie
Intertwining and twisting under.

Twisting under and binding so
The brighter threads that they may not sever.
Thus the pain of a year ago
Must stay a part of my life for ever.

SO LONG

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The dawn grows red in the eastern sky,
(Long, so long is the day,)
And I lean from my lattice and sigh and sigh,
As I watch the night fog creeping by
And vanish over the bay.

The thrush soars up, over green clad hills,
(The day is long, so long;)
Like liquid silver his music spills,
And ever it quivers, and runs, and trills
In a glad sweet burst of song.

Under my window there blooms a rose,
(How long a day can be.)
And I lean and whisper what no soul knows
Of my heart's sorrows and secret woes,
And the red rose sighs, 'Ah me!'

A ship sails into the waiting bay,
(The day is long, alack,)
But what would that matter to me, I pray
If the ship that sailed out yesterday
Should never more come back.