#### Ella Wheeler Wilcox, 'Passion Poetess,'Dead.

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I do not remember when I did not expect to be a writer, and I was a neighborhood celebrity at the age of eight."

This is a typical admission of a woman whose egotism was inoffensive, even though marked by obvious complacency. She told of the pessimism which shrouded her family in their little country him in Wisconsin, every member of which was unsatisfied with the lot in which the lines of each had apparently fallen; of the lack of books and periodicals, which made life an intellectual famine, and of conditions which presented what looked like an insuperable barrier to literary or other aspirations.

"There was nothing in my sit-uation," added this unusually fecund producer of poetry and prose, "to cul-tivate poetic talent, and I no doubt ove my early development as a poet to that fact, paradoxical as the statement may seem."

#### Her Literary Debut

Despite the discouraging environment thus set forth, this somber-faced little maid launched her first ship on the lit-erary sea when she was barely thirteen crary sea when she was barely thicten years old. Unknown to her family, she wrote two essays and sent them to the editor of the New York Mercury, a weekly publication, from which she had derived at occasional intervals pabulum for what she regarded as her budding genius, posting them surreptitiously in the midst of many juvenile difficulties. The essays were minted, and as a reimbursement for her contributions she received the Mercury regularly, being placed on the "free list," likewise a big bundle of back numbers of the paper.

Success followed fast on early endeavor in the field of literature. First financial roward came from Frank Leslie, who sent a check for \$10 for three little poems from the pen of the Wisconsin maid, and for a period following the publication of these the young author was a local "literary lioness" in social circles.

Pressing need of a larger income promuted her accontance of a Milwau.

social circles.

Pressing need of a larger income prompted her acceptance of a Milwaukee editor's offer of \$45 a month to edit the literary department of his paper, but this employment was shortlived, the venture failing at the end of six months. Not long after this the young woman's first collection of poems.

"Drops of Water," dealing entirely with total abstinence, brought her \$50, "Shells," followed, then "Maurine," declined by the firm to which it first was offered; brought out by a Wisconsin firm and barely paying expenses. Two years later, however, the publishiers who had rejected the verses came had with the request for the privilege of republishing the book, with additional poems.

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"Poems of Passion"

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Of the publication of "Poems of Passion," which made a stir throughout the country at the time, Mrs Wilcox wrote in her "Autobiography";

"When publishing 'Maurine' I had purposely omitted more than two score poems of a very romantic nature, in order to saye the volume from too much sentiment. Letters began to come to me requesting copies of these verses—ardent love songs which had appeared in various periodicals. This suggested to me the idea of issuing a book of love poems to be called 'Poems of Passion.' To think was to do, for I possessed more activity than caution in those days.

those days.

"As just related, every poem in the book had been published in various periodicals and had brought forth no criticism. My amazement can hardly be imagined, therefore, when Jansen & McClung returned the manuscript of my volume, intimating that it was immoral. I told the contents of the letter to friends in Milwaukee and it reached the ears of a sensational morning newspaper. The next day a column article appeared with large headlines: "Too Loud for Chicago. The Scarlet City by the lake shocked by a Badger girl, whose verses out-Swinburne Swinburne and out-Whitman Whitman."



contumely the verses brought upon her, she never bothered much about stand-including a savage attack by Charles A, ards and formulas of literature, but Dana, and the advice of friends who having something to say she proceeded urged her to destroy the lines which to say it, "with all her heart and all

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her mind and all her feeling." "The Love Sonnets of Abelard and Heloise" furnished an illustration of this when that book made its appearance in 1907. In the intervening years she has been an indefatigable producer alike in poetry and prose, magazines, newspapers and every variety of current literature being filled with her writings. The list of "fads" of various sorts which she took up from time to time is almost illimitable.

She took a conspicuous place in the limelight shortly after America's entrance into the world war by going to France, where for months she entertained the soldiers by reciting poems written on the spur of the moment and inspired by patriotic instinct. Ellis became the "beloved of the doughboys," according to one enthusiast, who wrote to a newspaper that the lines she penned for wounded heroes made them her abject slave. In one of these poems she wrote of an avintor:

He has come into touch with things supernal At seach man's gate death stands await.

At such man's gate death stands await. In the last three decades of her life she enjoyed more than a competence as the fruit of her labors.

A list of her more pretentious writings, excluding the innumerable verses contributed to the newspaper press and magazines, would make a formidable array. Thirty years ago she made ciaim to the authorship of the lines beginning.

Lauth, and the world isushs with you. Weep, and you weep alone. and offered \$50000 to a worthy charity in the literature being only one of many tours to different parts of the world. She enjoyed social prestigation which was as wine to her lips, and in the last three decades of her lips, and in the last three decades of her lips she enjoyed more than a competence as the fruit of her labors.

A list of her more pretentious writings, excluding the innumerable verses contributed to the newspaper press and magazines, would make a formidable array. Thirty years ago she made ciaim to the authorship of the lines beginning.

He has come into touch with things supernal At each man's gate death srands await. And dying flying were better than lying in sick beds crying for life eternal, letter to fly half way to God Than burrow too long like a worm in the sool,

Born in a Wisconsin Town Born in a Wisconsin Town
Mrs. Wilcox was born at Johnstown
Center, Wis., in 1855, the daughter of
a farmer named Wheeler and one of
four children. Her mother appears to
have been a woman of literary temperament, suppressed by surroundings not
calculated to develop the artistic faculty. Ella Wheeler had made her
start in literary circles before she met
Robert M. Wilcox in Chicago in 1883,
when she was twenty-nine years old,
and when the "Poems of Passion" were
still a reigning sensation. Wilcox was and when the "Poems of Passion were still a reigning sensation. Wilcox was a man of wide reading, extensive travel and artistic tastes, and his marringe with Ella, in 1884, proved a most con-cenial partnership. He died in May, 1916. His widow, writing of their meeting and marriage, stoutly main-

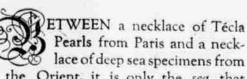
Laugh, and the world isughs with rou.
Weep, and you weep alone,
and offered \$5000 to a worthy charit
if any authentic published copy of th
verses, which she called "Solitude." verses, which she called "Solitude," could be found prior to 1885, the year when she said she wrote it. Authorship of the poem had been appropriated by one Colonel John A. Joyce, in 1886, and others had put in similar claims. While Mrs. Wilcox's reputation rests upon her prodigious output of poetry, she wrote also a vast amount of prose.

She always said it was a joy to ver sify, but an affliction to set down he ideas in ordinary prese.

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