

LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART AUTHOR DIES AT HOME HERE

Beth Slater Whitson, Who Also Wrote, "Meet Me To-Night in Dreamland," Succumbs After Long Illness – Was Internationally Known.

Beth Slater Whitson, internationally known as a song writer and wife of George M. Whitson, died at 5-o'clock Saturday morning at "Lookaway", her home on the McFerrin Road. Author of more than 400 songs and of short stories, Mrs. Whitson, who had been in declining health for several years, had been ill since Wednesday night of an attack, which was not at first considered serious though Friday night some anxiety over her condition was felt by the members of her family circle who had ministered with such devotion during her long illness. Early Saturday morning, the writer of "Meet Me To-Night In Dreamland" took the hand of her sister, Mrs. George C. Norton, saying, "Sister, let me go to sleep," and within a few minutes had gone to her eternal rest.

Funeral services will be held Monday morning at 10:00 o'clock at the family home on McFerrin Road, conducted by the Rev. Walter Caldwell, pastor of the Woodland Street Presbyterian Church. Interment will be at the Spring Hill Cemetery.

The story of Mrs. Whitson's literary career is one of remarkable achievement. The daughter of Mrs. J.H. Whitson and the late J.H. Whitson, she was born near Centerville in Hickman County, and she resided in that section until the removal of her family to Nashville in 1913. In early girlhood she began to write lyrics for songs which met with popular favor through their heart appeal, delicacy of sentiment and grace of expression. Some of these were popular in England and France as well as in this country, and two of these outstanding lyrics were "Meet Me To-Night In Dreamland", of which it is estimated that 3,000,000 copies have been sold, and "Let Me Call You Sweetheart", which, though published eighteen years ago, remains a favorite.

Though Mrs. Whitson was best known as a writer of verse, she did also some fictional work which was notable. The first story for adults which she wrote, "Poor Folks Shoes", was bought by Collier's Magazine and its poignant heart appeal made an impression on many readers. Two of her other stories, "At the Foot of the Hills," which appeared in Collier's and "The Knitter of Liege," in the Southern Woman's Magazine, were listed by O'Brien among the best short stories of their years of publication.

Serious illness cut short Mrs. Whitson's career at its zenith. She had begun work for the screen and three of her scolarlos, characterized by the exquisite sentiment and poetic feeling found in all her literary work, and ye "vivid and colorful" had been filmed. One of these, "Compassion" was seen in Nashville some years ago and others were "Sweeping Against the Wing" and "White Flame".

Mrs. Whitson, who was 53 years of age, is survived by her husband, George M. Whitson, to whom she was married in January 1916, her mother, sister and brother, Russell Whitson. For a number of years her residence has been one of Nashville's ante-bellum homes, situated on an eminence commanding a beautiful vista of the city, to which Mrs. Whitson gave the name "Lookaway", taken from "Dixie" and here she extended a hospitality which was typical of the old South. Her gentleness of nature and loveliness of spirit endeared her to all her associates, and she possessed also devotion to principal and strength of character. She had achieved a literary career in the face of odds which a less gallant spirit would have found insurmountable, and she was ever ready with encouragement and aid to young writers. She was a valued member of the Tennessee and Nashville Woman's Press and Authors' Club. Mrs. Whitson was a member of the Methodist Church.

In "My Dreams Came True," published in True Confessions Magazine several years ago, Beth Slater Whitson tells the moving story of the hard road to success traveled by a little Tennessee girl with a "song in her soul," who was determined to become a song writer. The narration begins some years before her removal to Nashville and her happy marriage to a Tennessean of the same surname.

In her little frame cottage home in a Tennessee valley was a scrapbook containing copies of her verses, which having appeared in the Metropolitan, Cosmopolitan, Alnalee's Lippincott's and various other publications, testified to her ability. The young poet determined to seek her literary fortune. With a one way ticket to Chicago, and little money in her purse, but armed with fifty lyrics which were the fruit of three years labor, the young aspirant, friendless and alone in that great city began a heartbreaking round, going from one publisher to another for days without getting even a personal conference. Finally her indomitable determination and courage triumphed. She gained an audience, and selling a number of lyrics at small sums which seemed then large to the beginning song writer, she came happily back to Tennessee to write many other lyrics.

One of the songs which she sold for fifteen dollars and which made a hit overnight was afterwards sold by the publisher for \$7,000.

"That was the beginning of my song writing career," Mrs. Whitson wrote in "My Dreams Came True." "I had gained greater confidence from my encounter with the world but I had not gained the canny wisdom that a song-writer must have to make great financial success. Back at home I began turning out more lyrics. To little sister and me the sum of twenty-five dollars 'per' seemed almost incredible wealth; even fifteen and twenty dollars thrilled us amazingly. Two numbers sent to a New York house brought us forty dollars, which we used to paint the little frame house, and another lyric paid for wall paper which we hung ourselves. I had a feeling that a fairy had passed through the house transforming its drabness into astonishingly beauty, when we finished. I could not write anything for days. I wanted to feast my eyes on the loveliness that had come out of my little gift."

Later, the Tennessee poet learned something of business and her songs were beginning to make large financial returns, when illness stayed her gifted pen.

During a trip to New York the young writer had the satisfaction of learning one of her "Dreamland" lyrics such by a celebrated singer in a leading New York theater, and she wrote, "It was a great day for a little country maiden, I assure you. I was repaid in that performance for all the hours of suffering I had endured in those seemingly endless weeks I suffered in Chicago trying to see publishers."

The life story ends with the touching description of the writer struggling against ill health, trying to grow in her flower garden of her home in song poems she could no longer write.

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