

SOMETHING ABOUT HAZEL ELINK

Nothing -
see 50 down

My life in early childhood was spent in the security of loving parents who did all in their power to provide a congenial and influential atmosphere in the home. Mother was brought up in the strict old orthodoxy of the early Presbyterian Church in Eastern Ontario. My father was brought up in a Wesleyan Methodist home. Hence, we were brought up to revere the Bible, to shun profanity, which one said was merely a crutch for a weak mind, and to respect our elders. We were not to judge them and think they were eccentric, who did not see eye to eye with us, and whom we thought a bit queer. A verse my mother often quoted was "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" saith the Lord.

We had a man in our district who poked fun at old crippled; one of these had been hurt in his early twenties, and left with a crippled withered hand. He also used a cane when he walked. He passed this farmer's house every Sunday on his way to church, and this gave the neighbour and his children an opportunity to make fun of his gait and the way he carried his withered hand up by his chest. It felt more comfortable up there. The neighbour got a hearty laugh from his older children as they mimicked the dear old man. Several years later the 'aper' got his hand badly mangled in some machinery, and was compelled to carry it up near his chest, and held there by his other hand. Verily, we reap what we sow. "The Mill of God grinds slowly,

But it grinds exceedingly small."

My own dear father died when I was not yet fifteen years old. Up until that time, although my mother suffered with arthritis, we had not known sorrow. Now I could realize with full force what bereavement meant. I was bitterly rebellious at the thought of God snatching my father when we needed him most. I wondered how the sun could possibly shine so brightly, and the birds could sing so merrily, while I felt so desolate and alone. I wished I too could have died.

"When some beloved voice that was to you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly
 And silence, against which you dare not cry
 Aches round you like a strong disease and new-
 What hope, what help, what music will undo
 That silence of your senses? Not friendships sigh
 Nay none of these!

My school days in our little school would soon be over and I was ready to try my entrance into High School, but when this tragedy came, Mother was unable to finance a high school education for me, and I, who so greatly longed to be a school teacher and an author, was forced to go out as a hired girl, where people just needed me in the busiest season or where a prospective mother was 'biding her time'. I worked hard and long for scant wages. I was embittered and regretted miserably the poverty which denied me a good education. When I was eighteen years old, I married a boy whom I had known all my life although he was eight years my senior. He had returned that summer from World War I and in the end of December we were married. Down through the years we had five children. The oldest was seventeen when the baby was born.

Our house was in a grove of pine, birches, spruce, cedar and poplars. It was a lovely spot. I have many happy memories of my home north of Barwick, along with some very tragic occurrences. In 1955 my husband was killed in an accident, one of those quick accidents that one finds all over the world, and which the loved ones find difficult to forget, where desolation settles like a pall on the heart and brain, and where you recover in slow degree from the shock and horror of it, if you ever do recover.

I moved from the farm which we were living on at that time. We lived there a year, with the option of buying if it suited our needs. We had hot water on tap and many other conveniences that were lacking in our former home. I moved

into our village of Barwick, as my children, with the exception of the youngest, were married or working away from home. The youngest was attending school at Fort Frances.

I worked as a cook in a timber camp with a lady I knew, one winter. In the summer, I baked in a bake shop in Sioux Narrows. But as I had pernicious anemia for years, and had B12 shots every two weeks, I was obliged, under my doctors orders to come home as there was no doctor in Sioux Narrows.

Then the Bell Telephone bought out our Municipal phone and I was taken on as part-time operator. I liked the work and on days I did not have to go to the office, I did day work in Fort Frances. In my spare time in the evenings, I completed Grade 11, 12 and 13 Literature from the Board of Education (lessons by mail) Then a course in Ancient History, also a course in Archeology and one in Wilderness Conservation. I scribbled poems and rhymes for different occasions and had scribbles full of things I liked to put in rhyme on paper.

While I was taking the ' Wilderness Course' I was asked to read some books by Sigurd Olson, Ely, Minn. I could not get them in our library in Fort Frances and wrote to Mr. Olson as to where they could be procured. He wrote immediately and we corresponded for some time. He ultimately read some of my poems and urged me to get them published in book form, if it was only that my children and grand children might have them. He enjoyed the ones I wrote on 'Wilderness' and several others which are in my book ' Selective Poems and Prose'. Mr. Olson's opinion I valued highly knowing what deep respect is given him both in the USA and in Canada, also in overseas countries. I have read all his books except the last one.

About this time, some friends of mine, Dr. and Mrs. Bill Hay of Brandon urged me greatly to let them undertake the publishing of my poems. After some consideration, I decided to let them have the books I had scrawled them in. She was a receptionist in her husband's office, but found time to type off much of this. I spent much time in Brandon with them, and enjoyed their

kind hospitality.

I had never dreamed that I could ever write anything that was worthy of a place in a book, although I have had several poems in the 'Toronto Globe' as it was then called. After the first one came out, I had a letter from Wm. Dyer the Peace Poet, in Toronto. He complimented me on it and had passed it on to his good friend Charles G. D. Roberts (both now deceased) and he wrote to Mr. Dyer and commented on my poem. Told me how good it was in all but the last verse and showed me how I could rectify it, and explaining what to avoid in writing poetry. I valued this letter, which Mr. Dyer had sent on for my perusal, and was amazed that two celebrities would even condescend to notice the scribblings of a would-be writer. I corresponded with Mr. Dyer until his death. The poems that appeared in the 'Globe' and in my book, which was printed in 1973 when I was seventy-two years old.

I was disappointed in the type errors, which are many, in my book, but it has sold well, and is paid for long ago. I have a few left which I may get sale for from time to time.

I was asked for my philosophy of life. My main belief is in the Bible, which I read through every year, and have done so for nearly forty years now. I firmly believe John 3: 16 and since then, He has smoothed my pathway and the bitter things have become sweet. I remember that we all will stand before a just God, at the judgement of the just and of the unrighteous. I know 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God' so I govern my life accordingly. I am not a Saint but I am accepted of the Christ who died for me, and you who love Him will see me some day, where all is hope, joy and peace. This is not a sermon, nor is it philosophy, it is simply Scripture.