

9-1-1937

Jennie Shrader

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Recommended Citation

Hawley, Charles A. "Jennie Shrader." *The Palimpsest* 18 (1937), 285-298.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol18/iss9/2>

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XVIII ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER 1937 NO. 9

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Jennie Shrader

The life of John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet, was in many ways connected with Iowa. His interest began during the conflict over slavery when he gave advice and aid to the Quaker settlement of Salem. It continued during the sixties when the seminary in Salem was named for him, Whittier College. During all those years, up to the time of his death in 1892, he continued to send money and books to the struggling prairie college. Meanwhile, he corresponded with Iowa pioneers, his poems were eagerly read by them, and he was regarded as their spiritual guide and mentor. The story of Jennie Shrader and her admiration for Whittier forms an interesting link in the Iowa-Whittier relation.

Jennie Shrader, christened Eliza Jane for her mother, was born near Marietta, Ohio, on February 16, 1837. Her father, John Shrader, was one of the early settlers in Ohio. He married Eliza Melvin, the descendant of a Revolutionary pa-

triot. They were justly proud of their children and gave them the best education the community afforded. The son, John C. Shrader, and probably Jennie also, attended Marietta Academy. About the time Jennie finished school, the family moved to Iowa and settled on a farm in the vicinity of Shueyville. John went to the medical school in Keokuk and Jennie prepared to be a teacher. When the United Brethren founded Western College on the prairie nearby, the Shraders were much interested in the project.

Presently the Civil War disrupted peaceful pursuits. John C. Shrader enlisted and was commissioned captain of Company H in the Twenty-second Iowa Infantry. Eventually he served as surgeon of the regiment. Jennie's lover also marched away, and gave his life for his country.

After the war the Shraders moved to Iowa City. Jennie attended the Iowa City Commercial College from which she received a diploma in 1871. During the next few years she taught in the Iowa City Academy. Her pupils remember her as a rather small woman, quick of movement, and an excellent teacher. Later she taught in Cedar Rapids and Brooklyn, Iowa.

Though Jennie Shrader gave instruction in many subjects, she was especially interested in literature. Indeed, she hoped to be a writer her-

self. Believing that the mind of a child is best cultivated if filled with the thoughts of great authors, she used poetry as a means of teaching ideals as well as knowledge. She formed the habit of collecting the poems that pleased her most. Even in old age, when her handwriting showed the effect of passing years, she augmented her anthology. Among all the poets, Whittier was the best beloved by her.

There was a time when she had plans for publishing some of the poems she liked, perhaps for use in the schools. Accordingly, she wrote to Whittier asking permission to use one of his poems. His generous answer was kept among her most cherished possessions.

Danvers, Mass.

12" 12" mo 1886

Dear Friend

Of course I have no objection to thy use of the poem referred to in thy letter, but my publisher "Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Boston" have the copy-right and must be consulted.

Thy fd

John G. Whittier

Jennie Shrader's anthology included hundreds of poems. It was never published, but the voluminous manuscript, entitled *The Cloud Illumined*, has been preserved. According to the final plan, the poems were arranged in five groups: Work,

Immortality, Old Age, Happiness, and Gems from Whittier. The Whittier section contained "Sunset on the Bearcamp", "The Eve of Election", "The Seeking of the Waterfall", "Our Country", "Snow Bound", "The Book", and "The Worship of the Waters" ["The Worship of Nature" in later editions]. And in addition to these poems a large number of excerpts were included.

This anthology is not only important for its bearing on the popularity of Whittier in Iowa at that time, but also for Miss Shrader's wide interest in American literature. Her favorite writers, besides Whittier, were Holmes, Irving, Bayard Taylor, Mark Twain, Timothy Dwight, Prescott, Hawthorne, Lowell, Longfellow, Emerson, Channing, Theodore Parker, N. P. Willis, Horace Bushnell, Poe, John G. Saxe, and Bryant. Her selections from English literature were also extensive and representative, but her favorite writers seem to have been Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Tennyson, Bunyan, Pope, Ruskin, Carlyle, Dickens, Harriet Martineau, Samuel Smiles, and Thackeray. In addition to English, her anthology revealed a remarkable knowledge of German literature. Her favorite German writers were Schiller, Goethe, John Paul Richter, Paul Gerhardt, and Luther. From the French she chose Victor Hugo and Chateaubriand. Her selections from Spanish

centered largely around Cervantes. Tegner represented Swedish literature. Her selections from Latin were numerous, but Cicero seems to have been her favorite Roman author. Greek philosophers as well as poets were quoted. Even a few selections from Hungarian and Russian writers were included.

On April 24, 1889, Miss Shrader married the Reverend Joseph M. Wilson, a Presbyterian missionary to the Indians. He was fifty-five and she was fifty-three. Immediately after the quiet wedding at the home of her brother in Iowa City, they went to Humphrey, Nebraska, where they worked together in his ministry.

About 1896, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson moved to Urbana, Iowa, where they founded the Urbana Shrader Academy. Urbana was an "inland" town twelve miles northeast of Vinton. As there was no railroad through Urbana, merchandise had to be hauled by wagon from Center Point and neighboring towns.

According to the title page of the first catalogue of Urbana Shrader Academy, the calendar for the second academic year was as follows:

1898

September 5, Monday — Fall Term Begins.

November 25, Friday — Fall Term Ends.

December 5, Monday — Winter Term Begins.

December 24 to January 2, 1899 — Holiday Vacation.

1899

March 10, Friday — Winter Term Ends (13 weeks).

March 20, Monday — Spring Term Begins.

June 9, Friday — Spring Term Ends.

The second page was devoted to a list of the faculty. Mrs. Jennie Shrader Wilson was the Principal and taught algebra, English language, literature, and didactics. Rev. J. M. Wilson was listed for Latin and history; C. I. Fisher taught geometry and civics; and Miss Stella Gearhart was instructor in geography and assistant in English.

“The aims of this Academy”, announced the Principal, “are to prepare students for any college; to offer to those who wish to teach the best advantages to prepare thoroughly for their high and responsible calling, and to furnish a good, thorough, practical education for business or the ordinary associations of life.”

The Urbana Shrader Academy offered four courses: two “University Preparatory”, designed to fit students to enter the State University at Iowa City; a “Normal Course”, designed to prepare students to teach; and a “Business Course”, designed to prepare students for business. Pupils who wished to enter the Liberal Arts college of the University studied Latin, algebra, grammar, physiology, and botany in the first year; geometry,

Latin, rhetoric, English literature, and general history in the second year; and geometry, Latin, physics, and English literature in the third year. The course for students who expected to study engineering, law, medicine, or dentistry at the University was nearly the same, except that physical geography and geology were substituted for Latin in the first year.

Prospective teachers were trained in common school subjects such as arithmetic, geography, United States history, civics, and economics. Latin was omitted entirely, but reading, spelling, and penmanship were required throughout the whole period of three years. The commercial course, which afforded an "excellent opportunity" to obtain "a good business education at a very small expense", consisted of bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, commercial law, penmanship, spelling, typewriting, and stenography. Tuition was \$10 a term or \$28 for a whole school year of three terms. Special instruction in shorthand and typewriting cost five dollars a month.

Perhaps the character of the academy was best revealed in a few notes of general information. For example, a correct knowledge of the English language was esteemed "of the highest importance, so much so that success often depends very largely upon correctness, accuracy and facility in

its use", that special attention was given to the teaching of this subject. "Our aim is to make the instruction in this department as thorough and practical as possible."

Students preparing to be teachers were particularly fortunate because Mrs. Wilson herself taught didactics. Her experience as a teacher was described as wide and varied. All students were required to take examinations "from time to time and at the close of each term". Diplomas were awarded to all who completed a course, and students prepared for college were admitted to the State University on presenting their academy certificate.

According to the printed program, the "Second Annual Commencement Exercises of the Urbana Shrader Academy" were held in the Methodist Church on Saturday evening at eight o'clock on June 10, 1899. The class motto was "Palma non sine pulvere", the "School Color: Gold", and the "Class Color: Green". The exercises included:

Chorus	Academy Choir
Invocation	Rev. J. M. Wilson
Vocal Solo — "The Ship I Love"	Harry Haines
Oration — "The White Man's Burden"	
	Edwin L. Ketterman
Oration — "Looking Backward"	Dudley A. Moore
Vocal Solo — "One Night in June"	Mrs. Starr

Oration — "Influence of Ideals"	Stella Gearhart
Oration — "The First American"	Harold Lewis Bryson
Vocal Solo — "The Girl I Loved in Tennessee"	Abbie Burrell
Presentation of Diplomas	Mrs. Wilson
Vocal Solo — "The Star of Hope"	Mrs. Ella Haines

Such was a typical academic commencement in an inland Iowa town at the end of the century. Mrs. Jennie Shrader Wilson was typical of Iowa educators during this period. Eventually the public high school displaced the private academies. The Urbana Shrader Academy survived until 1904, when Mr. Wilson died. Soon afterward Mrs. Wilson returned to Iowa City.

During the remainder of her long life, Jennie Shrader Wilson gave her time to church, charitable, and literary activities. In the Presbyterian Church of Iowa City, with which she first became affiliated in 1871, she taught a Sunday School class of women. Following the example of her mother who was a pioneer Daughter of the American Revolution, Jennie joined that society and became much interested in the patriotic activities. Again she turned her attention to poetry, both as a student and a writer. She composed the words for several hymns and wrote a few patriotic verses. Some of her poems have been preserved by her nephew, Dr. Donald L. Crissinger.

REDEEMING LOVE

St. John 3: 16

Redeeming Love! O wondrous plan
That Christ should die for guilty man!
That he should leave his throne above
To show to earth God's heart of love.

Redeeming Love! We cannot know
All it implies, while here below;
'Twill take us all eternity
To comprehend the mystery.

Redeeming Love! I come to Thee —
My Savior, God, who died for me!
Thy love supreme excels my mind,
No cause save mercy do I find.

Redeeming Love my theme shall be
So long as life remains to me;
And when I join the Heavenly choir
The notes shall rise in anthems higher.

Redeeming Love the angels sing
As to the throne of God they bring
Their praises, and aloud proclaim
Redeeming love in Jesus' name.

Redeeming Love! O plan divine!
That Christ should give his life for mine!
Only a God of love supreme, —
Only *our* God, can so redeem!

March 2, 1924

IN MEMORIAM

To Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, Mrs. Elizabeth McGee,
Mrs. Agnes M. Slemmons

Through gates of pearl to scenes sublime, (Rev. 22: 14)
These white souls, borne by angel bands,
Were placed before the great white throne,
And golden harps put in their hands.

They join the halleluiah Song,
They walk the streets of purest gold; (Rev. 21: 21)
Far, far beyond our utmost thought,
They dwell mid glories manifold. (I Cor. 2: 9)

Were we enabled to behold
The splendor that adorns them there,
How poor would seem what now we hold
As greatest treasures, rich and rare.

O Friends beloved, we mourn you not,
We joy that you are satisfied: (Ps. 17: 15)
Your eyes have seen the beauteous king, (Ps. 24: 10)
They are not *dead*, but *glorified!* (Matt. 22: 32)

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

"All we like sheep have gone astray", Is. 53: 6.
Far from the strait and narrow way; Matt. 7: 14.
In paths of sin our feet have trod, Romans 5: 12.
Unmindful of our loving God. Ps. 10: 4.

To lead us back He sent His Son — John 3: 16.
The Christ of God, the Holy One. Matt. 16: 16.
He came His life for us to give Is. 53: 5.
That we eternally may live. John 10: 28; John 17: 3.

Holy Spirit, be my Guide
Till I pass beyond the tide.
Make and keep me pure within,
Spotless from a stain of sin.

Holy Spirit, one with God,
By angelic hosts adored!
Thy forgiveness I entreat
That my lips Thy name repeat.

One of her patriotic poems was a hymn to Iowa.

IOWA

It lies within the great mid-west,
This lovely State of ours;
No mountain lifts its snowy crest,
No scorching wind devours.

But broad and fair her shining plains
In all their splendor lie,
With fruitful trees and waving grain
That gladden every eye.

We render thanks for this dear land,
So rich in golden grain;
Here Plenty spreads her lavish hand,
And over all doth reign.

We only smile at those who roam
A *better* land to seek;
Ere long we see them coming home
More wise, if not more meek.

Her sons are manly, strong and wise,
And act their part with grace;
They lead the van in every charge,
And always win the race.

Her daughters fair, though seeming light,
Can fill the Chair of State;
At home a queen whose word serene
Oft calms a lordly mate.

Her Sons and Daughters now allied,
Performing all that's best,
Shall make of her the perfect home,
Our Iowa! the blest.

Chorus:

O Iowa! Our Iowa! So beautiful, so free!
O Iowa! Our Iowa! The land for you and me.

1922

Jennie Shrader Wilson's life represents the career of an active pioneer leader. She loved Iowa and gave her life for the advancement of the State. Her activity and alertness remained undiminished almost to the day of her death, which occurred May 4, 1931, at the age of ninety-four.

CHARLES ARTHUR HAWLEY