

Classic Poetry Series

Winnifred Coombe Tennant
- poems -

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Winnifred Coombe Tennant(1874 - 1956)

Winifred Coombe Tennant (November 1, 1874 – August 31, 1956) was a Welsh suffragette, politician, philanthropist, patron of the arts and spiritualist. She was also known by the bardic name "Mam o'r Nedd".

She was born Winifred Margaret Pearce-Serocold in Rodborough Lodge, but grew up in France and Italy. She married Charles Coombe Tennant in 1895, and they made their home at Cadoxton Lodge, Neath. They had three sons, Christopher, Alexander, and Henry, and a daughter Daphne, but Christopher and Daphne died young. Before the First World War, Mrs Coombe Tennant became a suffragette, and when war broke out, she was appointed deputy chairman of the Women's Agricultural Committee for Glamorgan as well as chairman of the local War Pensions Commission. After the war, she became the first woman to serve as a magistrate in Glamorgan.

In 1922, Mrs Coombe Tennant was selected as the Liberal candidate for the Forest of Dean constituency, but lost to the Labour candidate. Although unsuccessful, she was nominated by David Lloyd George as a representative at the League of Nations, becoming the first British woman to do so. She was a nationalist, and was heavily involved in the Eisteddfod movement, becoming Mistress of the Robes to the Gorsedd of Bards. She collected works of art and in 1931 became official buyer for the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, acquiring works by Welsh artists such as Gwen John and Kyffin Williams.

Under the name "Mrs Willett", she practised discreetly for many years as a medium, her clients including Sir Oliver Lodge. She died at her home in Kensington, London. Her papers are held in the archive of the National Library of Wales.

During her lifetime, had been a gifted medium and automatic writer. Together with several other sensitives, she had been the vehicle for communications of a most remarkable kind, the Cross Correspondences, which apparently came from the surviving spirits of W.F.H. Myers, Edmund Gurney and other early members of the Society for Psychical Research. Mrs. Coombe Tennant died in August 1956 and about a year later she began to communicate through the automatic writing of Geraldine Cummins. Over a period of two and a half years a series of 40 scripts were produced containing material of considerable evidential importance.

Kingsford-Smith

Ask the sun; it has watched him pass-
a shadow mirrored on seas of glass;
ask the stars that he knew so well
if they beheld where a bird-man fell.
Ask the wind that has blown with him
over the edge of the oceans' rim,
far from the charted haunts of men,
to the utmost limits and back again.
Ask the clouds on the mountain height
the echoes that followed him in his flight,
the thunder that prowls the midnight sky,
if a silvered 'plane went riding by.

If the birds could talk, would they tell the fall
of a god who winged above them all?
Of an eagle man by the world's decrees,
King of the blue immensities?

Winnifred Coombe Tennant