

William J. Fischer

Dr. William J. Fischer was a lover of all things beautiful – words, music, songbirds and flowers.

Fischer, born in 1879, was a distinguished medical doctor in Waterloo who also found time to write poetry and fiction. In the 1903 preface of his first volume of poems, *Songs by the Wayside*, the forward read:



“The poems of William J. Fischer reveal that a new man is about to arrive in the field of American letters. It is not contended that his work is perfect. Now and then discords are sounded; but it is true work, nevertheless. There are passages of exquisite melody, and through it all, rays of morning light, which is a presage of splendid noon.”

When his second volume of poems was published, *The Toiler and Other Poems*, a 1907 review in the London Free Press celebrated Fischer; reporting that he had “grown in literary stature since his earlier volume, and the growth has not been in imitation of any greater poets but along the lines of his own individuality.”

The London reviewer reminded readers that Fischer, who took a five-year classical course at St. Jerome’s College in Kitchener, also attended the Western University medical school and trained as a physician in London, Ont.

“Those who knew him then remember him as a man most lovable and absolutely without egotism. Absolutely frank in his bearing towards all alike he seemed to have realized the high liberty of a child with the manhood necessary to control it.”

Fischer was the son of J.B. Fischer a noted meat market owner who went on to become the mayor of Waterloo. He married Caroline Kuntz, the daughter of brewery owner Louis Kuntz on a beautiful June day in 1908. The newspaper announced that Kuntz was “handsomely gowned in a dainty dress of embroidered cream silk tulle with trimmings of filet and lace and wore a cream picture hat and carried an amethyst gold rosary. . . The bride and groom left Berlin on the 9:53 train for a wedding trip down the St. Lawrence.”

The couple had two daughters, Bernice and Agnes. Their twin sons died in infancy.

After training in London, Fischer went into partnership with Dr. J.H. Webb for several years before setting up his own practice in his stately home on the corner of King and what is now Bridgeport Road. In 1918 he was appointed assistant medical director of the Waterloo Life Assurance Company of Canada.

His vocation as a doctor and his passion for writing came together in one of his poems, called *The Doctor*:

*A worker in the low, degraded street,
He sees the shadow with the shining light
And touches black souls as the pure priest can;
He sees Pain, should'ring her old cross so sweet,
And, through the dawn, the live-long day and
night
He feels the pulse of God in ev'ry man.*

Sadly, at the age of 41, Fischer died of cancer. Both of his parents had died just months before his own illness.

An obituary read, "In addition to his literary ability he was a great lover of music being a master of the pianoforte as well as the composer of a number of beautiful musical moods to which he never gave publication. Dr. Fischer took great delight in the collecting of rare singing birds, his collection being one of the largest and most complete in Canada."