

The Poetry of Common Things

WRITTEN FOR THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY BY NELLIE L. M'CLUNG



LET ME BEGIN inoffensively with flowers, and plants and trees, common green things, inconvertible matters, against which there is no law. In this day of unrest and warring opinions, it would seem as if a contemplation of these things might have a soothing effect on our troubled spirits, for surely there is no corruption in carrots, no tricks in turnips, no mixed motives in marigolds. To look at the world of nature it would seem to give us a perfect example of submission and meekness of spirit, but it is not so. Nature is neither resigned nor submissive. It is her resistance to environment which teaches us the strongest lessons.

Plants have one ambition and therein they have the advantage of us, who, often have too many, or none at all. The plant's ambition is to grow, to leave home, to widen out. To stay at home is death!

If a seed fall at its mother's side, it is doomed to a stunted life, or a miserable death, and in the vegetable world, just as in our own, life is sweet. So the seed fights for air, for space, for a chance!

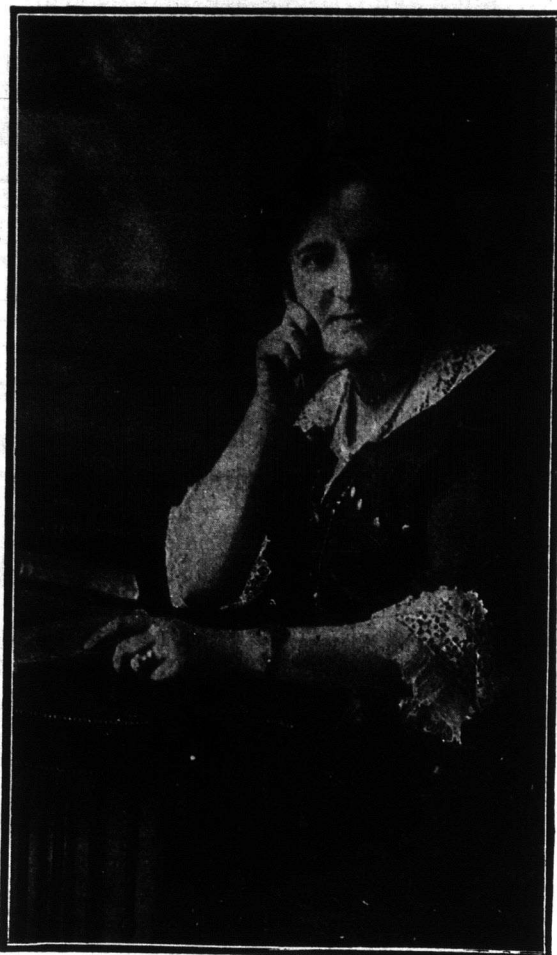
Seeds grow wings to help them to overcome space, just as you and I must grow wings to carry us over the rough places. You know the little wings of the maple seed, the soft down of the poplar and dandelion, the treacherous tumble weed that travels for miles. Every seed has some device, some scheme for overcoming space; sometimes it is just a pitiful little screw or whirl to delay its fall, and hold it in the air a little longer, and although many times the little device fails, that does not prevent the next seed from trying it.

Once a rootlet (according to Brandis) in penetrating the soil came in contact with an old boot sole, hard and apparently impossible to penetrate. The root at once subdivided itself into as many little rootlets as there were holes in the boot sole left by the needle, and then when they had safely passed through the tiny openings, they came together again and formed one root.

All nature throbs with struggle, hopes, achievement, and the man, woman or child who can draw near in faith, and read the message which God pins on every tree and flower, has a strong armour with which to bear life's battles.

There is poetry in everything that God has made; poetry means creation and God's work is all creative, it is only sin that destroys. Sin disintegrates, separates, breaks, scatters. It is dirt which keeps the wound from healing, the cement from setting, but poetry born of God is all creative.

Nature has spared no pains in producing beauty, for beauty is nourishing. There is the bow in the clouds, the gold in the western sky; the serrated leaf, the gorgeous



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Photo Jossop, Gladstone

color of the butterfly. Nature goes to no end of trouble to produce harmonious effects, for God knows that weary pilgrims on life's thorny highway need all these helps to bear life's burdens!

The poetic insight, which helps us to read aright the messages of good cheer, is not given to every one. In many it has been crushed out by the bitter grind of life. Things have to be chosen for their use and their ability to produce results. I once heard a woman say that she did not see why there was such a row made about the North Pole. It was no great find for whoever got it, for it was a poor frozen out place and would not grow anything anyway! She had, by reason of her hard experience with

late springs and early frost, acquired but one standard of value for any locality—would it grow wheat? We do an injustice to our children when we teach them, by our example, leanness of soul, letting them underestimate beauty.

A little boy once went out for tea; he belonged to a very large family. The lady of the house told him he was to choose his own cup and saucer from the china cabinet. Much to her surprise he chose a dark blue one, in preference to all the more gaily colored ones. She asked him why he liked the dark blue one best. He promptly told her he did not like it at all, but he took it because it wouldn't show the dirt.

We speak often of the depopulation of our rural neighborhoods, and wonder why our young people crowd into the cities, leaving good homes on the farm. Many have been the theories propounded, but the depopulation goes on.

Man cannot live by bread alone. Neither does a home consist of a place to eat, and a place to sleep. I have seen farm houses where the books consist of departmental store catalogues and "The Horse and His Diseases," by a veterinary authority and these were not the homes of poor people either. I once knew a family, who earnestly desired some sort of a musical instrument, and after much solicitation got their father to consent to look at organs. He did so and when he found out an organ was worth one hundred and twenty-five dollars, he nearly fainted. When he recovered from his swoon, he bought a Jewsharp. But the next spring he bought a farm and paid down three thousand dollars. You see the farm was a perfect legitimate investment and would pay a return; the organ would not bring in a cent.

We have set a money value on things. It is not the individual who is to blame but the race.

The lilies of the field, in the sight of our Master had a value, though as toilers and spinners they are decided failures.

Some day, in our public schools, we will have a department for the study of Beauty; a department for Poetry, a department of Humanity, whose object will be to make life fuller, sweeter and deeper. Let us show people how to be happy and it will be easy for them to be good.