

The RYERSON
P O E T R Y
C H A P - B O O K S



A Vale in Luxor

by

W. V. NEWSON

Introductory Note by Nellie L. McClung

OF THIS edition of THE VALE OF LUXOR, by W. V. Newson, two hundred and fifty copies have been printed. This Chap-book is a product of The Ryerson Press, Toronto, Canada.

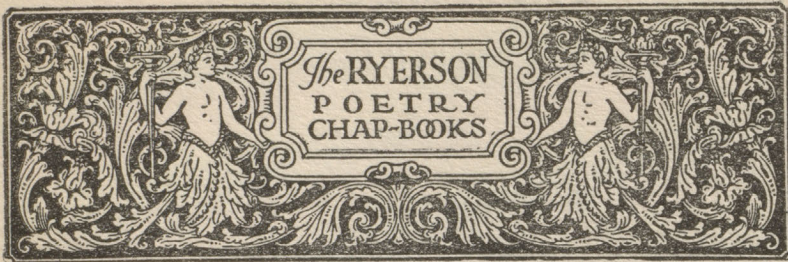
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INTRODUCTION

LIFE is full of surprises!

I thought I knew Mr. W. V. Newson, the dignified Deputy Treasurer of our Province, to whom we went when we had saved money enough to buy a bond. He has been one of the institutions of our Province, a solid rock of security—accessible, courteous, well-informed. But now we find that we did not know him at all—even those of us who went in and out of the same building, and saw him often. When we looked at that clear-cut, thoughtful face, we believed he was pondering on dull grey things like maturing bonds, Savings Certificates, and such—but now we know he was looking clear through these, down into the Vale of Luxor,

“Where gathered once the dynasties of old
Their precious baubles, beryl, chrysoptase,
Bronze fibulae—an alabaster vase.”

A poet has walked with us, and we did not know it!

The most poignant poem in the collection, in my opinion, is the opening one, “To My Mother,” in which the poet sets apart a little room of memory in his heart for his mother, where he can always come and visit her.

“There immortal you will be
Unperceived by all but me.”

Best of all, I like the poem entitled “The Workers,” in which the life of the bee is told in fragrant words that lilt and sing with languorous sweetness. It bears the mark of real genius, for it weaves a spell around the reader.

It is the poet's mission to show us the beauty of common things—to mend the broken harp of life with the magic of beauty, and make it play once more, and to this Mr. Newson has made his contribution. We sincerely congratulate him and gratefully acknowledge that he has shown us bits of beauty that our dull eyes had not perceived.

NELLIE L. McCLUNG.

Calgary, June 14th, 1926.

The Vale of Luxor

By *W. V. Newson*



To my Mother—Elizabeth A. Newson

EVER, ever, do I find,
In the runway of my mind,
Every beaten path or new
Hath its origin in you;
Nor park nor pale of wonderland,
But hath known thy guiding hand.

Far along the Hesperian way,
'Twas yours to give and mine to play,
Yours in faith to feel, and know,
Mine to doubt, and learn, and grow.

Ever, ever, Love will give
Me a room where you will live,
A room of memory sweet and true,
Where I may come and visit you,
There immortal, you will be,
Unperceived by all but me.



THE EYES OF A CHILD

TWO LITTLE pools,—twin lily ponds,
Demure and tranquil as the fronds,
That smile in affluent bloom adorning
The dear glades of youth's morning
Till the first sorrows of the baby mind
Ripple their tender blue, as a soft wind
Dimples the sunny waters of a mere,
Or shadows creep from nowhere unto here—
But wondrous things those eyes can do
To keep love awake in me and you!

ALBERTA—LAND OF SUNSHINE

I STAND on the brink of the prairie
And the foot-hills roll at my feet;
I'm proud of my towering mountain crags,
My flowering wolds and my wheat.

I've made a truce with Apollo;
I've borrowed his golden bow;
The lordly might of his shafts of light
Are warm in the grain I grow.

I hide in my breast my riches,—
My coal and naphtha and mould,
And power I store in a freshet's roar
To pay me a million fold.

I guard my gold in my rivers
And placer it in my coulees;
I hold in my hand a voluptuous land;
I wear my dower of trees.

This is the gift I offer,—
This to the strong and the bold:
I'm open to all who follow the call,—
Alberta—the new and the old.



DREAM RIVER

MY RIVER, dear dream river,
Close thy brimming braes beside,
Weary of the passing tide,—
I ponder.

Autumn leaves, sad Autumn leaves,
From the forest falling low,
Into my restless dream you go—
Dream fodder!

Beaming star, far beaming star,
Purple deeps of Winter's gloom
Nightly do your lamps relume—
Dream Giver!

Spring days, O bright Spring days,
Still my dream goes prattling by,
Yet upon thy banks I lie,—
And wonder.



“AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY”

LEAVE me not, O dread immortal Power!
Though so vaguely near,
I feel thy need yet nearer;
I would not loose my hold upon Thee,
Yet must Thou know how devoid I am
Of Knowledge,—how reason balks my will!
Thou who art Infinite, forbear
With those, who must forever grope
In that dark solitude of night
Where Thou art not—
Ever pursuing a distant glory
That men variously call God—
A Being remote and cold
Of unutterable magnitude—
A Supernal Phantom.
O bid me learn no more
Of Kingdoms vast, exalted
Beyond all human splendour,
But give me a home, near and warm,
Where I may dwell with my Preceptor;
Where are Honour, Beauty, Love;
Where there is One,
Who takes me to Him
Tired and worn, prepared to pass
How eager to that haven!

HEART OF THE LOTUS

A SUB-CONSCIOUS PRAYER

O SOVEREIGN-LORD of my destiny,
Eternal keeper of my innermost thoughts,
Daily do I commit myself to thy keeping;
Be receptive of the hopes of my conscious will
When I repeat what I desire to be
And to become;
Upon my praying-wheel I interminably revolve
My countless aspirations, but especially
That I may be kept strong in honour,
Free from all meanness,
Eager in work and buoyant in play,
And that the ending of each day
May find me reasonably happy
But not wholly satisfied,—
To the end that I may exalt my character
Beyond even the possibilities of my will.



JUST ONE OF GOD'S MOMENTS

JUST one of God's moments,
O Mother of mine—
Just one of God's moments
'Tween life and life,
One goes, one lingers a trifle of years—
It's a moment of God's divides us all.

Just one of God's moments
From babe to babe,
Just one of God's moments
'Tween age and age,
One lives, one loves, and flings onward the torch—
How little the moment that God has given!

Just one of God's moments—
I laugh at time;
Just one of God's moments
For me and mine,
Yet something within me will live for aye—
And one of God's moments has passed this way.

GRATITUDE

ALL THAT thou givest demandeth no return,
For gratitude, youth, love—in sorrow,
Have paid ever for their glad to-morrow;
So, when thou receivest favour, learn
That nought's expected, nought awaited
By the big of heart, that find in giving
Recompense in full that's ne'er belated;
But you, to earn full measure in the living,
Must give in turn—a kindly thought retold,—
A loyal word, just when it's in season—
Forbearance of betrayal—all these a thousand fold
Repay the heart that gives without a reason.



CONVERSATION

I SLEEP amid my myriad thoughts,
Dreaming betimes, now sad, now rapturous,
Till at last I wake and find you there
Beckoning some strange, weird form of beauty
Out of the vast infinitude of God
Into my consciousness;
See what a debt I owe to those
Who talk with me, and rouse
My languorous thoughts to conception,—
Thoughts, that but for you and you
Would sleep unborn, and
Ever in eternal solitude lie
Unwakened and adrift;
So in my spirit's highest noon
You woo them for their timeless swoon.



TWO CHILDREN

TWO CHILDREN hand in hand go by,
They know not where, they know not why—
Just looking for something, like you and I,
A sombering gleam in the Western sky.

Many the hills to brave and breast,
Children still—though far from the nest,
But ever remains the lure of the quest,
The golden lure of the gleam in the West.

Two little children, older grown,
Still seeking the dream of the Great Unknown,
Thro' widening eyes of a flower blown,
But half of the glory of wonder flown.



CLOUDS

THERE lay I dreaming deep within my chair,
When you came by and gently laid my hand
Warm in thine own—dear tendrils of command—
And bade me rise—but first you kissed my hair,
Then slowly to the window gravely drew,
And pointing Westward to the prairie dim
Showed me a filmy lake, just by its rim:
Headlands outjutting, bays of distant blue—
All this discerned in evening's fleecy mure;
As we in fancy ever first do hope,
Or e'en portray the things we would make sure;
And then, how often do our actions cope
The dream that doth our deeds procure
And doth prevent us in life's highest slope.



THEEWARD

TO YOU they go,
These wayward, vagrant thoughts;
Vibrant and yearning theeward
They press on to enfold you;
Musings joy-winged, sweet and true,
Wooed into life by you;
From some far-thought haven
They bring their dear love burden,
Nor need they be spoken—
These thoughts from dream-clouds woven,
But trip along from Soul of mine
And find anchorage in thine.

THE VALE OF LUXOR

Part I

HERE gathered once, the dynasties of old
Their precious baubles: beryl; chrysopease;
Bronze fibulæ; an alabaster vase
Dimly deline'd, that perfumed unguents held
And queenly fingers dipped—how finely rich
Against the velvet darkness of a niche,—
Pure and complete! Unbroken crowns of light
Lave round their form, as if to make
Of beauty a caress and fondly shake
Desire, unsurfeited, from the rapturous sight:
What rare altars! What canopies of gold,
Like veils of Isis, lifted fold on fold
Display new mysteries! Petals of vast
Ambrosial flowers, faded and hoar,
On ancient thorns impaled, fragrant no more!
What splendor of a King's immortal past,
Now, peaceful in that inner crypt of his,
At last is laid—a Pharaoh's chrysalis!

Part II

So came they here—their last pathetic way,
Tyrants of creeds, and mystic formulæ;
And what avail their power, their panoply
Of State, their pomp, their plaints of yesterday!
Their titan tumuli of stone, stern,
Majestic, rear their immemorial urn
About them; cleft pillar and architrave
And all the priestly trappings of their time
That went with Death, or saw their spirit climb
To Osiris, from mummy case and grave;
Their dust embalmed—the least would Oros save
In that great sepulchre of what he gave
Posterity; nor his wanton stylus
Weave all its story, save perhaps to trace
The ever mortal strivings of a race
For victory over time—his own papyrus;
Thus all have passed, both their beliefs and they;
Yet Truth, Beauty, Love will forever stay!

PYGMALION AND GALATEA

ABOVE its Parian plinth, an ivory shaft
Empoised upon its airy pedestal
The Cyprian King had built, his mind enthralled
To shape a form beyond the power of craft;
By groves of Ilex and by grassy mead
And azure fountain tinkling in the wind
Fair Aphrodite came, intent to find
A play for love, her warm and amorous need,
Nor strove in vain, for lo! Pygmalion kneels
Before the carven promise of a fair,
His hand perfected and his soul inspired;
Anon she seems to breathe, and now he feels
Her strangely move, the fillet in her hair
Encintured, falls,—she lives,—is his desired.



THE WORKERS

I

ARUSTIC bench beneath an apple bough
And blossoms pink and white to flaunt their lace
Above us, while Althea's golden mace
In silk corolla framed, now flicks the brow
As if to keep the drowsy noon awake
And opulently strews her waxen flake;
And yellow banded messengers, o'er sees
Of flowers, content and nectar laden, fleet
Their busy way, on lighting board to meet,
With bodies redolent of bloom and breeze
Of summer; working, panting, palpitate,
The narrow hiveway entrance, ventilate;
While drones and robbers are by some expelled
And some within, their precious burden store
Or preen the pollen, mid the murmur'us roar
From tawny leg, to frame and comb encelled
And feed the Royal Nymphs;—Can it be
Instinct and habit of heredity?

II

Another note is heard, happy and clear.
 A quiet hum;—they dart against our face
 And tangle in our hair, scouting a place
 To swarm; the Royal bride to heaven near
 Her nuptial flight has taken; and now emerge
 The drones from apathy, and find their urge
 To soar the firmament, and seek their mate
 Whom strongest wings and bravest eyes will find,
 And finding her will die, and dying bind
 With one great moment of his envious fate
 A countless host of fellows yet unborn,
 To life and work and to the sunny morn.
 Now soon the lang'rous consort droops to earth—
 In garden falls and sits upon a frond
 Of fragrant brier, whom, lo! the workers fond,
 Espy, and gather round their queen in mirth
 And cover neighboring bole, and shrub and tree
 From chaos to cohere, around the mother bee,

III

And so fall pendulous, like autumn grapes,
 That, mellow, bend the vine, their ripened blue
 Painting an arabesque, that holds them true;
 The keeper of the hives, the brindled shapes,
 Disclosed against their leafy resting-place
 His casual eye and calm and placid face,
 Perceiving, drapes a square of lawn beneath;
 Then straightway shakes them down, honey engorged,
 From hymeneal feast,—their temper forged
 To numbness, by satiety's relief;
 Lo! now to waiting hive the master takes
 The queen safe home; the mob to motion wakes
 And they become a moving, seething mass;
 But, what a sight!—They range themselves in ranks
 Like phalanxes of old: their tiny flanks
 Surmount the board: in martial order pass,—
 Sublimely brave, like legionry of Rome,
 To claim their place in corridors of comb.

TO RUPERT BROOKE

COULD earthly passion have inflamed a soul
Like unto this or soiled the limpid deeps
Of its imaginings—that like a spirit leaps
From the unutterable void of Time, the Goal
And Origin of all poor mortals!
Wafted or winging through life's portals
He came, too dear a thing for life
And its mad dissonance and strife;
Thoughts, fine, wondrous and perfumed,
Came from the Infinite, to be relumed
Into our being,—dim elusive shades
Caught in immortal tracery that fades
Faintly, like the slow disappearing breath
Of an infant claimed by death.



AN EXILE'S LAMENT

ERE WESTERING call of eve and shadow song
And weary years have told their all to me,
O to return, my Island home, to thee!
To pastoral scenes where calm delights prolong
Life's afternoon in lingering light, and glow
Like some enchanting tale, whose theme would keep
The tired eyes wide, that else would gladly sleep,
Or some sweet rime, whose tale is told full slow;
There, in life's short evening, would I view
Thy blossomed gardens, in their summer green,
The sloping banks of dun against the blue;
Now fade the purple shades upon the screen
Softer than evening and leave me nought to fear—
A slumbering child that knows its mother near.



BY THE SEA

HOW LIKE a woman's smile you seem
Glowing in sapient wonder—like a gleam
Of gladness, far spreading o'er the mere,
Sweetly at peace; till the souging sere
Of the wind gathers thy brow in wrinkles
That an hour ago were dimples;

From thy log pavilion looking down
I love to view the vagaries of thy frown
And wonder will Apollo come
To chase the scurrying shadows one by one
Back from thy glory!
What soft intuned story
Breathes in the deep,
And strives its mystery to keep!



THE CALL OF THE PLAINS

DAWN and the warm earth odours,—
God! What a land! What a day!
The hungering leap after winter's sleep,
The pulse of the mead and the ley!

The myriad darts of the morning
Spraying the palpitant glebe,
And a soul washed clean from the false and the mean
In the glory of things to be.

Far away, down by the marshes
A familiar bruit and blare;
You pause and hark to the distant bark!—
Your lowly friend and a hare.

So your plough pushes on in the furrow
And you dream on your downward way
While saffron flake and crimson lake
Are tinting the portals of day.

And this is the call of the prairie
Just simple and sweet and gay,
Over the hills and under the hills,—
The call of the Plains—in May.

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Lorne Pierce—Editor

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