

**THE FLOWER-PATCH
GARDEN BOOK**

by

FLORA KLICKMANN

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THE FLOWER-PATCH GARDEN BOOK

by
FLORA KLICKMANN

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Foreword

THIS is not a book for the Great among flower-growers. Nor for the Highly-experienced. Nor for the owners of gardeners who specialise on under-gardeners.

It is merely some random memos, made by one who doesn't know much. But who manages to keep moderately sane in the midst of that grinding machine called London, by thinking at day's-end of the high hills, which, though far and far away, are ever near to those who have once looked upon them, and loved their flowers, and ferns, and trees, and singing waters.

I

The Universal Need

ONE of my London friends, a woman teacher, lives alone in a flat, aided by a daily domestic assistant, who leaves the flat before her employer's return in the evening.

One day, as a present, the helper brought a flower-pot containing one leaf and a small root, taken from a plant she herself cherishes. Possibly she thought the flat could hardly be called a home without that particular ornament in the front window. Or she may have felt lonely, and wanted it there as company for herself. At any rate, she never fails to water it; and at intervals shares with it a penny packet of fertiliser bought for her own plant.

At the conclusion of her daily session, she invariably leaves a note on the kitchen table, reporting the outstanding events of the day. This was the bulletin left on one occasion:

“The man came to see the electric meter. The cat has three kittens. I've fed the Asperdistrer.”

That note sums up many a woman's day—routine duties small and large with, over all, a perennial craving for, and a desire to foster, beauty. Men may come, and kittens may go; but we continue our undaunted efforts to secure what stands to us for sheer beauty, even in the most unpropitious surroundings.

The poor “asperdistrer” has become a national joke; yet it often is representative of the better part of us—the desire for

the loveliness of undiluted Nature, as distinct from the tawdry glitter of the town.

It is pathetic to see the way we who live in crowded cities hold out our hands for anything that will bring Nature nearer to us, though it be but dyed beech leaves or gilded cones.

It is true that we can go to magnificent Flower Shows in our big cities. This is a gain. We see the marvels produced by experts, and think how wonderful it would be if we, too, could own a garden or a greenhouse radiant with such blooms—while we are painfully aware that we can't!

Yet in many cases I think it would be possible to do more in the flower-growing line than is being done; only we must divest our minds of the Flower Show effect, and get down to simpler beginnings.

The gorgeous Shows, despite their educational value, are positively hypnotic.

The sight of the wonderful specimens that are the result of years of care and selection, and bringing up by hand, often make us lose our heads, and we exclaim:

“Oh! I *must* have that!” (which is exactly what the grower hoped it would do!), forgetting that those choice varieties need specialised treatment as a rule, otherwise they will fail.

Fortunately, there are people still left in our happy islands, who, in addition to paying their taxes, can afford to give the choicest plants all the attention they require. But I am not writing for such. They don't need garden books, because, for one thing, they seldom do any gardening. They are usually deprived of the joy of digging and planting, by the discouraging presence of head-gardeners and their assistants. One is sorry for such people if they really love dabbling in the earth.

I lived for some years next door to a millionaire—a real millionaire, who had risen from small means to wealth he scarcely knew how to spend. But he loved his huge garden, a hobby that enabled him to get rid of a fair amount of cash annually, because his head man always pointed out to him the expensive rarities at the Chelsea Shows, and saw to it that he bought them.

Unfortunately, though the millionaire was a man of firmness where his business was concerned, he never seemed to have the courage of his gardening opinions any day of the week, excepting Sundays—when the presiding dignitary of the estate was smoking a pipe peacefully in his kitchen at an out-of-sight lodge by the hammered-iron gate; and the underlings were absent. Then it was that the poor rich gentleman would step out cheerfully with a kneeling mat, a broken knife, and a basket, and prod away at any weed he could discover. His only sorrow, as he told us, was the fact that they were so hard to find. His men kept the place as tidy as a hospital.

We did wish our neighbour would notice that there were weeds enough to satisfy the most ardent enthusiast in *our* humbler domain. But he was entirely engrossed in searching for an erring blade of grass in his own.

For millionaires, the great Flower Shows hold no pitfalls. They can order whatever takes their fancy, with the comfortable knowledge that each plant, when it reaches them, can be pampered as much as it desires.

But people with lesser purses, and scant outside assistance, must proceed on more circumspect lines, and only order what they know they can rear.

Just as we have developed a wholesale labour-saving campaign indoors, with the reduction of servants, abolishing things that are no earthly use, and taking short cuts whenever possible, so we might easily simplify some of our gardening, when we have to do much of it ourselves, or supervise ignorance.

It is often possible to get gay results, with less expenditure of time than was thought essential in the past. The amateur should keep this in mind.

The modern flower-garden aims, as a rule, at colour effects—masses, or clumps, of vivid colour. It is immaterial what form the flowering surface takes—rock garden, herbaceous border, woodland vista—we want colour and still more colour.

This desire is a physical need. We require colour in our surroundings, just as we need flavour in our food. Of course we can exist in neutral or drab surroundings, just as we can exist on flavourless food. But human nature doesn't thrive if deprived of colour, any more than if deprived of flavour.

The hideous outbreak of violent daubs and garish splashes, that called itself "Art," after the war, and made our wall-papers and fabrics a series of nightmares, was actually a reaction, after the surfeit of khaki and the depressing coloration of our war-time surroundings. It was the wild orgy of people starving for colour, who, having at last got hold of a few paint-pots, flung the paint about, and indulged themselves crazily and unrestrainedly.

Happily, we are now recovering our sanity where colour in art and decoration is concerned, though this doesn't mean that we need less; we need even more than in the past. It is a gain that our dress gets brighter as the years go on.

Nowadays, middle-aged and elderly people will often wear light or vivid colours that would have amazed the early Victorians. But our ancestors didn't need imported colour as we do. Nature provided them with handfuls of rainbow at every turn.

Now, alas! all too many of the hills that only half a century ago gleamed green and gold when the sun shone, or purple and blue in the shadows, are now smothered with unsightly small houses, grown dingy with soot and climate. Fields which were yellow with buttercups, or pink and purple with orchises, are now grime heaps, with factory chimneys belching poison. Brooks which were bordered with forget-me-nots, water-flags, and kingcups, are now repulsively edged with empty tins and such-like refuse, or more mercifully hidden away in drains. Woodlands that were carpeted with bluebells, or fringed with foxgloves, have now given place to the devastation of the jerry-builder. Even the sky—with its daily glory of sunrise and sunset, its immeasurable blue lying behind the white and grey cloud-banks—is blotted out in many places by a heavy pall of smoke.

Not everywhere, of course, has this desolation obliterated our heritage of beauty. But that appalling octopus—mechanised civilisation—extends its blighting shadow steadily and persistently as the years go on, depriving us more and more of the colour which is our rightful due, if mind and spiritual vision are to be kept healthily alert.

It is possible, however, to do much more than we are doing at present, to restore Nature's colours to our land, even though we can't put back the hands of the clock, and demolish the ugly buildings which have been allowed to

disfigure what was once the loveliest of scenery. And the cultivation of individual flower-pots, no matter how small or unpromising, with individual gardens, is one sure method of helping to satisfy that intense love of colour that is born in us.

And we needn't worry because our acreage is small.

There is such a distinct appeal in a little garden. The extensive borders, and lawns, and rockeries, and water gardens of great estates are impressive as well as delightful. One looks at them with awe, as well as admiration. But not with the sheer love that one feels at the sight of a flower-filled cottage garden, with blush roses by the door, and a crimson and yellow honeysuckle climbing up to the thatch.

A little garden can have a definite personality which is bound to be lacking in big estates when the work is in the hands of many different people.

There is a tendency, too, for gardens on a large scale, and in the possession of restless owners, to bristle with whatever characteristics chance to be the fashion at the moment. At one time pergolas seemed to possess the earth. But I fancy many people have by now discovered that these are not by any means all one's fancy painted them, when the blossoms contrarily flourish out of sight at the top, with only straggly stems in view down below.

Of recent years there has been an extensive outcropping of sundials on "modern-antique" pillars, also ornamental well-heads, as a central motive, with paved paths around, radiating to various points of the compass. Also lily-ponds, mop-headed shrubs in tubs, white-wood garden furniture, and garden ornaments. All very charming and effective when well placed, but monotonous when encountered in nearly every

garden. And often unsuitable when huddled together in the restricted area within a new-villa fencing!

It is a mistake to try to make a small garden a reduced replica of a large one. The cottager seldom does this. Instead she (and it is usually a “she”) plants what she likes, as she likes. She doesn’t clutter up the ground with extraneous matter, but sticks to growing things, the only ornament being the cat! She knows her plants individually; can give you the life history of each, with its likes and dislikes, its whims and vagaries. She tries to provide each with the soil and situation it prefers—one of the secrets of her success. And she allows no alien hand to meddle with her flower family; this secures their safety. Whether her borders be precise or haphazard, they reveal her personality if she be a true flower lover. It is this that makes many a cottage garden so attractive. We react to individuality.

Moral. If your flower garden is not large, keep to a very simple design. But whatever its size, plan it to suit yourself. Avoid what “everybody” is doing. Break away from all fashionable garden-tags, unless you desire them so keenly that you feel you can’t live without them! Be yourself in your garden. Let it represent your own ideas (so far as you can induce it to do so!), your own tastes and preferences.

If you do this, you will produce a much more interesting fragment of landscape than if you had copied some other person’s orthodox lay-out, and incorporated the fashionable garden features, merely because they are fashionable.

We feel the actual value of a small garden more than we do that of a big one. We are like the man who never said Grace when he had abundance, but said it regularly when poverty came.

And in any case, be the acreage great or small, our own gardening failures and mistakes often seem more interesting (to ourselves) than some of the successes of other people!

II

Some Indefatigables

IT is New Year's Day. I have been round the Flower-Patch gathering a basketful of brightness to carry indoors. The winter having been mild, as usual, there is quite a goodly number of summer-blossoming plants still doing their best to be gay.

There would have been many more, but for the annual necessity of clearing the borders when autumn arrives, in order to make all ship-shape against the coming of spring—a sad process, against which my soul rebels, for I hate to see plants which are still showing flowers, torn up and dumped on the bonfire! But I don't know how to avoid it. If the place is to be kept in reasonable order, it is useless to wait till frost sets in, or the spring arrives! The work would never be finished before the garden was bursting with new life and energy.

But I do stipulate that some must be left; this enables me to gather flowers of one sort or another out of doors most weeks in the year.

Already primroses are peeping from their tufts of crinkled leaves; but they keep their stems short at this season, apparently aware that gales must still be faced, and at this height—for the Flower-Patch is high up on a steep hillside—the closer they keep to the ground till the Atlantic wild winds become tame again, the safer they will be.

The polyanthus doesn't seem so nervous; many of these are holding up sturdy bunches of bloom. The garden cowslips have been in bloom for a month and more.

Blue stars of the periwinkle are dotted about among its glossy evergreen leaves. Festoons of canary creeper are bright with flowers round a sheltered window. Roses, sweet allysum and mignonette can still be gathered.

Winter jasmine and Christmas roses are what one expects to find at this time of year. Also the scarlet anemone is very accommodating and is in bloom now.

But the flower that deserves as much praise as any, at the moment, is the corn marigold, the sunniest of gems, which is still blooming bravely. I often wonder why this isn't more grown than it is, for it is one of the most obliging and uncomplaining of annuals.

It belongs to the Daisy family; the flower is like the moon daisy of the meadows, but it is the clear, clean yellow of the winter jasmine. It is sometimes called the yellow ox-eye. This particular shade of yellow has a charm all its own. It has no trace of orange in it; neither is it pale like a wild primrose. It can be guaranteed to bring glory into the dullest day.

Its foliage, too, is very pretty, a delightful shade of green with the faintest hint of blue in it; and well-cut leaves.

Beginning life as an unobtrusive annual hidden away in distinguished and aristocratic seed-catalogues among "Annual Summer Chrysanthemums," at the fag-end of an imposing list you may find *segetum grandiflorum*, which is my beloved friend the corn marigold.

I give the Latin name, not because I like it. I don't! I prefer the homely names of our English countryside. But the Latin name is safest when you are ordering some seed—which I

hope you will do. For a few pence, you can procure enough to stock half an acre.

I have heard it said that in the past this plant was a perfect pest to farmers, it was so rampant in the corn-fields. But our locality is not suitable for much corn-growing. Hence, whatever may be its fortune elsewhere, it hears no harsh words here! On the contrary, visitors say “What a wonderful show of yellow marguerites! I had no idea they would grow like that out of doors!”

Sow the seeds sparingly, as for ordinary annuals; thin out when a couple of inches high, as this plant grows to a height from two to three feet, and branches in all directions if it be given space; every spray bearing blossoms. These appear about the end of June; then it blooms and blooms, till a severe frost cuts it down. It won't stand a hard winter, any more than other annuals; but though our nasturtiums were turned to jelly a couple of months ago by ground frost, the corn marigolds are still smothered with yellow; and, like their first cousins, the pot marigolds, they will last on till next summer, if no severe frost reaches them, and the gardener doesn't clear them out! By that time, a host of descendants will be springing up, all about the borders and paths, where they have seeded themselves. We are never without them.

Of course they become straggly, overgrown and untidy-looking eventually, and have to be cleared from orderly beds. In any case, newly raised annuals bloom more freely than the left-overs from last year as a rule; but the old plants are valuable if they can be kept through the winter when flowers are scarce.

The virtues of the corn marigold are many. It has no fads; is willing to grow anywhere, so long as it can have a little

sun. All the members of the Daisy family like light and open-air sunshine, though not many can stand drought. So it is desirable to give this plant an open position; a little water when the weather is very dry; space to grow in, and then let it please itself—and very quickly it will please you too!

Another of its good points is its freedom from blight; at any rate, I've never seen any on my own plants. They seldom need staking; though, if they encroach on their neighbour's property, they can be gently restrained with a stick and a little raffia. But if you want plenty of colour, let them spread themselves as they will. In big masses they are really dazzling.

Then for cutting, they are beyond praise. I have known them to keep quite fresh and sprightly in water, for three weeks indoors, after being cut. They, and the ranunculus, are the most-lasting-when-cut flowers that I know. I believe both these would look well at the end of a month, if the water is frequently changed. And cutting—in moderation and with circumspection—does the corn marigolds good. If single flowers are cut on their long stems, leaving most of the greenery intact, fresh blooms will be sent up from every shoot. It is most generous with its blossoms, so long as it isn't allowed to run to seed. Remove the dead flower-heads and the plant will keep up a continuous supply of new-comers, till cut off by the cold.

Why this lovely thing isn't seen more often in gardens, I never can understand. It will grow in towns, and asks for so little attention.

When you have grown the *chrysanthemum segetum grandiflorum* you may like to try others of the Annual Summer Chrysanthemums. They are all easy to rear, and

come in a variety of colours, self and mixed. The coronarium varieties—garland daisies our great-grandmothers called them—are all very pretty, and, like the corn marigold, they are all good for cutting.

Two other annuals making a striking show of colour out of doors this New Year's day are borage and virginian stock.

Borage does not stand severe cold; but so far, it has braved the frosts that carried off the nasturtiums, the marrows, and the scarlet runners.

The drawback to this plant is its habit of hanging its head with such extreme modesty that one can see next to nothing of its wonderful azure blue, unless it is high up on a bank or wall, and the spectator is down below it.

Strangely enough, it is now lifting up its head these winter days, holding its blossoms in a more rational way, presumably to catch every bit of sunshine. In consequence, we now have an expanse of blue such as we never see in the summer.

And what a colour it is! A radiant intense blue; one feels it is the tint of all others that should be called blue. Certain delphiniums have this blue; sometimes its relative the anchusa gets near it. Yet nothing is quite like the borage.

Occasionally it takes on pink, or verges on purple. But while both these are attractive, its pure blue is its outstanding charm, with the touches of black and of white.

The present-day neglect of this plant may be due to its ineffectiveness, when grown on the ground level. Also, like the anchusa, its rough hairiness makes it less pleasant to handle than most garden dwellers. And it doesn't exactly shine as a cut flower! But if it can be grown among the upper crags of a rock-garden, or on a bank or slope, where it can be

looked up to, it is a beautiful thing. And in winter, if it has escaped the frost, it comes as a revelation to see the small bushes covered with blue stars, like nothing else the garden can produce.

It seeds itself from year to year. All the attention it ever gets from us is a persistent weeding out of big chunks that grow up defiantly among the gooseberry bushes, apparently revelling in the fact that one can't get at them without a stout pair of gloves—which one seldom has handy at the moment! And no matter how indefatigably one may work, to remove them from unauthorised places, one or two are sure to poke out their heads, later on, from the lower reaches of the sweet pea hedges, or disport themselves jauntily among the rhubarb.

Judging by the way they look after their own interests, and allow nothing to discourage them, I am inclined to think that, given one borage seed, it would be sufficient, in due course, to provide one with borage for a lifetime, and then have some over to leave in one's will!

Of course everybody knows all about virginian stock!

But do they?

At any rate, for the few who may not, I want to proclaim its good qualities. Should you only know it as a quick-growing edging, which soon becomes a dried-up, untidy tangle after flowering, you don't know the best of it.

Whereas, if the flowers are cut as soon as they fade, instead of being left to seed, a second crop of blooms will soon appear, and even a third, if your patience is sufficient for the job.

If it is only wanted for a short season to fill up a gap, pull it up as soon as the flowers are over, for it is very unsightly if left in the ground to wither.

But it is as a winter and early spring decoration that it can be so especially lovely. Seeds planted in late summer will begin to flower about November. If the winter is not too severe, these will give a pretty expanse of colour right on till the following May.

I have all sorts of odd boxes filled with it; these stand about in corners, or on the tops of walls, anywhere, so long as they are not fully exposed to the gales. They make very cheery pictures of happiness all through the darkest days.

Outside window boxes, facing the sun, can be kept in full flower with this useful little plant, right through the winter. Boxes and pots of it can be reared on a balcony or open verandah. It likes light and prefers to be out of doors, though it can be grown under glass. Or the boxes and pots can be brought inside when a hard spell of weather threatens. Only naturally one's greenhouse space is needed for more valuable and delicate items in the winter.

Wherever it is planted, it comes up so quickly, and gets to business right away, making no fuss about it, that it deserves better treatment and more careful consideration than it gets.

Often it is regarded (like mustard and cress) as mainly useful for the children to grow in their own little garden. Or at best, it is usually grown in far too crowded a manner, which results in poor attenuated plants; whereas it can be made to provide delightful colour effects if sufficient space be given to it, and a suitable position.

There is a rich crimson variety which is effective, and each colour can be bought separately if desired. The prettiest

treatment I have seen was a mixture of the white and the mauve varieties grown as a wide band in front of a massed bank of purple canterbury bells.

I would mention that, for some mysterious reason, the mauve variety is sometimes catalogued as red! If you stipulate for mauve, however, you ought to get the right sort, no matter what it is called on the label. It often starts out as pink, but develops into mauve.

Incidentally, a border that specialises in mauve and purple and white, with a touch of pale blue to heighten the effect, is a sight not easily forgotten.

A writer who gives a long array of plant names can become very boring! And it is extra tiresome if the plants listed require heat and cossetting, should it happen that the reader has neither a heated greenhouse, nor time to do the cossetting.

Therefore, I will only name one other plant that is a real ornament to the garden this first day of January—one that is the hardiest imaginable—variegated kale.

It is so seldom seen. Yet it is not only beautiful, but useful. One can eat it as well as admire it, though I prefer to keep it in the garden to the end of its praiseworthy career, it is so extremely decorative.

Procure your seed from a high-class firm, otherwise you may not get much “variegated.” Plant in the spring, as you would ordinary cabbage. Don’t be disappointed at their appearance when they come above ground; the youngsters won’t look at all remarkable at first, and probably you may think you have nothing but a row of broccoli or spring greens. If you have procured good seed, however, you will see a difference, as time goes on!

Thin them out as they grow bigger; but if you have room for them, don't throw any away; plant the thinnings somewhere else.

By the late autumn you should have a crop of kale in lovely shades of pink, mauve, purple, wine colour, as well as white. Some will be bordered with the narrowest edge of green; others will show no green at all. At most, there is very little green; mauve and purple being the predominating colours in the foliage, with frills of white, pink, or a darker purple. It is a very frilly plant.

One packet of seed will literally give you yards of colour, which brightens and increases as the cold weather advances. To go out on a frosty morning, and see what looks like big bouquets of pink or rose-coloured leaves, all outlined with sparkling diamonds, comes as a great surprise to everyone who sees it for the first time.

And instead of the winter finishing its beauty, the plants in the following spring will send up tall spires of yellow blossoms, which are most effective when seen in waving masses. When these turn to seed, the plants should be pulled up; their work is done.

Anyone who can find space for a row of these beautiful plants should try them, if they do not know them already. They need about the same amount of space as a row of cabbages; and they look best planted in a row, or singly, where each can display its own colour scheme. But as each leaf is beautiful, one does not grudge them the space they need. As a background for a flower-border they are very striking. While in the kitchen garden they provide such a gay variety entertainment, that even the beets will turn pale with envy.

The sun has just dropped behind the Windcliff opposite us,
in a glow of tawny orange; and above this, crimson and
purple sunset bands stretch across a sea-green sky.

That pale green tint spells frost to-night!

III

Points about Purple

THE most restful-looking garden I ever had was the year the Flower-Patch decided—without any special reference to me—to be blue and mauve and purple.

This may sound foolish to anyone who is only acquainted with properly and personally conducted gardens, and who knows nothing of the vagaries of a garden which is left for months at a time without an owner giving definite orders; with sunshine, a liberal rainfall, a southern aspect, on a warm hillside; and every other inducement to Nature to get busy.

I know it appears as though a garden ought to develop according to what one puts in it. And when one reads books about the correct way to garden, it seems inevitable that the garden beds must display the colours one has planted there.

It ought to be like that—but it isn't always!

I had not intended the Flower-Patch to be blue and mauve and purple. I meant it to be a rich mixture. And to this end, I had put in all sorts of seeds in August, where I saw a bare bit of earth—clarkias, eschscholtzias, annual candytuft, etc.—the seeds had been put in the ground in the hope that they would make some growth before the winter, and be that much ahead in the spring.

The insatiable flower-grower is always trying to take time by the forelock; and as a rule gets no farther on in the long run. One never seems able really to get ahead of either Nature or old Father Time!

But since hope springs eternal in the gardener's chest, I left the seeds there, with many kind thoughts, when I returned to town.

What became of them, I don't know. Possibly the birds ate them; or they may have started to do their duty, but were promptly sat upon by their neighbours. I can't say. I only know they were not to be seen when I visited the garden the following May; but neither were the bare spaces visible, for the perennials had taken possession of any ground they could get hold of, that wasn't already annexed by forget-me-nots.

The West of England being much milder than London, it is wonderful what headway some of the things will make as compared with conditions in town; while there are equal surprises on the other side of the ledger, when one adds up the items the rabbits and pheasants have eaten! Fortunately, there is usually enough and to spare: and the balance is generally on the right side.

I had dotted about the beds various roots of the small purple viola; quite little plants they had been, the year before. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the large, spreading clumps, smothered with flowers of an intense violet, that stands out an arrestive splash of colour for quite a long distance.

Then the aubretia! A flower I dearly love. It comes in such beautiful tints, and in such masses of bloom, clothing the stones, and carpeting the beds, wherever it gets a chance. Here, the rich "Violet King" had surpassed itself. I had planted it in among, and around, primroses. Though these were nearly over, there were enough left to show how satisfying was the intermingling of the two colours.

In addition to the rosy-violet, which is my favourite aubretia, there were others, pale mauve, pink, mauve-blue, and crimson, in various shades, and all of them charming. They are so industrious and enterprising. One loves the little low-growing flowers that make such a gorgeous show on so little; braving the uncertain spring weather with a radiant look of hopefulness.

The columbines were in full bloom. These are all self-sown, and grow like weeds. We merely pull them out when they interfere with other things. They made a pretty fluttering of purple and blue, with white and blue mixtures, as well as pink and wine colour.

Violets proclaimed their presence by their scent. While dog violets had spread in a surprising manner, and were of all shades of mauve and purple.

Speaking of violets: there is one clump of a peculiar washed-out beet-root colour, quite distinct from all the others. It isn't as pretty as some, but it is unusual. This plant literally walks about the place! I first noticed it in a bed a good way up the hillside. Next year it had moved a few feet lower down. The following year it had wandered still lower down the slope. It throws out long runners, and they enable new plants to travel in this perambulatory fashion! We let it walk on as it pleases.

Bluebells were among the uninvited inhabitants of the garden. They get in somehow from the adjoining orchards and woods which are blue with them. Speedwell, with the little white daisies, had taken possession of the grass paths. Ground ivy was blooming at the bottoms of the walls, and

wherever it could get a holding, and escape the gardener's hoe.

Periwinkle was flowering with exceptional zest—both the small and the large flowered. It trails over banks, climbs up among the prickly branches of cotoneaster that clothes some walls, carpets the ground under trees, and tries to monopolise the paths. A most useful plant, that endeavours to do its best even under the most adverse conditions. But give it a little sunshine, and a modicum of moisture, and it shows flowers most of the year, with a specially gorgeous display in early summer. It is in the winter, however, that I, personally, prize its blossoms most of all, for it is such a hopeful reminder that spring will be here presently.

There were blue irises, blue veronica; also uncommon blue auriculas with primrose-coloured centres, and a perfume as rich as their own colouring.

Various lilacs were in bloom, from the palest mauve to deep purple. And everywhere, in the beds, between the stone paving, in the crannies of the walls and steps, among the grass by the margin of the garden pond, were forget-me-nots—the old-fashioned kind, with large, baby-blue flowers and yellow eye. I like these much better than some of the newer varieties, which are strident in comparison with the unmatched blue of the old-world forget-me-not.

Of course there were other flowers and other colours; but the blue and mauve and purple outshone all the rest; and the yellow of the wallflowers only served to emphasise the blue.

The curious part about that garden was the way it continued the blue and purple scheme, when its spring flowers gave place to the summer show.

Not only did the sweet peas turn out to be a mauve variety, when I had ordered “Mixed” (this was due to my illegible handwriting; I couldn’t lay the blame on Nature), but the big purple mallows bloomed as never before—great bushes of violet flowers, two to three feet high. The campanulas, several sorts, were luxuriant. They were all over the garden, thanks to the gardener’s careful dividing and transplanting, from the pale blue ones with blossoms that climb up a tall stem, to the deep purple bell-flowers that would be so much more valuable if their long stems were not so weak.

The purple gladioli I had ordered, did everything the catalogue had said they would do, and a little more besides.

Of the annuals, the violet-coloured larkspurs, and the deep blue convolvulus minor made prize displays. The whole garden was a sea of purple and mauve, into which the pinks and paler colours seemed to merge, without saying too much about themselves.

It was a beautiful sight, and one I’ve never managed to repeat. Our neighbours and friends came and studied it, with a view to doing likewise. But it isn’t easy to duplicate a freak of this kind. Directly one definitely sets out a series of plants of one colour, either they look stiff and artificial and unconvincing—or else they don’t bloom that year!

One of our visitors, after looking at the scene in silence, at last said: “I’ve heard that purple and mauve are the most soothing colours for the mentally afflicted.”

I agreed and explained that this was why I surrounded myself with them. I also told him of the unknown correspondent (feminine gender) who wrote to me:

“Purple is the Spiritual Colour. It is the Heavensent ingredient in the rainbow. Alas, I see no purple in *your* writings!”

“I expect you had declined one of her poems,” was my visitor’s comment.

It was a comforting suggestion.

IV

The Critic

AN uninvited distant cousin, three-times-removed, had come down to the Flower-Patch from London, to sympathise with us.

A coal strike was in full blast at the time, and he wondered how on earth we managed to exist in a place that had neither gas nor electric light; and with only the regulation strike-allowance of half a hundredweight of coal per week—if even we managed to lay hands (or rather, shovel) on that much. He said he had never before understood why there was always trouble in Ireland, till he sampled the sort of fire his landlady was providing, made with non-combustible peat, which was all she could get to warm him.

Happening to have due to him one of those many long week-end holidays that seem to accrue so often to officials in Government Departments, he decided to look us up and obtain first-hand information as to our struggles and privations.

Of course, ill-natured people might have said that he only came because it was a simplified way of spending his leave, in pleasant surroundings, at a time when firing was scarce. But *ours* is a united family! We don't say such things!

On arrival he told us he had always felt he would really like to sample life in a howling wilderness. I replied with Thoreau's words, "A howling wilderness almost never howls; the howling is chiefly in the imagination of the hearer!"

After producing some cigarettes, as his contribution toward keeping the home fires burning, he spread himself out comfortably before a particularly cheerful fire, and commiserated.

How we could put up with it for more than a week-end he didn't know! (though he himself seemed to be putting up with it very contentedly).

But the Head of Affairs had not much spare time just then, to sit at his feet and listen! For the cold weather is a busy season in the woods. Strike, or no strike, trees have to be dealt with, and cut when the right year arrives.

Townpeople have very little idea of the systematic care that goes to the production of profitable timber; neither do they always realise the value of woods in these days of universal shortage.

Though a considerable acreage of wooded land appertains to the Flower-Patch, all the outstanding trees are catalogued. The very large conifers are not cut except where it is impossible to avoid it. Ancient oaks and beeches and limes are left, wherever possible, when the regulation year arrives for the cutting of a mixed wood. All boundary trees are preserved, of course; they are the landmarks and mentioned in the old deeds.

“Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance”—this injunction of the ancient lawgiver still holds good.

Hollies, yews, and wild cherries are left, by my special desire, when they do not seriously impede the woodmen. And yet another concession to my peculiar preferences is the way the men leave the strands and cables of the Traveller's Joy, that darling of the woods, that very often climbs to the tops of

our trees, and crowns the year with masses of silvery seedpods, which are like sea foam, when one looks down upon them, from the hill above.

In addition to the work of felling, that comes round automatically, when a wood is ripe for the use of man—in some cases fourteen years, in others twenty-eight or more, will be the allotted span—there is the planting of young stock, to take the place of that which has been cut.

Another aspect of the woods, and one calling for attention, is the havoc caused by the wind, which takes a heavy annual toll in this region. Being in a high and exposed position, the south-west Atlantic gales drive up from the channel with terrific force, and frolic over the hills in grand style, unhindered by anything. One never knows what damage they may do.

On a mild sunny day, the wind may suddenly spring up perhaps for only a few hours, and clear down the best part of a wood, the trees toppling over like skittles in one furious wind-drive. We reckon to find blown down anything from five to twenty-five trees every winter; and these have to be dealt with.

The curious part of these storms is the local character of the damage done. The gale may leave untouched great trees which one would imagine were right in the teeth of the wind, and yet it will attack the centre of a wood, or a group of trees which appeared to be well sheltered by others, twirling them about, whirlwind fashion, then leaving them lying in rows on the ground, in the very midst of other trees, which have not lost so much as a branch.

At the time our visitor arrived we had just dealt with eleven magnificent larches, victims of a hurricane. The trees

had been duly relieved of their branches and the big trunks were in process of being sawn into 4-foot lengths, and stacked in the wood-house and in barns. We were on the point of sawing up a big oak, which it had been necessary to cut down the previous spring, because it completely blocked a most desirable view.

Trees can so soon obstruct the outlook in a land of woods and forests with wonderful distances. One tree can shut out miles of scenery, if it is allowed to remain too long in the wrong place.

My husband suggested that instead of sitting in an easy-chair and feeling sorry for us, our visitor might come out and lend a hand at gathering sticks, and getting in a little kindling wood!

He said certainly and with pleasure. He didn't mind going out if there was anything he could do. Believed in plenty of exercise. Enlarged on his prowess at golf. Wondered how any relation of his could exist out of reach of a golf course, since there was nothing to see out-of-doors in winter.

Nothing to see! I could have shaken the man for being so stupidly blind!

Even if the frost cuts off all the flowers for a few days, there are the bare trees with branches of most varied designs, but all of them beautiful. There are ferns in plenty in all the sheltered spots, ivies with leaf-forms as varied as the trees. And above all, the mosses and lichens, only to be seen in their full beauty in the damp mild winters in which England excels.

Some of the mosses have charming little blossoms, green perhaps, or brown, or red. There is a lovely variety with

crimson blossoms, little upright filaments with the tiny flower at the top. The effect of an expanse of this crimson, as one sees it on the top of many a wall in January, is very rich.

There is one velvety moss with a golden-yellow tint in it, quite a “shot” effect, when seen in certain lights.

The grey-green cup-moss, with a tiny dew-drop in each cup, is a jewel of loveliness.

One species resembles miniature fir trees—a Lilliputian forest of them!

Some kinds are close and soft, covering stones with a smooth green surface that might almost be taken for suede.

One beautiful silver-grey moss had always delighted me, whenever I found it on the rocks and walls and growing in the woods. I didn't know its name, till one day a friend from Sweden was staying with us and exclaimed on seeing it:

“Why, there is some reindeer moss! The true reindeer moss! It's the first time I have seen it in England.”

She told me how the animals love it, and will smell it through six or eight feet of snow, digging down till they get at it.

The way certain of the mosses provide for themselves, when nothing in the way of sustenance appears to be forthcoming, is very remarkable.

When a seed settles on a stone, one concludes there must be a modicum of earth there for it to cling to, though this is seldom visible. Yet the seed seems to find something upon which to start life. Then it gradually accumulates a little mound of earth (leaf-mould, literally) which it makes by the decay of its own tiny foliage! Only the top of the shoot is

green; the rest of its foliage withers away, as it is not required when a new green shoot, or leaf, is formed.

Thus each, in turn, decays, and forms a substance on which the plant continues to build.

Truly an extraordinary process!

In the hot weather, if the moss is exposed to the sun, it withers and appears to be dead. Yet it revives with the damp cold weather, and apparently none the worse for its baking. How its roots keep alive, with nothing but the bare surface of the rock to hold to, and often no water, is one of Nature's many mysteries!

Last year, a clearing had to be made in one wood that had become too overgrown. Ivy had made merry to such an extent, climbing the trees, looping itself from one branch to the next, and sending up a thicket of real ivy-trees from the top of the original owners of the soil, till it had literally formed a dark roof to the wood, through which very little light could penetrate.

For years, no one had had the heart to interfere with this state of affairs; because it was a favourite roosting place for the pheasants.

But at last stern measures had to be taken. The land was running to waste. Most of the trees were dead, owing to the inroads of the ivy. We decided to clear the ground entirely of trees; leave it open to the winds of heaven for a season; and then replant with young stock the following year.

On examining the dark tangles, we discovered what we had not realised before, that these were all apple trees. This was the remains of an ancient orchard. Probably a century or

more ago, some little homestead had stood where now it is only stone-strewn woodland.

In the course of the work of clearing, a bonfire was necessary. The amount of useless stuff which had to be got rid of was amazing, once the men started to haul down the "roof." The main ivy stems that had strangled the trees were often twice the size of a man's arm in circumference and bigger than the tree trunks!

The bonfire burned for several days. Then the big expanse of greyish-white ash was left, as usual, to get quite cold. After which, it gets put on the garden borders, being one of the most valuable of fertilisers. But in this instance, as the clearing was a good distance from the garden, the ash got overlooked, and finally forgotten.

Twelve months later, when we went to inspect the cleared land, in order to decide details of replanting, we were surprised to see in the distance a great plot of some plant that looked like shining gold; it is no mere figure of speech to say that it was almost dazzling, so bright was the colouring. We found that the whole of the bonfire ash was covered with a thick moss bearing gold-yellow and rust-red blossoms. It was an unbelievable sight. Everybody was fetched to see it; and one and all stood silently before it; for this resurrection of loveliness from what was dead grey ash so short a time ago, fairly took one's breath away.

The moss seed must have drifted from the many green bosses on the shady side of the boundary wall; and finding the situation to its liking had gone ahead jubilantly.

We have left it untouched.

The lichens, too, are a wonderful feature of the winter months; so difficult to describe; impossible to sketch or paint; baffling in the way they appear—and then disappear again!

Stones which all through the summer look bare and grey, with the coming of the soft November mists and rain will take on a marvellous range of colours, and display plant life which is often so minute as to be indistinguishable as anything but colour, unless one puts it under the microscope.

There is one particularly lovely shade which is neither blue nor green nor yellow. It paints the stone a milky pea-green in places; in others, it develops almost the colour of sulphur. It is very beautiful and very vivid. It appears with unfailing regularity year after year, in the same places, so soon as the climate is favourable for its development. Then, the grey stones suddenly seem alive; and the colour remains throughout all the damp autumn, winter and early spring days.

Many of the lichens are a silvery grey; some are actually black; while rust, orange, yellow, slate-blue, brown, and fawn varieties are plentiful.

Certain species are distinctly blue-green. And one of the lovely scenes which Nature paints for us every winter, is an expanse of old apple and pear trees, stretching out gnarled branches covered with a blue-green sheen from the lichens which have made their home there. While great branches of yellow-green mistletoe, thick with white berries, suspend themselves from upper branches. And behind the orchard trees is a background of purple-stemmed birches. The contrast is remarkably beautiful.

The lichens increase year after year, just as the bushes and trees add to their dimensions.

I first noticed this in a round patch of lichen, that appeared one autumn on the centre of a big stone in a wall. It was a black and silver lichen—I don't know its name; but the colours will suffice.

In its growth, it looked something like a feathery bit of seaweed, only it was apparently glued fast to the stone, and was nearly circular. It disappeared in the summer, or else it so shrivelled with the heat that it was indistinguishable from the grey stone.

The following autumn, it reappeared; but the circle was larger. Each year it has increased in circumference, till now it nearly covers the stone; it is most decorative, although it is entirely black and grey!

I know that moss gardening is not possible for many people, on account of its limitations. The damp winter season is not every one's ideal, when it comes to working out of doors.

But when an able-bodied person, in the midst of such profusion, says: "There is nothing to see!"

Well——!

I was glad our visitor was removed from that easy-chair!

First we showed him the old wood-house and the barns. He was fairly amazed when he saw the orderly rows of massive tree trunks, which half filled the place. Then the stacks of branches, roughly graded as to size, so that large and smaller ones were not too much entangled. While in another corner were the small, twiggy, leafless branches, with their little

knots all the way up, and some with brown cones still clinging to them.

And yet another special place was given over to a portion of a beautiful Deodar tree, which had also come down in the same gale. And unless you know the perfume of this tree when cut, it is impossible to make you understand the delightful sweetness of the scent that filled the wood-house. Not a cloying sweetness, but a scent that is a real tonic, and lasts as long as there is any sap left in the wood. Some years ago, an unknown reader of my books, who lives in Cyprus, kindly sent me a spindle, as used by the local peasant women. It was evidently made of the same wood, for it has scented the box in which I keep it ever since.

Our distant cousin, three-times-removed, after looking in silence at the contents of the wood-house, said, at last, that there was no breath left in him, he was so astonished. But we told him he would have to find a little somewhere, for there was more serious work awaiting him than merely looking at tree trunks. And we led the way to the next job.

The tree we were after was lying much farther down the hill, and a very steep descent at that. We went down steps to a lower garden level. Then down a second flight to a small lawn. Down a third flight which landed us in an orchard, if you can really call a place an orchard when it also grows roses against the wall, pink, white, crimson, and cream, with yellow broom, purple buddleia, scarlet hawthorn, pink flowering almonds, as well as other irrelevant items.

But I have got into the bad, mad habit of dropping in a tree or a bush wherever there is a convenient space. And as I can't grow syringas, lilacs, tree lupins, forsythias, wiegelias, ribes, fuchsias and such-like flowering shrubs in the middle of the

woods, and the bushes take up too much room in the flowerbeds, I have found that the orchards offer convenient accommodation. And whenever a fruit tree comes down with the wind or old age, a flowering bush goes in its place, with a ring of daffodils or narcissus around it.

Of course, new fruit trees also go into the orchards. But as these are not very big to start with and they take some years to come to bearing,—about seven or eight years as a rule—it is as well to fill up the interval with flowering shrubs. We get a good deal of pleasure out of them while waiting for the fruit from the new trees.

At the very bottom of the orchard lay the massive tree trunk we were seeking. It had only been there a few months, yet already the ivy had crept up, and laid sprays of the sweetest little leaves about the rough rind of the tree, while blackberry and bryony had thrown their arms about it, with a tangle still remaining of crimson, orange, and purple-bronze leaves, and scarlet berries like a child's necklace.

One of the many wonderments of Nature is her activity, even though there may seem to be periods when there is nothing doing. Yet, return in a week's time, and you will see a change. There has been movement, development, alteration, somewhere. She never really sleeps. And the rate at which she increases such pertinacious things as bracken, bindweed, willow herb, ground ivy, brambles, and a thousand other wildings, is a constant marvel to the one who has to wrestle with their idiosyncrasies when trying to tame the forest primeval!

Two of our men—experts at the work—had started on the tree. With a two-handed saw, seven feet in length, they were finishing the first cut in the thickest portion of the trunk.

Their saw went to and fro with a steady, unhurried, regular rhythm, almost singing a song so cheerfully easy did it sound, the men moving in perfect unison.

Of course they were doing their best, as there was an audience; but in any case, they were quite aware that they were giving an exhibition of skill and finished workmanship that was well worth watching. Knowing themselves to be two of the cleverest and most experienced men at this work in the country (and such rural workers know their own value and their own exceptional powers), they handled the fallen monarch as easily, and with no more apparent effort, than if it had been a child's Christmas-tree. They made no show of using tremendous strength to impress the onlookers; there was no fussation; no attempt at display; merely calm, steady work, that appeared to be ridiculously simple, and gave no hint of its dangers or its difficulties. But the way that saw slipped through the wood ought to have been significant to the feeblest intellect.

“Now just look at those men!” the cousin said. (*We were* looking; obviously; he needn't have told us to do so!) “Did you ever see such slow, deliberate *playing* with a saw!” (Being a relative, he, of course, considered himself privileged to criticise our doings, our house, our employees, anything in fact that was ours!) “And two of them at it,” he continued scornfully, “when one man ought to be able to manage all they are doing, even if he were standing on his head! Isn't the British workman the very limit in the leisurely way he makes a job pan out, always needing another man to help him do nothing, and neither of them getting anywhere worth talking about in the end.”

“Ah!” was all the Head of Affairs said; but I guessed he was thinking all the more, and primarily about the men in Government offices!

“Why, if I had to do a job like that,” the cousin went on, warming virtuously to his theme, “I should make that saw fairly *fly*; revel in it too; instead of meandering along as they are doing; saving themselves with every stroke. And I could do it, too, though it isn’t my business in life. I made a dandy of a hutch for my rabbits, out of old boxes, when I was a youngster.”

“Why don’t you go down and show them how?” the Head of Affairs suggested, with wicked amiability.

Nothing loath, and quite pleased with the idea, he went down the hill and volunteered his services.

The men were not surprised at his offer of assistance. They were expecting it, for most of our visitors like to try their hand at wielding the fearsome-looking cross-saw. The first log had been sawn off, they were measuring and preparing to start on the next one.

“Which end will you take, Sir?” the head man inquired, holding the saw, while his subordinate stood aside, leaving a vacant handle.

“Oh, I’ll work it single-handed,” the cousin replied airily, as though he had been brought up on seven-foot saws from his cradle.

“Certainly, Sir. In that case you’ll probably prefer this,” producing a single-handed “farmer’s” saw, heavy, and grim as to teeth, but a few feet less in length. “It’s easier to manage than the cross-saw.”

The cousin hesitated for a moment and glanced at the smaller weapon a trifle superciliously, but wisely decided to take it. The cross-saw looked larger and altogether more formidable, now that he was close to it.

He took his stand, and debated where to begin. The two men politely withdrew, and commenced operations on another tree which was marked to come down. They may have wished to spare him embarrassment; or merely desired to hide their own smiles.

Then he started to work, hacking a bit here and a bit there; only, unfortunately, try how he would, he couldn't get the saw to "bite." It stuck; it wobbled; it scraped in an agonising manner; it caught itself in the bark; and at last it nearly broke in half—but no sort of an impression did it make on that tree trunk.

"I say!" he called to the men. "Haven't you a finer saw? This is such a clumsy affair, with no go at all in it; and villainously awkward to handle."

They relieved him of the "farmer's" saw, replacing it with a most ladylike implement; and even started a cut for him.

"That's more like it," he said, with a gratified look at the opening they had made for him.

They withdrew again. The ladylike saw started to screech in a tone that suggested suicide, as he shoved it down with all the force he could muster. I felt sure its last hour had arrived. But no! when he tried to haul it up again, it wouldn't budge. He had managed somehow to get it wedged immovably in the cut the man had made. Neither by tugs, or knocks, or any other blandishments, could he persuade it to move either in or out, up or down.

“You seem a long while getting up steam!” the Head of Affairs called out derisively. “I’m waiting to see how you do it!”

But by this time heated language was almost blistering the saw; and the head man reappeared in response to an urgent summons.

I fancy his hand was crossed with silver, which enabled him to extract the saw. Anyhow, he unblushingly assured the gentleman that knack was all that was needed; and that he certainly had the knack (!), only he just wanted a little more practice to bring it out. Would he like to try on a smaller log?

But the cousin suddenly remembered that he must write some urgent letters before post time!

V

The Rhythm of the Saw

BECAUSE the woodmen's work looks so easy, when one sees them dealing with the trees, the spectator is often misled into thinking there is nothing much in it. Anyone can wield a saw! is a prevalent notion among average men. And, although some would modestly refrain from offering to fell a big tree, especially after inspecting the woodman's axe and feeling its weight, scarcely a man would have any hesitation about his own ability to saw up the tree, once it was down.

Yet knowledge as well as scientific handling is necessary for that branch of work; and the knowledge of the expert woodman is often remarkably extensive, particularly that of the older men. I have learnt so much from them.

Every tree has a different grain; the saw soon senses this, and the worker must know how to humour the saw. Just as the bark of every tree is quite distinct from every other tree, so is the "feel" of the wood, when the saw cuts through it. You may give the same rhythmic movement, and send the saw through each piece of timber with the same measured swing, yet the action of the saw when it cuts through a trunk of the white close-grained ash is quite different from its action when cutting the reddish coarser-grained wood of the larch. The light wood of the horse chestnut responds to the saw in a manner quite unlike the response of the cherry. One feels all this as soon as one attacks the log.

Some wood seems so kind and friendly when you handle it; so anxious to give as little trouble as possible. The oak is

like this. And if you can get a woodman to talk to you about his craft, his face will light up when oak is mentioned, for there is nothing quite like oak! So easy to cut; so easy to burn, even when green; and so delightful to smell when it is burning!

On the other hand, one comes upon wood that seems determined to give trouble. While birch is not so easy to saw as oak, and beech is harder still, wych elm is a tough tiresome wood to try to get through, and the lime is a bad lot—woolly, and as disagreeable as wood can be! The men never have a good word to say for the lime tree. Though that doesn't deter me from growing lime trees; the honey-scented flowers are so ravishing in summer. And so say the bees.

Walnut, they will tell you, is not very good for firing; it goes so powdery. And though they know and appreciate the commercial value of the wood for furniture, they also look at it in relation to domestic use. The men in these parts have had to keep their home fires burning with forest wood for centuries. Our "Free Woods," which the people of this parish have the right to cut for home consumption, were granted to them over six hundred years ago, by Edward III. Even then, they claimed to have had the free use of the woods "from time immemorial"—it says in the statutes, and they have been using the wood in their homes ever since. They know all that is to be known about the characteristics of the various trees.

Beech is hard, one of the best woods for burning; hot and highly inflammable, and, like oak, it can be used as soon as cut. But no use for gate-posts as it is—they warned me, when I wanted to use a hefty, newly-felled tree trunk for one of the innumerable gate-posts, that are always needing

replenishment. It is too liable to rot, if exposed to damp. But if protected with oil, or other preservative, it becomes very hard and durable.

I like to talk with people who have read deeply in Nature's own book. First-hand information is so useful. And to study the trees at close quarters, is to learn so many wonderful things that would never enter one's head when working in a city office.

To look at the clean birch bark, as it shines among the darker boles of the woodland trees, is to discover that the tints of pearl are not confined to the jeweller's window. Try to paint the bark, and one finds that in addition to cream, pink, fawn, dove-grey, dark brown, black, and patches of green, there is a pearly iridescence in the silvery portions that defies one's paint-box!

Though I feel affection for most trees, there is one which I have never learnt to love!

For a downright snaggy villain, I know nothing to beat the Araucaria, or Chile pine; commonly called the Monkey tree. From first to last it is a nuisance; and I've a claim to speak, for I've had plenty of experience with it, having inherited specimens as a legacy from previous owners in three separate gardens. And each gardener who has had to do with them has been violent in his denunciations—to say nothing of the poetry expended upon them by the Head of Affairs, when trying to clip a hedge beneath their swaying, painfully pointed, octopus-like tentacles.

I'm sorry to dislike any tree; but the Chile pine has so many faults. It affords no sort of shelter, and birds avoid it. The vicious points to its scale-like leaves can do real damage to the hands, and in some cases have caused poisoned

wounds. The tree is prone to disease; and though there is something very striking about its formation and symmetry as a whole, it is weird and uncanny, and always looks an alien, out of place among our British trees.

Probably it is of definite use in its own country, since nature never seems to work without a plan. But here, at any rate, it is a decided misfit.

One large specimen, about fifty feet high, was entirely blocking a magnificent view, and in consequence had to come down. But literally it was a problem to handle, owing to the cruel way it hitched its claw-like branches into the men's clothes, and heads, and hands. But they got it down at last, all but ten feet of it, which was left standing and intended as a support for an American Pillar Rose. But though the rose started to do its duty, after the quick-growing, wide-spreading nature of its species, it suddenly turned pale, lost its leaves, and nearly died outright. It could not stand the peculiar resin in the bark of the tree trunk. The tree had, therefore, to be stripped of its old bark—a nasty prickly job! Then, the rose had no further objection to its company.

But this is anticipating—as the old authors used to say! We really had only got as far as the felling of the monster tree. To continue:

When finally it was laid low, denuded of its fearsome branches, and the big trunk cut up into eight-foot lengths, it was as heavy as lead, and took four persons to haul what two could easily have managed had it been oak.

The logs were left to season in an out-of-the-way spot under an out-of-the-way hedge. But the branches seemed inclined to monopolise the whole of the hillside! Unless you have been similarly blessed with a big Monkey tree, you can

have no idea how the branches spread themselves out when cut down—and not only spread themselves out, but curl up, and rise up, and twist around and smite you when you least expect it.

Altogether horrid things!

As I didn't feel like giving over the whole of the premises to them, something had to be done. A bonfire seemed the reasonable remedy. But they knew better! Even with thick gloves on, it is difficult to pick them up; and when we tried to pile them up to make a bonfire, they either slid off or wriggled off; stay there they would not.

Then Abigail suggested the kitchener. We women felt we must do something, if only because we had assured the men they could safely leave us to deal with an easy job like the branches, which would enable them to get on with the sawing on big trunks. I noticed they seemed quite willing to be relieved of those branches!

We got hatchets, and chopped off a few inches from one wicked-looking branch in order to experiment in the kitchen. It nearly set the chimney on fire, it blazed so astonishingly! Obviously we could only use small chunks indoors, and one at a time. Whereupon my friend, Virginia, calculated that it would take us to 27th April, 1982, to burn the lot! And in the meantime the inhabitants would have died of the smell.

It truly had an abominable odour!

In the end, the branches were chopped into manageable portions, and the bonfire blazed for a week; everyone taking a turn as stoker.

That was four years ago. The sections of the big trunk have remained beneath that hedge, and have nearly disappeared beneath the ferns, brambles, ground ivy and stitchwort that

have risen up with gentle fingers to hide the scars and cover up the wounds, and generally clothe with beauty the poor despised logs that nobody wants.

There are times when Nature seems almost to pity her downtrodden children, so tenderly does she deal with their misfortunes, so beautifully does she lay them to rest.

I sometimes think that close contact with forest trees develops in one an added sense or instinct for Nature: the trees seem to satisfy that unspoken inner longing for something—we know not what—that dates back into the dim ages, far beyond our knowledge. The trees are part of our life's need. They were friends of man in his primeval age. Shelter and warmth were among his most urgent necessities. The forest supplied both.

They are more than useful commodities, however. They are alive. Their movement is one of their charms. They are strong, and so independent of man. And they are poignantly beautiful, no matter what the season.

In our own land, where magnificent forests have been standing for centuries, we do not sufficiently appreciate our blessings. We take no public cognisance of them. We have nothing that exactly corresponds to the Japanese festival of the cherry trees. Neither do we make an annual pilgrimage to the woods, as do the Danes to-day when the lovely beech trees of Denmark are just unfurling their leaves in spring. Yet we have scenes quite as beautiful. No country in the world can show fairer woods in spring than our own. Only, we need to look at them with clearer vision. We need reverence, when we tread the woodland ways.

A friend has been staying with me whose early years were spent in a vicarage on the edge of a forest, where trees were the children's chief companions.

She was most proficient in the way she helped us and handled the wood. I noticed that she touched it with an appreciation showing plainly that a lichen-covered branch of an apple tree was something more to her than a stick for firewood. I commented on this.

“Yes!” she said. “We children learnt to love the trees; father used to teach us so much about them, even in his Bible lessons. And among other things dating from that period, I have always cherished his belief that when our Lord planned to be born on earth, and to undergo so much suffering and privation and humiliation, the great Fatherly Love decreed that His Well-beloved should have one comfort—congenial work. And that was why Joseph the carpenter was chosen for His foster-father. It gave Him the opportunity to handle the beautiful wood of the trees.

“Once when I felt so sorry for the poor little Boy Jesus, I said: ‘I suppose He never, never got any toys?’

“But my father immediately replied: ‘Perhaps not toys such as we have now; but I think He must have had some very happy times, playing with the clean chips and shavings in Joseph’s work-room.’ ”

And then my friend added: “I’ve loved chips and shavings ever since.”

VI

Friendly Wildlings

SOME plants seem to have a distinct preference for human contact, invariably establishing themselves near the road, or in the neighbourhood of a house.

The elder is one of these. It has been said that it is only found growing wild in the vicinity of a farm, or cottage, or where a dwelling once stood.

Quite possible. The tree was valued and cultivated in the past for its fruit, in the days when every self-respecting housewife in the country, rich or poor, made her annual brew of elderberry wine, as well as elderflower water; while she even pickled the buds to use as we use capers. The tree would be cherished when it appeared in the lanes, or edges of the woodland, and it would be encouraged on the estate.

I myself have never noticed it in any locality in England unless near human habitation; though it may be flourishing in outlying corners of our islands which, so far, I have not been fortunate enough to visit. I will say this for it, however: where it does get a footing, it takes good care to stay! I have never seen a plant reproduce itself, and grow to tree-hood, more rapidly and persistently than does the elder, when it can find any spare ground around the Flower-Patch.

Of course we foster a number of these trees about the place, not only for the scent of the blossoms, but also for the benefit of the birds, who eat the berries as greedily as they do those of the mountain ash. But there is a limit to the space we

can allow it. And, year after year, we have to cut down, or dig out, a number of young trees, that seem to run up like Jonah's gourd with saplings six feet high in a few months, directly any other trees are cut, or a bit of ground is left doing nothing for a season.

Apart from its flowers and fruit, it isn't much use. Its young stems are hollow; its wood soft and sappy, without much "body" to it—as is so often the case with rapid growers.

As fuel, it is not popular; it burns through too quickly; and its odour, when burning, is not pleasant like oak wood.

Yet I have a great affection for this tree, on account of its optimism. Be the weather ever so dreary, it is the first of the trees to show leaves, whether in town or country. Nothing daunts it, not even our saw and bill-hook. No matter how it is ill-used, it comes up smiling, with its annual crop of flowers and berries that never fails, and takes no notice of the unexpected tricks the spring and summer may play with the weather.

You can't depress an elderberry tree!

Chicory, or succory, is another plant that is more often found by the hedge-side and near the road, than out of sight of man. And this may also be due to the fact that it was cultivated to some extent in the past for its food value, as it is still on the continent. Thus, though it has escaped from the confines of the garden, it still lingers somewhere near.

I would recommend this, if you want more blue in your border. It is such a refreshing tone, and, being a perennial it stays. It does well on a sandy gravel, or chalk soil; and as it

inhabits rough waste ground in its wild state, it isn't fastidious.

I took up a root of it from one of our fields and gave it quite an affluent position among the herbs.

It fairly ran away with the garden!

Indeed, that chicory, and a comfrey I had planted next to it, so spread themselves that they entirely blocked one of the paths—where they remain unto this day, causing us to take a more circuitous route when up in that direction, visiting the herb garden.

But the show of blossoms on both is well worth the space they have annexed. And I never move a self-sown flowering plant from a spot it seems to like if I can possibly avoid doing so.

If you are buying a comfrey—and it is well worth buying—get the newer variety that has much bluer flowers than the original type. It is very attractive.

All wildlings won't consent to live in, or even near one's garden; probably because they are not provided with the kind of food and home-life they prefer. Think of the cruel way the land has been denuded of primrose roots—that will not thrive unless given pure air, and the sweet, moist leaf-mould of the woods, and hedges, and sheltered banks.

And the black spleenwort! How the old walls have been hacked and robbed to get out the fine roots of this, our English Maidenhair fern. Some of the transplanted specimens have been treated with the utmost loving-kindness—and ignorance! I've known it taken from a shady north wall (where its roots revelled in the cool depths behind the stones, and its soft green fronds never felt the shrivelling touch of the sun), and placed by an ardent, well-wisher in a heated

conservatory, where its frail roots could find nothing that they craved in a horrid, sun-baked flower pot, and where the warmth suffocated it.

I have known it deposited in a town garden, where it never got a breath of pure, non-smoky air; where the soil was sour, and stagnant water was all its roots could find. I have seen it smothered with a bell-glass; half-drowned one day and entirely forgotten for a week or more.

And then people—dear, kind fern-loving people, too—wonder why their treasure dies? Forgetting that the little elfin-thing is not only a child of the open, but is conservatively particular as to its dwelling place; resenting heat; resenting disturbance; requiring the protection of the stones for its delicate rootlets, and the safety of deep recesses against the extremes of heat and cold; and asking for clean soil made up of a little sand, a little leaf-mould, and a trifle of old mortar if it can get it—yes, especially that suspicion of mortar, or limestone.

Given a wall exactly to its liking, leave it in unmolested peace, and it will increase in a most generous matter, little rosettes of new baby ferns appearing each year, wherever a fern-spore has managed to lodge in a suitable cranny.

Two years ago one of our anthracite stoves developed a crack in its iron frame, and had to be pensioned off. But a broken anthracite stove, a large one too, isn't easily disposed of in a remote district. It isn't anybody's fancy, since it can neither be used as an ornament, nor as pig's food, nor employed to mend a broken fence—though nearly every other cast-off item, in the country, can be induced to return to active service under one of these headings!

I offered it to various friends, pointing out how elegant and artistic it would look in the drawing-room fireplace, draped with crêpe paper and a fern pot in the top.

Or, how excellent it would be for forcing rhubarb, with that nice central opening, complete with a door that could be used open or closed.

Or, what could be better as a food-hopper for the fowls, with the grain poured in at the top, and the hens feeding out of the ash tray?

The gardener even suggested that it might be snapped up by someone who was needing a “cinerarium”——!

But no one jumped at my offer, or seemed to be intrigued by the look of the thing. Though I did feel a little hopeful when a man called to inquire about it, as he had heard I had some heavy iron to give away, and he wanted a big weight to complete an ancient grandfather’s clock he had bought at a sale, the clock being minus this portion of its inside.

After trying to lift the monster, he decided that the weight of the creature would be just right; though he wasn’t certain that the stove could be got inside the clock case! He would let me know.

I never heard of or from him again. And still that wretched incubus disturbed my dreams, and blocked out the sunshine of my days. We decided at last to give it a temporary home (but only temporary, as I was sick of the sight of the thing, and wanted it off the premises), in an outhouse that is devoted to the storing of potatoes.

As it took three hefty men to carry it down, no one was in a hurry to move it again. It was merely left in a corner, standing on a bare cement floor, to pass its remaining days, or

at any rate *my* remaining days, in silent meditation. For it is certain I shan't attempt to move it!

That was two years ago. And I had forgotten all about it.

I was fetched to look at it last week. Around the old rusty stove is now a fernery! I know it sounds absurd, but it's a fact! A fern plot has arranged itself in front and at the side, the fronds being of various sizes and all as healthy as a fern could possibly be.

The seeds must have blown in—there are ferns in the walls outside. A little soil may have drifted into that corner from the potatoes. Probably when the floor was broomed over (as it is annually, after the last season's potatoes have been used, and the new season's not yet brought in), no one bothered to sweep the portion close to the old stove. Also, there may be some cracks in the cement; dumping down the heavy stove would very likely do something in that line. But whatever the reason, there are six different sorts of ferns growing there and looking as though they thoroughly enjoyed it, too. And among them are several very sprightly tufts of that same black maidenhair spleenwort, that is so determined *not* to grow, if one takes it up and offers it a good home that is not of its own choosing. Seeing this growing so cheerfully in so unlikely a place, makes me certain the cement must be broken there, and the spleenworts have found some food to their liking, as well as crevices for their roots.

You seldom can tell exactly what a wildling will do, save that it often won't grow when you introduce it to the advantages of civilised life, though it develops gloriously in surroundings—sometimes most unpromising!—of its own selection.

Judging by the letters that come to me from unknown readers, there are many city dwellers who, like myself, try to gather around them in town as many reminders as they can of the open, unspoilt countryside. They endeavour to persuade reluctant wild flowers to grow in their gardens, not because these are necessarily more beautiful than the orthodox garden flowers—sometimes they are; sometimes they are not; often they are rather insignificant beside the more blatant garden varieties. But the “town imprisoned men” (and women) want them for their associations; and in order to be reminded of the peace and the beauty of their native haunts.

I have an insatiable craving for wild flowers: and neither garden nor greenhouse blossoms, much as I enjoy them all, can ever make up to me for the absence of those lovely, persevering little things, that do their utmost to bring Heaven down to earth, if only mankind will let them grow, instead of destroying them.

For those kindred souls who like to keep at least a small portion of their garden as a reminder of the distant woods and hedgerows (which recede farther and farther from us as the builder goes on his way) I will suggest a few that I have found willing to live in London.

Roots of all the following can be supplied by any big firm of growers. When procured in this way, at the right time for removal, they will grow. Whereas the plant that is dug up when seen in the woods, or by the road side, seldom lives.

The time to transplant is when the plant is dormant, not when the leaves are making growth, much less when it is in bloom! Thousands of plants are killed every year, by being torn up when in flower. The enthusiast had far better spend a few pence on a root that is certain to live, with reasonable

treatment, and to give pleasure for years, rather than destroy one more happy growing thing, and in the end achieve nothing beyond another mark of desolation.

When people write to me bemoaning that they cannot get this or that wildling to grow in their garden, it invariably transpires that they chanced to see it growing when in the country, dug it up there and then, often with no proper tool, but in any case with some of the rootlets left behind; and in every instance at the wrong season. Then they are surprised that the poor thing dies!

And while I am on this subject, I want to emphasise the fact that the majority of woods and hedgerows are private property, together with the plants growing there. I know some town-dwellers imagine that anything “wild” is common property! But it isn’t! Much mischief and damage is done in consequence of this misunderstanding.

I have even known modern gardening papers to advise their readers “now is the time to cut briars from the hedges,” in order to get stocks for rose growing. And descriptions will follow of the type of briar the reader should search for.

But what about the hedges!

They have to be planted; they don’t grow of their own accord. And they are a perennial expense to keep in order, even when they are not damaged and robbed by the seeker after rose stocks! One small aperture is quite enough for any enterprising calf, and I’ve never known one that wasn’t enterprising! He will soon make it big enough to get through, and then betake himself, followed by the whole herd, to freedom. And no one can foresee how many miles away they will be before their owner discovers them.

While it is quite possible, in some places, to cut out a stout briar stem without doing any harm, it isn't work for a novice. The inexperienced can soon ruin a hedge; for many of the stout briars are needed in the build of the hedge. In any circumstances permission should be secured before anyone attempts to hack another person's property.

Some townfolk are curiously ignorant of the true value of things that are not ticketed in a shop window. And such as these do not realise that the products of the countryside are usually far more vital to humanity's needs than the products of the city.

They have no notion of the loss that can result from field gates left open and hedges damaged. Not only is a man's time wasted in hunting for stray cattle (and a man's time is expensive these days!), but the cattle themselves may easily come to grief, and the owner be unable to get any redress.

Again, in the woods, young trees can be damaged at a serious loss to the owners, merely through thoughtlessness and ignorance.

Very few people do such harm to others intentionally. Most would be greatly concerned if they thought that they had caused trouble. Yet the annual losses, all over the country, due to thoughtlessness, are considerable. Think of the acres and acres that are devastated every summer, by the careless throwing down of a match or cigarette end! I have myself seen hundreds of acres of valuable forest trees burnt down in my own district. A grievous sight!

To return to the wild flowers for town gardens.

The bluebells of spring will grow anywhere within reason. I have had them come up and bloom year after year in a hard

gravel path! Even a couple of dozen bulbs would make a pretty clump, if you have no room for more. Plant them a little deeper than you would crocuses; be sure to mark the spot, and keep it marked, to avoid the risk of spading them up, when they are resting.

Speaking of bluebells, I immediately think of stitchwort, because at one season our lanes are bordered with blue and white, when these two are in bloom together. I have grown stitchwort in my London garden, where it has done very well. But it has one disadvantage: it is so shabby and untidy when its flowering period is over.

In the hedgerow, one doesn't notice the hay-like appearance of the withered flower-stems. By the time they have finished their work for that season, other green-stuff has come along—wild roses, ferns, bryony, cleavers—and all this hides the done-with stitchwort.

Therefore, I don't advocate this for town gardens; more especially as the cerastium, which we call "Snow in Summer," produces a somewhat similar flower, and in addition displays most attractive silver grey foliage all the year round.

It never seems to me to be worth while to grow several different plants, when the blossoms are similar, if space be at a premium. I've seen the little Alpine daisy being cherished in a rock garden, while all around and on the lawn, cheerful though ignored, grew the ordinary small daisies, as like as two peas to their alpine relatives, apart from the difference in the length of their stems.

In the same way, it hardly seems necessary to grow the large white Shasta daisy, or the *pyrethrum uliginosum*, since they are so similar to the moon daisies of the hayfields, those

hardy nobodies that are willing to glorify the railway banks and anywhere else, if one will only let them in. The taller garden plants, though they are like the moon daisies in face and features, are not so steadily upright. They sprawl around unless elaborately staked, and want dividing every year or two—all of which means work; and in the end they are no greater novelty than the common ox-eye, or moon daisy, that grows by the thousand, without any staking or other attention.

Foxgloves everyone knows. While there are some exquisite garden varieties, the crimson one that paints our hills with carmine, is hard to beat. It will obligingly bloom in a cool corner, seldom reached by the sun—which is more than most flowers will.

Another plant that will consent to grow in your shady border is the woodruff. Probably you know that this plant does not give off its delicious perfume till it is dried. It should be gathered and the bunch hung up, head downwards, to wither. Only then will you realise what the scent of the woodruff is like. While most people recognise the foliage, everyone does not know its sweet little blossom, so frail and tiny and pure white, it is one of the most delicate of the wild flowers.

The white wood-sorrel will succeed where the woodruff does. And it would be worth growing for its delicate green leaves, like large shamrocks, even if it had no blossoms. But in most situations, if sufficiently cool and moist, with only a little sunshine, it will shake out its white bells in the spring.

Creeping jenny is another plant that prefers to keep out of the way of fierce heat, and must have a certain amount of

water. Not necessarily a brook! But a little damp seclusion suits it better than the open sunshine, which soon scorches it to death. It doesn't object to the open, if it can have its roots in moisture. Quite a number of plants are like this—the wild clematis, and bergamot, for instance. Given an open situation with plenty of water for its roots, the creeping jenny will grow and flower profusely all up each trailing stem—two yellow cups at each joint, hence its local name Herb Twopence.

Pink champions are among the favourites of the hedgerows in summer. They can be grown in town; but I think the space is better given to the more gorgeous rose champion (*Agrostemma coronaria* or *Lychnis coronaria*, in catalogues and places where they know things), with its silvery leaves and unique blossoms. This does admirably in town, and is a most remarkable colour. It can be grown easily from seed, which it produces in abundance; though it is better to cut off the dead flowers, so as to secure a long succession of blooms. And it is best to treat this as a biennial.

If you don't mind risking its propensity to seed itself all over your own garden and if your neighbour is a peaceable person, not given to "saying things," the great willow herb will be only too thankful to be given a few inches of earth in any town garden—whereupon it will soon set about taking the proverbial ell! But it is a handsome shrub, and most effective if grouped in a corner or as a background. I confess it can be a nuisance if allowed to gain the upper hand; for it does spread so rapidly, both above and below. For while its fluffy seeds are colonising outlying portions of the neighbourhood, its roots are pushing steadily outward in all

directions. It will soon occupy the whole of the herbaceous border, if unchecked!

Whatever else you may leave out, do include the wild rose. It is such a dainty gem. Nothing can surpass the beauty of a long spray of pink wild roses, with the buds just unfolding and ready to burst. Its only rivals are the sweet briars and the white field rose. Though every year sees a lengthy list of wonderfully beautiful new roses that have been placed on the market that season, none are more lovely than our native hedge roses. They are perfection in their simplicity, their form, and their graceful growth. And they respond so gratefully to a little attention. Also they will grow in town.

The yellow ragwort is a stalwart soul that is willing to grow anywhere and do its best to blossom on the poorest soil, though naturally it would prefer something a trifle richer. Its gay flower-heads will bring brightness into the dullest of town gardens. It likes sun and air, however, if available!

Don't be surprised if violets fail you. Like primroses, they object wholeheartedly to town air and town conditions, and won't look at them even through the glass of a frame! So don't waste any hopefulness over them. You will only reap disappointment. And you can buy lovely bunches at the florists, or of the buxom woman in a shawl who sits at the corner, and seems to be perennially tying up something with raffia.

I quite agree that this is not nearly as delightful as gathering the scented purple beauties oneself, feeling for the end of the long stem among the cool green leaves; or stooping to gather the perky little white ones, each with its tiny touch of mauve. But you simply mustn't think of these

things when planning your town borders. They are too distracting. And, believe me, it is much better to go without violet roots, than to watch sickly specimens gradually pine away for want of the particular brand of fresh air which you are powerless to give them.

One interesting wildling which I have found quite willing to live in London is the spotted orchis. Possibly other orchises would also consent to bloom there, but this is the only one I have tried. It did remarkably well for some years, increasing in size, and throwing up fine spikes of bloom in the early summer. Unfortunately, it disappeared in a period of great drought, while I was away. But I can answer for it, that it is well worth growing, and certain nurserymen can supply it.

Buttercups and daisies? Yes, of course! And what could be prettier or more suggestive of open spaces? I never can understand the present day craze for banishing every daisy from the domestic lawn! The millionaire I mentioned in an earlier chapter, used to spend hours hunting for a daisy root; and when he found one, he positively gloated over its mangled remains. Yet he loved his garden! That was the surprising part of it.

He was merely following a senseless fashion that must have been initiated originally by some prehistoric head gardener, who wanted an excuse for engaging yet another man (probably a relation who was out of work!). Therefore, he called his employer's attention to the "weeds" which were getting beyond him, on the lawn. And his employer, being

anxious to start for the Crusades, or to set out on some foray nearer home, said:

“I haven’t time to bother about weeds now! Get a man.”

While the Lady of the house, who, of course, didn’t dare to do any gardening with her own lily-white hands, or to know anything about such plebeian matters, in those days, merely went on with her cross-stitch, and remarked complacently to her non-favourite sister-in-law, when she called:

“Really, our grounds are becoming so extensive I’m almost afraid to walk down the pleached alley alone, in case I should be lost. We’ve had to engage yet another gardener! I can’t think how you can manage with only ten! But of course I’m so particular, and must have everything just so! I couldn’t endure to see daisies left lying about on the lawn, as they are in your garden. I’m so very orderly, and highly strung; my nerves simply couldn’t stand it!”

What the sister-in-law replied is neither here nor there. All that now concerns us is the pathetic fact that, ever since, a certain number of lawn owners have regarded it as part of their duty to Society to slay every daisy they can discover.

It’s positively wicked!

Where can you find a more lovely and enheartening sight than the velvety turf of an English lawn starred all over with little daisies, their golden eyes gazing up at the sun; or, at sunset, going to sleep with pink-tipped little frills to protect their tiny heads?

Although there are thousands of daisies in the fields around me, I never allow one to be evicted from a lawn, or from the paved paths. One long path has nearly every stone outlined with little daisies—the effect when they are in full bloom is magical.

And they could be grown in the same way in town, for they are most accommodating, and willing to make the best of life anywhere.

The real truth is, daisies—like sunshine and water—are so plentiful, that we have ceased to value them, and entirely forget to be grateful for them.

But—picture to yourself, if you can, what our land would be like *without* them!

Buttercups have not yet come into their own as garden subjects. But they will, one of these days! My own little experiments with these flowers makes me sure they will be treasured in gardens some day, when all our fields are built over. They are capable of doing so much more than one usually imagines.

I found a fairly strong root in my London garden, and gave it some robust nourishment, remembering that it enjoyed that brand of diet in the fields! I cut off all the runners, to encourage it to devote all its energy to flowers—which it obligingly did. By midsummer, I had a plant about three feet high, which was one mass of yellow blossoms, hundreds of them, and extremely showy. I had to stake it, as the stems were not strong, and the wind would soon have blown it about. But it was a most interesting sight; and every visitor enquired the name of the plant. It continued in bloom for quite a long while, as I cut off all the flowers I could when they started to seed.

One needs to watch a buttercup, however, once a root gets into the garden, otherwise, if overlooked, it will spread so rapidly that it can become a veritable pest!

I have heard it said that the buttercup is poison. Perhaps it is; I don't know. I've watched the cattle eat the grass around a clump, leaving the buttercups severely alone. On the other hand, they must eat a lot of buttercups in the hay cut from a flowery meadow.

I've noticed that fowls which have been kept in a small run, will eagerly eat buttercup leaves, especially in the spring, when they are let out into a field for a change. And my dog—a white West Highlander—eats the young leaves of the columbine (which belongs to the buttercup family) annually, when they first show above ground. He will search the borders most carefully for the upcoming leaves, and demolish plant after plant, when he feels the need of a spring tonic. Just as the red squirrels search for and nibble certain yellow toadstools at some seasons.

The columbines send up more leaves, after the dog's onslaught; so we never interfere. Besides, it is always best to let domestic animals physic themselves if possible, as they would do in their wild state. They often know their own needs, better than we do.

I think it was Pliny who said that eating buttercups will induce such hilarious laughter in humans, that unless the eater drinks copious draughts of pepper and pineapple kernels dissolved in date wine, he will die of his giggles.

Personally, having never eaten buttercups, I can't say anything about this. Our cows are quite sedate; but then, as already mentioned, they don't eat raw buttercups. So they are no guide.

Probably it is wiser not to eat them! Especially as the village shop doesn't stock pineapple kernels as a rule.

Brooms are among the wildlings that will live in town. This plant has been taken well in hand by horticulturists in recent years, and made to do interesting things in the colour line, but though the white, the wine-colour, the chocolate and brown varieties are all attractive, I still feel that the glory of our yellow native has not been surpassed. I greatly admire the new type which shows both yellow and bright chestnut brown in each bloom. But for garden show, for a feast of colour, nothing outshines the yellow, which grows wild in abundance, both in our woods and in open sunny places.

A high hill opposite my house is gleaming yellow in early summer, where acres of the steep hillside brought forth masses of young brooms, after some thick woods had been cut and carried. If an artist painted that hill as it is at certain seasons, people would say it was grossly exaggerated, so marvellous is the extent of its colouring.

When the broom blossoms are fading the hill gradually develops a pink, and then a deep rose hue, due to thousands of foxgloves which, like the broom, sprang into life the moment the forest trees were cleared away.

There is a sad side to the scene, I regret to add. The hills are being replanted with larches. Beautiful trees I admit, and the green of the larches in the spring is unrivalled among all the different shades of green which the trees put forth. But very few wild flowers will live beneath the larches—though violets will flourish there I find.

The present-day orgy of larch planting means the disappearance of many treasures and rare plants; and the clearing away of acres of loveliness in the way of flowers and ferns.

In the case of the foxgloves,—because they are supposed to injure the young larches, men are sent to slash them down, if possible, as soon as they show bloom, in order to prevent their seeding. In time, the authorities hope to exterminate them from the neighbourhood of the larches.

What a grievous loss!

And, of course, the brooms get slashed down with them!

A labouring man who was engaged as one of the slashing gang, rescued a bundle of young brooms before they were destroyed, for his cottage garden. He is one of Nature's artists, who loves the wild flowers, and recognises the inherent beauty of their setting. I was admiring his show of flowers; and it was then he told me how he had saved them, transplanting them from the hillside, before they were cut down.

Now brooms are very difficult plants to move. If you order them from a good nursery, they are delivered to you in the pots in which they have, been reared. The nurseryman doesn't meddle with the roots. I asked the labourer how he had managed to transplant such a number, and to induce everyone to live? For the long tap-root which runs straight down into the ground presents a serious difficulty.

He explained his method: Loosen the earth all round the young plant, till you can get the entire root out, without damaging it. Have a deep hole ready in the garden, where the plant has to be put. Cut off a little from the bottom of the long tap-root—this will induce new rootlets to form.

The next part of the job is important. Put the root right down in the hole, till it is well on the bottom. Then draw the plant upwards again, just a little, so that the root hangs straight down, without actually touching the bottom, and is

not curled up at all at its base. *If it is doubled up in any way, or curled round, the plant will die.* Fill in the hole with soil, while holding the plant in position, so that at last the earth is packed firmly all around, and underneath the root, which is thus kept perpendicular.

I can vouch for the efficacy of this method, for I commissioned the man to transplant forty young brooms from my own woods and plant them in a glen we were thinning out in another part of our premises. Every single one of the brooms took root-hold at once; and they are all flourishing examples of the fact that it is possible to move three-foot brooms, and have them flowering in the following spring—if you know how to do it!

I would also add that, though brooms are supposed to require dry, sandy situations, several of mine which by mistake were planted in a swamp made by an overflowing cascade, are just as fine and flower as gaily as those whose likes were taken into consideration.

You never can tell!

VII

Rampageous Travellers

EVERYBODY wants climbers and creepers. But these are not always as easy to accommodate as they appear to be when we see flowering masses clambering up cottage walls, over roofs, and even clasping the chimney.

“Look at my poor clematis!” said a friend, indicating a collection of stems with only a few languishing leaves, that could hardly be called an ornament to any wall. “Do what I will, I can’t get it to thrive; and yet, look at that gorgeous specimen on the cottage down the lane! They do nothing to theirs; yet it flourishes like a weed and smothers the place with white blossoms every year. I simply cannot understand why mine refuses to do likewise, seeing that it has the same aspect!”

The reason was plain to see, however! The cottage down the lane had no guttering round its eaves. The rain dripped from the roof unhindered, on to the border below. Their clematis was one that liked plenty of moisture at its roots—and got it, at the cottage, whenever it rained.

My friend’s house was built on modern hygienic lines, its roof being supplied with sufficient gutters and pipes to carry off every drop of water, leaving the paths and the borders below quite dry.

As a result, all the plants in the beds close under the wall were really dying of drought. The wall itself threw back the heat of the sun on to them; they actually needed more water

than the rest of the plants growing in the open border. Whereas, they got next to none; for even the rain seldom fell in that direction, as it faced south-east.

Notice the little flower beds against the walls of ancient thatched cottages innocent of gutterings, where the rain is left to deal with itself; and then study the borders under a modern house wall, that gets little water. You will see a difference!

This unnatural dryness in the soil accounts for many of the failures that all too often follow the planting of flowering climbers against the house. To circumvent this, don't plant too near the wall. This is the first rule. The amateur is inclined to put the root of his climber far too close to bricks and mortar. And when the plant happens to be one that objects to mortar, there may be added difficulty in getting it to smile on its new surroundings.

The second rule is: Give it all the water it needs—which may be much or little, according to the characteristics of the climber. Don't trust much to Nature in this case, for the house wall practically slams the door in Nature's face, where water is concerned!

And don't worry if someone (who doesn't love gardening) tells you that you are making the house damp, ruining the walls, encouraging rheumatism and undermining the foundation. Your watering-can won't do any of these dreadful things!

Apart from the main walls of the house, it is much more difficult to find suitable accommodation for climbers than the nurseryman's catalogue would lead the novice to imagine. Especially in towns.

Boundary walls to town gardens are seldom high enough to serve anything but a very juvenile climber. Frequently it is a fence instead of a wall, and this provides a series of draughts, ruinous to all plants.

Pergolas are often a disappointment in this country. They are natives of hot climates, where shade is an urgent necessity out of doors, and flowers, or at any rate foliage, can be relied on to clothe the structure all the year round.

With us, the pergola at best is an expensive item. Its finest blooms are up above and unseen by any, excepting the man who has to mount a step-ladder to prune and tie them up. If made of wood, they rot, and become dangerous, having to be constantly renewed. If made with pillars of masonry for the uprights, they need large grounds to balance them.

The main fault of the pergola proper, in these latitudes, is its comparative uselessness, considering the space it occupies; while its dragged appearance for months, when it is merely damp below, dripping above, and draughty at the sides, makes it depressing as well as useless.

Trellis work is pretty and useful; though it is not cheap in the long run. It must be made strong enough to withstand wind, and it needs frequent renewal. Wire or any sort of metal arches get so hot in the sun, that unless smothered with foliage, they become far too hot for the health of the creeper.

On the whole, however, trellis work seems to be the best support for climbers in small gardens, where the house wall isn't suitable, or is already engaged.

A pretty effect can be obtained with rambler roses, by putting poles in the ground, six feet above ground and eight feet apart, with a strong slack rope carried along and attached to the top of each. Ramblers can be planted against the

uprights; and when they reach the top of the pole they can be trained along and tied to the rope.

If you want a lovely but unusual colour effect on a trellis, plant a Dorothy Perkins rambler on the sunny side, and Canary creeper on the shadier side. The Canary creeper (raised annually, indoors if possible, and planted out in May) will soon help itself to get up in the world, by clinging to the rambler. Presently the two will be in bloom together, making a delightful combination; while the Canary creeper will continue to drape its pale green leaves and sunny festoons over the darker foliage of the rose, long after Dorothy's blossoms have turned from pink to brown. It will go on blooming until the frost; and if the weather isn't too severe, next spring you will find little seedlings sprouting in sheltered corners, for it is very prolific if the weather gives it but half a chance.

Why don't we grow more Canary creeper? Few climbers are more daintily lovely; both the green and the yellow tints are so fresh and young and happy looking. I am now trying to get a long hedge of this, in a place where I usually have a sweet pea hedge. As it will clamber up pea sticks as well as a pea, there is no reason why it should not be successful. At present it is in its spring infancy. But I'm looking forward hopefully.

And speaking of plants that take kindly to pea-sticks, it is so easy to grow Morning Glories, also called *Convolvulus Major*, around a circle of pea-sticks if there is no suitable wall available. Indeed, this is better than a wall, for they must have some support. They are essentially "twiners," and they ask for something to twine around. The piece of string tied to a tin-tack, so beloved in our childhood, is better than nothing,

of course! But actually the plant needs something stouter if it is to develop on robust lines.

Morning Glories deserve much more space than they get in modern gardens. “If only they would keep open till the evening, instead of being so short-lived!” people say to me.

I know they look shabby in the late afternoon; but they would be worth growing if they only remained open an hour! Their shape is so satisfying in its perfect proportion and outline, while their colouring is some of the richest in the whole of the flower world. Scarcely anything can match the deep purple blooms with rose-coloured rays. While a hedge of mixed colours is a lovely sight, they are all so generous with their flowers.

It is possible to get them to delay closing by an hour or two, if planted a little out of the direct line of the early morning sun. We have some facing west, and find that as they do not get the sun first thing in the morning, they do not open quite so early. This in turn makes them later in closing in the afternoon.

There is a very pretty variety of this *Convolvulus* called “Heavenly Blue” (*rubro-cærulea* in catalogues). It has large light blue flowers, and is very effective. But it is very delicate. I have grown it in a sheltered corner facing south, where in a warm season it flowered well. Also I have grown it under glass, where it ran up with surprising rapidity, clutching hold of everything, and apparently growing several inches in a night. But one day it suddenly hung its head and died without warning. We never discovered why. We had treated it royally, and there was no trace of slug or caterpillar. It just went!

All varieties of the *Convolvulus* Major object to cold. It is better not to plant the seeds of even the hardiest out of doors till the spring sun has warmed up the earth a little. Many disappointments with these seeds are due solely to their having been planted in the open ground too soon. They are very tender in their infancy, and need a little warmth if the seeds are to germinate and survive the first entry into life. Cold damp earth is fatal to them. But given conditions they like, the rate at which they will grow is surprising.

They can be started in pots indoors; or they do quite well outside if planted not earlier than the first week in June, where they are to bloom. This is soon enough in most districts. The gardener is naturally anxious to get his annuals up and doing, as soon as possible. But in our uneven climate, there is risk in planting too early anything that cannot stand cold winds. And even the hardiest of seeds do better for being planted a week later, rather than a week earlier than the orthodox date. Very few seeds care to germinate in cold soil; but given a sun-warmed earth, and they get busy!

It takes longer than the amateur realises to dispel the chilly wet of our English winters from the garden beds. "We haven't had any snow this year, and very little frost, so we can get our seeds in nice and early," I said, in my less-experienced years, to the gardener of that period. He was an elderly man who could neither read nor write; but he was packed full of knowledge of a practical sort.

"No," he shook his head. "The wind on Shrove Tuesday did a-come from the east; that means forty days of east wind. Then when the sun crossed the line in March, it were still from the east; that means we shall have east winds most of the time for the next three months. And east winds mean late

frost. Let them thur seeds bide a bit longer. Tain't worth whiles to put 'em into the ground to freeze to death."

His forecast was right. We had the east winds and late frost that year.

Since then, I've learnt to "watch the wind," as the countrymen do. And I find these signs and tokens usually follow the same routine.

One of the greatest hindrances to successful gardening in the British Isles is the damp climate. And it affects so many different types of growing things from big fruit-trees to tiny alpines. I used to imagine it was the cold that hurt the plants. In some cases cold does; but often a plant that can stand heavy snow with severe frost on top of it, and come out smiling after the thaw, will turn up its toes with mere mild damp and expire—or become so mouldy that the kindest thing is to end its misery (and the gardener's!) at once, by putting it on the bonfire.

The wise gardener does all he can to keep young seedlings from coming to an untimely end, through too early exposure to the damp cold of our spring time.

When planting climbers, it is necessary to know the method of each, in order to supply the right type of support. Some throw out tendrils, and catch hold of anything they can find; the sweet pea is an example of this.

Some hitch on to the nearest support by their leaf-stems; the Canary creeper does this; also the clematis.

Others, like the convolvulus and bryony, also the scarlet runner bean, twine round a sapling, a stick, or a branch. And it is worth noticing that each will only twine its own way, and

in one direction. When it is needful to place a climber round a support, notice its habit; otherwise, if twisted in the wrong direction, it will deliberately untwist itself, if it can, and re-twine round the support in its natural way.

I've seen it do this, and one can only marvel at the intelligence hidden somewhere in the green wisp that prompts it to act thus. And another thing that has often amazed me is the way a climber seems quite aware when there is a branch, or anything else that will serve its purpose, a foot or more away; and it leans over in that direction, adding bit by bit to its length, till at last it secures the helper it needs, if it is to get on in the world. But how does it know? It hasn't eyes to see the stick!

The honeysuckle is another plant that twines round any stem, if it can find a convenient one within its reach. When it can't, it clambers up some other-how! Anyhow! Excelsior is its motto, and up it will get if it possibly can.

When we are having any woodland cut, we keep a look-out for any saplings—usually hazel—that the honeysuckles have used. We often come upon them, patterned all the way up with a spiral groove, where the climber has twined itself tightly round the bark, binding it with surprising strength that has interfered with its natural development. Hence the well-known name: Woodbine. Such saplings make interesting-looking walking-sticks.

If I could only have one climber in my garden, it would be a honeysuckle. There is something so indomitable about it. And it is possible to get different sorts that will provide a succession of flowers from spring round to winter. I have five sorts. The tiny flowered winter blooming species; an early blooming variety with crimson and yellow flowers; the wild

honeysuckle; the Japanese variety with leaves netted with yellow, and an evergreen kind, which blooms late, often showing a few blossoms at Christmas time. The flowers are in pairs up the stem, and are succeeded by black berries which the robins dearly love.

There are many beautiful varieties on the market; and the deep reds are particularly showy. Yet the common woodbine has no rival in my honeysuckle-affections. It is not only a thing of joy in itself, but it twines around so many lovely associations.

And its perfume! Nothing in the world could be more delightful than the scent of a honeysuckle hedge on a summer evening.

A young seedling came up among the tall fir trees in the long wind-break which we call the "Squirrels' Highway." A most unpromising position for a honeysuckle seedling, for these trees are feathered down to the ground, and one would have thought the youngster would have been discouraged quite early in life, and have given up the struggle when it found a heavy evergreen branch determined to sit on its head! But it takes a lot to discourage a honeysuckle. So long as its roots remain in the ground, it will try to do something. Cut it down to the earth—it will send up half a dozen sprightly-looking shoots in place of the one stem you may have demolished.

This one in the Squirrels' Highway was as enterprising as any of its relations. Catching sight of a peep-hole of daylight in the branch above, it made for it, and managed to find sufficient space to creep upward from under the weighty lowest branch of the big spruce, and hoist itself up to the next one. By degrees, it reached something still higher, using each

branch as a support as well as a ladder. The trunk of the tree being too huge for this young hopeful to find its way round, it wisely decided not to twine in this instance. It seemed to know that it would require extra yards and yards of itself to encircle that great tree, and all this time it would be using up energy and yet not getting much farther up into the freedom of light and air—and these are the elements nearly all creation craves!

So it went on clambering upwards, branch after branch, wherever one offered a handy support.

I forgot that little struggler; and soon it was lost to view among the dark green of the spruce.

A year or two later, I noticed something that struck me as being very unusual—the spruce was in bloom, and at the very top!

The gardener came and inspected it. Yes! There certainly were a lot of flowers up there; but against the sky, it wasn't quite easy to see exactly what they were like. "Had I ever known a spruce to flower before?" he asked me.

"Not like this," I replied non-committally, as I couldn't remember off-hand at the moment whether a spruce bore flowers, and if so, what they were like!

I got my field-glasses the better to examine the phenomena; and then I discovered it was my young friend the honeysuckle, gaily waving its arms and flaunting yellow blossoms in the most hilarious manner at the very apex of the tree.

And that tree is over fifty feet high!

Somehow, it seemed almost ludicrous to see the frivolous thing waving airy defiance at the whole world from its perch

at the top of such hoary old dignity as that spruce! It reminded me of a certain light-hearted youth I know, who, not having sufficient to occupy his mind at the 'varsity, climbed the Cathedral spire—or some other equally respectable eminence—one night, and hung his pyjamas on the weather vane!

Youth will have its fling!

But whereas the Cathedral authorities, accompanied by College dignitaries, had that improper decoration removed, as soon as the combined forces of the Fire Brigade, the Police, the builders' squad, and the steeple-jack managed to clutch a flapping, unrepentant, silk leg, I have left the honeysuckle to enjoy its glad life as it pleases. It lives nearer to Heaven than I do. And it deserves every atom of sunshine it can get, for it has overcome a host of obstacles. And even now, its diet below ground is mainly pine needles, instead of the sandy loam and leaf mould which is supposed to be necessary for their existence.

It is the embodiment of pluck and enterprise—two qualities which I greatly admire.

I look up and salute it each time I pass.

Another climber that deserves far more attention than it is getting at the moment, is the old sweet-scented *clematis flammula*—not to be confused with the Traveller's Joy of the hedgerow. The flammula has pure white blossoms, not the cream-coloured flowers of the ordinary wild clematis. To us here, it is one of the fairest things in the garden when it flings its wreaths of small white stars over some dark ivy, and fills the air for quite a distance with a perfume like essence of sweet almond.

It is a plant that requires a few considerations, not many, but it won't do without these few. A sheltered corner is best; it doesn't like the cold. Yet the roots must not be baked dry in the hot weather; in other words, it must have water at intervals, if the summer be short of rain. It likes a little lime in the soil, not much, but a trifle pleases it; old mortar is the best if you can get it; and for this reason, it does better than some plants if near a wall.

While it can be trained over arches, or against a portico, or round a window, its greatest delight is to climb over a roof of a low outhouse. Once it can get on a roof, it goes ahead!

I have it outside my little garden room which is a lean-to with a sloping roof. It has spread itself all over the roof and climbed up the ivy which surrounds the chimney. In August the whole place is festooned with snow-white sprays of flowers; it literally wreathes itself round anything it can hold to; and is more suggestive of a bride than any flower I know—not forgetting the beauty of the myrtle and orange blossom.

If it were scentless, it would still be a gem. But coupled with its ravishing perfume—never too overpowering as it is out of doors—it is as lovely as anything Nature has ever produced.

It is curious how we neglect some real treasure, simply because fashion happens to have ousted it into the background, to make room for some novelty, which may, or may not, have half the charm of the flower it has deposed. The *clematis flammula* is an instance. Yet there is nothing else quite like it, that is willing to thrive luxuriantly in our climate, and foam over with flowers and scent in such abundance, without asking for a deal of finnickin' looking-

after! Our great grandmothers loved it, and they usually cultivated fairly hardy flowers in their old-world gardens.

Advice: Should you notice the leaves being eaten and the shoots cropped off, dust with powdered alum, especially on the roof where the stems are lying. Probably slugs and snails are responsible for this; and powdered alum is their poison.

Hops are useful when one wants to cover a blank very quickly; their growth is so rapid. More than this, they are undeniably decorative, not only when growing out of doors, but also when bunches of blossom are cut for indoors.

The drawback of this climber is a tendency to blight and to harbour aphids and snails. Quite large snails will walk up the vines and lodge among the leaves in the tops of an arch or arbour. But whether they eat nothing but “hop,” or whether they help to keep down other undesirables, I don’t know.

Ladybirds are invaluable if put on the plant. I only hope that snails do not eat them! It is deplorable how little one really knows about the manners and customs of the battalion of old residents one discovers in a garden, when taking possession!

The most rampageous of all the climbers at the Flower-Patch, however, is the bramble. I don’t wonder it is excluded as an undesirable alien, from New Zealand; and I fancy it is also shut out from some parts of Australia. One regrets having to say unkind things about it, since there is no jelly that can compare with blackberry jelly, to my thinking; and I have also heard more than one country-hungry person say there is nothing worth mentioning in the same breath with blackberry and apple tart, especially when a jug of the farm cream is passed along with it.

I admit the plant has its good points, as well as its thorns. But how it travels! If only it would be content to remain in its appointed lot and space, like any well-conducted fruit tree! Instead of this, in one season, it will step out at least three feet all along any field, if it be allowed a free hand in the hedges, and a free foot outside. I have even known it to take more than this. Then, if still left unhindered to proceed on its mischievous way, it will travel a farther three-feet the next season. In this way it is quite possible for brambles in a hedge to monopolise a whole field ultimately—only give them time. This actually happened to a small rough field of my own, that was left untended during the war years and some little time afterward, with the men at the front, and there was a general shortage of labour.

The bramble's method of procedure is ingenious. It throws up long lithe stems in spring, with as little delay as possible. After growing upright for a few feet, or as long as they can find something to lean against, they bend over—still increasing in length—until they touch the ground, taking care to land some little distance away from the parent root in the hedge. Once the tip of the stem touches the earth, it ceases to lengthen, but, instead, sends down a thick tuft of roots which anchor it firmly to the ground. The branch is now in the form of an arch, and for the rest of the season devotes its attention to producing as many side shoots, upper shoots and waving branches as it can, each of these having the same determination to launch out into the world beyond, and strike root a little farther from home.

Next year, the newly rooted branches start out on their own to send up long lithe stems from this fresh base. Which, in turn, bend over and ultimately peg out yet another new claim,

still a few feet farther into the field. And *da capo*, it repeats all the bold bad doings of its ancestor back in the hedge—quite a long way off by now!

In this way it forms one of the most exasperating, thorn-besprinkled tangles the mild-mannered British gardener ever need wish to handle. That the tropics grow far worse things, I am well aware; but that is their funeral! The bramble of old England is quite enough for me!

If you wish to be allowed to inhabit the earth along with it, your only chance lies in cutting it back ruthlessly. Of course that doesn't end its career; it comes up lustier than ever next year, but at least you will keep it from travelling.

In addition, if you attack any long stem that is bending over gracefully and turning its eyes modestly downwards, you will probably find, if you pull it up, that a mop-like tuft of roots is already under way, below the soil or grass. At least you can get rid of that.

Every season I bear honourable scars on hands and wrists (in spite of the stout leather gloves I wear) due to my never-ceasing activity in trying to check the brambles. Yet, next year, there seem to be even more than the year before, and healthier than ever!

A friend once begged a few roots from me. I gave him a generous helping, and parted with them gladly. They were just what he needed, he said, to plant round his London garden, to prevent cats getting in and making havoc of the borders.

When I saw him a year or two later, I inquired if the brambles had proved successful in circumventing the marauders.

“Quite!” he replied cheerfully. “The cats can’t get into the garden now. But then—neither can I!”

VIII

Gate Crashers and other Nice People

UNSQUASHABLE stranger (*to Abigail at the front door*): “I conclude we can go round the garden?... *No?*... Of course we saw the notices on the gates saying no one could be admitted; but I said *we* would get in somehow.... Yes, we climbed over quite easily, though we wondered why they were locked.... To keep strangers out? Really? How *very* curious!... You can’t give permission under any circumstances?... Oh, well, it doesn’t matter. But now we’re here, we may as well go round all the same.”

Does so!

(*A few minutes later. A voice in the distance, as a gardener approaches to inquire their business*): “It’s all right, young man; we’ve had permission.”

Meanwhile, Abigail (*on the verge of apoplexy, to indoor staff all offering advice and adverse criticism*): “But what could I do? I couldn’t take the two of ’em by the scruff of their double necks, and drop *both* of ’em into the water-butt! Now *could* I?”

Another type, whom we love, of course, because we are commanded to do so, though we don’t waste much time in liking them, is the slight acquaintance (or any other acquaintance), who calls uninvited, and out of sheer curiosity, in order to see how the poor live in a cottage. On discovering that the house isn’t quite as he had pictured it, and the

scenery even more so, he says, with gracious and condescending patronage:

“Do you know, I should like my daughter (or wife, or sister, or aunt) to see this place. I can assure you, she would really *enjoy* wandering around here. I shall bring her to see it.”

To whom I reply (more or less audibly, according to circumstances): “And I can assure you there are many other people who would really enjoy wandering around here, too. But, unfortunately, the days aren’t long enough to enable us to welcome all of those kind friends who wish to see *us*! We have no time to spare for those who merely want to see *this place*! And in any case, this isn’t a public show place kept up by national funds for the benefit of the general public. It’s a private dwelling, and the owner desires the ordinary privacy common to the ordinary small English home. And also expects that strangers and distant acquaintances will show ordinary courtesy by waiting till they are invited!”

But do you think callers of this pattern can take a hint? No! The daughter (or wife, or sister, or aunt) will turn up unabashed, in a day or two!

Then there is the lady from London, who, after an extra-festive, several-course luncheon (engineered with special care by an expert cook and her competent kitchen-satellite in honour of some great occasion), settles down in a comfortable chair on the verandah, with a satisfied complacency born of pleasant repletion, and remarks:

“I must look about, now I am down here, for some young village girl to take back with me, as I’m wanting a maid; and yours cooks quite decently. Has she a sister?”

An especial favourite is the caller who never looks where she is walking, but clumps along, right on top of all the plants growing in the paved paths. And when, in order to attract her attention to the fact that there *are* things growing there, I say, apologetically: "I'm afraid the paths are getting too overgrown."

She only replies cordially:

"Oh, they don't interfere with me; and they like being walked on; positively love it."

More clumping!

And isn't it pleasant to be told, on meeting one who had recently stayed with us:

"I shan't forget that upper verandah of yours in a hurry!"

I concluded she was expressing appreciation, as most people do, of the view from there. But she continued:

"I've only just got over the cold I caught there, when I sat out late one night, without any wrap. The worst cold I've ever had! I was a perfect *wreck* when I got home!"

So gratifying, when one has done one's best for a guest!

A lady called on me with an urgent introduction from a mutual friend, who wrote that the bearer of the introduction was devoted to flowers, and longed to consult me.

Not being a professional grower, or even a very experienced amateur, I wasn't anxious to be interrogated. But as she brought the introduction personally, and was waiting while I read it, I could hardly say less than: "Shall we go out into the garden? We can talk better among the plants."

“I won’t detain you a minute,” she replied, “because I know how frightfully busy editors are. What I have come to see you about is this: I have four daughters—exceedingly brilliant, brainy girls, and it occurred to me that it would be very nice if they went in for writing. They were greatly taken with the idea, but they didn’t know what to write about. I suggested that they should copy Louisa Alcott, and begin with a book all about themselves, like *Little Women*. They are quite willing to write this, only they say they don’t know the way. Now, would you kindly let them come and see you, and then, just tell them how to do it?”

Mrs. Wangle is another nice person who deserves honourable mention. She is one of that enterprising sisterhood to be found all over the fashionable world, who have made a most careful study of the science of extracting the largest possible number of free meals out of their acquaintances—friends they have none!

Like the majority of her kind, Mrs. Wangle is by no means poor, though she may not be very wealthy. But what she saves on house-keeping bills in the course of the year must, in any case, make a considerable difference to her income—to say nothing of her ingenious devices for getting herself conveyed home free of charge in other people’s cars, and with no tip to the chauffeur either!

Any excuse serves to enable her to get in the vicinity of a meal. Is someone going away? Then she hurries to them (just before lunch) to say a fond farewell, assuring them that she dare not have waited till the afternoon lest she should have missed them: and she takes care to prolong her farewell till the gong sounds for lunch. The rest is easy—unless the

hostess is particularly strong-minded, and willing to forego her own lunch while her visitor sits on, hopefully but hungrily!

When an acquaintance returns to town after an absence, no matter how brief, Mrs. Wangle will call at once to learn the latest health tidings (her thought for another who keeps a good cook is really touching)—and this time her call will be in the late afternoon, so as to secure not only tea, but an invitation to dinner if possible.

Though she manages sometimes to get an invitation to a country house, or even invites herself if she can get there by no other means, she never asks her hostess to pay her a return visit. She begs her, most cordially, to come to town, however, and strongly recommends a charming hotel not far from her flat—“and then I shall often be able to run in and see you, dear”—which she always does, about meal times.

Now and again a very determined relative will decline the charming hotel, and insist on making a return visit to her flat. In that case Mrs. Wangle will make a tour of her acquaintances beforehand, booking up any invitations for her guest that she can manage to land. If, after considerable angling, no invite is forthcoming, she still secures tea, by taking the guest to call on all and sundry at tea time.

When it comes to offering hospitality herself, she says quite plainly that she can only entertain on the simplest lines (and they are indeed simple!) because (1) her health is never robust, (2) her flat is *so* tiny, and (3) she has never felt the same since her husband died—which remark can be construed just as anyone pleases; but it all comes to the same thing in the end, viz. that she doesn't intend to provide any

refreshments sufficiently sustaining to enable anyone to hold out for the evening!

So far as her own catering is concerned, she does herself remarkably well on those occasions when she has no alternative but to provide her own meals, and these she takes in the restaurant on the ground floor, below the flats. If anyone chances to drop in upon her when she is enjoying her grouse or early asparagus, or expensive salmon, she always says that her system requires a great deal of "keeping up"; but having a very delicate stomach, she can only "keep up" on a really high class dietary. This type of menu is for her own exclusive delectation, however. Any guest who ever stays with her is daily amazed at the art which can provide a four-course dinner (not in the restaurant) that leaves the diner even hungrier at the end than she was at the beginning!

Like all good business women, Mrs. Wangle has a certain amount of equipment for the task ever in hand. She is a good bridge player, who can be 'phoned for, when a hostess finds herself short in making up a party (not that she has a 'phone; but the people in the flat above have, and she uses their number freely). Also, she can always be relied upon to find something to someone's discredit, no matter how short of scandal the world happens to be at the moment. So that conversation never need flag if she be present.

The recent slump in dividends has enabled her to move to a smaller, but still quite luxurious flat, without loss of social prestige, since we all have to economise these days.

Also it provides her with further excuse for withholding hospitality. As she said to one of the few remaining people who call on her: "Do take a chair, dear. It's all I have to offer

now, in my poor little flat!—but, at least I can give you a seat!”

Mention must be made of the lady whose acquaintance with other people’s gardens is so extensive that every plant she sees in mine instantly recalls something infinitely better which she has seen elsewhere.

“Is that rose a Lemon Pillar?... Why I hardly recognised it!” (though she did so at once!) “I wish you could see a Lemon Pillar I was looking at last week in Lady Blank’s garden. Positively *marvellous*! You never saw such blooms. Smothered! Not merely two or three like yours, but all over the pergola, and hanging in festoons. Liquid sunshine I called it. I shan’t soon forget that sight! I felt I never wanted to see another Lemon Pillar, after that one, as long as I lived. I couldn’t say half I wanted to about it——” (Neither could I! But I should dearly have liked to, all the same!)

“And that one little plant is the only *Onosma* you have? Really!... H’m! You ought to visit Mrs. Moneybags’ place and see *her* *Onosma*—grows all over the beds like a weed; banks of it; a blaze of yellow; never saw anything like it in my life before. And that rhododendron reminds me: Have you ever been over the Duchess of Gumpshire’s place in Ireland?... No? You really ought to run over and have a look at it. You’d get some ideas from *that* garden. Talk about gentians! Why you have almost to trample them down to get inside the gate. And as for her *Oxypetalum Tweedia cærulea*!... But there, we’re not all alike. Some people have the knack of growing flowers, and some haven’t. It’s no use blaming those who haven’t. After all, we can only do our best!——”

Another specialist in her own line of scrounging, is Mrs. Chunk.

But perhaps we had better have a pause for breath here and hand her over to the next chapter.

IX

An Afternoon Call

IT was Whit-Monday. And in London.

The telephone rang.

Now, to those few Londoners who are so blest (even though utterly undeserving) as to possess a garden that is really an unspoilt portion of old woodland, as ours was at that time, with beech trees in young green leaf, uncurling ferns splashed by a fountain, and comfortable chairs close to a tea-table beneath blue-green fir trees—to such, I repeat, a telephone ring on Bank Holiday holds few illusions! For all too often it means that someone desires a change of scenery, with a nice rest in pleasant surroundings. And that “someone” is certain to be the last person on earth one really wants! It is never one’s dearest friend.

I took up the receiver prepared for the worst!

A female voice accosted me with this naïve opening.
“Hello! Is that you, dear?”

Of course I promptly replied that it wasn’t.

But, with a comfortable laugh that seemed to gurgle from the owner’s three chins, the voice went on to assure me that she knew it was me, dear; recognised my voice instantly. (Alas! by that time I had recognised hers as belonging to Mrs. Chunk. Truly the last person I craved to entertain!)

Was I at home? Yes? It was *ages* since she had seen me; and she would like to run up that afternoon for a few minutes.

As she lives two miles away, has a steep piece of hill to walk up, after she gets off the tram, and (did I mention it?) is very well nourished, I knew she would require a good many minutes rest, after her “run up.”

I could not deny being at home; but I did say that my uncle would be visiting us that day.

“You have visitors?” repeating as much of my reply as she had heard, the rest being lost in the folds of her own laugh, which is always included in her social conversation.

“My uncle will be here,” I reiterated with emphasis, hoping that good taste would compel her to postpone the “run up.”

The day was too gloriously sunny for that, however. She wanted an outing, and evidently could arrange for nothing better.

“Your *uncle*, did you say?” she echoed again. “You have an uncle *living*? Just fancy your having an uncle! We should so like to meet him. What a *great* age he must be!”

“Yes; he’s nearly fifty,” I replied. “But in spite of his great age, he is frequently coherent, and sometimes he actually recognises us when he sees us!”

But sarcasm is always wasted on three chins!

At the same time, I noted the word “we.” Apparently she was not coming alone! As she owned five children and a husband, I wondered who would accompany her.

I soon knew!

“It will be so nice for him to see the children,” she went on (as though he had never seen any before!). “It will brighten him up.”

So all the children were coming! My heart sank so low, that my shoes nearly gave way under the strain.

I rang off mechanically.

The Head of Affairs was almost rabid when he heard, so much did he object! I had to remind him that she was not *my* choice of a friend, but the wife of a business acquaintance of his; and but for this fact, would never have got any footing in my house; she was so “everything” that I least care for! Yet was I likely to turn a cold shoulder on his business friends, no matter what, or how, their wives... etc.?

I didn't stop to argue the matter in too minute detail; I rang up my uncle, and begged him to come to lunch instead of tea, if he wished to exchange a sentence with us. I knew there would be no chance of his voice being heard, once the lady arrived, to say nothing about the prattle of her children, that was usually conducted *fortissimo*.

Mrs. Chunk's most remarkable characteristic was her ability to shunt the major portion of her maternal responsibilities on to other people. And so cleverly did she manage things, that—as someone once remarked—her main personal dealings with her children seemed to be when she introduced them into the world, and, later, when she allocated them to other people's care.

Not that she was morbidly reticent about them. Anything but! For having got someone else—as a privilege—to look after them, and to relieve her of trouble and responsibility, she had more time to devote to talking about them; which she did *ad nauseum* whenever she could find a listener.

Her theory seemed to be, that if a woman had no children of her own, it was only fair, and her lawful duty, to take on some of those bestowed on the world by other people. And if

a woman already had children of her own, then, obviously, it would not make much difference if a few more were added to the group.

The names of the Little Chunks were Gascoyne, Huldrina, Desborough and Arbuthnot; the nations latest hope being Tempest. Evidently, Peace having proved a fraud, his parents thought they would try something more violent, and never was a name more suitably bestowed.

Mrs. Chunk said she felt she owed it to her children to endow them with names that would single them out from the crowd. But one would have thought she had already seen to that, in marrying Mr. Chunk!

Boarding schools of course solved many of her problems for her during term time, and she had a perfect genius for ferreting out a succession of Holiday Camps, where, by a judicious dovetailing of dates, most of her family could be taken off her hands for the whole of the Easter and Summer holidays. Though she always reiterated that she only let them go to such places because she considered it was the duty of the educated classes to do what they can to leaven the masses. She felt it was so good for the lads from poor homes to have the opportunity to mix with boys like her own.

Having disposed of her children for six weeks or so, Mrs. Chunk's health naturally required a change and a *complete* rest. Which necessitated her going to some really bright seaside resort. And no one can speak in more authoritative detail than she does on such important subjects as which South Coast resort has the smartest tea-shops; and which hotel serves the best entrées.

Mrs. Chunk loves it if one has visitors; but she likes to know beforehand, as in that case she clothes herself more in chains than frock, and seems to perspire imitation pearls. But obviously such decoration is not necessary if she is only going to see me. As she says, it is so nice to feel that anything will do for me; and that she need not trouble to put the children into their better clothes. Indeed, she had not intended to let Huldrina wear that white coat again, as it really wasn't fit to be seen; but she knew *I* would not mind.

Mind? Of course not! Who could be so unreasonable as to mind, if the once-white cloth coat is now drab, and seems to have collected all the oil from Gascoyne's motor-bike? Who could see anything but charm in boys (always provided they are Mrs. Chunk's boys, of course; other people's boys don't count anyhow!) brought to call clad in grimy trench coats, looking as though they had been through a siege, with unbrushed boots and untidy collars?

I am old-fashioned, doubtless, but the boys I know most about, have to wash themselves before they are taken visiting!

In earlier years, and before Mr. Chunk had prospered sufficiently to be able to afford a nurse, Mrs. Chunk became an adept at leaving her children with neighbours. Miss Brown, who lived in her road, was a constant victim, when Mrs. Chunk wanted to go anywhere, and was without a maid. And she very seldom could keep one, for though they were all *devoted* to her children (according to her testimony) during the first week of their sojourn in the house, they seldom stayed more than two months at the most.

Hence the extreme usefulness of Miss Brown.

“She’s very spinster-ish,” Mrs. Chunk explained to me, “so it’s a perfect boon to her to have a little young life about the place. Of course it’s terribly dull for the pets to have only a couple of middle-aged women to look after them, as her maid isn’t young either. But I don’t mind leaving them with Miss Brown, because I know they are absolutely *safe* there. She is most conscientious, and I’m sure she tries to do her very best. So I can go out shopping and visiting with a *perfectly* easy mind. Indeed, once we didn’t come back till next day, as it was a bit stormy. The children said she was very worried in case they were not comfortable. But she put them into her own bed—as I knew she would—and slept on the sofa herself, to make sure they were all right.”

“I suppose you pay her for minding them,” I said, knowing that her income was much reduced, “or, at any rate, supply their meals?”

“Oh, no!” she replied with her usual laugh. “Miss Brown would never hear of such a thing, I’m sure, even if I did suggest it: and personally I wouldn’t dream of hurting her feelings by mentioning money. Besides, she loves having them, and would be so disappointed if I let them go anywhere else.”

As it happened, I knew that Miss Brown was looking for a new house a few miles further off. She told me herself that if she couldn’t find a house to suit her, elsewhere, she should set up a crèche in her present one, announcing that no child over a year old could be taken. This would at least limit the number of little Chunks dumped on her hands at one time!

When the party arrived that Whit-Monday, Mrs. Chunk immediately announced: “Tempest has been asking if you

will give us some of the eggs those lovely chickens of yours have laid? I told him I was sure you would. He never forgets those chickens—do you darling?”

Tempest endorsed the statement by announcing threateningly: “Me want eggs! Me want eggs!”—his family immediately assuring him in unison that he should have them, and that “Auntie” was intending to get them at once.

I never invited them to call me “Auntie”; the honour was thrust upon me! But, anyhow, my next duty lay clearly before me.

“I’m awfully hungry, Mother,” Arbuthnot volunteered, “and Gascoyne says he wants two eggs. Can I have two?”

“Well, you must ask Auntie. I daresay she will say yes! She knows all about growing boys and what they need. You must leave it to her.”

Yes, my duty was more than clear!

It was unfortunate that we had only three hens left, and two out of the three were broody! But there were six eggs in the larder—just sufficient for the party to have one apiece, my own family having been forewarned to decline them politely, no matter how they might feel *their* growing needs. I decided that the visitors must fill up any internal vacancies with cake in lieu of a second helping of eggs.

But no sooner had we started tea, than Tempest raised his voice in urgent appeal:

“Me don’t like my egg, it isn’t hard!” he yelled. “Me can’t eat my egg if it isn’t hard! Give me another.”

“Did little Tempest have a bad egg, then!” crooned the mother soothingly. “He needn’t eat the nasty egg. Auntie will

soon get him another-boiled quite hard, as he likes it.” This to me.

But I wasn’t exactly pleased, after I had sacrificed a new-laid egg on the alter of anything but friendship, to have it labelled bad and nasty.

I merely said I was sorry, I hadn’t another in the house.

Of course that induced torrents of grief; Tempest refused to be comforted, till his mother told him that after tea he should go out and whip that naughty, *naughty* chicken, that hadn’t laid another egg!

Later, when he was not allowed to have the fowls in his possession in order to whack them, he howled again! But that didn’t disturb Mrs. Chunk (though I was thankful the Head of Affairs had decamped after lunch). She sat on happily, regaling me with the latest brilliant achievements of her offspring, Huldrina sitting beside her (instead of helping to take care of her brother down the garden), and prompting her mother when she omitted any smart thing she (Huldrina) was supposed to have said or done.

It is strange that in these days, when everyone recognises and admits that there is nothing more beautiful than innocent, unsophisticated childhood, so many parents are feverishly engaged in trying to develop in their children, a forced and unnatural precocity, that is neither attractive nor convincing.

And though Mrs. Chunk favoured me with the minutest particulars of her family’s school reports, and similar details that are common to all youngsters in this standardised age, she never once made the remotest inquiry about my family, nor evinced the slightest desire to hear what the Headmaster said about their football, or what the Headmistress said about their dancing.

Even the longest visit must come to an end, fortunately; though it is surprising how much damage can be done in one afternoon, in a garden, by unruly children, whose parent pays not the slightest heed to them, except to smile indulgently when they do something specially outrageous, and then say: “Just look at those little pickles!” And the hostess dares not interfere.

But eventually Tempest announced that he was tired of this old garden, and demanded to be given another ride on the tram. He made such a hubbub about it, and got into a furious rage, as was his habit when he wasn’t instantly given what he wanted, that at last Mrs. Chunk rose to go, explaining to me the while her belief in encouraging self-expression in children, and the danger to their moral character that lurked unseen in any attempt at repression of their natural instincts.

Well—I realised there was no need to be anxious about Tempest’s morals at the moment; he was self-expressing so whole-heartedly (though I think it should be whole-lungedly), that my only fear was lest the neighbours should ring up the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and send an Inspector to find out what I was doing to a helpless child.

“Have you asked Auntie what we specially came for?” Huldrina inquired of her mother, in a stage whisper.

“Oh! Before we go—’Drina has just reminded me—we came up *on purpose* to beg some flowers. We were sure you would give us some—— Desborough!” as he appeared in the offing that moment, “find Arbuthnot and Gascoyne and tell them we are going——”

Wearily I got my scissors, and gathered a nice big bunch as quickly as I could; though I was sorry to have to cut them

that afternoon, as we had only one herbaceous border, owing to the prevalence of trees, and I was expecting visitors next day, and had hoped that the garden would look its best. Moreover, I had promised a niece of mine some flowers for a Sale of Work that was being held the following week at her school, in aid of their Sports Club.

Nevertheless, I was willing at the moment to give Mrs. Chunk the whole border, if only she would go before Tempest started a further set of tantrums.

“Oh! how sweet!” she said, as I handed the bouquet to her. “These are for *me*, of course. I love flowers. But what I intended to say was: we want some for a little Sale of Work at ‘Drina’s school next Wednesday week’ (I remembered then that Huldrina and my niece attended the same school). “All the girls have been asked to bring flowers. We don’t want to gather any from our own garden, though we’ve a *wonderful* show this year; our new gardener is a perfect treasure. But it’s a pity to rob one’s own garden, isn’t it, for we like to look at them. I said at once: ‘We’ll go and call on Auntie. You’ll be able to have all you want there.’ So ‘Drina will come on Tuesday evening without fail, and she’d like a really large bunch, please. And may she bring some of her friends with her? They would love to have some flowers too, wouldn’t they, darling?”

Darling said “Ra—*thur!*”

X

To Have, or Not to Have

WE never realise what a number of minor questions have to be decided, until we actually own a garden.

We start in so exuberantly with a new set of tools, if we can get them; if not, we make any sort of spade do. But we start in with something (young, old, but usually middle-aged) in the nature of an implement, together with some packets of seed. And all seems plain sailing at first, even if our back does ache, we know it isn't pneumonia, and spinal complaint and congestion of the hips, though it may feel like all three with some more serious complications thrown in. We work on light-heartedly, and with perfect faith in our own ideas. Nothing doubting.

Unfortunately, the evil one, who certainly takes a special delight in upsetting the enjoyment of persons who potter about gardens, is soon on the spot; and it isn't long before he sees that someone is forthcoming to undermine our self-esteem.

Have you ever yet displayed the garden work of your own hands to a caller, without copious advice being offered, gratis, on how to do things in an entirely different manner, so as to secure an entirely different result from the one you desire? It is queer how most people seem to consider themselves competent to criticise one's gardening methods; also the way one's pictures are hung!

My friends don't offer advice as a rule as to the way the curtains should be hung; but I've known them calmly announce that a certain picture is in the wrong light; or, worse still, is not hanging quite straight. Just as if pictures ever do hang quite straight after anyone has done a little dusting in the room!

And again, the average man visitor does not feel it his duty to criticise the way I carve a turkey (though he might well do so!); neither does he offer to do it himself. But let him loose in the garden, and in most cases he at once feels called upon to make all sorts of suggestions, and point out my mistakes in pruning, and show me how I ought to have done it. More especially does he feel impelled to lavish destructive criticism if he is only in the beginner's class himself.

This tendency of our friends to criticise our horticultural efforts comes rather hard on the novice, and particularly the one who is nice-mannered, gentle-hearted, and anxious not to hurt the critic's feelings by disagreeing; also, distrustful of his own knowledge.

But it doesn't do to give way. If you don't stick to your own plans, you may find yourself involved in a confusion of ideas. I am convinced that each garden-owner should, so far as possible, endeavour to make his garden to please himself, not to oblige his friends. After all, the friends do not live in it; the owner does. The friends have not thought the whole thing out over and over again, planning and improving the plans and revelling in the job; the owner has.

Moreover, the owner generally knows exactly what he wants; the friends seldom do. They merely offer slap-dash criticism on the first thing that catches their eye, and think no more about it. It is a modern vice!

There was the Faun, for instance. A case in point.

“Ah! I see now what’s wrong with your garden,” said a candid caller. “I’ve been wondering why it doesn’t seem quite right. What you need now is a figure of some sort. Of course you must have one in the centre of your fountain. Or standing at the edge of the pool would do quite as well. You can see that the garden positively asks for it. So effective, you know; breaks the monotony of the flowers. Besides, that kind of treatment is all the rage now. I’ve got one that will be the very thing. I’ll send it along, as I’ve no use for it now, in a flat. And I should love to feel I had helped to make your garden.”

It arrived. It was a Faun.

I don’t know exactly how to describe the gentleman.

Only the previous evening, a non-musical friend who had been listening on the wireless to a performance of Debussy’s *L’après-midi d’un Faune*, remarked severely at the conclusion:

“Well! If *that* is what he was like in the afternoon, then all I can say is, they ought not to allow the public-houses to open at all at midday!”

My Faun was just like that!

It doesn’t matter what I did with him; the main point is, he doesn’t live with us now. I don’t think my garden is suited to that type of classicality. Moreover, I don’t care for Fauns; not of that pattern, anyhow.

Yet, unless I had been quite firm, I should have found myself persuaded into decorating the place according to another person’s ideas, and in direct opposition to my own

liking. It is so easy for someone to say “Oh! you ought to have this, that or the other!”; but the owner should be the one to decide.

If I had given that Faun garden-room, because I hesitated about seeming ungrateful, other friends in the generosity of their kind hearts (and in desperation to know what to send for Xmas and on my birthday) would immediately have said:

“I know what *she* would like. She simply adores those garden statuettes. Look! Isn’t that Satyr positively weird! Enough to give one nightmare! She’ll love that!”

Forthwith an array of nymphs, gnomes, and other rural dieties would have landed on my doorstep! And it would have been so difficult to dispose of such unwanted tokens of affection. The donors naturally would look around when next they visited me!

While I am on the subject of garden ornaments, I would say that I think their use should be influenced by personal preference. But given plenty of flowers and greenery, I do not myself feel the need of artificial ornaments. And figures would seem entirely out of place in the wild scenery of our hills and valleys.

I have one white rabbit sitting up on his little tail, where something of the kind seemed needed at one spot in a rock garden. But he fits in with the landscape so successfully, that someone kindly knocked at the door with the information that one of our white rabbits had got loose and seemed to be making mincemeat of the rock garden!

There is also a fan-tail pigeon sunning himself on a low stump that badly needed a finish of some sort. No sooner was he perched there than small leaved ivy sent up a few inquiring sprays to look into the matter. These must have

reported “All well; no likelihood of our being eaten!” for very soon long tiny leaves were wreathing themselves around the pigeon’s base, and he would have been smothered in ivy if we didn’t keep it cut back.

Trifles of this description are natural to the surroundings, and do not strike a false note as a rule, unless they are overdone.

But figures are far too sophisticated for my semi-wild Flower-Patch. Such statuary is more suited to the formal garden. At best, there are long spells of weather in this country when the mere sight of the poor dear things standing out in the grey fog or cold dreary rain, clothed in nothing but an inadequate bath towel or a fig leaf, is enough to give one rheumatism and a temperature. Why, the remnants of a scarecrow look more cheerful on a dark January day!

I have heard people object to sparsely-clad statues in the open, on the ground that they are “suggestive.” Quite true! To me they are so painfully suggestive of pleurisy, bronchitis, double pneumonia and influenza, that I’m quite sure I’m not feeling at all well, when I get indoors!

Where the garden is small, it is best to avoid anything large, or conspicuous, in the way of ornament, otherwise it will dwarf the rest of the garden, making it seem smaller than it really is.

While one well-chosen piece may be useful as an accent, to bring out some special aspect of the plot, it is easy to overdo the idea. I know one garden that looks more like the show-ground of a monumental mason, than the harmless hobby of a happy amateur gardener. Yet the owner enjoys it, and loves every ornament he has squeezed into it. This in itself is a justification of its existence. I am a great believer in

letting people enjoy themselves in their own way, especially when their hobbies are no annoyance to their fellow-creatures. The difference between good and bad taste is sometimes only relative. And we need all the genuine happiness we can get in this rather difficult world.

All the same, I would advise the beginner to move cautiously, when it comes to importing a figure into his floral domain.

Marble is a native of southern Europe. In every way, it belongs to that region. Temperamentally, artistically, climatically, statuary is at home in Italy and Greece, where perennial sunshine fosters and emphasises its characteristics, and no clammy, dripping fog discolours it. Against dark cypress and ilex, such beauty enhances the scenery.

But in our own land—well, I don't want to appear too insular; nevertheless, I think nothing can be more lovely than our gardens, where they are typically English. They have a charm and an individuality all their own. They have no need to borrow design and lay-out from other lands, though we are indeed grateful for the many trees and shrubs and flowers other nations have sent us, or that we have collected from them.

There is nothing in any other country quite like the English gardens, whether they belong to castle or cottage. Do let us keep them intact so long as the ever encroaching factories and jerry-builders permit. All too soon they will be gone, never to return. Yet, they are among the most beautiful items of our heritage.

Among other matters which often require more than a little consideration are the paths and edges.

Our climate is not kind to our paths. Frequent rains turn them into juicy quagmire, unless made up carefully, so as to shed the wet in one way or another. If the garden is to be of practical use to anyone besides the local cats, it must have paths that can be walked upon all the year round.

The present vogue for crazy paving is sound sense. Like so many of the ways and doings of rural people, it originated in stern necessity, and was devised for use, not for ornament—yet another instance of the path of duty becoming the path of beauty! The cottager, needing a dry walk from door to gate, flung down some flat stones, and left it at that. Nature of course started in, at once, to do her bit. By the following year that path was doing its best to accommodate all the overflow from the borders.

Solid stone underfoot is ideal in a land of mist and moisture like ours. It doesn't wash off; it doesn't soon wear out; while the "crazy" style lets the water drain away, leaving the stones high and dry. The only drawback is the opportunity it gives for the least desirable weeds to settle between the stones, and remain there for life, unless the stones are frequently taken up, in order to eject them. On the other hand, those same crevices provide root room for a host of lovely growing things. And in very severe weather, these pavement plants will usually survive, when most others in the open borders are killed off. This applies equally to times of the hardest frost, and intense heat and drought. The stones protect the roots from extremes of temperature.

The only way to circumvent the weeds is to see that something more desirable is first on the ground. Though even then there will be weeds. But it is a big consolation to remember that you have not nearly so many as would be

flourishing if the major portion of the path were not stone covered. Gravel and such-like top dressings for walks can produce an all-over weed crop in a very few months.

Stone becomes expensive I know, if it has to come a long distance; but I believe it is the cheapest in the end, as it cuts out a deal of labour which would otherwise be perpetually needed to keep down the weeds. Also, it lasts almost indefinitely, with only an occasional readjustment if the stones get loose or displaced with the weather.

Sometimes these crazy stones are set in cement. This keeps them firmer; but the water doesn't get away quite so easily. Getting rid of the water must be the main aim of the pathmaker; otherwise the walks are miserable in wet weather, and dangerous in frost.

One of our friends having had all his paved paths bedded in concrete, was rejoicing to think how he had frustrated the weeds. But he was quite irate when he found he could not grow any non-weeds either! He had visualised a path a positive rainbow of purple thyme, pink silene, blue veronica and yellow stonecrop, with never a dock or dandelion to distress his eyes. Instead, he had the tidiest paths in the district; and the worst of it was, he couldn't easily have them all chipped up again when he realised his mistake. For once, the workman had made a really good job of it!

“That'll last you a hundred years, sir,” the builder said.

“Then have I to wait till I'm 149 years old before I can grow a few plants in my path?” the owner moaned. In the end, he moved.

An exceedingly interesting-looking path I have seen, which was entirely made by a middle-aged woman. She was

well-to-do, and kept a gardener; but this piece of work was her hobby: a mode of self-expression.

She lived near the coast, and used to collect smooth oval pebbles about two and a half inches long; some dark, some light. Over a substratum of ash and cinders, she put a thick layer of sand. The pebbles were then buried in this, each on its edge, and close together. She obtained an interesting geometric design, by slanting the pebbles in different directions, and arranging the dark and the light pebbles in a pattern.

Only a small section of the path was prepared at one time for the stones. And when they were set, with only the oval edge of each showing, they were covered with more sand, which ultimately worked its way around the pebbles, filling up every interstice. It was slow work, which had to be done kneeling—in itself fatiguing. But she patiently added bit by bit, working at it a little each day, weather permitting.

In time the path was finished and proved most serviceable as well as artistic. It had all the hard-wearing qualities of the old cobble-stone paving, combined with a very picturesque appearance. Also its more even surface gave it an advantage over the old rough and ready “cobbling.”

“It’s my piece of tapestry,” the maker said to me. “The doctor said I must live out of doors all I could. This gave me a definite incentive to come out and remain out. Yes, it took some time to do; but it’s the little *every* day that gets it done at last.”

Another attractive path, also made by a woman, was paved with old bricks set in herring-bone pattern.

While a rather odd path I once saw was paved with the bottoms of stone ginger-beer bottles. Whether the whole

bottle was there or not I don't know, only the bottoms were visible, set level with the earth and close together, like circular tiles.

Of course, any hard weather-resisting material can be used, so long as it can be set firmly in the ground. But some seem more suitable to one type of garden than another.

I tried marble chips on one of my paths. I was told that this was infallible for keeping down the weeds. Also it was such pretty, clean-looking, shining stuff, as I took up a handful, and it caught the light on its sparkling grains, and quite fascinated me.

But before any weed had a chance to start its life of struggle, I saw that the chips would not add to the joy of my premises. It was another illustration of the fact that marble is an alien in an English garden.

All around was the soft grey stone of the district—edging the beds, piled high for walls, propping up the terraces on the sloping hill-side, outcropping all about the place, when it could find nothing else to do; mossed and lichened with green and yellow, rust and brown; never aggressive, toning in with the plants that trailed about it and nestled in its crevices. And into the midst of this peaceful, eye-resting scene, I was foolish enough to introduce a white, glaring streak that shrieked aloud at its nun-like grey neighbours, making them look dull and characterless, beside the gleaming, devastating insistence of the marble.

“Who the dickens has been painting that path over there with whitewash?” the Head of Affairs inquired indignantly. “Surely they might have found something better to do, than to disfigure——,” etc., etc.

I explained that it was intended to keep down the weeds; was guaranteed to do that. But I offered to clear it away, as I wasn't in love with it either.

It wasn't so easy to clear, however; for by that time an always-anxious-to-oblige gardener had rammed it well in, as per my esteemed instructions. So we had to endure it—until the weeds came; which, fortunately, was quite soon. Very healthy and persevering our weeds are! For once, they found themselves welcomed.

Now, after a couple of years, that path is largely green grass, with a few bits of marble lying about; which leads intelligent visitors to tell us they feel certain we should find the remains of a Roman villa, or at least a nice tessellated pavement down below, if only we would go to the trouble of excavating. And I can see they think me a poor sort, because I don't upheave the whole on the chance of finding a few more bits of marble. But I say nothing. I never like to discourage earnest instruction.

Paving is a subject full of interest. It offers such a wide area for experiment, and teems with possibilities. I believe we have yet to see some striking developments in this particular branch of garden art. It has scarcely been touched as yet in England. Bricks have immense possibilities, as can be seen in the remarkable brick-work of ancient Persia which still survives.

It is a far cry from the old English grass path dotted with stepping stones to the amazing floral carpeting laid out in the streets at certain festivals, in the Canary Islands and elsewhere in the South. And though I, personally, do not wish to see blossoms sacrificed by the hundredweight to provide the colour for these glowing roadway designs, there are

probably other less destructive ways of getting variety of treatment and even colour into our garden walks.

XI

Suggestions

ALWAYS have a suitable background in readiness, with a camera, for the portraiture of visitors. It is well to decide beforehand which particular site in the garden will best answer this purpose.

Some people have a positive mania for being photographed. And the less they resemble the Venus di Milo the more they apparently crave to have a memento of themselves registered beside every rosebush, country stile, rustic gate, and stone seat. Or they want to be pictured gathering poppies in a field (with never a thought for the corn they are ruining).

Hence, it saves time if the owner of any rural “demense” settles, once and for all, the spot which provides the best background with the requisite lighting, for the inevitable snap. Because even if the garden-owner doesn’t possess a camera, the visitor will probably bring one. And few things are more saddening, when one is really anxious to display some horticultural gem one has raised with one’s own water-can from one’s own seed in one’s own flower-pot, than to have the visitor obviously contemplating nothing but the picture she herself (and it’s usually a “her”) would make in that landscape, while she poses in various photographically-impossible places and says with a sweet film-star smile, “Would this do?”—utterly regardless of the light.

Therefore, have a suitable spot already mapped out. Produce your camera, and all will be well.

Speaking of snaps, what a pity it is that the inexperienced amateur so seldom realises that the photograph of a single tree, one spray of wild roses, a fern growing in a wall, or one clump of primroses, may be of far greater worth than a wide expanse of landscape, in which nothing is clearly defined, and the true proportions are lost.

From my place high up above the valley, one can see for over thirty miles in one direction, with range upon range of hills, woods and meadows, river and rocks. This is the view most amateurs try to photograph with a hand camera! And then they wonder why their friends are so little impressed with the blur which results!

Here is another valuable hint. If your guests run short of occupation, set them to study the pansies and violas, and see how many of their friends and enemies they can recognise in the flower faces. It is really surprising how many of one's acquaintances can be identified in one bed of pansies, including severe-looking feminists, irascible old gentlemen, sprightly school-girls, ample matrons, smiling children, saucy-looking youngsters, and anxiously inquiring faces that are not quite sure what fate is going to hand out to them next.

I've found nearly all my relations, as well as conspicuous politicians and other notables in my own garden. And once you start people on the quest, you will hear them exclaiming something like this:

“Look! isn't that purple and yellow pansy exactly like Mrs. So-and-so! And that worried-looking brown one is the very image of Aunt Kate.”

If nothing more is accomplished, at least this will induce them actually to look at the individual blossoms. So few people really do that, though they think they do!

Yet another. If your garden gets below par just when you are expecting a visitor (and one's garden usually *does* behave in this way) don't cut off the dead flowers and seed pods in your desire to tidy up. If you do so, you will only emphasise the absence of blooms.

Whereas, if you leave an array of floral remains, it shows what has been, and speaks eloquently and indisputably, even though a trifle untidily, of the glory that has departed.

Then, if your visitor is of a desirable and obliging and sensible kind, hand her a pair of scissors, and a basket, with a picturesquely embroidered gardening apron (the more ornamentally useless the better, in this case), and encourage her to do her bit.

It is preferable that she should tell her friends later on: "My dear! My back was simply dizzy with cutting off dead roses, hundreds of them!"—than that she should say: "Never saw a *sign* of bloom in that garden all the time I was there!"

XII

Trials

BINDWEED should come first, I fancy, in the list of garden trials. It is so pertinacious, so utterly impossible to eradicate, once it gets so much as a toe-hold!

My first piece came to me in a parcel of plants I had ordered from a nursery of which I knew nothing. The plants were cheaper than usual—that ought to have been a warning! When they arrived, I was in a hurry and leaving for London the next morning. I did notice one piece of suspicious-looking root, which I pulled out and put on the bonfire. Alas, I did not examine the whole consignment, but planted them hurriedly, in order to get them into the ground before I left. It was during the war, and I concluded the nurserymen were short-handed, just as I was; and their places were neglected, just as mine was.

When next I came to the Flower-Patch, fine crops of bindweed were sprouting and spreading all over that bed. I dug, as everyone does when they first see the nuisance. But the bindweed enjoys being dug; simply revels in being chopped in half, as this enables the enterprising thing to produce two lusty plants where there was only one before!

I could not spend much time over it then. And I didn't see it again till the following year.

To make a very long and very weary story short, the time came when I said: "Everything is to be taken out of this long

border. I will deal with this bindweed *myself*, and deal with it *thoroughly!*”

No one objected to my doing so.

When the bed was emptied of plants, I started valiantly, seated on a mat covered with an old mackintosh, to dig over the whole of the bed, inch by inch. I got out piles of roots. Only, as sure as I said “*That* part at least is clear!” I would find an under stratum of roots far down where I never thought to find them.

I worked for three months on that border, every day getting out roots, either by the yard or by the half-inch. At the end of three months, I was half way along the bed—no farther! I straightened my poor disjointed spine, and said: “I think that will have to do for now. And anyhow, I have cleared *that* portion.”

Next year it sent up six little shoots in place of every previous one, all over that cleared bed. I could have wept with aggravation.

The fact seems to be that the more one digs, the more one chops it into fragments; and I have yet to see the fragment that won't form a hearty root.

Since it first came into the garden, it has travelled in all sorts of directions and appears in unexpected spots. Of course we try to rout it out; but unless one can get the whole length of root, it still persists. It had such a chance to go ahead while the men were on war work.

The most successful method so far was suggested by the gardener, and we have now cleared several big beds. All the perennials were removed, and the ground frequently turned over and examined. The bed was left entirely bare for a year, which enabled us to see every shoot that poked a cheeky head

above ground, and immediately we tried to secure the whole of the root belonging to the shoot.

The second year, we put in only a few low growing annuals, merely to take off the bare look, but not to cover the ground. And still we watched, and routed out. But there was far less to do. Each bed is being kept bare like this when it has a tendency to harbour bindweed.

I think we have completely cleared some beds now. But it is a long and tedious process. Yet I know of no better way.

Rabbits are our next sorrow. In town it would be cats in place of rabbits.

A reader has asked me if I will give a list of the plants rabbits *won't* eat. I could easily give a long list of those they will eat! I am inclined to think they enjoy everything, excepting the plants one finds very prolific in the woods and fields. Even these they may enjoy, only one does not notice it, when there are so many.

I don't think they eat foxgloves, primroses, violets, dogs mercury, wood spurge, ivy, bluebells and fern. Yet perhaps they do! I did not think they ate cow-parsley. There is such an abundance everywhere in June; it seemed probable that they left it alone, hence its luxuriance.

There is a sweep of it on a bank and up an orchard, just outside one of the dining room windows. I noticed the white blooms seemed to wave about a good deal, close to the window, then one day a little rabbit sat on his hind tail right before my eyes, caught hold of a flowering spray in his front paws, drew it down, and enjoyed it. Next day he did the same. I found he had pegged out a claim for himself there,

and he stayed there and became quite a friend of the family, so long as the cow-parsley lasted.

Wallflowers they love. We have to put wire netting round all the beds containing wallflowers, or they will be cropped down to the bone in one night. Before I knew of the rabbits' fondness for these, I often wondered how it was that one never found wallflowers growing wild down on the ground, while they were fairly plentiful on the old ruined walls of Tintern Abbey, before some irritating Authority spoiled the whole appearance of our lovely Abbey by "restoring" its walls!

I feel sorry for people who see the Abbey, for the first time, to-day. They must be so disappointed when its bare, gaunt, ugly-coloured walls come into view, looking like some recently-burnt-out skeleton of a building, rather than a hoary antiquity. One knows that ancient structures and ruins must be attended to periodically, if they are to be preserved, and also kept in safety. But surely it would pay to engage an artist to keep a watchful eye over the builder, and see that his "restoration" doesn't deprive the world of beauty such as Tintern used to possess, but which has been entirely banished! I don't think there was a more lovely ruin in the whole world than Tintern Abbey as I knew it in my childhood, and when it was owned by the Duke of Beaufort. When it became national property, its doom seems to have been sealed. Forthwith a considerable amount of the taxpayers' money was used to remove everything that was lovely about that ruin—save its actual walls which weren't so easy to demolish.

And the result? Anyone can see that to-day! But alas! our children will never know what it looked like in the past. I

doubt if anyone looking at the place now can even in imagination visualise the glory of that ruin as it was in pre-war days, when nature was permitted full scope and did so much to add an ethereal quality to man's wonderful handiwork.

Preservation is necessary, but such work should be safeguarded against vandalism by entrusting the task to people who have some appreciation of the æsthetic and spiritual needs of humanity.

To revert to wallflowers. If these are grown on a high wall they will flourish, in spite of rabbits, just as they used to on the walls of the Abbey. But low walls are no obstacle to Mr. Bunny. He will lie on the top of them like a cat basking in the sun; run over them as easily as he runs through them, and he knows every chink and cranny through which a rabbit can creep!

Our remedy for the nibblings of the little scamps is wire netting—especially in the winter time, when there is less variety in the way of salad for them to choose from. We try to keep their favourite plants grouped together, so far as we can, and encircle those beds with wire netting. Phlox, pinks, larkspurs, most seedlings, young laburnums, nasturtiums, tulips just above ground, carnations, ten weeks stock, mignonette—all these, and many others, have the rabbits cropped close on my premises, and left them looking as though they had been clipped with shears.

One season, I thought I would give the rabbits an extra amount of carrots, hoping to divert their attention from the flowers. They always eat some of the carrots; so I had extra rows planted, and left in the ground for their delectation.

But do you think that saved the flowers?

It was a cold winter; word quickly spread all over the woods that there was no food shortage on our place. Immediately bunnies from far and wide queued up nightly with their food tickets! And they found not only the carrots, but everything else! No, there's nothing like wire netting!

Of course the rabbits have to be kept down, so far as we can do it in a country that has so many miles of woods and forest-land. The poachers try their hardest; but a certain number have to be disposed of by us. In any case, the poacher's method is cruel. We have ours dispatched instantly and in the most humane way. Personally, I don't think I should ever have a rabbit killed, I am too fond of the happy little things. Also, I would like there to be "enough for all!" They and the other wild things are the real owners of the woods and fields, I am only an interloper.

But my neighbours' crops must be considered. Rabbits are amazingly destructive.

We don't make a festival of the matter, however! To make a sport of killing is abhorrent to me. I have an indescribable horror of hunting. When it is necessary to take life, it should be done as quickly as possible and with the minimum of pain—both mental and physical.

I do not think the mystery underlying pain will ever be unravelled this side of the grave. But at least we can see to it that animals, over whom man has been given lordship, shall be saved suffering as much as possible. We who know the agony of mere fear and terror, apart from the agony of actual suffering, should spare the dumb creation this added woe. Civilisation will never be more than a hollow sham, so long as men, and even women, deliberately go out of their way to inflict agonies of terror and cruel torture on helpless animals,

simply for personal gratification and to indulge a ghoulish form of pleasure.

What a return for the trusteeship of the animal kingdom that has been placed in the hands of man!

Injurious and destructive pests must be abolished, of course. But let us do this by the shortest route. Caterpillars and slugs can amount to a plague if left unchecked. Hence the desirability of birds. Especially if you live in town, attract the birds to your place by putting out food, every day at the same time and place. No need to ring a dinner bell; they soon find out.

As I have dealt with this matter on another page, I will only emphasise the need for putting their meals on an upper window-ledge, well out of reach of cats. A bird table in the garden is useless as a safe feeding ground in town. Cats can climb. And they know the dinner hour as well as the birds, and watch out for them.

Slugs can be kept under control with powdered alum. Dust it over and around plants they like to attack. It won't hurt the plants, but it will discourage the slugs and snails. I have a tortoise, supposed to be kept for the same purpose; only I've not yet decided which eats the most green-stuff—the tortoise or the snails!

Another useful deterrent is the naphtha ball. Two or three of these only half buried in the soil around a plant will usually offend the nose of the marauder. When the sweet peas are just showing above ground, and in their most inviting and succulent stage, we put naphtha balls at intervals of about eight inches down each side of the row of seedlings. These get hidden as the plants grow up.

Naphtha balls should not be used anywhere near the kitchen garden; otherwise the lettuces, and peas, and cabbages will be flavoured therewith! The odour is penetrating at times, but it seems to be more liable to cling to the foliage of other plants in its vicinity, rather than permeate the air. Only on very rare occasions have we scented it in the garden.

We are more troubled with snails and slugs than some people, because all our garden has been taken out of the fields and woods. Each new plot I add is so much more taken out of the adjoining field or orchard. This means that the garden is entirely surrounded with grass, which grows right up to the borders. And wherever grass is brought in contact with the flower beds, snails and slugs will have a good time. The grass is their native habitat, and gives them ample cover by day. When evening comes, or a nice soaking wet day when everybody is indoors, these small creatures have a lovely time! No rough gravel to creep over; no hard paths to cross; just a little step from grass to border, and then a superfluity of pansies, lupins, savoys and scarlet runners. Life is very gay, until they find their path from grass to border suddenly blocked by a low ridge of powdered alum. They can't cross that, though if there be a tiny space missed anywhere, they will find it, and get through! Sawdust and soot is largely used by country people to warn off the intruders, but I find powdered alum much more effective; also, it can be dusted over the plant itself if needed, and no harm done.

Aphis or green fly can be cleared away by a dust of Keatings—blown from one of this firm's bellows-tin. It is the

simplest remedy imaginable both for the greenhouse and out of doors.

I have no remedy to suggest for the depredation of the town cat. Poor pussy! He or she can be the most lovable addition to the ménage, when sitting on the home hearthrug by the home fender. But what a different matter he (or she) is when rolling over one's oncoming pyrethrums, or fighting lustily with the whole of the neighbourhood felines on the viola border!

I do wish people would kindly keep their cats, also their dogs, on their own premises! It can be done, and with no hardship to the animal.

XIII

The Poacher's Rest

PATHETIC sounds emanating from the big cupboard under the stairs, where the Head of Affairs keeps his tools, told me that he was in distress.

He was singing a hymn.

We all knew what that meant! And I overheard a household assistant remark: "What's gone wrong? The master's become fully choral."

I hurried cupboard-wards and, in my kindest accents, inquired what was the matter.

He ceased, for the moment, his vocal request that Providence would let some droppings fall on him, and said in anything but a devout tone: "Never saw such a house as this in my life! Can't find a thing I want!"

Now this was a distinct libel. I may have my faults. Yea, doubtless an interminable string of them. But at least I have organised a place for everything. And (apart from my study, and my office table, which I own are apt to get beyond me occasionally) my life is one stern endeavour to keep things in those places.

Above all do I concentrate on the data, of many and varied brands, which appertains to the Head of Affairs, from pipes and papers to tools and tobacco, arranging that every item shall be just where his hand will fall upon it the moment he needs it.

I've made quite an art of "placements." (Excuse my saying all this about myself; but if I don't, nobody else will! And even a worm is permitted an occasional turn!) I actually went to the length of sorting out the nails from among the screws; provided a wonderful nail-box (a birthday offering) with drawers and compartments (which jamb, and stick, and won't open when one needs a nail in a hurry). And finally, I hung up all the gimlets, screwdrivers, hammers, bradawls, chisels, and such like, in rows in the tool cupboard. Just on the eye line. Each on its own peg. A beautiful sight which should have rejoiced the heart of any "toolist," instead of reducing him to warbling like a nightingale.

Eventually, after knocking over a few things, pulling down boxes from upper shelves (which resulted in various droppings falling on him!), and stirring up all the tintacks in their box, it transpired that he was looking for a certain pair of pincers which should have been hanging on a particular nail, but weren't.

And he did wish he could have at least one corner in the house, just a *small* corner, where people would leave his things alone, etc.

The whole household, who, with offers of assistance, had by this time foregathered at the scene of disaster, kept on assuring him, singly and in chorus, that *they* hadn't taken it. Never used a pincer. In fact would hardly recognise one if they met it.

Meanwhile, I improved the shining hour and, with the aid of a tin-opener, a kitchen fork, a pair of scissors and a flat-iron, extracted from the packing-case the nail which had caused the commotion.

Later, the pincers were discovered, I forget where; but in some spot which no one in the household had been near for years. And certainly no one had put them there. Hence it was self-evident that the pincers must have walked there of their own wicked accord, and out of sheer perversity.

Missing tools are often like that, I've noticed.

It was this little episode which finally decided me to go systematically into the whole question of Tools.

I was feeling aggrieved. To say that nothing could ever be found—when I had organised the household as I had! This was the last straw!

I remembered reading in my childhood a book entitled "Misunderstood." I forget what it was about, but it was sad, and I loved it.

Well, I was like that. I felt that I, too, could write a book, and quite a thick book, that would be representative of a host of other Misunderstoods, as well as of my own pathetic lot.

Here was I, spending my days in trying to think things, and do things—and who cared? Life wasn't worth living. I decided not to go on living it—temporarily, of course; only temporarily!

So I went out into the garden, away from the strife and clamour of life. Having done my good deed for the day (two in fact; for I had found the pincers, in addition to extracting the nail), I could retire into solitude to nurse my wounded feelings.

I decided to do some weeding. Always a restorative when one has a grievance, because one can work it off on the poor

weeds. Though, after all, they are trying to do their best in that station of life, etc. It seems hard luck for them!

It was some time before I could find my weeder, an iron implement with a hook at the end, which pulls up stubborn roots in grand style. Someone had used it, and put it back in a fresh place.

Certainly, *all* the tools needed re-systematising!

I chose a remote corner of the Flower-Patch for my ministrations, in order to be able to nurse my grief in private. But I had forgotten that a man was at work there, relaying a stone-flagged path, which had become so encrusted with plants that there was actually no room to walk.

Coming unexpectedly upon him, naturally I had to hide my sorrow, not wanting to look peculiar. One never knows what tidings may circulate around the district if one begins to look peculiar!

So I tried to look as ordinary as possible; and I remarked that it was a nice day, but it looked like rain.

The man, realising that an intelligent answer was expected of him, and being a courteous, obliging person, surveyed the heavens, and then after mature thought, gave it as his opinion that it wasn't at all a bad day, but he shouldn't be surprised if it turned to wet.

Having thus come to a mutual agreement about the universe, I sought another remote part of the premises, hoping for solitude in which to brood over the pain of being misunderstood, and take it out in dandelions. But here I met the gardener. Probably he wondered why I was wandering about the place at eleven o'clock in the morning, instead of being at my desk. He felt anxious. And was at hand to assist.

We were beside a series of barns and out-houses—nice roomy old places, where one stores all sorts of things one is never likely to need, and has unlimited room to hoard still more.

“I suppose you wouldn’t feel inclined to get rid of that ash tree?” he began. “It isn’t any good there, and it takes up a lot of room.”

I looked at the sapling in question. It was in a curious place, and decidedly useless. It was growing right in front of the door leading to a lean-to out-house that might, or might not, communicate with the adjoining barn.

I had noticed the place sometimes, in passing; but had never examined it carefully, concluding it was part of the barn. Moreover, its door was so wreathed in vegetation that it wasn’t easy to open. In addition to the young ash, which waved its branches over the roof, there was a huge red currant bush, which had spread over most of the doorway, and was now smothered with fast-ripening fruit, and a tangle of ivy and clematis interlacing its branches. Add to this a regiment of foxgloves and evening primroses, standing like a guard before the doorstep. There wasn’t much chance to get in!

“What’s that place used for?” I asked him. “I don’t think I’ve ever been inside!”

(I seldom have time to rummage among the barns and out-buildings; there are a good many of one sort and another.)

“It’s just full of lumber now. But it was where they used to cook the pigs’ food, in the days when pigs were kept here.”

“Let me see what’s inside,” I said. I wondered what sort of a cooking range the pigs of the past had enjoyed.

After wrestling with the growing things, which made me think of

—“the leaves and ivy vine,
With their dark and clinging tendrils
Ever round those hinges twine”—

the door was opened at last.

I looked in. As there was no window, the only light came through the door. A big copper was in one corner, black with age and smoke and grime. For the rest, I could see nothing but piles of empty bottles of all sorts (legacies from previous owners!), pieces of old iron, rusty wire-netting, an old rat-trap, cobwebs and darkness.

A most uninviting place! It worried me to think I had such a disreputable spot on the premises. And all those bottles! An additional chance to be misunderstood!

And then an idea came to me. But I kept it to myself for the moment. I've found it wisest to refrain from unloading too hurriedly all my bright notions on a long-suffering world. Otherwise people get bewildered sometimes; or, what is worse, they look pityingly at me.

Therefore I began cautiously, and merely asked: “Do you think all that junk could be turned out and got rid of?”

“Certainly, ma'am, if you wish it,” he said readily.

“Then call James off that flagged path for the time being, and have him help you empty it as soon as possible.”

Next morning he reported all clear.

And we proceeded.

It did not take the men very long to get rid of the copper entirely, and close up the chimney. Some slates were removed

from the sloping roof, and plain glass substituted (taken from some old and done-with pictures!) And what a difference it made directly light was admitted!

The floor, being stone slabs, was easily cleaned.

After the walls and the inside of the roof had been thoroughly lime-washed, the whole place was given several coats of a full yellow wash, which introduced a warm sunny tone. I often think it would brighten our landscape a little if we used colour-wash on our cottages and outhouses sometimes, instead of the perennial whitewash. The coloured cottages one sees in Southern Europe may be bizarre occasionally, but at least they are not as depressing as whitewash can be, when it turns a dismally cold grey, the colour of the damp fog which so often besets us in England. A deep yellow is much more cheering than greyish white, in a climate like ours.

And the yellow in the little room was very pleasing when finished. Also it wears well and keeps its colour.

The gardener prepared a surprise for me. When I made a tour of inspection to decide what should be done next, I found the place charmingly fitted up with a table and shelves, which he had made. Everything so convenient.

For by this time I had let it be known that I desired a corner, if only a little corner, where I could keep *my* tools in peace and security. And I had broadcast the news that I intended to adopt this little room as my own particular outdoor “cubby-hole”—to use a West of England term.

The table was a clever bit of work made from odd lengths of wood and sawn-up packing cases—though no one would ever guess this on looking at the long serviceable piece of

furniture, standing firmly on legs which are well braced with crossbars.

What a pity it seems that England is gradually losing men of this type, who can turn their hands to almost any sort of work. The middle-aged men, who have lived all their lives among these hills, are most versatile in their abilities. The majority are able to build with stone, and build well. They understand cattle, farming in general, and vegetable growing. They are remarkably good workmen—to see them fell great forest trees is a sight to remember.

Then again, they know how to handle water—a very desirable accomplishment in a district where streams come tumbling downhill in rushing torrents, and often need a certain amount of supervision to keep them within bounds.

Some of the men are good boatmen. Most of them have first-hand knowledge of salmon-fishing, and the manners and customs of that aristocratic fish.

In addition, they seem to be able to do all sorts of odd jobs, each of which would require a special trade unionist in town!

We are never kept waiting for a sweep, because the gardener is an artist in chimney sweeping! He arrives clothed in white linen above and below! And the chimney is swept and every trace of soot removed, without anyone being awakened, if need be, in the morning.

And various other men are quite as adept at the work, though it is not their business in life. If a proper sweep's outfit is available, well and good; they know how to use it. But if the orthodox brush be lacking, they can still sweep one's chimney, for they cut a holly bush and use that instead. Quite effective it is, too.

Haircutting and shoe-mending are among other tasks they can undertake. While as for the odd carpentry needed in a house, and washers on taps, and new sash lines, they take on all such as a matter of course.

These are the middle-aged men, who have come from generations of sturdy woodmen and farmers, who had to rely on themselves if they wanted a job done. They have grown up in out-of-the-way homesteads where, before the advent of the motor-bike and car, and bus, very little outside help was available except at big expense. So they did it themselves.

Unfortunately, those of the rising generation do not appear to be developing along similar lines. What they learn at school has very little connection with their home life. The present industrial conditions seem to paralyse initiative.

Some of the older men, however, are remarkably clever with hands and brain. I found the gardener had put up narrow shelves and wider shelves. Some just above the long table, some at the end, and all of them stained a rich shining brown, with some walnut floor stain that had varnish in it.

There were large hooks in the roof beams where I could reach them, hooks in the wall, smaller brass hooks (such as one uses on a dresser) along the edge of the shelves; and a superfine peg-de-luxe on the door—for my coat and hat, if I wanted to leave them there the gardener explained.

Whereupon, behold my trowel and bulb planter, my weeder, secateurs and small pruner, all suspended in orderly line from one row of hooks. My own pet watering-cans depending from hooks in the roof-beams. A bundle of raffia for tying up dangling from another convenient hook.

At first, my own spud—a specially beloved tool—couldn't be found. But at last it was discovered that someone had annexed its long handle and fixed it to a sweeping brush! (Certainly—I did need a special place for my own tools!) However, the spud appeared next morning reclining gracefully against the wall, beside the springbok rake and a row of minor implements, its handle fairly gleaming with newly applied polish.

Two garden chairs had been added, and these gave the place quite a furnished look.

But the table needed a covering. As I have said, it is long and a nice width—would make a splendid “cutting out” table for dressmaking. White American cloth, such as we have on the kitchen shelves and dresser, seemed most suitable. But when I put it on the table, the effect was depressingly wrong! It looked as though the table had seen a ghost, it was so washed out.

Then I saw my mistake. The yellow walls and roof killed the white covering, and turned it to a blueish grey! Quite ugly!

It was a little while before I found a yellow American cloth to match the walls; but an enterprising London firm scoured the wholesalers till they found it for me. And instantly the room took on a different aspect, and became sunny throughout.

Then began the cheerful task of deciding what should go in the little room. On the wall I hung a Malagasi grass-woven curtain of unusual design. It is covered with native work showing ferns and grasses and birds. An unknown reader of my books in Madagascar sent it to me one Christmas. It gives the little room such an artistic tone.

Otherwise the wall decorations are mainly baskets of various kinds, hanging from pegs—Egyptian, Indian, Japanese, African—just an odd collection of different shapes and sizes; some for cut flowers, some for weeds; all of them useful and what one is continually needing in a garden.

It didn't take long to stock some of the shelves with vases, pots, jugs, bowls and glasses needed for flowers, as I intended the room to serve, among other useful purposes, for arranging the cut flowers. Have you noticed how difficult it is to find a place to do them indoors? No one wants them on the kitchen table. The living-room table is usually occupied in some other way. If one does them in the parlour, the chances are there won't be any more available table space there, and, in addition, the water is safe to get upset. Moreover, I certainly don't want them in my study!

I fairly revelled in the thought of a room with a nice big unoccupied table, and the flowers growing close at hand too. So convenient also for doing up boxes of flowers to send by post to friends. And from a narrow shelf above the table hang scissors, string, fine bouquet wire, lead pencils, and suchlike oddments.

There are special places for my kneeling mats, Sussex trug baskets; white wooden labels; a duster; and even a clothes brush. Under the table are stored baskets of fir cones for winter fires.

All sorts of gardening memos and reminders are fastened to the wall. At certain seasons there are sheafs of Honesty (or Satin Moons, as I've heard a country woman call them); also branches of sweet-smelling herbs, hanging from the rafters to dry.

As a rule there is a bunch of thyme and one of Hairy Mint (quite different from the mint-sauce mint) hanging inside the door, to be rubbed in passing. For no matter how dried up and shrivelled they may look, these two herbs retain their sweetness to the last fragment.

The little room has become something more than a rendezvous of gardening data. It can be a haven of rest. I've known a good many of our friends seek it out, and just sit quietly inside the door, looking at the lovely up-hill expanse of flowers—masses of them, with trees at the top. On one side of the door a white Jasmine flourishes, with its scents and white stars in summer. On the other side of the door is a yellow jasmine, that glows with its sunshine flowers from November round to February. While at the end, and clambering all over the roof, is the lovely white Clematis *flammula*, with its long sprays of exquisite little blossoms, always suggestive of a bride's wreath, and filling the air around with the sweetest of almond perfumes.

Though the room is away from the house, one never feels solitary there, for a little brook quietly prattles near by, as it tumbles down-hill over little rocks, and under a stone bridge. Such companionable things are little brooks.

“What shall we call the new room?” I asked the Head of Affairs.

“‘The Poacher's Rest' would be a good name for it, I should think!” he replied. “Nice and handy for them!”

He was feeling very irate with the poachers that moment; they had done a lot of damage the night before in one of our woods close by. And the amount of work those gentlemen

will do, in order to secure one poor little bunny, is almost unbelievable unless you saw it with your own eyes. They will dig huge caverns in the earth, removing big blocks of stone; they will pull down great stone walls; and altogether do in one night what would be a week's work if regulated by a trade union—and all for so little!

However, I decided that the poachers should not rest therein! So a strong lock was put on the door. And there it remaineth unto this day—being locked and unlocked night and morning. I don't want them using my tools! They did take some netting off the fruit bushes, and carried it into the wood to help them snare the poor little rabbits. But they hung it on the gate when done with!

I wouldn't trust them, however, to return my tools! And at present I do know where to find them—which is one blessing for which to be thankful!

XIV

A Touch of Grey

A TOUCH of grey in the borders is often a gain. I don't mean a geometrical block which repeats itself in a conventional or carpet-bedding design; but a bush or lower-growing plant that will serve to accentuate the colours of its neighbours.

Most of the grey-foliaged plants are pretty; some are remarkably handsome—witness the Globe Artichoke (not to be confused with the Jerusalem Artichoke, which looks something like a potato). Could anything be more imposing both as to leaves and flowers? And though it looks so exotic when first it comes up, it is as hardy as nails.

Quite early in the winter, or late in the autumn, it sends up new leafage from the old roots that dropped asleep for a week or two after flowering. The new growth is a real silver-grey. Each frond exquisitely cut like the classical acanthus. Every root displays a crown of delicate-looking leaves; and by Christmas there is usually a mass of this silver-grey, which by now has just a hint of green in it. "Such a lovely colour for an elderly lady to wear at her grand-daughters wedding," as someone remarked.

In ordinary years, the plants will be about eighteen inches high, or even more, by the end of the year. The leaves look so frail in texture, however, that unless you know their constitution you will naturally feel "All is lost!" when you wake up one morning to find the ground white with frost, or several inches deep in snow. If the cold is severe, the leaves

will become limp and droop over, as though the worst had happened.

Yet, the moment the thermometer rises above 32°, our globe artichokes rise with it. The hardest winter has never hurt ours yet. And though they were frozen into blocks of ice one year, when a very sudden frost descended and congealed the rain before it had time to get away, thus damaging the young growth beyond repair, they soon got over the misfortune by sending up a second instalment of leaves.

The development of these plants is rapid—a characteristic which makes them valuable to those who want a brave show in the garden as quickly as possible. The gorgeous blooms begin to open in July by which time the plants will be five or six feet high, and forming a real hedge. Who would imagine, when eating this vegetable (which is really the unopened flower-bud), that it could ever grow into a huge thistle-like head of the most gorgeous blue-violet colour, and the size of a pudding basin!

We don't eat them, however. Personally they never seem to me to be worth the trouble they entail in the eating. It is such a slow business to pull each petal from the bud and try to find something on it, wading through a heap of useless vegetation in order to get at the morsel at the base—which doesn't seem to amount to much when you find it! Ancient cookery books always had a good deal to say about "artichoke bottoms," and gave many recipes for keeping them through the winter. We have a wider choice of winter vegetables, thanks to quick transit from warmer lands to our own; and we have no need to hoard every bit of green-stuff that will consent to be hoarded.

I can't imagine even the thriftiest housewife going to the trouble of drying them and salting them and baking them again—in order to have them for use all the year round. Yet our ancestresses did all sorts of things with them—artichoke pie for example. I confess the recipe doesn't seem to worry much about the artichokes, the main ingredients being gooseberries, grapes, mace, hardboiled eggs, lettuce stalks, citron, butter, white wine, grated marrow, and stoned dates! After all that, would the bits of artichoke really matter one way or the other?

I know the globe artichoke is still in repute on the continent. It is often on the menu in France. Also it figures daily in the stores price list, and at a price which causes me to look quite respectfully at our own. Visitors often exclaim ecstatically when they have seen our regiment of them waving tenpenny “chokes” in the summer breeze, with as little concern as though they were nothing more aristocratic than the three-halfpence a pound Jerusalem kind! And our friends mention how devoted they are to them, and intimate that we are extremely fortunate people to be able to enjoy such luxuries free gratis.

Of course a dish of “globes” is put on the table the next day for dinner. Yet I notice that those same enthusiasts are never *really* keen on them, when they meet them face to face at the table. As one friend said, after working her way womanfully through a big one, as in duty bound considering all she had said the day before in praise of them: “Of course one thoroughly enjoys a taste; but it's one of those things one can't eat much of, and would never ask for a second time in a season.”

So that was all right!

I myself have a dark suspicion that globe artichokes are more often patronised because they are expensive and not met with at every dinner table, than because anyone really prefers them to asparagus, green peas, or brussels sprouts. But I may be wrong.

We ourselves wouldn't cut a single bud, except for the ecstatic visitor of course; we cherish them all for the magnificent blooms. When the tall row is in flower, it is a remarkable sight.

It was with no small degree of pride that we saw a beautiful painting of globe artichokes, by Mr. W. Giles, the President of the Society of Painter-Gravers at an exhibition in London. They were our artichokes, painted in our garden! If you saw this painting you would realise why I give first place to the artichoke, among silver-greys for the border.

Next I would place the useful but less imposing Lavender Cotton, or Santolina. The foliage is so unusual, and so minutely cut, it ought to be in every garden. Also the aromatic scent of the whole plant is much liked by most people. Some I know put it in with their linen, as one does lavender.

It is so easy to grow; put in a small slip with a heel on, and it will root. We drop in a few cuttings every year, in the nursery bed. There is no lack of offers from friends anxious to adopt the baby bushes and give them a kind home! They soon develop into nice little shrubs. One can do anything with them—either let them go on growing into big round bushes (they are nearly circular as a rule), or they can be kept clipped, like box, for a border.

The blossoms are bunches of bright yellow buttons, not unlike tansy flowers. It is for the lovely foliage, however, that one cultivates this. The flowers strike one as being a sort of erratic afterthought; popping up and breaking forth in a most irregular manner.

The Nepeta, or Catmint, is another hardy grey, willing to grow wherever you plant it, but looking its best on a low wall, or rock-garden, where its masses of blue flowers can hang down a little, if they feel like it; or wave about in mid-air, which is what they particularly enjoy.

One point to remember about this plant: it should be cut back a little after flowering, so as to induce a compact growth, otherwise it becomes weedy-looking and straggling, and ceases to be any ornament. This is another plant that can be propagated without the least trouble and is the better for being divided fairly often.

In Sweden the Catmint (or Kattmynta as it is called there) is extremely popular, for the following reason:

When the late Princess Margaret, daughter of the Duke of Connaught and sister of Princess Patricia, married the Crown Prince of Sweden, she took with her from England some Catmint, one of her favourite flowers, and planted it in her garden at Sofiero, her residence in the South of Sweden. Like all true flower-lovers, she was only too willing to share her plant with others. And cuttings were given to high and low, so keen was the Crown Princess to encourage flower-growing in the land of her adoption.

Gradually the plant spread. Everyone was anxious to grow a bit of the Princess's flower. Till now it adorns the borders in nearly every garden in the south and centre of Sweden. And

though the Princess is no longer with the people who loved her dearly for her own sterling qualities, the flower she brought them lives on, and year by year its descendants make their way farther and farther north, towards the Arctic cold.

In the trains, and at railway stations, you will hear people telling each other—what both parties already know—that those blue-flowering plants that trim the border round the station-master's house, are the actual grandchildren of the very plant the Flower-Princess (as they called her) brought from England. Whenever the Kattmynta is mentioned its history is fondly retold, because the people love to cherish this living link with the one who is gone.

The late Crown Princess was immensely popular with the Swedish nation. When preaching on the Sunday after her early death in 1920, the Swedish Archbishop said: "Not since the days of the saintly missionaries of the early Christian era has such a power for good come to Sweden as that which England gave us in our beloved Crown Princess."

And it was true. Her influence was remarkable; it was felt in so many different directions—quiet, unobtrusive though it was, it was really a strong force and always for good.

Not only did she love flowers herself, but whenever she was able to take a short holiday from the claims of her high position and visit Sofiero, she and her husband and children devoted their time to gardening, digging and planting with their own hands, and enjoying every minute of the time.

She did all she could to encourage others to garden, even planning their gardens for them, and suggesting what could be grown in them.

She organised a "Flower Street" at one of Sweden's big exhibitions, with plants and flowers, seeds and bulbs on

show. Florists' shops sprung up all over the country, as the result of her influence on public taste.

She now sleeps near the shores of the Baltic, a spot she herself selected, because she said she wanted to be buried "where the waters of the open sea are heard, and where flowers grow."

No wonder the grave of the English Princess has become a place of pilgrimage, while the little grey plant she loved is still being "slipped," and the cuttings handed on from one to another, throughout the length and breadth of that land.

Cultivating Antiques

THE present day inclination to look up old friends and the faithful companions of a past generation, is a healthy sign. There were a good many gems in the gardens of our grandmothers which ought to be seen more than they are to-day. And most of them should be revived in their original form; too much improvement lessens the glamour of the past—and it is this glamour one tries to recapture in making an “old world” garden. Novelties are desirable; most of them are delightful: but there is no need to let them monopolise the whole earth. There is so much pleasure to be derived from the company of the stalwarts of other days.

We spend much money, and zeal, and do a lot of hunting, in order to secure furniture and needlework and books of a dead-and-gone era, to adorn us indoors. Why not do the same for the out-of-doors? Flowers and plants can recall the past as surely as furniture; with the additional advantage that they don't introduce moth or wood-weevils into the house!

I have a number of such garden “antiques,” flowering happily and so obviously at home on the hillside. To me, the getting together of these old-fashioned flowers is as interesting a hobby as any I indulge in. I can recommend it to any lover of growing things who finds some of the newer varieties, and more recent importations from other lands, rather capricious.

While the world needs novelties—must have them, indeed, if we are to avoid stagnation—and granting that most of the

improvements effected by horticulturists are beyond praise, many amateurs like myself have not time to give to the cultivation of exacting plants, nor to experiment with unseasoned newcomers. I admit we lose much by this: but one can't do everything one would like to do, when business claims so much of one's day.

The plant that requires an attendant to be constantly hovering around, with either a sunshade or a hot-water bottle, isn't much use to me. In these hard times I have to content myself with the type that can keep its end up, in spite of weather vagaries, and without much assistance from gardeners.

Here are a few of the old-world flowers that I find sturdy, willing to grow almost anywhere, and altogether foolproof.

A big clump of "Moses in the Bulrushes," otherwise spider-wort, also *tradescantia virginica*, comes up every year in the middle of a hard stony path. Originally that path was part of a large flower-bed. When it was altered, and a path cut through it, the plants were removed. But a bit of "Moses" was evidently left. The following spring it showed above ground, and it might have been removed then by some industrious person, only it wasn't.

When I chanced to see it, I had it left till it should have done blooming, for I love its rich violet flowers, with their very delicate elusive perfume. It could be moved in the autumn, I said. But when that time came, it retired once more underground, and was forgotten.

Now, it has grown into a very large plant which entirely blocks the path all through the summer. But no one minds! There should be a Rent Restriction Act for dwellers in gardens, as well as for dwellers in houses. And so long as a

plant pays its way in lavish blooms and gladdening colour, it should be allowed to remain where it is doing well, if it can possibly be managed.

Therefore, when an anxious gardener appeared hurriedly with a spade, when he thought I was trying to get through its small jungle of leaves and flowers and bunches of seed pods (known as “widow’s tears” or “Job’s tears”) I merely said, in the vernacular:

“Let it bide!” And it still bides.

Lungwort, or *pulmonaria*, also known as “Our Lady’s Tears,” I recommend to those who especially desire spring flowers. Its blue and rose pink blossoms follow so quickly after the snow, that it should be grown in every garden where space is to spare for early flowers. In very small gardens, it is usually better to reserve the space for a summer show of blooms, when it is possible to make the most use of the garden; but even then, the foliage of the lungwort is attractive, the green leaves being marked with white; it is not dishevelled looking as are the Spanish irises and tulips when their flowering period is over.

The old-fashioned lungwort is low-growing and has blue flowers and pink on the one stalk—something like the comfrey. Newer varieties have red flowers. Personally I prefer the blue, as the new reds which I have seen are rather harsh in tone. This is a matter for individual choice, however; only, if you are out for “antiques,” you must have the old blue.

Among the hardiest of the hardy, is the wild geranium, or meadow crane’s-bill; also *geranium pratense*. In addition to the blue variety, which is still to be found growing by the

roadside and on railway banks, in many parts of the country when off the motorists' routes, there is a rosy-red species, and also a delicate pink. All three do well with me, and increase at a great rate. Their tendency to straggle is rather a drawback in a small garden; but where there is room they make such a lovely show, not only in the summer, when their large flowers produced in such abundance are very showy, but in the autumn the crimson and orange tints which the foliage takes on make them quite a conspicuous feature. The pink variety is in bloom the whole of the summer, and in a mild season has a second crop in late autumn.

It is most unfortunate that there is so often a confusion of names where plants are concerned. The geranium I have just mentioned, is a crane's-bill, not the same as our scarlet friend of the conservatory.

Though you and I may refer to our scarlet geraniums, I understand we are quite wrong in so doing, as their correct name is zonal pelargoniums. This would be all right, and easy to disentangle, were it not for the fact that we ignorant folk have been in the habit of calling certain other large showy flowering plants pelargoniums. Whereas we ought to call them fancy pelargoniums.

Lilac is another stumbling-block. Its proper name is *syringa*, and you find it listed under *syringa* in well-brought-up catalogues. Whereas our old well-beloved *syringa* bush, called by our grandmothers "mock-orange," is really (so we are told) *philadelphus*.

Very wearing for ordinary brains!

One trouble with gardening is the necessity for learning two languages, viz. the names of simple common-sense and everyday use, and the names beloved of gardening books,

learned persons, and those whose little knowledge is a very trying thing. It is argued that whereas the popular name may be misleading, the Latin name settles the question of a plant's name immediately. But does it?

There is that lovely pink and white gem, called most appropriately by some people "the lyre flower"; by others "ladies' lockets," or "Dutchman's breeches," or "bleeding heart" (though I own I don't like the last name). Anyhow, you take your choice, and address your much cherished plant by one or the other of these pet names. Then some well-informed soul arrives to enlighten your ignorance; and when you have referred to it as "the lyre flower," he kindly says: "Ah, *Dielytra* you mean."

Looking properly grateful, you politely refer to it as *Dielytra*, so long as you are permitted to remain in his improving society.

Later, when hunting for cultural details, you recall the information and turn up *Dielytra* in some gardening dictionary, only to find yourself referred otherwheres to *Dicentra canadensis*! What waste of time, to say nothing of patience!

To an ordinary intellect like mine, "lily of the valley" seems a straightforward name that explains itself, is as clear as daylight, and can be understood by all who read. But do you think any self-respecting maker of really high-toned gardening books would commit himself to its use? Certainly not! *Convallaria* is what you must turn to—and don't stop to argue that it isn't the convolvulus you are wanting. That has nothing to do with it.

My complaint is that the use of the "official" names of the flowers, belonging as they mostly do to a foreign tongue,

deprives garden language of much that is picturesque and descriptive, at the same time putting an extra tax on the brain—a proceeding few of us welcome nowadays.

If I tell you that beside the brook in the clearing *lysimachia nummularia* is spreading over the ground, with waving masses of *lychnis flos cuculi*; patches of *mentha aquatica*; and tall clumps of *lythrum salicaria* and *epilobium* growing about the edges of the water, only the wise and thoughtful will have the remotest idea of what I am writing; while the majority will merely feel the same sort of a headache that used to be concealed between the pages of their Latin dictionary at school.

Whereas, if I tell you that beside the brook in the clearing Creeping Jenny is spreading all over the ground, with waving masses of Ragged Robin; patches of Marsh Mint; and tall clumps of purple Loosestrife and Greater Willow Herb growing about the edges of the water, quite a large number of readers will be able instantly to visualise the whole scene, and without the slightest mental effort they will be looking at little golden cups laughing among trails of dark green leaves, and watching the fluttering pink of the care-free Ragged Robins, the deeper rose tone of the tall Willow Herb, or the warm richness of the beautiful purple Loosestrife—according to the season; while the scent of the mint, which they are certain to step on, or to gather, in passing, even haunts these pages as they read.

Why, oh why do some people cloud the joy of summer-time among flowers, by battering other people's heads with ponderous names of which they themselves know very little, as a rule, save that they learnt them out of a book?

I was thinking these thoughts aloud, when my friend Virginia reminded me that this is an age for wearing the whole of one's possessions in public, and advertising one's income on one's back. And she said it applied to the contents of the head as well as the contents of the purse.

Perhaps so! But may that sort keep away from my brook in the clearing!

To return to the old-world favourites. Bergamot has already started on a return journey; there is a growing appreciation of its rich crimson flowers and highly scented leaves. I mention it, as it does so well beside our brooks. It also has a place in the Herb garden. Being one of the mint family it likes moisture if it can get it; but will make the best of things if it can't. Its colour is a decided asset, and its fairly long flowering period is another recommendation.

Nemophila is a comparative newcomer beside bergamot. It only arrived on our shores in 1822 (having been found by the ill-fated David Douglas, who lost his life in the pursuit of new plants), whereas bergamot has been with us since 1656. But no sooner was the little Californian bluebell (as nemophila was also called) introduced into this country, than every garden plot wanted it! And no wonder, for its innocent looking blue and white flowers seem like a piece of the summer sky, when seen in masses. Also, being so easily raised from seed, it was welcomed heartily by rich and poor alike. It seemed so especially suited to the cottager's garden.

Then the wheel of time gave a twirl and brought along some new things—the Athenians of old were not alone in their quest of novelty; we all like to see and hear of some new matter. Carpet bedding became the rage; the blue lobelia

got an innings, being more compact than the nemophila, which in turn was allowed to slip into the background. But now, the modern gardener is rediscovering the surprising colour effects it can be made to give, as well as the intrinsic beauty of the little flower. Nemophila is experiencing a come-back.

Balsams likewise show signs of returning to our gardens. But they are not good mixers. The old-fashioned scarlet and white usually need to live by themselves, they are so apt to disagree with their neighbours. Some more amenable colours have been developed of recent years, which will be welcome in the borders, a violet-mauve being especially attractive. There is also a rose-coloured type, and a salmon pink, all far more useful than their more blatant ancestor. Nevertheless, the scarlet and white is the “antique.”

Balsams deserve a special word of praise for the way they stand up against trying weather. Though they are only half-hardy, once the frost is done with for the season, they can be planted out, and can be relied on to keep smiling even in dry weather.

There was a time when no garden worthy of the name considered itself complete without a passion flower. But it is not seen so frequently to-day as it was in Victorian times. Perhaps the indecisive colouring of the blossoms makes it less favoured in this age, when vivid tints are desired as an antidote to the drabness of our overcrowded towns. Yet, the fruit is very beautiful when fully ripe; only it does not always ripen in this country. In warmer lands it is made into a delicious preserve and used as other edible fruit, though its many seeds are rather a trial to some people. Maybe there is a

correct method of getting rid of them before sending to table; but if so I have not come across this. Australian and South African readers can perhaps help me here?

The passion flower is not too fastidious, and it will grow near a town. It has done well with me in a London suburb.

Another plant that flourished for years in the same London garden, was a large camellia, about eight feet high. These plants do not need anything like the coddling that used to be considered a necessity—at least that is my personal experience. Mine grew out of doors in an open border facing north. One of the curious facts about this shrub is, that in spite of its long-standing reputation as a greenhouse delicacy, it seems to prefer a north aspect—not against a north wall, but where shrubs shelter it from the hot midsummer sun. Mine was in a most exposed position, and was covered every year with deep crimson flowers. Perhaps it is still blooming there. It was when I removed from that house.

Scarlet salvia has jumped into popular favour lately, the universal cry to-day being for strong colour and plenty of it! Only the scarlet of this salvia is the tint which has to be given a location to itself, and even then it looks too hot and glaring!

Meanwhile, the lovely blue flowering sage, of roast pork association, *salvia officinalis*, is utterly neglected, excepting in the kitchen garden. Yet either of the blue sages (there are several desirable varieties) is worth more in the way of refined beauty than its more blatant scarlet relative. I quite admit that I have a preference for blues and violets and mauves and pinks, rather than for scarlets. I know I am biased. But those who experiment in garden colour will soon agree with me, that a small touch of scarlet is more pleasing

in a garden of mixed flowers, than a mass, which is certain to upset the balance and annul the colour-values of the other flowers. Whereas blues entrance their neighbours as a general rule.

Yet another beautiful blue is the hyssop. One seldom meets with this to-day. Most people who see the bushes covered with spikes of royal blue in our herb garden inquire the name, and invariably make some such remark as this:

“So *that* is hyssop, is it! Well, I’ve heard of it, of course; but I had no idea it was anything like that!”

I have a real affection for the Everlasting Pea. A good name for it! I’ve cherished my plant for over twenty years, and it is still going as strong as ever. I know it is considered rather plebeian. I own it looks a trifle prim and antiquated beside the gorgeous new ruffled sweet peas of to-day. But I love it all the same.

It makes no fuss; asks for nothing but a stick to cling to; puts up with a shady corner where it gets very little sun and still less attention; yet it comes up, year after year, poking some inquiring shoots above ground at the end of May, after we have annually given up all hope of seeing it again. Then, with a rapidity only equalled by a vegetable marrow, it climbs up the trellis, gibes at the ruffled beauties who have not managed to reach its height, and flings out its bunches of pink blossoms, as much as to say:

“There you are! Who said the old thing was dead at last?”

I believe one reason I feel such a different brand of affection for this plant as compared with my love for sweet peas (and I do love sweet peas; and grow many long hedges of them every year), is because it is an old friend of long

standing, a permanent resident; someone whom we know personally, and whose company we always enjoy; who can be relied upon to come up to expectations. Whereas with sweet peas, they are only summer visitors: lovely visitors, gorgeously appavelled and altogether delightful to behold, but still only visitors. And uncertain at that. There are slugs for instance! And late frosts! No wonder the good old Everlasting fairly snorts with contempt when it wakes up in May and finds that sweet pea seeds at 13s. a pint have only managed so far to produce an inch of stalk and a couple of leaves apiece—if that!

Double daisies, or button daisies, are coming into their own again, but in a much more resplendent form than was ever imagined by our forebears. A packet of mixed seed from a reliable firm will produce a striking assortment of colours and sizes, some looking more like miniature chrysanthemums than daisies; their only drawback being the way they deteriorate the following season. The only safe course is to raise a fresh crop of seedlings every year, unless you are near a good nurseryman who can supply you with ready-hatched seedlings. A real save of time and trouble in a small garden, where space is at a premium.

The raising of seedlings is very fascinating, and the work produces a distinct glow in the raiser. We do like to be able to point to something we initiated and brought to completion, if it be but mustard and cress. But to raise seedlings one needs space, and various etceteras such as frames, boxes, mild heat very often, and always time, attention, a very fine watering-can that doesn't leak (if such a treasure exists), and shading to keep off the sun. Failure in any one direction usually means the loss of the whole batch of youngsters. It is well,

therefore, if those who have to do all the work themselves, and have little time in which to do it, make use of some of the many firms who specialise on raising seedlings. Not only does this save the amateur having to set apart definite quarters for the seed boxes and frames, but he gains a year very often, and has his plants in bloom soon after planting, instead of having to wait a season, perhaps, while the seeds develop.

Only one more plant will I name in my list of “antiques,” not because I have got to the end of them, but I’m afraid if I write of all I have gathered together, no one will have the patience to read me! I will end with Jacob’s Ladder. The blue one is my favourite, the white being less effective. I know it can look rather untidy when its blooms are over, but if they are cut off without being allowed to seed, it keeps the plant in better form.

The name Jacob reminds me of an incident that has nothing whatever to do with the flower.

Having a schoolboy suddenly placed in my office, and left in my charge for a couple of hours, by a bargain-hunting parent, I looked around for suitable literature to help pass the time.

“Would you like one of Jacobs’ books?” I inquired, thinking that bargees and seafaring men would be in his line, and taking *Many Cargoes* from a shelf. “Or have you read them all?”

“Thanks awfully; but I think I’d rather have something else,” he replied, after a moment’s hesitation. “Those old B.C. Bible chaps take such a lot of chewing. I tried to read a thing of his once called *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, but I simply couldn’t stick it!”

XVI

Slightly Temperamental

NEARLY every gardening book tells us that anybody can grow the Madonna Lily. Well, I will now tell them that everybody can't. I can't! Not that I'm anybody. But at least I've tried again and again. I don't believe anyone has tried harder than I have (or much more expensively!) to induce these garden Queens to take a permanent interest in me.

But they won't.

I buy bulbs from firms whose reputation for honesty is only equalled by that of George Washington. Sometimes I do all that they tell me; sometimes I do just the reverse; in order to give the bulbs a fair fighting chance either way. But it is all the same in the end. Quite a nice show the first year; but next year, only one or two blind come-ups. And that is the last I see of them.

Then a friend who lives near me, and has a perfect galaxy of white lilies flourishing in her garden, suggested that probably mine had suffered through being out of the ground too long. Madonna Lilies are like that. Though I told her that the latest George Washington who had supplied me had assured me they were only dug up the day they were dispatched.

Still, I was grateful for her offer of some bulbs, which were removed, presto, from her garden to mine, at the identical moment when it was right to do this, and re-planted in a

most-carefully-prepared plot, by a gardener who handled them with the tenderest solicitude.

Again there was a fine display of bloom the following summer. And yet again, they disappeared as wholeheartedly as their predecessors, while their relations in my friend's garden went on blooming as cheerfully as ever.

It is so aggravating to be baulked like this; for I love these lilies, and desire them as much as any flower that grows.

I've seen them growing in all sorts of gardens, with practically no special attention. One London garden I used to visit had for years over two hundred clumps in bloom at one time. These unfortunately succumbed to lily disease eventually; but so far as I can trace disease does not seem the cause of my failures.

One of my many favourite books is *The Country that I Love*, by Queen Marie of Rumania, a grand-daughter of Queen Victoria, and first cousin to our King. Her intense love for flowers is in evidence all through this volume; but very specially does her description of the town of Jassy increase my longing for lilies, for at one season of the year Jassy is a town of lilies, one great garden, in which this flower of flower reigns supreme.

"Everywhere I found them," she writes; "in tall clusters of immaculate white, imparting a sacramental air to the poorest patch, giving dignity to the humblest cottage, their proud stems bending slightly beneath the wind's caress.... When unexpectedly I come upon a bed of lilies sending up their glory out of a cracked and thirsting ground, it is as though I must fall down and worship the Great Hand that creates such marvels. At these moments I suddenly seem to understand the

mystery of hidden truth generally too deep for human hearts to conceive.”

I, too, feel that if only I knew how to persuade these beautiful flowers to live in the garden here, I would have them just like that, in every corner and in all the beds, and every cottage should share.

Their perfume seems so full of summer’s high noon; so suggestive of the richness of the garden. And I love the orange anthers that dust with gold the very-busy, ever-so-important bee. One of my friends removes the anthers with scissors; she says they give the flower a worldly look; and she prefers an all-white lily.

But personally I think that touch of brilliant colour is one of the charms of the blossom. It is suggestive of a slight tendency to innocent frivolity, without being at all blatant; and it saves the flower from looking cold and haughty. I should be truly sorry to part with that yellow.

These lilies are so satisfactory for cutting. If gathered when the first bloom expands every bud will open in turn, in water.

And they seem to belong to a country garden. I never feel complete without them. Yet it is expensive to have to buy new bulbs annually, in order to secure the coveted flowers!

Another of my failures, so far, is the Lady’s Slipper, *cypripedium calceolus* and *spectabile*. I’ve tried them several times in the deep leaf mould of the shady wood, as that is the position they choose in their native haunts. I’ve also tried them in the garden.

No results!

Once my hopes rose hurriedly, for a root sent up a sensible looking shoot that seemed to promise a fine bloom. We put high wire netting all around the treasure, to protect it from rabbits, and any other animal that might have a fancy for *cypridium* for supper. And we put a ring of powdered alum outside the wire to warn off slugs. Yet something ate it, for it was gone by the morning.

A gardener's life has its depressions; and they don't all come from Iceland!

Then there is the Flame Flower, *tropæolum speciosum*. I don't pretend that I desire this as much as I do the Madonna Lilies, because I don't care for too much scarlet in the garden. Yet I feel a sense of inferiority because I can't grow it, even though I don't really want it!

It is annoying never to be able to rear a single specimen, when my nearest neighbour has it poking its bright flowers by the score out of the top of her hedges, climbing over a laurel bush, and generally flinging its sprays of flowers where it pleases. She has kindly given me pieces of its string-like roots; also I've bought consignments from other growers. I've planted it in peat, in leaf-mould, in the hedges, by shady walls—but I can't get a bit of it to grow on the premises. I hate to be outdone by a little thing like that!

And I find wallflowers slightly temperamental. I daresay this sounds foolish. Anyone can grow wallflowers, I'm told.

That is true, barring rabbits, and if the locality and position be right for them. But the Flower-Patch is on a much-exposed hill at a fair height, and though the average winter is mild, we frequently have some short but severe frost in January or February. And then—good-bye, wallflowers! One night will sometimes finish hundreds of young plants.

I know they grow wild, high up on old ruins, but the place where they flourish may be sheltered from the coldest winds. Also, the wild variety is much hardier than the newer garden sorts, some of which seem very delicate with us.

Every time I find the wallflowers cut off by a night frost, I vow I won't grow any more. Yet—what is spring without them? And there is always the off-chance that the frost will give us a miss that year. It often does.

Hope springs eternal—! so I continue to gamble in wallflowers. But there is no denying, they are more temperamental than poets and seed catalogues have led one to believe!

XVII

A Sprig of Rosemary

I NEVER realised, until I saw the house with its doors and windows closed, standing forlorn and neglected, how much the dear woman who once lived there, had been to me.

It was not so long since she had left it, carried out on the shoulders of strong village men, between the flower borders she was always tending, under the hawthorn that arched the little garden gate, and down to the quiet spot beside the river, where nothing will disturb her sleep, the only sounds being the songs of the birds and the water rushing over the weir—sounds she had always loved.

Only a few months before, she had been walking about her garden; and the place abounded with pathetic reminders,—but they wore a dejected look.

I undid the cord that fastened the gate and went inside; in the olden days I never dreamt of passing the cottage without looking in. Already the hinge of the gate was broken, and few things give a place a more derelict look than a broken sagging gate. It is the first thing the outsider sees, and it seems to say:

“There’s nothing in here now that really matters; nothing worth guarding; and no one who cares.”

I loved every inch of that garden quite as much as I loved my own, and I knew every plant that grew in it, and the birds that made it their home.

She was tenderly fond of birds, and they knew it, and made their nests in all sorts of nooks and crannies. It ought to have been called the Bird House, so constantly were little wings fluttering down to the window ledges; colour flashes seen among the bushes; cheeky birds hopping in at the doors; and the gayest of songs being trilled in the trees around.

At house-building time, blackbirds were in the laurel; thrushes in the plum trees; chaffies in the greengage that was trained on one end of the house; a black and yellow tit brought up its family in a secluded hole in the stone buttress wall that prevented the wood up behind the cottage from falling down-hill on to the roof! A tiny wren had its nest in a rose bush outside the living room window; a blue tit annexed a cosy hole in an ancient pear tree; song sparrows were in the hawthorn; martins twittered under the eaves.

A pair of robins set up housekeeping in the bank at the foot of the hawthorn—an absurdly dangerous place, considering the number of different enemies that would be prowling around by night. And the pretty willow warbler showed an equally fool-hardy disregard of danger, and built in a tangle of thick grass, left uncut in a far corner because of the snowdrops growing there.

Lapses like these worried Miss Fanny.

“Perfectly idiotic of them,” she would say. “Their parents must have brought them up very casually, not to have taught them better. I don’t blame the willow warblers so much, it may be their first season here, and their first nest, and they imagine they’re in the Garden of Eden! But those robins have lived here all the winter; they know perfectly well that seven cats reside in this lane, not to mention their visiting friends,

admirers, and other stray revellers. I really did expect the robins to have a little more sense!”

I suppose some people would have called Miss Fanny old. I remember that it came as a surprise to me when I read “aged 73,” though I had known she was older than my mother. But though she had lived 73 years, she wasn’t 73 *old*. A younger *soul* I never knew. It was only that her body grew tired sometimes, she used to say; her spirit never seemed weary.

There is no thrilling story to tell you about her, she was one of those unobtrusive women, who influence everyone who comes in contact with them. This faculty is a great gift, often amounting to genius; but so far it has never been properly classified.

She was not a native of this district. Like myself, her home was in town; she only spent portions of the year at her cottage here.

She was a much-travelled woman, and sometimes was away for a year or two at a time. But I believe her heart was invariably in this valley, no matter where her body might be.

Reduced income decided her to sell her town house, and then she made her permanent home among the people and the hills and the flowers she loved, her only regret being that she hadn’t done so years before.

We had many interests in common, particularly our fondness for wandering about the earth, and our liking for America. She loved Canada almost as though it were her native land. She once confided to me that she never was nearer marrying, than when a proposal came to her from a man she had known years before in her young days, who had

since settled in British Columbia. She thought at first she would say “yes,” for there was the lure of living in Canada! But she remembered that this would practically mean severance from England. She couldn’t face that.

“After all, there is no place like England”—this was always the finale. And we were both agreed on this. Also, we usually added, “and no place in England like this valley!”

Though she taught me endless things—for she was highly educated as well as experienced, it is only of her house and garden that I am writing now.

When first she bought the cottage, it was indeed a poor, neglected affair, little more than a bare, grey stone “barn,” with a couple of ugly windows upstairs, ditto downstairs, with a shabby front door in the centre. Being on the hillside, the ground merely sloped away in front; too steep for much of a garden, it had been let go to coarse grass, with a plentiful sprinkling of docks, thistles, and sorrel. Altogether, a most desolate-looking concern.

But she saw its possibilities, “What there is, is solid,” she said. “It will defy a good deal of time, and all the weather there is. It will be easy to make it look more like a home.”

She had the windows made larger, substituting casements which opened in the middle, for the sash windows. She heightened the chimney pots, which took away a little from the squat look of the place. She had additional rooms built at the side, with a slightly lower roof-line, to break up the square barn-like look. And she added a porch to the front door. I think the porch made the biggest difference of all. I remarked on this.

“A porch invariably does make all the difference!” she said. “Look at any house with a porch, and notice how much

more ‘welcoming’ it appears to be, than a house with the front door flush with the walls, and nothing beyond. A porch seems to me to be like part of the house stepping outside to show extra welcome to the visitor; as though the house were holding out its hands from the front door, and saying ‘We are anxious to receive you, even if you have to wait a moment outside while you ring the bell. At least you shall wait in comfort.’ ”

Since she first pointed this out to me, I have noticed the truth of her argument illustrated thousands of times over.

See how suspicious and grim some houses look with the front door shut fast in the main wall of the house and nothing to relieve the hard look of the frontage. Even a small entrance lobby, so long as it is open in front, will serve to annul this shut-out unfriendly look. Part of the desolate appearance of those hideous rows of workmen’s dwellings one sees in manufacturing areas, is due to the unbroken monotony of the frontages, with doors like cell-openings. Why, some of these houses actually look better in their rear than in front, when they have a lean-to in the backyard!

And a porch, in many instances, is easy to acquire, because, as Miss Fanny pointed out to me, it is not bound to be elaborate, or very solidly built. Indeed, on a small house, it is better not to have it too elaborate or solid. In any case, a few uprights, with some rustic cross-work will at least support a Virginia Creeper, if nothing else will grow there; and even this would serve to break the hard appearance of a bare front door, and make a house look more pleasantly affable.

Casement windows may not be entirely an unmixed blessing, as they don’t allow one to have outside window

boxes, as sash windows do,—which is a point in favour of the latter. But undoubtedly casements are infinitely more “homey” and picturesque in their appearance; whereas sash windows, especially if tall, can look so dreadfully institutional. A tall narrow window never looks as attractive from the outside, as a low, wide window, though the low window may not be so desirable from the inside. Light is so important.

It is possible, however, to get the effect of a low, wide window, and yet have the top light, by having an upper section, above the ordinary casement, which can be opened irrespective of the lower portion.

I know we can't all alter our windows at pleasure! But it is desirable to go into this question minutely, and see the newest designs, if one has the opportunity to overhaul an old house, or build a new one. Don't leave this to the architect.

Among other improvements, Miss Fanny added a loggia, with a solid cement floor.

“I'm not young enough to sit out on the grass in all weathers,” she explained. “Also, I'm beloved of the midges, who live in the grass. I need a damp-proof, midge-proof floor when I sit out of doors, and I like to sit out at all hours and in all weathers. In England we have one of the best climates in the world for out-door enjoyment in the evening; no mosquitoes, a long delicious twilight. Yet we do not make a practice of ‘taking the scents’ after sundown.

“But I'm not going to build a verandah like one I know in the United States; where the bathroom has been placed over the verandah, so that life, as you sit below, seems to be a constant succession of musical chimes in the roof above! A verandah ought to be a place of rest and peace.”

Yet another useful innovation was the sawing in half of the doors leading to the outside, so that while the upper half could be open, to let in sun and air, and very especially the lovely views, the lower half was closed, to keep out stray animals, and to give an air of semi-privacy.

When Miss Fanny had got over the building operations, she set to work to clothe the house with suitable apparel. Before long, a grape-vine was on one side—and we used to agree that no grape jelly anywhere could compare with what she made from the not-quite-ripe perhaps, but still jelly-able grapes that she gathered from that vine.

Round her bedroom window wandered a most prolific yellow rose. I don't know its name, if it ever had one. It wasn't a *gloire de dijon*; the flowers were the shape of a Maréchal Niel, but of an orange yellow. For years it produced an annual glory of flowers; and Miss Fanny often gathered a bloom and pinned it in her Sunday bonnet.

She dated back to the age when all self-respecting women wore bonnets on big occasions. She clung to them to the last, though eventually they had to be made specially for her.

She used to tell how the great Earl of Shaftesbury (world-famous for his disinterested philanthropy, and a near neighbour in her childhood) once said to her mother:

“We are so glad to notice that your female servants always wear bonnets in Church. These new-fangled hats do make women look so brazen!”

And though Miss Fanny wore hats herself in the garden and when travelling, she would as soon have thought of entering a church bare-headed as to attend a service with anything but a bonnet on her head. Though this bonnet

sometimes eclipsed every hat in the district for worldly gaiety! Flowers she would always have. Artificial as a rule, of course: but sometimes she substituted a gorgeous rose, and no one knew better than she did, which rose was likely to fade, and which could be relied upon to last out a service without giving the bonnet away!

On more than one occasion have I greeted her with: “Is that *another* new bonnet!” (one of her perpetual extravagances). “What a lovely rose! It looks as natural as though——” and then, seeing a warning twinkle in her eye, I would say no more in public.

The ground around the house was made into terraces, and what we now call rock gardens, though these had not come into their own at that time, as they have since. Local folk thought it “peculiar” that Miss Fanny should bother about stones—mere stones!—choosing those which were encrusted with white pebbles and bits of marble in them; or those covered with mosses, for the north side of the house. And actually, Miss Fanny was paying a man to pile them up, higgledy-piggledy, and put plants among them; when, as everyone born and bred in the valley knew, stones were stones, and rock had to be blasted out of the ground, if you wanted anything to grow, instead of being put into it.

Very queer goings on!

Yet in time everyone admitted that there was something to be said for this curious form of gardening. And a few of the more adventurous souls went and did likewise.

Now, of course, we all boast about our own rock gardens! Though really it is no great credit to us here, since the whole landscape when untamed is a series of rock gardens.

Moreover, we don't have to pay 6*d.* apiece for stones, as so many enthusiasts do.

Miss Fanny was nothing if not practical, however; and on one occasion, being saddened by the sight of the thrown-out tins that make hideous so many beauty spots these days, she demonstrated how people might use some of them, rather than pitch them into the brooks, or dump them down in the grotto where the waterfall drops from rocks above. There is no denying that tins, old iron, bottles and broken crockery are a problem in the outlying districts, where no dust carts collect the inhabitants' refuse. If some genius would arise to tell us how to dispose of such items satisfactorily and completely, he would earn the gratitude of thousands.

Miss Fanny's method at least utilised a few dozen old tins. Making a fair-sized hole in the bottom of each for drainage, she put in a few crocks and then added earth, as she would when filling a flower-pot, putting in each some suitable small plant. These tins she piled up cleverly, so as to form a sloping bank covering the surface with more earth to hide the tops of the tins, and inserting a judicious morsel of stone, here and there to delude the public into thinking it was entirely constructed of rock.

By the following year, she had a pretty bank, with plants flowering and spreading in all directions. And they have gone on increasing.

In time, the tins rust, and the force of the roots will also aid their dissolution. If burnt in the kitchener before being used in the garden, they will be ready to drop to pieces even before they are bedded.

Though the making of rockeries would not use up all the empty tins that clutter up a house in the country, it would use

up some. And where stone is scarce, it is especially useful to have something of this kind to hold up the earth and provide the sub-structure that one needs, if a rock garden is to remain intact, and not be washed down flat with the first heavy rains.

Shortly after this experiment was completed I noticed among the stones on the bank some fair-sized irregular lumps of something that was neither rock nor crystal nor quartz, but looked a cross between them all.

“Oh, those are some of my old bottles,” Miss Fanny answered my inquiries. “I wondered if it would be possible to reduce any of them to their original elements, as they are an unsightly nuisance when merely piled up in the outhouse. No one wants them, and they do accumulate so, even in a small household like mine. So I tried burning them. That piece you are handling was a pickle bottle. Rather pretty now, isn’t it?”

Yes, it was quite an attractive and suitable addition to the rock garden,—something like a piece of imitation crystal made of ground glass! There was no particular shape about any of the pieces.

“I put the bottle into a hot kitchen fire at night—and kept well out of the way, wondering if it would burst. But it didn’t! When the ashes were raked out in the morning, we found the lump of glass as you see it now. Though they vary. Every piece isn’t always successful, but I haven’t had time yet to find out exactly what makes the difference, or how to avoid failures. I only know that while some pieces come out looking clear and clean, others are brown and smoky and have ash embedded in them. Evidently it depends on what the molten glass picks up before it congeals; but how to regulate that part of the business, I haven’t yet discovered. Even when some are failures, at least they take up less room, and are not

so much of an eyesore when burnt as they are when stacked in an outhouse as old bottles, making the place look, for all the world, like a marine store. And it's so especially cruel the way some thoughtless people throw away broken glass, into woods, and fields, and places where animals wander. They had far better burn them before throwing them out, for they would do no harm then."

I agreed with her. And it's not only animals that get injured. Many a child has suffered from stumbling on broken glass hidden among the undergrowth.

"Can any sort of glass be melted down into these rockery bits?" I asked her.

"Any sort can be melted down, but you want thick glass and a good-sized jar or bottle, to get a lump large enough to be of any use in the garden. A large bottle will give you a piece about a couple of inches long, it reduces so much in the process. And don't forget, you need a very hot fire, otherwise it won't melt."

I've experimented myself since, and have succeeded in getting some quite presentable pieces.

Miss Fanny's great hobby, however, was cuttings. Every window-ledge indoors was full of little pots with twigs and snippets of greenstuff of one sort or another. Nothing came amiss to her. She had a theory that everything could be propagated by cuttings—if only you did it in the right way!

Perhaps! But with most of us, the problem is to discover the right way!

She had solved a good many of these problems, however; and she showed me how some things would root in water,—

like the impatiens, also mint. She instructed me in the necessity for planting cuttings of very succulent things, like geraniums, in sand, in order to keep the cut stems from rotting in too much damp, and the advantage in leaving a cactus cutting lying in the sun to callouse before potting. She explained why I had failed with my cuttings of snapdragons and calceolarias in the frame: I had not kept the frame closed for the first few days after planting. I had kept it open, and done all sorts of things I ought not to have done; and had left undone all sorts of things I ought to have done—such as putting sand on the surface before dibbling the hole for the cutting, which would have enabled a little sand to dribble into the hole, and aid it to perform the duty I required of it. Hence—well, I need not go into technical details about too rapid evaporation, etc. But I put sand on the surface for the next batch, and kept the frame closed for a few days after planting the cuttings, and they behaved themselves in an exemplary manner.

Now the interesting point about all this is the fact that Miss Fanny was quite ignorant about the practical side of flower growing, till she came to live here in the country, having spent most of her life in town, when she was not touring the earth. Yet the love for growing things must have been in her even then; for she would bring home an odd plant, a cutting, some seeds, of something she had seen and admired abroad. Many of her plants had distinctive names, such as “Mrs. Brown of Niagara’s cactus”; “the Mexican Lily,” “Cousin Ellen’s hydrangea,” “the Pyrenees Hotel Fern,” and so on.

Women of a past generation would preserve family history, and friendship’s records, in a patchwork quilt and the

photographic album; with picture post cards as a later variation. Miss Fanny's plants served the same purpose.

That she should have accumulated so much practical gardening knowledge in so short a time comparatively speaking, was not surprising if you knew her. For one thing, she was a great reader; and every new gardening book worth preserving, found a place on her shelves. Also, she was constantly at work, trying out old methods and new ideas to discover their worth for herself.

But more than this, her charming personality secured for her endless hints and information (also cuttings and seeds and specimen plants) that probably would not have come my way, or to any other equally ordinary seeker after truth. She had only to ask some simple question of an official at the Royal Horticultural Society, and forthwith he would be laying all his knowledge at her feet.

Elderly gentlemen explained their orchids to her with a courtliness that was impressive.

Young men told her confidently (and at the same time, in minutest detail), everything they had already discovered, and all they intended to discover, *re* tomatoes, grapes and propagating petunias.

Every man in charge of a display at the Chelsea Flower Show rose to his feet instinctively when she approached, and promptly did his very best to let her see how truly intelligent he was.

That gentle, old-world femininity had its value!

In such ways, Miss Fanny was always collecting information; and her memory was remarkable. By this system of intensive culture, she seemed to acquire as much knowledge in a year as other amateurs would in ten!

But to return to her cuttings.

When anyone brought her a bunch of flowers, her eye immediately selected any twig or shoot in the greenery that might be induced to root. Into a little flower-pot it went. I have a large fancy Pelargonium, a particularly handsome plant. I forget how many years old it is; but I have had it some time; and it is smothered with bloom every summer. Last year it bore fifty-six trusses. The parent of this was a slip in a bunch of flowers someone brought her, and which she reared into a splendid specimen.

It surprises me, when I look around my garden now, to see how much of it originated in her cuttings.

The big bushes of white spirea that tower eight feet high, and are covered with soft white plumes in June, came from her own spirea tree, which, in turn, she raised from a cutting someone gave her. She gave me several rooted bits; they are now huge shrubs, and the admiration of everyone who sees them in their glory.

Bushes of the old-fashioned crimson fuchsia are all about my London garden, as well as in the Flower-Patch. These came from the bush inside her gate, that drips in lovely crimson sprays from June round to the end of November, and often later in mild weather.

“It’s never any trouble to put a few stalks round a flower-pot in June,” she said to me. “And you never know when you may want another fuchsia for some corner, and they are so useful for half-shady places. If you don’t need them yourself, someone else will.”

Speaking of fuchsias, reminds me that the tall plants with long white and pink blossoms, which stand in my front porch all the summer, started out in life as slips from one of her

favourite indoor plants. “I like their old-fashioned name, ‘Ladies’ Ear-rings,’ ” she told me. “They look like that.”

The winter jasmine that clothes some of my walls with yellow sunshine in the depth of winter—this came from her garden. “Why, you can always find a rooted bit of yellow jasmine,” she said, “if you look for it. See how the end of this branch has rooted! That will make you a nice plant.” It has now grown into yards and yards of flowers!

“I wonder why you go to all that trouble to transplant wallflower seedlings?” she asked me one day, when she found me laboriously at work and nearly breaking my poor back over those small scraps of vegetation! “If you put in cuttings, nice woody bits like this, with a heel on,” breaking a branchlet from an old wallflower near-by, “they would be sure to grow, and you could plant rows while you are fiddling with half a dozen of the tiny seedlings. Unless you are wanting a special colour or variety?”

“No. I’m wanting wallflowers in the widest, non-special, any-colour-you-like sense! I just want wallflowers. As many as I can get. The only stipulation I make is that they must have the proper wallflower perfume.”

“I understand. To me, also, a scentless wallflower, like a scentless rose, is a most disappointing affair. I suppose these old wallflower plants are all of scented varieties?”

“Yes. But they are too leggy and straggly now; they must go on the bonfire.”

“What a pity!” she said. “When you could get half an acre of new plants from them! Are there any ones which you particularly like?”

“That one at the corner is a deep maroon-brown velvet, almost black in the shadows, and ruby when the sun shines

through the petals. I thought perhaps I'd keep it another year, though it is very floppy and untidy. I've tried to match it, but the seeds I bought, guaranteed to be the same, have produced nothing quite like it. And its scent is wonderful."

"Then certainly it must not go on the bonfire, till we've saved all we can.... Of course, it's best to take the cuttings with a heel on," as she was stripping the old plant which we had now pulled up, and was securing every shoot that had not borne a blossom. "But when it's a rarity from which I want to get as many new plants as possible, I also plant slips without heels. These long branches would be useless unless the stem were broken off much shorter. Some will root, even though all may not."

Very soon we had a long row of cuttings, from this one old bush. And the majority of them produced nice young plants, and flowered as gorgeously as their parent had done.

Roses were propagated every year by Miss Fanny from cuttings. She was very particular about these, and allowed no haphazard treatment where they were concerned.

"You can stick a piece of willow into the ground any time of the year, and it seems to like it, and will do its best to grow. But a rose asks for more attention, and is worth it."

Her reference to the willow reminded me of one of the many amusements I have given my gardener here, though he is too polite to let me see his smiles.

When I first had the Flower-Patch, one of my many desires was for a "Pussy Willow," the kind that has its yellow tufts in bloom by Palm Sunday. As there was a suitable spot vacant by one of the brooks, I immediately ordered a willow tree, describing exactly what I wanted, stipulating for the *salix*

caprea with the yellow catkins, which some people called “Palm.”

The tree arrived. Price 10s. 6d. The gardener looked it over critically, but said nothing. I hadn’t asked his opinion. He planted it carefully where I wanted it; and looked after its welfare most attentively, when I returned to London. In the spring, I was back at the Flower-Patch, and eager to see what my Pussy Willow was doing, almost as soon as I arrived. I was so looking forward to owning one of those lovely yellow-flowered trees.

“Why, it isn’t a yellow one! It’s a green one. And I ordered a yellow one most emphatically,” I wailed, looking at a miserable specimen that showed a few *green* catkins, “the female of the species,” not the male-catkin tree I wanted! I could have howled with disappointment, to say nothing of the waste of half a guinea; and one never has too many half-guineas to spare, in one’s youth!

“If I’d only known you were wanting one of those Sally trees there, I’d soon have got one out of your wood,” said the gardener regretfully. “Oh yes, you’ve any number in your wood. I expect you didn’t recognise them in the summer. And have you noticed the gatepost at the lower field gate? No?” He led the way. And to my amazement I beheld a gatepost that had taken root and was now a waving mass of thin stems smothered with *yellow* Pussy Willow catkins.

“I thought I wouldn’t cut them down till after you’d seen them, knowing how fond you are of flowers,” he said. Though I wondered if he had left them as one more object lesson demonstrating the stupidity and ignorance of the Londoner.

“And there’s some more by the raspberries,” he added. Sure enough, the posts holding the wires which supported the raspberry canes were blossoming with twiggy sprays all the way up, with quite a nice tuft up at the top of each.

Some old willow tree was evidently renewing its youth, and getting quite busy! Undoubtedly, you can stick a piece of willow in the ground at any time, and it will grow.

But roses, of course, are more patrician. Miss Fanny’s method I have proved to be a very good one. And I strongly recommend it to any gardener who has a sufficiency of leaves.

In the autumn she had all the leaves collected and made into a big pile in a sheltered corner; it was well pressed down, with a little soil between some of the layers, and a shallow covering of soil on the top.

About the middle or end of November she selected healthy-looking rose sprays of the past season’s growth, but only those that had not borne flower buds, cutting them about twelve inches long, and burying these in the leaf pile, with only about a couple of inches at the top of the spray left above ground. There would be dozens of these in orderly rows in the pile, the important point being the necessity for pressing the leaves close to the stems, and keeping them well pressed down.

These would be left for two years before being moved to other quarters, the only attention she gave them meanwhile was the constant watching to see that the cuttings were not rising out of the leaves, if the weather were frosty, or the soil getting loosened in any way around them. For if they are not packed about with the leaves and earth on every bit of their underground stem, they will rot instead of rooting.

In a couple of years there would be a collection of nicely rooted young roses, and though some of the cuttings might have refused to take hold, the majority would be showing a sprightly readiness to start life on their own. The leaf mould engenders a certain amount of heat when decomposing; this encourages the production of roots.

I have propagated scores of roses in this way, since she showed me how to do it; I find they do better in the leaf mould than in the ordinary nursery bed. But it is not advisable to try this method if there is any chance of conifer needles being among the leaves. Only such leaves as oak, beech, elm, and birch should be used—oak and beech being the best. Larger leaves like sycamore, ivy, chestnut, take longer to decompose, and are not of much use to the cuttings.

For those who have plenty of leaves and space for storing it is a great advantage to wait till the following year before inserting cuttings; and this enables the leaves to approximate more nearly to the mould the cuttings revel in.

I know it is usually said that roses do better if grown on a brier, or some other hardy stock, rather than on their own roots. I find the rooted cuttings do admirably, however, unless the rose is a particularly delicate variety; and in that case, I don't bother about it! I'm not growing for exhibition purposes, nor to rival my neighbours. Most of them have far more respectable-looking rose gardens than I can ever hope to achieve, with my mania for covering every inch of the ground with *something*, rather than see bare patches.

My chief aim in growing roses is to have flowers that look beautiful and possess perfume. I don't mind if it is a new or an old variety, so long as its colour and form appeal to me. When I get a variety which I specially admire, but which

proves to be picky, or uncertain in temper, I look around for something else that is nearly like it in appearance, but sturdier in health. One can generally find another rose that is similar in type, even though a slight variation in detail has enabled the grower to give it a new name, and by so doing please a lady friend or a good customer!

After all, to ordinary amateurs like myself who have very little spare time to give to gardening, strength of character and a few outstanding good points are of more value in the roses we try to grow, than expensive newcomers that want a lot of coddling.

All newcomers are not necessarily delicate, I know. But, personally, I seldom buy a new rose the moment it appears on the market unless I am so infatuated with it that I feel I can't live without it! "Madame Butterfly" bowled me over like that. And I've never regretted it! But in the main, as I haven't time to attend to a newcomer personally and note its idiosyncrasies, I wait a season, or even two, in order to hear the reports of wiser heads than mine, on the virtues, or the reverse, of some recent arrival. It is easier then to judge whether it will be happy in my humble garden, or despise me right away!

Meanwhile, I go on raising young families from those that really seem to like me and to enjoy living on this hillside. And I find that these roses we have raised ourselves very often last longer and do better than those that are bought, because they are acclimatised from the very beginning. Whereas, some of those one buys (not all, certainly, but some) may do well the first season, but "fade out" as the wireless people say, the following winter.

It may be the fault of our garden; or it may be that some plants are unduly forced before being sent out to the customer, and most of their energy is exhausted by the end of the first season. But whatever the reason, it is a fact that plants raised from cuttings in the garden where they are to remain permanently, will often develop steadily and adapt themselves to the conditions of that garden—or the district—more cheerfully than plants that have been imported from a totally different environment.

Some of the roses in my garden, raised from Miss Fanny's cuttings, have been there for over twenty years, blooming lavishly every year and still showing no signs of giving out.

I don't want it to be thought that I am indifferent to new varieties. Quite the contrary! I never can resist a rose-grower's catalogue, any more than I can the appeal of a rose show. Such wonderful new beauties appear every year. There are times when I am utterly reckless. The Five per cent Conversion Loan dividend arrives May 1st—nicely opportune for the shows! It also comes again November 1st—such a good date to plant!

But that doesn't lessen my ardour for raising young stock, where possible, from the most successful of my old plants. For one thing: I have never got over the war-time habit of trying to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. Those who were old enough to take part in the grinding and perpetual economising that those years of horror entailed, will carry the scars to the end of their days, so deep an impression did it make on most women. I still feel I must not waste—even rose prunings!

Another point: once I have loved any particular plant, I hate to lose it. I try to induce it to perpetuate itself, by

cuttings or root division, whichever method suits it best. This ensures my getting the same variety.

And yet a third reason why I enjoy raising some of my own plants: there is a definite and distinct pleasure in surveying one's own bit of handwork, no matter how feeble it may be in comparison with the achievements of other people. There is a satisfaction in having made something of one's own free will—as distinct from work turned out in order to make a living. And especially is it gratifying to behold, if one has done it as well as one knows how. It doesn't much matter what the created item is; whether it be a cake, a garden, a knitted jumper, or anything else that will serve some sort of purpose, either useful or beautiful.

And when I point to a row of rose bushes, and say casually: "All those we ourselves raised from cuttings," my visitor, bored probably with my garden enthusiasms, merely says: "How nice!" and passes on. But *I* feel a real glow inside me. And would gladly stop and give her the life history of each one. Only, I know the poor dear wouldn't listen!

Probably I had better bring cuttings to an end now; though I meant to tell of the bushes of forsythia, syringa, buddleia, guelder rose, flowering currant, sweet brier, crimson honeysuckle, lavender, rosemary—all owing to Miss Fanny's hobby.

But before I leave her, I must mention one of her favourite methods of flower arrangement for indoors.

With the exception of a bowl of ferns or some such simple decoration on the table at meals, she preferred to have the flowers in her living-room (which was also her dining-room),

mostly grouped together on a side table against the wall opposite the window, where full light fell upon it.

She was ahead of her age in her objection to having a house cluttered up with too many unneeded ornaments; and she did not care to see odd flower vases dotted about a room here and there in isolated spots. She said they lost their value in such positions, and were partially submerged by the surrounding bric-à-brac.

“If I had only one bowl of flowers, of course I should put them in the most centrally convenient place I possessed, where I could see them most often. But with the abundance we have here, I like to give them their own special quarters. Each member of a family has his or her own pet chair and place at the table. Even the cat knows that she owns the hearthrug! The flowers are quite as much a part of my life as the cat is! That is why I handed over that table to them.”

It was an old English “hunting sideboard”—a narrow serving table, on which in past jovial times the breakfast dishes were placed in some baronial hall for the guests to help themselves before starting out for the day’s hunting.

In Miss Fanny’s more restricted *ménage*, a bank of blossoms took the place of former game pies, potted leveret, collared head, glazed tongue and lordly ham. Yet it never looked like a “set piece.” It was just a natural profusion of greenery and blossoms—some standing stiffly upright, some low growing, some trailing along the table or over the edge. But her instinct for beauty saw to it that nothing clashed. She could combine most unusual colours in one group, and yet avoid the slightest hint of friction.

At one season that end of the room would be like a primrose dell, against a background of catkins dangling from

hazel twigs, and some of the still green fronds of last year's ferns, which usually linger with us through the winter, unless in very exposed places.

A little later in the season, the table might be lovely with wild cherry blossom, pink ribes, one or two sprays of the rose-coloured double peach and yellow forsythia. Miss Fanny taught me to combine clear yellow and rose pink.

At another time one would perhaps find the soft gold of the autumn bracken bunched with the intensely carmine-coloured leaves of the wild guelder rose and its crimson berries, bright orange beech leaves, together with trails of vividly coloured bramble—and how amazingly vivid blackberry leaves can be in the late of the year, town dwellers seldom know. Also, alas! they have so little opportunity to see the guelder exchange the full rose tint of its autumn foliage for a deep wine red, which in turn becomes a dark bronze purple that is equally rich in tone. And all this before it sheds a leaf!

At no season, however, did Miss Fanny purposely arrange a “scheme.” She merely brought indoors a fragment of the beauty that happened to be broadcast outside. Only her keen sense of right selection enabled her to avoid incongruities.

But whatever else was on her flower table, she invariably had a large flat glass bowl,—the sort one would use for stewed fruit or a trifle. In the centre of this was a tall, slender, clear glass vase; the whole being suggestive of an old-fashioned *épergne*. This was the only touch of formality on that table, and even this had nothing formal about it but the glass itself. For here was always an assortment of oddments gathered anywhere—very mixed, but never inharmonious. The short stems went into the lower portion; the longer stems into the vase.

“I often come upon a flower that I want to see at close quarters, or perhaps long to have its scent indoors,” she told me. “Also, many plants need to have some of their blossoms cut before they run to seed. And this makes a useful resting-place for the flowers one admires and gathers—and then wonders what to do with them!”

I have copied this idea, and I also find it useful for the small bunches of flowers my visitors love to gather for themselves, yet often are unable to find room for in their already overstocked bedroom!

She did sometimes indulge in one rather ambitious floral arrangement. It came about by my commenting on the surprising way the haphazard assortment in the *épergne* blended happily, instead of irritating one’s eyesight.

Like all young people, I had periods of violent belief in whatever cult happened to appeal to me at the moment; and the trials endured by my family at such times were in direct proportion to the intensity of the phase. Some of these cults were good, some were feeble; but personal experiment is what youth craves. At the time I commented on the flowers in the *épergne*, I was very Japanesy. Secretly, I thought it a mistake to put a number of flowers, and such a mixed lot, too, in one receptacle, even though they didn’t clash. I was an ardent admirer of one—and only one—low bloom, balanced by one—and only one—tall branchlet.

I still am!

But I’ve added to my “likes” since that day. Also I hope I’ve added at least a little to my small stock of common sense! I know now that there are a number of different ways of arranging flowers (and furniture, and one’s hair, and one’s income, and a lot of other things); and though each may be

totally different from every other, all may be equally admirable.

In reply to my comment, Miss Fanny asked me: “Have you noticed how wonderfully the flowers combine in those paintings of huge masses of flowers in big vases, that one sees in the National Gallery? I’ve often meant to try and arrange a floral trophy on similar lines.”

“Why not?” I was instantly intrigued, despite my Japanese proclivities. “Can’t we do it now?”

We started right there!

It was a simple matter to go out with scissors and basket, and cut flowers of every size and hue, for it was late August and the annuals were rampant. Also, we found a vase that belonged to the period we were intending to recall.

But, on the other hand, it isn’t nearly as easy as it looks to get scores of blossoms all to keep facing the audience; hanging down when we wanted them to hang; or standing upright when required; but all looking one straight in the eye, and at the same time obediently keeping their toes in the vase!

After a number of vain attempts to get them to behave exactly like those in an old picture Miss Fanny had unearthed, I came to the conclusion that the Old Masters must have wired some of their flowers, or had attendants hold them in position.

Whatever may have been the reason, we certainly were not shinningly successful,—not on the grand scale we had hoped for!

After our third erection suddenly flopped to pieces,—some items tumbling out of the vase; some sinking right down into

its interior—just as our previous attempts had seen proper to do, in spite of all our efforts to circumvent them, Miss Fanny said:

“Let’s try a bowl instead of a vase, and go our own way without trying to copy anything but the garden itself.”

Forthwith, in the bottom of a very large punch bowl, some pebbles were placed, a straight glass vase in the centre, and some metal flower holders and supports around it. Ultimately we found the pebbles only added to the weight and were not needed.

Then we built up rank after rank of flowers, putting in anything that came to hand, so long as it was the requisite height, irrespective of colour, but using only single blooms, not several of any one kind together. The tallest were in the centre, the lowest at the rim of the bowl, with trails of tiny creeping plants hanging over the edge.

Seeding grasses of the finer kinds, small ferns and sprays of light foliage that would not hide the flowers, were mixed with the rest; the whole rising gradually from the edge of the bowl to the topmost central peak. It is essential that the vase be entirely hidden; but it is a desirable adjunct, as it not only gives special support to the long stems in the centre of the bowl, but it helps to support the rest around it.

We found it needed a little care at the beginning to get the flowers to remain standing upright (and they must stand upright) just at the place where each was needed. But by the time the work was half done, one bloom supported another, and the work became easier.

I know it doesn't sound very wonderful as I write about it, but actually it was a gorgeous sight when finished. Of course we were fortunate in having a large garden to draw upon, and a great variety to choose from. But further experiments have proved to me that one can make a really impressive show with far less flowers than we used, if plenty of greenery be included; since each bloom will display itself quite advantageously if placed singly, and without much overlapping, against the green background.

For instance, a big bowl can be filled with sprays of foliage—small-leaved stuff is necessary, and it must be graded in height—then single blooms can be inserted among the green, of such flowers as marigolds, moon daisies, annual candytuft, a few opening rosebuds if these can be spared, a bright snapdragon at intervals, one or two geums, a few violas, some wavy bits of blue flax. In this way a handsome table bouquet can be made with no more flowers than would be needed for a vase at each corner.

The individual flowers show to better advantage if not crowded together; and if the heights are graded, so that the bouquet is not flat-topped, but rises to a central point, the flowers “go farther” and not one is lost to sight.

With this arrangement, if one bloom seems to be failing before the others, it can be taken out and another inserted in its place, without disturbing anything else.

Where there is no stint of flowers, there is no need to trouble over-much as to colours. The wider the selection, the better the effect; only—be cautious in introducing scarlet; it is so apt to kill everything near it.

If only a few flowers are available, then it is desirable to study the colour-schemes and have strictly friendly

combinations.

The last time I saw Miss Fanny, she was doing her valiant best to entertain a visitor who, obviously, did not intend to be entertained!

I was leaving for London early next day, and had called to say good-bye.

I knew nothing about the visitor, save that her mother, who had been one of Miss Fanny's old school friends, had wished her daughter to call, as she was touring the Valley. She was a woman of that hard, coldly brilliant type that someone has called metallic; about thirty-five years old; entirely self-sufficient; absolutely sure of herself—but sure of nothing else! She seemed to be without creed, or ideals, or anything else that could make one feel drawn towards her; though I don't fancy she desired any other woman to be “drawn” in her direction!

I have met the type on more than one occasion; she abounds on the Riviera (she frequently wears very long earrings!) But I've never felt attracted to her. I wasn't on this occasion.

Equally, I am sure she saw nothing attractive in me—though I can't blame her for that!

Miss Fanny looked very weary. She had been doing her utmost to make things interesting for her guest. But the lady was openly bored. She had evidently only come because her mother had insisted on it; she had no intention of being agreeable—that, at least, was quite plain to see! Her expression said:

“Why should I have to spend time on a dull old party like this, simply because she happened to go to school with mother!”

She would probably have made her call an extremely brief one, only it chanced to be the week of the Chepstow races; a time when every sort of accommodation has been booked up for miles around, and hotel proprietors have every available cupboard occupied. She was glad enough, therefore, to accept Miss Fanny’s invitation to stay the night.

Miss Fanny had been showing her visitor round the garden,—a tiring business when one has an unappreciative audience. She looked really grateful to me for appearing just then. Already she was overdone with the strain of trying to get into some sort of sympathetic touch with this unresponsive woman. But I put *my* foot in it straight away, by saying:

“Isn’t it positively wonderful, the way Miss Fanny raises such lovely things from any old stick that comes along!”

“I can’t think why on earth she does it, when it’s so bad for one’s hands,” the visitor replied, indifferently, “seeing that she can afford to pay someone to do it for her. And if she couldn’t, one can buy all that sort of thing so cheaply nowadays.”

I could see that Miss Fanny winced slightly.

I took a deep breath, with the intention of giving the lady an outsize verbal smacking—it would have been so good for her! But Miss Fanny spoke first:

“I know it isn’t easy for everyone to understand my attitude towards growing things; and I’m not sure that I can

explain it clearly.”

The visitor’s detached gaze out of the window signified that it was quite immaterial to her, one way or the other; and Miss Fanny certainly need not bother to explain it on *her* account! The gentle voice continued:

“But it seems to me that the Lord of the garden has handed us His plants and flowers, and said: ‘These are patterns I have made for you. Now see if you can raise some more like them, in order to help in restoring to the earth the beauty I put into it when I first made it’ ”——

(The visitor’s gaze into the beyond outside the window, said: “We are not interested!”)

“And so I seem bound to try to recapture some of the beauty of that first Garden, though I never saw it! I’m like the child who had always lived inland on the Kansas prairie where she was born. When asked if she knew what the sea was like, she said, ‘Well, I’ve never exactly seen it; but I’ve often heard it.’ ”

“ ‘Where?’ ” she was asked.

“ ‘In a shell,’ she replied. There are times when one seems to sense the loveliness of that first garden—even though it be but a faint, far-off echo, like the sound of the sea in the shell.”

As some remark seemed obligatory when Miss Fanny ceased speaking, her visitor said: “I daresay it helps to pass the time in a remote backwater like this; but personally I’ve never felt the very slightest urge that way.”

“No? of course we’re not all alike. But your dear mother was always so fond of flowers; and I remember that your Aunt was devoted to her garden, and worked in it up to the very last.”

“Oh! Aunt’s idea of gardening was hopelessly Victorian. She never moved beyond the geranium-calceolaria-lobelia period! She was absolutely static. But the Victorians were all alike, smug in their colossal ignorance and impervious to any new ideas.”

The lady was getting rude, as well as selfishly ungracious! I wanted to ask her: what about railways, anæsthetics, a hundred other products that were the result of the many new ideas born in that age? But Miss Fanny replied, quietly and without any trace of annoyance:

“I don’t think you were old enough, my dear, to be able to judge people of Queen Victoria’s era as a whole. And I can’t say that I ever met any myself of the type you describe. But, however smug and colossal the ignorance of some of the dead and gone Victorians may have been, in comparison with ourselves to-day, at any rate, they know more than we do *now*! For they know what lies at the end of the journey. We don’t. We have so much yet to learn.”

The visitor’s face suddenly brightened. Leaving the distant hills to get on as best they could without her gaze, she turned to Miss Fanny all animation the moment she finished speaking.

“It has just occurred to me, could you put me up to-morrow night as well as to-night? I should so *dearly* love to go to the races to-morrow. I should be certain to meet heaps of friends there. And as you are motoring into Chepstow at

midday” (this to me), “could you manage to load me up along with the luggage? That would just suit me nicely, and get me there in splendid time.”

As I have already stated, there was nothing in the least bit thrilling about Miss Fanny’s career.

And yet—I know more than one garden in London, where flowers are still blooming on bushes she raised.

Every Christmas, on my own table, stand several cactus plants, each a mass of drooping crimson blossoms, and the admiration of everybody; all these are related to Mrs. Brown of Niagara’s cutting, brought home to England in a sponge-bag.

There is no bed or border in the Flower-Patch, but has some touch of beauty which originated with Miss Fanny; and these in turn have given slips and rooted cutting to all sorts of outlying portions of the earth.

Some of her Rosemary I sent in a tin box to an outpost, far north, on Hudson’s Bay, where the land lies snow-bound nearly the whole year round. It took over a month to get to its destination, after it reached Canadian soil. But it brought to some English missionaries a message from home that needed no words to convey it.

More of her Rosemary went to a Nurse in a hospital in an arid tropical desert. She divided the sprigs among the other nurses; and even the doctors begged for some. They rubbed their pillows with it at night, they told me; and oh! how they dreamt of the green gardens of England!

And still the flowers bloom on, helping to bring back to a tired world, glimpses of our lost Garden heritage, as she wished that they should.

Our spheres of usefulness are not all alike; neither are all equally spectacular. But I sometimes think Miss Fanny's life-work was quite as serviceable in its own way, as if she had qualified as the world's Champion Steeplejack, or succeeded in swimming the Atlantic.

She did her best to substitute beauty for ashes, in her own allotted sphere. And she influenced many others to do the same. That influence not only remains unto this day, though she herself has passed on, but it steadily increases its radius in the way that would surprise her.

So often does it happen that people's best work is done after their death!

XVIII

Box Gardening

OUTSIDE window boxes make a very pretty addition to a house; they give it such a human, cared-for look. But they are not as easy to keep going as they appear to be. To secure a succession of flowers needs some planning.

Most of us like to have spring bulbs blooming outside our windows. They are the simplest things to grow, and make a show when we are longing for flowers. Daffodils do well for this; also tulips. Hyacinths are rather too squat for this purpose, and are better either indoors or in the borders. Crocuses make a gay show; I would advocate the large purple and mauve and white ones, as they come a little later than the yellows, and are less likely, therefore, to be blown to rags by gales. Not that I would say a word against the brave yellows, who defy snow even, in their anxiety to be up and doing. No praise is too great for them. Only it always grieves me if a gale flattens them down just when they are trying to open their golden goblets. They are so much more exposed on a window-ledge than down on the ground level.

There is one flowering bulb I would like to advocate—the tiny Rush Jonquil. To my mind, it is the gem of the whole race of daffodils and their kin. While immense size has its advantages in many cases, and large flowers may mean gay gardens, we need to keep alive our appreciation for little things. For so often the little things are more exquisite than their bigger relations. Large bodies are sometimes a trifle unwieldy!

The Rush Jonquil comes in several sizes; but my preference is for the smallest single variety—a little clear yellow star, not more than an inch across, and with a perfume that requires some new word, not yet in the dictionary, it is so exquisite! I grow boxes of these every year; some outside the south windows; some in wooden boxes, placed in sheltered positions out of doors. They are better in boxes that can be placed on a wall when in bloom, or somewhere near the eye-line; as they are apt to get lost in the border, being small. A dozen of the little bulbs do well in a small pocket in the rock garden.

A couple of the blossoms will scent a room!

As they are not very expensive, new bulbs can be put in the boxes each year, and the old ones turned out into any corner. They may not do much the next year. I seldom keep mine. They are too small to plant in the grass; and it is not worth taking up garden space for them, seeing that they can be bought so cheaply.

So long as bulbs are in bloom in the window boxes all is well. But once they have done flowering any and all must come right out, otherwise the boxes look deplorably derelict. And this is where a difficulty arises. So often it is too early to put in geraniums, they haven't been sufficiently hardened off, to be much use out of doors as yet. This means that there is a hiatus between the bulbs and the geraniums. And, incidentally, there is nothing better than geraniums for the window boxes, if you want a row of flowering plants. I believe I've tried nearly everything else!

But one year when I was expecting visitors, and had nothing but shabby done-with bulbs in the boxes, I felt so

ashamed of the windows, that I determined to try something else.

I turned out the bulbs; collected some small pieces of pebbly rock; also some roots of cowslips, forget-me-nots, purple orchises, aubretia, a few ferns, and rooted pieces of small leaved ivy. In each window box I made a small rock garden. It was remarkably effective; and looked lovely from the inside too.

If you have never tried a rock garden in a window box, let me recommend you to experiment forthwith. It is fascinating work, and you can take out a plant that has done blooming and substitute something else, without upsetting the whole concern. Of course you need to study the aspect; it is useless to put polyanthus, for instance, in a very hot position, or you will have a wilted box to look at for most of the day! But given the aspect the plants prefer, and you can keep the rock garden going strong all the summer, by aid of a judicious removal at intervals, and the substitution of a new plant.

Only, keep to small growing things, on the whole.

When the spring plants had finished flowering, I made a rock garden of small cacti, in a south-facing window box. It was surprisingly successful. Plants that had done scarcely anything indoors, suddenly grew apace and most of them bloomed.

Don't neglect to water your window boxes. Unless the rain beats in that direction, they will probably be starving for water. People often think they get all they need, just as the garden does. But the house shuts off the rain very often; and the window-ledge is partially under cover owing to its recess. Also, the boxes have not a depth of cool earth in which to bury their roots. So give them all the moisture they need.

And give them a suspicion of fertiliser occasionally. This works wonders.

If the window box is to look a credit to the house, it needs daily attention. It is useless to leave it for a week or so, and then expect to find it looking smart and cheerful. The area under cultivation being so small, it is imperative that every dead leaf, and bloom be removed at once. Every plant past its prime must be taken away before it really needs the bonfire, and something better substituted, if the box is to be kept gay.

For this reason, it is desirable to have a few plants coming on in the garden, which can be removed to the boxes when required. Only be sure to take them up with a clump of earth around the roots, to avoid root-disturbance. This will prevent their flagging. It is better to transplant from the open ground, rather than from the greenhouse. Those in the open will be hardened off; those from the greenhouse may resent the change of atmosphere, and look a trifle lackadaisical at first.

XIX

The Procession of the Perfumes

IT is strange that, in spite of the skill and knowledge of the scientist, so few of the actual scents of flowers have been captured for perfumery.

Oh yes, I know that all the most distinguished of scented flowers have had their names attached to sundry liquids and soaps—but, I ask you, how many of these reproduce the true scent of their namesakes? Very few indeed!

The titles are most alluring as one reads them on the charming bottles and lovely containers—“Wallflower,” one’s mind instantly visualises some garden, in spring, with clumps of “yellow wallflower streaked with iron brown,” or deep mahogany—an old-world garden of course, because so many of the modern wallflowers are scentless! And then one samples the “wallflower” bottle, with delicious anticipation. But is the old-world wallflower there? Not often!—at least, not in most of the “wallflower” bottles I have tested—and I’ve tried a good many! The concoction may be many things and various—very nice things too, sometimes, but the last thing it is likely to be is anything that is true wallflower.

Violets are a favourite topic with the perfumer; and some of the bottles labelled “Violet” are very pleasant essences of something. But so far I’ve never yet met one that really recalled the clean, cool violet odour as I know it—“the scent of violets hidden in the grass.” It remains hidden too—no one can get its full value beneath a glass stopper.

Roses again have lent their names to many toilet preparations—some of them get nearer to a true rose perfume than others; yet none holds the full rich intensity of a dark red General MacArthur rose—nor the hot spicy sweetness of the Damask, nor the lusciousness of the Kazanlik (from which the attar of roses is made). Something is lost in the transit from flower to bottle—something remains behind in the garden, which never has been captured so far, whatever may be achieved in the future.

I am doubtful, however, whether posterity will get much more out of the flowers than we do, for the simple reason that we seem to be doing our best to annihilate the perfume of flowers entirely!

The fact that the Shows give prizes for size, and certain types of colouring, but usually ignore perfume as a detail of no account, has resulted in perfume being sacrificed in order to secure “outsizes” in blossoms, or some particular fad in coloration. Nature invariably sets a definite limit in these matters. If one wants bulk—something must be sacrificed in another direction to balance this extra development, and the “something” is often the perfume.

Thus it comes about that the flower lover is constantly encountering disappointments in the garden, where all too often things are no longer what they seemed to be!

Some new Syringas I ordered last year are a case in point. When the blossoms opened this year, we went out to pay our respects to them, and sample the delicious scent one always associates with syringa. Imagine what a disappointment it was to discover that they were all of them scentless! Fairly large blossoms certainly, and of a fine silk-like texture—but as scentless as a pebble! Dire frauds!

Sweet Peas also may play one false, unless one is careful to order scented varieties when purchasing seed. The new sorts have frills, and wonderful colours; great blossoms and many on one stalk; but the old-time perfume is by no means a certainty.

Mignonette (the very name seems a perfume!) has also been so thoroughly “improved,” till most of the new varieties are scentless. And yet, what is the use of mignonette to the true garden lover if it hasn’t perfume? It is practically meaningless without!

Some few years ago I concentrated on Sweet Williams, or, to be exact, the sweet williams concentrated on me! I didn’t set out to have an acre of sweet williams that particular summer. I really don’t know why they favoured me so wholeheartedly just then. But it was during the war, when I had not time to spare for my cottage. The gardener was doing war work and the flowers had to shift for themselves.

The sweet williams seemed to find this an easy matter, and they seeded all over the place—hundreds upon hundreds of them, and of every imaginable pattern and colour known to sweet williams, from pure white through pinks and rose colours, to the deepest of dark velvety crimson, with markings in black and white, and every shade and tone of red. The ancestors of my plants came to me from a nearby cottage garden, old-fashioned flowers that had never been “improved” for show purposes, but had lived on from generation to generation round about the neighbourhood, in one garden or another. Finding my garden to their liking, and being left unmolested, they flourished apace.

Now my point is—the scent of those flowers was like the scent of Clove-pinks. The whole air was redolent. It was

delightful to walk about the paths and breathe the subtle spiciness of the garden.

But where can you find scented sweet williams to-day? Not among the most highly-bred varieties. My own scented strain disappeared, when, after the war, the garden was overhauled drastically, and dug up from end to end by newly-imported energy. I've tried many new seedlings but have drawn blanks in every case. The clove-scented ones still linger here and there, in out-of-the-way gardens; but they are getting rare.

The plant itself has so often been ousted from gardens to make room for something else which was fashion's favourite at the moment; and in this way the perfumed varieties have gradually disappeared. Yet originally they were noted for their scent. Hence their name Sweet Williams, or Sweet Johns, as they were also called.

Latterly, I seem to have got into the habit of looking eagerly for a certain succession of flower-scents which specially appeal to me, and I divide up the year, according to their coming.

The first place in the New Year we give to the Winter Heliotrope. What a wonderful scent it has! And how we watch for the not particularly attractive blossom—at least, some people call them dull, though to me they are welcome friends of the dark days. They don't care for frost, but as we are fairly mild in the Wye Valley they do very well.

And in company with the Winter Heliotrope, come the Primroses. To anyone who has only seen a few wild primroses growing here and there in the roadside banks or small groups nestling in woods, in the counties around

London, it may seem far-fetched to talk of the air being sweet with primrose scent. Yet—our primroses begin to bloom as early as September, and according to the mildness of the winter, they are showing here and there, in sheltered spots, all through the winter months. Not in battalions certainly, but in very pretty and decidedly welcome little clusters. If February is mild, they then start to make a brave show. But they never seem to develop much perfume while the north and east winds are about.

Yet, be it early or late, the day never fails to arrive, every spring—usually in March—when suddenly the air seems filled with a delicate fragrance like nothing else in the world. The wind will be coming from the south, or south-west. The sun will be shining with that warm friendliness that is so enheartening after the chilly damp of an English winter. And far and wide, edging all the Flower-Patch beds, covering the grassy slopes, circling round the base of old apple and pear trees, starring the orchards all over, peeping out of crevices in the walls, smiling up at one from the most inconvenient places in the centre of the long flagged paths, filling up every unobtrusive spot where nothing else is in possession at the moment, and decorating the stone steps all the way up—the earth seems lit up with masses of primroses, many of them as large as half-crowns. I have never anywhere seen wild primroses as large as those at the Flower-Patch. Neither have I ever seen them in greater profusion—I have counted as many as two hundred and fifty blooms on one clump.

Yes, unbeliever, two hundred and fifty! And I've called witnesses! They tried their hardest to make it two hundred and forty-nine, but only succeeded in making it two hundred and fifty-one!

When the thousands and thousands of flowers respond to the gentle warmth of the sun and the south wind, and release their scent, the result is wonderful. Everyone notices it and blesses it. For us it is truly Primrose Day.

This exquisitely scented breeze does not seem to last long. Not that the primroses die. They continue to gladden one's eyes and offer up their incense right on into May, unless the weather is unusually hot. But in a few days other flowers have also responded to the sunshine, and have added their perfume to the air. Early wallflowers come out, violet leaves as well as the blossoms seem to grow much sweeter—and the violets at the Flower-Patch almost rival the primroses in number. Early tulips and daffodils hurry forward; white arabis contributes an almond-like scent of its own; the small purple violas add more—and in this way the individual primrose scent is lost in a host of other perfumes, in the course of a day or two. Yet nothing quite repeats the deliciousness of that first greeting from the primroses. Moreover, such is the ingratitude of human nature, in the course of a few days, one gets to accept the spring perfume as a matter of course—i.e. when one is far away from towns and surrounded by fields and forests.

The next of the Fragrant Festivals, to which I always look forward, is the coming of the Cowslips. I know someone will ask: “But what about violets? Surely you love violets? And then the wallflowers? Is there anything anywhere that can compete with wallflowers?”

I quite agree. Violets occupy a niche of their own, and no other flowers can rival them. When I catch the delicious message one cool September evening which tells me that the first violets have arrived for the opening of the season, I

literally go down on my knees, and tenderly lift the leaves, which are also slightly odorous, till I find the few early-comers, rich deep purple blossoms, which seem to smile up at one like trustful little babies. Who doesn't love violets?

And Wallflowers, too! Such a feast of colour as well as scent. They seem to illumine the whole garden with their spikes of intensely brilliant yellow and pale primrose; while the browns and reds and purples are so velvety and regal-looking. Though there is that one sad fact, already mentioned, about the modern wallflowers—many of them have no scent!

When I made this discovery, having sniffed and sniffed at some highly-bred and most aristocratic specimen plants which had been sent to me by a famous grower, I couldn't believe the flowers were at fault—I felt sure it must be my nose. And an alarm seized me, lest I was suddenly going to lose my sense of smell! I hurriedly fetched out the rest of the household. Everybody sniffed—and then the sorry truth was revealed; they had no scent! Ever since then I have always stipulated for “the old-fashioned sweet-scented” varieties, when ordering wallflowers.

It is another instance of the old story: if one requires Nature to go out of her way and develop something above and beyond her original plan, she invariably balances matters by deductions in some other direction.

If Nature is asked to amplify her colour scheme, and to give us, in place of the old-fashioned yellow and brown wallflower—pinks and purples, rosy tints and creamy white, self-colours without a streak or shade of any other tone, and in fact produce a wallflower that is nothing like a wallflower, she will endeavour to accommodate us, but a price has to be paid for this, and the price of some of the newer shades of

colour is the perfume. One can't have it every way! The newer wallflowers are very beautiful, also the blossoms are very fine and showy; they give a truly gorgeous touch to the spring garden. Yet I prefer the old-world kind, with its mahogany depths splashed with gold, its irregular streaks and gay markings, and above all its lavish perfume that gives glory to the humblest of gardens, no less than to the greatest.

But though violets and wallflowers have each their own definite place in my affections I do not look forward to their coming as eagerly as I do to the cowslip season. For one thing, I have both violets and wallflowers in my London garden—but there are no cowslip fields within many miles of Charing Cross!

The very thought of cowslips calls up pictures of sunny fields far from the smoky gloom of town, bright with the new spring grass, warm with the soft May winds, and dotted over with the flowers, nodding on their brave little stems—the pale green and yellow seeming to intermingle in the blossoms. They look the very embodiment of happy English meadows.

Cowslips are plentiful near the Flower-Patch where there are open spaces. But in the main ours is a wooded district. Forests cover the hillsides. And, unlike the primrose, the cowslip doesn't care for seclusion of any description. It wants an open, wind-swept situation. And whereas primroses bloom by tens of thousands about the Flower-Patch, irrespective of trees, and loving the shelter of hedges and walls, and shady dells, the cowslips are not so numerous. Being out in the open fields, they were constantly trampled under foot by the cattle. And as I try to be a creditable farmer (though it be on a small scale), the meadows are properly grazed and tended as

all well-conducted meadows should be, and are never allowed to follow their own devices. Excepting when I suddenly have an outbreak and feel that I must have all the wild flowers obtainable; then, *pro tem.*, the utilitarian cows and veal-producing calves are banished from some of the fields, and Nature is allowed for a brief season to do entirely as she pleases. And she does it with enthusiasm! Up come the orchises—pink and purple, mauve and white—and the nettles; also flourish the ox-eye daisies and buttercups—acres of them: yellow trefoil and blue speedwell, pink restharrow and yellow clover, blue and purple and crimson milkwort, blue bugle, and dozens of other low-growing plants cover the ground thickly beneath the tall waving grass—and I have counted fifty different kinds of grasses.

Of course, it would never do to say out loud that I want the field left vacant because of the flowers. I should be thought an imbecile if I said such a thing. So we only refer to it as putting the fields up for hay. But they have other uses!

At one time I was afraid we had no cowslips. I had searched each spring but could find none. Then one day, when the cattle had been removed from one big field for a time, to other pasture, I found a few cowslips venturing to hold up their heads, and apparently looking around cautiously to see if there was any danger threatening from active hoofs.

I decided they must be rescued before the field was re-occupied. Having added a portion of an adjoining field to the actual garden itself (I'm constantly adding on more bits in this way, I never seem to have enough space for all the flowers I want to grow), we settled on this as a safe sanctuary for the cowslips. And there and then, Abigail and I dug up every root we could find in our own fields, in order to save

them from destruction, for the cattle are bound to damage them sooner or later.

Once we began to look for them, it was surprising how many plants we discovered, though most of them were flattened on the ground.

Of course it wasn't the right time of year to move them, but you can really move anything at any time if two rules are observed. One is to take up the plant in a solid block of earth, without disturbing the roots at all; the other rule is to dig a hole where the plant has to go, large enough to hold the solid block of earth just as it is, fill the hole with water, then put the block *en masse* in this, and press the earth well around it. A plant seldom turns a hair, if it is removed in this fashion.

All the cowslips lived—and since they have been installed in their new quarters—a long slope on the hill-side which we have named “The Cowslip Rise”—they have held up their heads gaily, and now send up splendid clumps of bloom on tall stems. There is no longer any need to lie flat on the ground in an effort to dodge the cattle! Instead they look down with condescension, on the lower growing primroses and violets, and crane their necks to see what is going on in the garden-beds and stone-flagged paths. They are a most cheery company.

Next in the procession come the bluebells.

While there is never one day out of the three hundred and sixty-five when the Flower-Patch is dull and uninteresting, there are certain times when the intensity of the beauty seems almost to bewilder one. The coming of the bluebells is one of these.

If it were only for the perfume, the season would be remarkable; but when one sees the colour—the acres upon acres of woodland trees in all their green mist of bursting leafage, and underneath, as far as the eye can reach, a sea of blue—it is a marvellous picture! Looking uphill, through the silvery stems of the birches, the smooth grey boles of the beeches, with the speckled branches of the wild cherries—there one sees thousands of bluebells, all looking one way—and that way toward the sun. Careless of brambles, unhindered by the thick carpeting of generations of fallen leaves, they thrust up their lovely bells in the greatest haste, once the hardness of winter is past, as though they knew they must put on speed if they are to get an innings before the foxgloves elbow them out of sight and the fern fronds hide them.

Looking downhill, every hollow, every dingle, is a pool of blue; shadows become drifts of purple; where the sunshine falls, the colour is positively arresting.

Yet, beautiful as are the woods, the open spaces where the trees have been felled, are even more wonderful. Here the blue is enhanced by association with other wildings—and particularly lovely is the intermingling of white with the blue. In the open spaces in our woodlands the wild garlic often gets a foothold—though we keep it out of the fields where cattle graze, as it flavours the milk. But where the land is not used for grazing, its beauty more than compensates for its other disadvantages. In any case, its odour is not noticeable, unless one handles it. The spikes of white star-like blossoms, rising from the green leaves (which the town-dweller so often mistakes for lilies of the valley!) mingle delightfully with the blue.

Another white companion is the stitchwort. One would think there was not room for any other plant to get root-hold, seeing how thick-set are the bluebells. But the frail stitchwort seems to lean against the sturdy shoulder of the bluebell, which gives the weak-kneed stem of the stellaria just the support it always needs.

Yet a third white flower, which loves the company of the bluebells, is the Woodruff. Is there a daintier flower in existence? I think not, for nothing could be more exquisite and perfect than the tiny white crosses which make up the tufts of woodruff blossom. This again is a frail-stemmed plant, which seems to revel in the support it gets from the stronger growth of its neighbours.

But though the ground is a sheet of blue in May, once the Wild Hyacinth has entered into possession, other flowers determine to get a foothold. There are more competitors in the open than in the thickets.

Most conspicuously beautiful is the Red Campion—which lifts its rich carmine flowers well above the bluebells. This grows in great profusion about our hedges and woods. Another of the bluebell's rivals is the Yellow Archangel—with its prettily-marked leaves. If this plant were as rare as an orchid, we should make quite a fuss of its silver-pencilled foliage—not to mention its charming spikes of yellow flowers.

The Wood-spurge also insists on its right to a place in the sun—or at any rate in the shade—when the bluebells are in bloom—and nothing goes better with the blue in a vase than the pale green of the wood-spurge blossom. But, unfortunately, the bluebells soon become disconsolate when gathered. They are not a success for indoor decoration.

It is curious how few wild-flowers retain their beauty when removed from their natural surroundings. The wild Cow-parsley is like foam when one sees it growing in the hedges and corners of the fields—but take it indoors, and it becomes an indefinite colour which is neither green nor white, and which goes with nothing else—not even with the tablecloth! Purple and blue wild-flowers invariably fade to a paler colour soon after being gathered. And, however much you may try, it is almost impossible to arrange the wild-flowers so as to secure the grace and airiness which characterised them when growing in the hedge or the field!

One sometimes hears the expanse of bluebells compared to the colour of sapphires, or to the sky. Yet it is like neither. Wild hyacinths are a living blue, which scintillates and glows as they sway with the wind in the sunshine and stirs one's emotions with a mysterious, inexplicable force. Beside them a sapphire is cold, and the sky—beautiful as it is—is another tone of blue entirely, and a calm, level tone at that.

Colour is extraordinary in its influence on the mind—we are only just beginning to find out how wonderful! Some day wise people will probably be able to tell why it is that the sight of a hill-side carpeted with bluebells almost moves one to tears: tears of joy, mark you, not tears of sorrow! Or why it is that a wide swathe of blue round the margins of the fields—where the harrow has not worried the surface—and the deep blue that fills up the corners, which the mowers never scythe, can act as a wonderful tonic to the tired town-worker, who chances upon it unexpectedly, refreshing the spirits, and clearing away the city murk which in time clogs the brain.

The old herbalists used to credit flowers and plants with a wide variety of virtues apart from physical cures. We of this

prosaic twentieth century laugh at it, and merely regard it all as so very quaint. But were they so very foolish? I am inclined to think they were sometimes ahead of us in their recognition of underlying spiritual qualities, which we are apt to overlook or ignore.

If there is anything calculated to make me of a cheerful countenance and raise my spirits above the wear and tear of everyday life, it is the sight and scent of an expanse of bluebells.

After the bluebells—the scents come in floods!

Lilies-of-the-Valley are always watched for both in the wood and in the garden.

Some flower scents are too heavy for indoors, like the Syringa and Lilac. But these I put in large jars by the front door in the porch. It is pleasant to welcome friends with flowers; and most people admire them.

It may be as well to mention the need for peeling away some of the bark, and splitting the base of the stems, before putting any flowers of this type in water. Wild Cherry-blossom, Crab-apple branches, Mountain-ash, Hawthorn—all such as these will droop at once if put into water without this little attention.

Both wild cherry and hawthorn can be used indoors, though the hawthorn scent is too heavy for some people. In moderation, however, I use it in the living-rooms. But out of doors, there is no limit to it. I have young plants coming on in the nursery bed, and these in due course get transplanted to the edges of the fields. There is something so enchanting about the May trees when covered with their snow-white flowers—which, with us, turn pink as they fade.

Hawthorn trees and hedges smothered with bloom used to be among the commonest sights of the country-side. But, alas! they are becoming rarer every year, owing to the necessity for keeping the hedges cut low, to aid the motorist in seeing what is coming in the distance. Therefore, I have every hawthorn tree preserved that I find on my premises. If it is a nice straight youngster, struggling for its existence in one of the woods, I have it removed and given a chance in a field. These young plants have to be protected with hurdles, as the cattle like the young shoots, and would eat them if allowed to get at them. But once they have grown above the range of the cattle they soon put on pace.

One can't name half the perfumes that are now making the air delicious. But there are a few which are specially cherished by the gardener for my delectation, and my rooms are kept supplied with them, so long as they are available.

White Pinks are my delight—and they grow so easily. It seems so wonderful, too, that by adding a very little soot to the soil on a wet day, one secures still more pure white flowers with a sweet clove scent! What miracles are being wrought every day in the garden! There are coloured pinks, too, but my first love were white pinks, so I grow all I can of Mrs. Sinkins, and Her Majesty. And they never fail me.

About this time the White Clover in the grass makes itself known. It's such an unobtrusive flower, too. But what a wealth of honey-scent it wafts all over the place. The lawns are not cut too often while the clover which grows on them is in bloom.

Honeysuckle scent is another joy that can't be described in words; yet who that knows it can ever forget it? And as there

are several varieties in the garden, one can have flowers over a long season, beginning with an early variety, that has a lovely carmine touch on its yellow trumpets, right round to the late autumn, when the wild honeysuckle which has been brought into the garden gives us lavishly a second crop.

Of course there are roses, but all roses are not so useful indoors. And most manage to look derelict by to-morrow morning; which is disappointing when one has taken trouble in arranging them. Therefore, I am not saying much about roses here; though if you grow roses, I do think it is a gain to specialise on those with perfume. The non-scented varieties may be ever so beautiful, but they seem lacking in the main characteristic of a rose!

One of my favourite flowers at this season is the Madonna Lily. And they do so wonderfully well in water. If cut when the first bloom opens, every bud will develop in water, to the last tip-top one. In a small room the scent may be too heavy for some people. But I do not think they are as overpowering as many of the artificial perfumes some use nowadays.

Though there are a good many clumps of Madonna lilies in the garden, I am not one of those fortunate people who make a great success of them. I find them capricious. Some years I have a regiment of upstanding blooms. Another year, they sulk! And possibly the following year they disappear! But I have dealt with all this in a previous chapter. Of course there is a reason for all this unevenness of behaviour. And some day, when I chance to have a little spare time, I'm going to try whole-heartedly to find out what the Madonna lily really wants! I've experimented with all the things recommended to me by experts. I've taken them up, and I've left them alone. But it all amounts to the same erratic conduct in the end.

However, when they do bloom (and some bloom every year, even though some of them fail), they are the loveliest things in the garden—roses not excepted. And I gather one or two spikes and carry them reverently indoors, in order to enjoy their beauty to the full, and miss nothing of the opening of their pure white flowers, one after another, with their orange anthers scattering pollen as they ripen.

After the lilies, we drift into the hot pungent scents of the herbs in August, with the sweet acid scents of raspberries, early plums and pears.

The coming of the Michaelmas Daisies and the Chrysanthemums, with their bitter sweet perfume, seems just what one needs after the heavy scents of the summer.

Change and still more change is what we crave. Nothing remains at a standstill with us, any more than in Nature. And though few things are more delightful than the coming of the sweet and languorous odours of spring and summer, equally do we appreciate the alternative of the more tonic scents of autumn. The fallen leaves and the bonfire smoke provide something we need as a corrective I suppose, to the long spell of undiluted sweetness of the previous months.

And still more bracing is it when a clean cold wind from the north arrives, with the scent of snow. Though with us it only lasts a day or two, it is the signal to be up and doing, a call to activity, for there are few things more stimulating than wind that has blown over snowfields—as every alpinist knows.

Sanctuary

SOMETIMES I wonder if birds really know that our place is sanctuary for them, with no danger at all from humans, and very little from anything else? They are so tame and friendly; it seems as though they do understand that it is a safe refuge.

Of course the regular supply of food is an inducement I know. And it is a pretty sight when they are all having their meals. Their breakfast is taken on upper window ledges, which are beyond the reach either of cat or rat. This enables the food to be put out on these high ledges over night, and by daybreak the whole place is a fluttering, twittering collection of birds, each trying to push his neighbour a little further off!

But sometimes, if a big gale is blowing, it would be useless to put out their rations over night. They would be blown into the Irish Sea by the morning! On such occasions, when the birds arrive and find nothing, there is a great clamour and discussion; and very soon some of them hammer hard on the window with their beaks. Now how did they know, in the first place, that this would fetch me to the window? Of course, having discovered by now that I do come and put out food in response to their hammering, they naturally continue. But one wonders how they learnt to do it in the first instance.

Later in the day, I put rolled oats on the ground outside the front porch. The trees around will be decorated at the end of every branch and spray with a bird waiting for its dinner. The moment I appear, they are at my feet. And then, when they are all steadily feeding, one notices how they arrange

themselves. At one side will be the jays—very tame indeed—and perhaps one or two magpies, and the black and white woodpecker. While as far away from the big birds as possible, will be the tits, robins, chaffinches, song sparrows, and any small birds. And in all probability in the centre will be one or two squirrels trying to oust the small birds and the big ones. If you look carefully, and don't attract his attention, a reddy-brown wood mouse peeps out from under the low-lying branch of a spruce, and unobtrusively joins the dinner party, keeping in the rear!

It is amusing to observe the truce that exists for the time being, between the jays and the smaller birds. Each group pretends it doesn't see the others; though the small birds never take their eyes off the big ones in case——! They know the wicked ways of the jays and magpies only too well! The blackbirds being more courageous, sometimes butt in, and try to take the food from under the jay's nose! But they soon repent!

Meanwhile—the squirrels and the wood mouse go on eating! The squirrels picking up each flake of rolled oats in their front paws, and nibbling it eagerly. And the mouse is always on the alert, and if he suspicions danger, he simply vanishes!

My bedroom opens on to a large verandah, or sleeping porch. The French windows are seldom closed, either by night or day. The verandah is open to the sky, but there are high rails around, to support awning if needed. For two years running, a pigeon has arrived at about seven o'clock in the evening, in July, apparently very tired, and has perched on a rail beside the house wall. He is either a carrier or a racer. He

is ringed. But though I go out on the verandah close to him, I don't attempt to touch him. He looks at me: seems to conclude I am to be trusted; and doesn't move. If I were to touch him, it would only alarm him.

I put down food and water. Whether he takes them, I don't know. He seems so thankful for the cosy corner to rest in, and soon tucks his head under his wing and sleeps till morning. The other birds are up and doing by 4.30 a.m. But he does not stir till 5, or 5.15. Then he wakes up, shakes himself to get his feathers in good order I conclude. After a preliminary glance around, he flies up to the tall chimney stack—surveys the landscape in all directions for a few moments. Then he takes off, rises with a strong beat of wings, and without a moment's hesitation makes a straight line south, and is soon out of sight.

But how does he know that ours is a hospitable and safe hostelry for birds? Do the wood pigeons and ring-doves, who eat my houseleeks from the walls, and clear my holly berries the moment they turn red, and gorge on beech mast in my Glen, tell him that he can be sure of a good meal and a well-aired bed here?

One morning about daybreak I was dreaming that we were removing. I could hear the furniture being dumped about, in that engaging manner common to all removing gentlemen. It got so loud, however, and they seemed to be dropping all our wardrobes, pianos, and similar oddments, over the banisters, that at last I decided to protest; and in doing so, I woke up!

Still convinced that I had heard a noise, I sat up in bed and looked around the room. To my surprise a large white owl was perched on the back of the chair in front of a mirror—

and had evidently been doing his best to fight the other bird he saw in the glass!

I tried to “shoo” him out. But he would not go. He was not afraid of me; he let me stroke him; only directly I got him near the open windows, he dodged back into the room. I had no gloves on, so would not pick him up, as I know what an owl’s claws are like, from previous visits when I was rash enough to pick up the intruder!

At last, in the hope of misleading me, he hopped into the waste paper basket, and hid his head. I saw my chance. Picking up the basket, bird and all, I put it out on the verandah and quickly closed the glass doors.

Then that bird got himself out of the basket—no easy matter—and rose heavily up to the verandah rail, where he sat and abused me for all he was worth, because he couldn’t get into the room. He could see me inside, and he wagged his head up and down in the curious curtsying way they have, and hissed out quite a lot of personal remarks. He was in a rare temper!

Next night, I was sitting out on the verandah in the dusk, before turning in. There was a heavy flutter, and behold my big owl was once more perched on the rail, and peering into the room. I said:

“Halloa! So you’ve come back, have you?”

I don’t think he had noticed me in the dark. Directly he saw me, he repeated the unkind noises he had said the time before. But he showed no fear, nor any inclination to go, when I went up to him. Only when he discovered that I had gone in and shut the window, so that he could not follow me, his language was violent.

Now—what was he after in the room? There was no food there. Was he anxious to have another try at thrashing the bird in the mirror?

It is often said that bullfinches are very destructive in an orchard. Different localities have different experiences of course; but we do not find they do much harm here, though at times appearances are against them.

We have a great many in our woods. Early in the year, as soon as the buds are coming on the *Kerria Japonica*, the gorgeous crimson and black velvet of the gentlemen, attracts our attention. We have a very large bank of *Kerria* outside one of the living room windows. We watch the bullfinches going up and down the *Kerria* canes, apparently stripping every one of *something*—whether it is the buds or not, I cannot say. Yet, in a week or two there is an expanse of yellow blossoms; the whole plant is a waving mass of them. So it doesn't look as though they ate the flower buds.

Then the bullfinches move on to a damson tree, not far away. Here they go through the same performance. And again, a few weeks later, that tree is starred with bloom; and in the autumn it hangs so thick with purple damsons, that it would be difficult to find any spare space to decorate with more.

These birds are fond of seedy-fruits. They gorge on the scarlet berries of the honeysuckle, on privet, and ivy berries. Also as soon as the elderberries ripen, one hears them cheeping like plaintive chickens all over the garden.

But though apples may or may not come in abundance in the autumn, the plum crop seldom fails. Unless there chances to be a very unlucky frost, just when the plum blossom is

“setting,” our plum trees, greengages and damsons are loaded on the trees to breaking-down point. Yet we are never without numbers of bullfinches.

Watching their performances year after year, I cannot help thinking that their main quest is for grubs. They certainly do no harm to our fruit crop.

Woodpeckers haunt us; several kinds too. The green woodpecker, the Yaffle, is a handsome fellow. I heard a lot of carpentering going on one morning, and drowsily wondered what the gardener was doing. Waking right up with the hammering, I saw it was only 5 a.m. Our men are not *that* industrious! I opened the window to reconnoitre. A yaffle flew past me, and screamed something that sounded rather saucy as he passed. Later I found one of the main supports of a pergola broken in two, and the ground around strewn with chips.

A pair of them decided to build in a damson tree close to one of our windows. It is a very old tree. But it had already been bespoke by a blue-tit who had made a nest in a hole at one side. The woodpecker took the other side of the trunk. And when they started on their alterations and improvements, all the neighbourhood knew it. The poor little blue-tit must have had an attack of nervous prostration, through hearing all the row going on next door!

The big birds took it in turns to hammer, one holding on to the trunk and resting, while the other took a turn at the “drill.” They worked at it for days, never seeming to mind us at all. They made a hole as circular as though they had drawn it first with a compass. It was large enough to insert a small orange. They excavated inside, till they had room to get in

and sit down. Each tried it, to see how it answered, the funny head looking out the opening. All appeared to be satisfactory, and they both seemed ever so important and busy.

But one day, some strange workmen appeared, with ladders and paint pots; they climbed those ladders and started to paint the outside of the window frames. Right in full view of Mrs. Yaffle! “This will never do!” she said to her husband. “Why they can see right into our nest! I did think we should have a little privacy here. But we can’t stay here another minute. They’ll be painting us next!”

And they were gone!

Mrs. Blue Tit later brought out her eight babies, having reared them in peace and quiet, after all.

One very handsome species of woodpecker, is black and white in stripes and patches, a very conspicuous-looking bird, excepting when he is climbing a tree trunk, when he seems to become grey, and amalgamate with the tree. His outstanding feature, however, is an extremely bright patch of vermilion beneath his tail feathers, and another crest-like, on his head. Altogether a very “Frenchy” looking dress.

He and the squirrels and the jays maintain a perpetual riot, by reason of the nut box. The jays and squirrels (ours are all red) fight daily over the nuts, chasing each other like fury. While they are thus engaged, the black and white woodpecker, waiting near at hand, seizes his opportunity and gets a nut. Both combatants then start to chase him.

One May morning I saw the woodpecker arrive at the squirrels’ breakfast tree, where the nut boxes hang, and with him another of his kind, rather shy and hesitant. He explained to her the beauty of the scenery, as concentrated in the nut

box. She still held back. He boldly went down; got a nut in his beak; took it back to her. She accepted it most gracefully.

In a few weeks' time he was busily cracking nuts for a family.

Have you ever discovered where your wild birds sleep? It is a most interesting study. Until you sit quite still and watch them, you will not easily discover where they roost. Each seems to have its own secret little places to which it retires at night. But it is most cautious in avoiding publicity! It will wait for a long while on a branch, before making the final dart into its hidden bedroom.

Some people who know but little about birds, think they sleep in their nests. This is incorrect. The nest is only used for the rearing of the young: the mother sleeps there while incubating the eggs, and later, when the babies need protection. The male bird roosts on a branch nearby. Once the youngsters leave the nest and are able to fly away, the nest is not used again.

With the exception of the youngsters in the nest, and the mother when brooding, all birds seem to like a warm hidden corner, but very few sleep inside a building at night. Ivy makes a good shelter for them, where thick around a chimney or on a wall; its leaves are stout and protective, and they remain on during the winter.

Some birds choose odd places, however, and once they have decided that it suits them, they stick to it, unless driven from it by danger.

A robin used to sleep each night *underneath* the roof guttering above the door leading from my bedroom on to the verandah. He held on to the iron bracket which supported the

guttering which does not fit very well into the bracket. He found there was just enough room for him to squeeze in under! For months he was safe there from cats and other night prowlers. Always, last thing at night, I used to go out with my torch and see that the tiny ball of feathers was safe, his little head tucked cosily under his wing. One night a very heavy thunderstorm sent the rain off that roof in a real waterfall. He must have been drenched; but he never budged! He used to retire regularly at close about 7 o'clock (i.e. 8 o'clock summer time) during the late summer, and earlier as the days shortened.

He deserted me in the early spring, when the blandishments of a lady led him to see how much more up-to-date a nest would be in an old tree stump, with himself sleeping in the laurels nearby.

Feminine innovations can be so dislocating in a home!

Window Gardening

A PHOTOGRAPH cannot lie, we all know that! But sometimes—just occasionally, someone else can—which is sad!

Consider the interesting subject of window plants, for instance. How often we see magazine articles bearing some such title as “Rainbows in Your Room,” or “Winter the Garden in Your Window,” or “Paint the Panes from Nature’s Palette,” etc.

All of which might mean next to nothing to the reader, were it not for the glorious illustrations accompanying the letterpress, which show windows ablaze with blooms and tender green-stuff (while the landscape outside is snow-covered), including such things as begonias, fuchsias, geraniums, ferns, cacti, mimulus, cyclamen, hydrangea—a heterogeneous collection of plants that would be poles apart in their cultural requirements. And all with their faces turned smilingly away from the window and looking towards the room!

Then some possibly well-meaning person tells of the wonders she reared from a packet of seed, leaving the reader to infer that the photo reproduced illustrates the results of that packet.

To all whom it may concern, let me point out that while plants in the window can be a perpetual interest, their beauty, as a whole, is for the outside passer-by, since no sane, normal

flower would give a moment's attention to the occupants of the room, if it has the chance to look out of the window!

Plants want light; to most of them it is as important as food and air. They reach out towards the light, and crane their necks to get as near to it as they can, no matter where you may place them.

Therefore, the view of the window plants from the room is invariably a back view of stems and leaves; seldom a view of the full face of the blooms. This is as it should be, if we value the growing things for their own sake, and not merely as bric-à-brac for room ornamentation.

Some people turn the window plants round and round, in order to make them grow symmetrically, and to be "all front," so to speak, and equally presentable all round.

But this dissipates the energy of the plant. It has to put forth a certain amount of extra vitality in order to readjust itself to every new turn the flower-pot gets. This means that something has to be taken from the plant's growth, and the development of blossoms.

Even in the garden, a plant seldom, if ever, is the same on all sides, or equally balanced all round. Clip it how you may, the leaves as well as the blossoms will inevitably strive to show their best sides to the south, or west, and turn away as much as they can from the sunless north, and the over-drastring east.

Therefore, if you have plants indoors because you love growing things, let them live, as nearly as is possible indoors, the life they most enjoy. At best they will be hampered with unavoidable limitations. No need to make these worse than they are.

If your window is a sunny one, stock it with sun-loving plants, such as cacti and geraniums. If a cool window that only gets sun part of the day, you can grow fuchsias, bride's wreath and mimulus. If a northern aspect is the only one available, content yourself with ferns—of which there are enough varieties to keep anyone happy.

But in all cases, let your plants live with their faces to the light. If you turn them round occasionally, for the edification of visitors, don't forget them when the envious admirers have departed, but turn them back to face the light.

It is worth remembering that the window is the coldest place in the room at night, especially in the winter—which is the time when people most need indoor plants. Therefore, if it can possibly be managed, move the plants from the window every night. I know this involves a little extra work. But it is possible to train the household into putting up with one's fads. And the gain is very marked, more particularly if you have flowering plants coming on into bloom.

I bring up a number of hyacinths, jonquils, etc., every winter, in the windows of our living room, as these face south. Every night I move them to a side table where they are out of a draught when the windows are opened in the morning (this is essential) and where they are warmer than they would be if left in the window all night.

When I am anxious to bring on any bulbs rather quickly, I put them on the mantelpiece last thing at night. This gives them mild heat through the coldest half of the twenty-four hours; and the difference it makes to their growth is remarkable.

This is worth trying by anyone who wants to bring on a few hyacinths in the room, and who has no heated greenhouse. By day they go back in the window, of course.

Tulips do not seem to care for this treatment. I tried it with freesias, however, and found it very successful. I had four pots of freesias, each containing six bulbs. Two of these pots I placed on the warm mantelpiece at night, the other two I left on the side table at night, with the other plants. Result—those which had the extra heat bloomed a fortnight earlier than the others.

Speaking of freesias. These are ideal for an invalid to grow in a room. They do not require a couple of months for quiet meditation in the dark, as other bulbs do; they can go into the window straight away. Though it is best to keep them on a side table for a week or ten days, and out of the direct light, till the tips of the shoots appear above the earth. The invalid can then watch their growth which increases daily.

When the blossoms come, they last quite a long while, new buds opening every few days. The fragrance, too, is so sweet and delicate, it would not be too strong for anyone; it never overpowers the room as hyacinths do.

Only remember to stake the plant early, before it has made much growth, put three tall sticks at the edge of the pot, with raffia round. This bulb produces a bush of weak, long, floppy, grass-like leaves, that break and get dreadfully dragged looking, if allowed to fall over. They need plenty of support to keep them as upright as possible. And even then they will do their best to lie down! But the lovely blooms are worth this little extra attention.

It is not wise to have a crowded window. A few plants do so much more satisfactorily than a large number, unless one

can give up the whole window to them, as one does with the side of a greenhouse.

We in England having green winters as a rule, with no long frost-bound periods, and next to no snow, do not often stop to count our mercies in this respect. We deplore our fogs, our rain, our uncertain summers; but we are apt to overlook our advantages—and we have some conspicuous ones that are denied most other nations.

We are never without something green and growing in our gardens, in the depth of winter, even if it be but ivy. In most parts of the country, outside the towns, one can find grass that is seldom hidden by snow, and never burnt brown as it would be in a hot climate. While to the south and west, where the warmth of the Gulf Stream penetrates, all sorts of brave adventurers will try to flower even in December—winter heliotrope, primroses, sheets of yellow jasmine, bright little daisies and many others of the hardy fraternity will show a few blooms all through the winter, if the frost be not severe.

Compare this with the countries of Northern and Central Europe, where the land is often frost-bound for months, with nothing visible in the way of green in the open, and then, so cold when the thaw comes that it can't be worked immediately. How they cherish every plant and morsel of growing green which they can get to live indoors!

In Norway you will find pots of ivy being cared for in the house like some rare plant, so intense is the hunger for plant life during the intense cold of the long winters.

A friend writing to me from Varberg in Sweden, on April 10th, said: "The night frosts are still very severe. I feel so sorry for the lilacs which are trying to open their leaf buds—the only green we have here so far, apart from the forced

foliage of the birch twigs, which are now on sale in the market-place. And you should see the delight on the faces of the purchasers; for we do so long for something green after the winter.”

What a contrast to our country! Think what it is like in England by the middle of April! We have no need to “force” birch twigs, to get a few green leaves. Our land is shimmering in a mist of fair young green, with all sorts of flowers coming into bloom.

In Denmark, indoor window gardens are a distinct feature during the winter months. All sorts of little trees are cultivated, often raised from acorns, cones, and such-like. These are grown indoors in the windows, during the cold weather. There is a Guild which fosters this phase of gardening, in which the Queen of Denmark takes a special interest. Young trees are quite as much cultivated as flowering plants, since the Danes consider trees as beautiful as flowers—and rightly so. They have them standing about their rooms. When the mild weather comes, they are put out of doors, or in the outside window-boxes.

We might do much more than we do at present in the way of raising small trees indoors. There is a vogue for miniature trees, for bowl gardens, and for rock gardens; and these are very beguiling. But much more might be done, for acorns are plentiful; also cones, beech nuts, chestnuts and cherry stones! There is a great fascination in raising one’s own forest!

While fresh air is so valuable for the window plants, they must not be in a draught. I have seen people open the window, and stand their plants right in the current of air under the impression that it was good for them! Whereas it is as bad for plants to be in a direct draught, as it is for human

beings. Many a plant that becomes sickly, and droops, or refuses to bloom—and its owner cannot imagine why!—is really suffering from a chill caught through being exposed to a draught.

“But the plants in the garden are in a draught when the wind blows!” someone said to me, “and they don’t catch cold then.”

No, they are not in a draught, generally speaking, in the open air, any more than we are. We don’t catch cold when we are in the garden, as we would if we sat in a direct draught by an open window. The current of air, coming through the window, is concentrated in a narrow channel, and all the more intense in consequence; whereas the wind in the open is diffused over a wide area, and is, therefore, less acute in its attack. There is an old Chinese proverb well worth bearing in mind: “When you feel the wind coming through a crack, go home and make your will!”

This applies also to plants!

A Mixed Border!

THE following questions have come to me in letters from unknown readers. As others may have had the same thoughts and wondered the same things, I will answer them here. The following point has occurred to many an amateur gardener.

“Gardens are often described, in books, as being a perpetual Riot of Flowers, or a Blaze of Colour. How is it done? I’ve spent time and money on mine, yet, though it is often very pretty, it is seldom an all-over Blaze of Colour, more likely its flowers only riot in spots! And often it has no flowers showing.”

To secure a never-failing succession of flowers, and borders showing massed colour effects, it is necessary to keep the plants constantly on the move. As fast as one set of blooms give out, the plants have to be lifted bodily, and something else put in their places.

Many flowers only bloom for about a fortnight out of the year. Hence, if you want *perpetual* colour, you can’t afford to give a plant garden-room all the year round, if it shows no colour for fifty weeks, or thereabouts.

Also, if you want a bright spring garden as well as a gay one in summer, you must sacrifice your spring bulbs, and rout them out as soon as their blossoms wither, instead of leaving them to complete their season’s development in the ground.

Gardeners who desire these colour displays work somewhat on the following lines: Bulbs are planted in the autumn—such as crocus, daffodils, tulips and hyacinths—with forget-me-nots as a background. Wallflowers, primroses and polyanthus will help the effect.

Meanwhile, biennials will be coming on in some other part of the garden, out of sight, and annuals will be planted in frames or seed-beds elsewhere—with cuttings of violas, pentstemons, pansies, calceolarias, and snapdragons coming on in frames.

So soon as the bulb blooms flag, out they come! Ditto the primulas. These may all be put in some out-of-the-way border to continue their growth. Wallflowers and forget-me-nots, being only biennials, go on the bonfire. Then the beds are filled with perennials, the young plants from the frames, and annuals dotted in groups in between them, to bloom a little later. And so on, till the frost makes further shifting unnecessary.

Now, personally, this type of gardening doesn't appeal to me one little bit! It is a colour display, certainly; but so is a box of ribbons, or a bundle of silk patterns. Colour can be very beautiful, but living plants, which have become one's intimate friends and companions, are worth more to me than a succession of rainbow effects, no matter how lovely. And I'm the last to wish to decry rainbow effects, only I think it is a pity to sacrifice everything else in order to keep up the effect all the year round.

A very bright display is possible at certain seasons—when the bulbs are in bloom; or when the annuals, including marigolds and nasturtium, have taken the law into their own hands, and are hoping to inherit the earth! But such riots of

colour are only at certain seasons. They are not perpetual. And it is well that their gorgeous display is only temporary; we should soon cease to value it, were it always with us.

When one has a number of old-established residents in the garden, one gets a deal more pleasure out of them, than if they are merely birds of passage, who only halt for a few weeks on our premises, and then pass on, never to return.

Of course, it isn't so likely to impress one's friends, if one cherishes the plants when they have finished flowering, and allows green patches to remain, instead of importing more colour hurriedly.

Yet, to the real lover of gardening, the green patches can be eloquent, and conjure up plenty of colour in the mind's eye.

In autumn, when the rock garden shows green cascades of aubretia, one visualises them in the spring, clothed with purple and pink, mauve and carmine. The winter jessamine, smothering the wall in summer with a dark green mantle—what a glory of intense yellow it will be through December and the dreary days of January! The wych-hazel and the daphne both look most ordinary bushes in August—but think what they will be like in the winter: the one showing the gayest of the gay tassels of bright yellow silk all up its bare stems; the other with its pink blossoms giving out a ravishing perfume.

How one cherishes such treasures, watching eagerly for the return of their flowers each year!

You can learn to read the leaves of the plants, just as you can the leaves of a book. The greenery in the garden can paint you coloured pictures, just as do the printed words (not forgetting that this applies also to the weeds. Alas!)

Anyone who is versed in this garden-reading will get definite pleasure from the sight of plants not yet in bloom.

But I admit this sort of thing doesn't dazzle one's non-gardening acquaintances!

Turning to another subject: Mushrooms.

These seem in the ascendant of late. They have been much more plentiful in the shops during the past year or two than I ever remember them before.

While the cultivated ones can be very delicious, they never equal the flavour of the ones that grow in the fresh air and health-giving breezes of the open country.

There is nothing more beautiful, here on the hills, than the early September mornings when the sun is shining on the upland fields that are spread about with dew-spangled, silvery gossamer which busy little creatures have spun during the night.

The fields where the cattle have been grazing are colourful in little groups and patches. There will be second-crop buttercups, clumps of purple knap-weed, white and pink yarrow, bunches of the pretty pink century, and the remains of seeding grasses, delicate and wraith-like now, but very beautiful. Also, dotted about the grass will be the autumn orchis, Lady's Tresses, which has tiny white bells, somewhat like a small lily-of-the-valley, and is scented.

Then among all this, there appears the gleaming white of the up-coming mushrooms!

What an indescribable joy it is to go out basket in hand to search for them, with the dew still on the grass, and every little drop a scintillating diamond in the sunshine! And how

quickly even the town-dimmed eyesight learns to discriminate between the shining treasure one is seeking, and the wild carrot bloom which is quite as beautiful in its own line, and has never had half the praise bestowed on it that it deserves. Still—it isn't a mushroom. And the most inexperienced beginner is soon able to detect the difference half an acre away!

But every one does not know the real *Agaricus Campestris*—the mushroom we eat, from poisonous fungi. And as there is one toadstool that is pale-coloured (though actually quite distinct in its appearance), mistakes are sometimes made by those who are not very familiar with the true mushroom.

There are several points about the edible mushroom that are not found in other fungi. The skin can be peeled from it like white suede; the odour is quite its own; also the characteristics of the gills are distinct. But I think it is safer for those who are not quite familiar with the true *Agaricus Campestris* to leave the whole tribe alone, when found growing wild, as certain species are rank poison.

And now here is another query that has come to me:

“I am told that there are other fungi, besides the ordinary mushrooms of the green-grocer's shop, which are as good for food. Can you give me the names and tell me how to know them? Is a silver spoon a reliable test for poison?”

There are somewhere about one hundred kinds of edible fungi, I believe. I haven't actually counted them, but I think there are as many as that. Therefore, I can't give you a complete list here. Neither would it be safe for me to describe them to you, as some of the poisonous kinds closely resemble

the harmless varieties; and it is very easy for the inexperienced to make mistakes—with serious consequences!

You need to study each species carefully and thoroughly, getting familiar with all the variations of that species, before you start to eat any of them! And if you could possibly get into touch with someone who is an expert, and who could point out to you the edible and the dangerous, it would be the most satisfactory method of learning to distinguish between them.

Many different kinds of fungi are used on the Continent as food, though in Great Britain we usually shun all excepting the *Agaricus*. Yet, the *chanterelles* (or *Cantharellus*) of our woods are excellent, I am told, as well as many others which we ignore.

I confess, however, that I have never had the courage, so far, to experiment with the lesser-known edibles. I often look at them and say, “I believe you would be excellent with bacon for breakfast!”—yet I pass on, and leave them to enjoy life!

I fancy the reason I hesitate is because I have never had an expert with me at the right season; and I feel I need instruction from someone who knows, before I dare try them on my family! Nevertheless, I am fully aware that there are many useful foods going to waste because of the housewife’s lack of concise knowledge on the subject.

About that silver spoon: Useless, as a test, I’m sorry to have to say! Formerly it was thought that if silver were placed with the cooking mushrooms, it would tarnish or turn black if any poisonous morsel had been included. But, unfortunately, this has proved utterly unreliable, several persons having died after eating mushrooms which evidently

contained some poisonous varieties, though the silver spoon was tried on them and it remained bright.

I am told that there is no absolutely reliable test which will reveal harmful ingredients to the cook. It is necessary to know the specimens individually, and be able to tell by looking at them whether they are safe or otherwise. And this means careful study.

Another correspondent has asked me if Capers can be grown in Great Britain.

The *Capparis spinosa* will live out of doors in the most sheltered parts of southern England. But as it is a native of the countries bordering the Mediterranean, it won't stand our cold-damp or frost.

The capers of commerce are the flower-buds of this shrub. Several species of *Capparis* are grown in greenhouses. They are charming evergreen shrubs.

Here is a question that concerns every gardener, for it deals with a most important inhabitant of the flower-border:

“Some Lady-birds have collected in the corner of the ceiling, in a room we seldom use in winter. Are they harmful? Should they be destroyed?”

Lady-birds are among the gardener's best friends. They live on aphids and other insects. Cherish every one you come across. They hibernate during the winter, and invariably choose the highest spot they can find for their long winter sleep—even going up hills, in warm countries.

Don't disturb them. They will waken with the first really warm, sunny day of spring, and will be grateful if they find a

window open to enable them to get out.

In some parts of California, where they are very plentiful, they are collected out in the wilds and taken by the bagful to the fruit orchards, where they do noble service in keeping down damaging pests.

The old-world rhyme:

“Lady-bird, Lady-bird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire, and your children are gone.”

is said to refer to the burning of the hop-vines at the end of the season. Hops are particularly prone to aphides, and therefore house in summer many a lady-bird.

Every true garden lover is also a bird lover, because everyone who has given the subject even superficial study, knows how invaluable the birds are, in helping to keep down the insect pests that would soon eat every green leaf from the face of the earth, if left unchecked.

Anyone who has the slightest doubt about their usefulness, need only watch one pair of Tits during the nesting season to realise that the amount of small grubs any such birds consume is enormous in the course of the year. Or try to keep track of the number of journeys a robin makes to its nest in one single hour—and every time with its beak full of several things!

There was one dreadful year in the War, when some ignorant person issued a mandate that birds' nests were to be destroyed whenever possible, in order to preserve the nation's food! Immediately boys and girls hunted for nests, destroyed the eggs, and killed poor little birds wherever they could find them.

As the result, large numbers of the small insect-eating birds were ruthlessly killed, while the real villain of the piece, the jay, went unscathed, as he is very difficult to demolish; and he ate the peas and the cherries as cheerfully as before—when he could find any. But unfortunately, owing to the absence of the small birds, the grubs and aphids multiplied like a plague. Fruit trees were smothered with them. The woods were alive with dangling caterpillars which let themselves down from the branches at the end of swinging silken cords. The small bush fruit, like currants and gooseberries, were nearly walking away with themselves, and great masses of destructive creatures made the tops of the bushes hideous, when they had all eaten their way to the top of a branch, and could find nothing more to eat. The Flower-Patch and also our London garden were both of them repellent sights, with creeping destruction everywhere! And naturally our food crops that season were considerably below the average, because everything that could be eaten was cleared up by the insect army.

And oh, how we missed the songs of the birds that year, and their business and fussiness during the nesting season! It was especially hard to be deprived of them at that time, when they were all that seemed left on earth of happiness!

Of course, others besides myself presently recognised the mischief that had accrued, and saw the crass stupidity of such instructions. And the order or suggestion, or whatever they called it—was countermanded. But it took several years to get back into the garden a sufficiency of birds to cope with the destruction that had so increased and multiplied during its season of liberty! Even now, I doubt if we should have as many birds as we really need to cope with the enemy, but for

the fact that many acres of the Government Woods, on the hills just across the river, have been cut during the past two years, while a still further number of acres of trees have been destroyed by forest fires. This has made it necessary for many birds to seek fresh homes. As my woods are Bird Sanctuaries, with food provided liberally for all my little friends, when the weather makes this desirable, I have had my numbers made up by the incoming of so many refugees. And once again the air is happy with their songs. Though why I should rejoice in their happiness, and never spare a regret for the sad fate of the marauding aphids, I don't know!

I was reminded of the value of birds in the garden by a question from a town reader, who was trying to attract wild birds to her garden. She asks:

“How can I prevent mice getting the food I put out on the bird table and window ledges for the birds?”

Aim to keep all food off the ground if you can. Many people make the mistake of putting out food in large pieces for birds. Whereas, it should be chopped into bits no bigger than a pea—unless you live by the sea and are feeding gulls, who seem able to swallow almost anything!

If the pieces are large, the birds will carry them away to a little distance, peck at them for a few moments and then leave them. Or they will toss them to the ground from the bird table. In this way, small vermin will find a most attractive food supply all around the house.

If you hang up half coconuts and lumps of suet, and leave them out all night, these will also invite undesirable visitors

to come for a meal at night. Rats will travel long distances at night, in search of food.

The safest way is to see that nothing is left out after sundown, in the way of food, otherwise some animal is sure to get wind of it and haunt your premises. And it is safest to take in everything by about two o'clock in the afternoon.

Remember, also, that the average birds only eat certain kinds of food; they won't eat everything—whereas rats will! The best foods are rolled oats—one of their favourite diets—soaked bread, and fat chopped small; or melted and put in a saucer and served to them when cold. They will not eat potatoes, or other vegetables, as a rule, nor lean of meat and hard bread and crusts. Hence it is useless to put out these things; they only throw them on to the ground, or leave them for night prowlers to clear up.

My own plan is this: Food is put out first thing in the morning—rolled oats, soaked bread, chopped fat of any sort, and a saucer of waste fat scraps, and the skimmings of soup, which have been melted down and allowed to go cold. They love this. If a bone or a coconut is hung up for the tits, this is not left out all night. Only a moderate supply of food is given (unless the weather is freezing hard), in order that they may eat up every scrap before noon. They then spend the afternoon hunting on the ground for any bits that have fallen down, and in this way they clear up every atom, and nothing is left to attract vermin at night—when mice and rats are most active. Most bird-lovers, in the kindness of their hearts, put out far too much food for their pensioners.

I find rolled oats more satisfactory than corn or seeds, as it doesn't roll off the table so easily. And don't forget that birds often suffer from want of water in freezing weather.

If you have a high window-ledge available, this is the best for the birds' food, should you suspect that vermin are around. Keep the window shut, as a rule, or the birds may fly in and then find it difficult to get out again.

Once they get to know the regular time for feeding—and the earlier it is, the better, as all birds like to break fast soon after waking—they will always be waiting for you at that time. Some will also try to get as many extras as they can, thrown in. The robin, for instance, reminds me of some of our carol singers, who first of all sang at the front door, in the orthodox manner. Then, after saying “Thank you kindly, Sir! And a Merry Xmas to you; and the same to you, Madam,” they allowed a decent interval, while they “carolled” the other houses within easy reach. After which, they returned to us and warbled at the back door! Only the robin doesn't even wait between his visits. He seems to keep an eye on every door and window belonging to the premises; and promptly presents himself the moment a likely-looking person hoves (or should it be heaves?) in sight!

Here is another question:

“Ruskin said, ‘There is a wide distinction between flower-loving minds and minds of the highest order... To the child and the girl... they are precious. But to the men of supreme power and thoughtfulness, precious only at times. Such men will take, in thankfulness, crowns of leaves, or crowns of thorns—not crowns of flowers.’

“Now what did he mean? Is the love of flowers a stamp of feeble-mindedness?”

Ruskin had been writing, in that chapter on “Leaves Motionless” in *Modern Painters*, of an age which was very

different from the world as we know it to-day. The old Italian painters were so accustomed to flowers that they accepted them as ordinary, everyday facts, just as they accepted food, water, and air. There was no need to emphasise them in any way, since they were the common heritage in lands where they cover the earth in multitudes, in their season.

The majority of those old painters didn't even trouble to paint trees faithfully, and as they really are. The artists were more interested in the persons and incidents which were outside the ordinary happenings of life. Also, such pictures were often commissions, or there was a definite purchaser in view. The Great Personages whose portraits were painted, were more anxious to have their jewels and expensive bric-à-brac reproduced on canvas than some flowers which were within the reach of the poorest. The artist studied his clients, naturally!

And in our own land, even in Ruskin's day, flowers had not been swept off the face of the country in many districts, by the jerry-builder and the motorist, as has happened since.

Probably he would be less emphatic in his statement if he were writing of the present day.

Though a very wise man, Ruskin occasionally let his personal preferences, and antipathies, run away with him! I fancy he felt a slight contempt for the admiration bestowed on Wordsworth. As when he sniffed at the poet for spending his time in bemoaning that he wasn't a daisy!

Yet Ruskin himself was keenly interested in flowers. On one occasion, when he was talking to an important visitor, his gardener came with the news that the first schizanthus blossom was out. Greatly interested, Ruskin immediately invited his guest to accompany him to the conservatory, and

everything else was forgotten in his excitement over the new flower.

Throughout his books, there are frequent indications of his own admiration for flowers.

Of course, it is difficult to define, exactly, the mind which is of the highest order, and the man of supreme thoughtfulness! But many cases would be quoted of quite enlightened people who seemed to care for flowers! I don't think the mere fact that the old Masters ignored them is any indication that those who do love them are lacking intelligence. After all, both you and I love them. That settles it!

The following question may interest some of my readers:

“Can you tell me the names of the National Flowers of countries outside the British Isles?”

You know, of course, that the Rose is England's representative, with the Thistle and the Shamrock for Scotland and Ireland respectively. Wales has two—the Leek, which has recently been somewhat supplanted by the Daffodil. This last is very suitable for the Welsh emblem, as it was prolific in some parts of Wales as a wild flower—till the marauding type of tourist started to dig it up.

Canada has chosen the Maple Leaf—so characteristic of her wonderful woods.

Australia has adopted the Wattle, or Mimosa.

Tasmania has no individual choice, but uses the Wattle on occasion. I venture to suggest to her that she might do worse than the Apple Blossom! At any rate, we in Great Britain owe

Tasmania a debt of gratitude for the beautiful apples she sends us.

New Zealand has no official floral emblem; but a frond of the Fern *Asplenium Bulbiferum* is often used. This should be a silver one, and is generally referred to as the Silver Fern.

India most appropriately has adopted the Lotus.

Turning to European countries, the following have no official flower: Italy, Portugal, and Belgium. Also Holland, though one feels that the Tulip ought to be adopted by that country, seeing how important a part the Dutch Tulip has played in that nation's finance, as well as in the world's gardens!

Neither France nor Germany has an official flower now. In the past the Blue Iris or *Fleur de Lys* (the Flower of Louis) was the symbol of the old régime in France; while the Blue Cornflower was used in Germany during the reign of former Kaisers.

Sweden has not adopted any flower, but certainly the Marigold *ought* to be her emblem, as these gay little blossoms are in every garden, and beloved of the whole nation.

Switzerland has two flowers—the Edelweiss and the Alpen Rose. These are mostly quoted and used together, and both, one feels, deserve to be so honoured. The national emblem of Switzerland is the Swiss Cross—as clearly traced over the full north side of the Jungfrau, in autumn, by the setting sun.

Spain has used the Pomegranate in its heraldic designs in the past: (but what it does now, I cannot say), and it is interesting to remember that this was often employed in

England in the time of Henry VIII as a heraldic symbol, during that unreliable gentleman's union with Catherine of Aragon. For popularity, however, the Carnation is regarded as the national flower of Spain.

Norway: the Heather (*Calluna Vulgaris*) is usually considered as the national flower. Denmark, as a whole, has no officially accepted national flower, but the Wild Rose has a non-official standing, and is usually considered her flower.

Of countries outside Europe—

Peru has for centuries revered the Sunflower. When the Spaniards first penetrated that country, they found it almost worshipped by the Incas, on account of its resemblance to the sun, which was to them a Deity. Priestesses carried the blossoms in their hands and wore them on their robes at temple festivals. And the flower was also used in all sorts of emblematic designs. The Spaniards found exquisite models made of pure gold.

China's national flower is the Peony.

Japan has immortalised the Chrysanthemum in choosing it as her flower, since it has been used in every form by the wonderful artists of old Japan.

Afghanistan specially favours the Rose, though whether it is the official flower I cannot say.

The Argentine has not adopted any floral emblem.

Neither has the United States as a nation, though the individual States have each their flower, and these are very interesting, each being typical of the district. Some were chosen by the Legislature of the State, but quite a large number were chosen by the votes of the school children in

the State—a very desirable thing, as it gives the children a sense of citizenship and also a personal interest in the flowers around them.

As is only natural, some flowers have been selected by more than one State.

Washington and West Virginia have both chosen the Rhododendron. Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Illinois and New Jersey have the Violet. Alabama, North Carolina and Nebraska, the Golden Rod. New Mexico and Arizona, the Cactus (of different sorts). Alaska, Forget-me-not. Michigan and Arkansas, Apple-blossom. California, the Eschscholtzia, which, in its own land, goes by the more easily spelt name—Californian Poppy! Colorado, Purple Columbine. Connecticut, Mountain Laurel or Kalmia. Delaware, Peach Blossom. Florida, Orange Blossom. Idaho, Syringa. Indiana and Pennsylvania, Tulip Tree. Kansas, Sunflower. Kentucky, the Bignonia or Trumpet Vine. Louisiana, Magnolia. New Hampshire, Lilac. Minnesota, Lady's Slipper or Moccasin flower. Maine (the country of the Pointed Firs), the cone and tassel of the White Pine. Ohio, Crimson Carnation. The wording of their law is: "The Scarlet Carnation is hereby adopted as the State flower of Ohio, as a token of love and reverence for the memory of William McKinley" (one of the American Presidents who was murdered).

Oklahoma, Mistletoe. South Carolina, Yellow Jasmine. South Dakota, Pasque flower, with the rather self-complacent motto "I Lead." Missouri, Red May. Nevada, Sage Bush. Maryland, Black-eyed Susan or Rudbeckia. Massachusetts, Trailing Arbutus. Virginia, Dogwood. Utah, Segoe Lily. Vermont, Red Clover. Montana, the Bitter Root, one of the Purslane family. Tennessee, Passion Flower. Texas, Lupin—

called locally Blue Bonnet. Wyoming, Indian Paintbrush. Oregon, Berberis Aquifolium or Oregon Holly-grape.

The Wild Rose is the choice of New York State, Iowa, North Dakota, and Georgia; while the District of Columbia has the American Beauty Rose.

It would be interesting if each county in Great Britain had a “county flower” of its own.

XXIII

Making New Friends

IT is a good plan to experiment every year with something entirely new to our garden. It must be understood that I am writing for people like myself, who have not a great deal of spare time to give to their flowers, yet who like to enlarge their collection.

Seeds are so cheap that there is a big temptation to buy far more than one can possibly deal with. The result is not only waste of money, but a certain amount of confusion. Too many things are crowded into the available space, and we have too many different irons in the fire to be able to do justice to any single item.

It is better to try to grow only one or two new sorts of plants in a year, unless one has ample space for setting them out, and adequate assistance in looking after them. I find I cannot do justice to many novelties each year, if I am still to retain my old loves, and give them the room they merit.

New-comers need more watching, very often, than the old-established residents. I have to find out their likes and dislikes, and though a plant may be happy in one garden (and do wonders in the seedsman's catalogue!) it does not follow that it will take equally kindly to every garden. Flower growing is often no end of a gamble!

I usually raise the seed of any plant that is new to me, either in a frame, or else indoors, if the seedlings are at all delicate.

Here I would mention that I have my frames on a bank, raised about 2 feet 4 inches from the ground, i.e., about the height of an ordinary table. This brings them on a level that does away with all necessity for stooping,—and very many amateur gardeners cannot stoop without discomfort. Half the reluctance so many flower-lovers have with regard to doing the gardening themselves, is due to the trials of stooping, or their difficulty in kneeling. A frame that is built well above the ground level, so as to enable one to work in an upright position is a boon no one would be without, once they have tried it.

And it is well to emphasise that all stooping should be avoided when gardening, if this can be managed. Where possible, use a proper gardener's kneeling mat; or a housemaid's kneeling mat is a useful substitute if you have nothing better; then descend! Rubber kneeling mats, made of soft resilient rubber, are quite inexpensive, and are really invaluable to the gardener.

Also, if you have space available where you are working, a piece of rubberoid, a couple of feet square, placed under the kneeling mat, is a further protection against damp—and our national bug-bear, rheumatism!

The position one takes when gardening makes all the difference between enjoyment, or weariful discomfort in the work.

To return to the seedlings. Enthusiastic beginners often err on the side of planting far more seed than they can deal with when the seedlings come up. This may result in neglect all round. Better have a few plants one can look after properly, and enjoy, rather than rows which one has not sufficient time

to thin out, weed, and transplant when needed, and which in the end become a burden rather than a pleasure.

And amateurs invariably sow their seed too thickly. It is difficult sometimes to avoid this, even if the seed is mixed with fine sand (a good practice, by the way). But crowded seedlings mean stunted growth. No room to move because of the neighbour's elbows, means that a plant cannot do its best. The amateur isn't fond of thinning out the seedlings. It seems waste of material, also it necessitates stooping! I've often longed for a few hinges in my back, when engaged on this work! Yet, thinning must be done, where the seed is too small to be planted singly.

Here are a few suggestions for flowers well worth growing, if not already in the garden. I have found all these very easy to grow and free from fads.

The *Acroclinium* is one of the very pretty everlastings, for which Australia is noted. It is one of the daintiest flowers imaginable. There is a lovely pink variety as well as a white. From time to time readers in Australia have sent me pressed everlastings, and the silvery sheen on the white has always fascinated me. This was how I first noticed the *Acroclinium*. When I saw the seed advertised, I determined to try it; and it has always done well with me.

The blossom is of the daisy type, with a yellow centre, surrounded by the shining pink or white rays. There is a double as well as a single variety. I don't know which is the loveliest—there is something so delicately refined about both.

Everyone who sees these growing in my garden is delighted with them.

This plant is listed in catalogues as a hardy annual; but I don't find that it will stand frost. As my garden is very exposed, I raise the seed indoors, planting it in March. When there is no further risk of frost, the seedlings are put in a frame, where they can remain, if that particular frame is not wanted for anything else; or they are planted out in the borders.

They look best in clumps, rather than planted singly. A little mass of them is very pretty. And they have this added merit, that they will bloom in six or seven weeks from planting, if the seed be raised indoors in the warm.

Don't let the plants run to seed, and you will then have blooms for quite a long time.

Another desirable annual is *Phacelia Campanularia*—a most glorious blue, with flowers that are not exactly a bell and not exactly a tube, but something of both. It is hardy, and soon comes into bloom, being wonderfully showy for dotting about the borders.

Venus Navel-Wort, or *Omphalodes*, is an old-fashioned flower—though neither name is a happy one! It is much like a white forget-me-not, and is an easily-grown annual. There are two blue varieties, which are very striking, *Omphalodes verna* and *Omphalodes Cappadocica*.

The seeds should be sown where the flower is to bloom, as it does not care for transplantation as a rule. It grows about nine inches high.

For the average small garden, it is more advantageous to grow plants that are not very tall—excepting in the background; and certainly plants with a tendency to grow very bushy should be avoided where space is at a premium.

Most of us desire all the flowers we can get—plenty of them, and lots of colour! To obtain this, it is wiser to grow a number of the smaller growing things, where each will in all probability produce at least one bloom, if not more, rather than cover a large area with a bush, no matter how handsome, that will take up more room with stalks and green leaves than it gives in colour.

Of course we need green; it is the making of the garden; but it is not necessary to grow large plants in order to secure this. And one big drawback to the bushy plants in a small garden, is the way they shut off light and air from lower-growing things.

All the plants I have named, so far, in this chapter, are low-growing, and seldom more than twelve inches in height. Some are less than this.

Another very bright little friend of mine is the *Viscaria*. It is not a new discovery; possibly you are growing it already. But if not, let me give it a hearty recommendation, for it is a most delightful little annual.

I had known the plant by name for a long time, through having seen it illustrated and described in seed catalogues. But it was not until some kind, unknown reader in British Columbia sent me a box of seeds from her own garden, including an envelope marked *Viscaria*, that I tried it for myself. Having a bare patch in the garden, from which we had moved some overgrown shrubs, we scattered the seed there, and went back to London.

Later, I came upon an expanse of pink, blue, white and rose coloured flowers, not unlike the blossoms of the stitchwort—a relation of theirs. Since then, I have grown this hardy little darling every year. It is so airy and light-looking,

waving in the breeze, it gives grace as well as lovely colour to any flower border.

Also, it goes on blooming till the end of the summer. It is only about six inches high, so should be planted well in the foreground. You can get the colours separately if you wish for special effects; also, you can get the blue and white together, and they make a very pretty mixture.

The Golden Drop, or *Onosma*, is another favourite. Its varieties show white, or pale pink, or pale yellow flowers, but I prefer the true Golden Drop, *Onosma tauricum*, with its full-golden bells.

This plant hates a damp, watery soil. Plant it in a well-drained pocket of sandy loam, in a sunny part of the rockery, and it should give no trouble. The only fault I find with it is the tendency of the tall flower stems to flop over. But this may be due to the fact that we are rather subject to high winds on my ground.

I advise buying young plants of this from a reliable grower, rather than spending time raising it yourself.

Parochetus is a delightful little trailing, spreading plant, that deserves to be more grown than it is,—though it shows signs of growing popularity and is now much more seen than it was a few years ago.

Its foliage is like a small clover; in fact, you might imagine it was a clover, when seeing it without its flowers. But later, when it is covered with clear blue little pea-blossoms—and a most uncommon blue at that—one recognises that here is something quite off the beaten track!

In catalogues it is listed to bloom in the late summer; but with us, it blooms steadily, out of doors, right up to the frost; while a plant I have indoors, bloomed right through the winter.

It likes a cool aspect, and some damp. If it can get its roots in some moist earth under stones, it is particularly happy. It is such a very attractive plant, with its sky-blue blossoms, like baby sweet peas, keeping up a succession of colour, and it is quite hardy. But it won't stand drought or hot sun. It does well in a cool paved path, or it will spread rampantly in a bit of marshy ground.

And now I want to say a word—several of them, in fact—for my ever-faithful friends, the Sweet Williams. They deserve so much praise, and get so little as a rule.

Yet they are wonderfully beautiful flowers and ask for so little in the way of attention. Even when they are included in the modern garden, only one or two special named varieties will be seen. Whereas, to get the full value from them, they need to be seen in massed expanses of mixed types. *Then* they are a feast for the eyes.

Another unknown reader (and I do owe so much to unknown friends all over the world) sent me some Sweet William seed from her garden. The plants flourished amazingly at my Flower-Patch; each plant seemed different from its neighbour. The designs on the separate florets were as exquisite as the colourings. Have you ever studied the markings of these blossoms with a pocket magnifier? You will find it an engrossing study.

Some of my plants showed deep crimson that was almost black, with equally dark crimson stems and crimson-green

leaves. Some had every shade of rose-colour, from the palest pink to full carmine; and perhaps a design in white, or others had deep maroon on pale pink; some had frilled edges; some a contrasting “picot” edge; many had bands of another colour encircling each blossom. Some of the flowers were almost vermilion—quite different from the usual rose tints. There were double blooms as well as single.

Also, quite a number showed three or four entirely different florets on one head of bloom—rather an unusual method with flowers, since most produce similar blossoms from the one root. Whereas, I have Sweet Williams showing white blossoms flecked with dark markings, pale pink selfs, full rose with a deep band, and others—all on one head of bloom. These variations are interesting to study. They only prove again how impossible it is to tie Nature down to any fixed schedule. She will break away and do unexpected things just when it pleases her to do so, and gives no reasons!

I was walking across one of my fields a year or two ago, when my eye caught sight of a bright crimson leaf among the grass. Examining it, I found it was a small sycamore seedling. I had it transplanted there and then to the “nursery” garden, just to see whether it was different from the ordinary sycamore. At the present time, it has developed into a healthy plant, a couple of feet high with quite a varied assortment of leaves—some green, some red, some half-and-half, some white, and some white and green. If it continues on these lines it will be a very gay tree! Yet there seems no reason why this one seedling out of the hundreds which spring up near our woods should have developed this unusual colour-scheme. And it is not due to any special ingredient in the soil, as the variegated characteristics continued and increased when

removed to another situation. Probably there is a definite reason for this break-away from type, but it takes some finding out; and Nature herself never explains!

But to return to the Sweet Williams. Gerard in his *Herbal* said that the only use of Sweet Williams was to “adorn the bosoms of the beautiful!” Evidently he hadn’t tried the effect of a big bowl of them on the table; personally, I consider them more suited to a big bowl than to the bosoms of the no-matter-how-beautiful!

Reginald Farrer was caustically unappreciative, and would give little place to them in the garden, considering that the chief merit of some of this order is that of generally flowering themselves to death! He also refers to the “repulsive aniline crimson” of some. Just as some other writers fling the word “magenta” at them, as being the most opprobrious term they can find!

I wonder why magenta should be such an outcast? It is not nearly as difficult in the garden as scarlet, for instance. It doesn’t obliterate its next door neighbour as completely as can the Oriental Poppy, when in company with which it disagrees. And it isn’t as lugubriously depressing a tint as that of the Crown Imperial.

No! I can’t join the customary tirade against magenta flowers. For one thing, I don’t know exactly what magenta is! I’ve heard it applied to Honesty, certain roses, cyclamen, some cinerarias, and various other flowers—when they did not happen to appeal to the writers! But as the colours in such cases vary considerably, I still am in doubt about poor magenta—and I may be welcoming it wholesale in my garden, for all I know!

But I won't have my Sweet Williams called anything but lovely, especially when I remember how easy they are to grow, how willing they are to do their utmost to brighten town gardens and to flourish on poor soil.

And they are so human in the way they close their eyes at night, and go to sleep, and then wake up in the morning, as bright as can be! I feel sure that any unbeliever would soon be converted if he or she saw the rows and rows of their smiling faces in my garden every summer, where they seed themselves year after year, and never fail me.

The only drawback to gardening is the fact that one has to leave off sometimes! But even then, it is quite possible to do quite a lot of gardening mentally. And because all keen garden-lovers buy every garden book that they can lay hands on, to read at night, or when Nature firmly refuses to allow them to interfere with her plans, I have herewith added one more book to the list, even though my own horticultural adventures are of the mildest.

Yet most of us like to hear about the successes of other amateurs, and still more about their failures.

To read that someone else can't induce dandelions to bloom, when our own lawn may be replete with them, is to add a golden glory to the day! Why we should view the matter from this angle, I don't know. By rights, the failure of the other one ought to fill us with sympathetic sorrow.

But does it?

While we are quite willing to share our dandelions with him, all sorrow for his sad state of destitution is swamped by self-gratification at our own ability in raising them!

It isn't a nasty spirit of conceit. It isn't a selfish desire to own a corner in dandelions. It is mainly a devout thankfulness that the whole of one's back-ache hasn't been wasted! And a sneaking relief at finding that one isn't the only person in the world who can't grow everything!

XXIV

Assessing Outdoor Colour

ONE sometimes hears it said that artists show a tendency to exaggerate the colours when painting gardens and landscapes. I have heard people remark, when looking at a picture of some brilliant outdoor scene: “Of course, one would never see anything like that in England! He must have painted it abroad.”

Yet English landscape can at times be as brilliant as anything one sees in sunnier lands, with the additional advantage that it is seldom dried up and brown with sunbake!

The artist paints what he sees, and the colours he puts on his canvas are invariably to be found in the landscape before him. But—he looks at that landscape with trained eyes.

It is rare to find anyone who can detect all the colour in any scene, unless their “colour-vision” has been carefully developed. There is a surprising variety of shades and tones, even in a brick wall. And when you come to open country, you may find there every colour that is in your paint box, and many which are not there!

Only, you won’t see them the first time you look at any landscape, nor the second time either, unless you study the scene carefully with a view to finding colour.

One stumbling-block to the amateur often lies in the difference between reality and appearance.

Begin by banishing entirely from your mind any thought of the actual colouring of the objects before you; and, instead,

decide what colours they appear to be.

For instance, you may know that the trees on the hill before you are green. They must be green, you argue, because they are birch and hazel, and such-like; and every leaf is green.

Yet—see that tree-covered hill-side at sunrise, and it may be rose-pink or even carmine.

See it when the light is falling one way, and it may be silver-grey. When the light comes from another direction, it may be blue, a lovely cobalt blue. And again, in certain shadow, it may be purple.

And yet, you *know* that the trees are green!

The artist puts down what he sees. And if, at the moment, the hills are rose-pink (as I myself have seen them many a time), he paints them rose-pink. Whereupon some people who have never chanced to see them that colour, will exclaim

“How absurd! As though trees could be *that* colour!”

And yet, they can be!

Then there is snow. You know that snow is white. Yet, look at it in the sunlight: there is nothing but blue in the shadows, and yellow in the sunshine.

A famous artist once said to me: “Do you know what is the colour of a sandy beach, when you look at it from the top of a cliff?”

I said: “Yellow ochre.”

He replied: “Sometimes, perhaps; but it can be mauve.”

I couldn't believe him. But some time later, to my great surprise, I came upon a strip of mauve sand (so it seemed to

me, when seen from a little distance), and a very decided mauve, with the waves breaking over it.

If you cultivate the habit of looking for colour, you will find it. Not all at once, but gradually, you will discover tints and tones you never suspected before.

Study the sky, especially when there are clouds (not difficult to find, in our climate!). See how many different colours you can detect, particularly in the morning, or at sundown.

Notice how the colour of the sky, i.e. the part where there are no clouds, varies according to the direction you are facing. To the north it will be an intense, clear blue; whereas, to the south, it will be much paler, perhaps not blue at all.

When asked to name the predominating colour in any open landscape, you would probably say green—green grass and green trees. Of course you know that these items are green; nevertheless, it is quite possible that you will find more blue than green, if you study the actual colour effects before your eyes.

The distance will most likely be blue. The glass in the cottage window-panes will very likely be blue. The smoke from the chimney may be blue.

And the stone wall—what colour is that? Grey? Study it carefully, inch by inch, and you will find it hard to say how many different colours there are in a yard of stone wall!

A good many artists avoid working outdoors when the sun is at its height in the daytime, preferring to work either in the morning or evening when the sun is not so high in the heavens. The colours are more easily seen at those times.

Intense sunshine tends to change the look of the colours; though it also emphasises some to great advantage. But this is primarily a matter for the artist himself to settle. The whole subject is a very fascinating one. And whether we are artists or not, it is an immense gain if we learn to see Nature as she really is, and train our eyes to take in all the subtleties of colour which are missed by the untrained, superficial observer.

There is no need to go abroad to find colour. Great Britain is teeming with it. And the fact that we are not always bathed in sunshine is no drawback. The untempered glare of a hot sun tends to kill colour. We can often see more in the garden on a grey day than on an intensely bright one, though a certain amount of sunshine has its advantages.

The greatest need of all, however, is the eye that has been taught and trained to see. The teaching and the training you can do for yourself.

You will remember that remark a critic once made to Whistler: "I never see the colours out-of-doors that you put into your paintings."

"Don't you wish you could?" replied the artist.

From My Note Book

MIDDLE-AGED and elderly fuchsias, that have made hard wood, can be allowed to dry off in the winter, and are the better for this. They must be kept clear of frost. Young fuchsias must not be dried off, but allowed to continue in their normal condition, for their first winter.

Pinks like a well-drained sunny position, with a little soot, that is not too fresh, dusted on the soil near the roots in wet weather. They also like a little lime.

Lavender cuttings are extremely easy to root. Set them in April or September. On one occasion, I picked up a branch from a lavender bush, which was lying in the path, evidently broken off with the wind. I was leaving for London in an hour, and had only just time to pull it to pieces, and put the fragments along the edge of the nearest bed, dibbling holes for them with my fountain pen! It was over a year before I saw that bed again. When I did, I wondered who in the world had been planting a lavender hedge in such an unsuitable place!

Day lilies seem willing to grow anywhere, either in sun or partial shade. Divide the roots in spring or autumn.

Choice violets prefer a shady, or north border in the summer. Also liberal feeding. It is a mistake to leave them to take their chance, during the non-flowering period.

Auriculas also like a shady border during the hot months, though I confess mine have merely to “stay put,” wherever they happen to be! We have no time to move things to and fro according to the season.

The wych-hazel never does so well as when it can get its roots down into moisture. The quince is also a good tree to place near running water.

Heliotropes enjoy leaf mould with a dust of lime I am told, though this seems a contradiction. I’ve never tried this combination yet myself, so do not guarantee it. We grow ours in leaf mould and sandy loam.

The bearded iris likes lime and sunshine, and bone meal.

Clematis should have a trowelful of lime scattered near its roots in the spring.

Wallflowers and mignonette both revel in a little lime.

Flowers should be burnt when withered. Flames are beautiful, dustbins are not.

Soot is liked by vegetable marrows, peas and beans; also fuchsias. But it should not be newly taken from the chimney, or it will do more harm than good. Let it stand for some weeks, or months if possible, and then use *very* little, and only apply when the weather is wet, so that it may get washed into the soil, instead of being blown about the garden.

Rhododendrons like a mulch of oak leaves and pine needles. They grow wild in the pine forests of Western China, and seem to revel in the conditions.

Snapdragons are easily propagated by slips; these should be put in a frame.

If wallflowers are cut well back after flowering, they will last for several years—frost permitting!

Forget-me-nots take care of themselves, and may as well be allowed to “weed,” and take the place of other less attractive weeds.

Outdoor cyclamen like a woodside situation in half-shady corners as a rule. They enjoy lime. Some like sunshine.

Among plants which ask for leaf mould, and hate lime, are the daphne, kalmia and rhododendron.

Honesty, which was formerly known as the Satin Violet, will seed itself like a weed, and grow anywhere. There is a deep-wine-coloured variety which is remarkably handsome when seen in a mass.

Michaelmas daisies, wallflowers, and mignonette are among the flowers that quickly discolour the water when cut and placed in a vase; also they give it a slightly unpleasant

odour. They should not be put into a clear glass vase. The water must be changed daily.

Bonemeal is invaluable as a plant food. And it has the additional merit of not producing weeds, as some forms of nourishment do.

The yellow winter jasmine often becomes shabby directly it is cut and brought indoors. But don't throw it away when the blooms drop. In a day or two the brown buds will open and give a new crop of flowers.

Yellow flowers and white ones seem to last best when cut. Blue flowers have a tendency to fade. Larkspurs lose their brilliance immediately and become a dull blue. Blue Cornflowers and Love-in-a-mist turn a greyish-white very soon.

Mullien is a valuable plant for dry situations. It lived through a long drought that carried off most else in the garden that year, and evidently enjoyed the dry heat. In some parts of Ireland, it is called the Velvet plant, on account of the delightful texture of its leaves.

If you can only find space for one rose tree, let it be Madame Butterfly. This seems to me to be the most all-round desirable of the hundreds of different sorts of roses I have tried. It has a delicious perfume; the colour is a superb blending of cream, apricot, pink, salmon, and crimson; it is not prone to blight or other rose troubles; its growth is robust,

the flowers coming on stout stems so desirable for cutting; it is remarkably hardy and seldom succumbs to cold; it has two flowering seasons, early summer, and again in autumn; it is equally good as a cut flower, either in bud or in the full-blown bloom. I cut some buds on Christmas Day in the garden, as it looked as though frost might soon arrive. The buds quickly opened in the warm room. I am writing this on February 6th. The roses are still a bowl of pink loveliness!

If you have a shady border that is a forlorn hope and largely given over to despair, put ferns in the background and London Pride in front.

A border that gets very little sun, excepting in the late afternoon, can often be induced to grow sweet peas, so long as it is not overshadowed by trees. I have a fine show of sweet peas most years in a border that faces north. A high hedge a few feet away keeps off most of the sun. It only gets a slant from the west; but the north-west position of the sun in the late afternoon at midsummer helps greatly.

The common yellow pontic azalea is one of the showiest of shrubs, as in addition to the wonderful radiance of its yellow flowers in the spring, its rose-coloured leaves in the autumn are as lovely as any blossom. But it will not grow unless planted in peat or leaf mould, and out of reach of any lime.

The wild heather has no objection to a tame garden, so long as it can be planted—like the azalea and rhododendron

—in a pocket of peat or pure leaf mould. The ordinary garden soil is useless to it.

While grey flowers are interesting to the collector and horticulturist, they are ineffective in a small garden. Some irises come under this heading.

The ordinary geranium, scarlet and otherwise, does not care for much moisture. But the “Fancy” or “Regal” pelargoniums must not be allowed to get too dry, and cannot stand undiluted sunshine for very long. Whereas the scarlet geranium revels in hot sunshine.

It is necessary to distinguish between sunshine which strikes a plant through glass, and that which touches it in the open air. That which comes through the glass is often very trying to the plants inside the window, especially in the summer. It is so burning in its intensity, and there are no breezes indoors to temper its strength. Watch all plants in a sunny window, and shade them from the midday heat in summer.

Both fuchsias and geraniums can be raised from the seeds produced by your own plants. But you are more likely to get some striking novelties if you procure seed from a high-class firm, where there has been a chance of cross-fertilisation among different varieties.

The Rose of Sharon grows rampantly and flowers profusely in my garden, in a corner that gets no sun and is

overshadowed by conifers.

The Strawberry tree, also the Tulip tree, have both done well and risen to great heights in my London garden.

Cuttings of the sallow willow (miscalled “Palm”) will root if planted at any time of the year, so long as they are kept moist.

Sending flowers by post is an art and a science. Some will; some won't. Leave out the “won'ts”.

Gather a day before posting, so as to give at least twelve hours in water—eighteen is better. Pack closely, the tighter the better, so that they can't shake about. Gather roses in bud; these will usually open in water on arrival. Herbs travel well; snowdrops also. Primroses and violets need eighteen hours in water before packing. Sweet peas and honeysuckle are not good subjects for the post.

To water very small seedlings, use a scent spray, and even then, don't spray directly on to the tiny things. It takes so little to drown a box of such frail atoms. A watering-can is often as devastating as hailstones!

Rose pruning is becoming almost a mania with some people. All roses will not stand hard cutting back; moss roses, for instance, hate it. Don't over-do the pruning. While it is needed if you are wanting only one or two exceptional blooms for exhibition, it is better to do too little rather than too much, in the ordinary way.

Everlasting flowers are much to the fore now. These have been greatly improved of late years, and now come in a number of bright, attractive colours, whereas the older sorts were rather dull, and went out of favour on that account. Cut these before they are too fully expanded, tie in bunches and hang head downwards till they are thoroughly dry; otherwise the stems double over, and the flowers refuse to stand upright in the winter vase.

Quaking grass, or totter grass (or wimwams, as it is often called in the West of England), is one of the most satisfactory of the grasses to keep for winter decoration. It will last for several years, and look well to the end. Dust is its only enemy.

Laburnum seeds being virulent poison, it is not desirable to have a laburnum tree in a garden where there are children. The little seed pods, like miniature peas, might attract them.

It is quite simple to grow mistletoe if you have an apple tree, by inserting the seeds under a flake of the bark. The mistletoe will do quite nicely there; though the apple tree is supposed to object. Yet unless the parasite grows in great quantities, I have not found that one bunch materially injures a tree. It certainly adds much to its interest in the winter, when the green bunches hang from the bare boughs. Pheasants love the berries.

For an inexpensive show of flowers, that will appear year after year, if left unmolested in the ground—try the Spanish iris. I know of nothing better.

Plant tulip bulbs at least six inches deep; this will minimise the risk of disease. They can be left in the ground in this case, all the year round, and will probably increase.

If you want to grow sweetness to last you through the dull, dark months, the following will keep the scent of their leaves if dried.

Knotted marjoram is rather delicate, and is best raised as an annual.

Hairy mint will grow anywhere, and will refuse to leave you for ever after.

Lemon thyme still holds its fragrance when dry and wiry.

Rosemary only needs to be rubbed to bring out its perfume.

Woodruff only reveals its perfume when dried. And the same applies to vernal grass. But the grass is not easy for the uninitiated to detect among the sixty varieties of grass which grow in our fields and wild ways.

If you have only enough money left, after paying your Income Tax and buying my books, to purchase one more plant—do let it be a myrtle. And when that myrtle blooms, I expect you will feel as I do, that words are wonderfully inadequate, when it comes to expressing one's genuine love and admiration for such perfection of beauty as this is.

[The end of *The Flower-Patch Garden Book* by Flora Klickmann]